

Transportation Committee  
Keyport Redevelopment Process  
Initial Report

## **Introduction**

At the Transportation Committee's first meeting, we began our examination of Keyport's current transportation resources and future transportation needs by considering those elements of our community that we valued. These values include: the small town nature of Keyport – the neighborliness, the quaint architecture, the mix of citizenry, the fact that there is a main shopping street/downtown area, and the children playing in the streets; the waterfront – for its beauty; its recreational value, including options such as small boat access, fishing, accessibility for children and its commercial possibilities; and its accessibility to transportation, including trains, highways, and buses.

Interestingly, after our discussions of these values, one committee member observed that it seemed that the majority of people valued aspects of the community from the past and would like the town to return to its roots. That is, Keyport had historically been a commercial and recreational center, with excellent shops, hotels, and boating. The committee agreed that these were the things that had made Keyport a thriving community in the past and that we should draw on that past to develop our future.

The committee next turned to its specific assignment: assessing transportation issues in the town.<sup>1</sup> To summarize, the committee agreed that parking was a threshold issue for the community. Essentially, all discussions regarding transportation issues returned to the question of parking. The committee also examined traffic patterns, identifying problem areas; investigated mass transit options, including ferry service and shuttle service to the near by train stations; considered nonmotorized transportation, such as walking and biking; and discussed traffic flow into, through and out of Keyport.

## **Parking**

*Observations:* Parking is available in Keyport in two forms: on-street and in both public and private lots. The committee identified the existing public parking lots, as well as the private, off-street parking areas, which are marked on the attached map. The committee then attempted to survey the usage of the various public lots.<sup>2</sup> They found that the municipal lot on American

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<sup>1</sup> Although the committee believes that Keyport is technically a borough, colloquially, it is referred to as a town. Therefore, the committee uses this nomenclature convention throughout its report.

<sup>2</sup> The committee attaches one caveat to their findings: their observations occurred during April and May, and not during any other season. From personal knowledge, the committee

Legion Drive is heavily used on weekends by boaters and fishermen. On Saturday, April 17, 2004, at 8:30 a.m., between 30 and 40 cars and pick up trucks were parked in a somewhat random pattern in the lot. The randomness of the parking was probably prompted by the lack of clearly identified parking spaces. In addition, no area was specifically designated for use by boat trailers. Similarly, on Tuesday, April 27, 2004, at 7:15 a.m., approximately 20-25 cars and pick up trucks were parked in a random cluster near the fishing boat dock. On every Saturday morning a committee member visited it, the boat trailer parking lot at the boat ramp was completely full, although the American Legion Drive lot was never completely full. In addition, every time a committee member visited the parking lot behind Gale's Hardware on weekdays, the lot was being heavily used.

The committee also made observations of on-street parking in residential areas, finding that a significant number of cars are parked on residential streets throughout the day and evening. In fact, on-street parking prevailed even in areas where residents had driveways or other private, off-street parking available to them.

In examining the parking situation in Keyport, the committee was concerned about the impact of future housing and business development on the parking situation, as well as the impact of insufficient parking on any efforts to increase business development in the community. The recommendations below attempt to address these concerns, as well as respond to the other observations.

*Recommendations:*

1. As a preliminary, temporary solution, clearly mark parking spaces at the municipal lot on American Legion Drive, designating some areas for cars and others for boat trailers. Given the fact that the lot is gravel, permanent painting might not be feasible, but other methods of marking the spaces may exist. The committee did not have sufficient time to investigate other options.
2. Improve signage identifying existing public parking. One committee member, who is new to the community, was unaware of two of the main public parking lots. Apparently, funding for way finding (i.e., directional signage) is available from the State of New Jersey, Department of Transportation. The committee did not have sufficient time to investigate the application process for this funding source, but suggests follow up on

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members recognize that usage of the boat ramp, as well as the fishing boat, during the warmer weather will significantly impact the parking situation in the downtown area. Similarly, usage of the Yacht Club will impact the parking at and around the Yacht Club during the warmer weather. Conversely, usage of these areas decreases during the winter months.

this topic.

3. Redesign (or relocate) the parking lots along the waterfront to make the waterfront more attractive and accessible. Currently, the bulk of the public waterfront downtown consists of parking. While the committee believes parking is vitally necessary for the community, the committee also believes that the waterfront should be made more appealing.

4. Investigate the possibility of building a parking garage/parking deck in either the lot behind Gale's Hardware, behind City Hall, or on the municipal lot on American Legion Drive. A parking deck in place of the lot on American Legion Drive could have a park planted on the roof, with access from Front Street through the existing pocket park. Obviously, significant costs would be associated with this suggestion. However, the costs could be shared between the town and potential developers, or financed through parking fees. The committee agreed that charging parking fees at the outset might discourage use of the parking, but that fees might be established at a later time.

5. Establish a zoning requirement for new housing/new commercial establishments to have designated parking. The committee did note, however, that even in residential areas where off-street parking was available, significant on-street parking exists.

6. Require residential parking permits for overnight, on-street parking

7. In connection with any mass transit connections (see below), consider the possibility of scattering parking throughout the community, thus requiring commuters to walk through town to access the mass transit options. The committee considered the alternative of creating parking near route 35 (off of Beers Street, near the industrial complex) for commuters and/or people using the boat ramp and fishing facilities and running a jitney service from the parking area to downtown. However, the committee concluded that this option would not encourage people to patronize local businesses since individuals would be parking, getting into a van/shuttle, and then getting out at their destination, which would either be the boat ramp or the mass transit connection.

8. Any parking lots/decks/garages should be able to be used for multiple purposes; i.e., commuters during the week and recreation during the weekends. For example, while slightly beyond the committee's charge, one idea the committee discussed was using the town's air space above the

Post Office to construct a restaurant.<sup>3</sup> Not only would the restaurant have pleasant views of the water, but the Post Office parking lot could be used at night for restaurant parking.

9. Removing the chain link fence topped by razor wire that currently exists around the Post Office parking area would greatly improve the appearance of the parking area, making more inviting and visually appealing.

### **Traffic patterns/street configurations/traffic flow**

#### *Observations:*

The committee identified several areas in the community that presented traffic-related problems. The committee defined problems to include, but not limited to, such issues as speeding, congestion, poor visibility at intersections, and general annoyance and confusion. The committee used personal knowledge of the individual members, as well as consultation with members of the police department, to identify problem areas. These problem areas, which are marked on the attached map, are:

1. Atlantic and Maple Avenues (corner where Cornucopia is ): Problem: Difficult to cross Maple due to poor visibility as well as diagonal intersection of Church Street and intersection with bike path
2. Broad and Front Streets: Problem: Difficult for pedestrians to cross due to the timing of the traffic lights
3. American Legion Drive and Beers and Front Streets: Problem: Intersection is not perpendicular, which makes it difficult to cross or turn onto Front Street.
4. Broadway and Maple: Problem: This is a main gateway to Keyport, providing access to the highways, as well as being the route to the Matawan train station. The traffic light is not well timed, which creates traffic congestion during morning and evening rush hours. Also, the traffic light does not clearly indicate when it is possible to make left turns coming from the highway, nor are right turns on red allowed coming from Broadway over the overpass.
5. Maple, Lupatotong, and Forth<sup>4</sup>: Problem: This is a five-way

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<sup>3</sup> As an aside, while not a common practice here on the east coast, many towns in the midwest actually own and manage restaurants and bars and use the profits to supplement the town's budget.

<sup>4</sup> On the map, this street was named "Fourth", while the street signs identify it as "Forth".

intersection, with no stop signs on three of the roadways. As a result, cars traveling west on Maple could either go straight or turn right without stopping, while cars traveling east can also proceed without stopping.

6. Parkway ramp to route 35

7. Broadway and Front Streets: Problem: Cars parked illegally on the road impede visibility and narrow the road to dangerous widths

8. Stone, First, Second and Walnut Streets: Problem: Intersection is confusing, and the road tends to flood

9. 7-11 (Maple and Broad Streets): Problem: Traffic pulling in and out of the parking lot into a busy intersection

10. First and Broad Streets: Problem: Visibility is poor, making it difficult to pull onto Broad Street from First. Traffic to and from the boat ramp exacerbates this problem.

11. Atlantic and Main Streets: Problem: Speeding in school zones

12. First Street: Problem: Speeding in residential area

13. Second and Church Streets: Problem: Confusion due to a lack of stop or yield signs.

14. Front and Church Streets: Problem: Visibility is difficult for people turning off of Front onto Church.

15. American Legion Drive: Problem: Heavy traffic on American Legion Drive creates problems for pedestrians, and vice versa. That is, the cars make the waterfront less pedestrian friendly due to the risk of being run over, and the pedestrians make it difficult to drive on the road.

The committee realized that traffic flow into, through and out of town was a significant part of our charge. However, our analysis of traffic flow depends, in part, on what changes are made in various areas of town. For example, if a ferry terminal was created, with parking located on American Legion Drive, traffic would need to flow from the highways to the parking area. By contrast, if parking were located on Perry Street, then the traffic patterns would need to be adjusted accordingly. Similarly, depending upon the use of the AeroMarine property, traffic volume and type would be affected, thus impacting the committee's suggestions. With these contingencies in mind, the committee makes the following comments.

*Recommendations:*<sup>5</sup> In making these recommendations, the committee recognizes that some of the streets are state or county, and not municipal, roadways, and as such, the Borough of Keyport cannot take unilateral action to respond to these recommendations.

1. Enforce existing traffic laws, such as speed limits and parking. This will require greater vigilance on the part of the police department.
2. Use speed monitors on Atlantic, First and Main Streets to make drivers aware of their speed.
3. Move Beers Street west to align with American Legion Drive. The committee was particularly concerned with the congestion and related difficulties that could arise at this intersection with the construction of additional housing on the Apollo site and strongly recommends examining traffic solutions as part of any site development proposed at this location.
4. Follow through on closing of Church Street near Cornucopia Restaurant, as well as keeping the vegetation trimmed to the east of Atlantic, on the north side of Maple.
5. Relocate American Legion Drive to be farther from the waterfront to allow easier access for pedestrians. Alternatively, install barriers or railings along the sidewalks to more clearly define the pedestrian areas.

### **Mass transit options**

*Observations:* The committee met with Monica Etz, Transit Village Coordinator in the Department of Transportation, to discuss the state's criteria for designation as a transit village. For details on the Transit Village Program, please see the attached materials provided by Ms. Etz. To summarize, the state has developed the Transit Village Program in order to increase use of public transportation by making communities more accessible to public transportation and less dependant on personal automobiles. The state, through various departments and agencies, provides funding to assist communities in creating these transportation-friendly environments. Some of the specific items the state considers in evaluating applications for Transit Village designation include: the existence of vacant land, underutilized or deteriorated buildings in the community; a clearly communicated vision for the future of the community as being transit

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<sup>5</sup> Since none of the committee are traffic engineers, the recommendations are based on the committee's lay opinions. As a result, the feasibility of any of these recommendations should be explored more fully by qualified experts.

friendly; compact design; a strong residential component, focusing on quality not density; efforts to eliminate automobile dependency in the Transit Village area (i.e., no “big box” stores); plans for a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment, including benches, bike racks and decorative touches; a station plaza with room for the community to gather for special events; 24 hour station activity to promote a sense of safety and security; creation of design guidelines that promote preservation of the historical character of the community, including details such as street lights, signage and store awnings; support of local arts and culture; and a willingness to grow jobs and housing populations.

In no way did the committee have time to develop a comprehensive set of suggestions to address these criteria. However, in making the following recommendations, we kept these criteria in mind. Further study and investigation is needed if an application for Transit Village designation is sought.

*Recommendations:*

1. Develop a shuttle service that ties in to the train stations (Matawan and Hazlet) and the Academy Bus stops on Routes 35 and 36. In light of the designation of Matawan as a Transit Village and the upcoming changes to the parking lot at that train station, the development of a partnership with Matawan on the establishment of a shuttle service may be possible and should be investigated.
2. Investigate the possibility of a ferry service. While one of the committee’s specific charges was to examine the history of ferry service in the area, time limitations prevented us from completing a comprehensive study of this issue. However, the committee strongly believes that use of smaller ferries that might be able to feed into other larger ferries at South Amboy or Belford should be considered. In addition, use of the ferries on weekends for trips to Sandy Hook or special events in New York, such as baseball games, should be investigated as one way of making the ferry more financially viable.
3. Consider using the AeroMarine property as the focus of a Transit Village. This suggestion would require assistance from New Jersey Transit in the form of establishing a light rail line along the former rail line (currently the bicycle path) that would tie in to the Matawan train station. In addition to using the AeroMarine property, the proposed light rail line could have a stop near Route 36, where some parking currently exists near the industrial complex. Also, parking could be scattered throughout town, within walking distance of this (or other) stops, thus encouraging people to walk through town and patronize local businesses. Obviously, this

suggestion requires extensive study and discussion with a variety of organizations, both private and governmental.

4. Consider using the bus station on Route 36 as the hub for a Transit Village. Again, this suggestion would require extensive study.

### **Nonmotorized transportation**

#### *Observations:*

In considering other forms of transportation, the committee focused on walking, biking and boating. Historically, boating has been an important focus for Keyport. Currently, the marinas and yacht club, along with the fishing boat, continue this historical trend. While recognizing that the Waterfront Committee would be examining ways of enhancing the waterfront and its related resources, this committee nonetheless discussed ways of expanding the availability of boating opportunities in the community.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Create transient docking for sailors. Using other small seaport towns (such as Beaufort) as our model, the committee discussed the possibility of creating transient docking spaces for boaters to dock at overnight, as well as day visits. Not only would this attract additional people to town to patronize the shops and restaurants, but it would do so by not placing additional demands on the existing parking for cars. This suggestion would possibly require additional dredging to allow for boat dockage, and therefore requires additional investigation. However, this suggestion could possibly be tied in to the expansion of the dockage for fishing boats, with the dredging and/or dockage being used for multiple purposes.
2. Develop businesses on the lower level of the buildings on Front Street. Related to making the waterfront area more accessible to pedestrians (see above) and creating transient docking for overnight or day sailors, the committee recommends encouraging the development of businesses in what are essentially the basements of the stores that face Front Street. In effect, the committee suggests creating two fronts for these buildings, with an upper level front on Front Street and a lower level front facing the water and American Legion Drive.
3. Make the town more pedestrian friendly. The committee suggests beautifying some of the alley ways, as well as adding benches and other pedestrian friendly details to the town, it would promote walking and browsing in the shops. In addition, some of the sidewalks are rather narrow, thus making it difficult for two people to walk next to each other. The committee therefore recommends examining how to widen the

sidewalks throughout the business, as well as residential, parts of the study area. Obviously, this will impact the availability of street parking, as well as requiring possible approvals from the county and will require additional study and investigation.

4. Install “Pedestrian First” signage in cross walks. As part of making the town more pedestrian friendly, the committee suggests installing signage in the cross walks reminding drivers that pedestrians have the right of way. Funding for this project may be available as part of the state’s way finding program and should be investigated in conjunction with seeking funding for other signage projects.

5. Study the use of the bike path. The committee did not have time to study the use of the existing bike path, but recognizes that this would be a valuable addition to this report.

## **Conclusion**

The committee attempted to respond to our charge given by examining traffic issues, mass transit options, as well as the availability for walking and biking throughout town. Our recommendations are based on our observations, research and other investigations. Given the breadth of the topic and the limited time available, we were only able to scratch the surface of how to comprehensively address transportation in Keyport. While many questions remain, we hope that this report can serve as the basis for the necessary additional investigation.