



Metuchen Shared Streets for Social Distancing

Background

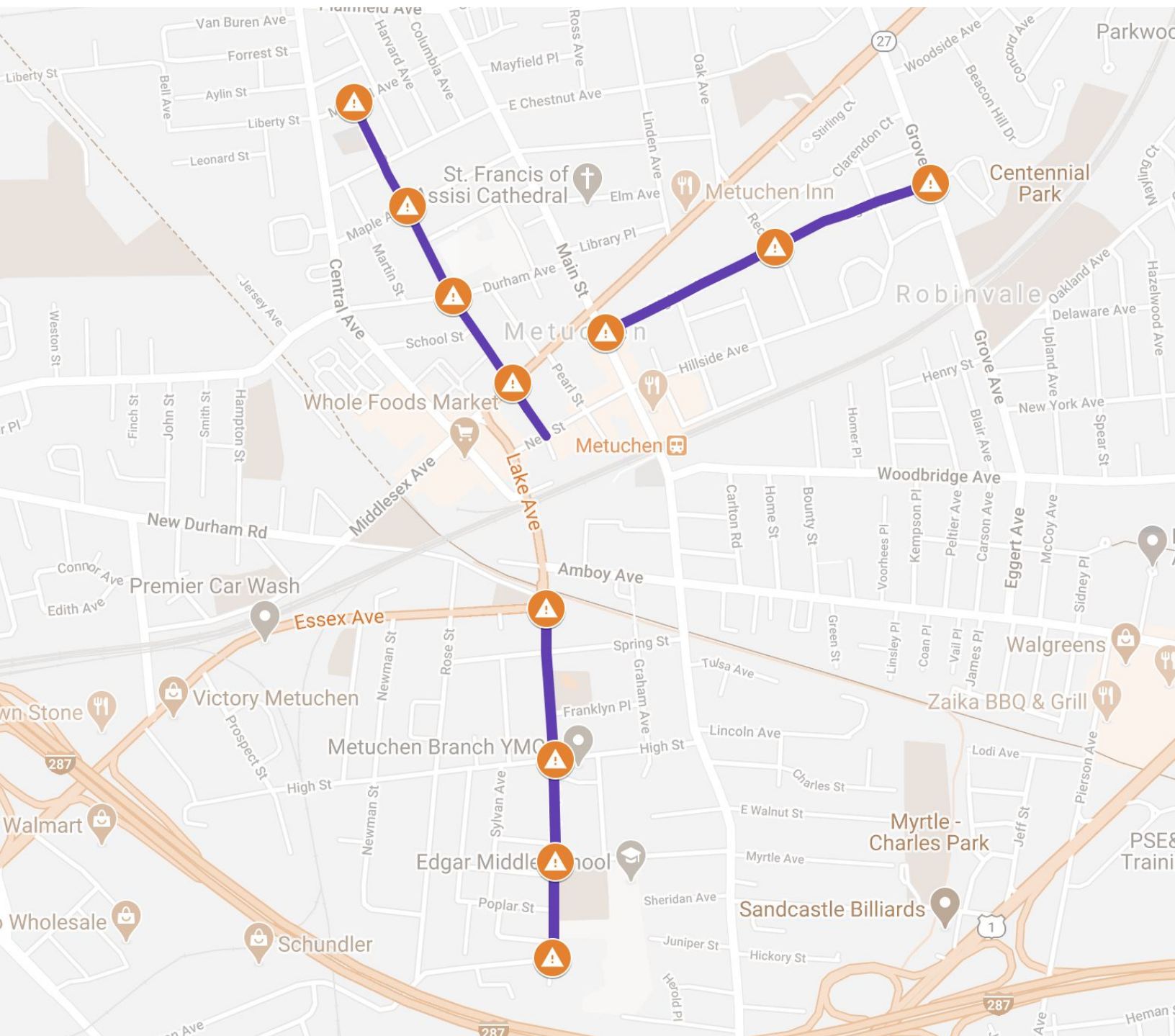
Due to restrictions in place to help combat the spread of COVID-19 including closing of gyms, fitness studios, and cancellation of sporting events there is a need for residents to exercise and enjoy the outdoors. While more people are staying at home, there has been an increase in walking and bicycling as a form of recreation and maintaining good health. At the same time, on many streets vehicle speed has increased as drivers are free from the constraints of traffic. The Shared Streets for Social Distancing concept is a way to allow for residents to safely walk and bike for recreation and physical and mental health as well as find additional opportunities to safely enjoy being outside responsibly while limiting danger from vehicular traffic. Shared Streets accomplish the goal of allowing safe movement of pedestrians and bicyclists on local streets primarily by lowering vehicle speeds while not preventing local residents from accessing their home.

The concept involves designating certain streets throughout the Borough as “Shared Streets” only open to local traffic. By partially blocking off streets using simple measures like traffic drums which the Borough already owns, the “Shared Streets” indicate that motor vehicles should not pass through that street for driving unless they are a resident traveling to or from their home on that street or commercial drivers making deliveries such as groceries, mail, take out and other packages. The streets also remain open for access by emergency and essential services. If they are a resident of the street, the “Shared Street” indicates that drivers should drive slowly and be extra cautious. By discouraging regular through traffic, more space is opened for local residents to walk, bike, skateboard, and scooter in the street while accommodating social distancing guidelines.

Minimal work is required on the part of the borough. DPW would place the drums on the streets at the corners near the intersection. The success of the measure can be easily evaluated and relocated, expanded, or removed if needed. Police presence is not required, and officers would monitor occasionally. Communication would be needed to notify residents of the temporary restrictions, the health and safety benefits of “Shared Streets” and that the restrictions will not impact parking or access to their homes on that street. All Borough residents should be notified about the “Shared Streets” that are open for more walking and bicycling. ***This initiative is for everyone in the community:*** residents living in apartments or multi-family homes without access to a yard, residents who need a safe place to walk while practicing social distancing as they go to a grocery store or pharmacy, and families caring for children who are looking for a safe place to have their kids ride a bike or run without having to worry about speeding traffic. It is a real win-win for a town that is already walkable and bikeable.

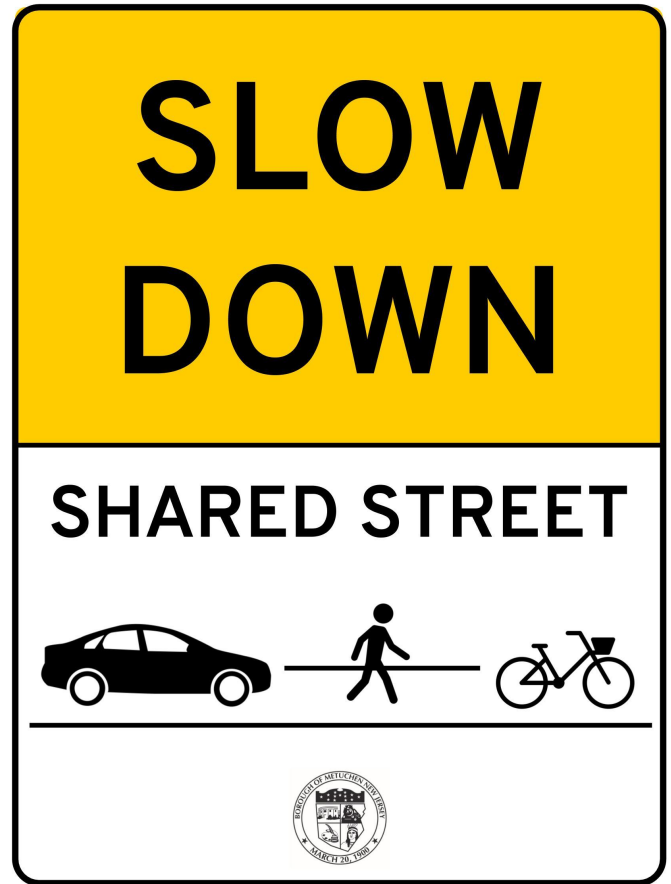
Proposed Pilot Streets

 traffic drum location



- **Center St** - from Midland Ave to New St
- **Highland Ave** - from Grove Ave to Main St
- **Lake Ave** - from Whitman Ave to Essex Ave

Proposed Signs



Signs will be attached to traffic drums and placed at major intersections along the route. Drums can be placed in the center of the road or intersection. These signs will inform vehicles that the roadway is closed to through traffic. The drums also serve to reduce vehicle speeds as they need to slow to maneuver around them. One of each of the above signs will be secured to the drum.

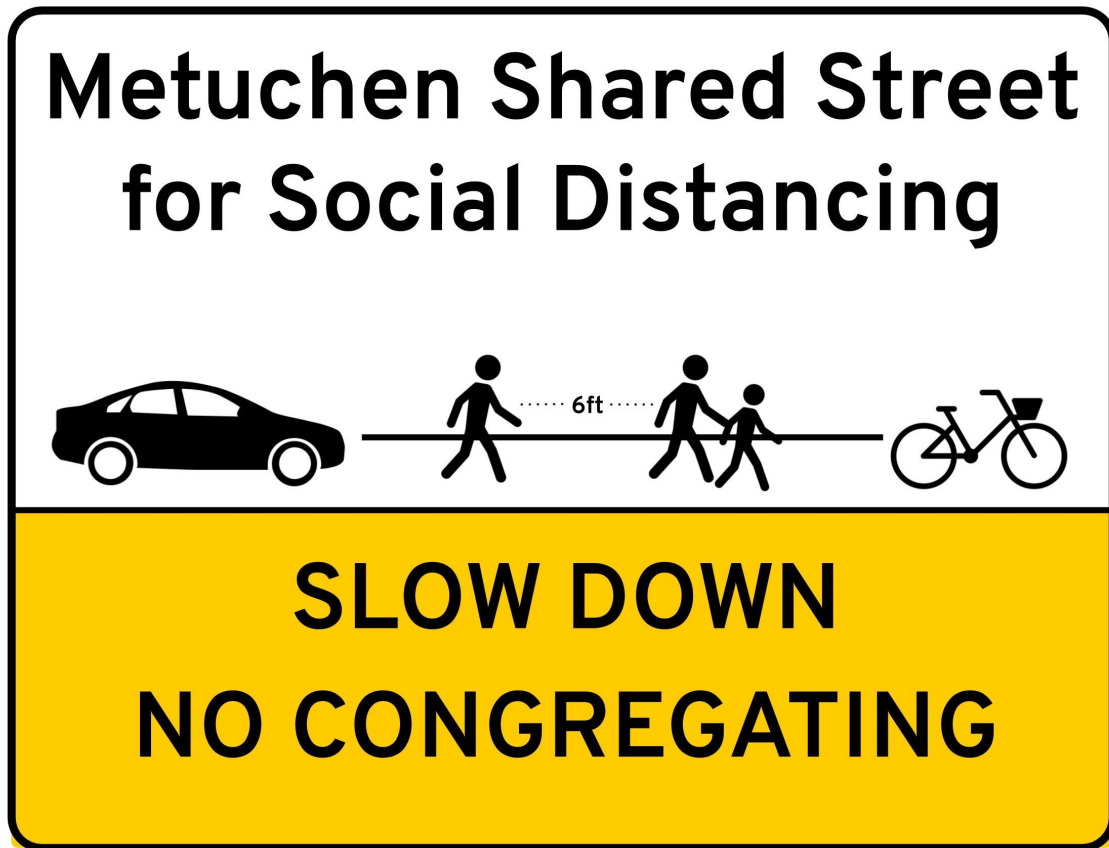
It is estimated we will require 15 traffic drums and therefore 15 of each of these signs will need to be printed.

Quote:

30 (15 each) "Road Closed" / "Slow Down" signs. 18" x 24". Full color. One side. No step stakes

\$255

Proposed Lawn Sign



Lawn signs placed along the routes will reinforce that the street is a shared space. We will work with neighbors to find hosts for the signs.

Quote:

50 "Metuchen Shared Street" signs. 24" x 18". Full color. Two sides. H stakes

\$745

How to Implement

1. Approval by the Mayor in conjunction with the Police Department (ex. Highland Park)
- or -
Resolution establishing the program by the Council (ex. Princeton)
2. Print and receive signs.
3. Work with DPW to ensure we have enough traffic drums or other appropriate barricades to attach the signs.
4. Work with neighbors to host lawn signs.
5. Communicate the “Shared Streets” program with residents including social media, email blasts, and nixle alerts.
6. DPW installs barricades at predetermined locations. They will remain in place 24/7.
7. We monitor the success of the program. Possibly work with Traffic & Transportation to conduct a survey after several weeks.
8. If successful, look to expand to other areas.

Letters of Support



June 19, 2020

Metuchen Borough Hall
500 Main Street
Metuchen, NJ 08840

RE: Metuchen Shared Streets for Social Distancing Program

Dear Mayor Busch and Police Chief Irizarry,

This letter is to acknowledge that at the June 2020 Traffic & Transportation Committee meeting the committee was asked to consider a "Shared Streets" program concept. The idea was well received and a motion was made, followed by unanimous approval, in support of a potential "Shared Streets" program in Metuchen.

Certain residential roadways in the Borough have seen a significant increase in non-motorized activity. Taking walks, going on bike rides, and engaging in other forms of exercise on low traffic streets is an important step one can take to maintain both physical and mental well being during these times. Borough residents and especially families are using streets as shared public spaces but in many cases sidewalks are not sufficiently wide enough to maintain proper social distancing from others.

The "Shared Streets" concept is a low cost, low maintenance way to provide additional safe space for residents to utilize as we head into the summer months. The committee hopes that you will consider implementing this program and is able to help where necessary.

Sincerely,

Jay Galeota
Committee Chair, Metuchen Traffic & Transportation Committee

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*Associated with the
Middlesex County
Improvement Authority*

June 18, 2020

Mayor Jonathan Busch
Borough of Metuchen
500 Main Street
Metuchen, NJ 08840

RE: Metuchen Shared Streets for Social Distancing Program

Dear Mayor Busch and Police Chief Irizarry:

Many cities in Middlesex County have streets that either lack sidewalks, or have narrow 4- or 5-foot sidewalks. It is nearly impossible to safely pass another person at the recommended minimum distance of 6 feet without one or both people having to step or roll out into the street. The "Shared Streets" approach re-envisioning and re-configures street space to make room for all people, not just those driving cars.

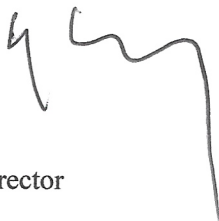
We are glad to hear that Metuchen is looking to join hundreds of cities around the nation and world that are adapting to the coronavirus pandemic by intentionally providing space on the streets for people. Designating certain low-speed neighborhood streets as "Shared Streets" that are closed to through traffic (though still available for residents, emergency and essential services, and delivery access) will improve walking and biking for residents and visitors of the Borough.

A "Shared Streets" initiative will:

- Support outdoor exercise
- Create a safer environment for people walking, wheelchair rolling, and biking
- Promote physical distancing of at least 6 feet

This letter is to express Keep Middlesex Moving's full support of the efforts by the Borough of Metuchen to adopt and implement a "Shared Streets" program.

Sincerely,



Bill Neary
Executive Director



June 19, 2020
Metuchen Borough Hall
500 Main Street
Metuchen, NJ 08840

RE: Metuchen Shared Streets for Social Distancing Program

Dear Mayor Jonathan Busch and Council President Linda Koskoski,

Many areas of Metuchen have streets that either lack sidewalks or have narrow, 4 or 5-foot, sidewalks. Making it difficult, if not, impossible to safely pass another person at the recommended minimum social distance of six (6) feet without one or both people having to step or roll out into the street. Also mask usage does not seem widespread in Metuchen, even in areas where many people come into close contact and cannot social distance.

The "Shared Streets" approach re-envisions and re-configures street space to make room for all everyone, not just those shielded by driving cars.

Many communities around the nation and the world are adapting to the coronavirus pandemic by reclaiming space on the streets for people and we are encouraged that Metuchen is joining these discussions. By labeling specific low-speed neighborhood streets as "Shared Streets" and closing them to automobile through traffic - but still available for residents, delivery access, emergency and essential services - improves walking and biking options for our citizens and visitors alike.

A "Shared Streets" initiative will:

- Support health and recreational outdoor activities - including the types that Bike-Walk Metuchen seeks to promote!
- Provide a safer and accessible environment for people walking, wheelchair rolling, and biking
- Facilitate social distancing of at least six (6) feet
- Foster economic activity resulting from improved biking and walking connections to Metuchen's downtown businesses
- Reduce the need for downtown parking by providing better biking and walking access, thus freeing up more strategic on-street parking spaces for parklets, outdoor dining and other beneficial uses

Bike-Walk Metuchen fully supports the efforts by the Borough of Metuchen to adopt and implement a "Shared Streets" program.

Happy Feet and Wheels,
Bike-Walk Metuchen

Cc: Council Member Jason Delia
Cc: Council Member Sheri-Rose Rubin
Cc: Council Member Daniel Hirsch

Cc: Council Member Todd Pagel
Cc: Council Member Dorothy Rasmussen
Cc: Metuchen Police Chief David Irizarry

Appendix

Potential Expansion

