



WalkBikeHike

Somerset County

CONNECTING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES



June 28, 2019

Prepared for:



Prepared by:





28
NJ TRANSIT
Somerset

NO
TURN
ON RED
8AM-6PM

RWJ SOMERSET

CUSTOM
MADE TEES

NEW LOT
SOLD

DISCLAIMER

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ABSTRACT

WalkBikeHike Somerset County is designed to improve multimodal mobility and safety for Somerset County travelers of all ages and abilities. Together, the WalkBikeHike Framework Strategy and Design Book have the potential to transform how Somerset County and its municipal partners plan, design, and build their roads, communities, parks, public facilities, and recreation areas. The Framework Strategy is just the first step in a process that will take shape over many years to see proposals advance from concept planning, to design and construction, and for many years of use and enjoyment. The Framework Strategy includes more than 220 candidate walk, bike, and hike improvements, totaling almost 275 miles of new facilities across Somerset County.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Well before the advent of the automobile age, early Somerset County maps depict travel and transportation networks linking communities large and small with a variety of destinations, farms, and emerging centers of commerce and industry. These thoroughfares have long since been overtaken by automobiles and trucks, carrying people and goods, and fueling a strong and vibrant local economy.

Somerset County is prized for its high quality of life, great schools, employment, and amenities. WalkBikeHike Somerset County seeks to enhance and extend access to these opportunities through the development of low-stress, all ages travel networks of trails, shared use paths, and on-road facilities for walking, biking, and hiking.

WalkBikeHike is a Framework Strategy that leverages county, municipal, and state investments in open space, parks, recreation, farmland, and historic preservation, to improve multimodal access, mobility, connectivity, and safety.

The findings and candidate improvements of the Framework Strategy will guide the development of convenient, equitable, and interconnected travel routes, facilities, and networks, over time, and in a collaborative manner.



Study Background

Somerset County initiated this study to support development of a safe and user friendly travel network that increases non-motorized travel options.

This undertaking recognizes the growing demand for better connected destinations and improved mobility choices for county residents, workers, and visitors, and to promote health and wellness opportunities for all persons.

The final report for this study is comprised of two volumes:

WalkBikeHike - Somerset County presents an overview of the three part-planning process: community engagement, technical assessment, and the study findings and recommendations in the Framework Strategy.

WalkBikeHike Technical Appendix includes the following:

Tech Memo 1-Community Engagement
Tech Memo 2-Technical Assessment
Implementation Matrix
Problem Statements
WalkBikeHike Design Book

The standalone Design Book guides the planning, design, and development of walk, bike, and hike improvements, based on state-of the practice standards and guidelines, to create a seamless, consistent, and integrated multimodal network across Somerset County.

Three-Part Planning Process

A three-part, community-based, planning process was used to evaluate and advance opportunities to improve multimodal mobility, safety, and access for Somerset County travelers of all ages and abilities.

Part One - Community Engagement

A continuous and collaborative community engagement process provided numerous opportunities and methods for discussion, assessment, and comment, including more than two dozen study meetings.

Hundreds of written and e-mail comments were received, and more than 1,600 responses were submitted to the online survey and crowdsourced mapping application.

The community engagement process culminated in the formulation of the consensus WalkBikeHike Vision Statement and Goals.



WalkBikeHike - Somerset County

Part Two: Technical Assessment

A comprehensive multimodal assessment of context and existing conditions identified needs, deficiencies, and opportunities for walk, bike, and hike improvements across Somerset County.

More than 400 recommendations from previous studies and plans were evaluated for initial feasibility and implementation.

Many Somerset County routes are high-stress roadways with significant barriers to multimodal access and mobility, making off-road paths and trails essential to developing a viable low-stress network.

Part Three: Framework Strategy

The WalkBikeHike Framework Strategy presents the study findings and recommendations, including the potential countywide multimodal network, focus area concept plans, and implementation policies and strategies.

The Framework Strategy builds upon the community engagement and technical assessment tasks, and guides the development of the countywide multimodal network of potential improvements and policies to create a low-stress, all-ages, network for travelers of all ages and abilities.

The potential network of countywide multimodal improvements includes a combination of trails, shared use paths, and on-road facilities for walking, biking, and hiking.

The WalkBikeHike Framework Strategy includes three elements to guide implementation:

I. **Building the Countywide Network**

Somerset County currently has 347 miles of off-road trails, and 22 miles of on-road bike lanes.

The Framework Strategy includes more than 270 miles of potential new improvements, nearly doubling the existing mileage with new facilities of various types spread across Somerset County with a much greater diversity and expanse than currently exists.

More than 220 individual potential new improvements are included in the Framework Strategy.

II. **Focus Area Concept Plans**

Five locations were selected for detailed analysis of context and development of potential improvements and amenities:

- Five Generals Houses
- Duke Farms-Sourlands Preserve-Lawrence Hopewell Trail Interconnect
- Raritan River Greenway
- Watchung Ridge Greenway
- Delaware & Raritan Canal Towpath/East Coast Greenway

III. **Policy Framework**

This program of strategies and policy recommendations guides implementation of the countywide network and Complete Streets projects through collaboration, partnerships, and adherence to the New Jersey Complete Streets Design Guide and Design Book.



Table 1: Summary of Existing and Potential New Facilities

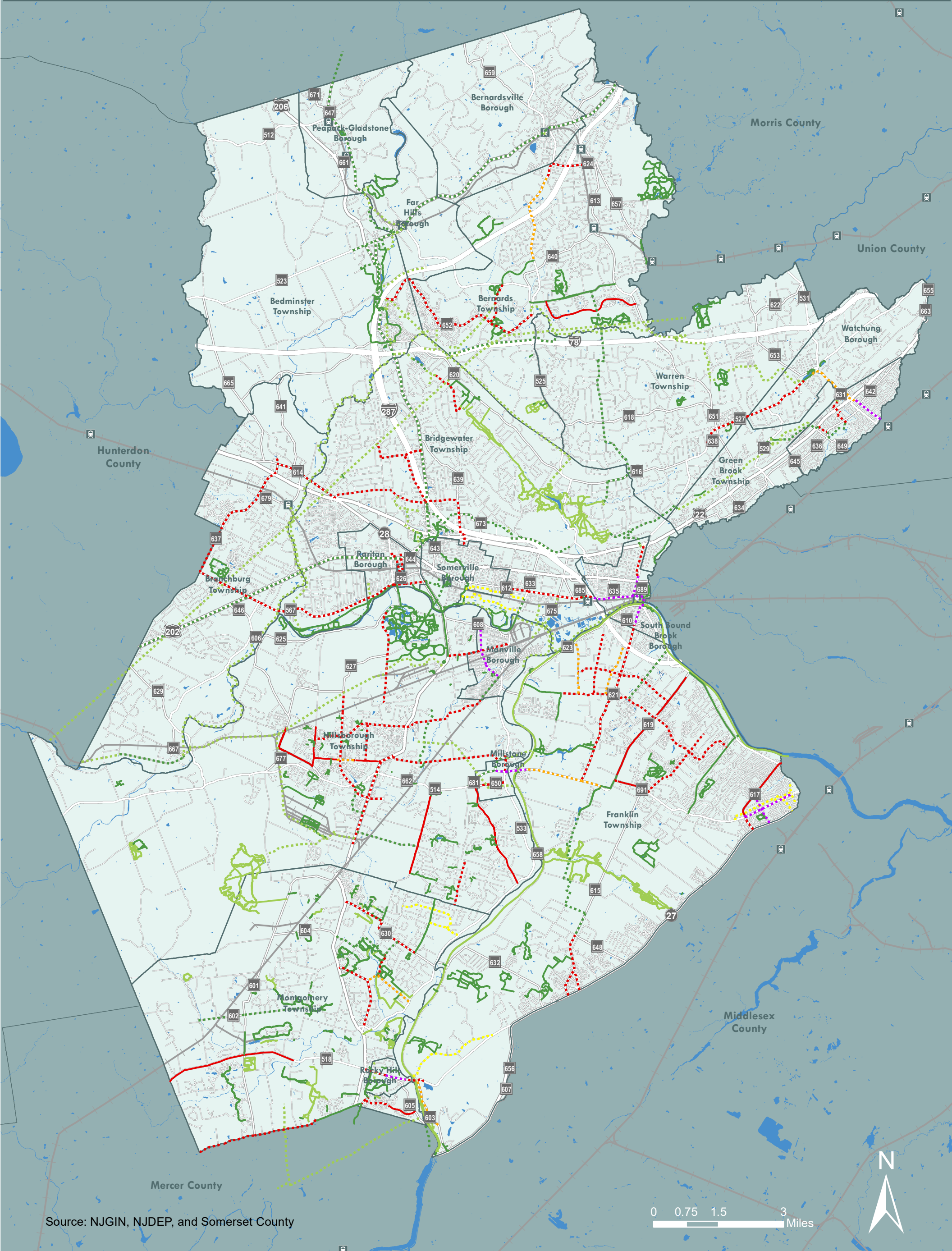
Facility Type	Existing (Miles)	Potential New (Miles)	Total (Miles)
Trail	140	99	239
Shared-Use Path	207	65	272
Bicycle Boulevard		10	10
Buffered Bicycle Lane		11	11
Bicycle Lane	22	78	100
Shared Lane Markings		8	8
Total	369	271	640

WALKBIKEHIKE - VISION STATEMENT

Somerset County supports cycling and walking as essential forms of transportation and recreation for residents, workers and visitors alike. Implementation of the countywide *WalkBikeHike* network over time will enable people of all ages and abilities to comfortably travel to both local and regional destinations. Working toward this vision in partnership with other County and local initiatives will result in a more livable, vibrant, healthy and sustainable region where people are inspired to walk and bicycle for fun, recreation, and daily transportation needs.



Figure 1: Existing and Potential New Network



Source: NJGIN, NJDEP, and Somerset County

0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles



Existing Network

- Trail
- - - Shared Use Path
- Bike Lane
- Railroad
- R Rail Station

Potential New Network

- - - Trail
- · - · - Shared Use Path
- · - · - Bike Boulevard
- · - · - Buffered Bike Lane
- · - · - Bike Lane
- · - · - Shared Lane Markings



What Comes Next?

Together, the WalkBikeHike Framework Strategy and Design Book have the potential to transform how Somerset County, its municipal partners, developers, institutions, and private land owners plan, develop, design, and construct their roads and the built environment, including parks, public facilities, and recreation areas. Each is encouraged to consult with the Framework Strategy and the companion Design Book in the development of new and enhanced multimodal facilities.

The Framework Strategy is just the first step of a process that will take shape over many years of planning, collaboration, permitting, and engineering.

Each responsible party that plans to build out the countywide network is encouraged to use the Framework Strategy and the companion Design Book which provides practical solutions to enhance bicycle and pedestrian mobility. Along with the Somerset County Preservation Plan, when completed, these planning documents should be consulted during all phases of transportation infrastructure delivery and maintenance from project and policy proposals, to funding, design and construction, and throughout operation and lifecycle maintenance.

Some candidate improvements have the potential to be implemented quickly and inexpensively, while others will be much more complex, time consuming, and costly.

The countywide multimodal mobility network will emerge one project at a time as individual segments and improvement are designed and constructed, blending local and regional perspectives, and seeking to connect and sustain the County's vibrant and diverse communities.

The proposed countywide network is comprised of more than 220 candidate walk, bike, and hike improvements, totaling almost 275 miles of new facilities across Somerset County.

Somerset County and its municipal partners should conduct a periodic review of the WalkBikeHike Framework Strategy to account for and adapt to changes in local conditions, needs, opportunities, and priorities.



