



Lehigh Valley Transportation Study

MICHAEL REBERT
Chair, Coordinating Committee

RAYMOND C. GREEN
Chair, Technical Committee

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Secretary,
Coordinating Committee +
Technical Committee

Starting The Walk/Roll Movement

Motorists looked on with bemusement as dozens of sign-carrying residents danced in the intersection at Broad and New Streets in Bethlehem. Normally, those kind of actions during rush hour at one of the region's high crash intersections would bring an arrest or at least a ticket.

But dancing among the group was Lehigh County Executive Phillips Armstrong, PennDOT Press Officer Ron Young and half the Bethlehem Health Bureau. No, this episode of controlled chaos got exactly the reaction that was intended.

It was designed to ignite the Walk/RollLV movement.

"As you may have noticed, we're trying to create a movement," said Stephen Repasch, Chairman of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. "A movement that takes a transportation system that was designed primarily for cars, and enhances it to be more for walkers, bikers and rollers – everyone, whether they drive or not. To do that, we need to identify the obstacles in our trail, sidewalk, road and public transit system, and figure out a way to remove them, so we can all get around more easily and more effectively, without what you're seeing behind us."

Hundreds of people flocked to downtown Bethlehem June 12 for the Walk/RollLV event that included walking and riding tours through the city, and of course flash mob dancing in the intersection, to raise awareness to pedestrian and bicycle issues. The event, the collaboration of more than 50 partners from across the region, was billed as a sort-off kick-off for the Walk/Roll master plan being drafted by the LVPC and consultants Toole Design Group.

Walk/RollLV, scheduled to be released by LVPC later this year, is to be a blueprint for filling the gaps in the roads, trail and transit system to provide a seamless network connecting every community in the region. The Walk/RollLV plan will look to change habits with suggestions that include dedicated bike lanes, pedestrian safety improvements and ways to connect the region's disjointed trail network. It's a change that will take years, but one that in the end affects more than just the kind of traffic flow the flash mobs halted.

Many of partners for the plan showed for the event by bike, bus, shoe leather, and in some cases wheel chairs.

"They say if you build it, they will come," said Greg Bott, Director of Development at the Center for the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living. "But if you make it accessible, then everyone can come."

Julie Corredato didn't have to come far from her Garrison Street to the event, and she didn't have to think hard about why she wanted to be there.

“My kids grew up walking and biking in this neighborhood, and it was no easy task keeping them safe,” she said. “I came close to getting hit while I was jogging through this intersection earlier this week. Some people act like you’re not there.”

Scott Slingerland, Executive Director of the Coalition for Alternative Transportation, took a moment to remember why all this is literally a matter of life and death.

“For a moment, let’s offer respects for all the people we lose to transportation crashes in the Lehigh Valley,” Slingerland said, as some motorists made illegal right-on-red turns around the crowds that gathered. “Per year over the past five years, we’ve been averaging three people seriously injured or killed while bicycling, 29 people seriously injured or killed while walking, and 142 people seriously injured or killed while inside motor vehicles. So, obviously we have work to do – and to a large extent, that work is to bring humanity back to transportation.”

Community Bike Works lead youth apprentice Eric Carpio said that this is an issue whose affects have no age limits.

“To me, a bike is freedom,” said the 15-year-old Allentown resident. “On my bike, I can ride to school, to my job at Community Bike Works, or anywhere else in the Lehigh Valley I want to go. You can ride a bike, even if you’re too young to drive, and it’s a lot less expensive than driving a car. Plus, it helps the environment.”

By the end of the two-hour event, hundreds of “Walk It. Roll It. Bike It. Bus It.” tee-shirts and hats walked away on the backs and heads of supporters, dozens who’d never been on a LANta bus took a tour inside, and dozens more danced in one of the Lehigh Valley’s busiest intersections, while people from across the region walked and rode through the streets of Bethlehem.

Organizers deemed it a success – but only the start.

“We hope this is the first of many similar events around the Lehigh Valley,” said LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley. “The kind of change we’re talking about isn’t going to happen overnight, but this is a great start.”

You can find more about the Walk/RollLV effort at <https://www.lvpc.org/walkrolllv.html>