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Oakcrest grad organizes event for Hamilton Green Team

By CHARLIE PRITCHARD For The Current
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HAMILTON TOWNSHIP — A group of fifteen people, including members of the Sustainable Township of Hamilton Green Team, residents, and officials from Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association, took part in a Bike/Pedestrian Audit in Mays Landing on Saturday, May 15.

The event was organized by twenty-year-old Lena Nguyen, the newest member of the Green Team. The 2018 Oakcrest High School graduate is currently majoring in Civil Engineering at the University of Virginia. “I hope to become a transportation engineer or community planner when I graduate,” she said.

“I was scheduled to do an internship with Maser Engineering last summer, but it was cancelled due to the pandemic. I was always involved with environmental clubs in my schools so when I found out about the Green Team I decided to join. I learned from the team’s co-chair Susan Lazarchick that a similar audit was planned a few years ago but it didn’t come to fruition. It’s important because it earns points for the Sustainable New Jersey Program. We are currently bronze-certified and need to renew in a few years, so this will help with re-certification.”

“I’m so pleased that we have Lena Nguyen working on this project and that we also have the assistance of Program Director Patrick Farley from Cross County Connection, and the support of LuAnne McCardell, the township’s Clean Communities Coordinator,” Lazarchick said. “I’m extremely happy about the turnout for the event. While this action was primarily a public exercise to better understand bicycle and

pedestrian issues, I'm hopeful that it will help to be a positive action to help move our wonderful municipality in a positive direction to become even more sustainable for its future."

The tour began in Gaskill Park and addressed pedestrian and bicycle safety issues along Main Street from Farragut Avenue to Hanthorn Street and Route 50 from Main Street to Third Avenue. The intersection of Main Street and Route 50 drew particular attention. "I am fearful of crossing this intersection due to the short amount of time to get across," Lazarchick said.

Resident Helen Hudson agreed. "There is not enough time for me to cross when I am with my grandchild," she said.

Many felt that No Left Turn signs should be installed at the intersection. "While that would make it safer, it would back up traffic for miles," Hamilton Township Deputy Mayor Carl Pitale said.

Another issue the group addressed was the inadequacy of handicapped ramps on the corners. "Most of these are non-ADA compliant," Farley said. "They should all have the mats with truncated domes."

"However, this can be very expensive, and the ADA is often referred to as "The Great Unfunded Mandate"."

Other issues discussed included adding bike lanes on Route 50, sidewalk conditions and the lack of driver concern about pedestrians in the crosswalks.

"You have a lot of positives in your downtown," Farley said. "The sidewalks are in great shape, there are lots of street trees, many benches and beautiful parks."

Lena is now tasked with writing a report about the findings of the audit.

"I'm currently interning for CHPlanning, a transportation and environmental planning firm based in Philly, where I'm analyzing data from a public survey," she said. "For this audit, I had a survey sent out earlier this year to residents to choose the location of the

audit, and I'll be directly applying what I've learned to analyze my survey. And in my Transportation Infrastructure Design class, I learned about road design and bike/pedestrian infrastructure, which I'll use to come up with recommendations in the report.”

“This summer, I'll be interning with a transportation engineering firm in DC and hope to apply what I've learned from this project to my work there.”

Contact Jacklyn McQuarrie:

609-272-7415

jmcquarrie@pressofac.com
