

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

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Elise Bremer-Nei, AICP/PP
Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
New Jersey Department of Transportation

For over 18 years, Elise Bremer-Nei has worked on bicycle and pedestrian mobility projects at the [New Jersey Department of Transportation](#) (NJDOT). As manager of bicycle and pedestrian programs at NJDOT, Elise approaches her responsibilities with the understanding that walking and bicycling are about more than transportation. She explained, “Bike and pedestrian improvements are about health, safety and quality of life; these projects touch on the most important elements of our lives, making this work so important.” Elise is known for her collaborative approach. She has forged strong partnerships with leaders from many areas including the health, wellness, equity, sustainability and environment sectors, who have a shared interest in making walking and bicycling safer, easier and more appealing.

Elise has managed, developed or had a hand in most of the significant plans that make New Jersey a leader in bicycle and pedestrian mobility including the: [New Jersey Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan](#), New Jersey Pedestrian Safety Action Plan & Toolbox, [New Jersey Safe Routes to School Program Strategic Plan](#), [New Jersey Bicycle Map](#) and over 100 technical assistance planning projects to help municipalities improve their walking and bicycling environments.



Elise’s expertise and thoughtful participation is valued across New Jersey. As NJDOT’s representative to the [New Jersey Trails Council](#), Elise contributes to a cooperative effort between NJDOT, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and other agencies to identify opportunities for the development of multi-use trails. She has participated on the NJDOT Safety Management Task Force and the New Jersey Department of Health’s Shaping NJ/Obesity Prevention Task Force. Elise has been a member of the Chesterfield Township Environmental Commission and the Executive Committee of the American Planning Association’s New Jersey Chapter. In 2007, Elise received the Dave Powell Excellence Award from the Federal Highway Administration New Jersey Division and in 2014, she was recognized with a Transportation Leadership Award from the Newark Regional Business Partnership for her work on the New Jersey Safe Routes to School Program. In addition, several technical assistance projects have won awards from the American Planning Association-NJ Chapter and New Jersey Smart Growth.



Sustainable Jersey Walking and Biking Actions

Elise is a member of the [Sustainable Jersey Land Use and Transportation Task Force](#). Through her position at NJDOT, she supports the development of Sustainable Jersey actions and continues to provide free technical assistance to communities throughout New Jersey to assist with completing actions. Elise said, “When I was introduced to the Sustainable Jersey program, I was amazed with how involved the certification program is and even more impressed by the municipal and school participation rate.” She added, “There are a lot of dedicated people that develop the Sustainable Jersey actions and review the certification submissions. We coordinate NJDOT initiatives, like Complete Streets, through the Sustainable Jersey actions. This helps to streamline how communities learn about and respond to program opportunities.”

Elise supports the development of actions through her own efforts and guidance from her NJDOT staff as well as her colleagues at the [Voorhees Transportation Center \(VTC\)](#) at Rutgers University, the Transportation Management Associations across New Jersey and on-call consultants at planning and engineering firms. They provide direct technical assistance. VTC staff help coordinate the Sustainable Jersey Land Use and Transportation Task Force, write and review actions related to walking and bicycling including: [Safe Routes to School](#), [Adopt a Complete Streets Policy](#), [Institute Complete Streets](#), [Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Audit](#) and [Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Plan](#).



Sustainable Jersey for Schools Walking and Biking Actions

In 2014, the partnership between Sustainable Jersey and NJDOT was strengthened with the launch of the Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification program. Elise and VTC staff have been active members of the [Sustainable Jersey for Schools Health and Wellness Task Force](#) and helped guide the creation of the actions that relate to Safe Routes to School including: [Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety and Promotion Initiatives](#), [School Travel Plan for Walking and Bicycling](#) and [Safe Routes to School District Policy](#). Elise was instrumental in securing the funds that allow the New Jersey Safe Routes to School Resource Center staff at VTC to serve on the Health and Wellness Task Force and provide direct technical assistance.



Sustainable Jersey and New Jersey Safe Routes to School

Recognizing the longstanding commitment to mutual support between the New Jersey Safe Routes to School program and Sustainable Jersey, Elise spearheaded the development of the [New Jersey Safe Routes to School Recognition Program](#). This program was developed to acknowledge the accomplishments of schools and municipalities implementing Safe Routes to School programs throughout New Jersey. Like Sustainable Jersey, this recognition program has separate requirements for schools and for municipalities, and has levels of achievement signifying progress towards sustainable Safe Routes to School programs.



To foster mutual support and to encourage communities to participate in both New Jersey Safe Routes to School and Sustainable Jersey, recognition in the New Jersey Safe Routes to School Recognition program is designed to help municipalities and schools earn points toward Sustainable Jersey and Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification; you can review these options at the bottom of this page: <http://www.saferoutesnj.org/levels/>.

In the introduction to the New Jersey Safe Routes to School Program Strategic Plan, Elise wrote, “Whether it is because traveling to school under their own power is good for our kids’ hearts and lungs, because it helps them arrive at class ready to learn with improved concentration, because it reduces traffic congestion and air pollution around our schools, because it lets parents share time with their children and their friends, because it gives us time to teach valuable safety and life lessons along the way – the positive outcomes of successful Safe Routes to School programs will be with us for a long time.”

Sustainable Jersey and the Transportation Management Associations

Through a partnership between NJDOT, the [North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority](#) and all eight Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) in New Jersey, the TMA staff provide technical assistance to municipalities, school districts and schools looking to achieve Sustainable Jersey points. Often the NJDOT-funded [Safe Routes to School Regional Coordinators](#) in each TMA district look for opportunities to include Sustainable Jersey points in their work, furthering the goals of the NJDOT Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs.

Education and Experience

Elise has a B.A. in Geography from Douglass College at Rutgers University where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She did graduate study in urban geography at the University of South Carolina and was a research assistant at the University of South Carolina and NJDOT before accepting a position as an assistant planner for the Monmouth County Office of Community Development where she managed a \$3.5 million Community Development Block Grant Program. She then spent two years working for a private consulting company before taking a position at NJDOT.

What You May Not Know About Elise

Elise was born in Detroit, Michigan and grew up in Akron, Ohio. She is the oldest of five children. After high school, she travelled east to attend Boston University and Rutgers University. Elise and her husband Michael now live in Chesterfield, New Jersey. Michael works for Burlington County as a traffic engineer, which makes for some lively conversations at home. They have a fourteen-year-old daughter named Emma who likes to play soccer and ski. For their vacations, they have been visiting the National Parks including Acadia (Maine), Denali (Alaska), Yellowstone (Wyoming) and Glacier (Montana). They made a special trip to see the glaciers in Alaska before they disappear due to global warming. Elise said, “Making improvements in transportation and biking and walking options has an impact on air quality and reducing the impact of climate change. I hope my work will contribute to a healthy planet for my daughter and the next generation of children. We each need to do our own part now.”

