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POET

Placemaking, Outreach, and Engagement Team



About Us

The Placemaking, Outreach, and Engagement Team at Rutgers-Bloustein (POET) is a multi-disciplinary group with expertise in planning, public policy, marketing, communication, and public engagement techniques. POET offers a full range of outreach and engagement services, from concept and advisory to full implementation of outreach and engagement events.



Our passion lies in making sure every voice counts and every story shapes the future. It's not just outreach; it's connection with purpose.

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Our Services

Public Engagement

- Public engagement research and practice
- Community outreach and activation
- Advisory group recruitment and management
- Expert facilitation and stakeholder engagement





Marketing and Communications

- Marketing and recruitment strategy
- Public relations, earned media, and social media
- Digital communications and content development
- Multimedia production, including video, podcasts, and web content

Placemaking

- Strategies for vibrant, accessible, and community-centered spaces
- Public space design and revitalization
- Urban planning and local economic development expertise
- Community-informed planning and design



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POET Awards

Outstanding Community Engagement Award,
American Planning Association for the Springwood Avenue Heritage Walk Virtual Tour Project, 2024

Excellence Award for Outstanding Community Engagement,
American Planning Association, 2021

Silver Award for Innovative Outreach,
American Planning Association, 2021

John and Jane Q Public Award for Innovative Outreach,
Transportation Research Board, 2017



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Client Feedback

"POET's staff is creative and enthusiastic about innovative public outreach. We've worked with them for many years on award-winning work to engage targeted audiences in our transportation planning programs and projects." -Ted Ritter, NJTPA External Affairs Manager

"Working with the POET team at Rutgers has been a consistently positive and productive experience. Over the past two and a half years, they have brought a high level of professionalism, organization, and creativity to every phase of our Community Planning Workshop program." -David Dritz, NYMTC

"Working with the POET team offered a new and exhilarating experience. While the committee at times experienced uncertainty about the direction of the project, the POET team kept us involved and updated through regular communication and meetings. They were phenomenal in their ability to virtually leverage the power of strengthening connections between people and places along the Springwood Avenue corridor, creating a StoryMap that showcases the social, physical, and economic fabric of the Asbury Park Westside community from 1930–1970."- Diane Shelton, Interfaith Neighbors

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Project Highlights

Vibrant Places Program – North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

POET partners with the NJTPA to support municipalities, counties, and community organizations in northern and central New Jersey through technical assistance, information resources, and workshops. Through creative placemaking technical assistance, the team provides recommendations and strategies to advance community-driven transportation and placemaking goals across the region. Example past projects have resulted in community vision plans, visitor guides, walking tours, engagement plans, and public art plans.









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Project Highlights

Innovations in Public Engagement – North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

POET researches and executes creative approaches to public outreach and engagement to encourage greater public participation in the NJTPA's planning projects. Through this project, POET continuously investigates best practices and new avenues for reaching people in the NJTPA region. From broad, region-wide initiatives to targeted efforts in specific communities, POET has helped bring thousands of people to the table, including kids and teens, older adults, ESL communities, LGBTQ+ communities, and more.







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Project Highlights

Community Planning Workshop Program – New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC)

POET designs, develops, and conducts community planning workshops across the NYMTC region. The team provides technical planning assistance to local municipalities and produces recommendations for improvements, while also facilitating thoughtful public outreach strategies and meaningful discussions among local officials, residents, and stakeholders on topics related to NYMTC's Regional Transportation Plan, Moving Forward. The workshops help communities connect regional transportation priorities with local needs and opportunities.





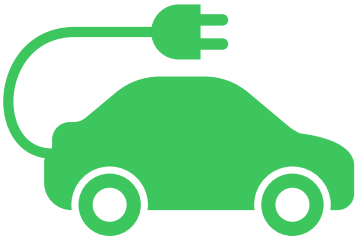




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Project Highlights

The Zero Emission Incentive Program (NJ ZIP) – New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)



POET has partnered with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) to provide comprehensive technical assistance related to zero-emission vehicle conversion. The goal of NJ ZIP is to incentivize New Jersey businesses and institutions to adopt zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (ZE MHDVs), especially those operating in overburdened communities. The team develops and deliverstools, a live "help desk," factsheets, webinars, and more to help businesses and institutions understand available programs and navigate the transition to zero-emission vehicles.



Project Highlights







Improving Virtual Public Involvement in Transportation Agencies – National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) 08-142

POET worked to research and develop a manual for state departments of transportation (DOTs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), rural planning organizations (RPOs), and other transportation agencies that can benefit from the development of structured, research-based guidance on how to choose and employ virtual public involvement (VPI) tools effectively, efficiently, and perhaps most importantly, equitably. The research team conducted a blend of desktop research and quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, interviews, user experience testing, and focus groups, to identify best practices for VPI across varied planning and project development contexts.

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Project Highlights







Practices for Online Public Involvement - National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Synthesis Topic 49-11

POET's 2019 research and report provided the current state of practice in online public involvement tools used by State Departments of Transportation and identified additional areas for research. Based on information gathered from the literature review, online survey, and follow-up interviews with State DOTs, the report summarized (1) the use and the types of online tools, (2) guidelines and procedures for using those tools, (3) challenges, benefits, organizational staffing needed to implement online public involvement, (4) interpretation and use of feedback resulting from online tools, and (5) reasons for not using online public involvement if applicable.

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Project Highlights

Customer Satisfaction Research - New Jersey Transit

The POET team worked with NJ TRANSIT to examine best practices for transit agencies conducting customer satisfaction surveys. The research combined extensive peer benchmarking with transit agencies across the United States, interviews with subject matter experts, and original user testing of the NJ TRANSIT Customer Satisfaction Survey. The resulting findings and recommendations provide practical insights for improving survey design, administration, and the overall customer experience and are applicable to transit agencies conducting customer satisfaction surveys and related research.



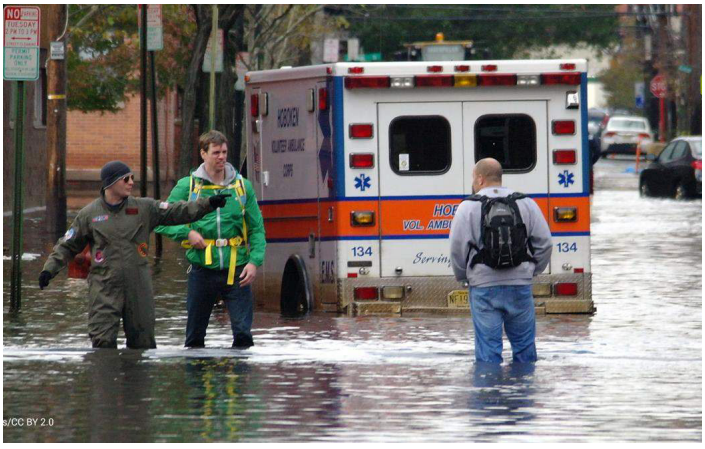


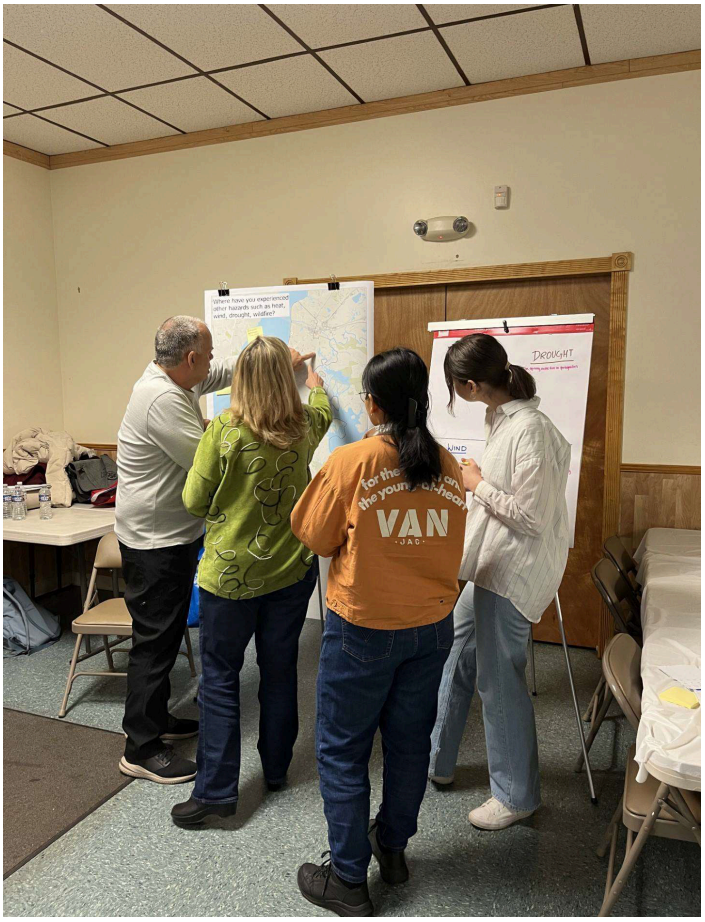
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Project Highlights

Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessments – New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Bloustein's Environmental Analysis & Communications Group

With support from NJDEP's Resilient NJ Municipal Assistance Program, POET worked with several NJ municipalities to develop locally specific Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessments (CCRHVAs). The team assisted local governments in identifying and assessing climate hazards, vulnerable infrastructure, key community assets, and at-risk populations. These reports laid the groundwork for strategies to reduce risk and build long-term resilience and contribute to the development of statewide CCRHVA guidance by providing examples and documenting the process, challenges, and emerging best practices.

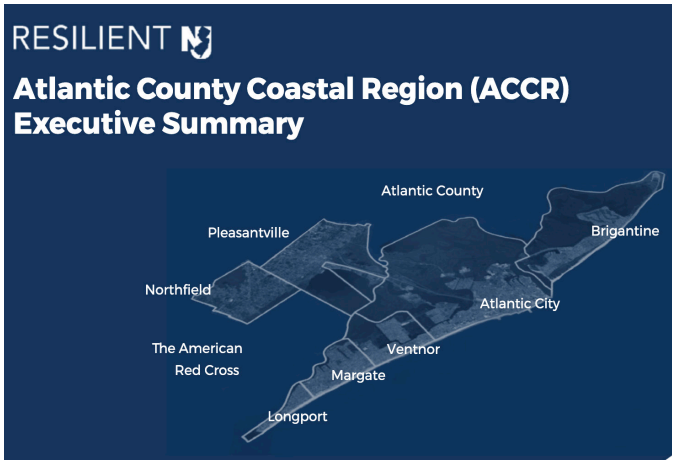






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Project Highlights







Atlantic County Coastal Region Resilience and Adaptation Action Plan Outreach and Engagement – New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)

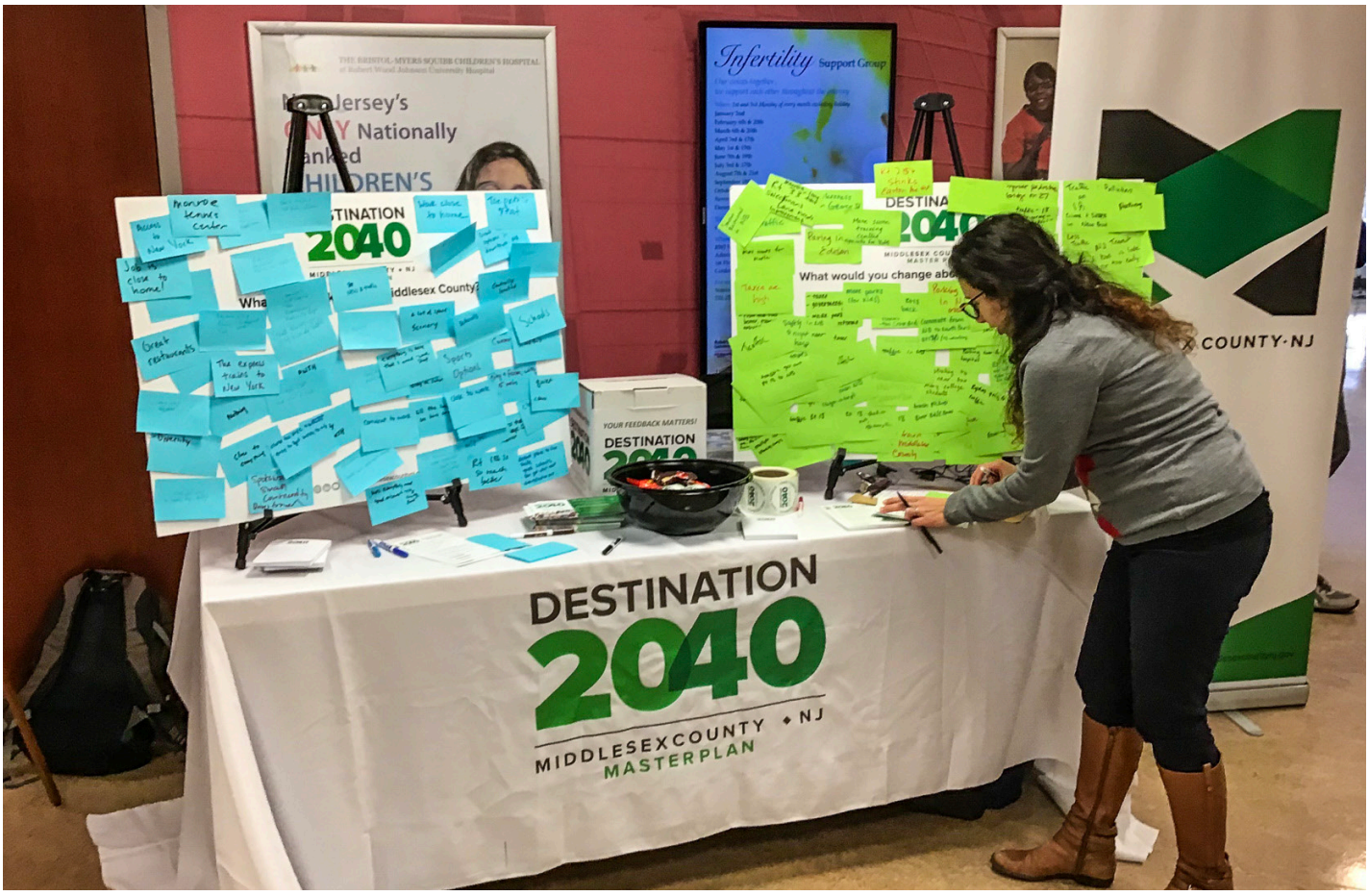
POET led engagement with vulnerable and historically underrepresented populations for NJDEP's Resilient NJ Atlantic County Coastal Region Resilience and Adaptation Action Plan. The work included planning and facilitating multiple rounds of virtual "Community Conversations" in partnership with nonprofit and community-based organizations to better understand participants' needs, priorities, and visions for the region, and later to present resiliency scenarios and gather feedback on potential actions and strategies. The team also provided facilitation and translation support for open houses and virtual public workshops, helping broaden participation in the regional resiliency planning process.

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Project Highlights

Middlesex County's Destination 2040 Strategic Plan Public and Stakeholder Engagement– Middlesex County NJ Government

POET provided the government of Middlesex County, New Jersey, with support for overall public involvement and stakeholder engagement for the Destination 2040 Strategic Plan. POET developed a public involvement plan that included a variety of engagement strategies, such as face-to-face outreach, meeting-in-a-box, and online engagement. Through this partnership, Middlesex County committed to conducting extensive outreach to gather feedback from those who live and work in the county to inform the Strategic Plan's priorities. POET also provided technical assistance and support by training county staff and facilitating and supporting stakeholder meetings.



Project Highlights

Together North Jersey Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement– North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

POET coordinated both stakeholder and public engagement for the Together North Jersey Regional Plan (2015), supporting a large-scale regional planning process designed to incorporate perspectives from communities and stakeholders across North Jersey. POET's work included managing Steering, Executive, and Standing Committees comprising approximately 300 members; planning and facilitating 15 regional workshops; coordinating 20 pop-up kiosk events; supporting online engagement through NJ.com; organizing three major conferences; and facilitating multiple working group meetings. Together, these activities created numerous opportunities for stakeholders and members of the public to help shape the regional plan.

