On March 8, 2016, America Walks offered a webinar titled "Exploring Tactical Urbanism." America Walks looked at how tactical urbanism is helping to shape the built environment. Walkable communities are safe, healthy and vibrant communities. America Walks was excited to offer a webinar that explores how the idea of tactical urbanism is instrumental in creating communities that promote enjoyable and accessible physical activity. Participants learned from two leading experts in tactical urbanism this idea and how it is informing their work in local communities.

America Walks received many questions and comments from attendees. Tony Garcia and Eric Katz of Street Plans Collaborative offered their expertise to help continue the conversation and answer the questions below.

**What are effective methods for demonstrating bump-outs, or curb extensions? With regard to methods, I'd be curious to know about the best type of material(s) to use, and what evaluation strategies could be implemented.**

This is a great question. In our experience paint, cones, and plastic sticks are all effective short term and inexpensive ways to create curb extensions. Cones are the most temporary measures, and we have had success simply bolting these to the ground. We are currently doing a research project, funded by the Knight Foundation, that looks at specific brands and a wider range of materials because this question comes up so often. Check Tacticalurbanismguide.com for more info. We should have a draft of the materials guide up by the end of the summer.

As far as evaluation, it is important to get data BEFORE the intervention. Choose times that are typical for traffic and weather (ie. not following a blizzard, or in the summer or when there is no school.) Get yourself a speed gun, these are relatively inexpensive. Measure both motorist speed before and after, as well as volume of pedestrians. Crossing times would be another important metric to observe.

**How much do these have to be in compliance with MUTCD requirements for short term traffic control?**

This all depends on how sanctioned the project is, but typically MUTCD is not a consideration for the short term interventions. We worry less about MUTCD compliance and more about how the street functions for bicyclists and pedestrians. Most likely, if you are working within a municipal structure you will need political support to bypass MUTCD, or a city public works staff/city engineer willing to approve despite lack of compliance with MUTCD. In our upcoming materials guide, we place a heavy emphasis on national standards like MUTCD and traffic engineering to help municipal staff break through this challenge.

**What do we do about the suburbs?**
The suburbs are a big challenge. Unlike existing compact, walkable areas, the suburbs don’t have the building frontage or land use that lend themselves to walking and biking. Step one in a suburban context is addressing the huge scale of the problem of suburbia. If the ultimate goal is to help suburban locations become more compact, walkable and urban, then your biggest opportunity will be to look at parking lots in strip malls. Start to divide up the parking lot into smaller blocks (imagine the end result of 100 years of development in this mall and work backwards). Start at the edge. There are many locations around the country where you find food truck rallies, or micro retail uses in mall parking lots, typically closer to the street. These are great seeds of urbanism because they don’t require any fixed investment, and can start to activate otherwise dead public spaces.

Another big opportunity for tactical urbanism in the suburbs is making dedicated bus lanes on overbuilt arterials. We all have six lane arterials in our cities, and many of these have regular bus service. What keeps this service from being a true alternative to the car is the frequency of service (or headways) and the speed of the service. Repurposing a lane in either direction for dedicated, high frequency transit service would be a great tactical move to get better transit in the short term, while land uses and building fronts are redeveloped (or while better transit service is in the works).

How can tactical urbanism be integrated with messages of empowerment about how community members can have an impact on their neighborhoods?

TU is all about how citizens can be involved in guiding the development of their communities. As we described in the webinar, there are two aspects to this idea that involve citizens. One has to do with folks going out and building better infrastructure (making changes to streets, planting trees, improving building fronts) sometimes with permission, but often times without. The other side of the coin is all about programming, and engaging folks in events after a tactical intervention has been made. Rather than sit in a public meeting with no real feedback or interaction, having events that directly engage the infrastructure is a better way to empower folks to take ownership of their cities and help decide what works and doesn’t work.

Does the public express safety concerns with having bike trails? What types of funding opportunities were explored? Is there statistics on the number of people utilizing these bike trails or reducing their time driving on roads?

We’ve heard it all with regard to bike trails and infrastructure. “It’s not safe to ride your bike.” “A trail will increase crime in my area.” Etc. Tactical urbanism is an answer to these concerns because it doesn’t involve hypotheticals. It disarms strawman arguments, and gets to real world problems and solutions.

As far as using trails and reducing time driving – on a project by project basis no such data exists that I am aware of. On a national scale we know that more and more of this infrastructure is built every day, and folks are driving less. Cities that make mode share goals and shift funding away from roads and toward bike/ped/transit infrastructure see measureable shifts in the way that people move around.
That being said, I never propose trail or bike projects as a way to reduce traffic or congestion. These are a matter of fact of living in cities and no amount of trail building will influence them. We are more interested in giving people more options to drive, rather than trying to get them out of their cars. We want to move toward a car-optional future!

**How is all of this work funded?**

We were fortunate to have some initial funding from Rails to Trails (thanks to Ken Bryan from the Florida office!) and other minor grants from the Miami Foundation, but much of it is volunteer driven!

**How did you get the property owner to accept less revenue from the land (compared to building a lot of houses)?**

They didn’t have a choice. Their original plan was rejected by the community. Our compromise plan allowed them to develop some areas, which was a delicate balancing act.

**What software application did you use for the interactive map you used online and in the meeting?**

The website is a Wordpress website with a plugin called wpgoogle maps.

**How do you plan to fund the building and maintenance of the trail?**

Funds to build the trail will come from several sources. The State of Florida Department of Transportation, Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, just to name a few. Maintenance will most likely come from a special taxing district.

**When you started to initiate your own participation process, how did you build your support and get the word out about your cause? Did you have community organizers? Partnerships with existing groups? Did this happen through the website?**

Once you have a website and facebook page support builds organically. We have also been diligent in giving presentation to local city commissions, talking to the press, going to any community event that we could find, and ultimately going door to door. One of our most dedicated volunteers went door to door on his bicycle and reached out to around 4,000 different houses (several times) during the course of the project.

**How did you get the property owner to not be worried about liability of people using the trail before it is ready?**

We have our own liability policy for each of the special events. The reason the trail is not yet open to the public is because of the overall liability challenge. Once the trust is established we will have liability protection from the municipal government and can open the trail at that point.
Do you have evidence that "a light touch on buildings like bathrooms and shelters" is appropriate? What about older/younger/pregnant/disabled/"restroom challenged" people whose use of the trail may depend on the availability of toilets, benches and the like?

We will certainly have benches and other typical park infrastructure, but other facilities like large picnic shelters and bathrooms will be located in places where they don't impact the adjacent neighbors (spacing will be about 1.5 miles apart). One of our big challenges was striking a balance between making a great trail, and addressing the concerns of neighbors. There are places where we can accommodate bathrooms and other park infrastructure, but for long stretches the trail will be natural areas with benches, exercise equipment, and other 'light touch' details.

Who will own the land the trail is on and who will pay for building the trail?
The land will be owned by a conservancy trust which will be responsible for securing funding for the building the trail and maintaining it.