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Fair Haven mayor recognized for bicycle, pedestrian advocacy



Cyndi Steiner, executive director of NJ Bike & Walk Coalition, left, along with Brian Stolar, chair of the Board of Directors for NJ Bike & Walk Coalition, right, award Fair Haven Mayor Benjamin Lucarelli, center, with an award for bicycle and pedestrian advocacy. PHOTO COURTESY OF NJ BIKE & WALK COALITION

New Jersey's statewide bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organization has designated Fair Haven Mayor Benjamin Lucarelli as one of the 2016 recipients of its Advocate of the Year Award. Selected by the Board of Directors of the NJ Bike & Walk Coalition each year, individuals and organizations are given the award in recognition of their excellence in the bicycle and pedestrian advocacy movement.

"This year's recipients truly distinguished themselves through their highly effective advocacy efforts," said Brian Stolar, chair of the NJ Bike & Walk Coalition Board of Directors. "Mayor Lucarelli and BikeOCNJ were instrumental in seeing Complete Streets realized not only as a policy and planning principle, but also as a fully implemented practice that is making their communities safer and more vibrant."

Lucarelli and Bike OCNJ, represented by co-chairs Thomas Heist and Drew Fasy, were presented with their awards at the Bike & Walk Summit at Princeton University on Feb. 27.

Lucarelli has been an avid supporter of Complete Streets in Monmouth County since his election as mayor of Fair Haven in 2012. He was the force behind Monmouth County reversing its April 2015 resolution to place all costs onto the municipalities for Complete Streets implementation on county roads. Lucarelli leveraged the resources of the NJ Bike & Walk Coalition in outreach efforts to local residents, visitors, bike shops and clubs and other civic groups interested in improving road safety in the county. This outreach generated hundreds of notes to the Monmouth County Freeholders demanding that the county fund bike lanes on its roads.

The mayor also worked tirelessly with local and state elected officials, with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and New Jersey DOT, and together with the outreach campaign, he was able to convince the freeholders to pass a revised resolution in July 2015 that created a first-of-its-kind cost share agreement between the municipalities and the county. That resolution made it easier for town officials to add Complete Streets features to county roads traversing their towns.

“I called assemblymen and senators and worked with the county engineer to push for change,” Lucarelli said. “Certain people are afraid of change, but at the end of the day, when we’re generating an outpouring of support with hundreds of emails going out to the freeholders, it becomes clear that in our area, people want it and we’re ready for it.”

Lucarelli is one of only eight [New Jersey](#) mayors to participate in U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx’s “Mayors’ Challenge for Safer People and Safer Streets” initiative that began in March 2015 and challenges mayors to “raise the bar for bicyclist and pedestrian safety” in their communities.

In November 2015, four miles of bike lanes were implemented under the new arrangement, on [Ridge](#) and Rumson Roads in Red Bank, Little Silver, [Fair Haven](#) and Rumson, connecting with [Route 36](#) at the Shrewsbury River Bridge in [Sea Bright](#), where the N.J. DOT will be adding bike lanes in the spring. More bike lanes are planned that will eventually complete a bike lane network throughout eastern [Monmouth County](#).

[Fair Haven](#) is a town that has embraced bicycle friendly features for several decades, including closing a street each day so that children can walk and ride their bikes to school and a bicycle “Ride of Passage” from the third grade to the fourth grade led by the mayor. “This year’s recipients exemplify a role model for peers while inspiring teamwork among many and often disparate stakeholders,” said Cyndi Steiner, executive director of the NJ Bike & Walk Coalition. “The proof of their efforts is the victories they have achieved for biking and walking in their communities and counties, ultimately making [New Jersey](#) a safer, healthier and more livable state.”