

2

DEVELOPING PLAN 2035

This 2009 plan update continues the NJTPA's comprehensive approach to transportation planning. The extensive outreach and visioning process described below built on and broadened the scope of the NJTPA's previous long range plan adopted in 2005, recognizing the fundamental connections between transportation and the environment, economy, energy use, global climate and social equity.

In developing Plan 2035, the NJTPA looked to the public for guidance in developing a transportation planning vision for the 13-county region of northern and central New Jersey. Through a series of public workshops and forums as well as an online survey and other methods, the NJTPA gained valuable input from the public for the development of all aspects of the Plan 2035. The extensive outreach also helped shape the NJTPA's technical analysis of issues facing the region, including guiding the development of three future scenarios that underwent computer modeling.



The public helped guide development of Plan 2035 through visioning workshops held throughout the region. Visioning Workshop, Somerset County.

This chapter provides background on the development of the plan and summarizes the public outreach efforts. Further detail of the public outreach activities is provided in Appendix A.

Planning Factors, Goals & Principles

Plan 2035 was developed to fulfill federal requirements for long range transportation planning. It also was guided by goals and principles developed in the past as part of the NJTPA planning process. These are described below.

Federal Requirements

The NJTPA must follow certain federal regulations in developing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The federal government requires an RTP for every metropolitan area. Plan 2035 was developed in accordance with federal requirements for regional transportation planning.

A key requirement is that year-to-year investments of federal transportation funding be guided by a long-term plan and vision approved by elected officials and state representatives in each metropolitan region. This helps ensure that investments are the result of open debate about the desired shape of the future transportation system; take into account the needs of all of the region's residents rather just the interests of particular communities; and lead to lasting solutions. The long-range plan must be updated every four years to reflect changing conditions and priorities.

In particular, this plan reflects consideration of several “planning factors” that have long been fundamental aspects of the federal surface transportation law and accompanying regulations. They are:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency;
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life; and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planning growth and economic development patterns;
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the trans-

NJTPA Goals

- **Protect and improve the quality of natural ecosystems and the human environment.**
- **Provide affordable, accessible and dynamic transportation systems responsive to current and future customers.**
- **Retain and increase economic activity and competitiveness.**
- **Enhance system coordination, efficiency and intermodal connectivity.**
- **Maintain a safe and reliable transportation system in a state of good repair.**
- **Select transportation investments that support the coordination of land use with transportation systems.**

portation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;

- Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

NJTPA Goals

In addition, the NJTPA has its own long-standing goals that guided development of this plan. These goals, which are fully consistent with federal requirements, are listed in the box above.

NJTPA Regional Capital Investment Strategy

The NJTPA seeks to put its broad goals to work through a Regional Capital Investment Strategy. This strategy, which informs the project selection and policy direction of Plan 2035, was initially developed for NJTPA's 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, approved in September 2005. This RCIS has been carried forward into Plan 2035 (with minor modifications regarding environmental issues as noted in Chapter 7). It is presented at the back of this plan. The core principles of the investment strategy are listed in the box on the facing page.

Coupled with the required federal planning factors and the NJTPA's regional goals, the RCIS embodies a performance-based approach to planning. The RCIS itself utilized specific performance measures, seeking particular benefits in realizing sustainable growth, increasing overall accessibility including transit accessibility, making travel safer,

maintaining existing infrastructure, slowing the growth of roadway congestion, accommodating increased freight traffic, and realizing system efficiency.

These and other performance measures are continually applied in NJTPA planning, from the assessment of regional trends (discussed in Chapter 3) to the Strategy Evaluation study, Safety Priorities study and asset management systems (described in Chapter 4) to the Scenario planning analysis (presented in Chapter 5). Moving forward from Plan 2035, the NJTPA is looking to learn more about the actual impacts of implemented projects in a new Project Performance Results study. In these and other ways, the NJTPA will continue to use performance measures to analyze and communicate about planning issues and to support collaborative decision-making.



Workshops gave residents and local officials the opportunity to share their thoughts on land use and transit investment in the region. Visioning Workshop, Middlesex County.

Public Outreach for Plan 2035

In developing Plan 2035, the NJTPA worked with a wide range of citizens, elected officials, interest groups, government agencies and other stakeholders, as well as nationally recognized experts on key issues related to transportation planning. Outreach came in many forms, including symposiums, roundtables, hands-on local visioning workshops, a webpage and an online survey. In all,

nearly a thousand people voiced their opinions about how to improve transportation in the region and address the challenges of an uncertain future. As part of the efforts, the NJTPA used a hands-on computer exercise and other tools to achieve an extensive level of participation.

Providing direction throughout was the NJTPA Board of Trustees, which held three special sessions on development of the plan and discussed key planning initiatives at its regular meetings. Also providing assistance was a Technical Advisory Committee which met throughout the

Regional Capital Investment Strategy

- **Help the Region Grow Wisely:** Transportation investments should encourage economic growth while protecting the environment and minimizing sprawl in accordance with the state's Smart Growth Plan, Energy Master Plan, and Greenhouse Gas Plan.
- **Make Travel Safer:** Improving safety and security should be explicitly incorporated in the planning, design and implementation of all investments.
- **Fix it First:** The existing transportation system requires large expenditures for maintenance, preservation and repair, and its stewardship should be the region's highest priority.
- **Expand Public Transit:** Investment to improve the region's extensive transit network should be a high priority, including strategic expansions to serve new markets.
- **Improve Roads but Add Few:** Road investments should focus on making the existing system work better, and road expansion should be very limited.
- **Move Freight More Efficiently:** Investments should be made to improve the efficiency of goods movement because of its importance to the region's economy and quality of life.
- **Manage Incidents and Apply Transportation Technology:** Investments should be made to improve information flow, operational coordination and other technological advances that can make the transportation system work smarter and more efficiently.
- **Support Walking and Bicycling:** All transportation projects should promote walking and bicycling wherever possible.

course of Plan development, focusing on modeling issues. In the end, all these efforts kept one over-riding goal in mind—to develop a plan that reflected a sustainable, achievable vision for the NJTPA region. The key public outreach activities are highlighted below.

Symposiums and Roundtables

The NJTPA called on experts from the region and around the nation to offer insights and direction for the development of Plan 2035 on many of the broad trends and issues facing the region—energy prices, the economy, climate change, affordable housing, and others. They engaged in spirited discussions and interacted with interested citizens and officials at a kick-off symposium in June 2008, three roundtables held between June and December 2008 and a final symposium in June 2009.

Symposium on the Future of Transportation - On June 26, 2008, a group of six experts with backgrounds in economics, transportation policy, climate change and regional development gathered at the NJTPA to discuss the critical issues and global forces that will affect the region for the next 25 years. More than 100 people attended the session, which was led by Dean James W. Hughes of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. Key themes of the symposium included the following:

- The rapid pace of technological change will create future economic opportunities.

- The region and state will face increasingly stiff economic competition from other states and nations.
- A comprehensive, multimodal transportation system is critical for the state and region to remain competitive.
- Rising transportation costs will make distance matter more in locating agricultural, manufacturing and other operations.
- New sources of funding for transportation are needed, as traditional sources are becoming scarcer.
- There will be an increasing need to forge stronger links between transportation, land use, and environmental policies in order to address the scarcity of resources and climate change.

Freight Roundtable (October 7, 2008)—The first of three roundtables, this session featured two parts—a morning panel of experts and a joint afternoon session with the NJTPA’s Freight Initiatives Committee. The purpose was to learn more about the needs, challenges and opportunities connected to freight movement in the region. Former New Jersey Transportation Commissioner Jack Lettiere led the first session, which featured 16 other regionally recognized freight experts. At both sessions, participants noted the region’s strengths in terms of freight movement which include its geographic location in a densely populated, wealthy consumer market and its extensive road, rail, port and air cargo facilities. Among the challenges to the goods movement system discussed were:

- Extensive infrastructure maintenance needs especially on heavily traveled truck routes.
- Insufficient clearance under the Bayonne Bridge which hampers access by the largest ships to the port.
- Lack of truck rest areas, forcing truck drivers to park in unauthorized locations.
- Limited roadway access to the port.
- Rail lines that cannot accommodate heavier rail cars.
- Conflicts between passenger and freight needs on rail lines.



Symposiums at the NJTPA offices focused on key national and global issues affecting transportation in the region. Finance Symposium, June 2009, Newark.

Climate Change Roundtable (November 17, 2008)—The second roundtable examined how the NJTPA could address the challenge of climate change in Plan 2035

and in its ongoing activities. The workshop looked at strategies for mitigation (reducing transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change)—and adaptation (changing infrastructure to deal with the effects of climate change). George Eads, Vice President of Charles River Associates and a member of the Transportation Research Board’s Committee on Climate Change and Transportation, was the featured speaker. He was joined by 10 panelists representing the federal government, transportation agencies, tri-state area metropolitan planning organizations, universities and non-profit advocacy groups. Themes that emerged from this roundtable included:

- Many communities and businesses have started adopting policies to address climate change and more are poised to do so.
- Better estimates are needed of potential climate change impacts, especially on coastal communities.
- Promoting transit use and smart growth are important strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- The NJTPA and other agencies must begin identifying infrastructure that is most vulnerable to climate change impacts and creating plans to address this.

Socioeconomic, Housing and Transportation Roundtable (December 8, 2008)—The nexus of housing, jobs and access creates some of the most challenging issues that Plan 2035 must address. This roundtable considered how the NJTPA can best address issues of access to jobs, affordable housing and environmental justice. The featured speaker was Professor Myron Orfield, Executive Director of the Institute on Race & Poverty, University of Minnesota. He was joined by a panel of 12 experts including representatives of transit agencies, non-profit advocacy groups, state government and universities. Among the topics discussed:

- Tax-sharing arrangements and reduced dependence on property taxes to fund education.
- Attracting investment to centers and downtowns.
- Promoting workforce housing development throughout the region.



Roundtable discussions focused on how Plan 2035 could best address critical emerging issues. Transportation 2035 symposium, June 2008, Newark.

- Overcoming public resistance to density and transit-oriented development.

Symposium on Financing Our Transportation System: Options and Actions—On June 25, 2009, this symposium was held to discuss the great challenges facing the nation and state related to transportation financing. A panel of experts addressed the immediate funding crisis and options for meeting longer term investment needs. Moderated by Martin E. Robins, Senior Fellow at the Rutgers University Voorhees Transportation Center, the session's keynote speaker was Richard T. Hammer, New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Assistant Commissioner for Capital Program Management. They were joined by four experts on state and national transportation policy. Among the key insights from the symposium:

- New Jersey is confronting a backlog of expensive infrastructure needs, including several major high cost bridges and the need to reconstruct major highway roadbeds.
- Initiatives to address climate change at the national level, such as the proposed cap and trade system, may offer opportunities for funding transit and transportation investments beneficial to the environment.
- A major transportation policy goal is to move away from our dependence on petroleum. Transportation industry in the US is 97 percent dependent on petroleum.
- Public education and outreach has been shown in cities around the world as an essential ingredient in success-

PLAN 2035 REGIONAL WORKSHOPS



Hunterdon County
Oct. 22, 2008—Freeholder
Matthew Holt



City of Newark
Oct. 23, 2008—Deputy Mayor
Stefan Pryor



Monmouth County
Oct. 27, 2008—
Freeholder
William C. Barham



Bergen County
Oct. 27, 2008—County
Executive Dennis McNerney



Jersey City
Oct. 28, 2008—Mayor
Jerramiah T. Healy



Warren County
Oct. 29, 2008—
Freeholder
John DiMaio



Ocean County
Oct. 30, 2008—David
McKeon, Director, Ocean
County Dept. of Planning



Union County
Nov. 5, 2008—Freeholder
Daniel P. Sullivan

PLAN 2035 REGIONAL WORKSHOPS



*Somerset County
Sept. 20, 2008—Freeholder
Peter S. Palmer*



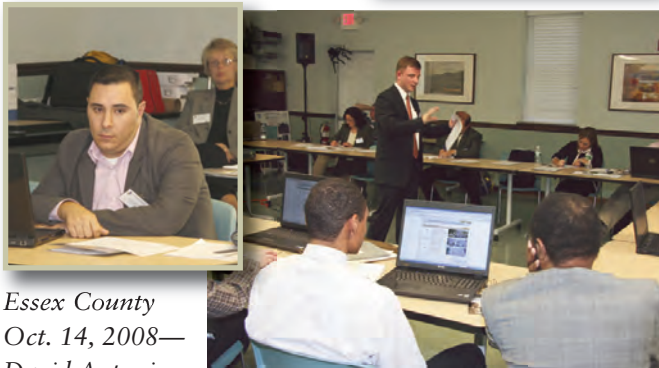
*Hudson County
Sept. 23, 2008—County Executive
Thomas DeGise*



*Middlesex County
Sept. 23, 2008—George
Ververides, Middlesex County
Planning Director*



*Sussex County
Oct. 2, 2008—At left, NJTPA
Chairman Susan M. Zellman,
Sussex County Freeholder*



*Essex County
Oct. 14, 2008—
David Antonio,
Transportation
Planner, Essex
County*



*Morris County
Oct. 16, 2008—Freeholder
Gene F. Feyl*



*Passaic County
Oct. 20, 2008—Freeholder
Pasquale "Pat" Lepore*



fully implementing innovative financing measures like congestion pricing and High Occupancy Toll lanes.

- The bi-partisan effort in 1984 that spearheaded the creation of the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund can serve as a model for addressing today's transportation financing crisis.

Visioning Workshops

In many ways, the visioning workshops formed the core of the NJTPA's outreach efforts. NJTPA Central Staff and consultants worked closely with the Trustees and their staffs to arrange the workshops. Each subregion was given a great deal of flexibility in the scheduling of the workshops and their format. Attendance generally ranged from 10 to 50 people, with more than 350 people attending the sessions in total.

Workshop participants used an interactive "visioning tool" that helped illustrate the potential effects of land-use and transportation decisions in the region through 2035. Participants made choices about land use and transportation investment, and the tool revealed the combined impact of these choices on travel time, settled land, access to transit, air quality and other key transportation, environmental and quality of life factors. The tool also included information on the cost of transportation improvements and potential funding sources.

At each workshop, the tool served to spur lively and extensive discussion on transportation and land use in the region. The main themes that emerged from the visioning exercise and discussion at the workshops included:

- Near universal agreement on the need to invest heavily in infrastructure maintenance and preservation. Few thought investing in road capacity expansion made sense. Most took the view that the region should fix the system it has and make it work better.
- A strong desire for greater investment in transit improvements. A viable transit system was seen as a critical element in maintaining economic vitality.
- Support for well-planned park and ride facilities to support transit use and intercept drivers at key locations as well as bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and telecommuting incentives.
- Agreement by many on the need for a greater mix of land uses, clustering of development, and promotion of development oriented toward mass transit. But in some areas, higher density was seen as a threat to the current character of towns and counties.

- Recognition that state mandates and regulations, including those on affordable housing and development in the Highlands, present challenges to towns and counties in planning for their future.
- Desire by many for greater use of rail and barges for freight movement rather than trucks, and clustering of port-related activity (particularly warehousing) around the port rather than in the region's outer fringe.
- General agreement that funding needs to be increased, but little agreement on the best ways to achieve that.
- Recognition that the lack of coordination on land use issues among all levels of government contributes to sprawl.

Internet, Information and Outreach

As part of outreach for the plan, the NJTPA established an interactive website featuring plan information, an online forum for submitting comments and feedback and an online version of the regional visioning tool used at the workshops. The website also provided extensive audio and video files of presentations and discussions at the symposiums and three roundtables.

A very successful internet feature was an online survey that garnered over 350 responses. It offered another avenue for input to the development of Plan 2035. It was promoted at the visioning workshops and other events and through the NJTPA website and postcards. The survey was intended to provide insight into broad issues:

- What direction is the region headed in the next 25 years?



An interactive visioning tool illustrated links between land use and transportation. Visioning Workshop, Essex County.

- Is it the right direction?
- What are the driving forces that are shaping and will shape the region in the coming decades?
- What are the public’s priorities for the region’s transportation system?

The survey featured 10 main questions dealing with these issues and several optional questions about the background of survey respondents. A Spanish language version of the survey was available, as was a toll-free number for those who wanted to comment without accessing the internet.

Key results of the survey included:

- For all trip purposes, single-occupancy auto is the most common mode.
- Thirty percent of respondents expressed a desire to travel more by train.
- Asked about changes in behavior due to high gas prices, respondents said they had engaged in “trip chaining,” driving less and doing more online shopping.
- Asked what actions they might take if gas reached \$6 per gallon, respondents said they would buy more fuel-efficient vehicles, cut back on long distance travel and carpool.
- The least viable options for those considering \$6 per gallon gas were moving, finding a new job and commuting at non-peak hours.
- The three most significant transportation challenges people see facing the region are lack of choices in public transportation and destinations served (23 percent), increasing traffic congestion and delays (17 percent), and aging and deteriorating infrastructure (16 percent).
- Challenges that go beyond transportation included rising energy costs, increasing cost of living and suburban sprawl.
- Strategies recommended included expanding the public transit system, encouraging development around transit stations, and encouraging flex-time and telecommuting.
- There was little support for new roads or new lanes on existing roads.
- The most acceptable methods for increasing transportation funding were more federal money, public-private partnerships, increasing existing tolls, and increasing the gas tax.
- The least support was given to adding tolls to roads

that are now free, providing access to high-occupancy vehicle lanes for a fee and increasing transit fares.

- Recognition and agreement that an outreach campaign to educate the public on infrastructure needs and financing, and dedicating sources of revenues for transportation investments should be undertaken by the NJTPA as part of its public outreach activities.

Using Public Input

A few of the major themes that emerged during the various phases of outreach discussed above were the following:

- Maintaining and upgrading the existing, extensive road and rail network is essential.
- Major highway expansions are no longer a realistic option, though the roadway network remains vital.
- Investing in expanded mass transit and new technologies will make the transportation network work more efficient.
- Pursuing denser development in keeping with smart growth principles can bring benefits, but must fit with community needs and desires.
- Measures to protect the environment and address climate change are needed.

These themes, together with other input from visioning workshops, roundtables and other outreach efforts, were considered and addressed by the NJTPA in creating Plan 2035. In addition, the input helped shape the three future scenarios that underwent computer modeling to show the impacts of alternative funding levels and policies on transportation system performance. The scenarios use updated population and employment projections that were reviewed by the 15 NJTPA subregions.

As described in Chapter 5 (Scenarios), the travel demand model allows for gauging the effects of similar choices under different investment and land use scenarios. In addition to public input, the scenario testing incorporated data and insights from management systems and studies of regional needs and strategies, as discussed in Chapter 4.

As noted in the introduction, among the three scenarios modeled, a “Plan 2035 Scenario” was developed and tested to capture a realistic set of choices that will guide the region’s future transportation investments. It forms the basis for the analysis, plans and recommendations discussed in the chapters that follow.

