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Innovative Public

Newark, Essex County

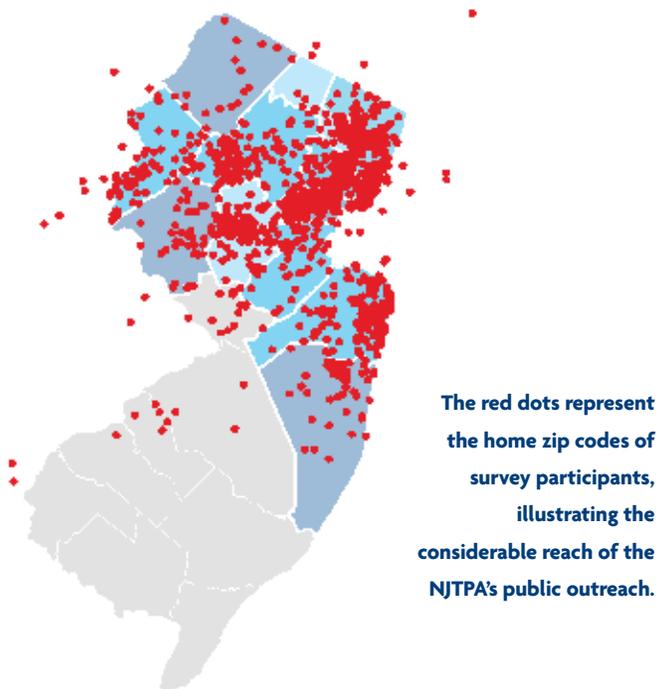


Outreach

Expand access to public transit. Make streets safer for people who walk and bicycle. Improve the region's ability to recover from major weather events. ● These are some of the ideas people who live and work in North Jersey gave when asked to share their vision for the region's future. ● Nearly 3,000 people participated in Plan 2045 through a series of innovative outreach techniques that included in-person events and online surveys. People of all ages and economic backgrounds—from children, to millennials to senior citizens—provided input for this plan. ● Public participation in Plan 2045 far surpassed the outreach of the NJTPA's previous long-range regional transportation plans, which relied on more traditional forms of public engagement. This was in large part due to research into innovative outreach techniques conducted on NJTPA's behalf by Rutgers University's Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC). The innovative techniques have been cataloged in a searchable public website tool. Based on the findings of this research, the NJTPA launched an extensive Plan 2045 public outreach program in spring 2017. ● The seven goals that the NJTPA Board of Trustees set for Plan 2045 (see NJTPA Goals—p. 8) were used to develop transportation-related topic areas. Public outreach focused on:

- Getting Around
- Safety
- Economy
- Technology
- Resiliency
- Environment
- Great Places

The outreach included a variety of activities where staff met with people face-to-face including pop-up booths at community events, customized public workshops, millennial dinner parties, a radio booth to engage children, interactive presentations at conferences and public meetings, a freight industry



roundtable, a symposium and special outreach sessions with limited English speakers and low-income residents.

Digital technologies further extended the considerable reach of Plan 2045's public involvement efforts. This included a website, a user-friendly online survey and extensive social media promotion. The survey mirrored the seven topics and related questions used at in-person events, but also included open-ended questions.

Stakeholder Forums

Forums sponsored by the NJTPA discussed key issues for the future that must be considered in Plan 2045. They featured presentations by experts and included lively discussion by interested parties, stakeholders and members of the public. Key events included:

■ *Freight Roundtable—June 14, 2016*

Manufacturers, haulers, railroads, warehouse developers and port operators discussed the challenges facing goods movement. They all agreed that reliability must be improved, infrastructure must keep pace with the growing volume of freight and the freight sector must take advantage of new technology.

■ *Plan 2045: A Regional Conversation—*

November 2, 2016 This wide ranging event included discussion of changes in technology and demographic shifts. Among the topics addressed: the waning of suburban office parks and the need to reimagine land use; the attraction of younger people to places with more transit options; the aging population and the need for services to support them; and the promises and threats posed by technology, like autonomous vehicles.

■ *Smart Cities Symposium—April 26, 2017*

Public and private sector experts discussed the promise of emerging technologies including: possible drastic reductions in crashes through connected vehicles that communicate with other cars and traffic signals; self-driving shuttles that improve transit access and efficiency; and streets equipped to better manage traffic with smart parking and adaptive traffic signals.

Public Outreach Events

Public outreach for Plan 2045 was primarily conducted in each of the region's 13 counties and two largest cities at either a **community event** (such as hosting a pop-up booth at an arts festival or street fair) or a **public workshop/meeting**, typically hosted by a county's Board of Freeholders and Planning Department (additionally, customized presentations were conducted at several other meetings and/or conferences). See the Plan 2045 Outreach Appendix for summary reports of the events held in the NJTPA's 15 subregions.



Jersey City



Somerville, Somerset County, Freeholder Peter S. Palmer



Newark, Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo

Community Events

These events were designed to personally bring Plan 2045 outreach to residents where they live, providing an opportunity for a broad range of participation. Eleven of these events were held during spring 2017. Information booths were set up at community events, with banners, signs, and other materials identifying the NJTPA and Plan 2045. A colorful custom-designed tabletop carnival wheel provided a fun way for people to select a topic and get conversations started. The NJTPA’s Plan 2045 team (including NJTPA staff as well as Board members and subregional staff) ran the booths and asked residents for their input on one or more of the outreach topics through a brief survey via electronic tablets or paper forms. Additionally, a coloring activity was provided for children who came with their parents.

Spanish interpreters also were on hand at all events (as well as Hindi and Arabic interpreters at select locations). More than 1,600 people participated in Plan 2045 community outreach events.

Public Workshops/Meetings

The NJTPA also conducted a series of interactive Plan 2045 public workshops, meetings, and special presentations. Some of these, co-sponsored by NJTPA subregions, were stand-alone workshops devoted to Plan 2045; others were planned as part of relevant professional conferences or existing

public/stakeholder meetings that allowed dedicated time for Plan 2045 discussion.

These workshops and meetings featured a live-polling tool, Poll Everywhere, which enabled participants to answer survey questions on phones or tablets in a group format and see results in real time. Participants were asked open-ended questions and

“We need better planning for bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks”—Feedback from Jersey City outreach event, May 19

multiple-choice questions. Responses from 264 participants were varied and informative. Survey results for community events and public workshops/meeting events are available in Plan 2045’s Public Outreach Appendix.

In general, many who participated in community events and public workshops spoke about the need for expanded or enhanced public transportation, improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and better connections where they live and work. Participants also called for safety and infrastructure improvements, asked for help addressing congestion and supported resiliency upgrades across the region.

Throughout spring 2017, the NJTPA extensively promoted all of its upcoming community outreach events, workshops, the online survey, and other ways to get involved



Flemington, Hunterdon County





PLAN 2045

Public Outreach

TOP ROW: Freeholder John Bartlett (left) in Paterson, Passaic County; Newark, Essex County; Freeholder Carl Lazzaro in Newton, Sussex County; Freeholder Thomas Arnone (second from right) in West Long Branch, Monmouth County

MIDDLE ROW: County Executive Tom DeGise (right) in Jersey City, Hudson County; Freeholder Kathryn DeFillippo (inset, right) in Chester, Morris County; Paramus, Bergen County

BOTTOM ROW: Plumsted, Ocean County; Freeholders Bette Jane Kowalski and Angel Estrada in Mountainside, Union County; Freeholder Jason Sarnoski in Harmony Township, Warren County



in the development of Plan 2045 via Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. And, during the events, staff shared real-time tweets and photos with the NJTPA's followers.

Specialized Outreach

In addition (and concurrently), the NJTPA worked with Rutgers-VTC to craft four specialized initiatives aimed at traditionally hard-to-reach demographic groups: young adults (18-30 years old), children and young teens, limited-English proficiency (LEP) residents, and low-income residents. All specialized outreach initiatives were customized for each group; however, like the general public outreach, they also were based on the seven transportation-related topic areas. Summary reports are included in the Public Outreach Appendix.

Set the Table

For young adults (sometimes referred to as millennials), a “Set the Table!” dinner party program was designed, featuring a fun “meeting-in-a-box” to clearly guide each host through their event including

“Public transit only goes to Manhattan and does not connect in ways we actually move.”

—Set the Table response on getting around

discussion cards with questions and facts about the region to jump start conversation. Approximately 160



Highland Park, Middlesex County

millennials participated in this activity.

Many young adults expressed an eagerness to stay involved in the transportation planning process as Plan 2045 is implemented going forward. Some said public transportation options, small businesses and access to a downtown area; diversity; and close proximity to New York City and other amenities were what they liked best about their communities. But they expressed concerns about a need to improve safety and also their ability to stay in New Jersey long-term

due to high housing costs and taxes.

Others noted that public transportation is a very desirable amenity, but added service needs to be more widespread and reliable with better station infrastructure. Nearly all young adults indicated support for expanded and safer bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Many also consider climate change to be a very important issue and suggested encouraging and incentivizing “green” practices.

NJTPA On Air

For children, a pop-up booth designed to look like a radio studio—called “NJTPA On Air”—provided a fun, interactive opportunity for children and young teens to record their thoughts on the future of transportation in their own voices. They were then asked to talk into the microphone and describe what they imagine transportation will be like in the future.



New Brunswick, Middlesex County



Approximately 200 children participated.

Many children imaginatively envision a future that includes everything from flying cars to teleportation; but some also talked rather eloquently about mitigating the environmental impacts of transportation, efficient Hyperloops, and alternative fuels. Several participants also said they thought they would use self-driving cars to get around in the future.

Limited English Speakers

In addition, six workshops were conducted at English as a Second Language classes to reach LEP residents. A four-part classroom activity introduced approximately 150 students to new vocabulary and provided an opportunity (either spoken or in writing, enabling students of varying English proficiency to participate) to improve fluency and confidence in discussing issues

“It’s easy if we can drive. It’s hard because public transportation is not convenient.”

—ESL response when asked about getting around

that affect their communities.

Many ESL students spoke optimistically about the region’s future and highlighted the need for improved transportation to access jobs and other opportunities. Several participants said that without cars they would have a difficult time getting from where they live to their places of employment and shopping destinations. This group also requested sidewalks improvements to make it easier to get around their communities.

Low-income Outreach

Finally, for low-income residents, the NJTPA and Rutgers-VTC partnered with two established organizations, La Casa de Don Pedro in Newark and Eva’s Village Recovery Community Center in Paterson. With the assistance of trusted advocates at both organizations, two workshop sessions were conducted, gathering input from about 150 participants.

Many in attendance pointed to the importance of public transportation to access jobs. Participants raised concerns about the need to transfer buses several times to get to where they need to go. They also cited a lack of service during off peak-hours and noted that more frequent buses would make it easier for them to use public transit.



Newark, Essex County

“We need buses running at off-peak hours and the buses don’t run frequently.”
—Low-income outreach response on getting around

Digital Outreach

WEBSITE

The NJTPA created a special section of its website (www.njtpa.org/Plan2045) to host a Plan 2045 survey open to anyone, whether or not they had ever heard of the NJTPA or participated in an outreach event. The survey, offered in English and Spanish, mirrored the approach at the NJTPA’s community events, public workshops and meetings. It included short, narrated videos as a primer.

The Plan 2045 survey also included simple demographic questions that enabled the NJTPA to learn a bit more about who participated. Nearly 500 people responded to the survey via the Plan 2045 website; more than 500 others answered one or more survey questions via Facebook (described in more detail below).





PAID SOCIAL MEDIA

To reach an even wider audience across North Jersey, the NJTPA incorporated a strategic social media component into its outreach efforts. Paid advertising, primarily on Facebook, was implemented over six separate one-week advertising campaigns. The ads were customized and demographically targeted to encourage residents to take the Plan 2045 survey on the NJTPA website (where the entire survey was available) or through Facebook (where select survey topics were provided).

The NJTPA’s paid social media campaign began with a series of 16 ads focusing on all seven topic areas developed to promote the Plan 2045 survey. Ads were targeted toward all adults in the NJTPA region and included a link to the online survey.

Further refinements helped make it easier for people to participate in the Plan 2045 questionnaire by utilizing a Facebook survey feature instead of requiring visitors to click a link to visit the Plan 2045 webpage.

During the combined six-week advertising campaigns, Plan 2045 social media ads were seen approximately twice by more than 1.6 million people. This resulted in more than 3.1 million

“impressions” (the number of times an ad is viewed overall), more than 50,000 link clicks, and 500 Facebook surveys completed. The resulting by-products of the ad campaign, such as social media comments, likes and shares also succeeded in another important way: increasing overall brand awareness about Plan 2045 and the NJTPA and introducing more residents to the transportation planning process in general.

What We Heard

While Plan 2045 outreach efforts drew participation from a diverse audience from across North Jersey, common themes emerged. These themes were used to inform the plan’s Regional Capital Investment Strategy (RCIS), a set of broad principles that sets goals for funding different types of initiatives (outlined in Chapter 6). Common themes (in addition to those mentioned above) included:

- Need for greater access to local public transportation as well as having better public transportation access to New York City from the western and southern counties in the region, with emphasis on the need for the Hudson River Tunnel project and the Gateway Program.



- Various enhancements and upgrades to public transportation with more service and better reliability, including one-seat transit rides to New York City.
- More commuter parking, improved roadway conditions, and safe travel to schools, as well as improved traveler information (such as developing new multi-modal transportation apps).
- Some suggested that planners need to look at transit more comprehensively as a system, rather than as individual components.
- A sense of community and safety were important to many people. Participants noted a lack of affordable housing choices, especially for low-wage and entry-level workers, as well as for young adults.

“Regional planning should support economic development.”—Response from Sussex County public outreach event, May 31, 2017

- Residents also said they want better resiliency measures to protect against future weather events (such as not permitting new construction on low-lying, flood-prone grounds) and emergencies.
- Some residents noted that city populations are growing without regard to capacity; others said better planning is needed for sidewalks and crosswalks, with some noting that many traffic signals seem to be geared for cars instead of bicycles and pedestrians.
- Participants called for more bicycle infrastructure, including protected bike lanes, bicycle parking and a need for more bike-share programs.
- Several residents expressed safety concerns about self-driving cars, but said they would be open to using an autonomous shuttle or vehicle if it were on a fixed route.
- Some suggested technology and infrastructure upgrades, such as supporting alternative-fuel vehicles and addressing congestion, to improve air quality.

The ultimate goal of the NJTPA’s public outreach project was accomplished: to use new and innovative engagement strategies to gather public input and inform and enlighten Plan 2045’s development. As a result, Plan 2045 effectively responds to the daily transportation challenges shared by the region’s

Go Farther: Regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

As part of a separate effort, the NJTPA also conducted extensive outreach to identify the transportation needs of seniors, low-income people, veterans and individuals with disabilities.

This outreach was part of an effort to update the NJTPA’s Regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), which was adopted in 2008. The 2017 CHSTP update, *Go Farther*, was used to inform development of Plan 2045.

CHSTP outreach efforts included focus groups, online and paper surveys (gaining more than 4,000 responses), community planning sessions (a series of 46 events organized by the state’s eight Transportation Management Associations), discussions with professionals who provide services to these targeted groups and an advisory committee. All of the input gathered from this extensive outreach was used to develop the CHSTP plan, which offers 33 recommendations.

Among the CHSTP recommendations are offering more affordable transportation options; maximizing resources by identifying common destinations in the region; removing physical barriers for people with limited mobility; and enhancing and expanding service.



6.7 million residents. It also reflects the aspirations they hold for their communities in the next 30 years.