

Summary of Public Comments and Responses on Plan 2045: Connecting North Jersey

Innovative, extensive, and inclusive public outreach activities were conducted for Plan 2045 in every NJTPA subregion and at a series of conferences, meetings, and other events. As a final step in this outreach effort, the draft Plan 2045 document was the subject of a 30-day public comment period as required by federal law. The comment period also provided an opportunity for public review of the accompanying Air Quality Conformity Determination and the FY 2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

During that time, a public open house meeting was held at the NJTPA's Newark offices on November 2, 2017 from 4-7 p.m., preceded by a workshop on the Air Quality Conformity Determination. Open house participants visited a series of stations on Plan 2045, the TIP, Air Quality Conformity, and various Plan 2045 public outreach initiatives. There was also a feedback stations set up to receive comments and questions.

The NJTPA used its website, as well as social media posts and a paid Facebook advertising campaign to extensively promote the public comment period and open house meeting. These ads reached more than 139,500 people, resulting in more than 185,000 impressions, more than 5,200 link clicks. There were more than 65 comments on these ads. Additionally, the Facebook event page for the public meeting reached nearly 18,000 people.

Facebook users posted messages relating to Plan 2045 calling for interconnected and off-road bike lanes; widening major highways; and expanding public transit — including additional buses, ferries, extending the NJ TRANSIT light rail and improved train connections. There were also calls for improving the state's freight network, which includes rail and roadways. Those posting about Plan 2045 on social media were encouraged to submit formal comments via the online comment form on the Plan 2045 website, via email or at the public meeting.

The open house meeting was attended by five NJTPA Board members, including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Governor's Representative, and Citizen's Representative. Officials from the New Jersey Department of Transportation, NJ TRANSIT and the Port Authority of NY & NJ also participated along with approximately one dozen transportation advocates and professionals, residents, and participants in Plan 2045 public outreach.

This document contains summaries of, and the NJTPA's responses to the 23 comments received via email, the Plan 2045 website, and public meeting comment cards during the 30-day period, which ran from October 10 to November 9, 2017. The full text of comments, including two comments received anonymously, will be provided in separate document posted on the Plan 2045 website: NJTPA.org/plan2045. In the final Plan 2045

document, this information will be incorporated into an Appendix, “Public Comments on Plan 2045.”

The NJTPA thanks all commenters for their ongoing interest and participation in the regional planning process.

Commenter: Jeff Procak

Comment Summary: Mr. Procak congratulates the NJTPA team for assembling this plan, recognizing the myriad of issues and stakeholders involved, building upon previous efforts, and embedding Together North Jersey, the TIP, and the CEDS in Plan 2045. Areas in the Plan that he says can benefit from further attention touch upon funding, procurement, private sector participation, freight capacity, and quality-of-life initiatives.

Response: NJTPA appreciates the recognition that Plan 2045 builds on previous efforts and incorporates extensive input. NJTPA will consider further work in the areas identified as it implements Plan 2045 and prepares the next Plan update.

Comment Summary: Mr. Procak notes that the phrase 'private sector' appears only eight times in the draft and the verb 'compete' just once suggests that there may be significant opportunity to drive down costs and improve service by developing and modernizing infrastructure that supports sustainable competition. He calls for forcing NJ Transit to operate more commercially by exposing it to competition.

Response: The NJTPA and its partners continue to explore private sector participation in infrastructure projects where possible. Cost effective use of funds and public private partnerships are discussed on pages 114 and 120. Under current state law, NJDOT is limited in the public private partnerships it can enter into for infrastructure projects. Virtually all NJ TRANSIT routes require some level of subsidy. This includes providing off-peak services and meeting service mandates that would be unprofitable for private sector competitors. Through the course of NJ TRANSIT’S history, certain bus lines have been privatized, primarily those that have shown to have some level of profitability.

Comment Summary: Mr. Procak says the Port Authority needs to change with the times. Together with AMTRAK, he says, the Port Authority is a poster child for state capitalism at its worst.

Response: AMTRAK and Port Authority operations are beyond the scope of Plan 2045.

Comment Summary: Mr. Procak comments that when it comes to freight transport capacity constraints, Plan 2045 should be a bit more cautious on recommending infrastructure development as a means of expanding capacity. He urges that freight technology should be expanded including methods that enable/encourage cargo to move quickly through the port without compromising security.

Response: Plan 2045 recognizes New Jersey’s long history of freight transportation and distribution, which also means that the region must adapt some infrastructure developed in the 19th century for 21st century needs. In that regard, in discussions with our public and private sector partners both on Plan 2045 and the New Jersey Freight Plan, the focus has been on optimizing all modes using available and emerging technologies and targeted infrastructure investment. As an example of the application of technology merged with public and private partnerships, GCT Bayonne implemented a truck appointment system at their terminal earlier this year, which has dramatically improved truck turn times. The terminal worked closely with the trucking community on the implementation. Plan 2045 calls for expanded use of this and other freight technologies.

Comment Summary: Mr. Procak urges greater attention to investments in quality-of-life improvements such as the Morris Canal Greenway and the Bergen Arches including repurposing historical monuments that have been abandoned and allow them to rejuvenate, educate, and generate new economic activity. This could be accomplished through a combination of commercial and philanthropic funding, conserving public funding.

Response: The following paragraph will be modified (with the bold addition) on page 129 (Chapter 7, Moving forward) to acknowledge the role that philanthropic and other private funding may play in making quality of life transportation improvements:

Moving forward with implementing this plan will require close cooperation with partner agencies, including NJTPA subregions, NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT, the Port Authority of NY & NJ, the TMAs and with numerous interests and groups in the state, **and could include partnerships with commercial or philanthropic organizations for local initiatives ...**

Plan 2045 acknowledges the need for additional study of the Morris Canal Greenway and the Bergen Arches. Chapter 7, page 130 addresses the need to “preserve and study possible multimodal transportation use of abandoned rights-of-way around the region,” citing these facilities as examples.

Commenter: Paul Onish

Comment Summary: Mr. Onish expresses the desire to see greater freight carried by rail to address the volume of truck traffic, particularly serving warehouses.

Response: See below.

Commenter: Sanford Gardner, Member of the Middlesex County TCC and Chair of the East Brunswick Traffic Advisory Board.

Comment Summary: Mr. Gardner calls for increased freight arriving at the port to be shipped via rail cars to warehouses in Middlesex County, particularly in and around Interchange 8A of the NJ Turnpike. This, he said, would lower the cost of local road maintenance from truck wear and tear, reduce congestion and accidents, and improve the quality of life for local residents.

Response: Plan 2045 recognizes New Jersey's significant concentration of distribution activity, including the freight moving via Port facilities, and the need to optimize all available freight modes. Accordingly, NJTPA's public and private sector partners both on Plan 2045 and the New Jersey Freight Plan are looking at available and emerging technologies and targeted infrastructure investment. NJTPA's Freight Rail Industrial Opportunity (FRIO) Corridors Program is analyzing the needs and means for improving access for national standard rail freight cars. Therefore, options for shifting freight to rail for movement to and from warehouses will be explored as Plan 2045 is implemented.

Commenter: John Prieto, Morris Canal Working Group/Canal Society of New Jersey member

Comment Summary: Mr. Prieto provided extensive comments, much related to better accommodating walking and biking in the region. This included calls for walk/bike facilities as part of bridge projects; developing pathways as an alternative to residential development in flood zones; more street closures for pedestrians especially near business district; greater interconnectedness such as connecting existing pathways with business centers or stations; campaigns by towns to encourage walking/biking; a small advertising tax to help fund greenways; safety features, such as emergency buttons and alert signs, along at interconnected greenway link crossings, among other suggestions.

Mr. Prieto also calls for exploration of "ramp metering" traffic lights on highway entrance ramps and opening a dialogue with local colleges/universities for transportation/traffic flow studies.

Response: Some of Mr. Prieto's comments relate to pathways that are under local control and beyond the scope of Plan 2045. However, Plan 2045 encourages county and municipal adoption and implementation of Complete Streets, off road bikeways and walkways, and local actions that make walking and biking safe, viable and inviting travel options. NJTPA grant and study programs implementing Plan 2045 will support these efforts.

Many of the suggestions can and will be considered for inclusion in guidelines and recommendations being prepared as part of the Morris Canal Greenway study now underway.

Highway ramp metering will continue to be studied for potential application in the state in cooperation with NJDOT and the NJ Turnpike Authority.

Commenter: Yin Mae

Comment Summary: What is being done about the deer overpopulation?

Response: Deer population control is beyond the scope of Plan 2045. Information can be found at the NJ Department of Environmental Protection:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/fgw/deer.htm>

Commenter: John Ogilby

Comment Summary: Mr. Ogilby calls for the establishment of a park and ride on a 40-acre property owned by Kearny Township between Route 280 and the NJ Turnpike. A Kearny Park and Ride with no intermediary stops to New York City, he said, could be successful and would relieve traffic from Route 280 and the NJ Turnpike Corridor south of Rt. 495.

Response: The need for expanded park and ride facilities is stated on page 86 in the discussion of transit access. This Kearny Township location could be considered for potential park and ride development in studies and planning efforts undertaken to implement Plan 2045.

Commenter: Peter Heimann

Comment Summary: Mr. Heimann compliments the document and its recognition of increased freight traffic.

No Response Needed.

Commenter: Robert Takash
President, Edison Greenways Group

Comment Summary: Mr. Takash offers a variety of general comments on improving aspects of the transportation network, including: capture the trends of bright people and technological tools; prioritize our multiple funding opportunities; build the Gateway tunnel and fix the Portal Bridge; and implement rails-with-trails and Complete Streets.

No Response Needed.

Commenter: Joseph Dunsay

Comment Summary: New Jersey Transit should raise fares for trips across the Hudson River, build bus terminals in Hoboken and Jersey City, and provide more bus service from Bergen County to Hoboken and Jersey City.

Response: Decisions on raising fares are made by the NJ TRANSIT Board of Trustees, and are outside of NJTPA's authority. There are currently large bus terminals at the Hoboken train station, which is adjacent to Jersey City and at Journal Square Transportation Center in Jersey City, and a bus plaza at Exchange Place, and the need for transit access is discussed on Page 86. The Transit Appendix references the development of the Northern Branch, which would extend the Hudson Bergen Light Rail into Bergen County. Bergen County and NJ TRANSIT collaborated to complete a Bus Rapid Transit service study in Bergen County, which was recently completed.

Commenter: David Alexander

Comment Summary: Mr. Alexander says the plan lacks clarity and brevity and does not concisely explain what is being done and how in a non-vague manner.

No Response Needed.

Commenter: Brian Boehlert

Comment Summary: Asks for Better transit options: new routes and more train service

Commenter: David Janosz

Comment Summary: Calls for improved rail transit so his family of five can travel to Manhattan for pleasure with one transfer or less for less than the costs of driving and parking.

Commenter: Rajesh Kohil

Comment Summary: Asks for a one-seat ride to NYC from Westfield during peak hours.

Commenter: Jay Latshaw

Comment Summary: Calls for more transit in Toms River.

Response: Plan 2045 calls for targeted expansion of transit facilities and supports expansion of transit services where justified and feasible. The Plan’s Regional Capital Investment Strategy (RCIS) includes a principle stating that “Investment to improve the region’s extensive transit network should be a high priority, including strategic expansions to increase capacity and serve new markets.” The RCIS further states that system capacity should be expanded “in measured steps based on the ability to meet travel demand, attract new riders and achieve cost-effective operations.” These policies will guide exploration of transit expansions around the region as Plan 2045 is implemented. It should be noted that addressing trans-Hudson transit issues, including the need for new Hudson River rail tunnels and the larger Gateway project will affect transit expansion in the region. This and other transit issues are discussed in the Transit section in Chapter 5 and the Transit Appendix.

Commenter: Stephen Lax

Comment Summary: Mr. Lax points out that in the Transit Appendix, NJ Transit states that there is no plan to use NJ Transit funds to extend rail passenger service on the Lackawanna Cut-Off beyond Andover, yet the three county project lists show \$21.89 million. He asks if this is to extend service beyond Andover. He comments that the extension would mostly benefit Pennsylvania residents and possibly encourage sprawl in New Jersey.

Response: Extension of the Lackawanna Cut-Off to Andover is scheduled to be completed in FY 2020, so these funds will be used to complete the project.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lax comments there does not seem to be enough demand to support proposed rail service on the NYS&W right-of-way in Bergen and Passaic Counties, given the less-than-frequent existing bus service between Paterson and Hackensack. He suggests expanded bus service including I-80 express service to test demand.

Response: NJ TRANSIT plans to update the Passaic-Bergen study previously conducted to revisit the demand analysis.

Commenter: The Board of Directors, New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP), summarized.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP calls for addressing traffic in Chatham Borough, possibly by widening the exit ramps off Route 24 onto I-287 or activating a long-ago abandoned interchange between the Short Hills Mall in Short Hills, NJ and Florham Park.

Response: On Page 74, Plan 2045 recognizes the need for well-targeted investments to enhance and improve roadways. These specific proposals will be considered, as appropriate, in studies and planning activities undertaken in implementing Plan 2045.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP points out that no mention is made of a Borough proposed new rail station in Chatham Gateway along NJ Transit's Morristown Line.

Response: NJTPA is aware of this request from the Borough. Further evaluation would be needed for inclusion in Plan 2045.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP asserts that the proposal for an express lane on highways for which drivers would pay a toll is similar to the old HOV lanes which were a proven failure.

Response: The potential new revenue sources to support transportation investment in Chapter 6, the Financial Element, pages 125-127 are presented for further discussion, not as recommendations.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP asserts that the plan is "New York" centric because it assumes New York City will remain the economic engine of the region even while it points to the growth of New Jersey cities. NJ-ARP questions why the plan does not call for reverse peak services on both rail and bus, including to relieve road congestion.

Response: Plan 2045 is based on the best available economic forecasting and supports transit expansions where feasible. NJ TRANSIT operations are not addressed in detail in the MPO long range plan. NJ TRANSIT operates reverse service where demand warrants it.

Comment Summary: While the NJTPA cites the critical importance of the Gateway rail project, it omits the NJ-ARP proposal to extend the New York City #7 subway line from Hudson Yards in Manhattan to Secaucus Rail Station. This would allow the downscaling of the \$10 billion PABT replacement in Manhattan with a companion PABT to be located in Secaucus.

Response: No project sponsor has been identified for the proposal to extend the New York City #7 subway line to the Secaucus Rail Station, and most of the capital funding issues fall outside the NJTPA's jurisdiction. Should a sponsor come forward, the NJTPA will coordinate to assist their efforts. The location of a new Port Authority Bus Terminal is under the jurisdiction of the Port Authority, not the NJTPA.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP states that the plan does not address the deficiencies of NY Penn Station.

Response: The need to address Penn Station capacity for trains and passengers is included in the Trans-Hudson sidebar on page 71, and is included in the aspirational funding scenario.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP states the Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) plan to spend \$1.5 Billion to extend PATH to the Newark Airport Rail Station is unnecessary as it the station is already served by NJ Transit and Amtrak.

Response: This is funded with Port Authority resources and is included in Plan 2045 for informational purposes.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP states that no mention is made of passing sidings on NJ Transit's Pascack Valley rail line. Also, the only mention of the Lackawanna Cut-Off is in the tables at the back of the report. It says the latter must be a priority to address congestion on I-80.

Response: Page 2 of the Transit Appendix includes Pascack Valley sidings under "Regional Rail Service Core Capacity." The Lackawanna Cut-Off from Port Morris is also referenced in the Transit Appendix which notes that further extension west would require capital and operating support from the state of Pennsylvania and/or localities in Pennsylvania.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP asserts that the plan gives inadequate attention to accomplishing "first" and "last" mile connectivity to rail lines such as improving para-transit services to make rail transit a viable option including for residents of affordable

housing sites located too far away from transit. It says the plan gives “casual mention” to vanpooling.

Response: Plan 2045 commits to continued support for the state’s eight Transportation Management Associations which operate, manage, or help facilitate the development of shuttles to employment sites. This includes carpooling, vanpooling, transit, and bicycling. This is discussed in the Transportation Demand Management section of Chapter 5, pages 93-95. In addition, in cooperation with NJ TRANSIT, NJTPA also provides federal Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for a variety of shuttle services across the region. Recommendations for improving paratransit and related services are also included in the recently updated Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, summarized on p. 29, which will guide Plan 2045 implementation.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP expresses disappointment with the former New York Susquehanna & Western rail line slated to be converted to a rail trail.

Response: There is no mention of creating a trail on the NYS&W in Plan 2045. Use of the line for possible transit service is identified in the Transit Appendix on page 3.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP objects to instituting a Route 9 bus way in Monmouth, Ocean and Middlesex (MOM) Counties which it asserts is doomed to fail as cars encroaching on the lane will negate its benefits. Since 1985, NJ-ARP has called for creating light rail or heavy rail service on the MOM right-of-way.

Response: The Route 9 bus corridor is one of the busiest in the state. Incremental improvements have been made over the years to this important transit corridor. Additional potential future improvements are listed in the Transit Appendix on page 5 under Bus Rapid Transit and Bus System Improvements. The proposed “MOM” line is included in the Transit Appendix on page 3 under Regional Rail Extensions of Service.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP indicates that in the Bergen County table, mention is made of the “northern extension of HBLRT” and no mention is made of light rail in Union County running to the Jersey Gardens Mall which, it asserts, needs to be considered.

Response: The northern extension of the HBLRT is referred to as the Northern Branch, with a terminus in Englewood, on page 6 of the Transit Appendix. The Union County light rail proposal is referred to as the Union County Transitway on page 5 of the Transit Appenix, and is the subject of current study.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP questions the lack of reference to ferry services and urges NJTPA to lobby the New Jersey State Legislature for increased ferry subsidies and explore the increased use of our waterways including the NJ-ARP’s proposals for ferries from the Amboys, Keyport, Bayonne, Newark and Elizabeth and high-speed ferries from shore communities.

Response: Ferry service is discussed in Chapter 5 on page 86. The NJTPA is prohibited from lobbying. The NJTPA recently completed a study of waterborne resources and opportunities. The final report can be found at <http://njtpa.org/planning/regional-studies/freight/inventory-and-assessment-of-waterborne-transportat/waterborne-transportation-resources-study> .

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP urges NJTPA to work with Sustainable Jersey to encourage municipalities to install electric vehicle charging stations so services such as “Zip Car” can be used as the first and last mile of connectivity.

Response: NJTPA is working with Sustainable Jersey to support electric vehicle infrastructure, and is also conducting a study to develop municipal readiness plans in Montclair, Secaucus, and Woodbridge. See <http://njtpa.org/planning/regional-studies/environment/air-quality/alternative-fuels-vehicles> .

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP expresses agreement with the various safety and security issues, though it says a “glaring omission” is the lack of a contingency/continuity plan in the event of extreme weather which could force its immediate shutdown of Hudson River tunnels for emergency repairs.

Response: The NJTPA actively participates in planning and assessments of major weather related event impacts with NJ’s operating agencies. The NJTPA has a role in supporting the development of emergency management planning with regional partner agencies; however, is not in the position to dictate actions of its regional partners.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP asserts that Plan 2045 should address ground transport as a matter of practicality and should drop the mention of drones and flyig cars. NJ-ARP disagrees with the plan’s assertion that driverless cars may become widespread by 2045 citing the very high infrastructure costs and insurance industry policies which will make such cars affordable only for the very wealthy.

Response: NJTPA welcomes further discussion of how technology could impact the NJTPA region. Plan 2045 does not indicate how technology will play out in the NJTPA region, but raises possibilities and questions.

Comment Summary: NJ-ARP urges more stringent fines for cell phone use or texting while driving and for Congress to incentivize car manufacturers to use cell-phone blocking technology except for 911 emergency calls.

Response: The NJTPA works closely with a broad range of safety partners, including law enforcement, engineers, educators, and advocates. The NJTPA supports strategies to reduce driver and pedestrian distraction, which is a growing safety concern across the country.

Commenter: Tim Sevenser

Comment Summary: Mr. Sevenser says Plan 2045 does little to make New Jersey the Green Transit leader in the USA which it is positioned to become given its population density and extensive transit assets. The state realized similar leadership through its support of solar power.

No Response Needed.

Comment Summary: Mr. Sevenser says the Plan neglects to mention the severe cuts and fare hikes since 2006 across many transit modes which he says contributed to the increased driving shown in the plan. He lists a number of potential transit projects that he feels are not dependent on Gateway funding and will increase Green Transit mobility from New Jersey to New Jersey.

These potential projects include restoring weekend direct Hoboken Service on the Morris Line; restoring off-peak fares to encourage transit ridership for more than just 9-5 jobs; extending the Hudson-Bergen light rail to New York Upstate and Staten Island; raising all station platforms to speed up boarding for all riders; adding sidings to the Pascack Valley Line and to the Gladstone Branch; restoring the Lackawanna cutoff all the way to Scranton; running light rail along the Morristown-Erie tourist and freight railroad; electrification and frequent rail service to Hackettstown; finishing the Cross-Bergen Rail from Hawthorne to Paterson to Hackensack; providing a Jersey Crescent Rail Link down the I-287/87 median which could provide a Rail beltway connecting 10 major rail lines, with eventual connections across the Tappan Zee Bridge.

Response: Plan 2045 calls for targeted expansion of transit facilities and supports expansion of transit services where justified and feasible. The Plan's Regional Capital Investment Strategy (RCIS) includes a principle stating that "Investment to improve the region's extensive transit network should be a high priority, including strategic expansions to increase capacity and serve new markets." The RCIS further states that system capacity should be expanded "in measured steps based on the ability to meet travel demand, attract new riders and achieve cost-effective operations." These policies will guide exploration of transit expansions, including those proposed in the comments, as Plan 2045 is implemented. It should be noted that addressing trans-Hudson transit issues, including the need for new Hudson River rail tunnels and the larger Gateway project will affect transit expansion in the region. This and other transit issues are discussed in the Transit section in Chapter 5 and the Transit Appendix.

Comment Summary: Mr. Sevenser outlines key components of the Rethink NYC plan, which he asks to be considered. These include the #7 Subway extension to Secaucus; a new bus terminal in Secaucus; remaking of NY Penn station into a through-running rather than a terminal station allowing for wider platforms and eliminating the need for a

new Penn South station, allowing for one seat rides across the region; and resurrecting Jeff Warsh's NJ Transit 2020 Plan released in 2001 to make use of abandoned rail rights of way throughout Northern New Jersey to create a light rail network.

Response: The innovative proposals in Rethink NYC plan were considered in preparing Plan 2045 and are consistent with general commitments to improve regional transit, as noted above, in the RCIS. As the proposals are further defined and developed by transportation agencies in both New York and New Jersey, including identifying funding commitments, the NJTPA will work with NJ TRANSIT to integrate into the planning process, as appropriate. The same applies to proposed light rail expansions.

Comment Summary: Mr. Sevenser states that due to ravages of increased extreme weather, sea level rise, and likely major disruptions of food supplies from Climate Change, New Jersey should power 100% of electric rail by 2018 with solar, wind and other distributed renewable energy (following the Dutch example). Electric vehicle programs should focus on buses and shuttles which are easier to charge as they largely follow fixed routes and end in consolidated points.

Response: Preparing for future extreme weather or unexpected events is referenced throughout the plan. For example, Chapter 4, Scenarios and Investment Priorities, outlines how climate change factored into the scenario planning process. Chapter 5 discusses resiliency needs and strategies beginning on page 105. The NJTPA is engaged in planning for electric vehicles. See <http://njtpa.org/planning/regional-studies/environment/air-quality/alternative-fuels-vehicles> for more information.

Comment Summary: Mr. Sevenser says that discussion of Peak Oil is conspicuously absent from Plan 2045

Response: In preparing Plan 2045, the NJTPA could find no consensus on the threat that Peak Oil presents. Plan 2045 envisions a future in which technology, land use decisions, lifestyle choices and targeted investments reduces the need for travel, and reduces its impact on the environment. The Together North Jersey (TNJ) Regional Plan, which is a foundation of Plan 2045, discusses sustainable energy. This plan can be found at http://togethernorthjersey.com/?page_id=1814 .

Commenter: Margaret Nordstrom, Executive Director New Jersey Highlands Council

Comment Summary— Ms. Nordstrom relates that the Highlands Council Regional Master Plan (RMP) supports comprehensive economic development planning and is providing grant funding for local and county economic development planning. The Highlands Council will be preparing a regional economic development plan and welcomes participation by the NJTPA. The RMP supports the protection of the character of communities and the natural environment through context-sensitive design, traffic calming, historical preservation, roadway beautification, and creative placemaking

strategies and believes this will provide a basis for an increase of tourism opportunities in the Highlands Region.

Response: These comments support many elements of Plan 2045. The NJTPA will seek to collaborate more closely with the Highlands Council, notably on an Economic Development Plan that the Highlands Council will be preparing, and on NJTPA's Planning for Emerging Centers program.

The Highlands Regional Master Plan and the Meadowlands District Master Plan will be added to the list of plans that will help shape implementation of Plan 2045 in Chapter 7.

Comment Summary - Ms. Nordstrom relates that the Highlands Council RPM supports a variety of transportation improvements which should be supported and pursued by the NJTPA. This includes RPM support for:

- development of a program to preserve the integrity of historic bridges in the region.
- the integration of pedestrian and bicycle safety into Complete Streets and providing assistance to counties and municipalities in implementing Complete Streets.
- increasing safety and security of inter-modal transportation for motorized and non-motorized users.
- expanded bicycle trails and designated bicycle routes including the East Coast Greenway, Morris Canal Greenway, Union Transportation Trail and 9/11 Memorial Trail.
- funding for investments that encourage compact, mixed-used development, that support transit use ("transit oriented development"), safe walking/biking, access to open space and recreation, and cost effective use of existing or planned public infrastructure.

In addition, the RMP provides for the identification of Highlands Centers. Ms Nordstrom relates that Council would like to coordinate with the NJTPA on this and future projects, as well as planning grant funding opportunities.

Response: The RMP priorities highlighted in Ms. Nordstrom's comments are consistent with and supported in Plan 2045. The NJTPA will pursue the suggested cooperation with the Council in implementing Plan 2045. Preservation of historic bridges is considered in NJTPA programs along with other needs. Clarifying language will be added to chapter 5.

By way of background, NJTPA has a Local Capital Project Delivery Program that allows a county to submit an application to study a bridge in need of repair, rehabilitation or replacement. There are several historic bridges that have been submitted and funded. The

program is mentioned on page 81 of Plan 2045, and a more detailed explanation can be reviewed by clicking on the following link: <http://www.njtpa.org/project-programs/project-development/local-capital-project-delivery-program.aspx>.

Chapter 5, bridges page 81 will be clarified as follows to reference historic bridges (addition in bold):

For bigger, more expensive county bridge projects (and selected road projects), the NJTPA's Local Capital Delivery Program offers a means to access federal funding for repair or replacement. **Balanced with safety, multimodal, community and other needs, maintaining the historic character of local bridges is a strong consideration of this program.**

Comment Summary: Ms. Nordstrom notes that the RMP supports coordination on tourism and transportation and points to the importance of the tourism sector in the Highlands region to the regional economy and the opportunities for enhancement, particularly by increasing transit service.

Response: Recommendations for improving tourism and related economic development are contained in the Together North Jersey (TNJ) Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and is supported by Plan 2045, as referenced in the RCIS guideline on page 169.

Commenter: Michael Lysicatos, Assistant Director, Passaic County Department of Planning and Economic Development

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos says the emphasis on millennials as a driver of the housing markets is very speculative and believes the plan does not reflect the uncertain nature of this group's impact on the housing and job markets. A productive discussion to have is how the current and future housing stock in New Jersey can accommodate the overall trends of urban living and house all individuals are making choices as they move through housing lifecycles.

Response: Page 34 states that millennials will "help" drive the housing market and notes that there are uncertainties about the future. For example, the plan notes that it is too early to tell if "having children motivate many millennial families to move to the suburbs or rural areas as their parents did."

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos asks if there are any trends in regards to inter-state and intra-state employment (i.e. origin/destination data) that shows a major need for transportation investments or land use investments?

Response: Origin and destination data, as well as other data and analysis, underpin the planning and project development of the NJTPA and Plan 2045. This data will continue to be explored by NJTPA.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos indicates that on page 37, Map XX should be labeled Map 2.

Response: This will be revised.

Comment Summary: On Page 44, in the Autonomous Vehicle Sidebar, Mr. Lysicatos asked that Plan 2045 highlight how autonomous vehicle trips are paid for and how this can create a new funding formula combined with public transportation. He also mentions that the advent of autonomous vehicles has impacts on trucking and freight.

Response: The purpose of the sidebar is only to introduce questions about the uncertain impacts of autonomous vehicles. The Financial Element chapter identifies taxes on demand-based transportation services, which in the future may include autonomous vehicles, as a potential option for future transportation revenue. The freight logistics sidebar on page 57 mentions truck platooning and other freight technology.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos questions the plan's statement that connections between urban areas are generally available in the Urban/Downtown Connectivity section (page 48). He says this is not the case as there are major time delays between urban areas (such as Paterson and Newark).

Response: Text on page 48 will be changed as follows:

Rail transit connections are available among and between some North Jersey's urban areas and denser downtowns that have train stations, but service can be infrequent, and residential areas — such as Ridgewood, Montclair or Hackettstown. ~~are generally available, especially for those areas with train stations.~~ Bus service also varies, by route as well as by time and day of the week (weekday/weekend). Walkability contributes to the attractiveness of using transit in these areas. Bus access to these locations can be slow or infrequent depending on the route and destination.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos says the need for the Bergen Loop to provide the connection for Bergen and Passaic Counties must be highlighted in the report. The expansion of Penn Station is needed in order to expand capacity which would be after the first phase is completed through the Hudson Tunnel project.

Response: The Bergen Loop is mentioned in the Trans-Hudson sidebar on page 71. The need to expand Penn Station capacity can be found in Chapter 5.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos states that there must be an equal accounting for urban core markets vs. the New York/Hudson River markets if New Jersey is to reap the benefits of job growth. There is nothing mentioned about the Passaic-Bergen-Hudson Rail Project (and other intra-state rail projects) currently in the technical study phase.

Response: The need for serving New Jersey's urban core markets is recognized in a number of places in Plan 2045. Page 37 states, "Also mirroring population growth, the long standing trend of outward movement of jobs from the urban core is reversing. Companies that favored corporate campuses in suburban or rural areas in the 1980s are moving jobs back to the urban core and downtown areas, particularly walkable locations with transit access." In addition, the transit section beginning on page 83, as well as the transit appendix, discuss issues involving a number of intraregional bus and rail services. The Bergen-Passaic rail service is referred to in the Transit Appendix on page 3 under Regional Rail Extensions of service.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos asks that Hurricane Irene be listed as a major impact on resiliency (page 65) as this had a significant impact to land use, business continuity and transportation services through all the riverine counties in Northern New Jersey.

Response: Hurricane Irene will be added to the text on page 65: "Heeding the lessons of Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene and the 9/11 tragedy before it..."

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos says the reality of transit expansion as a driving factor in this plan is severely diminished with only 4% of the RCIS allocation. This total is matched by road enhancements and expansion which was deprioritized in the text. The fact that 36% of the allocation has to go to Transit preservation shows that funds have been misallocated and the system has been allowed to fall into disrepair.

Response: Plan 2045 calls for targeted expansion of transit facilities and supports expansion of transit services where justified and feasible. Given the vast network of transit facilities in the NJTPA region, and their long history and age, considerable resources are needed to preserve these assets. It should be noted that with 44% allocated to transit (excluding the Gateway Program), the RCIS makes a large commitment to transit preservation, enhancement and expansion, while taking a balanced approach to the overall allocation of transportation resources.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos says there should be a sidebar for the various rail expansion projects that have been proposed and included in the State's planning.

Response: The Transit Appendix outlines transit expansion projects and related needs.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos says the plan's statement that "most County roads do qualify for federal funding" in the fifth paragraph on page 75 should be revisited to ensure it is accurate. The plan should also address the growing disparity in the urban

counties and the funding needs as a result of the centerline mile calculation and the higher demand for trips on these roadways.

Response:

Page 75 will be changed as follows:

However, much of the costs for these and other potential road improvements fall to county and local governments, which face serious budget constraints maintaining existing road networks. **While federal funding is available for some improvements, and NJTPA has a number of programs available to assist counties with the improvements, obtaining the funding involves following a complicated and lengthy process to meet federal requirements.** ~~Many of these roads are not on the federal aid system, so work on them is often not eligible for federal funding.~~

Plan 2045 supports, “expanded state funding for county and local road and bridge needs.” (Page 75). How this is accomplished is beyond the scope of Plan 2045.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos notes that on page 97 – The map of Safety Improvements and Street Smart Pedestrian Safety Campaigns on Page 97 is missing the local safety project completed along Main Avenue in the City of Passaic.

Response: The project will be added to the map.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos asked that the Passaic County Highlands Rail Trail be added to the list of greenways on page 104.

Response: The Highlands Rail Trail will be added.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos asks that the discussion of using abandoned ROW on page 130 (Chapter 7, Looking Forward) i not include the discussion of the Bergen Arches as it has been the subject of long-time litigation and has a very uncertain future.

Response: The Bergen Arches represents a potentially important transportation asset for the region.

Comment Summary: Mr. Lysicatos provided several projects that he felt should be added to the Project Index.

Response: The projects and the NJTPA’s responses are as follows:

- Morris Canal Greenway (Phases 2, 3 and 4) Browertown Road, Peckman River Crossing, NJDWSC ROW – Funding of Morris Canal Greenway projects are accomplished through programs and are not listed individually in the project index.
- Spruce Street Gateway Improvements – This project is funded through a NJ DOT program. Programmatic items are not listed individually in the project index.

- Main Avenue Concept Development – Listed on page 19 of the project index.
- 286K Car upgrades (two bridges) – Insufficient information provided.
- Multiple other project listings. – Insufficient information provided.
- The Passaic-Bergen-Hudson Rail Project (among others) should be listed as long-term projects – This project and others are referenced in the Transit Appendix; however, they are dependent on increases in capacity through the core of the New Jersey rail system as discussed in Plan 2045’s Transit Appendix. For this reason, they are not listed in the Project Index. Additionally, an alternatives analysis study is underway, which would determine the preferred alternative.

Commenter: David Schmetterer, Monmouth County Division of Planning

Comment Summary: Mr. Schmetterer provided a number of comments that address typographical, stylistic and substantive aspects of Plan 2045. Any typographical and stylistic errors will be corrected in the final printed plan. Substantive comments are addressed as follows:

Comment Summary: Avoid brand names (Hyperloop, Google, Uber, Lyft...) and use “ride hailing” instead of “ride sharing”.

Response: Plan 2045 uses the term “Ride hailing” throughout. References to brand names are used to illustrate ride hailing services.

Comment Summary: References to 3D printing suggest that it is the only potentially disruptive manufacturing technology. A broad alternative term for 3D printing is small scale manufacturing and rapid prototyping.

Response: Based on experts consulted in preparing Plan 2045, 3D printing is the major potential “game changer.”

Comment Summary: Page 34-35 references population over 65 in various counties. The 2015 one year estimate for over 65 population (2015 ACS) shows Monmouth at 16%.

Response: Plan 2045 uses 2011-2015 Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), which is generally considered more accurate than one year survey data.

Comment Summary: Discussion of maglev and hyperloop technologies on page 44 is overly confident.

Response: Page 44: Train systems will get faster and more energy efficient, ~~with maglev and hyperloop systems somewhere in the future.~~ **The future may include game changing technologies such as maglev and hyperloop.**

Comment Summary: Bus on Shoulder is on Route 9 in Middlesex County, not Route 9 in Monmouth County as it is stated, currently

Response: Page 76 will be changed – In addition, bus travel can be enhanced by “bus on shoulder” operations as seen along Route 9 in ~~Monmouth County~~ **Middlesex County**.

Comment Summary: One seat rides to NYC on the NJCL are also something worth mentioning in the long range plan (in addition to the Raritan Valley Line).

Response: There is some existing peak hour one seat ride service on the North Jersey Coast Line. Page 85: Change “... ~~expansion~~ **institution** of the one seat ride to New York City on the Raritan Valley Line...”

Comment Summary: Page 103, Asbury Park operates a bikeshare system as well. <http://bike.zagster.com/asburypark/>

Response: Page 103, add to the end of the first paragraph: **Asbury Park in Monmouth County has a bike share program.**

Comment Summary: Page 104 – add mention of the Hudson Trail as a trail to be supported.

Response: The Hudson Trail will be added.

Commenter: Neile Weissman

Comment Summary: Mr. Weissman states that NJTPA should take every opportunity to fully integrate biking and walking into the transportation matrix, emulating best practices of cities around the world where cycling has reached double-digit mode share. Cycling, he says, is a tool to reduce congestion, transportation, public health costs; attain air quality standards; enhance resiliency, sustainability, tourism, affordability, competitiveness. Among other measures, he calls for:

- Expanded GWB cycling facilities and a connected bike grid serving 11 densely populated municipalities by reallocating a small share of multi-billion dollar Port Authority infrastructure spending.
- Set and fund improvements to achieve bicycle mode share targets in high-density areas: 2% by 2025, 5% by 2035, 10% by 2045
- Apply performance-based planning across transit modes to maximize the benefit of constrained resources, recognizing that cycling and walking are the most efficient mode of travel.
- Apply relevant national standards for biking-walking facilities to all new and reconstruction transport projects (USDOT, AASHTO, FHWA)

Mr. Weissman cites examples of cities throughout the world that have invested heavily in cycling infrastructure and reaped the benefits such as Tokyo, a city of 13 million, where 90% use mass transit for their daily commute and one third bike the first-and-last mile. Among the benefits of cycling he cites:

- Cycling can help remedy clean air issues and reduce greenhouse gases.
- It can mitigate congestion -- an expansion of GWB paths could support 10K bicycle commuters per day, reducing demand on roads and the Port Authority Bus Terminal.
- Cycling could also greatly enhance resiliency as demonstrated by increased cycling on East River bridges following SuperStorm Sandy.
- By reducing demand for other modes of transport, bike travel extends the life of existing facilities.
- Cycling infrastructure is justified by public health models
- Active transportation was found to contribute half a billion dollars per year to the New Jersey economy.
- By enhancing rural economies, cycle tourism reduces the need to convert open space for development.

Mr. Weissman states that expansion of GWB walking and cycling facilities would have substantial economic benefits; Camoin Associates projected that a linear park across the GWB would attract \$42 million per year and sustain 675 jobs.

Response: Plan 2045 supports expansion of walking and biking throughout the region as discussed on page 102 in the Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety & Connectivity section of Chapter 5. This section notes that “Walking and biking are integral to regional mobility and contribute to quality of life, economic vitality, healthy living and environmental protection.”

Walking and biking are also the subject of an RCIS principle (p. 172) guiding future investment: “Support Walking and Bicycling - All transportation projects should promote walking and bicycling wherever possible.” Guidelines under this principle reflect efforts to realize many of the benefits cited by Mr. Weissman. In addition, the plan calls for support for Complete Streets policies by local governments and reflects many approaches to regional development in the Together North Jersey plan, notably creating more livable communities, that accommodate walking and biking.

Regarding expansion of GWB walking and biking facilities, the Port Authority addressed this concern at a public NJTPA committee meeting in October 2016. Port Authority staff reported that the comprehensive infrastructure rehabilitation program for the George Washington Bridge includes ADA-compliant access and other improvements at the Manhattan and Fort Lee connections to both the north and south pathways on the bridge. In place of the single shared cyclist and pedestrian path currently available, the northern path will be dedicated to cyclists and the southern path to pedestrians.

Port Authority staff note that they met with cycling organizations to get their input, and that the Port Authority's 2017 agency-wide Bicycle Master Plan states that GWB cycling and pedestrian volumes are being monitored, and that the design of the planned capital projects does not preclude further enhancement of bicycle access as a future improvement based on growth in demand. As noted above, the NJTPA supports expansion of cycling and pedestrian networks and facilities region-wide, and encourages continued efforts by the Port Authority and others to improve safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access as a regional mobility strategy.

Commenter: Tom Drabic, Sussex County Planner

Comment Summary: Mr. Drabic noted the county's support for many of Plan 2045's goals and priorities:

- The County is supportive of the new 7th Goal to "Improve overall system safety, reducing serious injuries and fatalities for all travelers on all modes". He notes that this is a high priority for Sussex County and is evident in a number of efforts in the County including Street Smart Pedestrian Safety Campaigns and very successful High Risk Rural Road projects.
- The County recognizes and is supportive of the need to increase Trans-Hudson capacity – in particular the need for new Hudson River Tunnels - due to their impact on the region's economy.
- The County recognizes the importance of and the need to improve goods movement and freight facilities in the region - including the Port of NY and NJ. In particular, the County feels the NYS&W railroad offers one of the best opportunities in the County for increased freight activity.
- The County supports continued progress in streamlining project delivery to make timely and efficient use of available funds.
- The County agrees with the RCIS's top investment priority, which is – "maintaining and preserving existing infrastructure – in all modes", followed by the second highest priority of enhancing and expanding transit.
- In terms of Needs, Strategies and Implementation in Plan 2045, Sussex County supports upgrading roads and intersections to improve safety, efficiency and traffic flow and continuing efforts to further reduce the backlog of needed bridge repair and replacement and improved preventative maintenance.

No response needed.

Comment Summary: Sussex County notes that Plan 2045 was guided by the Together North Jersey (TNJ) Plan effort which identifies how transportation investments can help address broad regional objectives such as improved mobility. It should be noted that the County's TNJ Study – The Sussex County Strategic Growth Plan Update identifies improving the County's transportation system as one of the highest priority objectives in the County.

No response needed.

Comment Summary: The County feels that more resources and funding are needed to help the Subregions develop and design projects. This would also put subregions in a better position to better help the NJTPA meet its regional goals.

Response: The NJTPA seeks to support the subregions in their transportation planning and capital program development that implements Plan 2045, and continues to look to improve this process where possible.

Commentor: Carolyn Grossman Meagher, Director of Regional Planning, NYC
Department of Planning

Comment Summary: Ms. Grossman Meagher states that New York City and New Jersey are intertwined from a transportation perspective as hundreds of thousands of commuters cross the Hudson River by all modes daily. She supports Plan 2045's call for the Hudson River Tunnels and for the Gateway Program, and applauds the NJTPA and NYMTC for their collaborative planning efforts, such as through the Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum. She encourages the NJTPA to pursue creative strategies to address trans-Hudson travel needs, and notes that continued employment and residential development in areas such as Jersey City and Newark and beneficial to NYC as well.

No response needed.