



**Written Comments Received on Plan 2050, the FY 2022-2025
Transportation Improvement Program, FY 2022-2031 State
Transportation Improvement Program, and Air Quality Conformity
Determination and Responses
REVISED August 23, 2021**

The NJTPA provided many opportunities for public input when drafting *Plan 2050: Transportation, People, Opportunity*. However, due to the ongoing pandemic, all public outreach events were conducted virtually using a combination of digital and social media technologies.

Among outreach activities, the NJTPA promoted a short survey completed by more than 2,100 people. In addition, staff conducted an extensive series of 23 virtual public workshops and specialized meetings (including one entirely in Spanish) and four TPA Tuesday symposia to engage nearly 1,000 more people at various times of day and days of the week. In addition to digital outreach, 20,000 bookmarks were distributed to libraries in the NJTPA region with a phone number people could call to provide input. Printed copies of the online survey were also distributed to libraries.

In addition, a website, www.NJTPA.org/Plan2050 was established to facilitate input into Plan 2050. Facebook and other social media channels (including Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube) were used extensively to engage more than 30,000 people (with a reach topping 3 million people) and get the word out about virtual public events, the survey, and the availability of draft documents. The NJTPA also used its own website and e-mail lists to make all draft documents available and to provide a portal for public input.

Finally, the draft document was the subject of a 30-day public comment period (beginning on July 6, 2021 and concluding August 4, 2021) as required by federal law. The comment period also provided an opportunity for public review of the draft FY 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the FY 2022-2031 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the accompanying Air Quality Conformity Determination for both Plan 2050 and the TIP.

Before the start of the public comment period, the draft Plan, TIP, and Air Quality Conformity Determination documents were distributed by mail or electronically (as requested) to the state-designated main libraries in each county in the NJTPA region. Also, the draft documents were distributed electronically to the NJTPA's Board of Trustees, Board alternates, members of the NJTPA's Regional Technical Advisory Committee, the federally recognized Tribal Nations and any other parties who so requested. The NJTPA also used its electronic mailing list, and the list of people who participated in outreach events, to distribute links to all draft documents,

provide information about the public comment period, and announce opportunities to provide input.

During the public comment period, the NJTPA held a virtual open house public meeting on July 27, 2021. Thirty-eight people participated. This meeting, preceded by a separate public workshop on the draft Air Quality Conformity Determination attended by 23 people, included a general presentation, given several times, and a series of virtual breakout rooms where people could ask questions and get more information about Plan 2050, the TIP/STIP, Air Quality Conformity Determination, and public outreach. There also was as a separate breakout room for attendees to participate in Spanish.

This document contains summaries of comments received during the 30-day public comment period and NJTPA's responses. The full text of written comments will be made available at the NJTPA website.

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

GENERAL COMMENTS

- **Commenter: Aaron R. Deutsch**

Summary: Bike lanes and full shoulders should be part of road repaving projects, such as Paramus Road in Paramus. Bike/ped improvements must be considered for every transportation improvement project to improve access and mobility and to close gaps.

Response: Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and safety is an important part of Plan 2050, and the NJTPA prepared a background paper on this topic, available at <https://njtpa.org/plan2050>. The issues raised by this commenter also are recognized in the Walking and Biking section of Chapter 4 and elsewhere in the draft of Plan 2050. In addition, the NJTPA has begun work to develop an active transportation plan for the entire NJTPA region. This plan will identify and address critical gaps in the active transportation network, such as overcoming barrier roads and connecting trails to each other and to important destinations.

- **Commenter: Kweli Campbell**

Summary: Municipalities should replace outdated ordinances that may discourage bike use; this becomes important for equity work regarding cycling/walking in communities of color.

There should be more outreach to drivers (particularly new drivers and when licenses are renewed), not just cyclists and pedestrians, regarding the need to safely share the road, especially where there are no bike lanes.

Plan 2050 references scooters but not bikeshare programs; bike sharing is especially important to address first-/last-mile gaps to and from transportation hubs.

Response: The NJTPA has worked with many communities through the NJTPA Complete Streets program to encourage bikeable, walkable communities. See <https://www.njtpa.org/completestreets.aspx> While it is up to municipalities to create local policies and programs that support biking, these two programs offer technical tools, and these comments will be considered as part of future program activities. Both programs are mentioned in Chapter 1 and the Walking-Biking section of Chapter 5. The NJTPA Street Smart Pedestrian safety program is also described in that section. Bikeshare programs are referenced in Plan 2050 in Chapter 5, Technology section.

- **Commenter: Neile Weissman of Complete George**

Summary: The commenter submitted a proposal for improving cycling in the region which was submitted in writing. The proposal recommends greater funding for bicycle infrastructure, including the path on the George Washington Bridge, and for the creation of a network of numbered bicycle routes in New Jersey, as exists in New York State and in other places. Also recommends that Essex County allow bicycling in South Mountain Reservation.

Response: These recommendations are excellent input for the Active Transportation Plan NJTPA will be developing beginning early in 2022.

- **Commenter: Andrew Herrera**

Summary: Commenter is a graduate student in city planning at Rutgers University and noted concern about climate change issues; he suggested the NJTPA support Transit Oriented Development. Getting people to drive less will reduce carbon emissions and make it easier to replace existing gas-fueled cars with electric vehicles. People who drive less would be able to walk and bike more often but also have access to public transit so they can more easily take trips to places like New York. The NJTPA can support TOD by improving the transportation infrastructure and encouraging people to live in New Jersey's Transit Villages. The NJTPA might help NJ TRANSIT build electric bus infrastructure and acquire electric trains.

Response: The NJTPA has long supported TOD, in conjunction with the State of New Jersey's Transit Village Program and the NJTPA Planning for Emerging Centers Program. This is outlined in Chapter 5 in the Transit section. Regarding support for NJ TRANSIT infrastructure upgrades, including lower-emission buses and trains, the NJ TRANSIT 10-year Capital Program and 5-year Strategic Plan are integral to both Chapter 5, Implementation, and to Chapter 7, Financing the Plan.

Commenter: Anthony Talerico, Mayor, Eatontown

Summary: The mayor noted that Eatontown was the first New Jersey municipality to adopt the NJDOT Complete and Green Streets policy by ordinance. He would like to see the creation of a "Bike to the Beach Route" in central Monmouth County that would follow Route 36 and

connect Eatontown with Long Branch Beaches, the racetrack in Oceanport, Monmouth University in North Long Branch and the mall in Eatontown. It could continue on local roads to Sandy Hook and the Henry Hudson Trail.

Response: The NJTPA will forward this idea to NJDOT, who has jurisdiction over Route 36, and to Monmouth County. Regional trails will also be part of the NJTPA Active Transportation Plan, to begin in 2022, and this information will be forwarded to the project manager.

COMMENTS FROM NEW JERSEY NJ BIKE WALK COALITION (NJBWC)

Summary: Debra Kagan, Executive Director of NJBWC submitted numerous pages of comments from Coalition staff and members. They are summarized and responded to below by topic area.

Accessibility – NJBWC Comments

Comment: The “Guidance for Long Range Planning” on page 6 should include taking an “all ages and abilities or 8-80” approach to planning and designing the transportation system.

Response: This can be considered when goals are examined during the next LRTP update in 2025.

Comment: More attention should be given in the plan to the importance of providing affordable mobility, a major equity issue in the region.

Response: The affordability of the transportation system is an important equity consideration and is reflected in NJTPA’s planning goals (“Provide affordable, accessible and dynamic transportation...”) and is identified as a priority in Plan 2050 for promoting accessibility and in implementing new technologies.

Comment: Support for E-Scooter and Bike Share programs are key to increasing mobility options, especially in denser areas.

Response: Agreed. See Chapter 5 for discussion of both.

Comment: In order to meet New Jersey’s climate change goals, we need to reduce our VMT and increase opportunities that encourage active transportation users. Overarching goals should include a focus on creating a mode shift in the region to increase levels of cycling and walking, with a recognition that one of the greatest benefits to this shift is that it reduces vehicle congestion and greenhouse gas emissions within densely populated and urban areas.

Response: Appendix A contains background papers on Climate Change and Active Transportation. Both contain strategies to reduce VMT. We have not set specific modal

shift goals in the past and can consider this for future planning work. NJTPA's Transportation Demand Management plan, highlighted in Chapter 5 focuses on reducing single occupant VMT.

Comment: MPOs are required to track measures of various aspects of transportation performance, however the performance measures are very car-centric and when geared towards bicyclists and pedestrians tend to be focused solely on safety. How can we further develop these performance measures to focus on the "quality of service" (accessibility, convenience, comfort, AND safety) and the movement of people, not just vehicles, through the region? NJTPA might consider developing "Quality of Service Standards" that look at the quality of infrastructure, as well as travel time performance measures for active transportation.

Response: The NJTPA tracks many performance measures, including the federally mandated ones that are highlighted in Chapter 4 and System Performance, Appendix B. The regional performance measures provide a broad set of performance goals: <https://www.njtpa.org/Planning/Plans-Guidance/Performance-Measures/Regional-Performance-Measures.aspx>. As performance measurement approaches are explored, quality of service can be considered in future performance assessments in cooperation with operating agencies.

Note: The following three comments are addressed in a single response below.

Comment: In the Active Transportation in the NJTPA region background paper, the Level of Bicycle Compatibility Analysis states that 46% of NJ roads fall into category 3: moderate traffic street, comfortable for those who already ride bicycles. This analysis seems generous. Given the high numbers of serious injury and fatalities in the state NJTPA should create a more detailed analysis of the level of compatibility.

Comment: An Active Transportation Plan should create a publicly available central inventory of existing and proposed active transportation facilities.

Comment: The proposed Active Transportation Plan should include a strategic investment plan that would make it easier for people to cycle from New Jersey cities and suburbs into New York.

Response: These three comments, taken together, are excellent input for the Active Transportation Plan the NJTPA will be developing beginning in 2022.

Road Safety– NJBWC Comments

Note: The following two comments are addressed in a single response below.

Comment: Strategies should include learning from changes seen during the pandemic and thinking differently about what and who our streets are meant for - deprioritizing speed and vehicles in highly urban areas and prioritizing safety and people.

Comment: Local municipalities often experience difficulties in knowing where to start with implementing Complete Streets in their cities/towns. The plan should include strategies that further assist local municipalities in implementation of the NJDOT Complete and Green Streets policy.

Response: In the Walking and Biking section of Chapter 5 is a discussion of complete streets, including the NJTPA planning efforts to support them. Further information can be found at <https://www.njtpa.org/completestreets.aspx> Step-by-step guidance is a good suggestion for these efforts.

Note: The following two comments are addressed in a single response below.

Comment: The New Jersey Safe Passing bill will become law this year. The plan should incorporate a strategy for an education/promotion campaign to increase awareness of this law through its Street Smart Program.

Comment: NJTPA should do an analysis study of the effects of the current Street Smart Program to assess its impact at improving road safety and level of implementation by municipalities.

Response: Including education about the new Safe Passing law will be considered for the Street Smart NJ program. Street Smart is evaluated regularly for its effectiveness. The evaluation reports will be added more prominently to the StreetsmartNJ.com website, including this report: https://bestreetsmartnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/NJTPA-Observational-Final-Report_08122019.pdf

Comment: NJTPA should include its own target of zero serious injuries and fatalities on roadways in the region (Vision Zero), as well as provide resources to counties and municipalities adopting their own vision zero policies.

Response: The NJTPA works closely with NJDOT and other agencies to implement the goals and strategies of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan and the federally mandated safety performance measures. At present, New Jersey has not adopted Vision Zero.

Comment: NJTPA should do a high injury network analysis for the region to address the most dangerous corridors for people walking, bicycling, and driving as part of the Local Safety Program and this information should be publicly available.

Response: The NJTPA uses high crash corridors identified through crash data to prioritize and fund safety improvements. In particular, the Local Safety Program as resulted in numerous safety upgrades at high crash locations.

Comment: A sidewalk inventory, similar to the one done by DVRPC, should be done for NJTPA to address the issue of pedestrian safety, noted to be a serious problem in the Long Range Plan.

Response: The NJTPA is working with NJIT to develop a sidewalk inventory. However, it is still in development and was not ready for inclusion in Plan 2050.

Trails – NJBWC Comments

Comment: The Bike Walk Coalition commends the LRTP draft’s inclusion of trails as areas of interest in implementing safe and accessible transportation options. Specifically, the mentioning of the Essex-Hudson Greenway as a potential project to achieve these goals is much appreciated.

Response: The NJTPA thanks the Coalition for this comment.

Comment: The plan should include opportunities and strategies for developing a regional North Jersey Trail network of urban trails in North Jersey that can serve as a safe, off road active transportation network, using the Circuit Trails as a model.

Response: These are excellent recommendations to consider as the NJTPA develops its Active Transportation Plan, to begin early in 2022.

Comment: The Essex-Hudson Greenway is mentioned briefly on page 63. This project should also be mentioned in the Plan 2050 Background Paper on Active Transportation.

Response: The background papers are intended as building blocks for Plan 2050 and are not being amended at this time. As noted, the Essex-Hudson Greenway is mentioned in Plan 2050.

Integration (Transit + Walking + Biking) – NJBWC Comments

Comment: NJ Bike Walk would recommend including the creation of an integrated and reliable transportation systems that effectively achieves the seamless operation of multiple modes of transportation.

Response: The NJTPA thanks the Coalition for this comment.

Comment: NJTPA should consider the development of a regional plan for mobility hubs or park-and-ride facilities that would be located outside cities and offer retail, services, and parking as well as connections to transit that would shuttle travelers into urban areas.

Response: This suggestion can be considered for possible future planning studies. It should be noted that Plan 2050 places priority on improving “Accessibility” rather than upgrades to single modes as part of efforts to take a holistic approach to needs.

Comment: The 51 percent of funding allocated to support the transit network should be allowed to be spent on adequate bicycle parking at stations and first-last mile solutions to help people arrive and leave from stations.

Response: NJ TRANSIT provides bicycle parking, and the Transportation Management Associations work to develop first and last mile solutions to stations. The NJTPA supports these efforts. They are outlined in Chapter 5.

Comment: Strategies to support active transportation in the proposed Active Transportation Plan must include an emphasis on implementing a ‘network level approach’ to planning infrastructure. The network of active transportation infrastructure should connect important destinations in the region to facilitate transportation to schools, places of work, health care facilities and downtown centers.

Response: This is an excellent suggestion for the upcoming Active Transportation Plan.

Note: The following two comments are addressed in a single response below.

Comment: Transit systems need safe, last-mile solutions. When a bike/walk and train combination is implemented it contributes to more equitable transportation access as well as a reduction in automobile use, congestion, and air pollution.

Comment: An important part of creating this integration is developing a regional strategic plan for bicycle parking at transit stations and other important commercial destinations in the region. Lack of adequate bicycle parking is a significant factor in discouraging people to cycle.

Response: The NJTPA agrees with these comments.

Funding– NJBWC Comments

Note: The following two comments are addressed in a single response below.

Comment: Strategies should include identifying new and innovative funding sources needed to implement bicycle and pedestrian projects (in addition to transit improvements).

Comment: Making the connections of climate change, health, economic development benefits for bike/ped projects and identifying additional funding sources that link to these issue areas for active transportation projects.

Response: Greater and more varied funding is certainly needed for active transportation investments. The NJTPA seeks to promote such opportunities to facility owners as they become available and refines its project selection criteria periodically to reflect changing priorities.

Comment: The plan discusses that 64 percent or more of the budget must be devoted to maintaining and improving existing infrastructure. This maintenance should also apply to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, but too often we see bike lanes with faded paint, debris, and potholes and cracked sidewalks. The LRTP should dedicate a percentage of this funding to the maintenance of bike/ped infrastructure and explain how these funds will remain secure for that.

Response: Maintenance of infrastructure is the responsibility of the entities that own that infrastructure, which can include the state, counties, municipalities and private entities.

This is beyond the scope of the NJTPA long range transportation plan, although the NJTPA works with all these entities.

Additional comments – NJBWC

The NJ BWC reached out to members of their community for additional comments and suggestions. These comments discussed road safety, specifically in shore communities; trails; and adopting a systems level approach to improve active transportation and transit infrastructure planning.

Response: Plan 2050 seeks to improve safe and accessible walking and biking infrastructure as suggested by Coalition members. Exploring opportunities for further progress will be the focus of the Active Transportation Plan being developed in 2022. The NJTPA will forward suggestions raised by members relating to specific counties/municipalities to appropriate officials – including Bergen, Hudson, Monmouth and Morris counties. In addition, concerns about statewide infrastructure will be shared with NJDOT.

Also, the NJTPA recognizes the importance of the Essex Hudson Greenway and other regional trails in the Walking and Biking section of Chapter 5 and in discussions of active transportation. This provides the foundation for further study and planning of proposed trails in cooperation with member agencies and eventual funding if warranted.

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN COMMENTS

Summary: Among comments submitted by Janna Chernetz, Tri-State Transportation Campaign are the following:

- Plan 2050 should ensure that active transportation networks are created and connected; the region needs to plan for more Bus Rapid Transit;
- The NJTPA should adopt its own Vision Zero safety targets and provide resources for communities to do the same;
- The NJTPA should conduct a high injury network analysis for the region to identify and address dangerous travel corridors;
- Crash data and related info should be made publicly available; a sidewalk inventory should be conducted;
- The NJTPA needs to prioritize transportation improvements for lower-income communities that depend on bus service;
- Intra-city bus service carries more people yet does not get prioritized compared to rail transit, which has declined during the pandemic (priority is needed for seven-days-per-week service);
- More investment is needed in accessible transit infrastructure;
- Support NJ TRANSIT meeting the statutory mandate of converting to an all-EV bus fleet. Priority for roll out must be in environmental justice communities;
- Resulting from the pandemic, there has been a substantial increase in goods delivery. This translates to an increase in truck traffic on neighborhood roads, ports, and highways. This

threatens the safety and health of those who walk, bike, drive and live around these roads. Priority must be given to reduce the need for truck traffic, incentivize truck transport during low volume hours and electrify trucks to reduce harmful emissions.

Response: The NJTPA has the following responses to the Campaign's comments:

- The Active Transportation background paper expands on these concerns related to accessibility. See Appendix A.
- The NJTPA agrees that Bus Rapid Transit is an important part of the transit network.
- Regarding safety, the NJTPA works closely with NJDOT and other agencies to implement the goals and strategies of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan and the federally mandated safety performance measures. At present, New Jersey has not adopted Vision Zero. The NJTPA uses high crash corridors identified through crash data to prioritize and fund safety improvements. Of course, the ultimate goal is that no lives are lost on the transportation system.
- Regarding the availability of crash data for the public, the NJTPA works with NJDOT, DHTS and other partners on data issues. There are some safety statistics on the NJTPA website. In addition, NJTPA staff may assist with crash data analysis as requested.
- The NJTPA is working with NJIT to develop a sidewalk inventory. It is not ready for inclusion in Plan 2050.
- The NJTPA agrees that transit, particularly bus transit, is critical to the accessibility and mobility of the region's residents and visitors, particularly for low-income communities. The NJTPA works closely with NJ TRANSIT to plan and invest in improving the transit system so that it meets the changing needs of the future. The Transit section of Chapter 5, developed in close coordinated with NJ TRANSIT, outlines these priorities. In addition, Plan 2050 supports NJ TRANSIT's 5-year Strategic Plan and 10-year Capital Plan, which include an ambitious vision for the agency.
- Regarding air quality, as mentioned above, Plan 2050 supports NJ TRANSIT's planning documents and their goals for fleet electrification.
- Addressing goods movement issues in complete streets planning is a regular component of NJTPA planning efforts. Thank you for bringing its inadvertent omission from Plan 2050 to our attention. The following sentence, in bold, will be added to the complete streets section in Chapter 5, Walking and Biking:

Other NJTPA programs supporting regional complete streets are the Subregional Transportation Program, the Subregional Studies Program, the Planning for Emerging Centers Program, Together North Jersey Initiatives, walkability audits and Road Safety Audits. **Integrating truck movement and goods movement needs are an important part of these planning efforts.** The Planning for Emerging Centers Program recently completed a Complete Streets Policy and Implementation Plan for the Borough of Keyport and the Hoboken Complete Streets Implementation Plan.

COMMENTS ON THE NORTHERN VALLEY GREENWAY

Several comments were received advocating further development and funding for the Northern Valley Greenway in Bergen County. Northern Valley Greenway is a concept for an 8-mile-long, linear park running through six towns in the county: Tenafly, Cresskill, Demarest, Closter, Norwood & Northvale. It would be built on an existing unused section of CSX Transportation's Northern Branch Corridor rail line north of Englewood. The commentors were:

Todd Adelma, The Cottrell Family, Jack Zeigher, Vivian Holzer, Dale Muto, Deborah Katz and Betsy Longendorfer. In addition, comments were received from local officials: Melinda Ianuzzi, Mayor of Demarest, NJ and Closter NJ Mayor and Council with John Glidden (Mayor); Alissa Latner (council president); Victoria Amitai (councilperson); Dolores Witko (councilperson); Jannie Chung councilperson.

Among the points raised:

- The Northern Valley Greenway would greatly improve access to nature, create opportunities for exercise, and would provide alternative means of transportation for thousands of residents including access to shopping, services, and recreation in many traffic-congested smaller towns.
- The greenway could offer potential educational, cultural, art, and nature opportunities for schools and residents, creating much needed additional green space in the county. The old CSX freight railroad tracks could be transformed into an enriching public space.
- It could boost local businesses and towns; and it would be a safe place for children to ride bikes, walk, or run without traffic, including providing students a safer path to Cresskill High School and other destinations.
- There is a growing movement across the country to establish safe cycling paths and the pandemic has increased demand for them. Towns along The Northern Valley Greenway support the proposed project. It would preserve a key transportation corridor and
- New York State has already turned its portion of the former Northern Branch Corridor into a rail trail. The Northern Valley Greenway would link to the Joseph P. Clarke Rail Trail at the New York Border, connecting it to Piermont, Orange, Nyack, and Blauvelt via the Old Eire Path and Raymond Esposito Trail. The southern terminus of the Greenway would provide access to the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Northern Branch Corridor Extension, enhancing the use of mass transit.
- While the greenway is mentioned in Plan 2050, it merits additional consideration, including financial and technical assistance. The project traverses six small municipalities that would otherwise lack the resources and expertise to execute such a project. The NJ Department of Transportation conducted a feasibility study that found no fatal flaws for this unique opportunity for active transportation in Bergen County.

Response: The following was added to the walking and biking section of Chapter 5 (in bold):

The NJTPA will continue to support improvements that make biking and walking safer and to improve access to transit for cyclists and pedestrians. Efforts are also underway to create more walking and cycling trails throughout the region, and to upgrade

infrastructure and connections to provide better walk and bike access to recreational, employment, residential and other destinations. The NJTPA is assessing safety needs where off-road trails cross roadways to make systemic upgrades along busy trails.

The efforts are often part of locally led initiatives to realize complete streets (see sidebar) **and to expand and initiate new trails**. Safe and attractive walking and biking routes are especially critical in low-income communities and minority communities, where data shows disproportionate serious injuries and fatalities for pedestrians. **Among the trails that should be explored for development and possible funding in the region, the Northern Valley Greenway would run through five towns in Bergen County (Tenafly, Cresskill, Demarest, Closter, Norwood and Northvale), providing safe bicycle and pedestrian connections among several mixed income areas.**

COMMENTS ON ROCKFALL PROJECTS IN THE TIP

A large number of comments were received objecting to the I-80 Rockfall Mitigation project in Warren County and a similar project on Route 29 in Hunterdon County undergoing project development. The text of these comments, along with all others received, will be posted to NJTPA.org/plan2050. The commentors on this topic were the following:

Adrienne Edwards	Alice Susan Cooper	Ann Hartig
Anna-Marie Jones	Birger Luecht	Brian Barends
Charles Fueker	Charles McKenna	Chris Merli
Chris Smith	Christine Molinski	Cindy Nelson
Deborah Kratzer, Chair, Kingwood Township Environmental Commission	Dianne Milonas	Donna Price
Dr. James Wells	Eileen Reed	Eleanor Shelton
Elise Transue	Elizabeth Townsend	Eugene Schoener
Florence Glancey	George Allaman	Isle Polonko
Jim Friedlander	Jody Shick	John Kulp
Jon Beaulieu	Joseph Barinas	Joyce Ely
Karin P.	Katen Kooi	Kathy Pritchard
Kevin O'Neill	Kim Schad	Kristen Hamill
Lary Range	Lucia Frazier	Malcom Leslie
Marie Carota	Meg Eubank	Nancy Jones
Nicole Dallal	Randi Peterson	Raymond Miller
Rick Porvaznik	Ronald Aloisio	Scott Csezmadia
Shealynn O'Toole	Sigrid Sorg	Sondra Billings
Susan Wells	Susie Ray	Tara Mezzanotte
Thomas Brankner	Thomas Pfau	Tom Coenen and Dan Kurak
Marion Kyde, Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Management Council	Sharon Furlong, Bucks County Environmental Action	

Among the organizations represented submitting comments on this topic: Devil's Tea Table Alliance, Friends of Treasure Island, Bucks Environmental Action, Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Management Council, and Kingwood Township Environmental Commission.

Among the objections raised:

- The NJDOT may have violated their own project development policy regarding the projects. The projects therefore should return to the Concept Development Phase and more meaningfully involve local elected officials, and other stakeholders.
- Thorough and adequate environmental, historical and archeological impact studies by qualified independent professionals are needed.
- The dangers of the I80 S-Curve have not yet been addressed, and they are a much greater threat to public safety
- The projects will degrade valued most scenic areas that attract thousands of tourists, including threatening endangered species and other natural resources and harming area businesses and property values. The areas also have historical and geological significance, and hold religious significance to Native American peoples
- Other project options, lower in cost and without drastic environmental and other impacts are available and must be explored. As proposed, the project approaches are wasteful public spending.
- Both projects are based on questionable rockfall data, are not based on a cost benefit analyses

Response: As the NJTPA has previously indicated when these issues have been raised at past Board and Committee meetings, these specific project-related issues are typically addressed in the project development process led by the project sponsor. Project development and environmental review is ongoing for the projects in question.

NJDOT Response:

Since any single rockfall event may have catastrophic results, purely reacting to rockfall-related accidents does not adequately protect the motoring public. Therefore, NJDOT maintains a Rockfall Hazard Management System (RHMS) to identify, evaluate and monitor rockfall hazards throughout the State. RHMS provides a standardized way to prioritize the use of limited construction funds available by numerically differentiating the apparent risks at rockfall sites. This proactive approach has been developed and adopted by the Federal Highway Administration and is the accepted industry standard throughout the United States.

RHMS ranks individual highway rock-cut locations rather than the projects that have been developed to deal with them. Each project typically incorporates several rock-cut areas, which are bundled together for geographic and cost considerations. The Route 29 Rockfall Mitigation project will address the #3 highest-ranked rock-cut location within RHMS throughout the State.

Additional questions and concerns about these projects can and should be communicated directly to the project sponsor, NJDOT, so they can be addressed during project development.

COMMENTS FROM NJTPA VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC MEETING 7/27/21

The NJTPA held a virtual open house public meeting on July 27, 2021 as part of the formal public comment period on the draft Plan 2050, TIP, and Air Quality Conformity Determination. Thirty-eight people attended. Breakout rooms offered an overview presentation given on a rolling basis, a Spanish language room, and rooms for Plan 2050, the TIP, Conformity Determination, and public outreach. Below is a summary of comments of participants related to Plan 2050, TIP, and Air Quality and NJTPA responses. In addition, there were general comments and questions about transportation planning and funding; NJ TRANSIT service; Bus Rapid Transit; bicycle and pedestrian facilities and safety; and local issues not directly related to Plan 2050, the TIP or conformity documents.

- **Commenter: Syd Chan**

Summary: Is funding for TIP projects related to federal transportation funding bills. What is the methodology of generating scores within the project prioritization process?

Response: Congress annually appropriates funding for transportation improvement projects and that funding is used for TIP projects. The current federal transportation funding bill is the FAST Act, which expires in September; if a new law is not in place, Congress can appropriate temporary measures, issuing project funds every six months until a new bill is enacted. As for the TIP and STIP, NJDOT estimates federal resources based on prior funding. Staff also explained the project prioritization process.

Summary: Is housing addressed in Plan 2050? What is being done to get workers to new warehouses being built around the region?

Response: The NJTPA has worked on Transit Oriented Development and related initiatives, but housing is not directly addressed in Plan 2050. The NJTPA seeks to make transportation investment in areas where it is supported and justified including areas with adequate housing. Chapter 5 of the draft Plan 2050 references the work of Transportation Management Associations on this issue. The plan also advocates brownfields redevelopment which makes facilities more accessible and measures to make freight “a good neighbor” which includes accessibility.

Summary: Did the NJTPA do a focus group focuses on the needs of non-binary or transgender transit users? Who is the NJTPA’s social media coordinator and has the NJTPA considered using the TikTok social media platform?

Response: The NJTPA’s social media coordinator is Melissa Hayes. The NJTPA did not do specific outreach to non-binary or transgender transit users. However, staff participates in relevant webinars and other programs and seeks to promote a transportation system that is safe for all users, regardless of gender identity, age, disability, race, or income. The NJTPA periodically assesses

various social media platforms for potential use. TikTok is not currently used as a social media platform.

- **Commenter: Stephen Freeman**

Summary: Why is the projected construction date regarding the Route 29 Rockfall Mitigation project in Kingwood Township pushed out from FY 2022 to FY 2025?

Response: This project is in the preliminary engineering phase and the required NEPA environmental documentation needs to be obtained.

- **Commenter: Nadereh Modi**

Summary: Asked about funding for new and emerging technology programs in the TIP, and planning for technology in Plan 2050. How much money is being spent on emerging technology, specifically electric vehicle infrastructure and connected/automated vehicles on local roadways?

Response: NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT have Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) program line items in the TIP. NJDOT does not yet have connected-vehicle projects in the TIP; they are being researched. NJTPA facilitates some of these projects on local roadways through the CMAQ Program, which funds adaptive signal programs in county corridors. The NJTPA has also funded electric vehicle charging infrastructure through the CMAQ program.

Summary: How is technology incorporated in Plan 2050? Many communities are hesitant about implementing technologies because they don't understand it or perceive risks associated with new technologies. How can NJTPA address that?

Response: Transportation technology is the subject of a Plan 2050 background paper. This issue is also addressed in the draft Plan itself, particularly in Chapter 5. Staff explained that the technology background paper includes education and outreach on technology issues. Demonstration projects, such as the one being undertaken with automated vehicles in Middlesex County, can help communities understand how technology can solve problems.

- **Commenter: Andrew Mikesh**

Summary: Is there is a dedicated process for active transportation projects, or do they go through the TIP development process?

Response: Staff explained that any type of project could be considered for the TIP and would go through the prioritization and review process. Active transportation projects are eligible for Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funding. The best course of action would be to contact the local or county agency (depending on the location) of the project) for project support.

Summary: He complimented the NJTPA on its active transportation background paper and reiterated his support for the Northern Valley Greenway in Bergen County New York and other states spend much more than New Jersey on bicycle and pedestrian programs; New Jersey has

catching up to do. He recommended that additional, non-transportation benefits of greenways, such as their use as horticultural corridors, educational partnerships with local communities, and “last mile” connectors for NJ TRANSIT be included in project consideration. He urged helping municipalities implement local projects, as they often lack needed expertise. He submitted recommendations for how this can be accomplished including creating and funding a “center of competency” that would be a resource for implementing active transportation projects and would like to see more resources dedicated to creating greenways, working with local entities.

Response: The recommendations would be particularly helpful and relevant for the Active Transportation Plan the NJTPA will be developing over the coming year. The NJTPA supports local planning efforts for trails and other local projects through its local funding and technical support programs.

- **Commenter: Henry Toulmin**

Summary: What equity considerations (regarding funding and population) are factored into the TIP?

Response: TIP projects are vetted and prioritized, and environmental justice (EJ) is part of that prioritization process. EJ criteria will be re-evaluated this year. The committees will provide input on these criteria and projects will be re-scored to reflect the new EJ considerations.

- **Commenter: Tara Mezzanotte**

Summary: Why is the S-Curve on I-80 not included in Plan 2050? At the county’s outreach meeting, it was rated as a top priority by residents for safety improvements.

Response: Staff explained this issue has not reached any project phase. Plan 2050 cites some examples of needs in the region but not all.

Summary: Where is project-level public outreach information collected by Warren County represented in draft Plan 2050?

Response: The county’s project-level outreach was part of the development of a local transportation plan funded as a subregional study by the NJTPA. The information collected should be referenced in that county plan. That plan and other subregional studies are considered in identifying needs that can eventually result in funding for projects.

- **Commenter: Lauren Rushing**

Summary: Where does funding for the LRTP come from? Why does the draft Plan 2050 RCIS combine bicycle funding with freight?

Response: Plan 2050 is financed with a mix of federal and state funding. RCIS categories were combined for presentation purposes. The RCIS calls for a share of funding directly allocated to bicycle/pedestrian needs each year. This does not account for the walk/bike features often included

in other types of projects, such as sidewalks on bridges or improvements made while repaving a roadway.

- **Commenter: Mike Dannemiller**

Summary: How are greenways addressed in draft Plan 2050? The Essex-Hudson Greenway represents a particular opportunity – though crossing the Hackensack River will require a major investment, maybe a ferry could be an interim solution requiring advance planning. The Essex-Hudson trail and others are multi-county and will need regional planning and funding to be realized.

Response: Various greenways are mentioned in draft Plan 2050. Some are at various stages of project development. The NJTPA collaborates with local advocates, NJDOT, and others to support these regional planning efforts for trails.

- **Commenter: Debra Kagan**

Summary: The Hackensack bridge will be a major challenge. The Morris Canal Greenway underwent a regional planning effort; how could something similar be accomplished for the Essex-Hudson Greenway and for other proposals? Also noted appreciation for the Plan 2050 Active Transportation background paper and urged the NJTPA to assist in helping towns implement complete streets. Suggested a guide for local efforts would be helpful.

Response: The Morris Canal effort took many months/years to organize and develop. Advancement of its recommendations benefited from state commitments of transportation alternatives (TAP) funding. For the Essex-Hudson Greenway, coordination between the two counties may be the best way to get the project advancing.

The NJTPA promotes complete streets implementation particularly through Together North Jersey initiatives as well as its own planning programs.

- **Commenter: Robert DeDomenico**

Summary: Encouraged the NJTPA to evaluate a last-mile consumer goods delivery system featuring a small diameter enclosed rail network

Response: The NJTPA would not have a role in evaluating or funding such a system. The NJTPA has a Freight Initiatives Committee which meets every two months to explore good movement opportunities.

- **Commenter: Emmanuelle Morgan**

Summary: Plan 2050 should not make a distinction between bike routes on roadways for experienced versus inexperienced riders. How does the region compare with other regions in terms

of intra- and inter-state bike facilities? Outreach for Plan 2050 should have been more extensive and included direct contact with the various biking organizations.

Response: The NJTPA has funded planning efforts in Hoboken, Jersey City and elsewhere that are resulting in expanded biking/walking. While the plan does talk about bicycle facilities best for experienced riders, this was part of an analysis to indicate the range of conditions in the region, rather than an endorsement of facilities.

There is a footbridge from Columbia, NJ to Portland, PA in Warren County. In addition, planning was initiated in late 2019 to coordinate with New York City for improved bicycle and pedestrian connections to the Bayonne Bridge bike lane from Bayonne and from Staten Island. Hudson County was leading this effort, which was halted in spring 2020 due to the COVID- 19 pandemic.

Outreach for Plan 2050 and the NJTPA's other draft products was as varied and as extensive as possible, especially given pandemic constraints. In addition to social media promotion, the NJTPA worked with partner organizations, community groups, and its subregions to encourage public participation. Also, specialized presentations and other outreach efforts were designed to engage kids, civic groups, young adults, and other populations. Chapter 2 and an outreach appendix describe the outreach.

- **Commenter: Matthew Rivas, NJDEP**

Summary: What are the effects of reduced VMT on air quality and how is that reflected in the TIP?

Response: Reduced VMT, especially from internal combustion operated vehicles, will directly mean less carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide in the air, improving air quality. Lowered VMT will also mean less tire friction on the roads which produce particulate matter, also improving air quality.

- **Commenter: Chris Adair**

Summary: Really liked the Plan 2050 bookmarks distributed to public libraries in the region.

Response: The NJTPA appreciates the compliment. The NJTPA printed and distributed 20,000 Plan 2050 bookmarks to many libraries in the region as part of the effort to promote the Plan 2050 survey and outreach meetings. The bookmarks helped the NJTPA reach people who might not have seen Plan 2050 online or social media messages or might not have regular internet access.

- **Commenter: Kwan Hui, DVRPC**

Summary: How did Rutgers University help the NJTPA find participants for the focus groups that were conducted and how were schools contacted to participate in the NJTPA's Plan 2050 Future of Transportation kids contest?

Response: The NJTPA works with Rutgers University’s Voorhees Transportation Center, specifically its Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET). POET staff personally contacted schools to participate in the kids' contest. For focus groups, Rutgers POET did some recruiting via social media, however most recruitment was accomplished via personal contact with community-based organizations, which then shared the information locally and with its members.

- **Commenter: Luis Rodriguez**

Summary: When will Plan 2050 be finally approved and what happens if it does not get approved?

Response: The NJTPA Board is scheduled to adopt Plan 2050 at its regular meeting on September 13, 2021. It then must be accepted by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The NJTPA is federally required to adopt a long-range plan every four years, and the plan is required in order for the region to receive federal transportation funds.

- **Commenter: Tom Dvorak**

Summary: Is the expected penetration of plug-in electric vehicles (PEVs) taken into account in the Conformity Determination? Is there a way to get “credit” for freight rail projects that often result in fewer trucks on the road?

Response: For the Conformity Determination on Plan 2050 and the TIP, PEVs were accounted for using the national default inputs, but not local inputs. The federal conformity process does not include freight rail projects. Therefore, such projects are not credited in the Conformity Determination for Plan 2050 and the TIP.