





Trains get people here, but there's no last mile connection to businesses."

—SOMERSET COUNTY COMMUTER,
LET'S TALK BUSINESS AND TRANSPORTATION EVENT

2



I'd like to see a future that encompasses safe, accessible and environmentally conscious modes of transportation for pedestrians and bicyclists."

—UNION COUTY RESIDENT, ONLINE SURVEY

Public Engagement



मेरा मानना है क आने वाले समय में लोगों को गरीन और क्लीन एनर्जी के कएि प्रोत्साहति कयिा जाना चाहिए। पेट्रोल, डीज़ल के स्थान पर इलेक्ट्रिकि चार्जिंगि प्वाइंट हों और लोगों के घरों की बजिली भी सौर ऊर्जा इत्यादसे आए।"

TRANSLATION: *"I believe that in the coming years, people should be encouraged to go for green and clean energy. Instead of petrol, diesel, there should be electric charging points and the electricity of people's homes also came from solar energy etc."*

—HUDSON COUTY RESIDENT, ONLINE SURVEY

THESE ARE JUST A FEW of the people who contributed their ideas

to help develop Plan 2050. More than 3,000 people submitted online surveys or participated in virtual public meetings, symposia, or targeted outreach to engage underserved populations, including focus groups and a children's activity. ■ Residents and workers from across the region, of all ages and backgrounds, shared their ideas for the future of transportation. The NJTPA found people and organizations were eager to share

their experiences and views, and that their comments are in line with the NJTPA's regional goals. Several key themes emerged:

- Improving transit—including bus, train, light rail, and the PATH—was the highest priority for residents who took the online survey and participated in outreach events. Participants said transit should be convenient, reliable, frequent, and user-friendly. The Plan should include ways to improve transit accessibility and connectivity, and ensure the infrastructure is in a state of good repair. It should also include ways to expand transit, both in terms of the number of lines and frequency of service.
- In the past, the focus has been on improving transit to and from New York City, while it often remains challenging to get around North Jersey (and New Jersey as a whole) using transit.
- Equitable access is important for all transportation modes regardless of age, income, race, or ability.
- Enhancing bike and pedestrian travel and safety is a priority, including expanding and connecting bike lanes and trails throughout the region. Bike and pedestrian planning should be thought of regionally rather than municipality by municipality. In general, more funds should be allocated to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- The increase in goods movement and freight traffic resulting from changes in consumer behavior

Point Pleasant, Ocean County



has led to more competition for curb space and increased wear and tear on roads. Goods movement needs to be better integrated into planning.

- Transportation funding in New Jersey is overly reliant on the gas tax. The state should look at ways to diversify and secure more reliable funding sources.
- Planning decisions should be more regional and holistic. More education is needed about the connection between land use planning and transportation so fewer inequities result from planning decisions.

Using new and innovative engagement strategies, the NJTPA—working with consultants from McCormick & Taylor, Mercer Planning Associates and Rutgers University's Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC)—was able to reach a diverse cross-section of the region's residents despite the challenges of COVID-19. Public input informed this plan, which aims to effectively and equitably address the region's transportation challenges through 2050.

Prior to the pandemic, the NJTPA planned to hold a series of in-person and online outreach activities to engage people who live and work in the region. However, any in-person events were shifted to virtual to adhere to state and federal social distancing and health guidelines.

To get the NJTPA Board of Trustees, staff and public thinking about the future, the NJTPA launched the Planning for 2050 speaker series in January 2019. The series included 12 presentations at NJTPA Board meetings through 2019, 2020 and the first half of 2021. Speakers included representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, Regional Plan Association, Coalition for the Northeast Corridor, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the National Association of Regional Councils, as well as a climatologist, economists and transportation planners. Topics included transportation performance management, long-term infrastructure needs, climate change, changing demographics, technology and more. Videos of the speakers are available at [YouTube.com/TheNJTPA](https://www.youtube.com/TheNJTPA).

In addition, the NJTPA hosted a virtual retreat for Board of Trustees members on June 5, 2020. The event provided an overview of the LRTP and included a discussion on the future of transportation in the region and how the COVID-19 pandemic could affect



long-range planning. Prior to the meeting, Board members were asked to take a brief survey to share their thoughts about the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in terms of transportation. Attendees participated in small group discussions—using virtual breakout rooms—on infrastructure and investment, affordability and inclusion, and bicycle and pedestrian safety. The event helped gather Board input for the plan, as well as public outreach efforts, which kicked off in September 2020 and continued through March 2021.

A draft of the plan was shared with the Board of Trustees—which includes the NJTPA subregions, NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT, the Port Authority and Governor’s Office—as well as the federally recognized tribal nations. Feedback from these key stakeholders was incorporated into the final draft, which was presented for public comment. In addition to their involvement as members of the Board of Trustees, NJ TRANSIT and the Port Authority of NY and NJ worked closely with NJTPA staff to help develop the transit portions of this plan.

Montclair, Essex County

Making Outreach Accessible

Understanding that not everyone can participate in live virtual events, the NJTPA employed other engagement methods. This included an online survey; distributing paper surveys with prepaid return postage and bookmarks with information about the plan to libraries; and a telephone hotline. In addition, the NJTPA engaged community groups to help publicize outreach opportunities. Additional specialized outreach, discussed in detail later in this section, was also conducted including focus groups with harder-to-reach populations, and events to engage young adults and youth.

To make the outreach more accessible to people with limited English proficiency, the survey was available in English and five other languages commonly spoken in the region: Spanish, Chinese (simplified), Korean, Portuguese, and Hindi. Other communications tools were translated as well. Social media ads were used to promote the survey in all six languages. In addition to the English-language hotline, there was also a Spanish hotline and some events were held entirely in Spanish or included an interpreter.

The NJTPA also worked with a Stakeholder

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT was paramount in developing the NJTPA's long-range Plan 2050. The NJTPA has conducted a series of accessible, inclusive, and interactive virtual public involvement activities to ensure Plan 2050 meets the needs of the region and its 7 million residents.



1 Survey
2,186 Responses



23 Public Meetings
512 Attendees



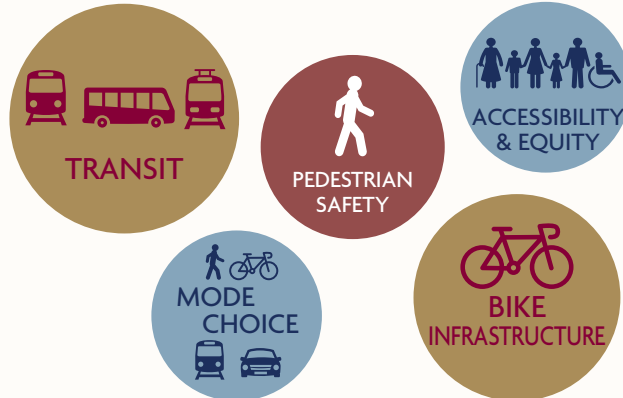
4 Symposia
347 Attendees



5 Channels
30K+ Engagements
3M+ Reach

Total Engagements
≈ 33,000

MOST FREQUENTLY NOTED ISSUES



Common Themes

- **NORTH JERSEY RESIDENTS** and workers want a reliable, efficient, responsive, and robust transit system. Improving, expanding, and connecting all types of public transportation was the highest-cited priority.
- **NORTH JERSEY RESIDENTS** and workers want more bicycle infrastructure for commuting, running errands, and recreation. A regional approach that enhances connectivity is highly desired.
- **NORTH JERSEY RESIDENTS** and workers want to feel safer when walking, and want more and better connections across communities.
- **TRANSPORTATION POLICY** and investments should be implemented on a regional scale to increase equitable accessibility and enhance overall connectivity.



MORE INFO:

NJTPA.org/Plan2050

f @NJTPA @TheNJTPA #NJTPA2050

Advisory Committee, a group made up of a broad cross-section of leaders from organizations that work with different demographic groups across the region to ensure outreach was inclusive and accessible.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The committee was created to help refine Plan 2050 public involvement approaches and to help vet outreach efforts and ideas, particularly related to youth, older adults, and women, as well as racially and ethnically diverse, foreign-born, limited English proficiency, disabled, and low-income populations. The group also promoted outreach activities and co-hosted larger outreach events. The committee met three times (August 2020, October 2020 and January 2021) and also provided input via email.

Participating organizations included:

- Age-Friendly Englewood
- La Casa de Don Pedro
- Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of NJ
- Statewide Independent Living Council
- New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition
- Disability Rights New Jersey
- Project Self-Sufficiency
- New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice
- New Brunswick Tomorrow
- United Way of Northern New Jersey
- Tri State Transportation Campaign

Website

The formal public involvement process began with the launch of the Plan 2050 website in September 2020. In addition to spotlighting the quick online survey, residents could find relevant reports, meeting times, and additional information about Plan 2050 and the importance of public input. The website was also available in Spanish and had a plug-in for visitors to translate the website into other languages. The website featured a Partner Resources page with public event flyers, a printable copy of the survey, sample social media posts, and materials in five additional languages.

Survey

In concert with the website, a short online survey was released. Nearly 2,200 people completed the survey, either online or by submitting a paper copy. The

survey asked questions about transportation improvements needed in the region, the modes of transportation most likely to be used in the future, and important transportation factors that help people decide where they want to live and work. These questions helped to give a snapshot of what residents are most concerned about regarding transportation. There was also an open-ended question that allowed participants to share their concerns or ideas about transportation. The survey results are included in Appendix D.

Social Media

In September 2020, the NJTPA began promoting Plan 2050 on its Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram social media channels. Social media content consisted of a variety of posts that advertised the virtual events, the survey, website and the TPA Tuesday symposium series. A promotional video was created to provide a brief overview of the long range plan and encouraged people to share their ideas. The video was produced in English and Spanish. It was posted on the plan website and shared on social media. The NJTPA used paid, targeted social media ads to encourage North Jersey residents and employees to take the survey and attend virtual events.

Virtual Public Meetings

Twelve virtual outreach events were held between September 2020 and February 2021. Public meetings conducted early in the outreach process focused on gathering general perceptions about North Jersey's transportation system. The second round of public meetings included more targeted discussions about areas of particular concern identified in the first-round meetings and survey responses, as well as potential solutions to the issues. The public meetings were advertised via email, on social media (in English and Spanish), and public access television, as well as through partner agencies and community organizations.

Round 1 Public Meetings

The first round of outreach consisted of six virtual public meetings conducted at varying times—one morning, one midday, two evening, and two on a Saturday—between September 30 and October 8, 2020. One of the meetings was conducted entirely in



Online survey, symposia and virtual events.

Spanish. The meetings were one-hour each and held via Zoom. Each event began with an overview of the NJTPA and Plan 2050. Attendees then moved to breakout rooms for facilitated interactive discussions. In the breakout rooms, attendees discussed what has changed in the past 30 years, what they would like to see change in the next 30 years and what they would like to stay the same. They were also encouraged to share their vision for the future of transportation.

Expanding transit to increase mobility options and connectivity was a popular topic in the breakout rooms. The discussions also touched on improving and increasing transit accessibility, particularly for populations who live in underserved or outlying areas, low-income populations, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Many participants said they would like to see more bike and pedestrian improvements integrated into transportation projects.

Round 2 Public Meetings

A series of six “Let’s Talk! Transportation” virtual listening sessions were conducted between January and February 2021 to further discuss solutions to the transportation issues identified in the first phase of

outreach. Three of the “Let’s Talk” sessions were topic-specific and co-hosted with partner organizations:

- **January 29, 2021:** Let’s Talk! Transportation & Business—The Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey and the Asian Indian Chamber of Commerce
- **February 4, 2021:** Let’s Talk! Transit—Tri-State Transportation Campaign
- **February 2, 2021:** Let’s Talk! Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety—City of Jersey City and the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition

These sessions began with a short presentation by the partner organizations. After the presentations, attendees were led into breakout rooms. The Let’s Talk! Transportation and Business event was simulcast in Spanish, and Let’s Talk! Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety had the most attendees.

In addition to the three topic-based virtual listening sessions, there were three virtual open house-style sessions, during which attendees could visit virtual rooms to discuss a variety of transportation topics. When attendees joined the Zoom meeting, they were first given an overview presentation on the NJTPA and Plan 2050. From there, they had their choice of four rooms:

- Transit
- Bike/Pedestrian
- Freight, Rideshare & Competition for Curb Space
- General Transportation

Each room had a facilitator who asked attendees questions related to the room’s topic. An attendee could visit as many rooms as they wanted and could switch rooms at any time.

Strategic Partner Outreach

Outside of the virtual public meetings, NJTPA also attended regularly scheduled meetings of strategic partner organizations to gather additional input and get help in promoting the survey and outreach events. Many of the attendees advocated for a greater focus on improving intra-county public transportation, which could include improving and expanding bus service on weekends and to communities with limited service, as well extending rail transit to new areas. Participants also said that improving bicycle safety infrastructure would encourage people to bike rather than drive.

In addition to attending strategic partner meetings, the NJTPA identified key community stakeholders as potential public outreach partners. Outreach was conducted to community-based groups, statewide chambers of commerce, statewide aid organizations like United Way, schools, public housing authorities, and other anchor institutions that helped to disseminate outreach materials via social media, print flyers, and print surveys.

TPA Tuesday Symposiums

While the public meetings and Let’s Talk! virtual listening sessions targeted the general public, the NJTPA also hosted a TPA Tuesday symposium series to engage planning and transportation professionals, as well as advocates and other interested parties. The general public was also encouraged to attend these events, which were held via Zoom. Each symposium included a keynote speaker, panel discussion and questions from the audience. The recordings were made available on the Plan 2050 website.

- *Adapting to Change*, held on October 6, 2020, focused on anticipating and adapting to unexpected changes. This symposium explored COVID-19

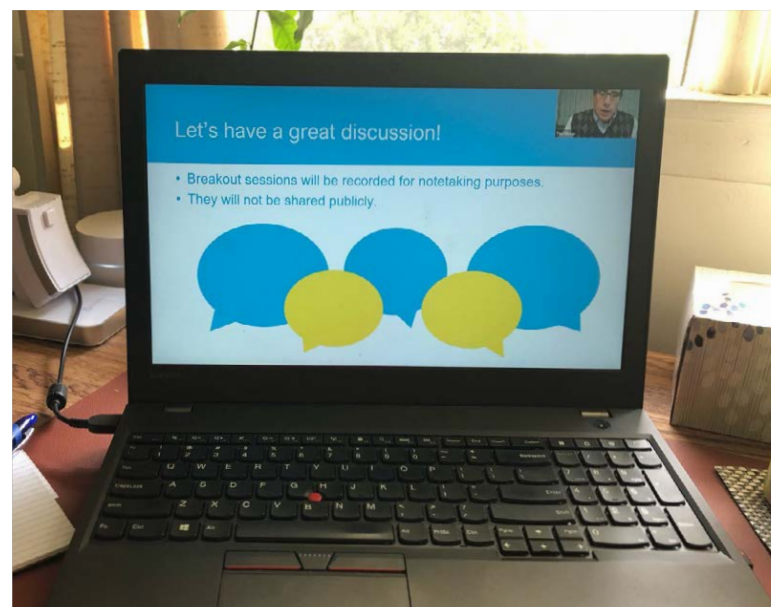
related impacts on transportation that could affect the future.

- *Advancing Equitable Transportation Systems*, held December 8, 2020, highlighted the legacy of racism and exclusionary policies and presented opportunities for advancing equitable transportation systems and investments.
- *Realizing Opportunity Through Transportation*, held January 26, 2021, explored how transportation drives North Jersey’s economy and discussed the importance of strategic transportation investments for the post-pandemic economic recovery and for the region’s economic expansion during the next 30 years.
- *Connected and Automated Vehicles*, held June 1, 2021, looked at these potentially transformational technologies, including assessments of the region’s readiness to support deployment, possible impacts on safety, and potential effects on logistics, transit, labor and business.

Bookmarks

Nearly 20,000 bookmarks advertising the online survey and hotline were sent to partner libraries, which distributed them at curbside or limited indoor pickups. Each bookmark had one side in English and one side in Spanish, as well as a QR code directing people to the online survey.

Virtual breakout room.



Specialized Outreach

In addition to general outreach, which was supported by consultants from McCormick & Taylor and Mercer Planning Associates, the NJTPA worked with Rutgers-VTC to develop specialized initiatives aimed at engaging traditionally hard-to-reach demographic groups.

Focus Groups

Focus groups included caregivers for seniors and people with disabilities; men and women re-entering society from the justice system; residents with limited English proficiency; and the unemployed.

Like the virtual public events, participants were asked about their transportation experiences—what challenges they face, what works well, what they'd like to change, how they use technology—and their visions for the future. Although the participants backgrounds varied, several common themes emerged across all five focus groups:

- Participants predominantly rely on buses for transportation. When buses run late, arrive early, or are full, it limits their access to jobs, services and opportunities. Participants blamed congestion for many of the bus delays, particularly during morning and evening rush hours.
- Better infrastructure, such as bus shelters, benches and lighting, and improved sidewalks would make

Paterson Museum, Passaic County



riders feel safer when waiting for or walking to buses, particularly on busy roads.

- Better communication is needed with customers, particularly when there is a change to fare payment options. During the pandemic, several riders said they were unaware about the shift to digital fare payment and those without access to a debit or credit card or smartphone were unable to use the technology.
- Participants with access to smartphones said mobile apps that provide real-time public transit information, such as bus and train locations, and provide walking directions to stops are useful. However, they stressed that vehicle tracker locations must be accurate to help them plan their trips effectively.

NJTPA On Air

NJTPA On Air was first developed to engage children and teens as part of Plan 2045 outreach. The original activity consisted of a pop-up booth decorated like a radio studio in which participants recorded their ideas about the future of transportation. For Plan 2050, to comply with health and safety precautions during the pandemic, the radio booth was reimaged as a virtual multi-media contest. Participants watched a short video, shared on the website and social media, that provided the contest prompt: “What do you think transportation will be like in the future, say when you are your parents’ age?” Responses could be submitted using a variety of creative formats, including drawings, essays, videos, or poems. In addition to promoting the contest online, Rutgers VTC and NJTPA staff also reached out to schools, after-school programs, and community organizations that serve kids.

More than 150 children participated. Submissions included animated videos, diagrams of futuristic vehicles, stories about life in the future, rhyming poems, and even a puppet show about transportation.

A gallery of submissions is available at njtpa.org/OnAir.

UpNext North Jersey

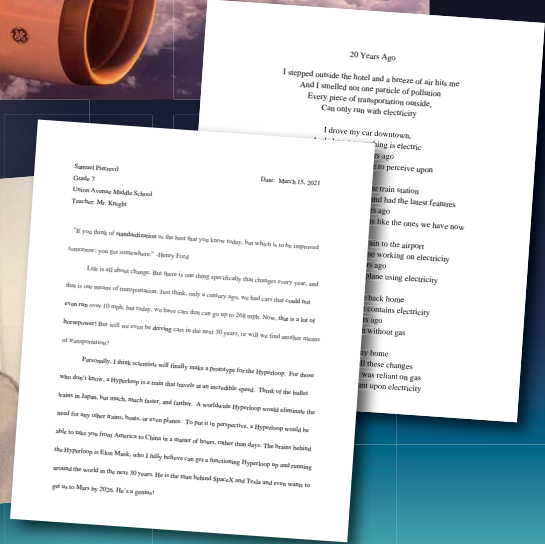
Five plan-related events were organized to engage members of the NJTPA’s UpNext North Jersey young adult advisory group. The group was created in 2019 to gather input from residents ages 18 to 30—a demographic that is traditionally underrepresented in public



what is superconductivity?

superconductivity is a phenomenon in physics where some materials show zero electrical resistance.

until recent years, superconductivity was only observed at very low temperatures, but recently, researchers have found ways to observe superconductivity at room temperature!



outreach efforts—on a variety of NJTPA projects and programs. Due to the pandemic, in-person events were shifted to virtual. The events touched on considering game-changers—like the pandemic, technological advances and severe weather events—in long-range planning; the concepts of open streets and complete streets; and discussions around three background papers developed for Plan 2050: *Active Transportation in the NJTPA Region*, *Transportation Technology* and *Climate Change and Transportation*. As part of the outreach activities, members participated in an Active Transportation Challenge, during which they walked or biked to a destination they would normally drive to. They reported back on their experiences and ways to improve walking and biking on the routes they traveled.

The plan-related outreach events included:

- Planning for the Unplanned, April 16, 2020
- Open Streets, June 18, 2020
- Active Transportation, September 24, 2020
- Equitable Smart Mobility, December 17, 2020
- Ask a Climatologist, January 21, 2021

Full summaries of the events and feedback provided are available in Appendix D.

NJTPA On Air submissions.

Incorporating What We Heard

As highlighted above, public outreach for the Plan drew a diverse group of residents and workers from across North Jersey. Several common themes emerged, which are reflected throughout this plan:

- Improving, expanding and better connecting public transportation should be a priority.
- Public transit should be reliable and efficient.
- There needs to be better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to connect to public transit and destinations, such as downtowns and recreational trails.
- Transportation improvements need to be made equitably to improve accessibility and enhance overall connectivity.

Although in-person outreach was restricted due to public health guidelines, more than 2,500 people provided input for Plan 2050 through an online survey, participation in events, and the children’s activity. As a result, this Plan effectively responds to the daily transportation challenges shared by the region’s residents and reflects their vision for the future over the next 30 years.