

NJTPA

Connecting Communities

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



njtpa.org/connecting

About the NJTPA

THE NORTH JERSEY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

AUTHORITY (NJTPA) is the federally authorized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 13-county northern and central New Jersey region, home to 7 million people. The federal government requires each urbanized region of the country to establish an MPO to provide local guidance over the use of federal transportation funding and ensure it is spent cost-effectively to improve mobility, support economic progress and safeguard the environment.

The NJTPA partners with local and state agencies to help fund more than \$3 billion in transportation investments annually. It analyzes transportation needs, approves proposed projects and provides a forum for interagency cooperation and public input into funding decisions. It also sponsors and conducts studies, assists county planning agencies and monitors compliance with national air quality goals.

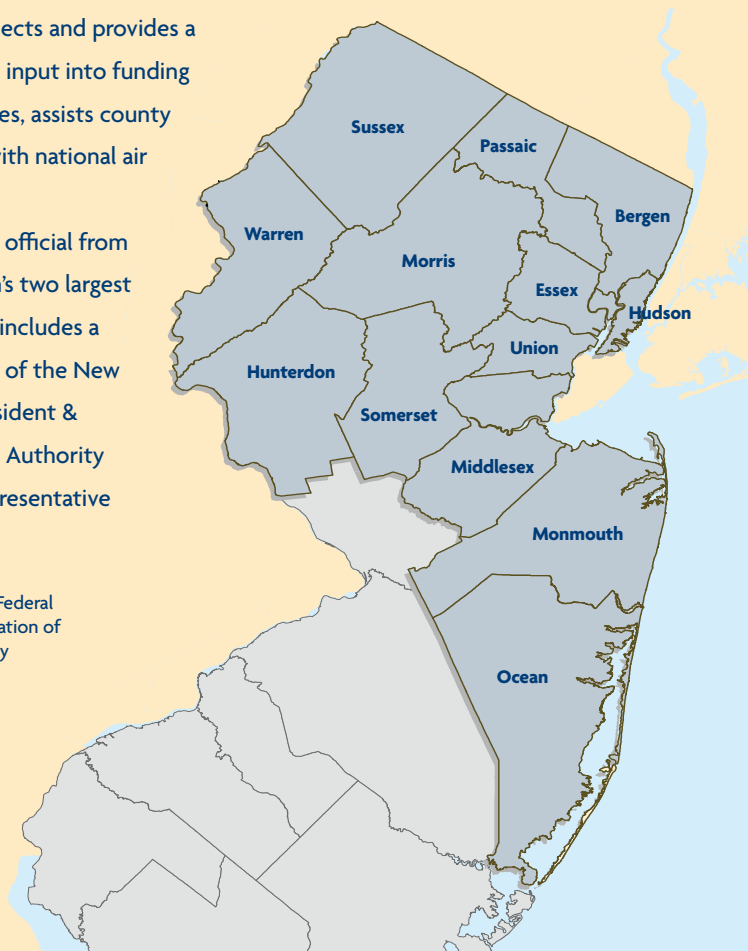
The NJTPA Board consists of one elected official from each of the region's 13 counties and the region's two largest cities, Newark and Jersey City. The Board also includes a Governor's Representative, the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the President & CEO of NJ TRANSIT, the Chairman of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and a Citizen's Representative appointed by the Governor.

This publication has been prepared with financing by the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The NJTPA is solely responsible for its contents.

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Illustrations: khan-design.net: p 4, 8.

Printed: November 2025





**Lakewood,
Ocean County**

THE REGION'S VAST TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM connects residents with the places they need to go and to the people in their lives, whether they're traveling to work or school, grocery stores or doctors' offices, or to see family and friends. The NJTPA recognizes the important role transportation plays in supporting the lives of the people who live and work in our region. That's why we've called this plan update *Connecting Communities: The NJTPA Long Range Transportation Plan*.

A lot has changed since the NJTPA adopted its last long-range plan in September 2021, just as the region and the nation were emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant share of the population now works from home for all or part of the work week, adding to local travel and filling communities with increased activity during the day, while changing traditional peak-hour travel volumes on major routes.

More residents are taking a greater interest in and adopting alternatives to the automobile for many trips, including walking, biking, micromobility, demand-responsive transit, ride hailing services and more. At least partly in reaction to this use of alternative modes, communities are increasingly looking to enhance safety and improve quality of life by taking a Complete Streets approach to their roads. Complete Streets are designed to ensure safe and adequate accommodation of all

NJTPA GOALS

transportation users, including walkers, cyclists, drivers, public transportation users, children, older individuals, people with disabilities and operators of freight vehicles, like delivery trucks.

This plan considers these changes while aiming to address some of the region’s most pressing transportation needs, including improving trans-Hudson travel via the Hudson Tunnel Project, which will build a new tunnel and rehabilitate the existing rail tunnels to eventually increase capacity along the Northeast Corridor.

Connecting Communities was developed under the direction of the NJTPA Board of Trustees in close collaboration with partner agencies, including member city and county “subregions,” the New Jersey Department of Transportation, NJ TRANSIT, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and the state’s eight Transportation Management Associations, among others.

A vision statement was developed as an overarching guide for this plan update:

Connecting Communities envisions a resilient, modern multimodal transportation system that meets the needs of all users, with the goal of getting people and goods to their destinations safely, easily and reliably. The NJTPA will strive to ensure the transportation system supports a thriving, resilient regional economy, and improves the environment, health and quality of life for all residents.

As with the last plan, there are seven goals that represent the NJTPA’s long-standing commitment to preserve and improve regional transportation while meeting the needs of its communities. The goals have been revised since the last plan to reflect updated guidance and new areas of emphasis:

- Ensure the transportation system meets the needs of all communities.
- Make the transportation system safer for all travelers and reduce fatalities to zero by 2050.
- Enhance system accessibility, efficiency, connectivity, and reliability for the movement of people and goods.
- Make the system resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and other hazards.
- Coordinate land use and transportation to create healthy and vibrant communities that reduce environmental and air quality impacts and support transit ridership, biking, and walking.
- Maintain the transportation system in a state of good repair.
- Increase the region’s economic activity, sustainability, and competitiveness.



Public Outreach

MORE THAN 4,000 PEOPLE provided input for *Connecting Communities* through online surveys, a children’s contest and in-person and virtual events. Social media, flyers and outreach to community groups were used to reach as many people as possible. Surveys and outreach materials were available in six languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, Simplified Chinese and Hindi).

Targeted outreach was also developed to engage traditionally harder to reach groups, including children and teens, young adults and those with limited English proficiency. The plan website, press releases, and paid and earned social media posts were used to increase awareness about *Connecting Communities* and opportunities for public input.

Among the top priorities the public shared were:

- **Transit:** Service that goes to more places people want to go
- **Safety:** Streets designed for all users—walkers, cyclists and drivers
- **Walking and Mobility:** Connected and well-maintained sidewalks
- **Bicycling:** Better connections to parks and community spaces

In addition, to meet a new federal requirement, housing stakeholders were engaged in plan development. These stakeholders shared challenges faced by residents in finding stable and affordable housing, the need for affordable housing

Leonia,
Bergen County

to be located near transit and other lower-cost travel modes, and the need for a range of housing types close to transportation and other services to meet the needs of the region's communities. Ensuring that the region fosters mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods centered around public transportation is critical for affordability and strengthening the region. ●

Context

THE REGION'S VAST transportation network of 25,000 miles of roads, 500 miles of passenger rails and over 3,000 buses connect 7 million people, 384 municipalities and 13 counties across more than 4,200 square miles.

By 2050 (this plan's horizon year), the region's population is expected to grow to 7.9 million. Employment is expected to increase from 2.9 million to 3.6 million jobs over the same period.

The region continues to be a center of freight and goods distribution for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic consumer market. While e-commerce continues to grow, the surge in development of distribution facilities seen in recent years has slowed as demand has decreased. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, the warehouse and industrial space vacancy rate was 1.3 percent; by 2024 this rose to 6.1 percent.

Among other trends:

- The region's population will continue to age. By 2050, 18 percent of the population is expected to be 65 or older, up from 16 percent in 2019.
- Even with a higher-than-average median income, 25.4 percent of all households in the region struggle financially to meet basic needs, like housing, childcare, food, transportation and healthcare, according to the United Way's Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) Threshold for Financial Survival.
- More of the region's residents (12 percent) use public transit compared to the national average (4 percent).
- About 14 percent of the population is working from home, which is similar to the national average. ●

TRENDS

POPULATION

7.9M

PEOPLE IN 2050  Up from **7M** in 2020




EMPLOYMENT

3.6M jobs in 2050

 Up from **2.9M** in 2025

AGE


18% over 65 years old in 2050

 Up from **16%** in 2019



LOW INCOMES

20% of the population in 2023 live in households where the income is less than twice the federal poverty level.

 This is down from **25%** in 2013





Connecting the Vision to Implementation

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES is structured around the plan's seven goals to show what must be done to achieve the overall vision, setting a course to a future where communities are well connected, and people have access to opportunities, goods and services.

Ensure the transportation system meets the needs of all communities.

The NJTPA recognizes that everyone in its region has a right to safely and easily get to where they need to go, regardless of travel mode. Acknowledging that the transportation system needs to address the needs of all travelers more fully, the NJTPA Board of Trustees has added this new plan goal to strengthen its commitment to this principle.

Among the strategies to help achieve this goal are promoting transit-oriented development and providing workforce housing near transit; and providing safe walking and biking facilities that connect affordable homes to services, schools, retail and employment.

Newark,
Essex County

Make the transportation system safer for all travelers and reduce fatalities to zero by 2050.

Every life lost on New Jersey’s roads is one too many. Making travel safer for everyone is a priority in all the NJTPA’s work—from vision statements and goals, to plans, programs and projects. National and state safety performance measures have been established to track progress towards improving safety. The NJTPA’s regional goal is to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries by 2050.

The NJTPA works with its many partners, including by collaborating with NJDOT to update the state’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan, and has a number of planning and capital programs that aim to improve safety.

Recommendations include maintaining collaboration with partners to identify and address the most serious safety issues. This includes providing technical support to Local Implementation Committees seeking to advance recommendations of Local Safety Action Plans. In addition, the NJTPA will continue implementing its Regional Active Transportation Plan with a study of on- and off- road active transportation corridors and trails.

New initiatives include updating the NJTPA’s pedestrian counts inventory; analyzing pedestrian lighting and developing recommendations to address the high rate of nighttime pedestrian fatalities; and developing a performance-based approach for screening alternatives and identifying optimal geometric and traffic control solutions for high-crash intersections.

Enhance system accessibility, efficiency, connectivity and reliability for the movement of people and goods.

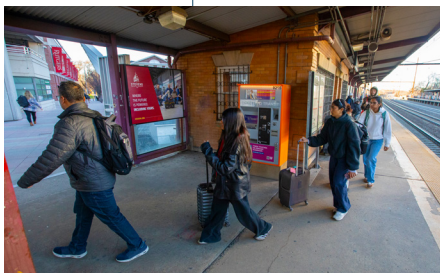
Through this goal the NJTPA seeks to ensure the transportation system fulfills its essential functions in moving people and goods to support economic progress and quality of life in the region.

By sustaining the massive daily movement of people and vehicles, the region’s transportation system serves as the backbone of mobility and access. Upwards of 25 million trips originate in the NJTPA region on a typical weekday, with over 150 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), as well as more than 3 million walking, 800,000 truck, and

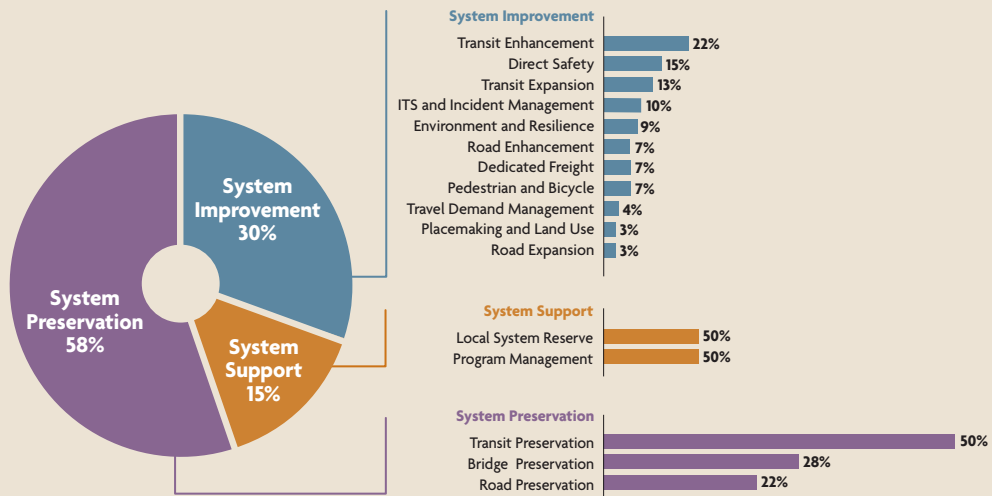
550,000 public transit trips on an extensive road and rail network.

Since 2018, the federal government has required state departments of transportation and metropolitan planning organizations, like the NJTPA, to make use of a standardized series of performance measures, setting targets to track and improve

**From top:
Elizabeth, Union
County; New
Brunswick,
Middlesex County**



RCIS TARGET ALLOCATIONS



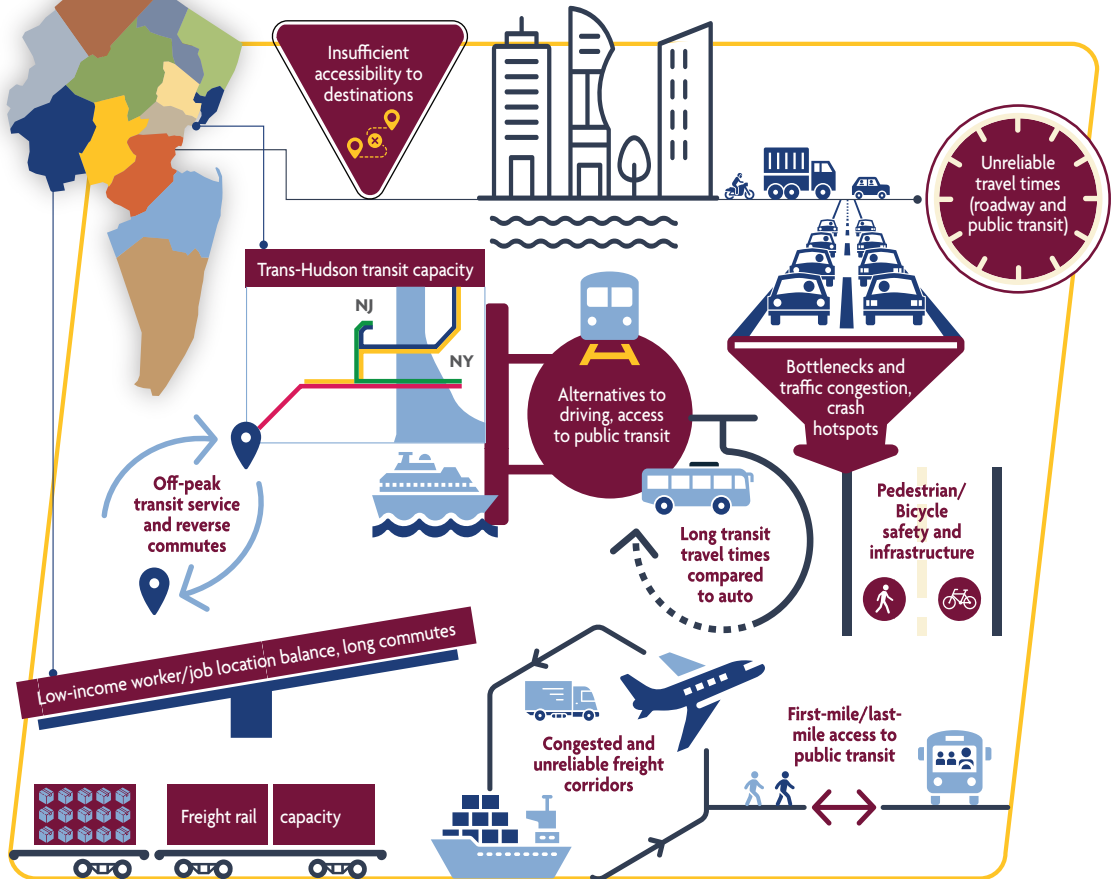
how well roads, transit and freight systems are working. These performance targets are adopted by the Board of Trustees and benchmark progress towards meeting the planning priorities.

The Regional Capital Investment Strategy (RCIS) and Congestion Management Process (CMP) identify guidelines and recommendations for the region to improve system coordination, efficiency, connectivity, and reliability for the movement of people and goods. As with other sections, there is an overlap between the goals. Recommendations not addressed in other areas include supporting goods movement through improvements to the operations, efficiency, and connectivity of truck and freight rail networks, as well as waterborne facilities, while also mitigating the impacts of excessive freight traffic on communities. Another area of focus is taking advantage of innovations in transportation planning and technologies, including new data sources to enhance modeling, real time system management and coordination and adaptive signal systems or traveler information and fare systems.

WHAT ARE OUR REGIONS NEEDS?

The chart below highlights examples of needs identified in the most recent NJTPA's Congestion Management Process (CMP) study.

Examples of accessibility, mobility, and reliability needs in the region.



Make the system resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and other hazards.

Extreme weather presents a growing challenge to the effective functioning of the transportation system and its ability to meet the increasing demands for movement of people and goods on which the economy depends. Rising sea levels, more extreme weather patterns and increasing temperatures result in more frequent and severe flooding of roads and rails, erosion that can undermine infrastructure foundations, accelerated deterioration of rail and roadway systems and other impacts. Along with broader disruptions to the economy, environment, quality of life and public health, these threats create an urgent need for the transportation sector to reduce air

pollution and for infrastructure to be built, retrofitted, or even relocated, in a more resilient way.

The NJTPA continues to actively promote resilience of the transportation system and, in partnership with the Port Authority, recently adopted a Resiliency Improvement Plan, which provides a risk-based assessment of vulnerable transportation assets.

A new environment and resilience category in the RCIS will help guide investment of carbon reduction and other federal transportation funds. Strategies to achieve this goal include incorporating measures to reduce flooding and extreme heat impacts into the Complete Streets Technical Assistance Program and participating in and supporting partners' efforts including NJDEP's Resilient NJ initiative. Promoting resilience strategies at the municipal level through comprehensive planning, including providing data that supports resilience and environmental planning efforts, will also help accomplish this goal.

Coordinate land use and transportation to create healthy and vibrant communities that reduce environmental and air quality impacts and support transit ridership, biking, and walking.

Land use decisions shape how people move around the region. The location of housing, its cost and its proximity to jobs and daily activities influence transportation choices. The ability to provide transportation options depends on municipal land use and development decisions. This impacts how people travel, how much it costs, and how long it takes—important components of quality of life. Land use choices also affect the environment and the region's transportation investments and their associated cost. Transportation and land use decisions must be coordinated to create healthy, vibrant communities.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Housing and transportation are two of the most significant and unavoidable household expenses. The rising cost of housing is impacting many families. More than a third (36 percent) of households in the region are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing and utilities. Nationally, the cost of housing has been rising faster than income for the past two decades. This trend reflects, in part, rising demand driven by population growth, which increases household formation and the number of people seeking to purchase homes. It also reflects a limited supply of available housing. Both the 2008

**From top:
Hopatcong,
Sussex County,
Cranbury,
Middlesex County;**





**Flemington,
Warren County**

financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant reductions in construction, which continues to lag demand. Zoning restrictions and other local land use regulations also play a role in slowing home construction. Due to these factors, fewer families have been able to find homes that meet their needs.

The NJTPA collected and is analyzing zoning data for the region's 384 municipalities. Once complete, this zoning atlas will allow state, regional and municipal policymakers to better coordinate land use and transportation planning across the region. The NJTPA will also work to continue and potentially expand coordinated land use and transportation planning technical assistance programs, such as the Planning for Emerging Centers and Vibrant Places programs, and include consideration of housing and transportation costs in NJTPA-funded studies, as appropriate. In addition, educating municipalities on the importance of integrating transportation considerations into affordable housing planning, including locating housing near walkable, mixed-use centers on existing transit routes, will help address this goal.

Maintain the transportation system in a state of good repair.

Maintaining and improving the region's transportation infrastructure is necessary for safety and economic competitiveness. Delays caused by infrastructure failures can be costly and disrupt communities due to diverted traffic, increased air pollution and noise, and a loss of reliable travel. The state's aging infrastructure, funding

constraints, and the need to make the transportation system more resilient present challenges. Continued and improved collaboration among all partners in the planning and capital programming process—including NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT, the Port Authority, counties and municipalities—is necessary to strategically address maintenance and preservation needs.

Connecting Communities recognizes that proactive maintenance and rehabilitation of roads, bridges and transit assets extend their lifespan and is a critical investment. There are several ways to help achieve this goal, including working with partner agencies to explore streamlining project delivery, from planning to construction, to accelerate completion of needed projects. In addition, innovation and research into new materials and approaches promise to enhance the effective use of resources to extend infrastructure lifespans and to maximize the use of resources. The NJTPA also encourages infrastructure owners to implement the actions and strategies in the Resiliency Improvement Plan.

Increase the region's economic activity, sustainability and competitiveness.

This goal seeks to enhance the transportation system's role in supporting nearly every aspect of the region's economy. It also recognizes the significant economic benefits the transportation sector provides, employing many thousands at the port, Newark Liberty International Airport, warehouses, trucking firms and other employers in the region.

Road and rail travel, which fell sharply during the pandemic, has since rebounded significantly. Commerce through the port is above pre-pandemic levels and growing. This has propelled an economic recovery, though not without challenges for future growth. These challenges may arise from trade policy, such as tariffs, extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, or other disruptions. These may cause short-term fluctuations in freight volumes; however, the region is well positioned for significant growth in the future.

This goal is connected to many of the others and the recommendations were developed after considering employment, commuting, economic and community development and freight needs and trends.

Strategies for achieving this goal include ensuring investments to maintain and improve the multimodal system keep pace with the growth of demand for movement of people and goods affecting the highway network, the transit system, the port, freight rail network and other critical facilities. Major infrastructure projects—notably completing the trans-Hudson River tunnels and

From top: Port Newark, Essex County; West New York, Hudson County



larger Gateway program, upgrades to trans-Hudson bridges and improvements at the port—are vital to safeguard the bistate economy.

Ongoing cooperation between the public and private sectors is essential to economic progress. This includes improved dialog and planning activities early in the development process to better mesh business interests with community needs. In addition, local governments should adapt to e-commerce deliveries by creating Complete Streets that accommodate all curbside and road users, including delivery trucks, transit vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians, parking, and non-transportation uses of the street. Innovations such as smaller vehicles or cargo bikes may be appropriate in some locations. ●

Financial Element

WHILE THE GOALS are at the heart of this plan, providing overarching priorities for future development of transportation, *Connecting Communities* is more than a policy document. It identifies and makes choices about near-term, mid-term and long-term investments to be accomplished with reasonably expected available funding. The federal government requires that MPO long-range plans be fiscally constrained.

For the near-term and mid-term, the project index includes \$39.9 billion in project commitments. This plan envisions systematically improving the transportation system by making full and effective use of all available federal and state transportation funding.

To keep pace with the growing population and travel, new methods of funding transportation will be needed. This plan foresees an average of \$4.9 billion in year of expenditure (YOE) dollars available annually to address current and future transportation system needs. Nearly half of total funding is dedicated to capital investments focused on maintaining the transportation system in a state of good repair. ●

Plan Scenario Funding and Expenditures BILLIONS OF YOE\$

SOURCE	NEAR-TERM FY 26-29	MID-TERM FY 30-35	LONG-TERM FY 36-50	TOTAL
Federal	\$11.57	\$16.83	\$41.21	\$69.60
State	\$7.12	\$10.66	\$31.94	\$49.71
Other	\$1.19	\$1.62	\$1.35	\$4.15
TOTAL	\$19.87	\$29.10	\$74.50	\$123.47



Implementation

THERE ARE SEVERAL priority actions that the NJTPA and its partners can take to realize the goals of this plan. These actions require continued and strengthened collaboration with agency partners, counties, municipalities and the public.

Beyond capital projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the NJTPA will use annual updates to the Unified Planning Work Program to help implement the priority recommendations focused on planning activities and the early stages of the project pipeline. This work program guides the ongoing transportation planning activities of the NJTPA staff, its member agencies and other transportation agencies in the region. Many of the priorities outlined below are included in the current work program or can be considered for future ones.

Planning

The NJTPA commits to continue and expand programs that support strong county and municipal planning that advances the goals of *Connecting Communities* and that can result in transportation and community improvements. Examples of these programs include Complete Streets Technical Assistance, Planning for Emerging Centers, Transit Hub Planning, Local Capital Project Delivery and Freight Concept Development.

Paterson,
Passaic County



**Newark,
Essex County**

Other actions the NJTPA can take include:

- Considering housing and transportation costs in studies, as appropriate.
- Using the regional zoning atlas, when completed, to support coordinated land use and transportation decision making.
- Using the findings of the latest CMP to further explore local needs and identify potential projects that could be implemented, including evaluating ways to mitigate the impacts of freight traffic on communities.
- Using the RCIS as guidance, consider investments based on performance data and lifecycle cost analysis for infrastructure assets. Encourage proactive maintenance and rehabilitation of roads, bridges, and transit assets to extend their lifespan.
- Continue and expand research and pilot initiatives to advance the use of technology, including exploring new materials and innovative use of smart infrastructure.

Investments

The way forward offered by this plan foresees the investment of some \$123.5 billion through 2050. Based on this funding, the region can implement the investments in this plan’s project index and those that will be identified through the ongoing project development process during the life of this plan. This will involve regular updates

to the TIP, through which federal and state transportation funding is allocated and scheduled.

The NJTPA continues to support major infrastructure projects—most notably completing the Hudson River tunnels and larger Gateway Program—to improve accessibility and mobility for everyone—as the most critical long-term investment in the region.

Connecting Communities advocates for other strategic transit enhancements to make more modal choices available in the region. This plan also recognizes the need to improve travel safety and reduce fatalities; support active transportation and Complete Streets projects; and mitigate the disruptive and dangerous impacts of extreme weather hazards. *Connecting Communities* supports continued robust funding for upgrading infrastructure and maintaining a state of good repair for road and transit infrastructure owned and operated by NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT and local entities.

Collaboration

Coordination and collaboration are central to successful planning and implementation. This plan recognizes the need to foster coordination between transportation agencies and state and federal agencies making non-transportation investments, such as new schools, affordable housing, or new parks, to incorporate transportation early in the planning process to realize the greatest benefits. There is also a need for collaboration between state and local partners to better plan for and manage warehouse and related development.

This plan also recommends that the NJTPA explore ways to increase support to state agencies, counties and municipalities to plan for, apply for and obtain competitive grants.

Connecting Communities supports priorities and investments being made by other entities, including:

- Investments and upgrades to facilities by the Port Authority, with cooperation from terminal operators and shippers through the Council on Port Performance, in which the NJTPA participates. These discussions and the resulting improvements are vital to the future of the port.
- Continued support of NJ TRANSIT's efforts to ensure stable and adequate funding for existing and strategic expanded services and operations, recognizing the vital role bus and rail transit plays in an efficient transportation system serving all communities.

**From top:
Bridgewater,
Somerset County;
Palisades Park,
Bergen County**





**Belvidere,
Warren County**

Achieving collaboration on these and other priority recommendations will require sustained dialogue and commitments by numerous parties. The NJTPA is well positioned to help foster and enhance regional cooperation—an especially important role as new challenges arise and needs and interests change. This plan provides a solid foundation for this cooperation and continued progress toward achieving a resilient, multimodal transportation system that meets the needs of all communities in the NJTPA region. ●

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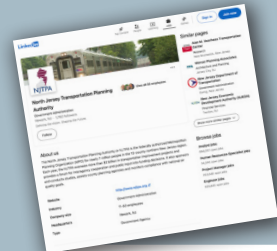
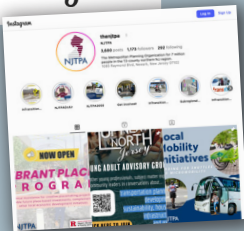
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