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THE VISION

VISION STATEMENT

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES: The NJTPA

Long Range Transportation Plan envisions a resilient modern multimodal transportation system that meets the needs of all users—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.



Leonia, Bergen County

This vision statement was developed with guidance from the NJTPA’s Board of Trustees, partners, staff and the public. It served as a guide for the creation of *Connecting Communities* and encapsulates the NJTPA’s approach to meeting its mandates as the MPO for northern and central New Jersey.

As required by federal law (Title 23 CFR Part 450), this plan includes “long-range and short-range strategies/actions that provide for the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system (including accessible pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities) to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.”

As discussed in Chapter 1, to meet these requirements, the NJTPA Board considered the prior plan’s goals, refined and expanded them, arriving at the seven goals underpinning this plan. These goals (page 11) are pursued in the context of priorities and policies set by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which oversees MPO planning across the country in keeping with federal law. The law includes several planning factors reflected in this plan, including one that speaks directly to the *Connecting Communities*

theme—enhancing connectivity across and between modes for people and freight. Other federal planning factors reflected in this plan include: supporting the region’s economic vitality and enhancing travel and tourism; making the transportation system safer and more secure for all users; increasing accessibility and mobility for people and freight; protecting and enhancing the environment; making the transportation system more resilient, reliable and efficient; improving quality of life; and emphasizing the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Since 2018, the federal government has required state departments of transportation and MPOs to make use of a standardized series of performance measures, setting targets to track and improve 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 (see Appendix D).

The NJTPA vision for the region in this plan is consistent with and reflects these national priorities. The vision also draws upon and coordinates with the policies of state and partner agencies. This includes policies in the following plans, among others:

- **New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan** (State Plan)

- **New Jersey Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP)**
- **New Jersey Keep It Moving Long Range Transportation Plan**
- **NJ TRANSIT 2030—A 10-Year Strategic Plan**
- **Port Authority NY–NJ Capital Plan and Port Master Plan 2050**
- **Highlands Master Plan**
- **Hackensack Meadowlands District Master Plan Update**
- **New Jersey Turnpike Capital Plan & Strategic Plan**
- **New Jersey Priority Climate Action Plan**
- **New York–New Jersey Metropolitan Statistical Area Priority Climate Action Plan**

Coordinating with these and other plans and partner agencies is an essential function of the NJTPA as it fulfills a “comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing approach” to planning—called “3C” planning—which has been mandated in federal law for MPOs for more than four decades. It means the NJTPA seeks to integrate varied interests, perspectives and priorities into a singular long-term vision for the region and its communities.

This coordination extends beyond the NJTPA region to include the greater metropolitan area through the Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum. This group of 10 MPOs and councils of government from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania meets regularly to discuss larger regional issues, such as goods movement. The MAP Forum is finalizing a report outlining existing transportation and other data for the larger region, entitled *Regional Planning Context: The Multi-State Metropolitan Region*.

Gathering Input

Moving from broad goals for regional transportation to strategies and investments that can achieve them requires detailed study of needs around the region and robust public and stakeholder engagement. As highlighted in Chapter 1 and discussed further in Chapters 3 and 5, several NJTPA programs help identify and advance strategies and investments. These programs are conducted in cooperation with NJTPA member agencies and partners, frequently with participa-

tion by municipal officials, and private and public sector stakeholders. All provide opportunities for public input and review.

This plan will shape and direct these ongoing programs, drawing upon extensive public and stakeholder input. 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. Figure 2.1 summarizes the people reached through these methods. In addition, targeted outreach was 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 raise awareness about *Connecting Communities* and opportunities for public input. In addition, to meet a new federal requirement, housing

Figure 2.1



stakeholders were engaged in the development of this plan. Below is a summary of some of the key input received. More detailed information is in Appendix C.

Board Visioning

In October 2024, the NJTPA held an in-person visioning session with the NJTPA Board. It included many subregional planners. As noted in Chapter 1, the session was built around a revised set of goals. Among the key points during the wide-ranging and thoughtful discussions were the following:

The NJTPA and partner agencies must redouble efforts to make travel safer, including increasing collaboration between the counties and municipalities.

There is a need to improve the transit network; to address road congestion and unreliable travel times; and to upgrade aging or outdated facilities.

Other suggestions included supplementing traditional, fixed route transit with on-demand services and micromobility; increasing housing near transit; bolstering local planning capacity and resources; applying more data-driven approaches to target investments for safety and other needs; and better engaging developers and the private sector.

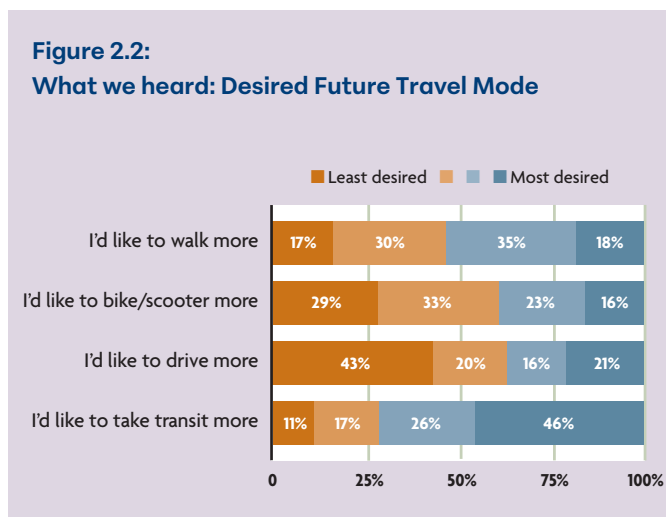
Participants also discussed how the NJTPA can work to ensure the transportation system meets the needs of all users, which led to the creation of a new plan goal.



Surveys

More than 1,850 people participated in an initial online survey sharing their vision for the future of regional transportation. Most participants (45 percent) said driving is their primary means of transportation, followed by bus/light rail/PATH/train at 26 percent, walking at 19 percent and riding a bicycle or scooter at 5 percent. Among the insights:

- When asked to rank desired future travel modes, nearly half (46 percent) of participants said they would like to ride transit more as their first choice and another 26 percent selected that as their second choice. The next most popular future travel mode choice was walking/using a mobility device, followed by riding a bike/scooter more. Driving more was the least popular option. (See Figure 2.2)
- Of those who do not currently use transit, the top ways they could be encouraged to do so include more frequent service (14 percent), better connections to other transit lines (12 percent) and faster travel times (10 percent).
- Approximately half of respondents said they did not feel the transportation system in their area meets their current needs.
- When asked what improvements would have the biggest positive impact, 24 percent chose expanding and improving transit options, followed by improving walking and biking connections (13.8 percent) and making roads safer and reducing crashes (13.6 percent). (See Figure 2.3)



A second survey was conducted from late April through early June to coincide with in-person pop-up outreach events. It included the same questions being used at the in-person events, detailed below, to provide an additional opportunity for the region's residents to provide input. The findings are incorporated in the Pop-Up Outreach section.

Forums

Three virtual Let's Talk Transportation forums were held in January and March to present information and gather feedback on a variety of topics. They included:

- *Walking, Biking & Rolling Investments: Creating Active and Accessible Communities*, held in partnership with the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition and Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University
- *Going Places: Improving Access to Transit*, held in partnership with NJ TRANSIT
- *Creating Vibrant Downtowns: Balancing People, Parking & Deliveries*, held in partnership with Downtown New Jersey

Pop-Up Outreach

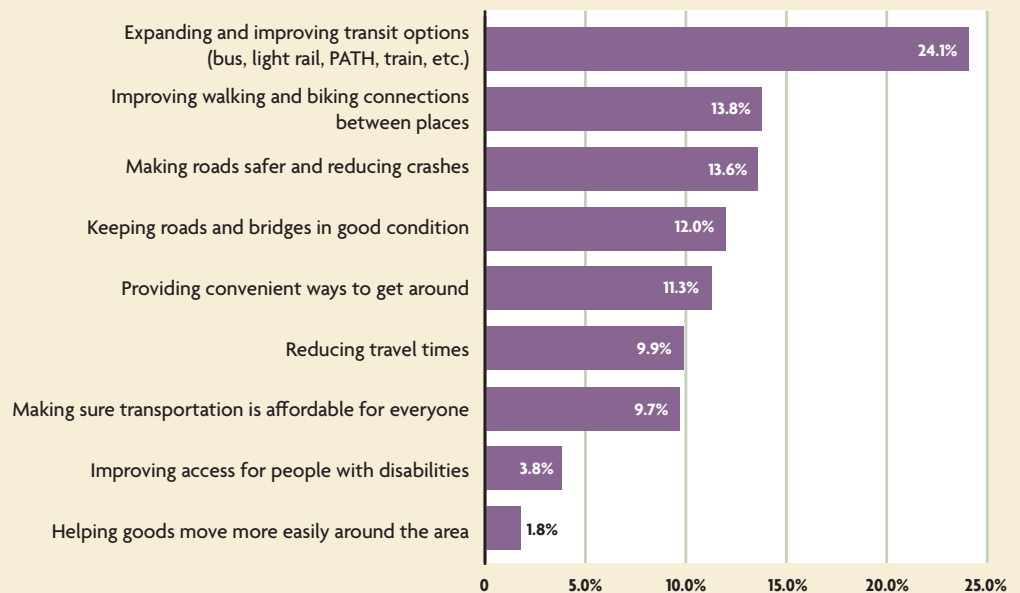
In-person public outreach was conducted in each of the 15 subregions between mid-April and early June. The outreach was held at a variety of well-attended community-oriented events, hosted by non-profits, municipalities, counties and others (see Appendix C for a full list).

Participants' top priorities 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

Approximately 1,700 people shared their insights on these top-

Figure 2.3:
What We Heard: Priority Improvements



ics and their transportation improvement priorities through the pop-up events and supplemental online survey.

Targeted Outreach

To ensure that the outreach reflected the diversity of the region, additional targeted activities were conducted. This included the introduction of Sammy the Squirrel, the NJTPA's new mascot, to engage children. Sammy's likeness was used on the plan website and in social media posts to encourage children and teens to share their ideas through a multimedia Future of Transportation contest. A puppet version of Sammy also visited Boys and Girls Clubs, Liberty Science

Center and public libraries in the region to engage children and get them to record their ideas for the future. Other targeted outreach included:

- Working with the NJTPA's Outreach Liaisons to develop materials to engage their communities. This included developing an activity to gather input at ESL classes, as





NJTPA OUTREACH



well as a survey and a virtual and in-person outreach event to engage members of the LGBTQ+ community.

- Reimagining the Set the Table meeting in a box activity from prior LRTPs as an interactive online game to engage young adults and others. An event was held in May to engage members of the NJTPA’s UpNext North Jersey young adult advisory group using the game. It was also used to engage teens at pop-up events at Boys and Girls Clubs in the region.

Housing Roundtable

Developers and housing advocates participated in a roundtable discussion on affordable housing in February 2025. This roundtable was held to comply with new requirements in IJA, which encourages the consideration of housing in the transportation planning process and recommends coordinating with affordable housing organizations and others. Participants included representatives from the Affordable Housing Alliance, Invest Newark Land Bank and municipal housing authorities. Discussion touched on the challenges faced by residents in finding stable and affordable housing, the need for affordable housing to be located near transit and other lower cost travel modes, and the need for a diversity of housing types close to transportation and other services to meet the needs of the region’s diverse population. Ensuring that the region fosters mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods centered around public transportation is critical for affordability and strengthening the region. The discussion informed recommendations in Chapter 3.

Using What We Heard

The input from these efforts (see Figure 2.4), along with findings of technical planning activities highlighted in Chapter 1, was used to craft this plan and its vision for the future. Some recommendations gathered during outreach activities were incorporated directly into *Connecting Communities*; some helped the

Opposite page, clockwise from top: Piscataway, Middlesex County (1 & 2); Jersey City, Hudson County; Cranford, Union County and Paterson, Passaic County

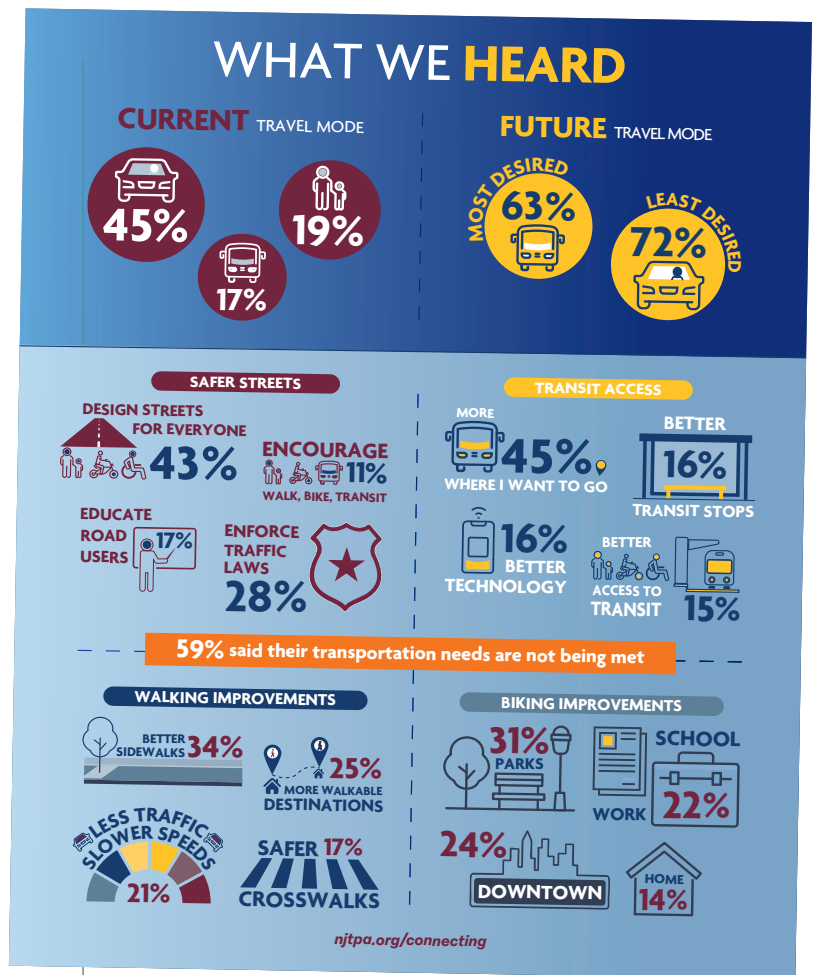


Figure 2.4

NJTPA refine existing plan elements; and other suggestions had to be balanced with competing priorities or set aside for future consideration due to funding, feasibility and other challenges. However, all input was weighed and carefully considered. Summaries are included in Appendix C.

The next chapter presents the results of both public input and technical planning during the development of this plan. It is broken into seven sections and includes issues facing the region in each goal area. The chapter provides a blueprint for advancing and implementing this plan’s vision for the region. ●