

Congestion Buster Task Force Land Use and Growth Subcommittee

As of March 19, 2002

Interim Report on the Recommendations Provided by Subcommittee Members

BACKGROUND:

As part of the Congestion Busters Task Force process, a Land Use and Growth Subcommittee (the Subcommittee) was formed to discuss the effects of land use on transportation, the factors affecting traffic congestion, and to make recommendations to the entire Task Force on areas to be addressed to assist the Task Force to accomplish its goals. As part of our charge, the Subcommittee has developed this summary report of our discussions and recommendations and, most importantly, a prioritization of the recommended actions.

The Subcommittee believes that the priority for actions that will maximize effectiveness begins with actions at the local level. In general and with few exceptions, the current local planning and land use process in New Jersey is not designed to support Transportation Demand Management techniques that would encourage alternatives to the single occupant vehicle (SOV), such as: increased ridesharing, transit, biking, walking, teleworking, compressed work week, etc.

The municipal planning process is presided over by the local Planning Board, and the Planning Board is made up of municipal residents and elected officials. The process and decisions are governed by the municipal land use and zoning ordinances and guided by the municipal Master Plan. In terms of those issues before the Congestion Busters Task Force, the municipal Master Plans may contain a "Circulation Element" which provide the basis for many of the decisions that the Board reaches as they relate to transportation within the development process. These guidelines combined with recommendations from the Board professionals (Engineer, Planner, Traffic, environmental and legal consultants) form the basis of municipal developmental decisions. Under current municipal land use practices, Board members are not required to receive training specific to transportation, pollution or land use.

Since, in general, all land area not under direct ownership of the State of New Jersey or the Government of the United States is governed by the land use and zoning ordinances and guided by the municipal Master Plan of the local municipality including land uses along State and Inter-State corridors, the Subcommittee agrees that the first priority is assisting, educating, encouraging and providing incentives to the local municipality.

- *Assistance* may include the provision of training or available data that clearly shows the strong and undeniable link between land use and transportation. A sampling of additional assistance offerings could include recommendations for enhancements to municipal Circulation Elements; sample ordinances; membership in or assistance from Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) with strong municipal programs; availability of MPOs to provide assistance/technical support; and the provision of transportation or planning consultants specializing in the development of circulation elements which provide options to the SOV.
- *Education* could include structured training sessions with resulting certifications for Planning Board, Zoning Board and Township Council in the areas of traffic congestion and land use.
- *Encouragement* could take the direction of incentives; statewide recognition; making additional funding available for municipal efforts that further the causes of increased transportation alternatives to the SOV.
- *Incentives* could, obviously, include increased funding or grants; membership in a TMA; press releases and media coverage, etc.

While additional accompanying details (see Appendix A) and further specific recommendations are required and will be presented, the following provides the accumulated suggestions of the Subcommittee received to date as they relate to the local level (first priority). Please note that the recommendations are not presented in priority order.

LOCAL LEVEL/MUNICIPAL ACTIVITIES (Formal Subcommittee Recommendations):

- Expansion of the use of Transfer Development Rights (TDR) in order to save open space while concentrating development in areas which, in turn, may help to sustain transit (will require State legislative action).
- Municipalities need to have more incentives or mandates to zone villages or centers instead of spreading out development through out the town. This way transit and vanpools become an option.
- Municipal Land Use Law needs to be amended to authorize municipalities to require as a condition of preliminary site plan or

subdivision approval demonstration by the applicant of conformity with traffic management guidelines adopted by the municipalities. This gives municipalities more control over development and sprawl.

- Pass legislation that would allow municipalities to pursue timed-growth planning, so that residential, commercial, office, and industrial development does not leapfrog ahead of infrastructure development and that all such infrastructure is coordinated and consensus-driven.
- Encourage new commercial and industrial development to locate where it can be served by transit services (existing or new services).
- Encourage the focusing of new development into existing communities and identified growth centers to allow for effective provision of transit services and transportation infrastructure.
- Municipalities receive incentives to encourage the integration of sidewalks/bike paths; transit stops; reduced parking in return for the provision of shuttles; park and ride lots along major travel routes; the addition of on-site services for larger office parks or commercial development; transit-friendly development; etc.

There are some specific municipal recommendations that the Subcommittee believes should accompany the above summaries.

- Municipalities need to evolve their current planning and zoning regulations to encourage Transportation Demand Management (TDM) techniques and options
- Concentrate development into densities designed to encourage transit and ridesharing opportunities, and to maximize the preservation of open space within the municipality
- Provide a mixture of uses in these concentrated developments to enable residents and employees within these developments to avail themselves of offerings within the development
- Provide a requirement for pedestrian and bike linkages from residential and office space to commercial space
- Maximize the use of the existing transportation infrastructure and exploit/exhaust all opportunities within this existing infrastructure before adding additional infrastructure
- Municipalities should consider working with counties to incorporate the concept of Transportation Development Districts/Transportation Improvement Districts (TDD/TID) in their community planning efforts (please see RITCSC reference).
- Municipalities should encourage employers to utilize flextime, compressed work weeks and teleworking to reduce the amount of vehicles on the road or to limit the amount of vehicles traveling at the same times (by spreading out the "rush hour")

- Municipalities should join as members of their local TMA and utilize the resources provided by the TMA for its residents, even to the extent of placing the TMA's contact information in the municipality's "guide to services"
- Municipalities should encourage the development of Park and Rides in heavily traveled and congested areas of their community traversed by major corridors
- Municipalities should plan regionally and work with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), the Office of State Planning (OSP), New Jersey Transit (NJT) and their local TMA as well as their neighbor townships and counties up and down the corridors supporting the development
- Municipal development practices need to encourage transit-friendly design and smart-growth techniques, inclusive of bus-rapid-transit options
- Safety for the pedestrian and bicyclist needs to be taken into account along with the commuter in municipal development practices
- Municipalities must not lose sight of the need to accommodate truck traffic and the movement of goods
- Municipalities should enlist in NJT's Community Shuttle program to the extent possible, utilizing the local TMA as a source for determining demand on a possible shuttle route
- Municipalities should look to maximize the effectiveness of municipal shuttles (such as those for seniors) by connecting to neighboring municipal shuttles, county shuttles and NJT services, and considering adoption of NJT's policy of adding bike racks to buses
- Municipalities should make high levels of information available to its businesses and residents by working with the local TMA to set up information centers featuring transit and rideshare information. These options will be little used if their availability is not widely known
- Municipalities need to work closely with State Police and NJDOT personnel to remove accident victim vehicles from the roadway as soon as possible, while also providing reasonable alternate routes for blocked roadways
- To assist in the regionalization process, municipalities should embrace the corridor task force process as in the Route 73/38 Task Force, the Route 1 collaborative, and the Route 287 task force

The next area that the Subcommittee reviewed were areas that, while not actually at the local level, were most directly affected by local decisions, or relied upon local decisions to some extent for much of their outcome. For

purposes of argument, these recommendations have been categorized under the term of "County Level Activities," and are presented below, not in priority order.

COUNTY LEVEL ACTIVITIES (Formal Subcommittee Recommendations):

- To extend the Burlington County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program to the remainder of the State.
- To resurrect earlier proposed county planning enabling legislation, which would give counties authority to approve or disapprove development based upon existing infrastructure capacity.

Municipalities are required to file their Master Plans with the County office in which they reside. And, the County has review authority along with the municipality for development that occurs along County roads. However, that is where the level of involvement and regionalization of development ends. Counties are not required to (and for the most part because of home rule do not) review and comment on municipal Master Plans, nor are counties required to have a current County Master Plan. As discussed above, one important recommendation is that the municipalities work regionally with their local, counties and State partners. As part of this effort, they should review and comment on all municipal Master Plans, review plans in conjunction with highway corridor goals, and be required to have a County Master Plan and keep it updated in a similar fashion as the MLUL requires of municipalities.

The Subcommittee also believes that, in addition to the above County recommendations submitted, other actions could include the implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) on a widespread basis; develop or encourage the development of park and ride facilities along county highways; and, in conjunction with the State Police and local municipalities, a coordinated effort to remove accident vehicles from the roadways of county roads and intersecting municipal roads. Additionally, the Subcommittee believes that the counties might also be in a position to assist the municipalities in encouraging the adoption of TDM measures in their development processes through funding opportunities made available through the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO).

Finally, and in conjunction with its municipalities as well as the State and applicable MPO, counties should consider working with municipalities to incorporate the concept of Transportation Development Districts/Transportation Improvement Districts (TDD/TID) in their regional county planning efforts (please see RITCSC reference).

The Subcommittee also spent considerable effort in looking at the massive role that the State government plays in encouraging alternatives to the SOV. And, while there was consensus that the municipalities have the ultimate control of what happens to the vast majority of the land area in the State, there was also agreement that the State is in an excellent position to assist, encourage or, in some cases, force some of the change needed. Brought out in our discussions, the recommendations below, and in the additional discussion that follows the recommendations, is general agreement that we cannot build our way out of congestion and that new highway expansion is generally a short-term solution. As is discussed in much of the literature cited in the bibliography, in some cases, the additional flow capacity of a roadway brought about by extra lanes will be quickly filled by increased traffic drawn to the roadway as a result of the increased flow. Unfortunately, this might include drivers leaving transit and ridesharing arrangements in order to avail themselves of the new, increased capacity of a formerly congested route.

STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES (Formal Subcommittee Recommendations):

- To evaluate the State Highway Access Management Code in terms of its consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), and to explore ways to strengthen existing SDRP considerations in the Code, as well as create new avenues for compatibility, as appropriate.
- To amend the New Jersey State Planning Act to mandate that municipal master planning and zoning comply with the goals, strategies, policies and planning area policy objectives of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP).
- DOT Capital Program – Fix it First and transit must be a priority.
- DOT must reduce the number of additional lane miles. All highway expansions must be carefully evaluated to support the state's growth management objectives. Added capacity that causes auto-dependent development and sprawl must be avoided.
- DOT funding pie- Prioritize transportation improvements so that fix it first and NJ TRANSIT receive more money. With more state funding dedicated to rail and bus we can expand and build new transit lines and add capacity on trains to reduce VMT.
- Incentives (i.e. credit on the corporate business tax) must be given to employers to locate or relocate in transit friendly areas.
- Consider requiring that new office buildings/parks offer TransitChek, parking cash-out and/or rideshare services to their employees

- Major Corridor Origin & Destination Studies. There are probably less than a dozen corridors in the state. A systematic approach is necessary to gather the data.
- That the State (through the Office of State Planning) encourage and assist the municipalities in the scripting of legislative aids to steer the local development process to incorporate carpools, vanpools, transit, etc. in return for reducing parking requirements; and to continue to encourage pedestrian/bike linkages and introduce opportunities to use non-motorized methods for transportation.
- That the State (through the Office of State Planning and with help from the NJ League of Municipalities) encourage municipalities and county governments to implement the process of requiring pedestrian/bike linkages, or collecting transportation impact fees to assist in the addition of alternatives such as new pedestrian and bike linkages when the addition of these alternatives are not possible (wetlands, space, etc).

The following presents some additional recommendations or further explanation of the recommendations formally provided by members of the Subcommittee. These additional comments are not provided in order of importance.

- That the NJDOT expand its park and ride program to provide sufficient funding beyond what's currently programmed
- That the NJDOT expand its incident management/emergency routes program to include all counties and affected municipalities in the State. These efforts should be in conjunction with the State Police, counties, municipalities and the local TMA, which can serve as a coordinating entity between state, county and local levels
- The State should undertake a massive educational and information exchange in order to encourage municipalities to adopt the type of TDM-encouraging land uses discussed under the municipal activities recommended above. Funding and assistance should be made available to the municipalities through grant opportunities coordinated through the MPO, and NJDOT should consider employing the local TMA to assist in this task.
- The State should work proactively with the NJ League of Municipalities and the NJ Department of Community Affairs to redraft and recast the NJ Residential Site Improvement Standards to be TDM focused and allow municipalities to require this type of enhancement

- The State should promote compact development/clustering practices to municipalities and land use consultants serving the municipalities
- The State, along with the applicable MPO, should assist the counties and municipalities to incorporate the concept of Transportation Development Districts/Transportation Improvement Districts (TDD/TID) in their regional planning efforts (please see RITCSC reference).
- NJDOT should integrate TMA efforts and staff more into ongoing State programs that could be assisted with the inclusion of the TMA and its members
- NJDOT should encourage developers that reach out to them in order to gain access to State highways, to contact the proposed development's TMA in order to acquaint them with the traffic issues and concerns in the region affecting their proposal, and the potential solutions to their issue as offered by the TMA
- That NJ TRANSIT continue to expand its bike racks on buses programs to expand the "reach" of transportation services beyond normal walking distances

Finally, the recommendations would not be complete without directing some attention towards the Federal government, and many of these recommendations could also be directed at this level, including park and ride, encouraging TDM efforts, reviewing Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding flexibility to insure that this valuable program allows the States as well as funded entities the ability to try innovative and proven strategies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A summary of sources utilized for the Land Use and Growth Subcommittee Summary Report to the Congestion Busters Task Force

Stuck in Traffic – Coping with Peak-Hour Traffic Congestion, Anthony Downs; The Brookings Institution and The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1992

The Transportation/Land Use Connection, Terry Moore and Paul Thorsnes; American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report Number 448/449, 1994

Transportation & Land Use Innovations – Why you can't pave your way out of congestion, Reid Ewing; American Planning Association, 1997

A Toolbox for Alleviating Traffic Congestion and Enhancing Mobility, Michael D. Meyer, Ph.D., P.E., Georgia Institute of Technology; Institute of Transportation Engineers, 1997

Regional Intergovernmental Transportation Coordinating Study Commission (RITCSC) – Final Report; The Transportation Policy Institute, October 30, 2000

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan Executive Summary, New Jersey State Planning Commission; March 2001

Municipal Transportation Demand Management, Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association; 1995