



2030 New Jersey Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan  
**Engaging the Public**  
**Advisory Panel**

**NJDOT Foran Building**

**January 12, 2006 - 2:00PM – 4:00PM**

Agenda

- 1. Introduction of Advisory Panel Members**
- 2. Introduction to New Jersey State Long-Range Transportation Plan**
  - The 2030 Plan
  - Role of the Advisory Panel
- 3. Engaging the Public**
  - Issues and challenges
  - Who exactly is “the public” for long-range and statewide planning?
  - What does the public need to know about the “big picture” transportation issues and choices facing New Jersey?
  - Are common misconceptions holding us back?
  - What methods are available to confront apathy and develop an informed public that is ready and willing to engage in the planning process?
  - How can the media be best utilized?
- 4. Identify Action Steps for Public Engagement**
- 5. Measures of Success for Public Engagement**
  - How will we know when we get there?
  - Discussion

## 2030 New Jersey Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan

### Engaging the Public Advisory Panel

#### Meeting Summary

**NJDOT Foran Building  
January 12, 2006 – 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM**

<u>Meeting Attendees</u>	<u>Organization/Affiliation</u>
Arnold Bloch	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Steve Brown	Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
Sasha Corchado	Regional Plan Association
Anthony Davis	NJ Department of Transportation
Dan Doggendorf	Continental Airlines, Inc. (NJ Chamber of Commerce)
Michael Egenton	New Jersey Chamber of Commerce
Tim Evans	New Jersey Future
Pam Fischer	AAA New Jersey Automobile Club
Gail Gimbel	DMJM Harris
John Humeston	FHWA
Pam Lebeaux	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Neil Longfield	NJ Department of Transportation
Damien Newton	Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Eric Powers	NJ Department of Transportation
Camille Sinclair	NJ Department of Transportation
Candace Snyder	DVRPC
J. David Stein	NJTPA
Les Varga	SJTPO

#### Meeting Summary

The meeting opened with Neil Longfield of NJDOT welcoming the Advisory Panel members and asking that they introduce themselves. He then gave a brief introduction to the 2030 Plan, which provides the basis for informed decisions about transportation for the next 25 years. He stated that this Advisory Panel is one of four that are being convened to provide input to the Plan. The other three are Environmental Justice, Mobility of Aging and Disabled Populations, and Smart Growth. He then reviewed the agenda and introduced Arnold Bloch of Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, who led the group through an interactive session.

#### What's the biggest challenge in engaging the public in a Long-Range Transportation Plan?

- Why should people care? What's in it for them? Are there any hot button issues? How will people benefit by being engaged?
- How can we get the message across that transportation is more than just talking bridges, roads, and transit – it affects many other aspects of their lives?

- How do we localize the issues so they have real meaning for the average person?
- Long-range planning is too abstract for many people. It is hard for some people to think in the long-term. How do we get people to see that long-range planning affects short-term decision making?
- How do we get people to even come to meetings? How can we get them involved without coming to meetings?
- How do we get people to believe they will have an impact, that we want to hear from them, and that we will really listen to them?
- How do we deal with public cynicism and apathy?
- How do we get people to understand the important issues?

The group then brainstormed answers to questions related to engaging the public in an ongoing dialogue about long-range transportation issues:

#### What are the key topics?

- Where the money is going to come from.
- DOT's ability to deliver services and capital improvements.
- The connections between transportation and land use.

#### What should NJDOT let people know about?

- The key trade-offs that need to be made in providing services and capital improvements.
- Why people should care about this dialogue.
- How the future will look with and without transportation investments. Let them see what the future will be under each scenario.
- What NJDOT can and can't do.
- People don't realize that the gas tax doesn't cover needs.

#### What does NJDOT need to learn from the public?

- What the public is willing to pay for in terms of improved transportation.
- What trade-offs people are willing to make.
- What people think about smart growth options and transportation.
- How people use transportation modes and services.

Overall, participants felt that in an era of constrained resources, an emphasis needs to be placed on discussing and learning about what is really needed, what can be afforded, and what trade-offs need to be made. The limitations and opportunities that NJDOT faces must also be explored, especially with regards to land use connections. None of these efforts are likely to be successful, however, until the public is a fully engaged partner, understanding what the future holds and willing to state their preferences and needs.

Given these key topics for discussion and mutual education, participants were then asked three additional related questions dealing with those who should be part of the ongoing dialogue:

### Who must be involved in the dialogue?

- State and federal legislators
- Local elected officials and associations
- Those with veto power
- Transportation system users
- Special interest groups
- The media
- County planners
- Other state agencies
- MPOs
- Local/regional chambers of commerce and community organizations
- The general public

### Who needs to see more detailed information?

- Most participants felt that a range of information should be made available to a wide spectrum of people, giving them the option to learn at various levels of depth, through such mechanisms as a web site. For the most part, people who want more detailed information will ask for it or go to a web site.
- However, there was a concern that special care and thought be given to providing information in the right manner to those with different types of disabilities.

### Who are the most important participants that NJDOT knows least about?

- Commuters, through-travelers, and visitors from other states
- Immigrant groups
- Children
- Local organizations and associations not typically involved in transportation processes
- Developers and architects
- Transit (especially bus) dependents
- The disabled community

One of the points made throughout the discussion of these questions was that while long-range planning must be done at the state level, the related public dialogue must be carried out at the local level. In addition, while there was much concern about those “special” stakeholders (those described by one participant as having some formal or informal means of veto power), there was equal concern that there was considerable benefit from involving and learning from those not typically sought out, like the disabled, children, and local organizations.

Participants then formed breakout groups to develop techniques for engaging the key parties in a dialogue on long-range transportation planning.

What techniques should NJDOT use over the next five years to engage the public in a dialogue on the key topics?

- Techniques need to be interactive, targeted, and highly visual
- They should involve a variety of media and forums, including using the internet, using commercial media (TV/radio/print), mailings and education programs to school-age population.
- Eliminate jargon in what we say
- Provide performance measures that mean something to people.
- Entertain people.
- Mix up techniques so nothing gets stale.

What techniques should NJDOT use over the next five years to get important information out to the public?

- The message needs to influence what means are used to get the word out, or “The message drives the media.”
- TV monitors at rail stations (e.g., PATH Vision)
- Transit advertisements (including bus wraps advertising the web site)
- Utility bill inserts
- Transportation user-targeted advertising
- Billboards
- School education programs
- Innovative advertising (e.g., pizza boxes, cinema advertisements, etc.)
- Newsletters published by various other interest groups
- Bulletins from municipalities
- Drive-time radio advertising
- Partner with the media so they'll help tell the story
- DVRPC had good results with a personal survey performed at movie theaters; a movie trailer announced the survey which was conducted on premises after the movies.
- Use high traffic websites, such as NJ TRANSIT online schedules and the Motor Vehicle Services website.

What techniques should NJDOT use to best learn the important concerns of its constituents?

- Use existing survey data from MPOs, transit agencies, etc.
- New household surveys, mail, phone, etc. (including regular use of the Eagleton – Newark Star-Ledger poll). Use this data to understand evolving issues, needs, and concerns.
- Monitor complaints in the media.
- Convene focus groups. In particular, use focus groups to learn information from those groups that aren't normally heard from.
- Set up a "user group" of commuters for regular communication and feedback.

In responding to these questions, all groups noted that no techniques would be successful if the public were not informed how their comments and participation play a role in the planning process. People need to know that they are being listened to.

Feedback loops were talked about as a means of providing continual debriefing on what role the public is playing. It was also interesting to note that public meetings were not typically mentioned as a technique, given the issues that many had with getting a sizable cross-section of the population to participate in the traditional meeting format.

The discussion then moved to performance measures:

How do we know if our engagement process is successful or not?

- Make it someone's job to monitor the engagement process, including its successes and failures.
- Figure out appropriate sample sizes and inquire of the public how they think the engagement process is going.
- Systematically examine whether the plan's results have been referenced in NJDOT's subsequent actions.
- Examine whether the long-range plan has played a role in local community prioritization of needs.

What's the most important action that NJDOT should consider doing as a result of today's discussion?

- Establish institutional feedback loops between NJDOT/NJ TRANSIT and the public.
- Dig into the information the agencies already have. For instance, a vast number of suggestions and concerns were recently gathered by the interagency Safety Management Task Force. Don't approach each plan as if it's a blank slate.
- "Practice what we preach;" i.e., use the Long Range Plan in short-term NJDOT/NJ TRANSIT decision making.
- All planning should be local.
- Listen
- Be honest with the public
- Advertise locally.
- Personalize – "what do these issues mean to the average person?" Remember that most people do not think about transportation.
- Agency credibility needs improvement. One way to build credibility is by showing where the money is going.
- Visualization is a key technique. Show where investments are being made.
- Coordinate inter-agency efforts.

Mr. Bloch concluded the interactive session and thanked the panel members for their participation.