



North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, Inc.

Five-Year Strategic Business Plan

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Cambridge Systematics

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NJTPA

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Statement of Mission

(As revised at the May 18, 2002 Board Retreat)

The NJTPA is *the* transportation planning leader and technical and informational resource for the people of northern New Jersey that:

- Creates a vision** for improved mobility needs for people and goods;
- Develops a plan** for transportation improvement and management to fulfill the vision;
- Partners** with citizens, counties, cities, state, and federal entities to develop and promote the transportation plan for the region;
- Prioritizes federal funding** assistance to make that plan a reality; and
- Links** transportation plans with economic growth, environmental protection, growth management, and quality of life goals for the region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PLANNING PROCESS

This **Strategic Business Plan for the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)** contains strategies and actions to strengthen and develop the agency into a more effective leader of transportation planning and decision-making in the northern New Jersey region.

Input for this plan was gathered from those who have direct interests in the success of the NJTPA – those who will need to implement the plan’s strategies and actions and live with their consequences. This was done through interviews with Board members, Central Staff, legislators, federal and state government staff and others; workshops; and the involvement of a working group made up of NJTPA Central Staff, representatives of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and NJ Transit, and members of the Regional Technical Advisory Committee (RTAC).

In addition to the workshops, a Board Retreat was held on May 18, 2002 to allow the principals – the Board members themselves – an opportunity to engage in an in-depth discussion on priorities and gain consensus on an action plan for the future.

B. MISSION STATEMENT

The following mission statement for the NJTPA was created based on input from interviews, workshops and the Board Retreat:

The NJTPA is the regional transportation planning leader and technical and informational resource for the people of northern New Jersey that:

Creates a vision to meet the mobility needs for people and goods;

Develops a plan for transportation improvement and management to fulfill the vision;

Partners with citizens, counties, cities, state, and

federal entities to develop and promote the transportation plan;

Prioritizes federal funding assistance to make the plan a reality; and

Links transportation planning with economic growth, environmental protection, growth management, and quality of life goals for the region.

C. STRATEGIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Four sets of strategies and respective action items have been developed as outcomes of this Strategic Business Plan.

- Enhance the ability of the NJTPA to exercise leadership in regional transportation planning and investments.
- Develop the NJTPA’s technical resources in order to advance regional planning and better serve partnering agencies, relevant constituencies and the general public of northern New Jersey.
- Increase the effectiveness of the NJTPA Board of Trustees through basic operational improvements.
- Improve and upgrade the organizational structure and capabilities of NJTPA’s Central Staff.

D. ACTION PLANS

Strategy: Enhance The Ability Of The NJTPA To Exercise Leadership In Regional Transportation Planning And Investments

- Develop a vision statement as a preamble and guide for the 2005 Regional Transportation Plan
- Prepare a regional capital investment strategy
- Become more involved in the State Implementation Plan development
- Increase the role of the NJTPA in regional transportation security
- Become a major participant in the State’s Growth Management policies and strategies.
- Form stronger partnerships with transportation

providers that do not generally receive federal funding

Strategy: Improve The NJTPA's Technical Resources In Order To Foster Regional Planning And Better Serve Partnering Agencies, Relevant Constituencies And The General Public Of northern New Jersey

- Create and distribute a data resources directory
- Create an inter-agency resource working group
- Initiate discussions with the appropriate state agencies on understanding socio-economic forecasts
- Develop a methodology for creating a standard set of regional socio-economic forecasts
- Develop, monitor, update and share socio-economic forecasts with subregional and state partners
- Enhance the current North Jersey Travel Demand Forecasting Model
- Address the cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of establishing in-house capabilities to operate the enhanced travel demand-forecasting model
- Create an interagency task force to develop protocols for corridor planning/project concept plan "hand-off" from the NJTPA to operating agencies

Strategy: Increase The Effectiveness Of The NJTPA Board Of Trustees Through Basic Operational Improvements

- Meetings of the Board of Trustees and their committees should change from monthly to bi-monthly
- The Board should annually evaluate the agency's performance and reset annual objectives and goals
- A calendar of major agenda action items will be distributed at the beginning of each year
- New Board members should receive training
- Reports that are to be distributed to the Board should have a standardized executive summary
- Protocols should be developed setting out the time requirements for the receipt and distribution of meeting action item documents to board members
- Enhance the flow of information to Board members on the status of capital and planning projects through improved NJDOT/NJ Transit quarterly reports and periodic meetings with project managers

- Incorporate RTAC into the committee structure of the Board

Strategy: Improve And Upgrade The Organizational Structure And Capabilities Of NJTPA's Central Staff

- Perform an evaluation of the internal organizational structure of Central Staff
- Review and revise (as needed) current job descriptions of Central Staff
- Hire additional staff to fully implement the strategic business plan

The NJTPA already is implementing many of these actions. The agency is overseeing a regional transportation security study. The Board and Committee meeting schedule has been revised and new protocols regarding summarizing and distribution of information are in place. In addition, there has been an internal reorganization that allows the staffing structure to better reflect the goals and mission of the agency.

Nevertheless, implementing this wide range of actions will require constant work over the next five years. The NJTPA has developed performance measures that will continually assess whether the agency is effectively implementing this plan.

Funding remains an ever-present concern for the agency. Implementing many of these changes, such as enhancing technical resources and hiring additional staff, will require additional funds, but future sources of revenue are never certain. The agency should examine possible funding sources such as increased federal funding in the pending reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), using capital funds – such as Surface Transportation or STP money – and developing revenue-generating activities to build the NJTPA's financial resources.

Finally, the NJTPA must maintain a laser-like focus on the reauthorization of TEA-21. This represents the best chance to increase federal funding levels to the NJTPA and other MPOs. By working with the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), the NJTPA can enhance its federal funding position.

Funding is simply a means to an end, as are the strategies and actions outlined in this plan. The implementation of the recommendations contained in this study will position the NJTPA to emerge as the regional leader it seeks to be. Intelligent and thought-

ful implementation of these ideas will enhance the NJTPA's ability to perform technical analyses, improve communications between Board members and Central Staff, raise the NJTPA's profile with both the public and other levels of government and, ultimately, allow the NJTPA to become the leader in regional transportation planning and investment decision-making.

I. INTRODUCTION

This **Strategic Business Plan for the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)** outlines key strategies and an agenda of actions designed to strengthen the agency and make it a more effective leader for transportation planning and decision-making. The detailed and highly interactive process used to forge this plan has created a path forward that will help the NJTPA serve its critical constituencies: counties and municipalities, businesses and employees, transportation providers, and, most importantly, the residents and traveling public of the northern New Jersey region.

This report provides an overview of current operations of the NJTPA and recommends future strategies for operational improvement. The primary objective of this effort was to develop a plan for the future based on current and evolving issues and the needs of the NJTPA region. This report compiles and reviews those issues and offers a plan for the future.

One of the first – and most significant – outcomes of this process was creation of an agency mission statement. This statement reflects the purpose of Metropolitan Planning Organizations under federal legislation, but it goes further. As all participants throughout this process agreed, the NJTPA should be the regional leader in developing a long-range transportation vision for nearly 6 million people in the northern New Jersey region.

After the mission statement was established, the project team focused on an extensive information-gathering process. The interactive, broad-based process used consisted of three major mechanisms: interviews with key individuals; interactive workshops; and a diverse working group made up of Central Staff members, representatives of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and NJ Transit, and Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) representatives.

Information gathered was used to develop strategies and related actions to make these goals a reality over

the next five years. These strategies include enhancing the NJTPA's leadership in transportation planning and investment, developing the agency's technical resources, increasing the effectiveness of the NJTPA Board of Trustees and upgrading the organization and capabilities of Central Staff. The plan then recommends a wide range of specific actions – from preparing a regional capital investment strategy to enhancing the region's travel model to reworking the Board's traditional meeting schedule – designed to implement these strategies.

In the spring and summer of 2001, the consultant team conducted interviews and surveys with more than 50 individuals, including Board members, RTAC representatives, Central Staff members, legislators, representatives from federal and state government, and other key stakeholders with an interest in transportation in the region. These interviews offered a wide range of perspectives on the NJTPA.

Six highly interactive workshops were conducted from July 2001 to May 2002. Each workshop was developed to address different issues that surfaced as a result of interviews or previous workshops. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and contribute their ideas. The workshops involved a large number of participants and at some workshops several small groups were formed to discuss critical topics. The workshops were as follows:

- **Workshop #1: July 23, 2001 – Introduction to the Strategic Plan and the Mission of the NJTPA** – More than 40 participants, including Board members, RTAC representatives, working group members, Central Staff and others.
- **Workshop #2: October 10, 2001 – Internal Organizational Issues of Central Staff** – Thirty-one Central Staff members attended this workshop.
- **Workshop #3: December 17, 2001 – Defining Roles and Responsibilities with Partnering Agencies** – More than 30 participants, including Board members, RTAC representatives, working

group members, federal agency representatives, Central Staff and others.

- **Workshop #4: January 28, 2002 – How the Board Operates** – More than 36 participants, including Board members, RTAC representatives, working group members, federal agency representatives, Central Staff, and others.
- **Workshop #5: February 20, 2002 – Technical Activities** – More than 34 participants, including RTAC representatives, working group members, representatives from state agencies and authorities, Central Staff and others.
- **Workshop #6: Creating an Action Plan** – Working group members.

In addition to the workshops, a Board retreat was held on May 18, 2002 to review and build consensus on overall strategies and actions for the Strategic Business Plan. Attendees included 18 Board members or their alternates, working group members and

Central Staff. Summary reports of the interviews, workshops and the Board Retreat are found in the Appendix. Other sources of input included a review of other MPOs covering urban areas comparable to the NJTPA region and an “environmental scan” of the demographic, economic, legislative and other factors affecting the NJTPA and other transportation agencies in the state and nation.

In the end, the strategies and actions developed through this extensive process all have one goal in mind: to make the NJTPA into *the* regional leader for transportation planning and investment decision-making. Establishing these strategies and actions called for significant involvement and input by those who have direct interest in the success of the NJTPA. They are the ones who will need to implement recommended strategies and actions and live with their consequences.

II. MISSION STATEMENT

The overall mission of the NJTPA was explored through extensive discussion to develop an understanding of the agency's purpose and core values. Extensive interviews were conducted with Board members and their staffs, former Board members, legislators, NJTPA staff, and representatives of FHWA, the Office of State Planning, the Department of Environmental Protection, advocacy groups, and user

groups. The interviews focused on the mission on the NJTPA, its challenges and opportunities in the next 5 to 10 years, and critical issues facing the agency.

The objective of the first workshop held was to gain consensus on the purpose of the NJTPA based on information gathered in earlier interviews. Following this workshop, a mission statement was drafted and adopted in the fall of 2001. This statement was modified at the Board Retreat in May 2002 and is incorporated into this plan for Board adoption.

Statement of Mission

The NJTPA is *the* transportation planning leader and technical and informational resource for the people of northern New Jersey that:

Creates a vision for improved mobility needs for people and goods;

Develops a plan for transportation improvement and management to fulfill the vision;

Partners with citizens, counties, cities, state, and federal entities to develop and promote the transportation plan for the region;

Prioritizes federal funding assistance to make that plan a reality; and

Links transportation plans with economic growth, environmental protection, growth management, and quality of life goals for the region.

III. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In an effort to manage the information obtained, a SWOC analysis was used identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges of the NJTPA. This analysis assisted the NJTPA in identifying aspects of the organization that could be used as building blocks and those needing improvement. The SWOC analysis helped develop effective strategies that support the mission and goals of the organization.

This agency examination revealed a wide ranging list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing the NJTPA now and in the future. The strengths of the organization include a strong public involvement program and the active involvement of

Board members. One weakness limiting the agency's effectiveness is the lack of effective partnering between the NJTPA and certain agencies. The major challenge facing the organization is balancing the transportation and economic needs of a growing region with increasing traffic congestion and aging infrastructure.

The SWOC analysis allows the agency to develop strategies and action plans that will build on the organization's strengths while enhancing areas that present challenges to future growth. In addition, this type of internal assessment has a better chance of being implemented as input is derived from participants in the process rather than purely from the outside. The analysis follows in the chart below:

Strengths

- Active involvement from the Board
- Central Staff responsive to the needs of Board members
- Wealth of experience and skills at the subregional level
- Proactive and innovative on emerging issues (e.g., Brownfields)
- Strong public involvement

Weaknesses

- Difficulty in acting regionally – hard to put aside parochial interests
- No strong, shared sense of direction
- NJTPA and certain agencies generally lack an effective partnering relationship
- NJTPA isn't the place where all regional transportation plans and policies are debated and established
- Flow of information and communications is weak among Board, subregions and Central Staff

Opportunities

- Travel patterns require regional perspectives and multi-modal solutions
- Strong regional economy based on accessibility, mobility and cost-effective transport
- Quality of life values and context sensitivity require an effective forum to debate transportation investment options
- Innovations in information technology

Challenges

- Aging infrastructure
- Growing congestion
- Maintaining a strong port
- NJTPA certification issues
- Future of federal funding
- Making the hard decisions

IV. INTERNAL REVIEW

This chapter reviews the internal infrastructure of the NJTPA, which includes Central Staff operations as well as the NJTPA Board of Trustees, three standing committees and the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC – a committee of planners from the region). The information for this chapter was derived from the following sources:

- Interviews and surveys
- Workshop #2: October 10, 2001 – Internal Organizational Issues of Central Staff Workshop #4: January 28, 2002 – How the Board Operates
- Board Retreat: May 18, 2002

A. IMPROVING HOW THE CENTRAL STAFF OPERATES

Through workshops, interviews and confidential surveys, the consultant team sought to help Central Staff focus on how they could improve the way the agency operates. The objective of the second workshop held was to encourage Central Staff attendees to think about the attributes of a good organization and consider what changes could be made at the NJTPA to fully embrace these attributes. Each staff member was assigned to one of four breakout groups that focused on an organizational attribute. The goal of this discussion was to identify opportunities to improve the internal processes of the organization.

The primary attributes of a good organization were condensed to four topics:

1. Open to communication, change and learning
2. Positive work environment
3. Clear and shared sense of mission and direction
4. Well-defined structure and assigning of responsibility with all technical and managerial resources to fulfill its mission

Each small group was charged with answering the following questions as they applied to the above attributes:

- Recall an organization where this attribute has worked well

- List of obstacles to overcome at the NJTPA
- Develop action plan

As each group discussed and evaluated the topics, group members identified actions required to improve these aspects of the organization. These organizational attributes are critical, because each contributes to fulfilling the agency's overall mission. If the NJTPA is to become "the primary regional leader and technical and informational resource" it must have a top quality workforce. Therefore, the Central Staff operation must be a place where teamwork and new ideas are encouraged, valued and supported. The actions and steps identified in Workshop #2 can be categorized into four areas: (1) improving communication, (2) training of employees, (3) the development of the Unified Planning Work Program, and (4) developing performance measures.

Communication

If the NJTPA is to become a true leader, it must have effective internal communication. Good communication supports and leads to an environment of trust and respect. An environment such as this promotes teamwork, which will allow employees to provide the type of services that are needed to create and develop a transportation plan for the region. In addition, improved communication among staff will help the agency anticipate and develop strategies for dealing with critical issues.

Training

Developing and implementing a more effective training program will allow the agency to fulfill its mission by providing its employees with the skills needed to make the NJTPA a leader in transportation issues in northern New Jersey. The Central Staff is a critical resource to the Board for its decision-making. Improving training will provide employees with the skills needed to maximize technical skills, leadership, openness, trust and teamwork.

Unified Planning Work Program

Under federal requirements, the agency must prepare a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). These plans support the mission by “developing a plan for strategic investments in our transportation systems and prioritizing federal funding assistance to make that plan a reality.” By creating an agency-wide integrated process for the development of the UPWP, the agency will allow for more effective communication among the employees and expand the ideas and technical resources reflected in the document. Additionally, a more open process will encourage teamwork and information sharing between the diverse talents within the agency. This discourse can assist in linking the RTP with tasks in the UPWP to support economic growth, environmental protection, growth management, and quality of life goals for the region.

Performance Measures

Performance measures that monitor the agency’s success in achieving the initiatives of the Strategic Business Plan will provide a vehicle for feedback that allows senior management to know where adjustments are needed to ensure that the initiatives stay in step with the agency’s needs. Developing performance measures ensures continuous improvement of Central Staff and improves not only the quality of the workplace but of the work produced. These performance measures should be linked to the NJTPA mission to become a regional leader on transportation issues and a technical and informational resource for the region.

Outcome

Following Workshop #2, an internal Central Staff working group was created – known as the Internal Organization Review Group – to discuss and improve organizational issues. While this effort has had some limited success, it has led directly to the recommendation of a strategic organizational review of positions and functions within Central Staff, both from its current operational standpoint and its ability to meet other strategic goals in the future.

B. HOW THE BOARD OPERATES

One of the outcomes of the SWOC analysis was that the Board, Central Staff and subregional staff needed

to work smarter and better. Although there is recognition that the Board of Trustees is highly involved, all participants in this process agreed that much could be done to improve information exchange between all relevant parties: The Board, subregional staff, Central Staff, partnering agencies, federal agencies, etc. This was discussed at length in the following venues:

- Workshop #4 – How the Board Operates – the goal of this effort was to identify opportunities for participants to make the NJTPA a stronger leader for the region, partner better between agencies, and become the definitive forum for regional transportation issues.
- Board Retreat: - the goal here was to have participants reach consensus on a variety of previously identified issues to support the mission of the organization.

Five issues that surfaced many times throughout the interview process were identified and discussed in Workshop #4 as necessary to improve agency operations. Breakout groups were formed to discuss the following topics:

- Improving information flow between the Board and Central Staff
- Key training needs of the Board
- Review of the current committee structure
- Improving agency partnering
- Fostering greater regional leadership by the NJTPA Board

Based on the discussion, action plans were developed in each group. These included:

- Develop a better training program for Board members
- Redefine/restructure the RTAC’s purpose and their relationship to the Board’s standing committees
- Improve the means to deliver information to the Board
- Improve partnering with other agencies
- Improve information flow/communication between Central Staff, subregional staff and the Board
- Hold a Board retreat to discuss issues and agree on actions

These items have been grouped into three general areas: Leadership, Technical Resources and Board Effectiveness. Issues concerning each topic were discussed at the Board Retreat. At the conclusion of the

retreat, consensus was reached on developing strategies to implement an action plan. These were then fleshed out in more detail in Workshop #6 (Creating an Action Plan) and they are discussed in Chapter VI.

Becoming a Leader

Leadership issues were discussed throughout the project to develop future goals for the agency as well as to provide a foundation for related issues. For instance, the role of the NJTPA was explored in interviews and at workshops to help develop the mission statement for the agency.

In the assessment interviews the consultant team heard that stakeholders were looking for the NJTPA to take a leadership role on the often-complex regional transportation issues facing northern New Jersey. The consultant team found there is a perception that the NJTPA is a regional leader, but is not the place for leadership in the region. Many interviewed believe that leadership in the area comes from NJDOT, NJ Transit, and the NJTPA respectively, but believe that the NJTPA – as the MPO – should be first.

Additionally, the mission of the agency was discussed extensively at Workshop #1 to provide the basis for a new mission statement. Participants at the workshop discussed what the core values of the agency should be and what the key components for the agency's existence and success should be, among other related topics. Many agreed that the NJTPA should provide strong leadership and should be a source of vision for the region. Participants pointed to things like improving the transportation system, improving quality of life, providing leadership, building consensus, being dynamic, innovative, visionary, and action-oriented.

Participants at the Board Retreat also discussed the need to improve technical resources and how this relates to becoming a leader. If hard decisions are to be made, they must be made with technical data at

their foundations. Currently, no agency collects and distributes all the relevant data the region needs to improve transportation systems in northern New Jersey. As the MPO, the NJTPA is in the unique position to provide this much-needed assistance.

The risks or threats to the agency in becoming a leader include the potential for “treading” on other's turf. For example, examining and/or promoting goods movement projects in the region could conflict with the Port Authority of NY & NJ plans, while planning for light rail projects could conflict with NJ Transit plans. However, if the NJTPA were able to provide sound technical underpinning to support such decisions, there would be a strong basis for projects to be supported and move forward.

In addition, becoming a leader means increasing the amount of time required from Board members. There are commitment issues as well as the risk of conflict with the subregions. At the Board Retreat, members did agree that they might have to make local concessions for the good of the region. To solve this, actions include the need to improve the training process for Board members and possible use of a trained facilitator to manage conflicts. Other strategies and actions were developed to address the time commitment issue and to better to support the Board as it assumes a leadership role. These include reducing the number of meetings and committing to RTAC as a sounding board for local issues of regional significance.

Participants at both Workshop #4 and the Board Retreat discussed the role and responsibilities of the RTAC. RTAC had previously been the key approval committee of the Board, but now provides a forum for presentation and discussion on regional issues. All participants agreed that the RTAC is a valuable resource and the future role of the RTAC should be examined.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

This chapter summarizes the results of a scan of the external environment – those trends and forces in the outside world that are important to the NJTPA. This section focuses on implications for the NJTPA, rather than an exhaustive discussion of all factors in the external environment. This environmental scan considers several elements:

- The legal context of metropolitan planning organizations
- The special context of northern New Jersey
- The financial setting
- The overall external environmental context
- Special factors within the external environment

A. THE LEGAL CONTEXT OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (MPOs)

The NJTPA is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) designated with the responsibility of regional transportation planning and programming functions in the Northern New Jersey metropolitan area. The NJTPA's primary designated responsibilities include preparation of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and a regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The NJTPA utilizes travel models, a Congestion Management System (CMS), a prioritization process, and other technical analyses and cooperative procedures to analyze needs and to develop investment priorities. The NJTPA carries out its functions in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations that govern transportation and its relationships with other factors such as economic development and environmental protection.

Current federal law governing transportation programs stems from the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and related legislation. Highway programs are codified under Title 23 and transit programs under Title 49 of the U.S. Code. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Authority (FTA) circulated new draft metropol-

itan and state planning regulations in order to implement all provisions of TEA-21. However, those regulations have not been finalized, and states, MPOs, and others have expressed many concerns about the draft regulations. Currently, the metropolitan and state planning regulations that preceded TEA-21 remain in effect to the extent that the statutory provisions of TEA-21 have not changed them. There have been no legal cases to define what aspects of the previous regulations are or are not in compliance with the provisions of TEA-21 and Titles 23 and 49 as currently constituted.

The NJTPA and other agencies also must develop their plans in conformity with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), and in conformity with the federal Clean Air Act(s) and related regulations. Thus there is a complex but well-documented institutional and legal environment facing the NJTPA, its partner transportation agencies, and the various levels of government.

The NJTPA strives to meet the same challenges confronting other MPOs that serve the largest metropolitan areas in the United States. Infrastructure is aging, congestion is growing and funding levels are inadequate to assure that future levels of service do not deteriorate. Air quality, environmental justice, Smart Growth, various state plans and quality of life issues provide a policy context for transportation decisions that is complex and subtle. These are very significant shared challenges, faced not only by MPOs, but also by their partner state DOTs, transit agencies, local governments, and constituents.

B. THE SPECIAL CONTEXT OF NORTHERN NEW JERSEY

The NJTPA also faces special circumstances due to its location in northern New Jersey. The NJTPA is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the northern New Jersey area, which has a population of 6 million and constitutes one of the most dynamic

and wealthy regions of the United States. Significant factors that define the context within which NJTPA operates include:

- New Jersey is a small state in terms of land area, but is a large state in terms of population, making it the most densely populated state in the nation.
- New Jersey has more functions performed by state government relative to other states.
- The northern New Jersey area (i.e., the NJTPA region) includes by far the majority of the citizens of the state, and therefore, as the state fulfills its role in governance statewide, that statewide role may be very similar to the role it takes in northern New Jersey.
- NJDOT and NJ Transit are New Jersey's statewide transportation implementing agencies, and their actions, too, are relatively concentrated in the northern New Jersey region, as they should be by any measure or rationale.

The Governor of New Jersey is statutorily the most powerful governor in the nation, and the influence of the governor's office across governmental functions reflects that very strong statutory authority.

The existence of a governor's veto over NJTPA minutes, which is an anomaly in the context of other metropolitan planning organizations in the United States, is somewhat reflective of the Governor's relative authority .

- The importance of the state level of government is likewise constituted in the role of the State Legislature, whose members take a very active interest in decisions affecting their constituents.
- Besides having the vast majority of the population of New Jersey, the northern New Jersey area is also a significant portion of what is by far the largest urban concentration in the United States – the entire New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area. Despite its status as one third of this mega-region, the focus on New York City and Philadelphia means northern New Jersey is in the awkward position of having little major media focused on or dedicated to its own identity.
- The many issues that cross state and mega-regional boundaries militate against the kind of autonomy that might otherwise be enjoyed by a region of six million people who are not part of another larger area (e.g., Philadelphia) or are mostly in a single state (e.g., the San Francisco Bay Area).

The NJTPA is administratively housed in the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). Whatever the administrative or technical skills available at NJIT, this is an unusual organizational arrangement (relative to other MPOs in the nation) that mixes together organizations with dissimilar functional missions. This arrangement has advantages in terms of administrative benefits and partnering with staff housed at the federally funded university transportation center available at NJIT. As part of NJIT, the NJTPA Central Staff is subject to the university salary structure.

C. THE FINANCIAL SETTING

The NJTPA receives federal funds, which supply all of the financial resources available to the agency. Because of the use by New Jersey of provisions in federal transportation law allowing "soft match," which were instituted under the leadership of New Jersey and New York, no actual financial match is required to be supplied to the NJTPA by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT).

Currently, the NJTPA receives no funds from its local member governments and operates in a manner such that a portion of its federal aid funds is passed through to local governments to help support regional transportation planning.

D. THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Anticipating the future is usually difficult, but examining the current state of affairs and historical context for the NJTPA and other transportation agencies can provide important information about the future. What has happened, and are similar trends expected? What challenges are implied for the future? Basic factors shaping transportation and being shaped by transportation are expected to continue:

- The real economic output of the country and of the region has doubled every twenty to twenty-five years, and there is no reason to think that it will not double and then double again in a similar future time frame.
- International trade has been growing rapidly in importance to the regional economy and the U.S. economy.
- Transportation investments and system enhancements have been major contributors to economic growth in the last half century. Examples include

the interstate highway system, highly productive freight containerization, passenger rail service, and multimodal enhancements. But this contribution to growth is threatened by the possibility of declining service levels for passenger and freight modes, due to inadequate capacity.

- Technology, and most particularly information technology, has grown exponentially over the last fifty years, and there is no evidence to suggest that this growth will not continue. Freight and passenger systems will benefit from information technology.
- Environmental consciousness has gone from near zero in 1950 to a major focus of citizens of the region and the nation. The region and the state have created key initiatives with brownfields programs and Smart Growth.
- The population of the region grew rapidly in the last fifty years of the twentieth century, and will continue to grow in pace with national growth.
- The region's population is highly diverse and is being impacted dramatically by immigration. Immigration and diversity could continue to be as critically important as in the recent past, or could become even more important than they have been.
- Institutional arrangements have been evolving. The NJTPA, NJDOT, and other State DOTs and MPOs and local governments do have more flexibility in decisions about federal funds.
- Freight operations management has evolved from serving manufacturers to serving consumers, with dramatic impacts on service levels and on the need for the system to maintain high performance levels.
- Financial arrangements have continued to evolve very slowly. States and localities continue to invest about 1.4 percent of gross domestic product in transportation.

E. SPECIFIC EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

The consultant team has surveyed seven important areas with potential future long-term implications for NJTPA: demographics, information technology, transportation technology, structural financial problems, environmental, international trade, and institutional challenges. The following summarizes our list of the most significant factors and their challenges posed and implications for the NJTPA:

Demographic Trends

- The region will experience population growth at average rates for the country as a whole, unlike much of the rest of the Northeast, which likely will experience less growth.
- The aging of the region's and the nation's population will require greater attention to mobility choices and to safety and signage programs.
- The driving age population will grow rapidly in the next decade, due to the "echo" of the baby boom. These persons are now in the five to twenty year age category.
- Immigration is a major factor in regional demographics, but is the wild card in population growth. The level of immigration into the region is determined partly by national immigration policy. If national policy is such that immigration is encouraged, many immigrants will come to the United States, and many will settle in the region. The overall New York-New Jersey region is anticipated to receive 20 percent of all immigrants.
- The region enjoys great diversity, with the population mix mirroring the national mix. The multicultural population of the region provides not only for enormous vitality socially and economically, but also provides for some challenges in terms of accommodating diverse languages and generating different kinds of patterns of modal usage.

Information Technology (IT)

- IT is the hardest factor to forecast and the most profound, with impacts on travel volumes, vehicle flow rates, agencies' management practices, and personnel needs.
- Information technology may reduce miles of travel by allowing more telecommuting and by replacing shopping travel with consolidated delivery services. However, we cannot even be certain whether IT will increase or decrease travel.
- Mastering and using information technology will be a major challenge. It is already difficult to attract good junior staff in many fields, and MPO or state salaries are not close to competitive with private industry in technology fields.

Transportation Technology

- Does the region have a goal for the next fifty years

of providing a positive impact on economic growth by bringing on line new successful higher speed technologies or better level of service technologies? Or is the goal to be defined as not dragging down the economy as badly as might have occurred, due to steadily declining levels of service since 2000?

- Can the region accommodate technology advances, and can they be positive forces in fostering desirable advances?
- Can the potential adverse impacts of new technologies, such as potential declines in fuel tax revenues due to efficiencies or alternative fuels, be overcome sufficiently so as to maintain operating and capital investment requirements?
- Can the region meet the challenges posed by changes in transportation technologies by adapting rapidly enough to maintain its world leadership as a center for finance, trade, information technology, and tourism?

Structural Financial Problems

- The current structure of the New Jersey State Transportation Trust Fund and federal transportation revenues does not respond well enough to inflation or economic growth. This puts continued political strains on the region and the state to find additional sources.
- The pressures can become even worse with potential long-term changes in fuel efficiencies, fuel types, or diversion of revenues.
- Innovative finance can help to fund improvements sooner, but a revenue stream – new or old - must back up all innovative financing arrangements.
- Finances need to be stable and commensurate with needs, but current sources are forecast to cover only a portion of anticipated future investment requirements.
- The NJTPA, as an institution with no internal funding sources, is dependent on the future course of federal aid, and potentially of state transportation sources.

Environmental Issues

- Environmental issues, environmental impacts, environmental justice, brownfields, SDRP compliance, and air quality conformity issues are taking up more and more of the intellectual resources of the

NJTPA and of state DOTs and of other MPOs. Conformity rules and environmental impact rules have evolved to continue to challenge all transportation agencies.

- Sustainable development provides a challenge to develop overall urban and rural designs which improve the quality of life and the standard of living. Sustainability is now problematic by definition, because it seems to be whatever a specific speaker says it is.
- Global emissions could impact everywhere, and cause changes in the use of energy. Concerns have been expressed in developed countries over the equity of suggested responses to global emissions issues.
- Can the NJTPA, NJDOT, NJTPA and other agencies meet the challenges posed by air quality conformity, global emissions, “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) organizations, smart growth and sustainability?

Economic, International Trade, and Intermodal Challenges

- Previously, international trade was very modest in relation to the overall U.S. economy, but is now very significant. Increasing trade flows will have major impacts on transportation facilities and investment needs.
- Intermodalism used to be a small and specialized area, but is now growing rapidly. Intermodal movements will continue to grow rapidly, and will imply changes in state programs in order to accommodate rail and truck traffic.
- The region is a world leader in economic diversity and trade, but can it maintain and enhance this role?
- The society will be much wealthier. Will the region be able to adjust revenues and program structures to serve a much richer and more demanding array of persons and industries?

Institutional Challenges

- Freight and logistics have now been reorganized to be customer focused – “on the trip,” whereas the orientation of MPOs and DOTs is still predominantly on facilities. Can MPOs, state DOTs, transit operators and other partner agencies continue to evolve to be “customer-oriented” and “trip-oriented” like

many aspects of the freight industry?

- It will also be a significant long-term challenge to get MPOs and DOTs to evolve towards “providing a wide range of services for travel” rather than “planning and constructing and managing specific facilities”.
- Devolution of responsibility to lower levels of government is real and will continue in terms of decision-making, although there is still debate about funding sources. States and localities are now making choices about how to spend federal funds as well as their own funds. Devolution of decision making is positive for State DOTs and MPOs, which are developing and can continue to develop increasingly better cooperative relationships with local governments.

VI. BUSINESS STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

A. INTRODUCTION

Four sets of strategies and respective action items have been developed as outcomes of this Strategic Business Plan. Three strategies emerged as critical areas of focus as a result of the various workshops and the Board of Trustees Retreat. These strategies are as follows:

- Enhance the ability of the NJTPA to exercise leadership in regional transportation planning and investments.
- Improve the NJTPA's technical resources in order to foster regional planning and better serve the NJTPA Board, partnering agencies, relevant constituencies and the general public of northern New Jersey.
- Increase the effectiveness of the NJTPA Board of Trustees through basic operational improvements.

A fourth area should be pursued as well, in order to improve a key tool to help implement these three strategies. This fourth strategy is:

- Improve and upgrade the organizational structure and capabilities of the NJTPA's Central Staff.

These strategies and their respective action plans are described below.

B. STRATEGY: ENHANCE THE ABILITY OF THE NJTPA TO EXERCISE LEADERSHIP IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND INVESTMENTS

Overall Strategy

The goal of this strategy is for the NJTPA to assert its full leadership role in directing the future of the region's transportation system by serving as the initiator of regional mobility solutions and transportation policy. The NJTPA should direct and establish a forward-thinking regional transportation vision and

action agenda that views the transportation network as a comprehensive system of highways, mass transit and freight movement. At the Board Retreat, many participants noted that the NJTPA must be more involved in promoting and supporting transportation projects that benefit the region.

Asserting leadership means that NJTPA should establish transportation plans and policy for northern New Jersey that:

- Identify the region's future needs and direct the effort to meet those needs;
- Offer choices to meet the multi-modal needs of the region;
- Advance regional consensus over parochialism;
- Establish a prioritized capital investment agenda; and
- Strengthen the region's economic base.

At the Board Retreat, all attendees indicated their willingness to make the NJTPA this type of a leader in regional transportation.

Action Plan

The following action items are recommended to fulfill the strategy of enhancing the leadership of NJTPA.

1. **Develop a vision statement as a preamble and guide for the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan** – A visioning process should be established that includes all relevant agencies, as well as representatives of the public. The vision should have a multi-modal basis and should deal with passenger and freight concerns. It should reflect what is desired for the region 20 years hence.

Central Staff should initiate the visioning process in FY 2003 by defining the Regional Transportation Planning development plan and determining whether a visioning consultant should be hired. The vision, once complete, needs to be approved by the Board of Trustees. This would help guide the development of the 2030 Regional

Transportation Plan, which must be adopted by September 2005.

2. Prepare a regional capital investment strategy

– Once the visioning process is underway, a regional capital investment strategy should be developed that would provide a performance-based decision making tool for the Board of Trustees in order to better guide the selection and prioritization of problems and projects. Benchmarks and performance measures need to be developed as part of this effort. The regional capital investment strategy must be compatible with the vision developed for the 2005 RTP and future RTPs.

Central Staff should initiate the development of the regional capital investment strategy in FY 2003. The development process should be coordinated with NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT capital investment strategies. The effort should involve RTAC and other committees of the Board.

The regional capital investment strategy likely will need to be worked on and phased in over the next two fiscal years. There is sufficient funding in the Unified Planning Work Program in FY 2003 to begin the process, though additional funds may need to be secured in FY 2004.

3. Become more involved in the State

Implementation Plan development process –

The importance of the relationship of transportation to air quality makes it critical that the NJTPA become immediately involved in the updating of the State Implementation Plan (SIP). That process is now administered almost entirely by NJDOT and NJDEP. Central Staff should become active and continuing participants in the SIP development process. Current Central Staff personnel can do this, using existing funding.

4. Increase the role of the NJTPA in regional

transportation security planning – Building on ongoing efforts that the agency has taken since 9/11, the NJTPA should work closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other agencies in developing plans for better securing transportation facilities and services in the region. Security should be made part of the visioning process, as well as a fundamental part of the Regional Transportation Plan.

5. Contribute to the state’s growth management policies and strategies – NJTPA should become

involved immediately in growth management deliberations related to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). Invite representatives of the State Planning Commission and Office of Smart Growth to Board meetings and consider inviting them to RTAC meetings. In addition, the agency should pursue the potential for the NJTPA (and the state’s other MPOs) to join the state’s Smart Growth Policy Council. As the Regional Transportation Plan is being developed, the NJTPA should strive to mesh it with the goals of the SDRP. Finally, the NJTPA should consider hosting a future workshop among regional partners and stakeholders to identify other ways to better link transportation planning with growth management policies. Current Central Staff personnel can do this, using existing funding.

6. Form stronger partnerships with transportation providers that do not generally receive federal funding –

Through informal and formal means, the NJTPA should work more closely on regional transportation planning and capital investment issues with those agencies and private transportation providers who do not typically receive federal funding. These include the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the New Jersey Turnpike and Highway authorities, and regional private freight railroads, major trucking companies and major private bus operators. Current Central Staff personnel can do this, using existing funding.

C. STRATEGY: IMPROVE THE NJTPA’S TECHNICAL RESOURCES IN ORDER TO FOSTER REGIONAL PLANNING AND BETTER SERVE PARTNERING AGENCIES, RELEVANT CONSTITUENCIES AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC OF NORTHERN NEW JERSEY

Overall Strategy

The goal of this strategy is to strengthen the regional transportation planning capabilities of the NJTPA – and by extension, those of its subregional governments, as well as those of its state planning partners. At Workshop #5, many different technical activities were discussed and highlighted for action, but the

most critical areas noted dealt with:

- Improving data collection and clearinghouse activities;
- Standardizing of socio-economic forecasts for the region;
- Enhancing travel demand modeling capabilities; and
- Playing a leading technical role in advancing corridor studies and project concept developments.

At the Board retreat, there was a strong sense that, as a regional agency, the NJTPA serves a unique role and could provide uniformity in the type of data and forecasts that would be used in a host of planning and policy activities. At the same time, it was recognized that improving these technical resources likely would require new and/or reallocated resources. As a result, the Board reached consensus on these elements of a “technical resource” strategy:

- The NJTPA should collect and share data of various types that are relevant to its mission and its leadership role. It should set standards for data collection and form cooperative partnerships so that the burden of data collection (and analysis) would be shared by a number of agencies.
- The NJTPA should take the lead in coordinating with all applicable agencies to achieve one standard set of socio-economic forecasts for the region. It was also recognized that the Office of State Growth is statutorily responsible for producing state population and employment projections.
- The NJTPA should enhance its travel demand model to make it multi-modal and capable of dealing with passenger and freight movements. It should also consider building in-house capability to operate the model.
- The NJTPA should take the lead in providing “hand-offs” to operating agencies of corridor studies and project concepts for development.
- The NJTPA should retain and strengthen the Subregional Transportation Planning (STP) and Technical Studies Programs

Action Plan

The following action items are recommended to fulfill the strategy of strengthening the technical resources of the NJTPA.

1. **Create an inter-agency “data resource” working group** – The NJTPA should convene a working

group among various subregional, regional, state and federal agencies to undertake the following mission:

- Analyze the sufficiency of current data resources;
- Establish gaps and data needs;
- Make recommendations concerning collection of new data; and
- Create protocols for the sharing of data among regional users.

This activity should begin in FY 2003 and continue forward from there. Current Central Staff personnel can do this, using existing funding.

2. **Create and distribute a data resources directory** – The NJTPA should produce a directory of regional data resources – including mapping sources – that are available at the agency, as well as among the subregional agencies and partnering state, regional and federal agencies. The directory should be widely distributed. This activity should be undertaken in FY 2003. Current Central Staff personnel can do this, using existing funding.
3. **Initiate discussions with the appropriate state agencies on understanding socio-economic forecasts** – The NJTPA should immediately begin a dialogue with the relevant agencies that deal with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan to understand differences in methodologies for establishing socio-economic forecasts and agree to one approach. Current Central Staff personnel can do this, using existing funding.
4. **Develop a methodology for creating a standard set of regional socio-economic forecasts** – The NJTPA should develop a set of techniques for creating defensible and standard sets of socio-economic forecasts for the northern New Jersey region. The methodology should be able to produce both “trend” forecasts and a set of forecasts that are compatible with the vision that is developed for the next Regional Transportation Plan. The NJTPA should do this in partnership with subregional members and all other appropriate agencies. It will require an outside consultant to assist with this effort. Speed is of the essence – if the NJTPA is the first to produce a regional set of forecasts in conjunction with other key agencies, there is a high likelihood that these will become the standard for the region. This effort should begin in FY 2003 and

be completed in approximately one year. The consultant effort can be paid for through the FY 2003 and 2004 UPWPs. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.

5. **Develop, monitor, update and share socio-economic forecasts with subregional and state partners** – The NJTPA should develop forecasts based on the above referenced partnerships and established methodologies and keep these updated over the next several years. This activity will require personnel resources beyond those currently available at the NJTPA. An assessment of personnel needs will be undertaken. Based on a snapshot of several other large MPOs in the U.S. that undertake socio-economic forecasting using in-house resources, there is typically a staff of between 2-4 persons whose primary responsibility falls within this technical area.
6. **Enhance the current North Jersey Travel Demand Forecasting Model** – The NJTPA should upgrade its travel demand modeling system by, among other things, allowing it to deal with multi-modal trip-making and with both passenger and freight movements. The NJTPA should do this in partnership with subregional, state and nearby regional (e.g., NYMTC) agencies. It will require an outside consultant to assist with this effort. This effort should begin in FY 2003 and could require approximately 18 months to complete. The consultant effort can be funded from the FY 2003 and 2004 UPWPs. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.
7. **Address the cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of establishing in-house capabilities to operate the enhanced travel demand forecasting model** – The NJTPA does not currently have adequate staff needs to operate an enhanced model. The agency needs to assess what the benefits and effectiveness will be of providing the in-house capability. It then needs to compare that against the salary and training costs related to having knowledgeable and sufficient staff to run the model, not only for Central Staff activities, but for activities of other partnering agencies as well. Other options should be considered as well, including using a consultant to operate the model or partnering with other agencies to operate the model. This analysis should be done in FY 2003 and continue through early FY 2004.

The experience of 10 large MPOs known to be active in travel demand forecasting was reviewed to provide a general idea of the staffing requirements needed for the NJTPA to undertake in-house operation of the enhanced travel demand forecasting model. The number of staff associated with this activity in each MPO, expressed in terms of estimated full time equivalent persons (FTE), ranged from 6.5 FTE (Denver) to 15 FTE (Dallas-Fort Worth). The overall average staff size was approximately 9.2 FTE. Several of the MPOs use personnel with more experience and pay higher salaries for travel demand forecasting activities than what the NJTPA typically might expect for new mid-to upper-level hires. This was seen as primarily a function of the limited supply of such personnel throughout the country. It is recommended that additional staff be recruited with the capability to operate the travel demand model to substantiate the selection of strategies for specific travel corridors to support the modal hand-offs to NJDOT and NJ Transit.

8. **Create an interagency task force to develop protocols for corridor planning/project concept “hand-off” from the NJTPA to operating agencies** – The NJTPA should convene an interagency task force – including state partnering agencies and subregional representatives – to develop a set of agreements on the role of the MPO in developing and “handing-off” modal strategies to be advanced into project-level planning by operating agencies. The results of this effort should be a formal memorandum of understanding. This effort will benefit from the results and recommendations of the NJTPA Strategy Evaluation study. The task force should convene in early FY 2003. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.
9. **Retain and strengthen the Subregional Transportation Planning (STP) and Technical Studies Programs** – The NJTPA has always found the subregional transportation planning programs to be an invaluable resource to support regional planning. The local outlook via the core program (e.g. review of the capital program, attendance at meetings, etc.) has provided the funding and opportunity for many subregions to actively participate in the regional transportation planning process and develop outreach mechanisms to involve

municipalities and concerned citizens in the work of the NJTPA. In addition, the NJTPA has demonstrated its commitment to improving the technical expertise within each subregion through a set aside pool of funds for a Technology Library, which provides hardware and software to the subregions in support of regional planning. It is recommended that both the core program and funding for the Technology Library continue for this iteration of the Business Plan.

Historically, the NJTPA has tried to set aside funds for discrete subregional planning studies that improve transportation planning and systems through the Supportive Task Program and the Technical Studies Program. After a review of these programs, with input from federal funding partners, it is clear that these study programs should flow from the Regional Transportation Plan, just as the rest of the work program does. Therefore, it is recommended that these two competitive programs be merged. This would provide opportunities for the subregions to conduct technical studies, refine strategies (as developed in the Strategy Evaluation Study), or accept “hand-offs” from Central Staff for further project development. Currently, the supportive task program prohibits the hiring of consultants. In a merged program, subregions would have the option of hiring a consultant or performing the work in-house.

The guidelines for this program will be developed by staff with input from the RTAC. It is anticipated that this will be a two year program and that the guidelines will be evaluated for each two-year solicitation period. If there are specific products or emphasis areas required by the NJTPA, these would be included in the subregional study program guidelines.

D. STRATEGY: INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NJTPA BOARD OF TRUSTEES THROUGH BASIC OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

Overall Strategy

The goal of this strategy is to allow the NJTPA Board of Trustees to operate in a more efficient and informed manner so that it becomes a more effective

governing body. At the root of this strategy is the fact that Trustees have busy schedules, performing various responsibilities beyond those directly related to the NJTPA. It is incumbent, therefore, that the time that Trustees devote to regional transportation decision-making is optimized. That is:

- Meetings at the Board and committee levels should be less frequent, but at the same time better planned, so that discussions and decision-making activities are more inclusive, more focused and more relevant to the regional transportation needs of northern New Jersey.
- The flow of information to and from Trustees from Central Staff should be improved, in terms of its timeliness, its content, its format and its relevance to decision-making responsibilities.
- The technical resources of the Regional Technical Advisory Committee (RTAC) need to be better tapped so that Trustees can benefit more from their expertise, their experience and the regional diversity that they bring to the table.

At the Board Retreat, there was a consensus on the following specific aspects of this strategy:

- Board meetings and committee meetings should convene on a bi-monthly basis (rather than the current monthly basis), unless there is a specified need for more or less frequent meetings on a case-by-case basis.
- Board members should be kept informed regularly through timely distribution of materials, as well as through special events such as briefings, workshops and training.
- Protocols should be established that govern information flow, including report formats, distribution techniques and the use of regional and subregional status meetings on capital projects with operating agencies.
- The RTAC should be better incorporated into the regular operations of the Board by having its members attend committee meetings, formalize their relationships with Board members from the same county or municipality, meet to discuss key regional issues of their choosing, and address (and offer recommendations on) critical issues as assigned by the Board.

Action Plan

The following action items are recommended to fulfill the strategy of increasing the effectiveness of the NJTPA Board of Trustees.

- 1. Meetings of the Board of Trustees and its committees should change from monthly to bi-monthly** – NJTPA Board meetings should meet on a bi-monthly basis as part of their normal routine. (More or fewer meetings may be scheduled on an as needed basis.) During the month that no Board meeting occurs, committees of the Board should meet. A calendar of Board and committee meetings should be made available to agencies and the public. There should be strong consideration given to combining some Board meetings with media events, as a further inducement to spur full attendance of Board members and to promote the leadership role of the NJTPA.
- 2. The Board should annually evaluate the agency's performance in implementing this plan** – This review and dialogue can occur through a regular Board meeting, a retreat, a workshop or a joint committee session. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.
- 3. A calendar of major agenda action items should be prepared and distributed at the beginning of each year** – This should be done immediately. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.
- 4. New Board members should receive training** – On an as-needed basis, new Board members should be provided with information regarding the goals, objectives, mission, history, protocols, and responsibilities of the NJTPA. The recently revised handbook can serve as the instructional manual, though face-to-face training should be done as well. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding. The USDOT Metropolitan Capacity Building Program is useful as an additional resource for this training.
- 5. Reports that are to be distributed to the Board should have a standardized executive summary** – Central Staff has already taken this step. Standard format of the executive summary should include any positions on an issue formally taken by RTAC. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.
- 6. Protocols should be developed for the distribution of meeting action item documents to Board members** – Central Staff should work with Board members and partnering agencies to establish deadline, content and format protocols for the distribution of written materials to Board members regarding meeting action items (e.g., TIP amendments). The goal would be to have materials to Board members two weeks prior to a committee meeting. A memorandum of understanding among the NJTPA, NJDOT and NJ Transit would be the outcome of this effort, along with a technical level workshop to ensure familiarity with the protocols. This effort should be completed in FY 2003. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.
- 7. Enhance the flow of information to Board members and subregional representatives on the capital and planning projects underway at NJDOT and NJ Transit** – Quarterly status meetings among NJTPA Central Staff, NJDOT and NJ Transit should be made more accessible to Board members, RTAC and others at the subregional level. This might include periodic meetings held with these agencies at the subregional level, or at RTAC meetings, or some combination of these and/or other options. This effort, which has begun to be examined by Central Staff, needs to be championed and resolved in FY 2003. Depending on the recommendations of how this subregional status coordination would occur, there may be a need for additional Central Staff personnel to provide leadership and follow-up activities on a continual basis.
- 8. Incorporate RTAC into the mainstream of Board activities** – RTAC members should sit in a non-voting capacity on Board committees, with an emphasis on mixing and matching so that Board and RTAC members from different subregions serve on the same committee. In addition, protocols should be established for formal and informal contacts between Board and RTAC members from the same subregion. RTAC members should meet in their own committee when they find it important to discuss important issues, or when the Board asks them to meet to address key issues. These actions should be undertaken in FY 2003. Current Central Staff personnel will continue to support this effort, using existing funding.

It is acknowledged that the Regional Transportation

Advisory Committee (RTAC) serves a vital function in reviewing and disseminating information, and making recommendations to the NJTPA Board and their individual Trustees to aid in decision making. Additionally, the RTAC members complement the work of and assist the Central Staff by providing local input on a variety of issues to craft a regional perspective. They also serve an important role in advising Central Staff on important regional issues of immediate concern. In order to strengthen both the role of the RTAC and to provide greater opportunities for members to assist Central Staff in fashioning the regional transportation agenda, it is recommended that the RTAC consider the new NJTPA mission statement (which will be adopted as part of this business plan) as they focus their own mission and set their agenda for the next five years. In particular, the RTAC should reflect where and how they can best serve the Board and partner with Central Staff as “local technical experts” that support the regional effort.

The RTAC should take the recommendations, strategies and actions that emanate from this report and take steps to take a more active role in advising and/or assisting (as appropriate) Central Staff to:

Create a vision

Develop a Plan

Partner to develop and promote this plan

Prioritize federal funding

Link plans with economic growth, environmental protection, growth management, etc.

Specific action steps include:

- Hold a brainstorming session to discuss issues of regional significance which need to be developed by the NJTPA Board (e.g., development of the next RTP, public outreach, freight/goods movement, UPWP, data resources, regional demographic forecasts, technical abilities of the subregions, smart growth, etc.). and prioritize items to be addressed over the next five years and to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Form working groups or subcommittees to assist Central Staff in the development of these issues.
- Develop their own agenda (with administrative support from Central Staff) and meet on a bi-monthly schedule and/or when the Board asks them to meet to address key issues.

- Report the progress to date on significant issues at regularly scheduled committee meetings.
- Establish protocols for formal and informal contacts between Board and RTAC members from the same subregion.
- Develop a manual for training of new RTAC members.

E. STRATEGY: IMPROVE AND UPGRADE THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CAPABILITIES OF NJTPA'S CENTRAL STAFF

Overall Strategy

The goal of this strategy is to address organizational and personnel needs of NJTPA's Central Staff so that it can meet its mission and be fully successful in carrying out the strategies described above. At Workshop #2, organizational issues and deficiencies were initially identified in terms of current operations. This needs to be expanded to include new responsibilities identified in the above strategies. The same analysis needs to be done regarding the job descriptions of existing staff and potential new hires.

Action Plan

The following action items are recommended to fulfill the strategy of improving and upgrading the organizational structure and capabilities of NJTPA's Central Staff:

1. **Perform an evaluation of the internal organizational structure of Central Staff** – The organizational structure – including divisional structure, lines of authority, lines of communication, etc. – should be evaluated by Central Staff senior management. Recommendations for change should be put forth to the Executive Committee of the Board and to NJIT, as appropriate. This task should be undertaken in the early part of FY 2003. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.
2. **Review and revise (as needed) current job descriptions of Central Staff** — The various job descriptions should be reviewed for consistency with the current mission and the strategies in this plan. Appropriate revisions should be developed.

Recommendations for change should be put forth to the Executive Committee of the Board and to NJIT, as appropriate. This task should be undertaken in the early part of FY 2003. Current Central Staff personnel can support this effort, using existing funding.

3. **Hire additional staff needed to fully implement the Strategic Business Plan** – Based on the assessments of staffing needs described above – specifically for undertaking socio-economic forecasts, collecting and analyzing data, providing in-house operations of an enhanced travel demand forecasting model and coordinating better interaction among NJDOT, NJ Transit and the subregions – secure the necessary employees to fill these jobs. This task will occur over the next several fiscal years and most likely would require additional funding – both for personnel and potentially for office space.

VII. OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION CONSTRAINTS

During the course of this highly interactive strategic plan development, the consultant team did not deal in any depth with the issues of financial or institutional constraints. These are issues that the NJTPA will have to grapple with over the next several years as it implements its strategies and action plans. In order to kick off the “grappling process,” the team offers some potential options for securing additional funding and for making institutional changes. Some of these are controversial and there will almost certainly be no immediate consensus on any of them. But the team offers them to spur debate and discussion. All the relevant stakeholders have expressed over the last year a willingness to change various practices in order to make the NJTPA the regional leader in transportation planning and investment. Taking a leap in the area of funding and other institutional changes may be the next logical step.

A. OPTIONS TO ADDRESS FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The NJTPA operates under current financial constraints that are somewhat more limiting than the constraints of its peer metropolitan planning organizations in large urban areas. The NJTPA receives only the federal share of the source of funds that are dedicated to metropolitan planning, called PL funds, because the match in New Jersey for those funds is “soft.” Soft match is a provision of federal legislation that allows the DOT to count as a match for federal aid revenues, such as tolls, which represent a fiscal effort within the state. Thus, the normal 20 percent match for the 80 percent of federal PL funds is not received by the NJTPA as actual financial resources. Switching to a hard match would provide for 25 percent additional revenue for the NJTPA. Providing the hard match adds to the 80 percent a proportional 20 percent, which is a twenty five percent increase over the existing 80 percent ($20/80 = .25$). A hard match could come from a mixture of NJDOT and local gov-

ernment funds. For the NJTPA, the subregions represented by the Trustees would be the logical local governments to provide local matching funds. In some metropolitan areas, this match is provided half by the state and half by the local governments.

Additional federal funds might be secured due to reauthorization. There are and will be proposals before the Congress to increase the takedown of federal PL funds under the federal aid highway program. PL funds did not grow proportionally to other federal aid during the six-year authorization period of TEA 21, the most recent law authorizing federal aid for highways and public transportation. An upward adjustment to the PL percentage would recognize that the MPOs have substantial new responsibilities that are critical to assuring the success of highway and transit plans and programs. The NJTPA has recently rejoined the membership of AMPO, the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. AMPO is lobbying for an increase in the PL funds for the federal surface transportation reauthorization legislation, which will cover the period of 2004 to 2009.

The subregional program could also be shifted to other sources of state or local funding support, freeing funds to be devoted to the regional rather than subregional level.

These adjustments, if they can be implemented, still may not provide all the funds needed to carry out the NJTPA’s expanded mission. The NJTPA could receive portions of other federal, state, and local funds for planning and project development activities. In particular, under this Strategic Business Plan, the NJTPA is charged to take on additional technical responsibilities related to modeling and forecasting. The NJDOT receives other federal aid for state planning and research and has its own resources that could be devoted to supporting these activities at the NJTPA.

In funding the new requirements of the Strategic Business Plan, it is anticipated that resources and capabilities might be built up over a few years rather

than implemented within an initial year. This would provide for a ramping up towards full capabilities.

The NJTPA Board- preferred funding option is to first utilize capital funds (such as Surface Transportation Funds or STP) and explore revenue generating activities, rather than seek money from the state or divert funding from the subregional programs.

B. OPTIONS TO ADDRESS INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

There are no aspects of the strategic business plan that require new legislation to be enacted at the state or federal levels. However, new legislation can strengthen the ability of the region to meet its mission and can assure that the funding or authority needed is in place.

At the federal level, the normal cycle of reauthorization of highway and public transportation legislation is now underway, with a new authorizing law needed for federal fiscal year 2004, which begins October 1, 2003. Key aspects of that federal legislation could be additional funding dedicated to metropolitan planning, and reaffirmation of the key roles and responsibilities of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, which are now codified in the United States Code under Titles 23 and 49. It is in the interests of the member jurisdictions of the NJTPA, including the state, to

assure that the federal reauthorization legislation strengthens metropolitan planning and provides more federal financial support for these critical functions. The federal reauthorization must also continue the funding partnership for transportation that has proved critical to the economic and social needs of states and local communities.

Funding can be allocated by the state and local jurisdictions without new legislation. However, new legislation is desirable to establish and codify such funding sources for the NJTPA in order to assure a commitment to carrying out the Strategic Business Plan. A dedicated source of local funding, however small, would provide much needed resources and would demonstrate the commitment of the local jurisdictions to the mission of the region.

New legislation may be desirable at some point to establish the NJTPA more fully as an independent agency. It is currently housed for administrative purposes in the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT). The employees and the financial and contracting procedures of the NJTPA are technically housed within NJIT. While the relationships on the administrative side function smoothly, metropolitan planning organizations need to be independent agencies, not functionally aligned with unrelated public entities.

