



2030 New Jersey Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan
**Environmental Justice
Advisory Panel**

**NJDOT E&O Building, Second Floor
Training Room B**

January 11, 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. How Does Environmental Justice Fit in Statewide and Long-Range Transportation Planning?**
 - Definitions
 - How can the plan's benefits be shared by those communities with high concentrations of low-income or minority residents?
 - What can be done to reduce negative transportation impacts on low-income communities?
- 4. New Approaches to Meeting the Transportation Needs of Low-Income and Minority New Jerseyans**
 - What are some of the particular transportation needs of EJ targeted populations today, and will they change by 2030?
 - What policies and programs are most promising for addressing EJ needs?
- 5. Developing Methods to Support Environmental Justice Analysis**
 - Developing statewide indicators
 - Accessibility modeling and scenario assessment
 - Data needs
- 6. Defining Priority Action Items**

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Meeting Summary

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January 11, 2006 – 2:00PM to 4:00PM**

Meeting Attendees

Organization/Affiliation

Deva Deka	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Danielle Graves	NJ Department of Transportation
Meredith Hammond	NJ Department of Transportation
Terri Hirschhorn	NJ Department of Human Services
Joung Lee	FHWA
Jerry Lutin	NJ TRANSIT
Tameka Macon	FHWA
Eric Powers	NJ Department of Transportation
Marianne Stock	NJ TRANSIT
Paul Thomas	NJ Department of Transportation
Les Varga	South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization
Herman Volk	NJ Office of Smart Growth
Terry Wesley	US Environmental Protection Agency
Pam Lebeaux	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Kyle Winslow	Parsons Brinckerhoff
Maura Fitzpatrick	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Gail Gimbel	DMJM Harris

Meeting Summary

The meeting opened with Danielle Graves of NJDOT welcoming the Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Panel members and asking that they introduce themselves. She then gave a brief introduction to the 2030 Plan (LRP), which provides the basis for informed decisions about transportation for the next 25 years. She stated that this Advisory Panel is one of four that are being convened to provide input to the Plan. The other three are Aging and Disabled Mobility, Engaging the Public, and Smart Growth.

Ms. Graves explained that the advisory panels and focus groups are part of the public involvement effort for the Plan's update. The expectation is that this Advisory Panel will continue to meet even after the 2030 Plan is completed. She reviewed the agenda for the meeting and then introduced Pam Lebeaux of Parsons Brinckerhoff.

Ms. Lebeaux began by stating that the goal of this effort was to gain input from panel members on how the LRP can be fair and equitable. She reviewed the Federal definitions for environmental justice populations and relevant New Jersey demographic information:

- Definitions
 - Minority is defined to include African American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian and Alaskan Native
 - Low-income is defined as persons whose household income is at or below DHHS poverty guidelines. For New Jersey, the threshold is \$19,350 for a family of four
- NJ Demographics – 2000
 - 27% of residents are non-white – 13.6% are African American, 5.7% are Asian American, and 8.1% are all others.
 - 13.3% of NJ residents are Hispanic/Latino
- NJ Poverty Levels – 2000
 - 7.3% of residents are below poverty, which equals 612,000 people

Noting that low-income households often include the working poor, she provided an illustration of the typical transportation costs faced by persons working at the minimum wage:

- Travel Expenses and the Working Poor
 - Current minimum wage = \$6.15/hour
 - Hours of work needed to fill a gas tank = 6
 - Hours of work needed to buy a weekly bus pass between Trenton and Princeton Junction = 3.5
 - Hours of work needed to buy a weekly rail pass between New Brunswick and NY Penn Station = 13

Ms. Lebeaux then reviewed the key elements of the previous 2025 plan update and its approach to EJ. The 2025 plan included:

- An investment scenario with a balance of transit, highway, and travel demand management measures
- Policy recommendations
 - Fix it first
 - Smart growth
 - Public involvement
- Urban Supplements for seven cities with detailed recommendations for transit operations, highway improvements, infrastructure, safety and public information
- Input from focus groups and issue groups including low-income representatives
- Input from targeted outreach activities in lower-income communities
- EJ recommendations
 - Commitment to principles of EJ
 - Need for systems-level analysis
 - Consider input from all stakeholders
 - Commitment to relief from disproportionate adverse impacts

Ms. Lebeaux then noted that the current plan is expected to have some of the same themes and some differences, including:

- Stronger emphasis on transit

- Stronger emphasis on smart growth
- A different focus on transportation security
- Potential for some aggressive travel demand management strategies such as incentive pricing

The information gathering for the current plan includes an EJ focus group as well as today's panel.

Maura Fitzpatrick of Howard/Stein-Hudson then led the group through a discussion of how EJ fits into the Long-Range Transportation Plan; new approaches to meeting the transportation needs of NJ EJ communities; developing methods to support EJ analysis; and defining priority action items.

How can the Plan's benefits be shared with EJ communities?

- At NJDOT on a project level, EJ is part of the Community Impact Assessment effort to look at impacts on communities. The CIA group is looking to engage with communities, understand their values, and correct any inaccurate preconceived notions. It is important to gain the trust of the community.
- It was suggested that communities be asked to focus on conditions five years in the future rather than 25 years out when their input is sought. Narrowing the focus on a nearer term condition, and a more localized one (e.g., how will this project impact their family) can assist in getting more concrete input from the public.
- A challenge is that, while it is possible to identify which communities receive more or less in terms of numbers of projects, it is harder to tell where the projects' benefits will be most realized or their impacts felt. For example, a road project in Elizabeth might primarily benefit through-commuters rather than area residents.
- Another challenge is how to define EJ communities. There are now sophisticated methods in place to identify a community's specific needs. It is hard to know how best to balance the needs of minority vs. low-income inhabitants. For example, Asian-Americans are listed as an EJ group; however, there are communities with large portions of Asian-American residents who are affluent.
- NJTPA is looking to establish its own committee to assist its effort to define EJ communities and distribute projects in the most balanced and appropriate fashion.
- EPA is grappling with how best to identify impacts that are placed on different groups. They utilize mapping to capture the environmental burden from datasets such as the Toxic Release Inventory. They are struggling to identify a reference community against which to compare. They also try to look at social and cultural issues specific to a particular community, as well as cumulative risk from impacts.
- FHWA and SAFETEA-LU promote the use of visualization techniques to present ideas which can assist overcoming language barriers.
- Communities may be sensitive to being labeled under EJ. They may not necessarily want to have additional hurdles placed on them before building new projects. In addition, the label could discourage some industries from locating there.
- Transit dependency could be considered an additional EJ indicator (in addition to race and income status). Households without access to autos are a large part of NJ TRANSIT's market, particularly for bus service. An important policy is to invest in and continue operation of bus services in communities with transit-dependent populations, but this policy is not always followed.

- Looking into the future, there may need to be new types of bus services beyond fixed route that can better serve neighborhoods. How to pay for this is a challenge as it costs the state twice what people pay for transit to provide the services. However, the agency recognizes its role in providing mobility to those who would otherwise have none. NJ TRANSIT and NJDOT are promoting access to transit through smart growth principles as current population densities are too spread out to provide adequate service to all who need it.
- FHWA suggests pilot programs, perhaps in partnership with TMAs, in order to improve access and mobility. One example is a car share program in Paterson.
- NJTPA suggested looking at user-side subsidies (like food stamps) to address the needs of people without sufficient means. It can be easier to provide subsidies such as taxi vouchers than to provide transit services to certain areas.
- DHS indicated that certain areas have taxi subsidies under the welfare program, but they prefer to give transit passes because that provides more value and flexibility than, for instance, a \$6 per day monetary subsidy. Transportation Block Grants can also be used in some cases to promote TMA and shuttle services for areas with no transit available. For individuals no longer on welfare, Transportation Plus can help them purchase used vehicles at reasonable costs. DHS has tried car sharing, but that has not been successful due to high insurance costs. Meadowlink is trying to promote car sharing through corporations that could bear the insurance costs.

What can be done to reduce negative transportation impacts on EJ communities?

- NJDOT has completed a statewide freight plan and one of the issues in the plan is how freight facilities can be “good neighbors.” The freight plan is being integrated into the LRP. DOT is conducting a multi-modal study in the Camden area, looking at job opportunities from brownfield site development. These can be economic catalysts to help communities redevelop.
- The LRP supports smart growth initiatives such as more compact development around transit as much as possible. This has benefits not just to EJ communities, but to the entire population. The plan should encourage land use and transportation integration at a corridor level, including looking at local trip making.
- Access to transit can be a means to an end for EJ communities. They need access to affordable transit without negative impacts.
- The balance of access to jobs and affordable housing is a real challenge. Housing should be located where jobs are located. Currently office parks and commercial development are separated from residential communities. In considering how to better integrate land use and transportation, attention should also be paid to how to make a broader range of housing types available.
- SJTPO is focusing on how to make walking more attractive. They are also promoting Job Access and Reverse Commuting (JARC). Atlantic City has a large “day-time” population of employees who travel to the area for work in the casinos and resorts. In addition, the agricultural areas in the southern part of the state also attract temporary and day-time employees, many with language barriers. There is a challenge in providing access to jobs for the entire region.
- The project prioritization process should be reviewed from an equity standpoint. The question was raised as to whether there has ever been an EJ analysis of Local Aid spending or where “Quick Fix” projects have occurred. Are we focusing on “squeaky wheel” communities as opposed to EJ ones? This analysis should be done for all types of transportation spending across the board.

- A project's impacts must take into consideration what types of businesses may be shut through ROW expansion. For instance, if a project results in the closing or relocation of the only pharmacy within walking distance of an EJ community.

What are EJ community transportation needs today vs. in 2030?

- The population of elderly travelers will increase, as will the portion of those who are low-income.
- Children are an even bigger group than elderly and access to day care will become an increasingly important issue.
- There needs to be more collaboration among DOT, DEP and DHS to look at community needs beyond just transportation, including health care and asthma levels. Information on where Medicaid recipients are concentrated could be helpful. One of the Urban Supplement communities might be selected as a pilot for this type of coordination effort.
- DHS is using GIS mapping as a pilot to track needs and programs. There is currently no statewide analytical support.
- The Governor appointed an EJ Task Force which is gathering petitions from communities. The Task Force looks at these petitions on a case-by-case basis. The Task Force has had some trouble making communities aware of this opportunity. This type of program could be expanded in the future.
- In the wake of Hurricane Katrina there is concern about evacuation plans specific to non-car owners in southern NJ. The day-time population of those who arrive by transit would also be a focus of concern.
- Security is also a growing concern. The ripple effect from an incident in NYC could have a crippling impact on northern NJ. The Department of Homeland Security will be dealing with this issue rather than the LRP.
- There is a growing need to deal with bicycle safety among members of the service sector who frequently ride at night without sufficient reflective and safety gear.
- Low-English proficiency does not merely encompass Spanish-speaking individuals. The languages spoken in EJ neighborhoods are increasingly more diverse.

What are the most promising policies and programs for EJ communities?

- It would be helpful to have more integration among agencies that have transportation, health and environmental information about EJ communities. The difficulty is determining which agency should maintain this database and where it could be housed. TRANSCOM is one model for a clearinghouse of travel and transportation information. There needs to be more of these cooperative efforts.
- There can be more integration of data and information within DOT.
- It may be helpful to try a pilot program in one test-case community where agencies can work together in exchanging information and responding to community needs. If successful, this example could be built upon. The EJ Task Force may be a good starting place. Participants need to be realistic about the scale of these efforts and what information needs to be shared; it is essential to avoid collecting information for its own sake. There is also a Brownfields Interagency Task Force.
- Programs should make a difference in people's lives. For instance, there is an innovative program where DHS has partnered with a bank which enables low-income people to purchase a car and establish a credit rating for themselves at the same time.
- The counties have the best sense of the population groups within their borders and their transit needs through the United We Ride Program.

- Increasing congestion will make bus trip lengths increase, lessening the attractiveness of bus transit over time. NJ TRANSIT can partner with NJDOT to look at exclusive bus lane treatments to improve speeds.
- Changes to NJ TRANSIT services in the future could address the desire on the part of customers for real time information about bus service.
- Pricing and subsidies need to be examined so that increases in transit fare do not disproportionately impact EJ communities.
- JARC is not a good model for new and more flexible services due to its high costs.
- The LRP should identify and categorize the various programs available to meet the needs of EJ communities and make recommendations for actions in the next five years.
- Transit Villages and Fannie Mae mortgages are two programs that should be looked at further.

What methods and measures support EJ analysis? What are appropriate models, indicators, and data needs?

- Modeling accessibility could be applied to EJ communities
- A Transit Availability Index could be useful
- NJ TRANSIT had to demonstrate that their recent fare change was equitable; a map-based Title VI analysis is used and updated as required.
- Congestion could be an indicator, as could displacement of communities and travel times
- Information needs to be gathered from stakeholders in an area of impact including neighborhood groups and faith-based organizations.
- The question remains of how best to maintain a database on EJ populations
- There is a challenge with how to forecast poverty levels. Should it be based on current demographics? One option is to look backwards and see where there has been stability in income levels.
- It may be possible to estimate some categories of travel needs analytically.
- NJTPA's forecast model can look at accessibility to jobs by mode.
- Parsons Brinckerhoff has developed a database of EJ stakeholders covering about 100 projects for Community Impact Assessment.
- The models need to be married with existing information.
- Sometimes the best thing is to spend time in a community asking questions rather than to review databases.
- FHWA has case studies on EJ success stories.
- NJ TRANSIT has maps for Title VI projects.

How can we define and prioritize action items?

- Consider what we are doing or need to do to offset the negative impacts of transportation.
- EJ communities can be surveyed (NJ TRANSIT is conducting bus surveys in Newark/Elizabeth).
- The MPOs will likely look to the state to set a statewide direction and develop indicators. The state should develop a model implementation plan in line with the Title VI focus by the MPOs.

- Bus services should be evaluated periodically to make sure they are meeting changing needs. NJ TRANSIT is doing some bus service reevaluation for specific counties in the NJTPA region.
- In addition to long-range planning, there is a need to consider equity in the capital programming process. How can DOT ensure that beneficial projects come through the TIP process rather than the process relying on political decisions?
- In general, a more proactive approach to EJ in transportation is needed.

Ms. Fitzpatrick concluded the interactive session and turned the meeting back over to Danielle Graves for final comments.

Danielle Graves concluded the meeting by thanking the panel members for their participation.