



**Comments of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign on  
NJTPA's Draft Transportation Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2012-2015.**

**August 22, 2011**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on NJTPA's *Draft Transportation Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2012-2015*.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign (TSTC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to reducing car dependency in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. TSTC reviewed NJTPA's *Draft Transportation Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2012-2015* on a project-by-project basis. This document contains a number of large road widening projects that TSTC believes should not proceed given New Jersey's numerous unfunded existing transportation infrastructure needs such as maintenance and expansion of existing transit service and maintenance of a state-of-good-repair for the state's roadways and bridges. New Jersey already has a backlog of infrastructure that needs repair<sup>1 2</sup> and 4.4% of bridges in NJTPA's 13 counties are considered structurally deficient.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, road widening projects will only exacerbate the state's chronic traffic congestion.

The amount New Jersey spends on road and bridge expansion has increased every year since 2009. This year, NJDOT will spend almost 12% of its funds on new capacity projects leaving less revenue available for existing needs.<sup>4</sup>

Road widening projects, such as the ones proposed for Route 1&9 and Route 46 and under consideration for Route 17, increase the percentage of funds going to NJTPA's road expansion projects. Spending on road widening projects is contrary to NJTPA's stated goal in its *Plan 2035* of keeping road expansion below 3% of the overall capital program.<sup>5</sup>

As such, TSTC strongly recommends that road widening projects, including the following projects, not proceed.

- **Route 17, Williams Avenue to I-80**

The TIP increases funding for this Bergen County project from \$1.9 million proposed in NJDOT's *Proposed Fiscal Year 2012 Capital Program* to \$14.682. The project examines widening this section of Route 17 to provide six lanes. Route 17 in Bergen County is one of the most dangerous roads for

<sup>1</sup> *Plan 2035*. North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. Page 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Rough Roads Ahead, Fix Them Now or Pay for It Later*. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. June 2009.

<sup>3</sup> *More than a Bandage for New Jersey's Crumbling Bridges*. Tri-State Transportation Campaign. December 2010. Page 5. < <http://tstc.org/reports/bandage/More Than a Bandage.pdf>>.

<sup>4</sup> Tri-State Transportation Campaign's analysis of NJDOT's FY 2012 Transportation Capital Program. < <http://blog.tstc.org/2011/08/19/new-jerseys-shift-toward-road-building-accelerates/>>.

<sup>5</sup> *Plan 2035*. North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. Page 68.

pedestrians in New Jersey. In place of widening the roadway, NJTPA should consider ways to make this roadway safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- **Route 1&9, Haynes Ave. Operational Improvements**

The TIP funds this Essex County new capacity project at \$16.287 million in Fiscal Year 2014. The main component of this project is an additional third lane along Southbound Rt. 1 & 9.

- **Route 46, Passaic Avenue to Willowbrook Mall**

The TIP funds this Essex County new capacity project at \$2.8 million in Fiscal Year 2012, \$2.89 million in Fiscal Year 2013 and \$18.1 million in Fiscal Year 2014. A main component of this project is the widening of Route 46 from four lanes to six lanes.

New capacity projects, such as the ones above, are expensive to build, exacerbate sprawl and traffic congestion, and are costly to maintain. These three projects alone will cost New Jersey \$52.86 million to study and construct between Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2014. Adding capacity to roadways as a means to relieve congestion is not necessarily effective; more lanes often mean more vehicles as evidenced by the Authority's Garden State Parkway widening numbers. The New Jersey Turnpike Authority's traffic projections have shown that the section of the Turnpike the Authority plans to widen will be as or more congested by 2025, the project's "design year." In addition, spending on new capacity projects threatens to undo the progressive goals set in NJTPA's *Regional Transportation Plan*.

Due to these concerns, TSTC maintains that wherever possible, infrastructure solutions that do not add new capacity should be pursued.

TSTC urges NJTPA to concentrate its limited resources on sustainable traffic relief and "fix-it-first" projects and abandon its proposed plans to widen Route 17, Route 1&9, and Route 46. TSTC recommends that NJTPA pursue the following guidelines in developing projects for the region's final *Transportation Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2012-2015*:

- **Take a hard look at proposed expansion projects and call off projects that will not offer sustainable congestion relief.** These projects tend to be overly expensive, and come at the expense of environmental quality and existing roads and bridges conditions.
- **Prioritize funding for fix-it-first projects.** In an era of strained State budgets, fix-it-first projects help to control spending and ensure that taxpayer dollars are directed toward sustainable transportation investments.
- **Provide funding for smart growth projects linking transportation and land use.** Rather than continue to widen roads, NJDOT should focus on working with towns and other municipalities on smart growth projects. This will address the underlying cause of traffic congestion, sprawling land use.
- **Continue to develop and fund bicycle and pedestrian projects and target funding to places with the highest number of pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and deaths.** NJTPA should also continue to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian additions on roadway and bridge projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.