

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority
Board of Commissioners Meeting October 18, 2012
Public Comment**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment today. My name is Janna Chernetz, and I am the New Jersey Advocate for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit transportation policy watchdog organization working in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.

While the NJSEA determines whether to approve an amendment to its Master Plan that would allow a water and amusement park to the American Dream Meadowlands project, Tri-State remains concerned about the impact this project will have on the already congested roads in the Meadowlands. The congestion, if not properly mitigated, will have a devastating and crippling effect on the region and the quality of life of those who live and work in the area.

I want to be clear that the traffic impact from American Dream Meadowland is not just about game days. It's about traffic to the Meadowlands region—seven days a week—and the quality of life for the over 460,000 people that call the Meadowlands region their home. The estimated 150,000 daily visitors, or 55 million annually, expected to flock to the American Dream Meadowlands will not only compound existing traffic problems during football games, concerts, other events, both morning and evening rush hours, but also grind the few hours of non-congested traffic roadways to a halt.

Those who live in or travel through the Meadowlands region already waste roughly \$1,000 a year and 20 hours a year sitting in traffic. The proposed economic benefits of this project could quickly be lost if the Meadowlands region is further gridlocked as a result of inadequate transit investment. Without additional transit service, seven days a week, the region and the state are ill-prepared to deal with the true costs of American Dream Meadowlands.

Even NJDOT Commissioner James Simpson indicated that the Meadowlands region is already the most congested area in the state. Yet an adequate transportation demand management plan has not yet been released and a stable funding source to pay for the needed mass transit improvements—to support a project of ADM's size has not been identified. It's uncertain if the minimal bus and rail service improvements outlined in the Mass Transit Plan will be adequate for the size of the project and its location in the Meadowlands. For example, the Plan's bus service enhancements are far below the level of service provided to a much smaller retail destination in the area, the Westfield Garden State Plaza Shopping Mall in Paramus, NJ which has over 10 bus lines.

What is certain, however, is that the burden to meet the necessary service levels cannot fall solely on NJTransit's shoulders. With NJTransit recently cutting approximately 10 bus routes in order to find \$1 million to increase bus service to Newark Airport, increasing fares by 22% in 2010, and cutting employee benefits to save \$1.6 million, it is unrealistic to expect NJ Transit to provide additional service to the area without new revenues to support it.

The developers, Triple Five, must contribute to the operating costs of adding regular rail service and bus service to the project for which they themselves state are needed to ease traffic congestion. Models already exist in Oregon, New York and Florida which Tri-State has highlighted in our blog, *Mobilizing the Region*, in July. Identifying transit operating funding sources will not only mitigate congestion and improve access to ADM, but will also protect and improve the quality of life for residents of the Meadowlands region and for those who currently travel through the area.

Thank you.