

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Comments - Newark Master Plan – Circulation and Mobility

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit policy organization working for a more equitable and environmentally sound transportation network in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.

Tri-State Transportation Campaign commends the city's vision within the Circulation and Mobility section of Newark's proposed Master Plan. Newark is the largest city in New Jersey, one of the nation's major air, shipping and transit hubs, and is made up of residents who overwhelmingly depend on walking and transit as transportation. In fact, 40% of Newark households do not own a vehicle. It is important that Newark's Circulation and Mobility plan mirrors these diverse needs of its population.

Tri-State believes that the Circulation and Mobility section of the Master Plan, as drafted, is strong and focuses on the appropriate target areas to keep Newark moving forward. The Plan rightly focuses on the need for increased access to multi-modal travel and transportation choices as a way to promote economic development and safe and healthy neighborhoods. However, certain components of the Plan can be strengthened.

Goal #1

Increase the use of all forms of public transit by residents, commuters and visitors to/from and within the City.

Newark is a diverse city and is home to over 270,000 residents of which 40% of households do not own vehicles. It also boasts major entertainment and sports venues, large and small businesses, and major transit, freight and air hubs. Ensuring that its transportation system is accessible and safe to all who use it must be a top priority. Newark's goals to work closely with NJ Transit to promote intercity trips in addition to increasing service on all modes should be applauded. Newark should also work closely with NJ Transit and the state to ensure that bus stops, sidewalk, and light rail and rail stations are safe from both a security and infrastructure perspective. According to a study conducted by *USA Today*, the likelihood of a crime exceeds

the national average at 28 of 29 airports in the most populous metropolitan regions of the country and all 26 central train stations studied.¹ Newark Liberty International Airport and Newark Penn Station were on the list. These goals can be achieved through the endorsement of a Safe Streets to Transit program within the City and through grant applications for the NJDOT Local Aid program.

Goal #2

Connect the neighborhoods to one another and to the various employment, recreation, entertainment and waterfront destinations within the city.

Tri-State supports Newark's efforts to better connect neighborhoods by way of safer pedestrian and bicycle access. This is very important to residents as it makes getting to work, school, medical appointments, and other necessities of daily life easier, safer, economical and more environmentally friendly. Adding bike lanes when appropriate and signs reminding motorists to be aware of bicyclists are effective tools to enhance safety and connect neighborhoods. Newark has already made tremendous strides by adding bike lanes and this momentum needs to be kept up. Ample bike parking will complement these efforts. Meadowlink TMA is already partnering with Rutgers-Newark for a university bike share. A city sponsored bike share would help complete a bike network in Newark and the goal of increased access to multimodal travel options. Newark should also provide safe pedestrian access to major entertainment facilities, jobs and transit is beneficial to all who arrive in the City. Offering jitney services to bridge the gap where pedestrian and/bike and public transit is lacking is effective in closing the gap and reduce dependency on cars.

Goal #3

Connect the City outward to the local, regional, global infrastructure and the opportunities it affords.

The City's reliance on road widening projects to resolve congestion problems will do little to resolve congestion issues in the long term. Wider roads encourage development further afield from city downtowns perpetuating the "sprawl cycle" and create hostile walking, biking and transit environments. Newark should focus maintenance and repair of existing roads and bridges, on enhancing its existing public transportation network and concentrate on improving connections between modes of transportation as well as expanding existing service. Tri-State applauds the City's plan to work with NJTransit and PANYNJ to expand Go Bus and PATH service.

¹ See http://www.usatoday.com/travel/news/2011-07-11-crime-near-transportation-hubs_n.htm

Goal #4

Adequately accommodate vehicular traffic and minimize congestions along the City streets and the regional roadway system.

Goal 4 must be balanced with the City's plan to implement a Complete Streets policy (see Goal #5) as some objectives may be in conflict with Complete Streets principals. Certain vehicular traffic flow improvements, including but not limited to signal timing, increasing speed and the elimination of certain pedestrian crossings, could compromise pedestrian, bicyclist and commuter safety. Given the density of Newark, Tri-State urges Newark to work with NJ Transit to increase public transportation service and explore the possibility of exclusive bus lanes as a means of low cost transit enhancements. Tri-State encourages Newark to work with local businesses and universities to incentivize public transit and jitney service. Utilization of freight rail will also help mitigate truck traffic as a result of industrial and port growth and keep Newark's roads safe for pedestrian and bicyclists.

Zip Car and other car-sharing programs have become increasingly popular in the region; offering an alternative to car ownership which is very costly in New Jersey. Tri-State encourages Newark to work with Zip Car and Meadowlink TMA to explore adding more car sharing locations throughout the City as an additional tool to mitigate the need for automobile ownership in the City and increase the sense of autonomy for those who cannot afford ownership of a car.

Goal #5

Improve the safety of the streets and intersections for all users

A robust Complete Streets Policy is the most effective method to achieve this goal and Tri-State applauds Newark for incorporating the development and implementation of such a policy in its Master Plan. To date, 27 municipalities and 3 counties, including Essex County, and NJDOT have adopted Complete Streets policies.

A Tri-State analysis of pedestrian fatalities in Essex County found McCarter Highway (NJ 21) and Broad Street in Newark to be the most unsafe roads in Essex County for walking based on the number of fatalities each year.² Tri-State urges the City to work with NJDOT and the county to conduct a walking audit to highlight potential safety improvements. Tri-State urges Newark to improve pedestrian safety of these streets a priority in the coming months.

Working with the County of Essex, in addition to NJDOT, is essential to meeting the objectives under this goal and to make sure safety improvements are implemented on the streets of Newark regardless of jurisdiction.

² <http://www.tstc.org/reports/danger12/>

Too frequently, pedestrians are injured while getting off buses. Newark should work with NJ Transit to broaden pedestrian safety measures to include stop and stations throughout the city.

Our older residents are at most risk for pedestrian fatalities and injuries. According to a Tri-State analysis, in Essex County, those who are 60 years or older make up for 28% of pedestrian fatalities though they make up only 16.2% of the population.³ To that end, Tri-State urges the City to work with NJDOT and Essex County to conduct walking and safety audits around senior housing and senior centers in Newark.

Safety outreach in schools, community and faith-based organizations, making sure signage is clearly visible to drivers and pedestrians, and pedestrian refuges at wider and more dangerous crossings are improvements and efforts that will make Newark streets safer for motorists and pedestrians alike.

Finally, the City should, in addition to its Master Plan, produce a separate Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Plan.

Goal #6

Facilitate the movement of freight through the Port Newark/Elizabeth and Newark Liberty International Airport areas via enhanced freight access and industrial land use policies which support the continued economic growth of these vital assets.

Tri-State urges Newark to minimize truck traffic by encouraging use of rail freight whenever possible including expansion of existing access to freight lines. Targeting expansion of industry in areas accessible to rail freight is encouraged through incentive programs such as a “Freight Village Program.” A “Freight Village” is a fusion of land use and transportation planning which clusters freight-dependent companies around a concentration of shared transportation infrastructure. To the extent that freight village development patterns allow rail or waterborne transportation to serve major industries more effectively, the general public benefits from reduced truck traffic and cost of goods and services. As the freight volume increases and as the amount of the freight moved by truck increases, there will be a growing demand for developments similar to the freight village model. This demand will increase exponentially upon the completion of the widening of the Panama Canal and raising of the Bayonne Bridge. Adding trucks to our already congested roadways is not a viable option. Newark should seek to reap the benefits of its freight rail infrastructure to boost economic development. Working with the EDA to develop business incentive programs like the Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit program, but for freight hubs, is one way for Newark to capitalize on its freight infrastructure while promoting economic development and creating jobs.

³ <http://www.tstc.org/reports/older11/index.php>

Tri-State discourages projects that increase truck traffic in areas where pedestrian traffic is high like schools, parks and playgrounds. The City must be mindful of the most vulnerable users of Newark's roadways when considering truck routes.

Goal #7

Balance the parking needs and desires of various users (residents, students, workforce, and downtown)

Tri-State applauds the City's efforts to develop a parking management plan that encourages transit and reduces reliance on cars. Working with and having the cooperation of NJTransit, local businesses, sports, entertainment and cultural establishments and higher education institutions is essential to the success of this goal. However, the City must look beyond the automobile when considering parking needs of its residents and visitors and aim to provide ample bike parking so as to encourage bike use.

Goal #8

Coordinate land use and transportation planning

Coordination between land use and transportation planning is crucial to economical vitality and personal and environmental health. Newark has unique transit assets that allow for great potential for economic development. Tri-State encourages Newark to take advantage of these assets and promote development around existing transit. It is only through a strong integration of land use and transportation planning that Newark will be able to meet the objectives set forth in Goals 1 through 7.