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**NJDOT Spends More on Walking, Biking and Transit but Not Enough to Improve Safety or Maintain State's Roads**

A new analysis of the New Jersey Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) and New Jersey Transit's (NJT) Transportation Capital Program for fiscal year 2014 reveals encouraging shifts towards greater investment in bicycle, pedestrian and transit projects. However, the agency is still spending too much money to build new roads and bridges for short-term traffic congestion relief instead of redirecting more of these funds to maintain the State's existing roads and bridges and retrofit more of the State's most dangerous roads to be Complete Streets compliant. The report was released today by the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a regional transportation policy watchdog organization.

"Pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users will see more investment in this capital program that addresses their needs. But, as a percentage of the overall spending plan, too few resources are being spent on these projects," said Veronica Vanterpool, the Campaign's executive director.

The analysis shows an increased investment from 2.1 percent to 2.8 percent for bicycle and pedestrian projects. Such projects deliver safety benefits for all users of the road and help the agency pursue its Complete Streets policy. However, with five roadways in the Campaign's top ten list for Most Dangerous Roads for Walking in the region, NJDOT should be investing more to knock these roads off this list next year.

"In the three years from 2009 to 2011, pedestrians and bicyclists made up 27 percent of all of New Jersey's traffic-related deaths but bicycle and pedestrian projects received less than 3

percent of NJDOT's funding," said Norris. "More money must go to making streets safer for all road users," he added.

The Campaign's analysis also finds that roughly 10 percent of all the dollars in NJDOT's portion of the Capital Program will go to significantly expanding the State's road and bridge network. This is down from last year, when almost 12 percent of the dollars in the NJDOT portion were dedicated to expansion.

"It is encouraging to see NJDOT decrease its spending in this area. But the Agency is still relying too heavily on these kinds of projects to deliver congestion relief," said Janna Chernetz, the Campaign's New Jersey advocate. "Almost a quarter of the dollars going solely to road and bridge projects will go to expansion," she added.

Large expansion projects do little to relieve traffic congestion in the long term. Studies have shown that wider roads entice more people to drive, adding more vehicles to roads and bridges and further causing congestion. Moreover, recent research has shown that New Jerseyans are driving less, reducing the demand for increased highway capacity.

"According to U.S. PIRG's Moving Off the Road, in New Jersey, annual per person vehicle miles travelled dropped 2.14 percent from 2005 to 2011," said Matthew Norris, the Campaign's South Jersey advocate.

The analysis also shows that NJDOT is moving further away from a "fix-it-first" approach despite the deteriorating conditions of its existing road and bridge infrastructure. According to NJDOT, 10 percent of its bridges and 41 percent of its highway pavements are not in acceptable condition. TSTC's analysis shows that the State plans on investing 25 percent of the Capital Program's dollars on projects that repair or preserve the State's existing roads and bridges, down from nearly 30 percent in the 2013 Capital Program.

One troubling trend that continues is the reliance on temporary funding sources to pay for NJDOT projects. One-shot payments from the Port Authority, transfers from the State's General Fund and borrowing help plug gaps in the 2014 Capital Program.

"The Port Authority's yearly payments will end in 2016, leaving a considerable gap in the Capital Program if new and sustainable funding sources are not identified by Governor Christie and the state legislature," Vanterpool noted.

NJT's share of the entire Capital Program has increased from slightly over 37 percent in the 2013 Capital Program to a little over 39 percent. "More funding for transit helps respond to decreased driving, and provides transportation choice, among NJ residents, especially millennials and baby boomers," says Chernetz.

## **NJ Transit**

As a new part of the analysis, TSTC broke down NJT's portion of the Capital Program. Funding dedicated to buses comprise a little over 30 percent of NJT's Capital Program, yet in fiscal year 2012, bus trips made up almost 60 percent of NJT's average weekday unlinked passenger trips.

“Given that the majority of trips are taken on a bus, NJT must provide more funding for bus capital and bus operations,” Vanterpool said. “In addition, increasing support for bus transit will allow for an increase in much-needed cross Hudson capacity,” she added.

While the Capital Program has already been adopted for Fiscal Year 2014 (which began in July), moving forward, TSTC urges NJDOT and NJT to:

- Shift away from expansion projects as congestion relief and instead, focus on alternative modes to provide congestion relief
- Increase funds for fix-it-first to maintain and repair existing infrastructure
- Increase funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects
- Increase transparency in the Capital Program by identifying all project component costs including the cost of bicycle or pedestrian accommodations on road projects and identifying compliance/exemption to NJDOT’s Complete Streets policy
- Increase funding for bus capital and operations

Because transportation is so important to New Jersey’s economy, the Campaign also calls on Governor Christie and the State Legislature to:

- Create and approve new, dedicated revenue sources to replenish the Transportation Trust Fund

The full report can be found at <http://tstc.org/reports/NJDOT-2014-Capital-Program.pdf>

*The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.*