

# What Lies Ahead?

## Road and Bridge Projects in NJDOT's 2015 Transportation Capital Program

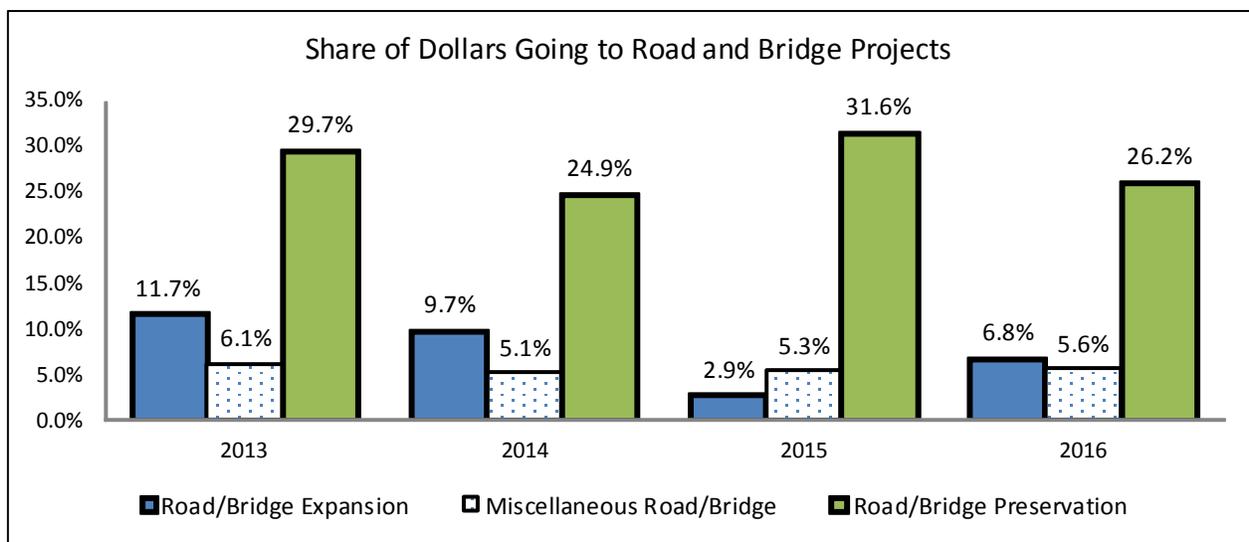


The New Jersey Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) yearly transportation capital program lays out the agency's planned investments for the state's roads, bridges, transit and all other transportation-related capital projects for one year. Examining the projects in the Program provides insight into the agency's transportation priorities.

NJDOT's 2016 transportation capital program dedicates \$2.9 billion for the state's roads and bridges with \$131 million slated for road and bridge expansion and \$506 million for system preservation.

### FINDINGS

- ◇ **The funds dedicated to road and bridge expansion projects have increased 140 percent.** In 2015, road and bridge expansion projects comprised only \$54 million of NJDOT capital program's funds; in this year's capital program, **expansion projects total more than \$130 million.**
- ◇ **Fix-it-first** projects that maintain or fix the state's roads and bridges declined by 16 percent. In 2016, these projects will comprise only 26 percent of the capital program's funds. In 2015, they totaled 32 percent of the funds.
- ◇ Funds dedicated to expansion projects increased this year mainly due to ongoing work for Direct Connection and the Manahawkin Bay Bridges projects. From 2016-2024, NJDOT will spend nearly \$575 million on these projects alone.



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



## For Every Dollar Spent on a Road or Bridge Project...

	2016	2015	2014	2013
Expansion*	17.6 ¢	7.2 ¢	24.5 ¢	24.6 ¢
Miscellaneous Road/Bridge*	14.4 ¢	13.3 ¢	12.8 ¢	12.8 ¢
Preservation*	68.0 ¢	79.5 ¢	62.6 ¢	62.6 ¢
Total	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00

\*For definitions of terms, see Methodology section.

### New Jersey's Maintenance Needs Result in Higher Costs for Drivers

According to a July 2014 White House report, 35 percent of New Jersey's roads are in poor condition and 36 percent of the state's bridges are deficient or structurally obsolete.

The report estimates that driving on the state's roads costs drivers an additional \$604.88 a year just for vehicle repair and operating costs.<sup>2</sup>

A 10 cent gas tax increase would go a long way towards lowering these costs while imposing only an additional \$53 per year for drivers.<sup>3</sup>

## What is Fix-it-First?

A fix-it-first policy prioritizes maintenance and preservation of existing roads and bridges over building new infrastructure. This emphasis reduces the backlog of deficient roads and bridges, which cost travelers time and money while ensuring the road network remains safe. A focus on existing roads and bridges means state DOTs are not adding new roads and bridges that require additional maintenance. As part of the 2000 Transportation Trust Fund reauthorization, the New Jersey legislature passed a fix-it-first mandate. The past three capital programs show varying adherence to a fix-it-first policy; while expansion projects comprise only 7 percent of the funds in 2016, in 2013, these projects consumed nearly 12 percent of the capital program's dollars.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◇ Before increasing lane capacity on roads and bridges, NJDOT should first explore less costly traffic demand management strategies including incentivizing employers to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips, encouraging more efficient use of existing parking facilities, and pricing busy corridors during peak hours.
- ◇ Ensure that road and bridge projects incorporate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure at the onset.
- ◇ Keep road and bridge expansion projects to no more than four percent of capital program funds and use more funds for fix-it-first projects.

## Sources and Footnotes

TSTC analysis of the NJDOT portion of the *Transportation Capital Program Fiscal Year 2016, 2015, 2014, and 2013*.  
TSTC's analysis of the NJT potion of the *Transportation Capital Program Fiscal Year 2016*.

<sup>1</sup>NJDOT's \$2.9 billion portion of the capital program contains projects that are not administered by the agency but must be in the capital program because they are funded with federal funds. These "non-DOT" projects include the Port Authority's Goethals Bridge replacement and the Bayonne Bridge Navigational Clearance Project. TSTC's analysis of the NJDOT portion of the capital program takes out these projects in order to paint a clearer picture of NJDOT's planned spending. The FY 2016 NJDOT portion has \$951.5 million in non-DOT projects. The FY 2015 portion had \$616.5 million in non-DOT projects. The non-DOT portion of the FY 2014 and FY 2013 capital programs were \$862.8 million and \$128.7 million respectively.

<sup>2</sup>"An Economic Analysis of Transportation Infrastructure Investment." National Economic Council and President's Council of Economic Advisors. July 2014. <[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/economic\\_analysis\\_of\\_transportation\\_investments.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/economic_analysis_of_transportation_investments.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup>"An Increase Gas Tax will Help NJ Drivers Save Money." Mobilizing the Region. March 2014. <<http://blog.tstc.org/2014/03/12/an-increased-gas-tax-will-help-nj-drivers-save-money/>>.

# Methodology

For analysis of the NJDOT portion of the capital program, TSTC classified each project in one of 12 categories: bicycle/pedestrian, freight, local aid, miscellaneous road/bridge, non-NJDOT, other, Port Authority Project Program, road/bridge expansion, road/bridge preservation, safety, smart growth and transit (not NJT). Projects that are “non-DOT” are not included in the analysis. Road and bridge projects that also included bicycle or pedestrian components in their project descriptions were noted as having “bike/ped components.” For analysis of the NJT portion of the capital program, TSTC classified each project as a rail, bus, rail and bus, or other. TSTC then assigned each project to as many of the categories listed below as the project warranted.

NJDOT	Bicycle/Pedestrian	Sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian improvements such as bulb-outs and ADA crosswalks. Recreational trails funding and other bicycle/pedestrian lump sums included.
	Freight	Funding for NJ's Freight Program and maritime industry.
	Local Aid	Funds dedicated to counties, urban areas and metropolitan planning organization for unspecified projects.
	Miscellaneous Road/Bridge	Road and bridge projects that do not add to the road network significantly. Projects include operational improvements, intersection improvements such as adding turn lanes, road drainage projects, dams and culvert projects.
	Non-NJDOT and NJT projects	Projects undertaken by agencies other than NJDOT or NJT and over which NJDOT or NJT have no control. These projects are listed in the capital program due to reporting requirements.
	Other	Includes ITS, general funds for planning and research, studies, lump sums for unanticipated needs, etc.
	Port Authority Project Program	Port Authority funds represent funds from the canceled Access to the Region's Core project. NJDOT uses this money to pay for five NJDOT projects, Route 7 Hackensack River (WittPenn) Bridge, Route 139 (Hoboken and Conrail Viaducts), Route 1&9 Extension, Route 1&9 Pulaski Skyway and Route 1&9 Pavement. From 2012 through 2016, the Port Authority will give NJDOT a total of \$1.8 billion.
	Road/Bridge Expansion	Significant increase in capacity and/or significant increase in infrastructure to be maintained. Examples: adding to the road network such as a flyover project, extending a road, adding additional lane miles, or adding to the bridge network such as adding additional a lane to a bridge, or creating a new bridge (while keeping an old bridge).
	Road/Bridge Preservation	Bridge replacements, rehabilitation without added capacity, road reconstruction, repaving without added capacity.
	Safety	Improvements that focus on vehicular safety concerns, including rockfall mitigation, traffic signal replacements and rail-highway grade crossings. This category addresses statewide, county-wide or route-wide safety improvements, and does not include individual projects that NJDOT undertakes for operational and safety reasons (e.g. changes to an intersection to improve safety).
	Smart Growth	Projects that link transit and development.
	Transit (not NJT)	Transit capital investments, funds for transit improvements, transit vehicle purchases, ferry projects.
Road or Bridge with Bike/Ped	Addition of bike lanes, sidewalks and other bike/ped facilities to roads and bridges, whether in a preservation, miscellaneous or expansion project. Projects described as "proposed to be bicycle and pedestrian compatible" are also included. This category is a sub-category of the expansion, preservation and miscellaneous road/bridge categories.	
NJT	Rail Maintenance	Rail station maintenance, rail car maintenance and track work.
	Rail Expansion	Expansion of the rail network.
	Rail Maintenance and Expansion	Rail projects that have both maintenance and expansion of rail network.
	Debt Service	Payment for borrowing.
	Access to Transit	Improvements that help people use transit, such as park and rides, ADA projects and programs serving vulnerable populations such as the elderly or disabled.
	New Buses	New bus purchases or new bus leases.
	New Rolling Stock	New rolling stock purchases or leases.
	Bus Maintenance	Necessary maintenance for buses.
	Bus Expansion	Expansion of bus service.
	Bus Maintenance and Expansion	Bus projects that have both maintenance and expansion of service.
	Bus Enhancements	Improvements that are not required maintenance, but additions that improve bus riders' experiences.
	Rail Enhancements	Improvements that are not required maintenance, but additions that improve rail riders' experiences.
Rail and Bus Enhancements	Improvements that are not required maintenance, but additions that improve rail and bus riders' experiences.	