MISSION TO DELIVER
TRANSITION 2026

Report of the
Saving You Time and Money
Action Team

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A well-functioning, effective, and innovative state government is essential to making New Jersey more affordable for families and expanding economic opportunity throughout our state. When business and occupational licenses are reviewed quickly and efficiently, more New Jerseyans are able to start small businesses or launch great-paying careers. When new energy projects and housing developments receive their permits without delay, costs fall and families pay less on their utility bills and mortgages. And when families can quickly book and receive their REAL ID, they have more time to spend with their friends and families doing what they love. Very simply, when Trenton functions well, you save time and money.

But too often in New Jersey, red tape and government bureaucracy get in the way. New Jersey ranks 49th in the nation for Business Friendliness according to CNBC, and we had the slowest rate of REAL ID adoption in the country due to challenges with state agency structures and processes. Permit reviews for major projects routinely drag on for years and can take double or triple the time for approval compared to other states. "New Jersey [has] a surplus of permitting and procedural requirements that slow and sometimes prevent desirable projects and programs," noted one respondent to the Governor-elect's General Public Survey, "particularly in land use and zoning for small businesses." These yearslong review and approval processes add millions of dollars in costs to new energy and housing projects, making families' utility bills and housing costs more expensive and even eliminating jobs when projects are cancelled entirely.

This Transition Action Team is squarely focused on removing these barriers and making the state government work smarter, with fewer delays and costs for businesses and residents. This change should start from the top, with a culture shift in the Governor's Office and state agencies focused on customer service, transparency, and accountability. We urge the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration to commit to reducing red tape and permitting delays, saving New Jerseyans time and money and reducing the cost of energy generation, housing, and healthcare.

This will take a whole-of-government effort, from creating a new focus on fast and efficient permitting and license approvals to prioritizing customer service–oriented reforms at the Motor Vehicle Commission to empowering and strengthening the Business Action Center so it can better assist small businesses. Everything from applying for a property tax rebate to receiving your driver's license should be simple and straightforward. It's your government—it should work for you.

To enact this new vision, the Saving You Time and Money Action Team proposes that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration consider several recommendations to accomplish the following key priorities:

- Streamlining and Expediting State Agency Permitting
- Cutting Business and Occupational License Times
- Strengthening the Business Action Center
- Reducing Regulatory Burdens and Upgrading Agency IT Infrastructure
- Reforming the Motor Vehicle Commission

The Transition Action Team understands that these recommendations need to fit into the broader context of all the Transition Action Team recommendations and will have to be prioritized accordingly. We also recognize that these recommendations will need to be considered in the context of a challenging budget landscape, particularly with the impact of federal funding cuts, and where these recommendations are not budget neutral, they may need to be adjusted or prioritized.

Transition Action Team Recommendations

Streamlining and Expediting State Agency Permitting

Recommendation: Issue an Executive Order prioritizing customer service and accountability at state agencies, particularly within the permitting process.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order (EO) establishing customer service, transparency, communication, accountability, and feedback as foundational expectations across all executive agencies. This EO should set a clear tone while ensuring staff are supported with the modern tools, training, and systems they need to succeed. It should also direct the creation of a Chief Customer Service Experience Officer, reporting to the Chief Operating Officer, to oversee these resources and ensure customer service is a priority at all state agencies. By aligning culture, tools, and accountability, the State can eliminate longstanding delays and run a transparent and responsive government. This Executive Order should cut across all state government agencies and functions, with a particular focus on the agency permitting and approvals process.

Regarding customer service, the EO should encourage agencies to adopt a consistent "Get to Yes" mindset with clear expectations for responsiveness and respectful engagement. Staff will be equipped with modern tools and streamlined workflows to reduce manual work and accelerate constituent-facing services.

Regarding transparency, the EO should encourage agencies to adopt and publish clear process steps, decision criteria, and timelines for major services so residents and businesses know exactly what to expect. Public dashboards and internal visibility tools should be used to track progress and highlight bottlenecks that require reform.

Regarding communication, the EO should encourage agencies to provide proactive updates at key defined touchpoints, eliminating the need for residents to chase information. Agencies should standardize response-time expectations and use multi-channel communication to ensure consistent, timely outreach.

Regarding accountability, the EO should encourage each agency to define and publish service-level commitments tied to measurable response and processing times. Leaders in each agency should monitor performance and take corrective action when standards are not met, supported by data and modernized systems.

Regarding feedback, the EO should encourage agencies to develop clear avenues to provide feedback on customer experience via agency websites, and agency staff should regularly review feedback and make changes as needed.

The EO should also provide opportunities, potentially within the first 100 days, for agency staff to participate in listening sessions with their agency leadership to ask questions and raise ideas for enhancing their agency's performance and improving job satisfaction. These listening sessions should later be followed by staff seminars aligned with the Governor's priorities.

Recommendation: Create a Cross-Agency Permitting Team to streamline and expedite state agency permitting.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a Cross-Agency Permitting Team within the Governor's Office under the Chief Operating Officer, with the responsibility to streamline and expedite project permitting and approvals across all state departments and agencies.

The Cross-Agency Permitting Team should create and manage a Permitting Dashboard, made up of individual cross-agency dashboards specific to each project, to show businesses and residents applying for a permit exactly where their project is in the approval process. The Team should also develop and

coordinate pre-application meetings between applicants and agencies, pre-application checklists for applicants to complete, and enforceable permitting timelines that agencies must meet. It should ensure that agency staff are being responsive and accountable to businesses and residents and monitor agency performance in the permitting process. It should also act as a one-stop shop for businesses and residents to answer any permitting questions, resolve outstanding issues regarding the state agency permitting process, and intervene with agencies where necessary to keep stalled approvals moving. The Team should be focused on creating a "Get to Yes" mentality within all agencies and identifying where red tape exists that is slowing down agency approvals.

This Executive Order should also encourage the creation of a Permitting Coordinator position at all permit-issuing state agencies, to act as a single point of contact and authority empowered to resolve permitting delays and bottlenecks. This coordinator should work closely with the Cross-Agency Permitting Team to move permits forward and coordinate between agency staff and applicants, including by setting up pre-application meetings that will ensure that agency staff and applicants are on the same page and ready to move the project forward. The coordinator should be available to applicants and agency staff to ensure that all parties are aligned and to ensure strong communication regarding additional information or project alterations that may be needed.

The Cross-Agency Permitting Team, working with agency Permitting Coordinators, should also develop a pre-application checklist that allows applicants to see what permits their projects are expected to require based upon the type of project, and which will also give state agencies key information with which they can set up their pre-application meeting and project-specific Permitting Dashboard.

Recommendation: Create a public-facing online permitting dashboard to improve transparency and reduce delays for projects.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a public-facing online Permitting Dashboard to be managed by the Cross-Agency Permitting Team, which will increase transparency for permit applicants by showing the real-time status and progress of project permits and allowing online communication between applicants and state agencies to reduce delays in the approvals process.

The Permitting Dashboard will be made up of individual dashboards specific to each project that is applying for state permits, with each project having access to one cross-agency dashboard that will go live after the project's pre-application meeting is held. The Dashboard should clearly display which permits are required for project approval, associated fees for those permits, each agency's progress on the approval process for each permit, the required timeframe that each agency has to complete their approval, and an online window where state agencies can request additional information/alterations from the applicant and where the applicant can submit additional information to the agency. When additional information is required, the Dashboard should automatically notify applicants by email or text and prompt them to respond directly through the platform. The Dashboard should clearly indicate when an application is deemed complete and when statutory or regulatory review clocks begin.

Agencies, managed by their Permitting Coordinator, should be required to update the status of a permit directly into the Dashboard immediately after a decision or request for information is made.

Recommendation: Commission an audit of permitting processes across state and local agencies to identify opportunities for reform.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order commissioning an audit of the permitting process across state and local agencies, with the goal of identifying roadblocks and barriers that currently cause delays and issuing recommendations on how to expedite project approvals.

The Executive Order should create an Audit Team, managed by the Cross-Agency Permitting Team under the Chief Operating Officer, that will map the business and resident "journey" across the permitting process, covering all permitting services across state and local agencies. The user journey map will show current state and local pain points and inefficiencies and identify opportunities for a more streamlined, unified approvals system.

The audit should establish a list of backlogged permits by age and identify permits stalled at pre-application or step 1 stages. Backlogged permits should be clearly identified to the Cross-Agency Permitting Team and agency Permitting Coordinator for priority completion. The audit should also catalogue every permit type across state government, including fees, approval steps, timelines, costs, and milestones, as viewed from the applicant's perspective with comparisons to similar permits in other states.

The audit should also map internal workflows, software/applications used in the permitting process, and data access and staffing models—including district-based versus centralized structures—to identify opportunities for improved throughput and accountability. The audit should map out current workforce skills, training gaps, and succession-planning challenges, including civil service constraints that inhibit overlapping training for replacement staff. It should also assess where additional staffing and technology upgrades are needed to meet permitting timelines.

Recommendation: Develop and implement enforceable permitting timelines within the agency approval process.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the Cross-Agency Permitting Team, managed by the Chief Operating Officer, to work with state agencies to develop and implement enforceable timelines ("shot clocks") that agencies must meet for each step of the permitting process to increase transparency, accountability, and efficiency in project development. As it develops these timelines, the Cross-Agency Permitting Team should also determine what additional staffing or technology capacity state agencies need to meet these targets. The Cross-Agency Permitting Team should develop a process for addressing missed deadlines by state agencies, including a potential refunding of the permit fee to the applicant, conversion to third-party review, or possible automatic approval of the permit in specific circumstances as allowable under statute. Permitting timelines should also be required to be met simultaneously across state agencies and subdepartments, rather than one after the other.

Specific timelines for additional rounds of agency comment or requests for information, as well as limits on the number of rounds of comment allowed for an individual permit, should also be developed to ensure that these don't unnecessarily delay a project's approval. Comments issued during an initial agency review should also be considered final and new substantive comments shouldn't be introduced in subsequent review cycles unless material changes have been made to the application.

The Cross-Agency Permitting Team should also ensure that all permitting timelines are clearly shown in the Permitting Dashboard, so that permit applicants know exactly how long the permitting process is expected to take. The Cross-Agency Permitting Team should also evaluate existing timelines in use at state agencies to ensure they are being followed effectively.

As part of this timeline development process, the Cross-Agency Permitting Team should make recommendations to the Chief Operating Officer regarding additional staffing and technology that specific agencies need to meet these permitting timelines. Using these recommendations, the Chief Operating Officer should work to prioritize staffing hires and IT upgrades in the state agencies and departments where they are most needed to meet these permitting timelines.

Recommendation: Modernize and digitize New Jersey's state permitting system to allow online and accessible application submissions and responses.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherill-Caldwell Administration direct the Cross-Agency Permitting Team to review all state-level permitting processes to determine where the permitting system can be modernized and digitized, particularly regarding communications and submissions between agency staff and permit applicants.

The Cross-Agency Permitting Team should ensure that all state agency systems are sufficiently upgraded to allow them to upload permitting process updates directly into the Permitting Dashboard, and that all applications and deliverables required from applicants can be submitted online to agency staff through an interactive portal. This modernization should be informed by feedback from state agency staff regarding what types of updates will simplify workflows and expedite processes.

The Cross-Agency Permitting Team should also ensure that project finance operations are centralized and digitized to provide system-wide online visibility of all receivables, including fees, invoices, and charges. Escrows and deposits should be managed end-to-end within the portal, supported by a time-stamped Escrow Reimbursement Tracker that documents status, responsible office, and next action, creating a clear audit trail and minimizing status inquiries.

Recommendation: Expand self-certification and third-party review options to reduce strain on state agency staff and expedite project reviews.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the Cross-Agency Permitting Team to review opportunities for the expansion of self-certification and review by third-party licensed professionals to reduce strains on state agency permitting staff and expedite project reviews, building on the successful Licensed Site Remediation Professional program. Opportunities for consideration should include the use of self-certification and third-party reviews when agencies miss their enforceable timeline within the permitting process, for specific technical review approvals where shortages of state-employed licensed professionals are leading to permitting delays, and for publicly funded public works projects that are already heavily regulated through public purchasing guidelines.

As part of the permitting process audit, the Cross-Agency Permitting Team should identify the components of the state permitting process where use of self-certification and third-party reviews would most effectively reduce delays and speed up approvals while still protecting public health and safety. Permits where self-certification or third-party review is available for use by permit applicants should be clearly displayed in the Permitting Dashboard.

Issue Area: Cutting Business and Occupational License Times

Recommendation: Create a One-Stop Shop for occupational and business licenses to expedite approvals.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a One-Stop Shop for occupational and business licenses within the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs at the Attorney General's Office, with the responsibility to streamline and expedite the license approval process across all agencies and licensing authorities.

This One-Stop Shop should create and manage a cross-agency Occupational and Business License Dashboard that is focused on reducing license approval times and creating a "Get to Yes" mentality at licensing agencies and boards. The One-Stop Shop will work with agencies and boards to catalog their licensing processes to identify and address bottlenecks, work with agencies and boards to develop and implement enforceable license approval timelines, identify areas where staffing and technology needed to be expanded to meet licensing deadlines, and ensure that agency and board staff are responsive to businesses and residents. The One-Stop Shop should also be available to any resident or business to answer any questions about the license approval process and resolve issues with licensing agencies and boards, including by conducting outreach to agencies and boards where necessary to keep stalled approvals moving.

Recommendation: Create an occupational and business license dashboard to improve license approval transparency.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating an Occupational and Business License Dashboard within the Division of Consumer Affairs managed by the Licensing One-Stop Shop, which will show businesses and residents where they are in the license approval process and allow direct submission of required documents online.

The License Dashboard should display every step required for approval for every occupational and business license issued by a state agency, the current approval status of a resident or business license application, a timeline for the approval of that license, and any additional information that the resident or business needs to submit to have their license approved. The Dashboard should build upon the Division of Consumer Affairs' existing "MyLicense" website, which currently displays some information regarding the licensing process and required information, with the goal of making it more interactive, easy-to-use, and comprehensive.

Each license-granting state agency or board should be required to automatically update the status of a pending license approval within the Dashboard when new updates or progress is made in the approval process.

Recommendation: Require state agencies and licensing boards to audit their licensing processes to identify bottlenecks.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order requiring all state agencies, boards, commissions, or other organizations that issue permits, licenses, or certifications to create and submit an audit of their licensing processes to identify bottlenecks and barriers to the fast approval of licenses.

Within this audit, submitted to and managed by the One-Stop Shop at the Division of Consumer Affairs, each agency and board should list the licenses they grant, the application method for each license (for example, paper or digital), each step in the approval process for that license, the average time taken by the agency or board to approve each type of license, any application fees for the license, the current backlog of submitted but not yet approved licenses they have, the time it would take given current

agency/board capacity to work through that license backlog, and any current appointment or staff vacancies within the agency or board.

Recommendation: Direct the NJDCA One-Stop Shop to work with agencies and licensing boards to develop and implement enforceable license-approval timelines.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the One-Stop Shop at NJDCA to work with agencies and licensing boards to develop and implement enforceable timelines for occupational and business license approvals, with the goal of reducing most license approval times by over 75% compared to current average timelines.

Using the results from the licensing audit, the One-Stop Shop should work with agencies and licensing boards to set specific mandatory, enforceable timelines for the approval or rejection of a license for every business and occupational license that the state issues. Agencies and boards should be required to meet these deadlines and time overruns should result in either a refund of the licensing fee or the automatic approval of the license.

Recommendation: Strengthen capacity and fill staffing vacancies to reduce licensing approval times.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor's Office staff work with the One-Stop Shop at NJDCA and the Legislature to strengthen capacity, fill staffing vacancies, and improve technology capabilities at licensing bodies and organizations, including the Division of Consumer Affairs, Department of Banking and Insurance, and Licensing Boards, to expand the number of license approvals that can be processed and reduce the time it takes for residents and businesses to receive their licenses.

The One-Stop Shop should use the results from the licensing audit to determine where additional staffing and technology capabilities are needed to meet the enforceable timelines it will set for license approvals and provide recommendations to the Governor about these capacity needs. The Administration should have the Governor's Office work with state agencies to reallocate resources and staff to meet these needs where possible, and with the Legislature to appropriate additional resources in the FY27 budget for this capacity-building.

The Administration should also consider reducing the current diversion of permit fee-related funds from the Division of Consumer Affairs and other state licensing entities to other agencies, so that adequate financial support can be provided to oversee license processing, ensure proper staffing, reduce present license backlogs, and review consumer complaints and feedback.

The Governor should also immediately move to fill all appointed positions on the state's various licensing boards, collaborating with the licensed professional community to appoint qualified members. Licensing boards in New Jersey currently face significant vacancies and a lack of professional staff, and the Governor's Office staff should immediately work to ensure that boards are fully staffed with individuals focused on reducing license backlogs and approval delays. The Governor's Office staff should also consider giving flexibility to licensing boards that have vacancies that challenge their ability to have a quorum so that they can still process license applications under certain circumstances.

Strengthening the Business Action Center

Recommendation: Expand the Business Action Center's visibility and outreach and prioritize customer experience.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order implementing a full relaunch of the Business Action Center's visibility and outreach programs, including an updated interactive website and app, advertising campaigns on television, digital, and print media, multilingual outreach, cross-agency referrals from state agencies that interact with businesses, and new partnerships with Chambers of Commerce, business organizations, and nonprofit associations. The relaunch should focus on making businesses throughout the state familiar with the BAC and the programs it offers, as well as building long-term relationships and partnerships with business advocacy organizations.

The Governor should also issue an Executive Order creating Regional Business Action Center Access Hubs: four physical regional offices throughout the state that provide in-person services and guidance regarding state government navigation, capital support, permitting and approvals, and contracting training.

As part of the relaunch, the BAC should host biannual Business Roundtables at each of its Regional Access Hubs, where individual businesses and business advocacy organizations can meet with BAC staff and representatives from each business-facing state agency to discuss challenges and opportunities for businesses in their interactions with the state government.

The Governor's BAC relaunch Executive Order should also establish customer service and accountability as central to the BAC's mission and set a clear tone that the BAC will adopt a "Get to Yes" mentality when supporting businesses.

Recommendation: Increase support for historically underrepresented businesses through investments in procurement coaches and capital access trainings.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a sub-office within the Business Action Center focused on supporting small businesses that have historically been underrepresented in state programs and contracts, particularly those businesses identified in the New Jersey Disparity Study published in 2024. The Disparity Study showed that businesses owned by Black Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, women, and veterans were awarded a far smaller percentage of state contracts than their share of businesses in New Jersey.

This sub-office should develop recommendations for how the Business Action Center can better create a level playing field for all small businesses in the state, including through the potential development of a Procurement Coaches program to help small businesses access state contracts and a Capital Access Training initiative to help small businesses apply for and receive financing.

Recommendation: Create a One-Stop Shop within the BAC to support residents seeking to start a small business.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a One-Stop Shop within the Business Action Center (BAC) that is focused on making every step of the business development process as streamlined and cost-effective as possible to support residents seeking to start a business in New Jersey.

This One-Stop Shop should develop a comprehensive, easy-to-use online portal with every step required to start a business in New Jersey, including information on how to apply for a new business license or occupational license, where to register a business's property with county and municipal governments, what permits are needed to open a business, and key steps on managing a business's payroll and tax requirements. The One-Stop Shop should also be accessible to all businesses via online, phone, and walk-in appointments, be available to answer any questions about the new business development process and be able to interact with state or local agencies on a business's behalf to help them move forward in the licensing and permitting process.

The One-Stop Shop should also display on its online portal all state services available to businesses in New Jersey, including from agencies such as the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Business Action Center, and Department of the Treasury. This portal should include any state initiative or funding opportunity that is available to businesses in New Jersey (such as small business lending opportunities, workforce training programs, or supply chain initiatives), as well as state-funded contracting opportunities that are available for business bidding.

Recommendation: Expand the Business Action Center's mission to include supporting non-profit and community organizations.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order expanding the mission of the Business Action Center (BAC) to include supporting non-profit and community organizations, allowing these organizations to participate in BAC-funded initiatives and apply for BAC grants.

Non-profits and community organizations, including educational institutions, faith-based organizations, community service associations, and organizations that support the arts and historic or cultural venues should be eligible for support from the BAC and for grants based on appropriate criteria.

The BAC should also create a Non-profit and Community Organization Support Unit, including a non-profit and community organization ombudsman and non-profit assistance desk, to provide guidance to non-profits on grant compliance, state contracting, reporting protocols, and cross-agency collaboration.

Recommendation: Expand BAC programs that help small businesses access capital.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the Business Action Center to develop recommendations for improving access to capital for small businesses.

These recommendations should include a Capital Access Accelerator, a unified capital navigation system with multilingual coaching, micro-grants, loan readiness programs, and investment tracking for historically underrepresented businesses and those lacking access to capital. This Accelerator should include technical assistance for applying for SBA, CDFI, NJEDA, and municipal small business grants, as well as loan readiness support programs to ensure that small businesses are prepared to apply for grants. The Business Action Center should coordinate closely with New Jersey Chambers of Commerce and business advocacy organizations when developing these recommendations to ensure that barriers to capital for small businesses are identified and addressed.

Reducing Regulatory Burdens and Upgrading Agency IT Infrastructure

Recommendation: Create a standing Regulatory Review Commission or Office of Regulatory Review to identify outdated regulations and recommend modernizations.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a Regulatory Review Commission or Office of Regulatory Review to identify outdated or burdensome regulations and recommend ways to modernize or streamline those regulations.

This standing regulatory review structure should be based in the Governor's Office under the Chief Operating Officer and should include bipartisan representation from multiple state agencies, business advocacy organizations, and consumer and environmental protection organizations. The office should examine where existing or proposed regulations exceed statutory authority or impose significant delays and costs on new projects. The office should also examine where new technology such as artificial intelligence or review models such as third-party certification could be used to streamline and expedite regulatory review while still protecting residents and the environment.

Based on this review, the office should provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on how regulations that specifically have been found to lead to delays or cost increases can be reformed or modernized to reduce their impact on project development and cost of living in New Jersey.

Recommendation: Develop an IT modernization and AI transformation plan focused on critical state agency projects.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order requiring the Chief Operating Officer or New Jersey Office of Innovation to develop an information technology modernization and artificial intelligence transformation plan, focused on modernizing technology capacity and capabilities at state agencies involved in the permitting and approval process for projects and licenses.

As part of this plan, the New Jersey Office of Innovation should consider the creation of a Technology Council under the Chief Operating Officer, composed of the state's Chief Technology Officer, Chief Information Security Officer, Chief Purchasing Officer, and Chief Digital Innovation Officer, to implement system-wide IT improvements. Under this Technology Council and COO, there should be one IT lead with authority over IT in every state agency to work with individual agency IT departments to pursue reforms and upgrades.

The IT Modernization Plan should focus on boosting the capacity of customer-facing state agencies, particularly those that review and approve project permits, business or occupational licenses, and drivers' licenses and REAL IDs. The IT modernization plan should benchmark New Jersey's IT infrastructure compared to other states and specifically deploy upgrades to state agencies facing significant backlogs in their approval process or that are failing to meet required process deadlines, such as the permitting and licensing "shot clocks" that will be developed.

The AI Transformation Plan should focus on how to responsibly and effectively deploy AI to create more effective and equitable government services. The plan should develop specific use cases that harness AI to transform state service delivery, including by modernizing IT and government operations, expanding customer service resources for state agencies, determining what programs work for whom and under what conditions, and streamlining permitting and access to benefits.

Recommendation: Make It easier for state agencies to hire and fill vacancies to boost regulatory capacity.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor's Office staff develop reforms to make it easier for state agencies to hire and fill vacancies, as well as build out state agency customer service resources and standardize training for new hires to improve the customer experience for residents and businesses.

The Sherrill-Caldwell Administration should direct the Chief Operating Officer and New Jersey Office of Innovation to audit Civil Service titles that are in use in management and collective bargaining agreements, and reform them where appropriate to make it easier for agencies to hire and fill vacancies, particularly for positions focused on innovation, customer service, and technology implementation.

The Governor's Office staff should also work with institutions of higher education to develop state government customer service skill resources and standardize the training of new hires and promotional positions to improve the customer experience for residents and businesses.

Recommendation: Expand models for state agency and municipality cooperation on key projects to boost regulatory effectiveness.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the Chief Operating Officer, in collaboration with municipalities, to review viable avenues for expanding the participation of local governments in the state's system-wide portals for project permitting and review, with the goal of reducing duplication of services, streamlining processes, and improving transparency and accountability within the entire government regulatory and approval process.

Local governments should be allowed, encouraged, and fully resourced to consider the feasibility of integrating their own review and approval processes into the state-wide Permitting Dashboard. A mechanism should also be created whereby the Cross-Agency Permitting Team under the Chief Operating Officer can support the local permitting and approvals process for key projects if the municipality opts-into such an arrangement.

The Chief Operating Officer and Cross-Agency Permitting Team should also develop resources to help local governments streamline their own regulatory and permitting processes, such as an online manual and helpline, draft permit timelines, and a streamline pledge.

Recommendation: Reform the procurement process to allow state agencies to operate more effectively.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the Chief Operating Officer to assemble a team of government vendors and Treasury officials to review the NJSTART procurement system to ensure that it has the proper flexibility for each contract, can be used for older and newer contracts, and corrects technical glitches.

As part of this review, the COO should work to streamline, expedite, and reform the Department of the Treasury's Division of Purchase and Property rules to make it easier, faster, and less costly for state agencies to procure new technology and equipment. This should include implementing uniform methods of operations for cooperative agency use—as some state contracts include comprehensive instructions that are strictly enforced while others have no established methods of operations—and streamlining

compliance processes for pay-to-play, prevailing wage, vendor registration, and other documentation through standardized forms or automated checks.

Recommendation: Issue an Executive Order establishing a cross-agency Digital Services Team.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order forming a new cross-agency Digital Services Team to improve resident- and business-facing services, conduct a comprehensive audit of digital platforms and services across agencies, and provide recommendations for where additional digital modernization can improve agency capacity, effectiveness, and customer service.

This Digital Services Team should be focused on improving the quality of and access to digital services from state agencies, and should include product managers, user experience researchers, user experience designers, and front-end and back-end engineers, all managed by the Chief Operating Officer within the Governor's office.

The Team should leverage modern technologies, including artificial intelligence, for data collection and document verification alongside human review for audit and compliance.

Reforming the Motor Vehicle Commission

Recommendation: Prioritize Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) reform and reorient the agency around a customer service mission.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order establishing Motor Vehicle Commission reform and enhanced MVC customer service as top priorities of the new Administration. The Executive Order should also specifically articulate the goals of expediting the Real ID process, enhancing the accessibility of MVC services both in person and digitally, and reducing wait times for inquiries and appointments.

The Executive Order should also identify low-lift actions to prioritize in the first 100 Days of the Administration, including a refresh of the website to be more user-friendly, priority lines for Real ID appointments at the MVC, and priority hours for senior citizens. It should also highlight the following recommendations as priority actions.

Recommendation: Prioritize digital-first MVC initiatives, predictive scheduling, and appointment optimization to reduce wait times.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the cross-agency Digital Services Team to establish a Blueprint for enhancing the digitization of the MVC and optimizing appointments. The goals of the Blueprint should be to increase the number of MVC functions and appointments that can be completed online, cut response times for inquiries and booking appointments, and combine more services online to boost efficiency and reduce the number of required appointments.

To increase the number of online MVC functions and appointments, the Digital Services Team should work with the MVC web team to change the look and feel of the website to be more user-friendly, as well as replace legacy systems, strengthen cybersecurity, deploy biometric validation, and modernize data architecture. The Digital Services Team should also make more information readily available on the website, including required MVC documents and "how to" menus for MVC transactions.

To cut response times for inquiries and waiting times to book appointments, the Digital Services Team should develop a digital modernization plan for the MVC, including AI document pre-verification, self-service kiosks, virtual queueing, and a major expansion of online transactions. The Team should focus on expanding predictive scheduling, cancellation recycling, real-time appointment visibility, and capacity balancing. The Team should also develop an NJ MVC Mobile App for appointment booking, status tracking, and document uploads.

Recommendation: Issue an Executive Order creating a REAL ID priority pathway to expedite the REAL ID process for residents.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a new REAL ID priority pathway at the MVC to expedite the REAL ID process for residents and reduce backlogs.

The Executive Order should direct the creation of a "REAL ID Fast-Track" pilot program within the first 30 days that accelerates REAL ID approvals through a series of innovative new initiatives, possibly including longer hours, dedicated lines at the MVC for Real ID approvals, guaranteed appointments within 3-5 days, pre-verification, and priority hours for key constituencies (i.e., senior citizen hours).

The EO should also direct the MVC Chief Administrator to conduct an audit of the current backlog of REAL ID approvals, identify potential simplifications or reforms to address key bottlenecks to MVC approval capacity, and consider additional efficiency improvement opportunities.

Reforms and efficiency improvement opportunities for consideration by the MVC Chief Administrator should include converting pandemic surge centers into Real ID-only mega centers, extending operating hours at MVC centers, establishing passport express lanes, establishing an online pre-verification portal, adding fast track express lanes for pre-verified documents, adding mobile units to serve citizens who may not be able to easily go to MVC centers including the elderly and disabled, establishing Real ID priority weekends, dedicating a Real ID call center line, opening all existing appointment slots 90 days out instead of 30–45, creating 10 minute "Real ID Express" appointments for pre-screened documents, creating permanent Saturday service and two late evenings per week at the 15 largest agencies, and ending statutory and mandatory in-person renewal every 4 years if the photo less than 10 years old.

Recommendation: Expand MVC workforce recruitment and retention efforts, focused on customer-facing roles.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct the MVC Chief Administrator to conduct an audit and review of MVC operations in order to identify where additional staffing and technology capabilities are needed to drive efficiency improvements and reduce wait times.

Based on this audit, the MVC should stand up a Workforce Excellence Program that provides employee training, customer service redesign, standardized triage, multilingual staffing incentives, staffing surges (at high volume centers and that extend hours as needed), and Navigation Specialists.

Recommendation: Issue an Executive Order creating a Community Navigation and Equity Access Program to boost access to MVC services in underserved communities.

The Transition Action Team recommends that the Governor issue an Executive Order creating a Community Navigation and Equity Access Program to expand access to MVC services and make it easier to use these services in underserved communities.

This Program should make the Motor Vehicle Commission more accessible through mobile MVC units and partnerships with nonprofits, libraries, and seniors centers. The Program should particularly prioritize multilingual digital access and ADA-compliant systems to expand accessibility.