

# MISSION <sup>TO</sup> DELIVER

## TRANSITION 2026



# Report of the Transportation and Infrastructure Innovation Action Team

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New Jersey's transportation infrastructure serves as the backbone for our continued prosperity, growth, and quality of life. In a state as dense as ours, transportation is a multilayered network, including our roads, bridges, and tunnels; our airports, freight rail network, and ports; and our public transit systems that span across the state. Each component requires regular reassessment to ensure that it is meeting residents' and businesses' needs and to unlock new potential benefits for our communities.

Public transit is an especially crucial resource for our workforce. Many New Jersey commuters would readily share that our public transit systems are straining under high demand, aging components, and climate-related pressures. No matter how long their commute, every member of our workforce deserves relief from the “Summers of Hell” they have endured year after year and to reverse the decline of NJ TRANSIT performance. This Transition Action Team recommends that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration explore ways to improve NJ TRANSIT reliability, enhance the customer experience, improve public communication, and expand mass transit options like bus rapid transit corridors and light rail.

Regional needs should also be reevaluated to determine what areas of the state currently lack adequate public transit service to support business growth, housing development, and access to good-paying jobs. We urge the Administration to investigate opportunities to improve public transportation availability in South and Central Jersey—including whether the bus rapid transit system should be a priority, and if so, how to expand access. Access Link also needs to be assessed across the state, with attention to what we can do to best modernize the system and expand access.

In addition to investigating the status of our transit routes, we encourage the Administration to look closely at our transit hubs. We believe that these sites—properties owned by NJ TRANSIT and New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)—offer opportunities to generate revenue for NJ TRANSIT, among other needs. They also have potential to promote economic growth and opportunity in surrounding communities.

To enact this vision, the Transportation and Infrastructure Innovation Action Team proposes the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration consider the following recommendations to accomplish these key priorities:

- Improving Public Transit Performance, Reliability, and Ridership
- Unlocking State-Owned Assets for Economic Growth and Opportunity
- Investing in New Jersey’s Transportation Needs for Today and Tomorrow
- Additional Policy Considerations

We understand that these recommendations need to fit into the broader context of all the 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 upcoming federal funding cuts, and where these recommendations are not budget neutral, they may need to be adjusted or prioritized.

## Transition Action Team Recommendations

### Improving Public Transit Performance, Reliability, and Ridership

#### Recommendation: Identify dedicated, sustainable funding for NJ TRANSIT (“NJT”).

NJ TRANSIT (NJT) has struggled with disinvestment and a lack of reliable, stable funding for years, which has taken a toll on both its operational and capital expenditure programs. And despite the recent dedication of a Corporate Business Tax Transit Fee and the implemented and announced fare increases,

revenue challenges remain for the agency. The expiration of COVID-era relief funding at the federal level, declining ridership across many of its services, and systemic challenges related to New Jersey's unique position as a global leader of freight transportation have all increased headwinds for NJT operations in recent years. Because of these headwinds, NJT reliability and customer satisfaction with NJT services have both declined.

To reverse those declines and reestablish NJ TRANSIT as a national leader in transit service, we recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration prioritize additional dedicated, sustainable funding sources for NJ TRANSIT. For example, we suggest that the Administration prioritize the implementation of NJT's LAND Plan<sup>1</sup> to maximize the amount of non-farebox revenue that NJT generates, reducing the need for further fare increases. As part of that implementation, we believe that the Administration should reevaluate the cost structure of current right-of-way agreements to determine if they are appropriate and determine whether the state can recover additional costs from lease holders. We recommend that the Administration explore additional revenue generation strategies, including land value capture surrounding NJT transit stations; surcharges on taxis, limousines, and rideshares that are dedicated to NJT; and continued dedication of toll revenue from NJ Turnpike tolls to NJT. And finally, we suggest that the Administration create the necessary oversight structures of NJT's budget and publicly publish metrics on NJT's financial performance.

### **Recommendation: Prioritize reliability and safety through preventative maintenance, inventory management, infrastructure investment, and transparent customer-facing performance metrics.**

Reliability and on-time performance have been consistent challenges for NJ TRANSIT services. Both metrics have continued to decline in recent years, leading to widespread commuter dissatisfaction and declining ridership across the transit system. While some of the causes of NJT's declining reliability performance are not directly within the control of the state or NJT to address, such as scheduling conflicts with Amtrak and freight rail carriers or capital conditions along federally owned railroads and NJT asset condition and maintenance strategy are root causes of the system's performance decline. NJT's rail and bus fleets are among the oldest in the nation, and NJT's reactive maintenance model extends downtime needed for repairs to its fleets and increases the risk of service cancellations, further fueling commuter frustration.

We recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration direct NJT to shift to a proactive, predictive maintenance model. The model should be focused on flagging and diagnosing breakdowns before they occur. In order to accomplish this objective, we suggest that the Administration align its fleet maintenance schedules with manufacturer schedules and data-driven maintenance intervals and adopt early part replacement and inventory replenishment strategies. It should also consider investments in fleet maintenance or enterprise asset management software and technology to capture failure data should be considered to improve maintenance processes. Moreover, we urge the Administration to review NJT's contracts for maintenance and repair services, and to examine how to improve coordination and reduce downtime for repair through additional or amended contractual provisions or requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> New Jersey TRANSIT (2025). *NJ TRANSIT's LAND PLAN: Leveraging Assets for Non-farebox Dollars*. [https://content.njtransit.com/sites/default/files/marketing/website/pdf/REAL\\_ESTATE\\_OPPORTUNITY\\_REPORT.pdf](https://content.njtransit.com/sites/default/files/marketing/website/pdf/REAL_ESTATE_OPPORTUNITY_REPORT.pdf)

We also recommend that the Administration prioritize its working relationship with Amtrak and freight rail carriers to resolve scheduling conflicts and address capital and repair needs in as collaborative and efficient manner as possible.

We also suggest that the Administration direct NJT to publish data for the public on key reliability and performance metrics, including the state-of-repair and status of fleet replacement for its bus and rail fleets, and to delineate between peak and nonpeak time performance when collecting and publishing that data. We believe that this data should be used by the Administration and NJT to prioritize their capital repair needs, and to inform public messaging.

### **Recommendation: Update the NJT mobile application to streamline usability with real-time service updates, consistent messaging, and easy-to-understand alerts.**

NJ TRANSIT commuters rely on NJT's mobile application to purchase tickets, view bus, rail, and light rail schedules and plan trips, receive updates on the timeliness of their preferred transit option; and connect with NJT customer service and NJT Police. Yet despite the critical nature of these services, many commuters have struggled with the app's design and functionality. Many have expressed frustrations with inaccurate service updates and a lack of real-time functionality; a lackluster user interface on the app; and the need for better communication from NJT through the app and across all social media channels.

We recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration to upgrade the NJ TRANSIT mobile application to address the concerns of NJT customers regarding its design and functionality. Specifically, we recommend that the Administration garner customer feedback on the application through public surveys and hearings held across the state. In addition to the feedback garnered from NJT commuters, we also suggest that the Administration prioritize the real-time service update functionality in its application and make the necessary technological improvements to its rail and bus fleets to improve that functionality. We also urge the Administration to hire dedicated rapid-response staff at NJT, responsible for communicating to NJT riders through the app and across all social media channels. The staff should be available to provide explanations for service cancellations to commuters and communicating service changes due to repairs or other issues.

### **Recommendation: Improve capital plan coordination and expenditure prioritization between New Jersey's transportation and planning agencies and authorities ("Mobility Corridor").**

The NJ Department of Transportation, the NJ Turnpike Authority, NJ TRANSIT, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and municipalities must better coordinate capital plans for multi-modal connectivity, mobility, and safety. We recommend that the NJDOT Commissioner be tasked with leading an inclusive Mobility Corridor approach where the scope and timing of capital projects complement each other, maximize access to transit facilities, and incorporate bicycle and pedestrian elements. A gap analysis for access to transit facilities, transit express lanes, and connectivity between transit and other transportation modes should be an essential element of Mobility Corridor planning. An additional explicit goal of this capital plan coordination should be supporting transit-oriented development consistent with New Jersey Transit's LAND plan and local TOD efforts.

The Purpose and Needs statement for every major surface transportation project (transit, roads, bike/ped) should be aligned to this Mobility Corridor approach, with the goals of systematically eliminating pinch

points, identifying short-term “quick hit” improvements, building transit ridership, and reconnecting communities.

## **Recommendation: Streamline statewide procurement practices and consider multi-state partnerships.**

The separate, siloed procurement processes of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, NJ TRANSIT, and New Jersey Turnpike Authority can work at cross purposes and hinder mobility improvements. Additionally, this lack of procurement coordination leads to missed opportunities to build a better multi-modal system.

For example, transportation organizations in other states have adopted a true multi-modal approach when considering highway improvements and include into the highway project scope and budget the purchase and initial operating funding of transit rolling stock during the construction period; the service becomes permanent transit service after completion. The Mobility Corridor recommendation highlighted above would identify—and fund—opportunities for highway and toll facility projects to further transit goals. This would require active collaboration and coordination of agency leadership and procurement functions.

Pooled procurements between and among organizations represent an additional opportunity for cost savings and streamlined procurement timelines. While it is common for transit agencies to “piggyback” on the procurements of sister agencies through the additional rolling stock options built into may procurements, a true pooled multi-agency procurement led by NJ TRANSIT can result in substantial cost savings if the participants are disciplined about customization issues.

An additional consideration for more effective procurements is enabling and encouraging the use of Alternative Delivery methodologies. Design-Build, Progressive Design-Build, Construction Manager At-Risk, and Public-Private Partnerships are specialized procurement tools that can effectively allocate risk and responsibilities among the parties, encourage innovation, and incentivize project delivery performance.

## **Recommendation: Leverage federal grant, formula, and credit programs to amplify state funding, including FTA and FRA capital and safety programs, and federal credits tools to lower borrowing costs and accelerate delivery.**

Federal funding represents one of the more significant opportunities available to the Sherrill–Caldwell Administration to advance transportation priorities while limiting pressure on the state budget. New Jersey receives substantial formula funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), yet stakeholders consistently note that the state does not always capture the full range of discretionary grants and federal credit opportunities for which it is eligible. Fragmented application processes, inconsistent interagency coordination, and limited centralized oversight have resulted in missed deadlines, underutilized programs, and avoidable project delays. In addition, even when funds are awarded, New Jersey has faced challenges drawing down obligated funds in a timely manner due to delayed internal approvals and unaligned processes.

We recommend that the Sherrill–Caldwell Administration adopt a more disciplined, centralized approach to federal funding, including maximizing formula and discretionary grant awards, systematically deploying federal credit tools to reduce borrowing costs, and ensuring that New Jersey is consistently positioned as a grant-ready state and an execution-ready state. Agencies should also be encouraged to look beyond traditional, mode-specific funding silos and pursue federal opportunities that may not sit squarely within

their customary federal counterpart agencies. For example, the state could leverage US Department of Labor workforce development funding to support training programs for transit operators, maintenance staff, and construction trades, freeing funds for use elsewhere in the system.

To support this strategy, the state should streamline and standardize grant application, approval, and draw-down processes across agencies, aligning internal schedules to federal Notice of Funding Opportunities and post-award requirements. Each agency eligible for discretionary federal funding should designate a dedicated federal grant lead responsible for not only applications, but also for expeditious internal approvals and drawdowns. These agency grant leads should participate in a standing monthly interagency grants coordination meeting convened through the Governor's Office, to review active and upcoming opportunities, applications, awarded funds, and drawdown status. Regular reporting would create visibility into the state's federal funding pipeline and reinforce accountability.

Finally, the Administration should institute a transparent "federal funds capture and execution" report card, tracking both dollars pursued and dollars successfully obligated and drawn down. Where funds are lost or delayed due to missed deadlines or internal process failures, that information should be elevated to leadership and addressed directly. Public accountability paired with streamlined processes will be essential to changing behavior and ensuring New Jersey does not leave federal dollars on the table.

## **Recommendation: Unlocking new match opportunities for flexible pathways that can strengthen applications, stretch scarce state dollars, and advance projects of regional and national importance.**

For New Jersey, USDOT's federal credit assistance programs, Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF), and the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) represent important and underutilized tools to expand the state's nonfederal match capacity for competitive discretionary grant programs. While neither program provides grant funding, both offer low-interest, long-term loans and other flexible credit instruments that can be strategically structured as part of a project's overall financing plan.

In many USDOT discretionary grant programs, RRIF and TIFIA loan proceeds may count toward the required non-federal share because they are repayable credit assistance rather than federal grant dollars. This distinction creates new match opportunities for New Jersey project sponsors, including NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), port authorities, counties, and municipalities, that may otherwise face constraints on available state or local cash match. By incorporating RRIF or TIFIA into the capital stack, New Jersey can advance large-scale, complex, or multi-jurisdictional projects without relying solely on limited Transportation Trust Fund resources or local appropriations.

Using RRIF or TIFIA as match resources can also enhance the competitiveness of New Jersey grant applications by demonstrating financial readiness, leveraging dedicated revenue streams, and reducing upfront fiscal pressure on state and local partners. These programs can finance a substantial share of eligible project costs; offer favorable terms such as below-market interest rates, extended maturities, and deferred repayment; and help attract additional public and private investment by improving a project's overall risk profile.

For rail, transit, port, and intermodal projects across New Jersey's nationally significant freight and passenger corridors, such as the Northeast Corridor, Gateway Program-related investments, Port of New York and New Jersey assets, and statewide transit modernization initiatives, RRIF and TIFIA can serve as

powerful complements to discretionary grants. When structured appropriately, federal credit assistance can close funding gaps, accelerate project delivery, and unlock eligibility for major federal awards.

To fully leverage these tools, New Jersey sponsors should carefully align loan terms, repayment sources, and timing with the specific requirements of each grant program and confirm eligibility with the relevant USDOT program offices, as non-federal match rules may vary. With thoughtful structuring, RRIF and TIFIA offer New Jersey new, flexible match pathways that can strengthen applications, stretch scarce state dollars, and advance projects of regional and national importance.

## **Unlocking State-Owned Assets for Economic Growth and Opportunity**

**Recommendation: Create an interagency working group to facilitate project advancement and multimodal service planning, monitor revenue performance, and resolve interagency barriers.**

While New Jersey has strong individual institutions, the absence of a formal, empowered interagency structure has resulted in fragmented planning, misaligned timelines, duplicative reviews, and missed opportunities to advance asset-based strategies effectively. Too often, coordination occurs late in the process, if at all, after key decisions have already been made, limiting the state's ability to resolve conflicts or optimize outcomes.

We recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration establish a standing interagency working group, led by a staffer within the Governor's Office tasked with transportation policy planning, with the responsibility for facilitating project advancement and multimodal service planning, aligning planning and scheduling, and actively resolving interagency barriers. This working group should operate at the senior staff level (but not principal) where day-to-day decisions are made, but with clear expectations set from the Governor and Cabinet leadership that coordination is mandatory, timelines matter, and processes must improve. The purpose of the group would not be advisory, but operational, to ensure that asset monetization, TOD delivery, and capital planning move forward in a coordinated, predictable manner. Quarterly reporting to the Governor's Office should be mandatory, with the NJDOT Commissioner explicitly accountable for the working group's performance and results.

A useful model is Maryland's DOT-centered structure, in which the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) functions as a unified cabinet-level agency overseeing the State Highway Administration, Maryland Transit Administration, Port Administration, Aviation Administration, and the Transportation Authority. In Maryland, modal administrations retain technical expertise, but capital planning, budgeting, and project sequencing are coordinated centrally through MDOT, with regular staff-level coordination and early cross-agency review of projects before they advance for approval. This structure enables Maryland to identify conflicts early, align schedules, and present a coherent, statewide capital program.

While New Jersey's governance structure differs, adopting elements of Maryland's approach, particularly centralized coordination, early capital review, and disciplined scheduling, would materially improve delivery without requiring wholesale reorganization.



## Recommendation: Create a statewide database of NJT, NJDOT, and other state-owned properties, elevate NJT's LAND Plan and clarify state and local authority, and adopt transit-oriented development as default policy framework and model for state-owned land.

NJ TRANSIT, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, and other state agencies own a variety of underutilized or vacant properties and surface-level parking lots across New Jersey. NJT has done an audit of its owned properties in preparation for the LAND Plan, which creates a masterplan for the redevelopment of those underutilized and vacant parcels to increase non-farebox revenue for the agency; by unlocking the value of NJT's 8,000-acre real estate portfolio, the LAND Plan can provide sustainable revenue for NJT while also generating economic growth for the state, tax revenues for municipalities, and new jobs and housing for New Jersey residents. Other state agencies, however, may have varying degrees of inventory of their owned properties, and therefore may not have strategies developed for the maximization of revenue generation and driving of economic growth from the redevelopment of their properties.

We suggest that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration immediately direct all state agencies to perform an inventory of their owned properties and assets, similar to the work done by NJ TRANSIT for preparation of the LAND Plan, within the first 100 days of the Administration. We also recommend that the Administration direct a single state agency, potentially the Treasury Department, to collect the inventories of owned properties from all state agencies and to present that information in a searchable, public-facing electronic database to facilitate the redevelopment of those properties.

Additionally, we recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration and Legislature elevate NJ TRANSIT's LAND Plan through a package of legislative proposals that direct and enable NJT to enact elements of the LAND Plan, and to adopt a similar framework for all state-owned properties. Specifically, we suggest that the Administration and Legislature propose legislation to:

- Amend NJ TRANSIT's enabling statute to direct NJT to find productive, revenue generating uses for underutilized or vacant NJT-owned land in support of its transportation mission.
- Empower NJT and NJDOT to undertake the full spectrum of transit and transportation-related improvement projects, such as intermodal connections, mixed-use development, selected economic development projects at transportation nodes, and collaborative redevelopment with local jurisdictions and the private sector.
  - Potential elements include condemnation authority for acquiring parcels; public-private finance, construction and operations authority; and the ability to expedite the planning, design, and entitlements for priority projects.
- Formalize NJT's working relationship with local governments to partner for housing at TOD sites through expedited permitting processes.
- Enact legislative priorities identified in the LAND plan.



## Investing in New Jersey's Transportation Needs for Today and Tomorrow

### Recommendation: Explore the creation of a South Jersey bus rapid transit network connecting population centers, jobs, and transit hubs.

South Jersey is home to key job and population centers and transit hubs that are critical for New Jersey's economic growth and progress. Despite this, the region lacks the necessary connectivity to ensure the proper mobility of its residents and the goods they produce and consume. Bus rapid transit could provide a powerful solution for those connectivity issues, affording the state a relatively cost-effective investment that can expand transit access for South Jersey on a quicker timeline than other options.

We suggest the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration explore the creation of a bus rapid transit network that connects population centers, jobs, and transit hubs across South Jersey. Specifically, we recommend that NJ TRANSIT and South Jersey Transportation Authority examine the demand for bus service across South Jersey and collaborate on the design and operation of bus rapid transit for the region. The network should provide access between residential centers and jobs clusters and should connect to existing transit hubs like Walter Rand Transportation Center, the Vineland Transportation Center, and Atlantic City Train Station and Atlantic City International Airport.

### Recommendation: Examine port expansion at Camden, Paulsboro, and Salem.

The South Jersey Port Corporation's Camden, Paulsboro, and Salem port facilities are important economic development assets for the state. In New Jersey, as in many other states, ports are one of the most significant sources of good-paying, family-supporting blue-collar jobs.

We recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration develop a master plan for South Jersey port expansion that moves up the value chain from break bulk cargoes to include roll-on, roll-off cargo, higher value specialized project cargoes, and short sea shipping. Potential public and private investments in on-dock and inland rail capacity, as well as skills training by local educational institutions, should be key elements of master plan.

### Recommendation: Improve tourism connectivity in Atlantic City.

With deep history as a leading entertainment destination in the country, Atlantic City is a unique magnet for visitors to the state. The city's gaming, entertainment, and hospitality industries, coupled with its seaside location and assets like the Atlantic City Convention Center, Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall, and boardwalk, have long been key drivers of South Jersey's economy and culture. However, increased regional competition in the gaming industry, shifts in consumer habits, and an overall perception of decline have hampered Atlantic City's and the region's economic growth. It is clear that change is necessary to unlock Atlantic City as a catalyst for continued growth and prosperity for so many residents of New Jersey, and to showcase the state on the national and global stage.

We recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration examine a variety of transportation investments in order to unlock Atlantic City's potential. Specifically, we suggest that the Administration prioritize the creation of a fixed route transit option within the tourism district, whether in the form of light rail or bus rapid transit. Additionally, we urge the Administration to explore transit connectivity from the Atlantic City Rail Terminal to the Atlantic City International Airport, with passenger rail as a possible solution. With

regards to Atlantic City International Airport, we believe the Administration should work with private air carriers to increase passenger service to the airport and should explore the expansion of private service or cargo facilities at the airport, with corresponding freight rail access. Additionally, we recommend that the Administration support the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center to its fullest ability. And finally, we recommend that the Administration invest in and activate Atlantic City's waterfront, including the expansion of Senator Frank S. Farley State Marina and exploring the construction of a cruise port within the city.

### **Recommendation: Prioritize the expansion of light rail across the state.**

New Jersey's light rail systems provide an important transit link for many NJ TRANSIT commuters. Riders of the River Line, the Newark Light Rail, and the Hudson Bergen Light Rail have access to many of the state's densest and largest residential and job centers and key transit hubs. Still, challenges with these services remain; whether declines in reliability and on-time performance, a lack of frequent service (particular during off-peak times and weekends), or concerns with cleanliness and public safety, it is clear that the state is not meeting its potential with regards to light rail service.

We recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration treat light rail service and the expansion of light rail access as a priority. First, we recommend that the Administration immediately order a ridership analysis of the Glassboro Camden Line project to reexamine the project's eligibility for federal funding, reducing the burden to the state to fund the project. Second, we recommend that the Administration prepare to expedite the Hudson Bergen Light Rail extension project immediately upon the completion of the new EIS required by the federal government. Third, we suggest that the Administration and NJ TRANSIT prioritize enhanced operations of the River Line, specifically an increased public safety presence and investment.

### **Recommendation: Explore possible improvements to Access Link ADA Paratransit service that consider the safety and needs of its users.**

Access Link ADA Paratransit service plays a vital role in ensuring that people with disabilities who cannot use NJT's bus or light rail system have an accessible, reliable transportation option. However, despite its critical role for so many New Jersey residents, performance by and customer feedback for Access Link services have been mixed. In fact, many of the operational challenges that the state faces in running its Access Link service are similar to the challenges faced by other states, such as the inability for customers to book same-day rides, or the lack of oversight on rider safety and a mismatch of vehicle suitability for rider needs when booking overflow services.

We suggest that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration explore ways in which it can improve Access Link service and prioritize those improvements. Specifically, we urge the Administration to examine the creation of an option for riders to reserve same-day rides on Access Link and ensure that a variety of booking options exist for those reserving rides. We also recommend that the Administration ensure that the current reservation and subscription models are maintained, despite the addition of same-day booking, to maximize flexibility and accessibility for users. Additionally, we recommend that the state establish requirements on overflow service contractors to ensure that rider safety is prioritized, like requiring drug and alcohol testing requirements for drivers and ensuring that the vehicles used in those services are suitable for the needs of Access Link customers. And finally, we urge the Administration to examine improvements to Access Link dispatching processes and systems.

## Recommendation: Consider prioritizing immediate actions to enhance NJT rider experience, like improved bus, train, and station cleanliness, ADA accessibility, and public safety.

Many of the frustrations that NJ TRANSIT riders feel with NJT services stem from deeper systemic issues that require extensive planning, long-term investment, and coordination with other state and federal agencies to ameliorate. However, there are a variety of performance and quality of life metrics on which NJT could improve immediately to enhance the rider experience and ensure accessibility and rider safety. Stakeholders specifically noted that inconsistent communication during delays significantly erodes rider confidence, even when the service issues are unavoidable, and have expressed dissatisfaction with NJT cleanliness, safety, and ADA accessibility.

We recommend that the Administration direct NJT to implement a focused, time-limited customer experience initiative aimed at visible improvements across buses, trains, and stations. This should include enhanced cleaning schedules at high-ridership stations and on-board vehicles; improved lighting, signage, and wayfinding; and more consistent real-time service announcements during disturbances. ADA accessibility improvements should be prioritized as part of this effort. Near-term actions include addressing elevator reliability, improving curb conditions and boarding areas at bus stops, and ensuring that accessibility features are consistently operational and clearly communicated. Public safety and access must also be addressed through visibility, deterrence, and enforcement. NJT should advance the use of automated bus stop and bus lane monitoring cameras, pursuant to pending legislation, and those revenues should be dedicated to Access Link, creating a transparent link between enforcement, accessibility, and improved service. In addition, NJT should publicly track and report progress on these near-term improvements, reinforcing accountability and demonstrating that rider experience is a core performance metric, not a secondary consideration. Moreover, we recognize that population growth in central New Jersey has been particularly substantial, in addition to certain other regions of the state; as the state evaluates transit service changes and expansion opportunities, these growth trends, and the resulting pressures on transportation and infrastructure systems, should be explicitly incorporated into planning, prioritization, and investment decisions.

## Recommendation: Reconfirming New Jersey's commitment to pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Pedestrian and bicyclist safety is critical. Although New Jersey has thankfully seen a decline in serious accidents and fatalities involving pedestrians and bicyclists in 2025, New Jersey witnessed a 32% increase in those incidents between 2023 and 2024. The cause of this trend is multifold and present a set of aggregating challenges that put the safety of all road users at risk: the causes include an increase in the size and weight of passenger and commercial vehicles, poor pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the densest parts of the state, and poor nighttime visibility and lighting (particularly on our highways and rural roads) .

We recommend that the Administration reconfirm and prioritize New Jersey's commitment to pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Specifically, we urge the Administration to implement the suggestions of the Target Zero Commission.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, we recommend that the Administration prioritize funding for pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure construction. We also encourage the Administration to examine regulations

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<sup>2</sup> New Jersey Target Zero Commission (2025). *New Jersey Target Zero Action Plan*. [https://dot.nj.gov/targetzero/pdf/NJ\\_Target\\_Zero\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2025.pdf](https://dot.nj.gov/targetzero/pdf/NJ_Target_Zero_Action_Plan_2025.pdf)

that restrict the use of appropriate traffic calming and speed reduction measures on the state's roads, and that the Administration and Legislature enable the use of automated traffic enforcement measures like speed and red-light enforcement cameras.

## **Additional Policy Considerations**

For recommendations that fall outside of the identified issue areas above, we offer the following considerations to promote a holistic approach to transportation and infrastructure in New Jersey.

### **Policy Consideration: Ensuring a world-class commuter experience for FIFA World Cup 2026 and the United States Semiquincentennial.**

The summer of 2026, during which New Jersey will host the FIFA World Cup 2026 and commemorate the United States Semiquincentennial, presents a unique opportunity for New Jersey to showcase itself on the global stage and generate additional revenue, but also a series of unique challenges. The demands on New Jersey's transit systems and transportation infrastructure will be unprecedented, and it is important that the state is prepared for those demands.

To that end, we suggest that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration immediately create a subcabinet level position focused on ensuring New Jersey is prepared for the upcoming challenges of summer 2026, including the mobility demands of attendees to events occurring across the state. We suggest that this appointee be empowered to take actions to address any concerns with preparations for the summer of 2026.

### **Policy Consideration: Accelerating and unfreezing state bottlenecks to expedite capital project delivery, procurement, and agency review.**

Providing the full range of Alternative Delivery mechanisms and reforming state permitting and procurement processes would provide maximum flexibility and value when delivering major capital projects.

Many peer transportation organizations and states utilize a range of Alternative Delivery mechanisms such as design-build, progressive design-build, and Construction Manager At-Risk and Public Private Partnerships to more effectively allocate risk among the parties and deliver the most sophisticated projects. Typically, a Value for Money analysis is performed early in the process to evaluate these and other factors and recommend a procurement methodology. A properly structured Alternative Delivery project can limit the financial liability of the public agency and reward technical innovation and project delivery excellence by the private sector partner. New Jersey should have the full spectrum of Alternative Delivery mechanisms in its toolbox.

Permitting reform that includes front-loading environmental resource agency and community involvement, allows for CEO-level involvement throughout all stages of the permitting process, and assigns a single responsible party for timely completion have reduced peer EIS processes to 12-14 months for the most complex projects, with measurably better environmental outcomes.

### **Policy Consideration: Re-examining the governance and financing structure of New Jersey's various transportation entities.**

Evaluate the combination of transportation entities or specific functions of those organizations to identify opportunities for efficiencies and a stable, consistent funding platform for transit.

Alternatives range from fully combining NJDOT, NJTA, and NJT into a single organizational entity with a single, flexible Transportation Trust Fund to a more limited financial pooling of financial resources.

The most consolidated model includes highway, bridge, toll facilities, transit, aviation, and port facilities in one department, led by a Commissioner with the responsibility to build a consolidated multi-year multi-modal capital project program and operating budget encompassing all transportation modes. Advantages include: more financial flexibility for an administration's transportation priorities, better intermodal planning, cross-functional safety programs, more effective integration with land use planning, and greater accountability to local communities.

A more limited model would not fully integrate the separate organizations but would pool capital and operating financial resources in a single Trust Fund, maximizing flexibility for priority projects and building a stable multi-year funding source for statewide transit needs in particular.

### **Policy Consideration: Expanding micro transit services in New Jersey and ensuring synergy between various services while maintaining flexibility for local policymakers.**

The various micro transit services in New Jersey offer important connections to fill gaps in New Jersey's public transit network and provide powerful transportation solutions to a wide spectrum of local issues. Whether increasing access to public transit in transit deserts or combatting the lack of access to fresh groceries and food, micro transit services are currently employed in a variety of forms by state, county, and local jurisdictions in New Jersey. Expanding state support for micro transit and increasing synergy between the different micro transit options in the state and New Jersey's public transit network will not only vastly improve mobility for many residents in a relatively quick and cost-effective manner, but it will also provide critical support for the long-term viability of New Jersey's transit systems.

To achieve those benefits, we recommend that the Sherrill-Caldwell Administration look to increase support for local micro transit services across New Jersey. Specifically, we recommend that the Administration and the Legislature offer grant funding opportunities to county and local agencies through the state budget process for those agencies to initiate, expand, or operate micro transit services. Additionally, we recommend that the Administration explore integrating the various micro transit services into the NJ TRANSIT app and website, so that NJT commuters can find and potentially book micro transit through NJT.