



2030 New Jersey Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan
**Mobility of Aging and Disabled Populations
Advisory Panel**

**NJDOT E&O Building, Second Floor
Training Room A**

December 15, 2005 - 2:00PM – 4:00PM

Agenda

- 1. Introduction of Task Force Members**
- 2. Introduction to New Jersey State Long-Range Transportation Plan**
 - The 2030 Plan
 - Role of the Task Force
- 3. Aging and Disabled Populations**
 - Definitions
 - Distinct and Shared Issues
 - Recognition of Existing Studies
- 4. What has happened in the past 5 years to improve mobility?**
 - Summary of the 2000 Issue Group Meeting
 - What has been achieved in the past 5 years?
 - What are the challenges today and for the future?
 - Discussion
- 5. What are other agencies doing to address mobility issues?**
 - Innovative strategies (ITNAmerica)
 - Traditional strategies
 - Discussion
- 6. What specific recommendations ought to be part of the Long Range Plan?**
 - Low cost and no cost strategies
 - Short-term strategies
 - Long-term strategies
 - Discussion

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Mobility of Aging and Disabled Populations Advisory Panel

Meeting Summary

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December 15, 2005 – 2:00PM to 4:00PM**

Meeting Attendees

Sandra Brillhart	Greater Mercer TMA
Steven Fittante	Middlesex County Department of Transportation
Maura Fitzpatrick	Howard/Stein-Hudson
Julie Gandy	Burlington County Transportation Services
Gail Gimbel	DMJM Harris
Danielle Graves	NJ Department of Transportation
Terri Hirschhorn	NJ Department of Human Services
Robert Koska	NJ TRANSIT
Jerry Lutin	NJ TRANSIT
Bill Neary	Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc.
Henry Nicholson	Monmouth County Department of Transportation
Leslie Roche	DMJM Harris
Ronnie Siriani	NJ TRANSIT
Andy Swords	NJ Department of Transportation
Nelida Valentin	NJ Department of Transportation
Herman Volk	NJ Office of Smart Growth

Meeting Summary

The meeting opened with Danielle Graves of NJDOT welcoming the Advisory Panel members and asking that they introduce themselves. She then gave a brief introduction to the 2030 Plan, which provides the basis for informed decisions about transportation for the next 25 years. She stated that this Advisory Panel is one of four that are being convened to provide input to the Plan. The other three are Environmental Justice, Engaging the Public, and Smart Growth.

Some panel members participated in a similar session held during the preparation of the 2025 Plan update. Danielle stated that while the discussion for the 2025 Plan focused on all modes of travel, today's meeting would focus on transit and paratransit. The expectation is that this Advisory Panel will continue to meet even after the 2030 Plan is completed. She reviewed the agenda for the meeting and then introduced Leslie Roche of DMJM Harris.

Ms. Roche reviewed the definitions being used by NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT in the 2030 Plan for the aging population, the disabled population, and mobility. She referred to a fact sheet distributed to Panel members and to be posted on DOT's web site on issues

related to mobility for aging and disabled population groups. She discussed shared and distinct issues among these two population groups. Distinct issues may or may not include employment transportation needs and accommodation of personal mobility constraints. Shared issues include eligibility, availability and education. She recognized existing studies, including the following:

- Voorhees, 2005. *Meeting Employment Transportation Needs of People with Disabilities in NJ*
- National Association of States United on Aging, 2004. *Developing Coordinated Transportation Systems for Older Persons*
- APTA, 2003. *Mobility for the Aging Population*
- AARP, 2005. *Livable Communities Report, Transportation and Mobility Chapter*

Maura Fitzpatrick of Howard/Stein-Hudson then led the group through a discussion of the progress that has been made in improving mobility for the disabled and aging people since the 2025 Plan; what areas still need work; what new challenges will be faced in the next 25 years; innovative strategies that have been undertaken; and specific recommendations for the 2030 Plan. She began by reviewing the recommendations that arose from the Advisory Panel meeting that was held in preparation for the 2025 Plan update.

2025 Advisory Panel recommendations

- Consumer education on transit use (buddy system)
- Readable travel information (signs, schedules, alternatives)
- Coordinated and borderless paratransit services are needed
- Local routes and off-peak transit services are needed
- Possibly increase paratransit flexibility by re-visiting current rules (Casino Act funding) regarding age limits, competing with fixed-route transit and funding allocation
- Funding (customer fare payment, entitlement versus need, match monies)
- Land use decisions should consider transportation infrastructure (what and where needed; how it can be provided)

What improvements have been made to address mobility for aging and disabled citizens since the last LRP update?

- There are fewer “turf battles” and more trust among transportation and service providers. There is an effort to work together more and to eliminate barriers.
- NJ TRANSIT has taken the lead and facilitated cooperation and coordination among service providers; some providers have been quicker and better equipped to coordinate with NJ TRANSIT than others. It is recognized that NJ TRANSIT cannot satisfy all service needs; a coordinated effort is required to optimize resources and adequately serve customers.
- Advancements in technology are allowing better communication and coordination of service provision.
- The State Planning Commission has a formal Smart Growth endorsement process for municipalities. Qualifying communities are eligible for priority funding from certain programs. In addition to monetary benefit, applying Smart Growth principles encourages mixed-use development, reduces dependence on the car, provides greater walkability, and increases the feasibility of transit and paratransit services.
- The United We Ride Framework for Action provides a means by which state and local transportation agencies can work towards their mobility and financial goals. The NJ Council on Access and Mobility leads coordination efforts; locals are following suit in planning and coordinating their goals.
- SAFETEA-LU establishes transportation funding programs for state and local agencies to increase mobility for aging and disabled populations. Successful funding requires coordination among human services providers, paratransit providers and regular transportation providers.
- One activity of the NJ Council on Access and Mobility is to pull together all the state-level programs that have transportation elements (62 programs). The goal is to reduce duplication and minimize expenses.
- NJ TRANSIT and the Department of Health and Human Services have partnered successfully. An example is the Work Pass Program which encourages people who have the ability to use a monthly pass on fixed-route transit rather than paratransit services. Transit fares typically represent less than 50% of the cost of a one-way passenger trip on a paratransit service; for example, a 30-minute ride on a bus or train may cost less than \$1.00 for a reduced fare eligible passenger versus \$8-\$10 on paratransit. The money that is saved can be used elsewhere, such as grants for transportation services for folks who cannot use fixed-route service, such as shuttles or modified fixed-route service.
- As New Jersey advances toward being built-out, the focus of new development is turning back to urban and older residential areas, and the trend toward transit-oriented development is gaining some momentum. Both developers and older communities are looking at these opportunities to revitalize underutilized properties and consider mixed-use development. Examples include Asbury Park, Atlantic City, and Long Branch.
- Age-restrictive housing developments are focal points of existing and future transportation needs.
- The introduction of light rail has increased transportation choices in the areas it serves. New and expanded services are expected in the future. Some 45 stations have been built over five years and the lines are very popular with users.

What still needs more work?

- County to county coordination of services still needs to be improved. Jurisdictional boundaries and liability issues remain to be resolved in many areas. As a statewide agency, NJ TRANSIT may be a resource to begin addressing these ongoing issues.
- As medical services become increasingly specialized, access to medical care requires more trip-making to more locations. The health care system of in-plan services can require travel beyond jurisdictional boundaries.
- There is a need for more centralized dissemination of information on travel services and options for aging and disabled people. A challenge to establishing a centralized information system is determining who will manage the information and how it will be funded.
- Five years ago, the transit services discussion focused on how to coordinate providers; today, the discussion is about how to best serve the customers.
- NJ TRANSIT's Independence Program (NJTIP), which provides travel instruction for people with disabilities, is currently only being offered in the northern New Jersey counties using volunteers. This program should be expanded statewide.
- Casino Revenue funding requirements can be restrictive, such as the requirements that providers serve five miles beyond their borders. While innovative funding mechanisms are needed and welcome, legislative action may be needed to update the Casino Revenue funding program.
- There should be a system in which clients pay for services according to their financial ability.
- There is a need to accommodate the disabled beyond curb-to-curb service; i.e., addressing the need for curbside, bus shelters and continuous sidewalks.
- Currently, taxis operate under local jurisdictions and are not required to accommodate the needs of aging and disabled populations. A centralized system of ensuring taxi services can accommodate these populations in any area is needed.
- Private transportation providers are not subject to the jurisdictional boundaries of public transportation services that rely on public funds. Integration of private providers into a centralized system with public providers would help overcome current challenges, address costs, and optimize private fleets.
- Facilities such as adult day care centers often do not have a coordinated system of getting people to and from their facilities. Developing and implementing a coordinated system among public and private providers would streamline operations and cost.
- Aging drivers should be better accommodated, which involves more than just improved signage but also tools to help in processing decision making while driving. This need should be balanced with the needs of other drivers as well as those of bicyclists and pedestrians.

What new challenges will we face by 2030?

- Population growth and with it increased congestion and difficulty in maneuvering.
- Some programs for seniors start at 60 and others at 62. There is a need to standardize this definition across all programs.
- Seniors will not give up their cars unless there are viable alternatives and they feel comfortable with using those alternatives.

- While some empty nesters are moving to urban areas, many other single seniors are moving in with family members in more suburban areas with fewer transit alternatives.
- More seniors will remain in the work force, which will impact peak-period travel.
- The state's population is becoming more diverse, with a larger influx of newcomers with language barriers.
- More and more disabled people have regular employment in competitive environments which makes arriving at work on time essential.
- Little to no off-peak transit service, particularly during the nighttime and on weekends. Counties such as Monmouth and Somerset have instituted bus service one night each week. The need to expand that service is foreseen.
- Meeting new Clean Air Act requirements as transit fleets age (cost of retrofits).
- NJ insurance laws require liability insurance for volunteer drivers that can be cost-prohibitive. In states such as Maine, insurance laws enable the transit provider to obtain an umbrella policy to cover the portion of insurance above that which the volunteer driver has. Legislation may be needed to address the issue in New Jersey.

What innovative strategies are in the works to improve mobility?

- ITNAmerica – The Independent Transportation Network America Program is a private system started in Portland, ME. ITNAmerica uses paid and volunteer drivers to transport seniors by auto, 24/7. This is a membership program that also relies on subsidies. Subsidies can come from a wide variety of sources, including but not limited to medical facilities, retail facilities and corporations. A key feature of ITNAmerica is the software system that establishes, tracks and accounts for all operations. Elements of this innovative program include the ability to bank credits stored in personal transit accounts that can be used later. Children can purchase gift certificates or volunteer their own time to bank credits in their parents' accounts. Eventually, it is hoped that the program will extend across the nation; children in one part of the country will be able to bank credits for their parents in another location. The program in Maine provided 15,000 rides last year, primarily for medical and social programs. The organization is not-for-profit with a staff of 6-7.

In order to address the issues of liability insurance, the Maine Legislature enacted special legislation that prohibits insurers from raising rates or denying coverage to individuals who volunteer as drivers for non-profits. Subsequent to the Advisory Panel meeting, Sandra Brillhart provided the link below for more information about this statute.

<http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes/24-A/title24-Asec2902-F.html>

The Mercer County TMA is starting an ITNAmerica program and is in the process of working through the insurance issues. The program is being funded through NJDOT and the NJ Foundation for the Aging, among others.

- A centralized concierge service would provide information and arrangements for transportation (similar to the 311 model in NYC). Concierge service is being tried in Hunterdon County. Ocean County also has a program with an information kiosk that provides information on human services and transportation.
- Water links provide untapped opportunities to transport the aging and disabled. The services will need to be made more user-friendly.

- The service route concept may help address the limits of fixed-route transit service. A service route is a cross between fixed-route and advanced paratransit, using extra recovery time on routes for diversionary stops. This system, which is being adopted in some New Jersey communities, provides better curb-to-curb service than fixed route.
- Traditionally, paratransit service provides service to one or a few destinations. Optimized paratransit service should link as many, varied origins and destinations as possible. Currently, paratransit systems in Burlington (Burlink), Warren and Monmouth counties try to do this. Experience to date has shown greatest success where large trip generators occur (population centers, malls and medical campuses).
- Allowing transfers across transportation systems. Burlington County is an example of reducing barriers to allow easy transfers across systems with a simplified fare structure. This is possible because both the transit and paratransit providers want it to work. NJ TRANSIT has been reluctant to look at fare integration across all the counties' bus systems, which currently have differing fare structures.

What specific recommendations should be included in the 2030 Plan?

- Transportation service providers, such as private jitneys, find the process of approval as a paratransit service to be cumbersome. Often these private services have routes similar to those of NJTRANSIT and erode public transit ridership. Streamlining the approval process, creating incentives for new paratransit service providers, and establishing complementary routes would benefit customers and reduce competition with existing NJ TRANSIT routes.
- A seamless payment system for collecting fares within and across providers.
- Reduce barriers to the disabled, such as hand-held ticket swipe technology. The technology exists to do this, similar to E-ZPass.
- Create a statewide Concierge Service and examine NYC's 311 program as an implementation model. This could initially be linked to senior and disabled programs. A longer term recommendation would be to link this to all transportation services.
- NJ TRANSIT should become the structural model for all transit services; to operate seamlessly, county and other transit service operators should use the same fare, payment and other operating structures.
- Enforcement of NJ's requirement for mandatory driver testing every 10 years
- Providing alternative transportation services in communities with large numbers of drivers who are no longer licensed should be a priority.
- Provide new services to adult communities such as is happening in Ocean County.
- Remove disincentives to providing ITNAmerica type programs throughout NJ using volunteer drivers with their own vehicles.
- Continue with Smart Growth policies.
- Improve signage using new technologies.
- Pilot a program which provides real-time bus arrival information at bus waiting facilities.
- Integrate more low-floor buses into the fleets.
- Require that municipalities be responsible for creating walkable environments within their communities.

- Determine how best to feed customers, particularly in underserved communities, into NJ TRANSIT's existing transit services.
- While NJ TRANSIT has evolved with more flexible and smaller vehicles and modified fixed routes in certain areas, there needs to be more of this tier of services between Access Link and regular NJ TRANSIT bus services. They should contract more with local service providers with more knowledge of the needs of their communities.

During this discussion period, panel members raised policy questions for consideration by NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT.

Policy questions:

- Are we more interested in having people move toward transit, or bringing transit to them?
- Are we trying to reduce unmet demand through means other than providing additional services such as promoting walking?
- Is the bottom line access to goods and services? Can certain trips be avoided without reducing that access?
- Should there be a guaranteed level of mobility for all citizens like we have for education? It is a given that people will not give up their mobility readily.

A panel member recommended that the team contact the DOT Retirees' Association for additional input.

Ms. Fitzpatrick concluded the interactive session and turned the meeting back over to Danielle Graves for final comments.

Danielle Graves concluded the meeting by thanking the panel members for their participation.