

Mobility for the Millennium

A TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR THE NEW YORK REGION



Executive Summary

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) is a regional association of government agencies and transportation providers. It provides the region with a forum to address transportation-related issues from a regional perspective. NYMTC is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the New York State portion of the metropolitan region.

As an MPO, NYMTC is required by Federal regulations to develop a long-range Regional Transportation Plan and update that Plan every three years. The current update of this regional plan, entitled *Mobility for the Millennium*, responds to current and future changes in the region's demographics, economy, and transportation needs by providing a

relevant, informative, and dynamic long-range guide for the transportation planning process through the year 2020.

NYMTC's region is comprised of New York City, and the counties of Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester. NYMTC's voting membership includes these governments, as well as the New York State Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Advisory members include the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, New Jersey Transit, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

THE MESSAGES OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

As we count down to the millennium, our region is confronted by a number of challenges and choices. Over the course of the next two decades, decisions must be made that will affect our position in the global marketplace and influence the development of our local communities. The region's challenges lie in a number of areas, including: how we move from place to place, how we move our goods, the way we plan our future and make our decisions, and the quality of our lives.

Much has been done in recent years to reinvest in the region's extensive network of roads, bridges, railroads, and transit routes. Billions of dollars have been spent over the past two decades to repair roads, rails and bridges; to purchase buses, subway cars and commuter coaches; and to improve information and communi-

cation. Gradually, our transportation infrastructure has been repaired, while policy innovations have been implemented to increase transit ridership and ease congestion.

The improvements and investments of the past twenty years have provided a foundation for future investments which go well beyond repairing the transportation system. Approaching the new millennium, the region faces a historic opportunity to continue this increased investment in the transportation system to 1) address unmet needs, 2) bring the system fully to a state of good repair, and 3) implement important enhancements to the system that could significantly improve mobility, ease congestion, improve air quality, and enhance economic vitality.

The *Regional Transportation Plan* outlines a variety of options and guideposts for these improvements, both large and small in scale. Taken together, these

choices offer a path toward greater mobility and efficiency at the beginning of the 21st century.

The options outlined in this *Regional Transportation Plan* have the potential for major impacts such as transforming the commute of Rockland County's residents, providing direct rail access for freight crossing the Hudson River to destinations in New York City, Long Island and New England, increasing transit options for residents and employers of Manhattan's East Side, and improving mobility in chronically congested corridors such as Interstate 287, the Long Island Expressway and the Cross Bronx Expressway. These are among the visions of the *Regional Transportation Plan*-visions which can be made real through regional cooperation-where residents, businesses, municipalities and transportation agencies work together to address the decisions that must be made.

THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The role of this *Regional Transportation Plan* is twofold; to create a catalogue of planning activities in the region to meet the Federal requirements and to provide a vision of future improvement opportunities. The *Regional Transportation Plan* is a dynamic document, providing a menu of current planning projects, as well as a visionary component to address future considerations. The *Regional Transportation Plan* is intended to serve as a platform for collaborative efforts throughout the region. All participating Council members share a responsibility to define and find interdependencies among planning projects to take full advantage of available resources.

NYMTC has built its future vision around nine regional goals for improving the transportation system as a whole. The *Regional Transportation Plan*'s highlights are presented below within the framework of these nine goals.



Goal: Infrastructure

One of the region's greatest needs is the maintenance of its transportation equipment and facilities. It is critical for the region that its transit system, highways, and bridges are

maintained in a state of good repair. A well-maintained infrastructure is the foundation on which other improvements to the transportation system can be built.

The Regional Transportation Plan defines the resources which the region must apply to maintaining its vast transportation infrastructure through the year 2020, an effort which will require approximately \$79 billion in current dollars. The Regional Transportation Plan also identifies major long-range maintenance needs.



Goal: Mobility

While transit remains the dominant mode for the region's work trips to New York City's Central Business District, travel patterns throughout the region are changing, prompting new approaches to the challenge of enhancing mobility. Reverse commuters, (i.e., travelers leaving central city locations for employment in suburban areas), represent a growing market that is often underserved by current transit systems.

Suburban mobility represents another growing challenge for the region. As suburbs continue to evolve into independent centers of social and economic activity, travel patterns throughout the region become increasingly varied. Growing population, land use patterns which encourage automobile travel, and increasing numbers of suburb-to-suburb commutes have contributed to increased automobile ownership, and placed strains on a transportation infrastructure which was not designed to meet current travel demand patterns.

The Regional Transportation Plan places new emphasis on managing demand and focusing on alternative modes of transportation, such as transit, walking and bicycling, ferry service, ridesharing, and helping people make smarter travel choices through the application of new Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies.

Regionally, the Regional Transportation Plan identifies a series of potential regional improvement proposals to be refined and developed through major investment studies, congestion management studies, and feasibility studies. These options define an unprecedented menu of as much as \$65 billion in current dollars of potential future investments, if all

of the projects were found to be constructable and operable. These future investments have far ranging implications for the region's mobility. The Regional Transportation Plan indicates which of these proposals are currently under study, which are newly proposed for future study, and offers rough time frames when the improvements would be eligible for federal construction funding.

In specific corridor areas throughout the region, the Regional Transportation Plan identifies current and probable mobility improvements, and offers conceptual guidelines for future improvements to lead planning for the long-term future.



Goal: Land Use and Transportation

The link between land use and transportation has become an increasingly critical component for enhancing mobility and the quality of life in the region. Traditional development practices often overlook the impact of development on the present and future transportation system. For new development, location decisions should take into account the availability of adequate transportation service. At the same time, proposed improvements to the transportation system should improve access to major activity centers, facilitate multi-modal connections, and provide travel options to relieve congestion. Incorporating plans for transportation facilities into the design of new development, with the objective of ensuring that future demand for transportation matches future system capabilities, represents another way to promote mobility.

The Regional Transportation Plan identifies a series of potential sustainable development studies in critical areas to develop integrated land use and transportation solutions for the short-, medium-, and long-term future. Working through the framework of these studies, local municipal planners and officials can engage their residents, businesses, neighboring municipalities, county planners, and transportation agencies to develop a vision for their communities and the transportation services desired to sustain that view.



Goal: Safety

The safety and security of the region's transportation facilities are major concerns to facility users, operators, and to all levels of government.

Safety is a concern for both highway and transit travel. Security, and the perception of security, is a key concern that affects transit ridership. The goal of the Regional Transportation Plan is to improve safety and security for all users of the transportation system, with a new emphasis placed on reducing the number of pedestrian and bicycle-related fatalities throughout the region.

The Regional Transportation Plan proposes the expansion of existing or initiation of new education programs for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in conjunction with efforts to monitor safety trends. In specific corridor areas, the Regional Transportation Plan targets proposals and strategies to address particular safety issues.



Goal: Airport Access

Three major airports and several smaller facilities serve the NYMTC region. Ground access to these airports is problematic, leaving the region at a competitive disadvantage in the global economy.

These airports handle millions of passengers and tons of cargo each year, and serve as major employment centers. Increasing periods of severe congestion plague the principal arterials to the airports, limiting access for passenger and commercial vehicles. This problem is compounded by the lack of direct rail access to the airports from Manhattan and other parts of the region. Although John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) handles 1.8 million tons of air cargo annually, freight transportation to and from the airport is limited by restrictions on commercial vehicle traffic on major roadways such as the Shore Parkway. New projects, such as transit links to JFK and LaGuardia airports, as well as new ferry services to LaGuardia are underway or have been proposed to alleviate problems of ground access to the two airports.

As part of its regional improvement proposals, the

Regional Transportation Plan discusses several efforts being undertaken by Council members to evaluate improved access to LaGuardia and JFK airports. The Regional Transportation Plan also proposes the application of ITS technologies on the Van Wyck Expressway (to improve both passenger and freight access to JFK) as well as a Congestion Management Study focused on the Van Wyck. The Regional Transportation Plan also considers potential improvements to ferry services to both of these airports, and includes access issues related to Stewart Airport in a proposed Major Investment Study for Interstate 84.



Goal: Freight Transportation

While the region is undergoing a transformation to a service-based economy, estimates of domestic and international economic growth indicate a substantial and continued need for the movement of goods to sustain the population and support the region's businesses. An efficient freight transportation system is essential to the collection and distribution of goods throughout the region. As industrial and warehousing functions have become dispersed geographically, the region's and the country's reliance on trucking has grown significantly.

Within the region, 72 percent of the New York/New Jersey metro area consumer market is east of the Hudson River, while 63 percent of the freight distribution and warehousing infrastructure is west of the Hudson. The additional disparity, between the number of trucks and capacity on limited-access highways allowing commercial traffic, has constrained regional freight mobility and placed the region at an increasing competitive disadvantage. New initiatives in rail freight service, as well as increased port capacity and ITS applications, have been proposed to ease congestion and enhance freight mobility throughout the NYMTC region.

As part of its regional improvement proposals, the Regional Transportation Plan concentrates attention on major investment options for the Port of New York, and improved trans-Hudson rail freight access through: a dedicated rail freight tunnel connecting New Jersey with Staten Island and/or Brooklyn, or the reactivation of the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge.

More specifically, the Regional Transportation Plan calls for county or municipal efforts to designate or refine truck routing systems.



Goal: Quality of Life

Transportation is an important contributor to economic sustainability, which includes using land in a way that attracts and retains residents, employers, and services. Future economic growth in the region is directly related to infrastructure investment and improved mobility. Travel options, convenience, access, and safety are additional and important factors which influence quality of life and economic vitality.

Alternative, non-motorized modes of transportation, such as walking and bicycling, are energy efficient and environmentally friendly. Walking and bicycling, when promoted as viable means of transportation, can also help contribute to the region's quality of life while reducing automobile congestion.

The Regional Transportation Plan seeks to address this goal through: 1) future sustainable development studies and operational studies which improve access to areas of economic growth through integrated land use/transportation planning, 2) improving the interface between communities and their transportation facilities, and 3) placing greater emphasis on demand management and the use of alternative travel options. These efforts are targeted in the Regional Transportation Plan's consideration of specific corridor areas.



Goal: Regional Planning and Decision Making

Many of the mobility and congestion problems in the New York metropolitan region have far reaching impacts that extend across municipal, county, and state borders. Adapting the transportation network to serve evolving patterns of demand and need, while addressing larger impacts in a complex region is an enormous challenge. NYMTC covers a portion of the tri-state region in New York State which encompasses ten counties, 190 local municipalities, and

a variety of authorities and special districts.

The current Metropolitan Planning Regulations under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) call for greater cooperation and planning coordination between governmental jurisdictions and transportation providers as a prerequisite for the receipt of federal funding assistance.

The Regional Transportation Plan proposes innovations for the planning process which will improve the level of coordinated regional planning and decision making. These include: 1) a comprehensive clearinghouse of relevant information in both electronic formats and hard copy, 2) enhancing coordination across three states, 3) promoting issue-specific, special purpose groups and multi-jurisdictional studies, and 4) soliciting increased participation by local officials and the public at large.



Goal: Financing the Future

The *Regional Transportation Plan* includes NYMTC's financial plan—the estimated costs of maintaining, operating, and improving the total transportation system through the *Regional Transportation Plan*'s 2020 horizon year.

The fiscally constrained portion of the *Regional Transportation Plan* includes those projects and strategies which can be funded through the resources anticipated to be available through 2020. Guidelines for future improvements and regional improvement proposals are those elements that cannot be included as part of a fiscally constrained plan, but are noted in the *Regional Transportation Plan* to guide future planning activities.

Apart from the projects and strategies which appear to fall within the anticipated fiscal resources of the *Regional Transportation Plan*, it proposes that the region do what is necessary to obtain the additional resources needed to make the longer-term guidelines a reality. Suggested steps that have been taken elsewhere include exploring alternative funding mechanisms, such as the Transportation Trust Fund, NYSDOT's Industrial Access Program, federal credit assistance, existing federal and state finance programs, public-private partnerships, and locally-generated revenues.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the coming years, the *Regional Transportation Plan* will serve as both a cornerstone and an engine of the federally-mandated regional planning process. Amendments must be made as additional planning work is completed, and the *Regional Transportation Plan* must be fully updated within the cycle prescribed by Federal legislation.

The strategic framework of the *Regional Transportation Plan*, its nine regional goals and associated objectives, and the various analyses which flow from the framework at both the regional and corridor area levels, contain a variety of recommended strategies and concepts which can be employed to improve the region's transportation sys-

tem in the future. Recommended improvements can serve as guideposts for planning activities in the coming years, intended to transform these proposals into fully defined solutions which move toward implementation using federal funding or financing through other sources. The approach used to develop the *Regional Transportation Plan* brought together the planning processes of NYMTC's member agencies in a collaborative exercise that extended beyond the jurisdictions and mandates of the individual agencies. As a result, the *Regional Transportation Plan* can be used to inform, provide a framework, and be integrated into the individual agencies' planning work.

You can help us by offering your views and comments on the Plan update, in one of the following ways:

Mail us your comments.

Send a letter to Regional Transportation Plan Update, New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, One World Trade Center, Suite 82 East, NY, NY 10048.

Send us your comments via the Internet.

Simply call up the Council's website at www.nymtc.org. You can download the full plan update and submit your comments on the special page provided.

Fax us your comments.

Our fax number is 212.938.3295. Make sure you indicate Regional Transportation Plan Update on your cover sheet.

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