



# REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION, INC.

*... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.*

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### SPECIFICS OF TURNPIKE WIDENING PROPOSAL QUESTIONED BY REGIONAL PLAN GROUP; NEW JERSEY COMMITTEE CALLS STATE'S HIGHWAY FINANCING SOURCE OF PROBLEM

Regional Plan Association agreed with the New Jersey Turnpike Authority today that there will be a lot more traffic in the area north of the Turnpike-Garden State Parkway interchange and that additional highway capacity will be needed. While Regional Plan generally endorses the concept of giving additional capacity to the traffic corridor served by the New Jersey Turnpike north of its Garden State Parkway interchange, it takes issue with two important specifics of the Turnpike Authority's proposal to double the present Turnpike's width from the Parkway interchange north to Route 3 (west of Lincoln Tunnel).

"First, the additional Turnpike lanes would better serve the Hackensack Meadows and intra-New Jersey traffic without inducing automobile commutation to Manhattan if they were built west of the Meadows instead of east, as the present widening proposal provides," according to James S. Schoff, Chairman of Regional Plan.

"Second, the design of the Turnpike widening south of the Newark Airport--where the extra highway capacity is clearly <sup>widening</sup> needed--is one of un-

relieved ugliness. The present plans call for solid paving 200 feet wide, broken only by narrow barriers. The standards of appearance should be far higher for the several generations who will use this facility," Schoff added.

George F. Smith, Chairman of the New Jersey Committee of Regional Plan Association, expressed the Committee's concern about the problems of New Jersey highway financing that influences the Turnpike Authority's decision, and curtails the public highway system generally. "Those responsible for New Jersey highway planning cannot provide the most efficient highway system for the State with the present restrictions on highway expenditures. This is the basic issue New Jersey must face."

Schoff is Chairman of Bloomingdale's; Smith is former President of Johnson & Johnson. Regional Plan Association is a 36-year-old research and civic organization dedicated to a more efficient, attractive and varied metropolitan area covering Northern New Jersey, Southern New York and Western Connecticut.

The full statement of the Association is attached.

REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION  
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605 Broad Street, Newark, New Jersey

January 26, 1965

Regional Plan Association Policy Statement on the proposed New Jersey Turnpike widening between the Garden State Parkway and Route 3, west of the Lincoln Tunnel.

The New Jersey Turnpike Authority has proposed a doubling of the width of the Turnpike between the Garden State Parkway and Route 3, which leads to the Lincoln Tunnel. The cost is something over \$300 million. The original turnpike cost was \$279 million.

Arguments For the Widening

The Authority explains that traffic already is at capacity and beyond at some hours, that an increase in traffic can be expected as four Interstate highways are connected to the Turnpike over the next year or two, and that it is necessary to decide promptly how wide the Turnpike will be in the long run so the interchanges can be designed efficiently now.

The Authority also notes that the proposed route has the advantage of a relatively clear right of way which can be acquired easily and relatively cheaply.

Furthermore, the northern portion of the New Jersey Turnpike has been designated as Federal Interstate Route I-95, a route which parallels the Turnpike from the Pennsylvania line to Bound Brook swinging east to join the Turnpike. This is apparently because the cumulative effect of New Jersey's fiscal policies over many years has caused New Jersey to use up its quota of federal interstate highway funds and mileage on other interstate routes in New Jersey. Hence,

there are no federal 90 percent funds nor mileage available at this time to extend I-95 north of Bound Brook as a 90 percent federal-10 percent state toll free facility.

Given the financial restrictions imposed on Turnpike improvements to assure the Turnpike's continued ability to repay its bonds, the only feasible highway construction that can be built promptly within the Turnpike Authority's financial capacity is the doubling of the Turnpike on the existing alignment between the Garden State Parkway and Route 3.

#### Traffic Projections

None of the agencies that must be relied on for transportation data in Northern New Jersey--the Turnpike Authority, the New Jersey Highway Department and the Tri-State Transportation Committee--has yet published figures detailing the number and type of vehicles expected to use the Turnpike on this stretch over the coming generation, with their probable origins and destinations. Nevertheless, it seems likely to the Regional Plan staff that there will be a substantial increase in bus, auto and truck traffic in this corridor, and the magnitude suggested by the Authority's proposed six-lane addition does not seem unreasonable.

#### Arguments Against the Widening

However, there are several objections that might be made to the proposed widening.

First, because of the stringent financial limits on the project, it will be an ugly facility. It will be over 200 feet wide, almost solid paving broken only by narrow barriers. There will be no

landscaping between the four sets of three lanes nor alongside them. The highway will be at least as wide as two-thirds of the length of a football field or a whole north-south Manhattan block--almost solid paving running through an area already bereft of greenery and natural beauty. This at a time when the President has declared a policy of beautifying the nation's free interstate highways.

Second, the proposed route does not appear likely to promote the best use of the Hackensack Meadows, on which the governor is even now awaiting a development report. The Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce has objected that Newark's plans for the Meadows would be disrupted by the proposed alignment. Probably a route along the western edge of the Meadows--instead of doubling the expressway east of the Meadows--would be more likely to encourage and serve the Meadow's development.

Third, the Port of New York Authority has objected to the proposed widening because it will induce extra traffic to try to enter the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels. These facilities already are at capacity during many hours of the day. The Port Authority argues strongly against adding additional river-crossing capacity at either of these points. The Turnpike Authority considers the widening as primarily a service to vehicles going from one point to another in New Jersey--not as a service to traffic bound for Manhattan. Since the projected origins and destinations of the anticipated traffic have not been published, we can only speculate, but the fact that the proposed widening would end at the approach to the Lincoln Tunnel where the Turnpike would suddenly revert to six lanes implies that a good deal of the traffic is expected

to use the Lincoln Tunnel. Otherwise, where is it coming from or going to at the northern end of the double width?

An alignment west of the Meadows north of the Newark airport would better serve distribution of intra-New Jersey traffic.

Fourth, the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce, the Port of New York Authority and the Newark Evening News all have raised questions about whether the proposed widening is as pressing as several other routes in the same part of New Jersey, one of which we note is the Hoboken freeway, connecting approaches to the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels. If the Hoboken connector could be built as a section of the Turnpike, it should be as a toll facility with revenue bond financing.

Fifth, the Turnpike has been closed by smog in whole or part twenty-six times the last quarter of 1964 and once, over its entire route, thus far in January. It would seem to be advisable to see whether a more smog-free route exists before committing large-scale funds to an artery that had to be closed an average of twice a week for three months running.

#### Conclusion

The Turnpike Authority is to be commended for planning to meet the probable traffic increase before serious bottlenecks occur.

While Regional Plan generally endorses the concept of giving additional capacity to the traffic corridor served by the New Jersey Turnpike north of its Garden State Parkway interchange, it takes issue with two important specifics of the Turnpike Authority's proposal to double the present Turnpike's width from the Parkway interchange north to Route 3 (west of Lincoln Tunnel).

However, the stringent financial limitations placed on the proposal because they must be financed by revenue bonds have made the present plan unsatisfactory in two specific dimensions.

First: The addition to the turnpike, as planned, will be one of unrelieved ugliness.

If, however, the widening south of the Newark airport can be built with adequate landscaping, this part of the proposal would seem satisfactory.

The widening north of the airport would better serve the Meadows and intra-New Jersey traffic without inducing automobile commutation to Manhattan, if it followed the probable better alignment west of the Meadows.

The weaknesses of the Authority's proposal reflect the faults of New Jersey's highway financing generally. State highway revenues allocated to building of all classes of highways are insufficient to match federal money even though the state needs to contribute only 10 percent to the federal government's 90 percent in building the interstate system of toll-free highways.

Therefore, in this instance, the state's total highway investment has had to be conditioned to fit a route and design that can be financed by revenue bonds. In this case, we believe that investment should be improved upon in two specific ways--south of the airport in design, north of the airport in location. Only with adequate state highway funds can New Jersey's transportation investment be allocated reasonably and efficiently.