



# Regional Plan Association

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Statement of

Regional Plan Association

on the

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey

Plainfield Corridor Service-Newark Airport Connector Project

Submitted for the record

February, 1974

Regional Plan Association cannot support the proposed Port Authority Trans-Hudson (PATH) extension-Newark Airport Connector, despite its positive aspects, unless at least two modifications are made to assure greater benefit to the public for what will be a major public investment. These modifications are:

. . . The Newark Airport connector must be tied in with Penn-Central service--both from Midtown Manhattan and from the south --at McClellan Street, Newark, to enable the maximum number of people to go by train to the airport.

. . . Responsibility must be assumed by the State or assigned to the Port Authority for parking facilities at commuter stations to prevent localities from limiting parking and thus limiting PATH patronage.

This project developed over a number of years in a piecemeal way. First, the airport was designed (as a self-sufficient unit) without rail access, but with an internal "people-mover" to carry people among terminal buildings and parking facilities. The passageway for the inter-terminal "shuttle" was designed to preclude either a PATH

car or standard train from entering the terminals. The State of New Jersey during the Cahill administration pressed the Port Authority to extend PATH along the Plainfield Corridor to replace the ailing Jersey Central service. To provide some rail access, the "shuttle" was planned to extend about one mile to the airport's periphery to intersect at McClellan Street with the extension of PATH from Newark. The result of this process of project development leaves the airport traveller with a far from ideal service involving a transfer with baggage between PATH and the inter-terminal "shuttle". By contrast, if the project had been designed integrally from the start, direct no-transfer service to and from the airport terminals on PATH equipment would have been possible.

#### Benefits

Despite its shortcomings, an evaluation of the Plainfield Corridor/Newark Airport Project indicates the following benefits:

1. The project will further objectives of RPA's Second Regional Plan--i.e., provide better public transit to urban centers, namely Lower Manhattan, Jersey City, Newark and Elizabeth, and provide some incentive for the clustering of residences and commercial activities in the Elizabeth-Plainfield corridor.
2. It will greatly increase the frequency of service to the area between Elizabeth and Plainfield, significantly reduce travel time, and eliminate a change of trains at Newark for travellers to Lower Manhattan. It does capitalize on the advantage of good existing rights-of-way. However, a light transit car may offer a very low standard of comfort for a 25-mile trip compared to commuter-rail equipment.

3. By transferring to the Airport inter-terminal "shuttle" at the McClellan Street station in south Newark, passengers on the new PATH extension will be able to reach Newark International Airport.

What is still needed

The Port Authority and the Region have a large investment in this new Newark Airport which can only be fully realized if access to it by public transportation is enhanced from a broad segment of the New Jersey-New York Region. If airport service is enhanced to the Region's central areas for large numbers of people, costly public improvements to Stewart Airport, 60 miles to the north, will be even less necessary than they appear today.

There are ways to achieve these additional benefits without greatly increasing costs beyond the proposed expenditure of some \$210 million of public funds on this project: First, the PATH Plainfield Corridor Service should be linked more adequately with other rail service in New Jersey from the south, west and north. Second, these linkages should make the new Newark Airport more accessible by rail for residents of New Jersey and the rest of the New York Region.

Essential amendments

In Regional Plan Association's judgment, there are two essential amendments to the project.

1. As now designed, the project does not allow riders on the Penn Central, coming from the Trenton-Princeton-New Brunswick area, or from Long Branch and shore points in Monmouth and Ocean Counties, or from Midtown Manhattan, to get to the airport without making two

transfers, one at Penn Station-Newark to PATH, and another at McClellan Street from PATH to the inter-terminal "shuttle".

Therefore, the most important change required is to allow commuter trains on the Penn Central tracks to stop at the McClellan Street station. This would considerably widen the geographic area with one-transfer service to Newark Airport. The new station at McClellan Street could replace the underused North Elizabeth rail station, two-thirds of a mile to the southwest.

Generally, the McClellan Street station should become an intermodal interchange point of greater importance than now envisaged.

2. Because of the nature of development in the Plainfield corridor and the distance between stations, most future PATH riders in the area will be arriving at PATH stations by auto or bus. This makes it imperative to develop park-and-ride facilities as an integral part of the project, and not to leave this responsibility entirely to the local municipalities, as is now planned. Experience too often has shown that the motivation of municipalities is to keep away automobiles belonging to rail patrons from outside the locality--not to increase rail ridership. It is equally important to consider land development impact in the corridor and not leave integrally-related land use controls solely to local responsibility. There are many examples, such as Queens Boulevard in New York City, where transit improvements were not matched with appropriate land controls to encourage well planned growth around stations (as recommended in Regional Plan reports). This should become a State responsibility.

Desirable amendments

Also, other amendments to the Project should be given further consideration.

1. As now designed, Erie-Lackawanna riders on the Morris and Essex, Gladstone and Montclair lines cannot reach the PATH airport service without first going to Hoboken and then backtracking on PATH to McClellan Street via Jersey City. Hardly any travellers would do this.

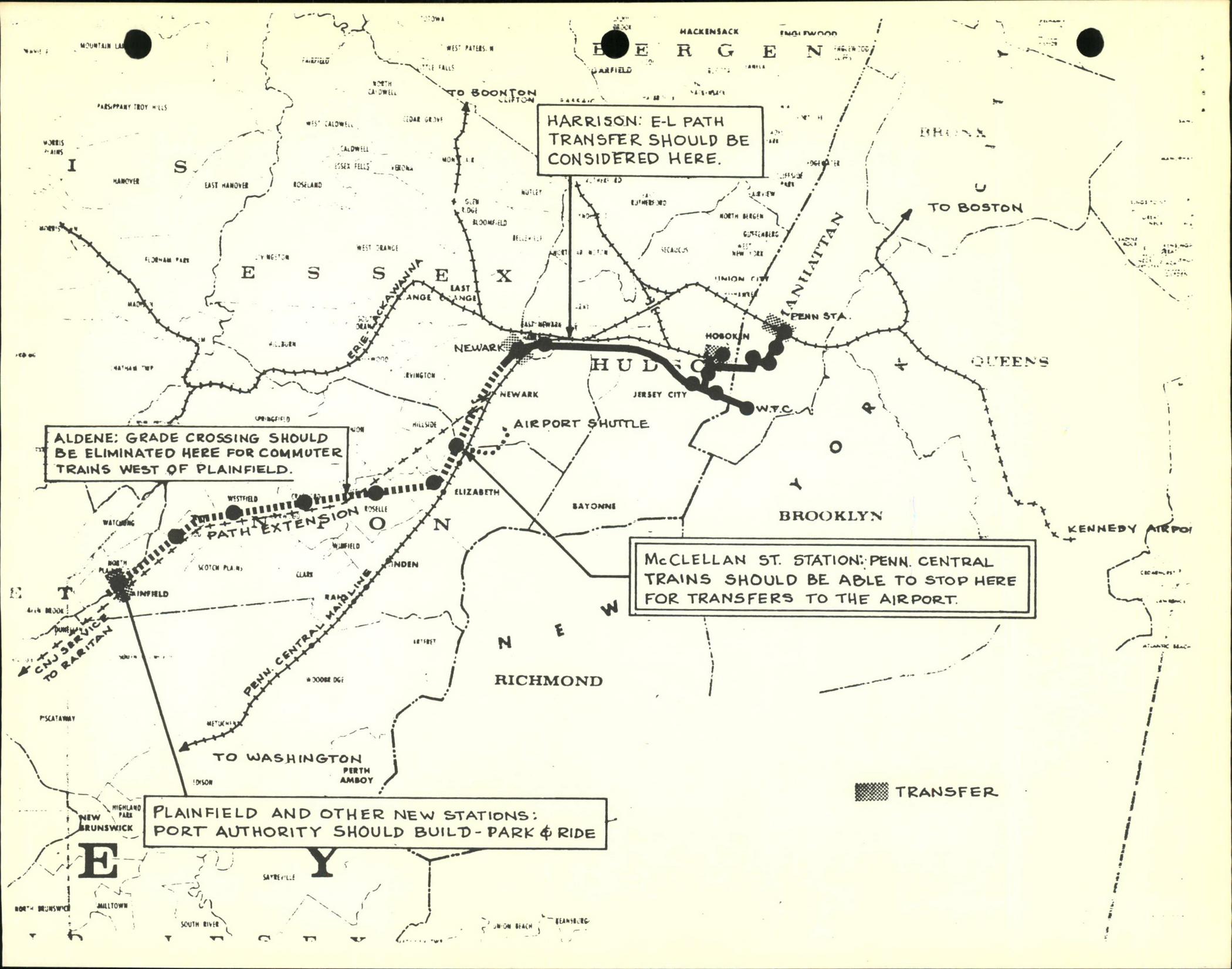
Therefore, the feasibility of an interchange station in Harrison, enabling transfers to PATH from the Erie-Lackawanna lines should be explored and pursued.

2. While the PATH extension will provide improved service in what is now commuter rail territory east of Plainfield, commuter rail service west of Plainfield should be maintained with express service from Plainfield east, perhaps with turbine equipment in the future and, if necessary, using the Aldene Connection to Newark as it does now. However, this is made difficult by the proposed design, which would make longer haul trains cross PATH at grade near Aldene. To provide uninterrupted service, the proposed grade crossing at Aldene should be replaced by an overpass.

3. In the project as proposed, the design and alignment features of the inter-terminal "shuttle" at Newark Airport are not firmly specified, nor is its performance (i.e., travel time from McClellan Street to any of the terminals and ease of making the transfer with baggage). More attention should be paid to these aspects of the design before final plans are approved.

Even though the envelope for the shuttle within the airport building was designed so as not to allow the passage of PATH-sized cars, other arrangements (i.e., elevated ramps in front of the airport buildings), are still possible which would allow direct service to the airport, replacing, in effect, the inter-terminal "shuttle" with a branch of PATH. No steps now to be taken should preclude this for the future.

We underscore our recommendations for essential amendments to the Plainfield Corridor Service-Newark Airport Connector Project by calling attention to the need for the most effective use of combined Port Authority and federal funds. If these funds are not to be used with maximum effectiveness for this project, there are other desirable public transportation improvements in New Jersey for which they could be utilized. This program should be reworked along the lines suggested to make it worth the cost.



HARRISON: E-L PATH TRANSFER SHOULD BE CONSIDERED HERE.

ALDENE: GRADE CROSSING SHOULD BE ELIMINATED HERE FOR COMMUTER TRAINS WEST OF PLAINFIELD.

McCLELLAN ST. STATION: PENN. CENTRAL TRAINS SHOULD BE ABLE TO STOP HERE FOR TRANSFERS TO THE AIRPORT.

PLAINFIELD AND OTHER NEW STATIONS: PORT AUTHORITY SHOULD BUILD-PARK & RIDE

TRANSFER