



Regional Plan Association

Regional Plan Association is a research and planning organization supported by voluntary membership to coordinate conservation and development in the Tri-State Urban Region.

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RPA SAYS: "CONSOLIDATE TRANSPORTATION FUNDS AND ALLOCATE EXPENDITURES ACCORDING TO STATEWIDE PRIORITIES"

Regional Plan Association today released its findings and recommendations on Governor Kean's proposed Circle of Mobility. (See attached) Calling the initiative "bold" RPA cautioned, however, that unless firm decisions are made to coordinate planning and financing of the projects comprising the Circle of Mobility, it will have been a wasted effort.

Thomas J. Stanton, Jr., Chairman Emeritus, National Westminster Bank NJ, called on Governor Kean to use this opportunity to set an important precedent in New Jersey transportation decision-making. Mr. Stanton said "The projects within the Circle of Mobility must be prioritized and the funding allocated accordingly. It is most desirable to use New Jersey Turnpike funds to finance rail transit because Turnpike users will benefit from having auto users converted to rail passengers. Unless we proceed in this coordinated manner we are likely to see transportation chaos and ultimately economic decline," concluded Stanton.

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CIRCLE OF MOBILITY

RPA Findings

The Circle of Mobility is a bold initiative. It is the first attempt to bring together the main transportation providers in northern New Jersey to produce a comprehensive implementation plan to improve road and rail service.

Two key principles are implied in the Circle of Mobility:

1. Funding sources can be matched with transportation needs across administrative boundaries.

2. Rail and road projects can be compared, prioritized and sequenced.

While much public attention has been directed toward the various projects that make up the Circle of Mobility it is the planning process and issues of control that are the most important for New Jersey's future. Many of these questions, concerning both fact and public policy, are yet unanswered:

1. How much will the projects cost and how much money is available from each potential source?
2. How will the priority and sequencing decisions be made?
3. What goals is the Circle of Mobility seeking to maximize? For example, improved air quality, increased economic development, enlarged trans-Hudson capacity?
4. What decisions should be made by the Kean Administration and what should be left for the incoming Governor?

RPA Recommendations

1. New Jersey Transit and the New Jersey Turnpike Authority should not be in competition for scarce transportation funds. Project funding should be allocated according to overall regional transportation priorities. Public and private funding sources should not be making transportation policy to suit their parochial needs. Under the present structure only the

Governor has the power to coordinate these separate agency agendas. This project provides an opportunity for the Governor to set an important precedent in New Jersey transportation policy.

A model for consideration is how the Port Authority toll revenues are made available for transit improvements. The Governors of New York and New Jersey decide on the appropriate use of Port Authority funds. For example, in New Jersey this has taken the form of contributions to the New Jersey Transit's capital program. The Authority collects the tolls; the Governors decide on their use based on overall transportation priorities. Such a decision would be even less complicated in the case of the New Jersey Turnpike tolls, since bi-state cooperation is not an issue.

In the long-run, a permanent mechanism should be created by the legislature to coordinate the implementation of the Circle of Mobility projects as well as future New Jersey transportation projects. New York, when faced with a similar problem, created the Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 1968 to oversee the NYC Transit Authority, Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, Long Island Rail Road and Metro North. New Jersey should explore the applicability of this model as a means of matching sources of funding (toll revenues from the Turnpike and the Parkway) with overall transportation policy. As important as the particular mechanism chosen is the executive leadership to ensure cooperation and coordination.

2. Good planning requires that Circle of Mobility projects be considered in light of clear policy goals. Prior agreement on desired goals would decrease the dissention over project priorities and reduce the tendency for situational decision-making. RPA suggests the following planning goals for the Circle of Mobility:

- A. Improve economic development potential by providing increased accessibility to transit
- B. Support the mandate of the State Planning Act to increase urban redevelopment
- C. Limit adverse environmental (land, water and air) impacts

3. New auto access to the waterfront should be limited. The waterfront, especially from Hoboken north, is extremely narrow and congested with high levels of auto produced air pollution. Introducing more autos into this area without careful planning and control will lead to decreased quality of life for residents and workers. RPA has long advocated a rail transit/pedestrian oriented

"River City". Increased auto usage is contrary to this vision and contrary to state and federal air quality goals.

A new tunnel as proposed by Hartz Mountain Industries to serve the northern waterfront should be considered only if a) the Conrail tunnel is of insufficient capacity, or b) the Conrail tunnel will not be available for use for a substantial period of time after a new tunnel could be in service, or c) additional auto access to the northern waterfront is deemed critical to meet planning goals.

Recent public argument in the press over the appropriateness of various technologies for use in a transit tunnel has not been useful. The Hudson River Waterfront Transportation Office is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the available technologies to provide transit services on the waterfront. This will include evaluation of objectives, costs and benefits, routes and performance of the various technologies (i.e. buses, light rail, automated guideways/monorails etc.). The evaluation process should be allowed to go forward unimpeded by preemptive decisions made as part of a Circle of Mobility plan. Only after deciding what needs should be served can rational decisions about technology be made.

4. Elements of the Circle that contribute to building the Secaucus connection and waterfront rail transit should be funded and built first. RPA has had long-standing policies favoring these rail projects. Individually and together they will bring vitally needed transportation services to the area. In addition their benefits extend well beyond the Meadowlands and waterfront by providing connections across the Hudson and into central New Jersey. Specifically, better access to major New Jersey urban centers - Newark, New Brunswick and Trenton - would result from the Secaucus connection. It would also provide new access for Passaic, Bergen and Rockland Counties, major contributors to trans-Hudson auto congestion.

5. High visibility Circle of Mobility projects should not be allowed to drain funds away from other long-standing priority projects of New Jersey Transit. Designation as an element in the Circle of Mobility does not make a project automatically more valuable than other transportation projects. There may be a tendency to delay projects outside the Circle that have less public relations value but may bring higher regional transportation benefits. Individual Circle of Mobility projects should stand on their own merit in comparison with all other regional transportation needs.