

SJTPO

2025 Regional Transportation Plan



Executive Summary
June 2004

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I. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FOR SOUTH JERSEY

REGIONAL PLANNING

The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the southern New Jersey counties of Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem. Federal regulations require that transportation planning and decision-making for urbanized areas be carried out through MPOs. The SJTPO works to provide a regional approach to solving transportation problems in collaboration with citizens, businesses and interest groups, local and county government, and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT).

Figure 1 depicts the SJTPO region.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

As the federally recognized MPO for the four-county area, the SJTPO is required to develop a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP serves as the official transportation plan for the South Jersey region and guides the transportation decision-making for a projected twenty-five year horizon. As a long-range planning document, the plan sets the course for the future of the region, and guides the development and operation of an integrated, intermodal transportation system that facilitates safe, efficient, economical movement of people and goods. It includes proposals for both short-range and long-range strategies and actions.

The RTP provides a foundation for coordinated regional transportation planning, and identifies future needs so that more detailed technical studies may take place. Accordingly, project features and funding requirements are identified through detailed studies that provide the technical and environmental analysis needed to enter projects into the federal and state funding pipeline.

Federal regulations require the RTP to be updated on a three-year cycle. The first RTP for the SJTPO region was adopted in August 1995. A reexamination and confirmation of the 1995 RTP's goals, forecasts and capital investments was adopted by the SJTPO in March 1998. The Plan was updated again in 2001. The current 2004 RTP Update examines current and future conditions through the horizon 2025.

The technical work to develop the current RTP Update included revisiting RTP goals and policies; update of context and existing conditions; upgrade of the regional travel model to support analysis of future transportation investments, strategies and actions; developing a financing plan; determining air quality conformity; and developing an implementation plan. Specific emphasis was placed on safety, emergency evacuation, and the regional SJTPO Congestion Management System. The technical activities interact with the public participation and coordination activities throughout the RTP development process and coordination program to define the plan's overall work effort.

The executive summary explores the following topics: context for transportation, challenges for the region, the RTP implementation plan, and a summary of actions and initiatives pursuant to the federal planning guidelines.

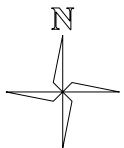
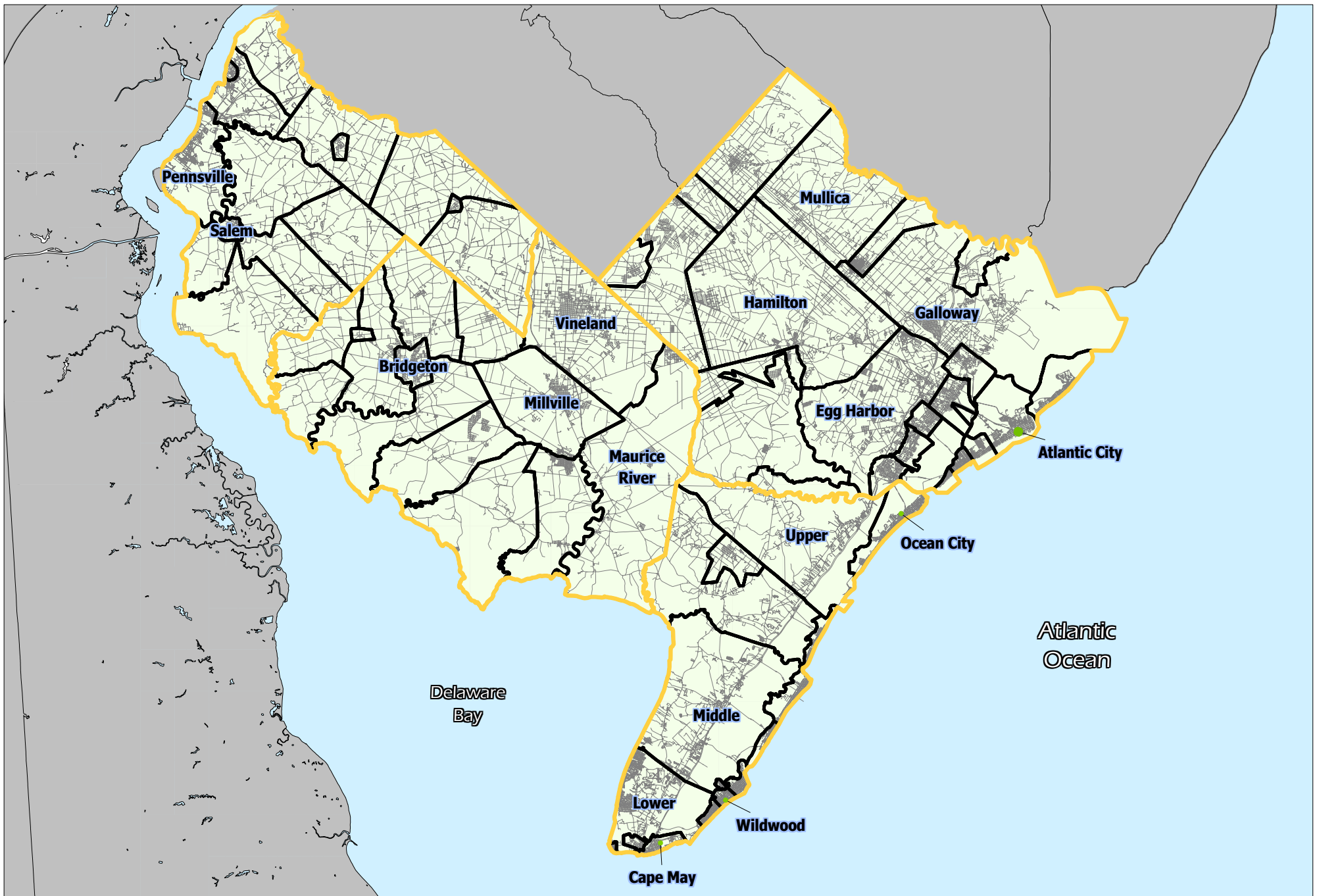


Figure 1
SJTPO Region



RTP GOALS & POLICIES

Transportation planning and decision making for the SJTPO region are guided by a series of goals and policies. These goals and policies reflect the priorities, needs, and values of the region's citizens, decision makers, and business community. A questionnaire was used to solicit input from members of the SJTPO Policy Board and TAC on the 2001 RTP Goals and Policies. Based on the responses, the following goals and policies are proposed to guide the regional transportation decision making process; the proposed revisions must be adopted by the board before becoming the official goals and policies of the SJTPO. (The proposed revisions are highlighted in bold font.)

❖ Improve safety

- Ensure the safety and security of users of highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian and freight systems.
- **Ensure the security of all transportation facilities in the region.**
- Fully integrate emergency evacuation issues into all regional planning, as well as corridor planning and project development as appropriate.
- Continue and enhance support of the South Jersey Traffic Safety Alliance and integrate traffic, **bicycle** and pedestrian safety considerations in SJTPO's programs.

❖ Support the regional economy

- Advance projects to interconnect the transportation system.
- Improve access to areas of major employment and tourism.
- Improve the movement of people and goods in the region.
- Advance projects that support tourism in the region.

❖ Reduce congestion

- Optimize the efficiency and use of the existing transportation system.
- Develop and use innovative technologies.
- Using the SJTPO CMS, invest in new highway capacity only if it can be shown that other measures are not able to address existing and projected need.

❖ Promote transportation choices for the movement of people and goods

- Expand and improve other (non-auto) transportation systems as needed: aviation, passenger rail, marine, rail freight, bicycle, pedestrian and public transit.
- Advance projects that enhance mobility for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders.
- Provide for affordable mobility options to all segments of the transportation disadvantaged (young, elderly, handicapped and poor) and support welfare to work transportation initiatives.

❖ Protect and improve the environment

- Encourage the use of alternative transportation modes that have a lesser impact on environmental resources than SOVs.
- Minimize negative environmental and social impacts of transportation improvements and augment the positive.
- Ensure that transportation improvements preserve historic character, culture or sense of place.

- ❖ **Restore, preserve and maintain the existing transportation system**
 - Ensure the key elements of the transportation system are restored, preserved and maintained.
- ❖ **Secure dependable, reliable sources of funds**
 - Pursue all avenues for transportation funding.
 - Support transit-operating subsidies to ensure affordable mobility options.
 - Advance projects that are cost-effective solutions for the region.
- ❖ **Recognize interrelationships between transportation and land use plans**
 - Concentrate development in existing or planned centers or corridors that are consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
 - Plan and design transportation investments that are consistent with the goals, strategies and policies of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
 - **Provide increased transportation system capacity to accommodate areas targeted and planned for growth.**

THE SEVEN PLANNING FACTORS

Federal regulations also require that Metropolitan (or Regional) Transportation Plans consider seven planning factors. Consideration of these factors ensures that MPO long-range plans attempt to achieve common objectives across the nation. The table below compares the seven planning factors to the RTP Goals and Policies.

SJTPO GOALS AND POLICIES	RELATED TEA-21 PLANNING FACTORS
Improve safety	Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area
Support the regional economy	Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
Reduce congestion	Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight
Promote transportation choices for the movement of people and goods	Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life
Protect and improve the environment	
Restore, preserve and maintain the existing transportation system	Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight
Secure dependable, reliable sources of funds	Promote efficient system management and operation
Recognize the interrelationships between transportation and land use plans	Emphasize the efficient preservation of the existing transportation system

Source: <http://www.sjtpo.org/rtp3.html>, accessed April 21, 2004

II. CONTEXT FOR TRANSPORTATION IN SOUTH JERSEY

The RTP examines the context for transportation planning and decision making in South Jersey. Long-range transportation planning requires understanding the demographic characteristics that combine to create the demand for travel. Increases or decreases in the number of people living in an area together with increases or decreases in the number of jobs in that area or region can affect the number, length, and distribution of trips that must be made and consequently the need for transportation facilities and services.

The demand for travel in southern New Jersey differs from the rest of the state in several key ways, and is dominated by three themes: the unique character of the region compared to the rest of the state, the importance of the gaming and tourism industries, and the seasonal variation in travel.

- Southern New Jersey is more rural, its population and jobs are more widely dispersed, the greatest concentration of employment is in one location – Atlantic City – and tourism is an important industry. The four southern counties that comprise the planning area offer a wide range of land uses, and particular care must be taken to protect the unique natural resources that characterize the region. The region's population density is about 1/3 of the statewide level of nearly 1,100 persons per square mile.
- Employment in Atlantic County and Cape May County is predominantly in retail trade and services (70.1% and 59.8%, respectively), demonstrating the importance of the gaming and tourism industries to their economies. While Cumberland and Salem counties can boast their manufacturing industry (19.8% and 17.2%, respectively), this is less than 20% of the jobs in those locations, and retail and services still account for about 40% of the jobs in both counties.
- The SJTPO's shore communities, in particular, experience significant seasonal fluctuations in both population and employment. The roadway network must accommodate an enormous influx of seasonal and recreational visitors, most of whom travel by car or bus. During the tourist season, the population of Cape May County alone grows to more than five times its size, and this season has expanded to span 9-10 months of the year. Atlantic City is a year-round destination for millions of tourists.

SJTPO DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

Atlantic County continues to have the largest population in the area and the greatest number of jobs (see Table 1). By 2025, it is forecast to experience the greatest increase in both people and employment, bringing another almost 64,000 jobs into the region. Atlantic City is by far the largest single employment center in the region. Cape May and Cumberland counties are projected to experience more moderate growth. Salem County, in contrast, will grow at a much lower rate: only 5% in population and 10% in employment.

Table 1 - SJTPO Regional Population and Employment Forecasts

County	POPULATION				EMPLOYMENT			
	Total		Change		Total		Change	
	2000	2025	Net	%	2000	2025	Net	%
Atlantic	252,552	330,367	77,815	30.8%	125,739	189,516	63,777	50.7%
Cape May	102,326	123,066	20,740	20.3%	40,012	49,375	9,363	23.4%
Cumberland	146,438	181,481	35,043	23.9%	60,400	86,470	26,070	43.2%
Salem	64,285	67,500	3,215	5.0%	22,600	24,860	2,260	10.0%
Total	565,601	702,414	136,813	24.2%	248,751	350,221	101,470	40.8%

Source: SJTPO and Census 2000

Table 2 shows the age distribution in the region. The percentages by age cohorts are fairly evenly spread by county, with the exception of Cape May County, which has an older overall average and a 65+ population of 20.2 %, reflecting the higher number of retirees residing within that county. Not surprisingly, the number of people in the region aged 44 – 64 has increased from 19.7% in 1990 to 23% in 2000 as the Baby Boomers age.

Many shore communities have significant population of seniors. Planning for New Jersey's future will need to address the mobility needs of increasing number of mature drivers.¹

Table 2 - Population by Age Group Age - 2000

County	1 - 17 Years Old		18 - 44 Years Old		45 - 64 Years Old		65 Years Old+	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Atlantic	63,855	25.3	97,699	38.7	56,561	22.4	34,437	13.6
Cape May	22,859	22.3	32,640	31.9	26,146	25.6	20,681	20.2
Cumberland	37,203	25.4	58,128	39.7	32,020	21.9	19,087	13.0
Salem	16,450	25.6	22,978	35.7	15,546	24.2	9,311	14.5
Total	140,367	24.8	211,445	37.4	130,273	23.0	83,516	14.8

Source: SJTPO and Census 2000

¹ Senior Safety Study: Task 1 Memorandum, NJDOT, October 2002

III. CHALLENGES FOR THE REGION

The SJTPO faces numerous challenges in meeting the region's travel needs now and in the future. This section describes those challenges identified through the RTP process. Specific actions in response to these challenges are presented in the Implementation Plan section.

RELIEVING CONGESTION

More people, more jobs, more tourist attractions inevitably mean more cars and trucks on the roadways. Frequently traffic flow can be improved through relatively low-cost projects, such as intersection improvements. Major problems, however, can justify adding lanes, although this is done only when other options have been exhausted.

SJTPO recently completed the development of a South Jersey Congestion Management System (SJ CMS) to support its transportation planning efforts. Unlike the statewide Congestion Management System, the SJ CMS addresses the unique travel conditions, time periods, and unusual peaking characteristics in the SJTPO region caused primarily by seasonal fluctuations in travel to the shore and weekend evening travel to Atlantic City.

MAKING DRIVING, BICYCLING, AND WALKING SAFER

The work of the South Jersey Traffic Safety Alliance (SJ TSA) should be continued as it brings together traffic safety professionals from the fields of law enforcement, education, fire, rescue, engineering and planning, to develop region-wide traffic safety programs, share successful practices, exchange information, and support capital projects.

The SJ TSA provides valuable local input into the regional transportation planning process conducted by the SJTPO. In the plan update process, the SJ TSA was asked for input on issues and locations where they see traffic safety problems (roads, intersections, signage, drainage, sight triangles, etc.) This input serves to help in the identification of problem areas based on safety concerns. Facilities identified as exhibiting safety concerns should be evaluated to determine if they are candidates for further technical study to determine appropriate corrective action measures.

Current federal planning rules call for a renewed emphasis on safety considerations in the metropolitan planning process. Since its inception in 1998, the South Jersey Traffic Safety Alliance has helped SJTPO select locations for sidewalks; acquire speed trailers; and identify specific problem locations for the Regional Transportation Plan. In a reciprocating relationship, SJTPO has acted on behalf of Alliance members, reaching out to appropriate members of the County Planning Department, County Engineers, and the New Jersey Department of Transportation, to address specific safety concerns identified by Alliance members.

The challenge is to address known safety concerns in the region and to anticipate future safety challenges as the region becomes increasingly more populated, older, and more heavily traveled.

PLANNING EMERGENCY EVACUATION ROUTES

The SJTPO region has a very significant inflow of people throughout the recreational season. During an emergency, the ability to evacuate this large population base, which is many times greater than the year-round population, is critical. Evacuation may be necessary during severe weather, when roadways are flooded, making many impassible. The ability to provide a

system that can withstand the adverse elements and reliably move a large number of persons in a limited amount of time is a fundamental need of the shore communities and region.

The SJTPO is assessing the performance of the region's transportation system in an emergency situation. The new South Jersey Travel Demand Model is being used to evaluate the ability of the region's roadways to evacuate a large number of vehicles in a short time period. The analysis will identify critical links and bottlenecks and test various measures, including reversible lanes and other measures. The results of the study will help define the critical needs related to emergency evacuation in the region.

The challenge is to safely and reliably evacuate a large population base.

PRESERVING AN AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

The SJTPO is faced with the enormous task of maintaining the existing transportation infrastructure while addressing future needs by undertaking significant improvements to the infrastructure. The scale of existing maintenance needs has necessitated targeting most resources and efforts to making these necessary repairs. The need to maintain the existing highway and bridge system in a state of good repair is of paramount importance to the SJTPO region. In particular, nearly one-quarter of the bridges throughout the region are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. This backlog of bridge needs must be systematically addressed to bring all bridges into a state of good repair. At the same time, funds needed to maintain and preserve the system must be made available, as deferring maintenance leads to increased long-term maintenance costs and shortened useful lifecycles.

ENHANCING TOURISM

The region's roadway network must accommodate an enormous influx of visitors, most of whom travel by car or bus. Tourism is a major industry in the SJTPO region, and not just in Atlantic City. While the casino resorts generate the greatest number of visitors to the region, ecotourism and cultural and heritage attractions are becoming increasingly popular.

Atlantic City is a year-round destination for millions of tourists. In 2003, the city attracted an average of 2.7 million tourists a month. Of this number, 76% and 23% traveled through the region in automobiles and buses, respectively. In addition, during the summer peak, the population of Cape May County alone grows to more than five times its year-round resident population, and the tourist season has expanded to include 9-10 months of the year. More than 20 million trips were taken to Cape May County in 2000.

The increased demand on the transportation system is tremendous and must be addressed. Tourism, the largest industry in the region, cannot thrive if visitors are unable to travel comfortably, and the quality of life of the region's residents is greatly affected by congestion and delay. The challenge is to create a transportation system with the flexibility to accommodate the large amounts of traffic generated by non-residents.

GETTING WORKERS TO JOBS

Employment and tourism, the region's #1 source of revenue, are closely linked in the SJTPO region. Atlantic City is the single biggest employment center by far in Atlantic County, and in the region, with 61,697 jobs in 2000. In comparison, the second biggest employment center, Vineland, employed half that number of workers (30,793) that year, and only 12,582 people worked in Millville, the third largest employment center.

Projections for 2025 show continued significant changes in the distribution of population and employment. Both Egg Harbor and Galloway townships will outstrip Atlantic City in total population, while Atlantic City will grow by only 2%. However, the number of available jobs will continue to be focused in Atlantic City, with an increase by 2025 of 72%. Although employment will grow elsewhere in the region, it will not keep pace with the rapid population expansion in such areas as Egg Harbor and Galloway townships. In addition, while most people work in the same county where they live, a significant number of people also travel from Cape May and Cumberland counties to Atlantic City to work. As a result, even more people will commute to Atlantic City, increasing the number of travelers using the region's roadways and available public transportation. This future imbalance of population and employment growth is shown in Figure 2 below.

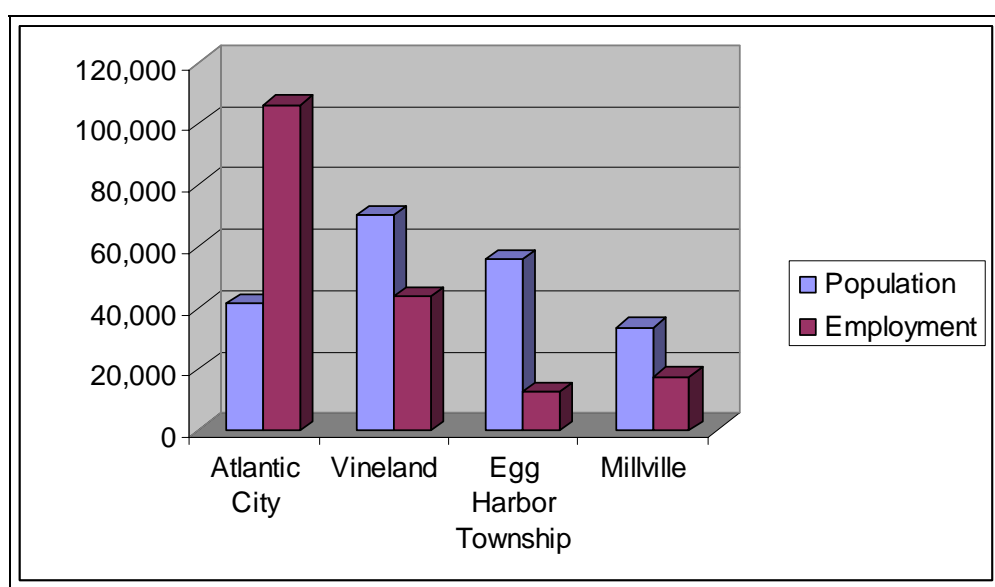


Figure 2 - Population & Employment in Key Cities (2025)

Not surprisingly, the dominant mode of travel to work in 2000 in this region was the automobile. The overwhelming majority of people (79%) drove alone, and 11% carpooled. With the exception of only Atlantic County, more people walked or bicycled than took public transit. The challenge is to move people to work efficiently, with minimum delay and congestion.

IMPROVING FREIGHT MOVEMENT

Although tourism is the main industry in this region, Cumberland and Salem counties do have some manufacturing industry (19.8% and 17.2%, respectively). However, while they are important, supporting these manufacturing operations is not the only, or perhaps even the greatest, motivation for improving the freight network. More than half a million residents of the region rely on goods movement, primarily by truck, for almost everything they use on a daily basis, including food, clothes, furniture, housing materials, and the list goes on.

The SJTPO has identified the need to improve the ability to move more freight by rail, and is working with NJDOT to address other freight-related issues such as the need for increased

road maintenance to accommodate bigger and heavier trucks and the problems created by tractor-trailers delivering goods in older cities.

PROVIDING TRAVEL ALTERNATIVES

Although transit service is available in every county of the SJTPO region, it is generally sparse due to the low population densities. Most of the region's transit service is concentrated in Atlantic County, and more specifically in Atlantic City. This is a result of the tens of thousands of commuters and tourists who work and visit the city on a daily basis year round and thus provide the demand that is necessary for successful transit operations.

As the number of jobs in Atlantic City increases and the population in nearby communities rises at an even greater rate, increased bus service will be needed, both between Atlantic City and other SJTPO locations and within some of the larger communities. It is hoped that NJ TRANSIT's Atlantic City Rail Line will continue to increase in popularity, encouraging more visitors to travel by rail rather than by automobile. SJTPO will also be pursuing the recommendations of the South Jersey Regional Rail Study, which evaluated four existing rail corridors to determine the condition of their infrastructure, environmental constraints, and improvement costs for possible reactivation of passenger rail service.

In addition, a number of public and private organizations provide demand-responsive transportation services in the SJTPO region; NJ TRANSIT's Access Link, Cumberland County's CATS, Cape May County's Fare Free Transportation, Salem County's Senior Citizen & Disabled Resident Transportation Program, and Atlantic County's CARTS are some of the most visible. Many entities provide transit services for agency clients, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and participants in Work First New Jersey, the state's welfare-to-work initiative.

As Baby Boomers continue to retire to the resort areas within the region, special services for older residents will be in greater demand. Increased coordination among all the special transit service providers, including permitting the use of such services by a wider range of clients, could result in a larger and more effective overall network.

Further improvements and additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities are also needed to provide travel alternatives, as well as for recreation purposes.

IV. RTP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The RTP Implementation Plan proposes improvements and action items in response to the region's identified needs and problems, and enhancements to the process used to evaluate and plan for the future health and function of the transportation system. In addition to the FY 2004-6 Transportation Improvement Program and Study Corridors, this proposed multimodal plan includes regional corridor improvements, enhancements to the regional travel demand model, the SJTPO Congestion Management System, safety and emergency evacuation, ITS, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, multimodal including freight, and tourism.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the SJTPO lists state and federally funded state and local highway projects, public transit projects, and statewide transportation programs scheduled for implementation within the next three fiscal years (2004 through 2006). The TIP is required to be financially constrained and provides for \$220 million of transportation investments in southern New Jersey for this period. Figure 3 depicts the FY 2004-6 SJTPO TIP Highway Projects.

SJTPO STUDY CORRIDORS

A series of fourteen Study Corridors was developed to assist in the MPO planning process. The corridors are depicted in Figure 4. The Study Corridors represent the major travel movements of the SJTPO planning area, and serve to focus planning and analysis efforts where needs and problems are greatest; together they create a comprehensive understanding of transportation needs and concerns within and across the region, addressing a variety of issues confronting the region's travelers. The Study Corridors are described in more detail in Chapter Four of the RTP Update, the Multimodal Transportation System Assessment.

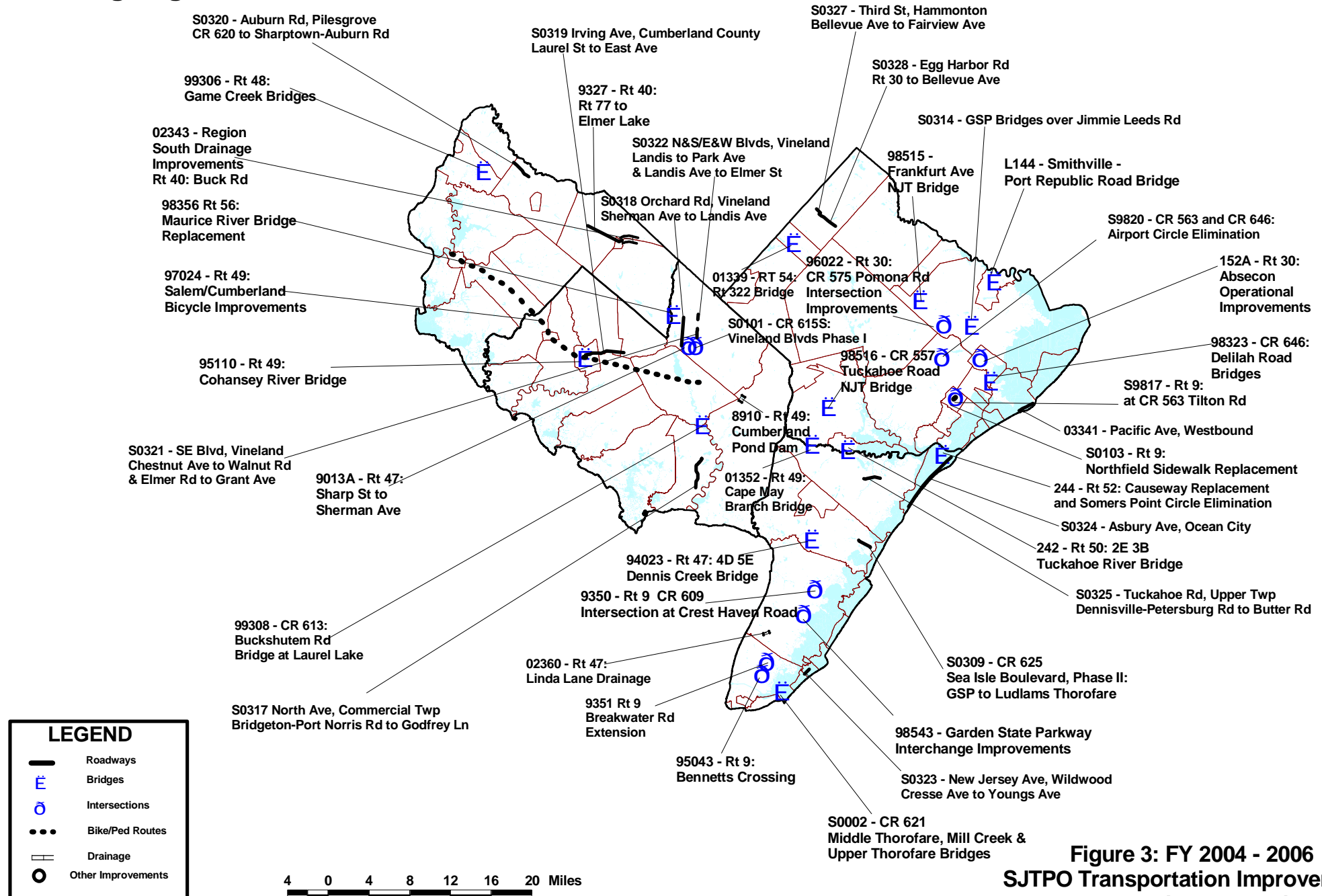
The Study Corridors are based on a composite of data sources and screening methods, including NJDOT Management Systems Data, CMS problem areas, SJTPO Congestion Management System (SJ CMS) Needs and Corridors, and SJTDM model runs.

The Study Corridors enable the examination of local travel markets in the context of regional conditions and priorities. They provide a method for comparative analysis of critical roadway segments in the region and can be used to prioritize investment of transportation resources that is consistent with established and demonstrated need.

Table 3 - SJTPO Study Corridors

Study Corridor	Route ID & Location	Limits
1	US 9, Atlantic County	NJ 52 (Ocean City) to Burlington County Line
2	US 9, Cape May County	Cape May Ferry to NJ 52 (Ocean City)
3	Atlantic City Expressway, Atlantic County	Atlantic City to Camden County Line
4	US 30 (White Horse Pike), Atlantic County	Atlantic City to Camden County Line
5	US 322/ US 40, Atlantic County	Atlantic City to Gloucester County Line
6	US 40, Salem and Atlantic Counties	NJTP to US 322
7	NJ 47/ NJ 347, Cumberland and Cape May Counties	NJ 55 to Wildwood
8	NJ 55/ CR 615, Cumberland and Salem Counties	NJ 47 to Gloucester Counties
9	NJ 49, Salem, Cumberland, Atlantic, and Cape May Counties	I-295 to NJ 50
10	NJ 50/ CR 563, Atlantic and Cape May Counties	US 9 to Burlington County Line
11	NJ 77, Cumberland and Salem Counties	NJ 49 to Gloucester County Line
12	I-295/ US 130/ NJTP Interchange, Salem County	US 40, NJ 48, US 322, Delaware Memorial Bridge
13	Garden State Parkway, Cape May County	US 9 to Great Egg Harbor Bay
14	Garden State Parkway, Atlantic County	Great Egg Harbor Bay to Burlington County Line

South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization



**Figure 3: FY 2004 - 2006
SJTPO Transportation Improvement
Program Highway Projects**

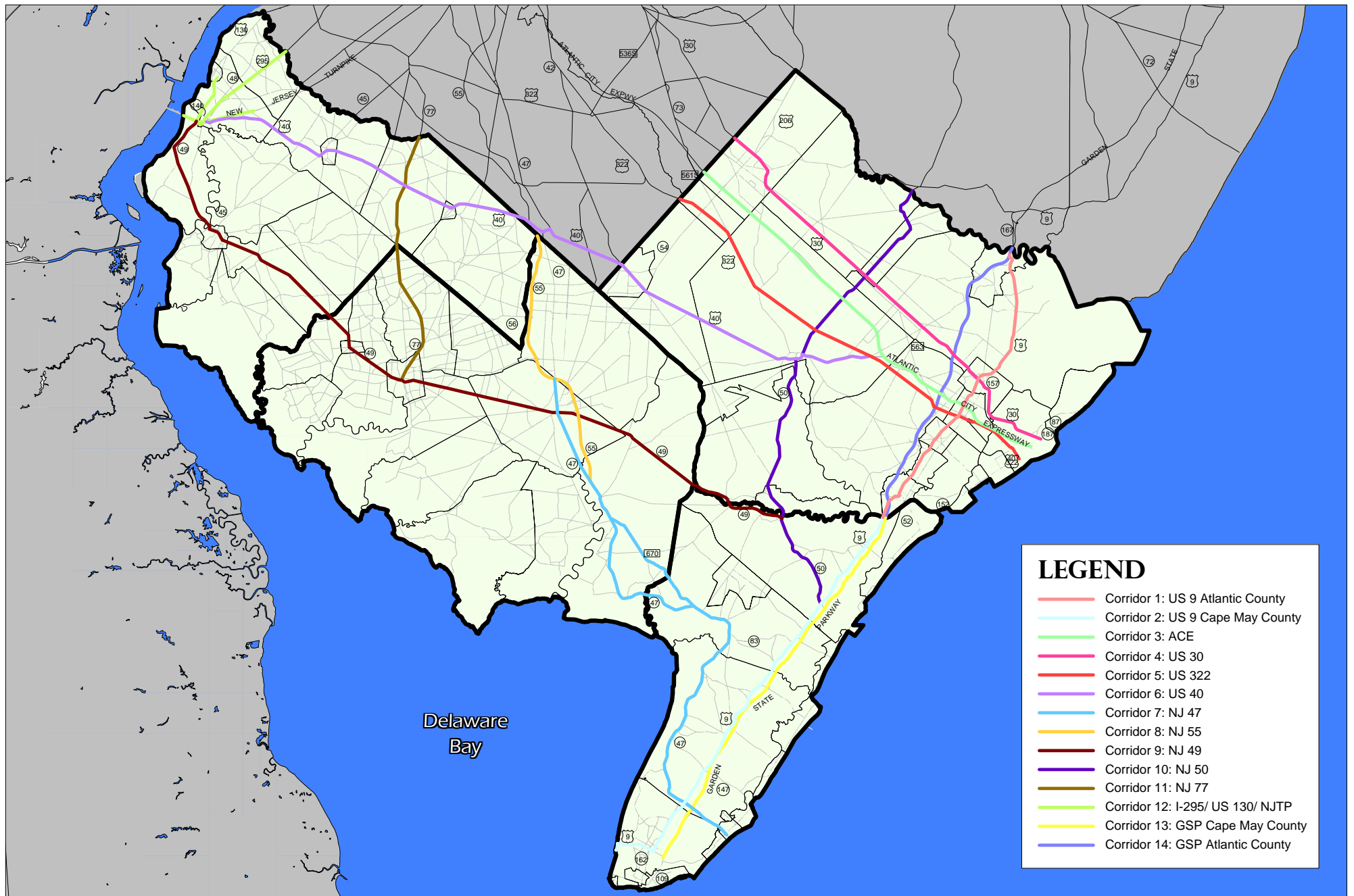


Figure 4
SJTPO Regional Transportation Study Corridors

REGIONAL CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The SJTPO regions covers a relatively large land mass, yet the primary highway system consists of a limited number of arterials. These arterials must serve the dual purpose of providing regional mobility and access to centers of activities for longer-distance travel, as well as localized mobility and access for commuters and residents. The amount of travel demand placed on the roadways varies significantly based on the day of the week and the season of the year. Volumes can increase significantly in the summer season on many roadways. This places a serious strain on the region's primary roadways. Minor improvement concepts have been proposed or are being advanced to improve the efficiency of the existing system. However, a comprehensive assessment of the long-term needs of the primary corridors in the SJTPO region is necessary to determine the extent of the deficiencies and to develop comprehensive improvement plans. These improvements are expected to include high-level capacity additions such as more lanes and possible new roadways on new alignments where needed. The following corridors are proposed as priority corridors for study and concept development.

Route 55

The Routes 55 /47 Corridor extends from Route 55 and 47 in Vineland to the terminus of Route 55 at Route 47 in Port Elizabeth, and follows Route 47/347 toward Cape May County and the shore. Several areas along this corridor are identified as significant problem areas both now and in the future. In fact, this corridor has been identified as a problem corridor for many years, and the issue predates the creation of the SJTPO as an organization. Interim improvement concepts, such as signalized intersection upgrades and a modest motorist information system, have provided some short-term relief, but still fall far short of significantly improving traffic flow conditions in the corridor today and do little to address the long-term needs of this growing regional problem.

The Route 55 corridor serves two vital functions in the region: as a primary recreational corridor, and as a primary emergency evacuation corridor. As the tourist season and the demands it places on the system extend in duration with each passing year, more stress is placed on the primarily local roadways that service traffic in this corridor. Numerous studies have been conducted calling for improvements in the corridor. The Shore Connection Committee, composed of local, county, and state transportation agencies and officials along with business and citizens groups, concluded in 1998 that significant seasonal congestion exists in and around the corridor and measures should be taken to address this growing problem. The Committee also supported the completion of Route 55 as a long-term improvement. The corridor currently experiences a high number of accidents, as the traffic flow conditions have contributed to 1387 accidents between 1995 and 2001.

The SJTPO has called for measures to add sufficient capacity through major expansion, upgrading of existing facilities, or the development of new facilities on new alignments to develop a lasting solution. A possible completion of the Route 55 corridor would extend from the existing terminus of Route 55 in the City of Millville, Cumberland County, to the Garden State Parkway (GSP), in Dennis Township, Cape May County. The proposed four-lane, limited access freeway would be built primarily as a new road extending from Route 55 to cross CR-548, Hunter's Mill Road, CR-550, and CR-651 before following Route 83 on the existing, upgraded alignment to US-9 and GSP. Additional concepts and potential alignments have been proposed.

From a traffic perspective, a new segment of Route 55 is forecast to carry a significant amount of traffic volume, as the new roadway would draw recreational and long distance traffic from overtaxed local roadways not designed to handle the current and future demands. Congestion and delays are present on Route 47 and Route 49, particularly during the summer months, and the future demand is expected to exceed capacity on these two state roads. Thus, the new segment of Route 55 would provide significant relief to the roadway system, as summer traffic volume would be diverted from two-lane state and county roads.

The shore communities of Cape May County contribute significantly to the state and federal treasuries. Tourism is a major revenue generator in the region, and employs over one hundred thousand people in the area. The southern resorts and businesses are in competition with other regions, and failure of the transportation system to serve existing and future demand will lead to the erosion of this important economic engine. In addition, as demonstrated in the emergency evacuation assessment, completion of Route 55 is forecast to significantly improve the ability to move people and goods in the event of an emergency. In these times of increased security threats and the need for homeland security, Route 55 could play a vital role in everyday life as well as providing an enhanced level of safety that is impossible to achieve with the existing transportation system. In events ranging from hurricanes to nuclear emergencies, the benefits of improved evacuation of up to 650,000 visitors, and the residences and workers in 16 municipalities, far outweigh the cost and impact of completing this vital missing transportation link.

Improving the Route 55/47 corridor, in a manner that is respectful of the communities through which it passes, and in a least intrusive environmental manner as possible, is a critical need. The years and years of waiting for action should come to an end.

Cumberland County Route 552

This corridor extends from Laurel Street in Bridgeton City to Main Road in the City of Vineland, and along Orchard Road from CR 552 to Chestnut Avenue. The study was undertaken to determine the transportation needs of the Corridor based on both existing and future design hour traffic flows. Other areas such as school speed limits and emergency response travel patterns were also examined. The findings showed that the CR 552 Corridor will ultimately require widening to a four to five lane section from Kenyon Road to Main Road with additional improvements at some of the intersections. West of the Carmel area, CR 552 as a two-lane roadway will operate with satisfactorily flows. The Orchard Road corridor from CR 552 to Chestnut Avenue will operate sufficiently as a two-lane roadway; however, the County should re-examine the need for widening Orchard Road to a three-lane section with the potential development in the area.

With the various intersection and roadway improvements in place, CR 552 should maintain acceptable levels of service. In order to limit the widening that may be needed at various intersections and to aid in decreasing traffic along and within the vicinity of the corridor, trip reduction strategies and/or the introduction of public transit along the corridors should be considered. Ongoing evaluation of the corridor either through traffic studies as required by the various municipalities or the County, or through the SJTPO yearly traffic data collection program, is recommended.

Wrangleboro Road Corridor

This corridor extends from the Black Horse Pike (U.S. 40/322) to Duerer St. (CR 561). This corridor serves as a north-south connector between rapidly developing sections of Egg Harbor, Hamilton, and Galloway townships, and is a vital link for both local and regional travelers. Access to several key regional travel corridors is provided through an interchange with the Atlantic City Expressway and signalized intersections at the Black Horse Pike (U.S. 40/322), White Horse Pike (U.S. 30), and Tilton Road (CR 563); the Atlantic City Airport lies adjacent as well. A key element of the project is a widening of the bridge over the Atlantic City Expressway, which is proposed in a study currently being conducted by SJTA. Widening of the Wrangleboro Road/ Pomona Road corridor, as well as intersection improvements at Wrangleboro Road/ Tilton Road and Pomona Road/US-30 are currently in the concept development phase.

Route 9/Garden State Parkway Corridor

A study of this corridor is currently underway.

BRIDGES

Bridge Management System data supplied by NJDOT for 2003 indicate a total of about 23% of the region's bridges are either *structurally deficient* or *functionally obsolete* (10.9 and 11.9% respectively). This actually represents an improvement compared to the total of more than 28% from the Department's data for 2000 (14.6% *structurally deficient* and 13.5% *functionally obsolete*). The SJTPO should follow this trend and continue to improve the region's bridge infrastructure.

SOUTH JERSEY TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL ENHANCEMENTS

The South Jersey Travel Demand Model was placed into service in 2000. Model applications include support of regional travel forecasting efforts and the air quality conformity assessment. The model was upgraded as part of the 2004 RTP Update as part of an ongoing process to ensure the quality and accuracy. The current enhancements include

- improvements to the trip distribution model the modal split logic modules
- trip assignment validation to a new base year of 2000 consistent with the 2000 Census and revised demographic projections
- assignment runs through the 2025 forecasting year using the updated demographics
- develop an emergency evacuation scenario and implications for regional planning efforts

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Although it has been useful in other part of New Jersey the statewide Congestion Management System (NJ CMS) has severe limitations when applied to the unique travel conditions, time periods, and peaking characteristics of the SJTPO region, where congestion is most severe on summer weekends for recreational and shore-oriented travel, and weekend evening travel related to the Atlantic City Gaming industry.

To address these deficiencies, the SJTPO Congestion Management System (SJ CMS) was conceived as a long-term, multi-phased effort to develop the data resources, tools, and procedures relevant to transportation planning efforts in the SJTPO region. Phase I of SJ CMS development was completed in 2002; Phase II was completed in 2003. To date, the SJ CMS development effort has completed the following milestones:

1. established the critical parameters and performance measures for identifying and evaluating congestion and applicable in the SJTPO region
2. defined analysis areas and applicable volume to capacity ratio (v/c) ranges for measuring congestion using the South Jersey Travel Demand Model (SJTDM)
3. packaged and applied these data resources, measures, and tools into a database tool called the *SJ CMS Tracker* used to identify, track, and evaluate congested intersections, interchanges, and corridors in the four-county region
4. defined these congested locations as *CMS Needs*
5. developed a traffic monitoring program to coordinate ongoing data collection efforts with the need to monitor congestion at identified *CMS Need* locations

The SJTPO has successfully integrated the SJ CMS and the SJ CMS Tracker into the planning process. Examples include the following:

- Identification of more than 100 existing and 125 future CMS Needs
- Development of the SJTPO Study Corridors
- Identification of refinements and critical needs for the SJTPO data collection and traffic counting work program.
- SJ CMS data and findings have been applied to the following studies:
 - Route 9/Garden State Parkway corridor in Atlantic and Cape May Counties
 - Wrangleboro/Pomona Road

After the completion of the CMS Need identification process, those locations with identified transportation deficiencies (these are called CMS Needs in the SJ CMS documentation) will be grouped together into study corridors based on the various performance measures and standards set forth. These CMS Need locations include deficient roadway segments and intersections that have been identified and analyzed individually, but because strategies that are appropriate for one need location may affect other need locations, it becomes necessary to examine the inter-relationships among these locations and to group together adjacent and/or contiguous locations into study corridors. In general, if a CMS Need intersection is located within or in close proximity to a CMS Need segment, it will be considered of the CMS Need segment from an analysis point of view.

A Total Score for each corridor was calculated and an overall ranking was prepared with the highest scores representing the high priority Study Corridors. From the ranking of these segments, the project team drafted a candidate list of potential corridor studies for SJTPO region by county; special consideration was reserved for corridors that are significant for seasonal travel (see Table 4).

Table 4 - Potential SJTPO Corridor Studies

County	High	Medium	Special Consideration
Atlantic	A24 (US 9) A34 (CR 585) A42 (CR 563)	A5 (Garden State Parkway) A18 (US 30 - White Horse Pike) A36 (SR 152) and A46 (CR 559) A44 (CR 604/CR 563) A47 (CR 670)	A24 + A34 + A42 as one study
Cape May	CM13 (US 9 - SR109 to Cape May Ferry)	CM1 (Garden State Parkway) CM41 (Garden State Parkway) CM12 (US 9 - SR 47 to CR 657) CM42 (US 9 - Nummytown Rd to SR 47) CM43 (US 9 - CR 657 to Atlantic County line) CM31 (SR 109) and CM46 (SR 162) CM29 (CR 623) and CM44 (CR 631)	CM41 + northern portion of CM43 CM1 + southern portion of CM43
Cumberland	CU11 (SR 47) CU23 (CR 615 - East & West Blvd.)	CU21 (CR 552 - Sherman Avenue) CU30 (CR 540/SR 56)	Southern portion of CU4 (SR 55) + CU10 (SR47) + CU12 (SR 347 - Summer months)
Salem		S8 (Main St) + S6 (US 130) + S12 (SR 140)	

SAFETY

Facilities identified as exhibiting safety concerns should be evaluated to determine appropriate corrective action measures. The work of the South Jersey Traffic Safety Alliance should be continued to provide valuable local input into the problem identification process and public education.

ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Maximizing the efficiency of the existing highway system is a priority in view of limited financial resources and environmental constraints. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), including motorist information systems and incident detection systems, are particularly important to the South Jersey region due to the large number of motorists who are unfamiliar with the highways, mainly recreational travelers, and the limited capacity of primary and secondary routes to absorb incident-related capacity reductions. Variable message signs (VMS) have been used in the region during peak periods and have proven effective. A system of closed-circuit cameras linked to VMS signs and the South Jersey Traffic Operation Center operated by NJDOT provides motorists with “live” traffic information regarding route selection during the peak travel periods. Additional measures, such as the expansion of the Atlantic City Computerized Traffic Signalization system and other signal systems, have also been effective in improving vehicle throughput. Additionally, E-ZPass has now been implemented on all the toll roadways and bridges leading into the SJTPO region.

SJTPO is currently engaged in a major effort with the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority to develop statewide and regional (for SJTPO and NJTPA) ITS Architectures by April 2005. The Regional and Statewide ITS

Architectures will establish the framework for ensuring institutional agreement and technical integration of ITS projects in the respective areas, and will identify opportunities for making ITS investments in a more cost – effective fashion.

TRANSIT

Although transit service is available in every county of the SJTPO region, it is generally sparse due to the low population densities. Most of the region's transit service is concentrated in Atlantic County, and more specifically in Atlantic City. This is a result of the tens of thousands of commuters and tourists who work and visit the city on a daily basis year round and thus provide the demand that is necessary for successful transit operations.

However, there are many transit needs in the region. There are unmet needs for transit-dependent and rural populations in the region. Additionally, as employment continues to spread out along highway corridors, new bus services may be needed and expansions of existing services may be warranted. Further, it is critical to build upon the transit services that currently operate in the region so that the mobility offered by these essential services are maintained and improved.

South Jersey Regional Rail Study

This Interim Report, completed in 2002, evaluated the potential for restoring passenger rail service to abandoned lines and freight rail corridors within the South Jersey area. Four candidate rail corridors were identified for further study:

1. Atlantic City to Mays Landing
2. Winslow Junction to Cape May
3. Millville-Vineland-Winslow Junction - Bridgeton (spur)
4. Glassboro - Vineland.

The study concluded that are that each of the four corridors shows some level of merit for consideration of the reactivation of passenger service. The results of the analysis performed in this study indicate no “fatal flaws” were found in any corridor that would eliminate an entire corridor from moving to the next phase of study, although specific aspects of several corridors present significant challenges.

Currently, the only rail corridor offering commuter rail service in the SJTPO region is the Atlantic City Rail Line serving the towns of Hammonton, Egg Harbor City, Absecon, and Atlantic City. The South Jersey Regional Rail Study provides the basis for more detailed planning to reactivate one or more abandoned rail lines for passenger service. Future phases of this long-term effort will yield detailed ridership, environmental, and cost analyses.

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN

SJTPO has taken many steps to address the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. The current Transportation Improvement Program (2006-2006) for the region identifies the following projects for implementation:

County	Route	Program	Description
Atlantic	9	Northfield Sidewalk Replacement	New sidewalks, curbs, curb cuts, and crosswalks
Salem	40	Route 77 to Elmer Lake	Provision of 8-foot shoulders for bicycle compatibility, construction of new sidewalks, enhanced pedestrian crossings, and signage for pedestrians
Salem/ Cumberland	49	Salem/Cumberland, Salem River to Route 55 Bicycle Improvements	Improvements to gaps on a primarily bicycle-compatible route. May further include installation of crosswalks, bicycle lane striping and signage, and improved access to bridges
Cape May/ Atlantic	52	Causeway Replacement and Somers Point Elimination	Provision of a wide sidewalk for pedestrian and bicycle use, and recreational pull-off areas for pedestrian access
Salem	130	Penns Grove Sidewalk Replacement	New sidewalks and crosswalks at various locations along the corridor
Cape May	CR 609	Crest Haven Road	Pedestrian access improvements.
Cumberland		Buckshutem Road Bridge at Laurel Lake	Provision of two 8-foot shoulders and a sidewalk on one side of the bridge

Cumberland County Bike Trail Study

The majority of Cumberland County's roads are favorable for bicycling by virtue of their wide shoulders or very low traffic volumes. The Cumberland County Bike Trail Study provides a comprehensive review of actions, system improvements and programs that can help advance bicycling for local transportation and recreation uses as well as for attracting bicycle touring and events. The Bike Trail Study provides recommendations that integrate or expand bicycling into existing County efforts such as the County Ecotourism Plan, the County Transportation Master Plan and regional bicycle safety programs. Critical components of the study include a mapping effort that evaluated 300 miles of County roadways for bicycle compatibility; a recommended county bike route network and potential trail facility locations; suggested programmatic strategies for attracting bicycling activity to the County. Potential funding opportunities from all levels of government, commercial and nonprofit private sectors to noted resources and organizations are also identified.

Priority Actions

The following are proposed as priority actions for bicycle and pedestrian travel in the SJTPO region.

- *Support Efforts by Counties to Advance Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects* - The SJTPO will support efforts by the counties to advance bicycle and pedestrian projects so that more short trips can be served in the region by these alternative modes. Many counties and municipalities in the region have developed local bicycle and pedestrian facility plans, adopted bicycle and pedestrian-friendly comprehensive plans and/or made requirements for bicycle facilities part of the development review process. The improvements called for in these plans should be prioritized for funding.
- *Continue to Work with NJDOT to Maximize New Facility Mileage in South Jersey* - The use of bike and walk modes continues to grow in the region. The shares of bike and walk to work in the SJTPO region are higher than the overall state shares, and within the

region, the greatest shares of walk and bike to work trips are found in Atlantic and Cape May counties. The barrier islands in Atlantic and Cape May have high population and employment densities as well as mixed land uses and a resort environment, all of which supports bicycle and pedestrian travel. Some high density population centers in Cumberland County (Bridgeton, Millville, and Vineland) and Salem County (Penns Grove and Salem City) also permit walking or biking for some work, school, and shopping trips. The update of the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, being developed by NJDOT, will be reviewed when available and the guidance incorporated into the SJTPO planning process as much as possible

Facilities need to be provided to increase foot and bicycle traffic for both tourism and non-tourism-related travel in the region. - Roadway improvements should be planned, designed, constructed, and maintained to accommodate shared use by motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. Additionally, funds need to be secured to continue the development of designated facilities for bicyclists and for improved facilities for pedestrians, including sidewalks, especially in the more urbanized areas.

- *Assist in System Assessment and Planning and Design Standards Work Efforts of the Counties and NJDOT/NJ TRANSIT* - This action will help ensure that roadway improvements accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, transit facilities are accessible by both pedestrians and bicyclists, and designated facilities are designed to current standards.
- *Develop Regional Promotional or Marketing Materials* - Educating the public about mobility options is a critical step to expand the use of non-motorized modes of travel and to support greater travel by bicycle in southern New Jersey. Given the developed tourism markets in Atlantic and Cape May counties as well as growing eco-tourism along the Delaware Bay shore, a comprehensive guide containing information on bicycle routes and facilities in the region is a priority.

MULTIMODAL INCLUDING FREIGHT

The movement of goods is vital to the economic well-being of an area. Freight movement can have a considerable impact on quality-of-life issues. Intermodal connections should be improved in the SJTPO region to facilitate the movement of goods. Upgrades to the region's rail system are important to maximize the amount of freight that can be carried by rail, thus helping to limit the increase in truck traffic. Improving access of local rail carriers to regional and interstate facilities has been identified as a need to keep the rail lines competitive and open new markets. Area airports must also have adequate access to the multimodal transportation system to promote the efficient movement of both people and goods.

Freight Issue Group

County representatives of SJTPO's Technical Advisory Committee met in February 2004 to discuss issues related to the movement of freight in the region. This meeting was held in conjunction with the Statewide Freight Plan effort. Significant issues and concerns raised at the meeting are summarized below:

- Double-stacked container freight on rail is increasing in an effort to accommodate the significant rise in the amount of freight that must be moved. Height restrictions impeded the access of double-stack rail cars to southern New Jersey.

- The Delair Bridge is a major chokepoint for freight entering from Pennsylvania. An engineering analysis is needed to determine the modifications necessary to correct this problem.
- Significant trucking activity causes capacity problems at many area intersections; turning radius is also a problem at key locations
- Freight movement in Atlantic City is not a major problem since the casinos have established their own distribution centers off island; however, trucks bringing product in do compete with the tour buses and have difficulty navigating in city streets because of their size. Unlike the buses, trucks do not have designated routes in the city.
- The Salem County port is shallow – it is being dredged to a depth of 26 feet.
- Intermodal connectors are needed to the Millville Airport (an Empowerment and Federal Trade Zone) and Pleasantville (an Urban Enterprise Zone).
- The region's peninsular shape is an inherent disadvantage for freight travel which essentially operates as a spur line. Rather than through-movements, most travel is one-way in, and then back out, so returning vehicles are empty and therefore not cost-efficient.

Millville Airport Industrial and Park Intermodal Access Plan Study

In 2002, the SJTPO sponsored a detailed study of highway access to the Millville Airport and Industrial Park. Access between Airport/Industrial Park area and major state routes such as Routes 49, 47 and 55, will be critical to attracting businesses and encouraging economic development. Currently, the majority of the signed routes to the Airport/Industrial Park convey traffic through heavily congested, urbanized residential and commercial areas in Millville. A direct connection to major State highways does not exist and the signed routes have numerous deficiencies that limit the number and size of commercial vehicles that can be accommodated. The Millville Airport Industrial and Park Intermodal Access Plan Study identified and evaluated a number of Conceptual Alternatives that would meet the project needs of improving highway access to the Airport/Industrial Park. These Conceptual Alternatives entail highway operational, capacity and safety improvements to both existing highways and proposed new highway segments.

A series of phased improvement was identified with each phase intended to accommodate a successively higher level of development.

- Short term: provides improved access to the Airport/Industrial Park within a relatively short time frame, with minor environmental impacts and permit involvements and relatively low cost.
- Intermediate: provides upgrades to accommodate additional truck traffic resulting from new development.
- Long Term: provides the most direct access to the Airport/Industrial Park; would also improve traffic circulation in the Millville area by providing a connection between the Airport/Industrial Park and the City's other Industrial Park, east of NJ Route 47. While this alternative would best meet the needs of improving access to the Airport/Industrial Park and improving overall traffic circulation of the Millville area, it would result in significant environmental impacts and require a number of State and Federal permits/approvals for construction.

TOURISM

Tourism is vital to the SJTPO region and the entire state. Tourism is New Jersey's second largest industry; in 2001 it generated \$31 billion revenue. Mobility is essential to assuring that this valuable source of employment and revenue will continue well into the future. Planning and development of regional transportation infrastructure is crucial to supporting the continued growth and economic stability of the tourism industry.

In the SJTPO region, the vast majority of visitors arrive by automobile, although a considerable number of visitors – about 6.7 million in 2003 – are casino bus passengers to Atlantic City. Prospects for growth in visit-trips by air are excellent, as plans by the South Jersey Transportation Authority for increased scheduled air service and an extensive capital improvement program at the Atlantic City International Airport near fruition.

Nevertheless, the automobile will remain far and away the dominant mode for tourism travel in the foreseeable future. Corridor planning and project development involving facilities leading to tourism areas must therefore fully acknowledge seasonality, time-of-week/time-of-day, and other trip-making characteristics common to recreational travel. This is nowhere more true than in the NJ 47/NJ 347 corridor, which, as mentioned earlier, lacks a long-term solution to the chronic and growing congestion, delay, and environmental degradation brought about by tourism-related travel.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

The SJTPO region has a very significant inflow of people throughout the recreational season. During an emergency, the ability to evacuate this large population base, which is many times greater than the year-round population, is critical. Evacuation may be necessary during severe weather, when roadways are flooded, making many impassible. The ability to provide a system that can withstand the adverse elements and reliably move a large number of persons in a limited amount of time is a fundamental need of the shore communities and region.

The SJTPO has assessed the performance of the region's transportation system in an emergency situation. The South Jersey Travel Demand Model was used to evaluate the ability of the roadways to evacuate a large number of vehicles in a short time period. The analysis identified critical links/bottlenecks and tested improvement measures, including constructing the Route 55 completion.

The scenario testing indicates that vehicle throughput in the danger districts as defined by the number of vehicle hours traveled (VHT), improves by 2.29% during the PM peak period. This improved throughput would mean that an additional 2,956 vehicles can make it through the danger districts to safety during the PM peak period. Based on an estimated vehicle occupancy of 2.0, an additional 5,912 people could make it to safety during the PM peak period.

Hourly volume forecasts indicate that the PM peak period represents 22.4% of the daily volume. Extrapolating over a 24-hour period from the PM peak period translates into an additional 13,196 vehicles or and additional 26,392 persons that can make it to safety if Route 55 Freeway is completed. These results indicate the critical need to complete Route 55 to address emergency evacuation in the region.

V. FEDERAL PLANNING GUIDELINES

Federal planning guidelines require the RTP to address certain critical issues to help assure that the plan is consistent with the governing regulatory acts, including the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

Based on these guidelines, the RTP Update must meet these key tests: financial constraint and reasonableness, and air quality conformity. The RTP also addresses the requirements of the Presidential Executive Order on Environmental Justice and documents SJTPO's Congestion Management System and its role in the regional transportation planning process.

CONSTRAINT AND REASONABLENESS

Federal transportation planning requirements assert that financial plans are a required element of regional transportation plans for MPOs. The transportation needs of the region in fact go far beyond those improvements listed in the MPO's annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which can only address the most pressing needs because of funding limitations. The SJTPO must strike a balance between funds used for maintenance and improvements to substandard infrastructure, and those used for new construction to meet growing travel demands.

The actual budgeting of federal and state funds for projects within the MPO is a product of the development of three regional MPO Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP), the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the Annual Capital Program. These programming decisions are made by cooperative participation of NJDOT, NJ Transit, local government representatives, and other agencies.

Current funding for transportation improvements in the SJTPO region is dedicated through FY 2006.² The TIP lists state and federally funded state and local highway projects, public transit projects, and statewide transportation programs scheduled for implementation within the next three fiscal years (2004 through 2006).

The FY2004-2006 TIP provides for \$220 million of transportation investments in southern New Jersey for this period, and is constrained to currently available funding.

The FY2004-6 TIP was developed over a number of months by NJDOT, NJ TRANSIT and the SJTPO. To develop the TIP, projects are screened for their ability to be advanced for implementation and to verify their scope and cost. Projects that pass this initial screening are placed in the project pool for further evaluation and review. The SJTPO employs a project prioritization process that is used to evaluate the project pool.

The current project prioritization process, coupled with funding limitations, leaves many projects with little or no financial backing. This leads to future challenges as the region continues to develop and transportation needs increase. Insufficient funding means these needs will continue to grow, especially as the region's existing transportation system ages.

² Financial data based on the following:

<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/capital/stip04-06/FinTable/Table4.pdf>, accessed March 29, 2004
<http://www.sjtpo.org/tiptables2&3.pdf>, accessed March 29, 2004

Continued federal and state funding is required to support the SJTPO's short-term investment program. Although adequate funding levels are in place to support this plan's short-term investments, on-going planning studies will identify additional short and long-term investments needed in the region. The actual budgeting of funds with the funding categories will be a product of the planning process: needs analysis, prioritization, project selection, and the TIP negotiation process. Plan updates and the requirements of a fiscally constrained TIP will ensure that investments are economically feasible for this region.

The SJTPO is faced with the enormous task of maintaining the existing transportation infrastructure while addressing future needs by undertaking significant improvements to the infrastructure. The scale of existing maintenance needs has necessitated targeting most resources and efforts to making these necessary repairs. The need to maintain the existing highway system in a state of good repair is of paramount importance to the SJTPO region. In particular, there are many bridges throughout the region that appear on the bridge deficiency list, indicating that they are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. This backlog of bridge projects must be systematically addressed to bring all bridges into a state of good repair. Funds needed to maintain and preserve the system must be made available, as deferring maintenance leads to increased long term maintenance cost and shortened useful lifecycles. Funds in the SJTPO have also been used to make the existing system more efficient. In contrast, projects that expand our region's transportation system have only been implemented selectively due their great cost, the need to minimize environmental impacts and difficulty in selecting and acquiring right of way. The system enhancements identified in the plan echo this balanced approach to the region's needs.

New Jersey's Transportation Trust Fund has provided a stable source of funding for the state's transportation system. However, maintaining and enhancing the SJTPO's infrastructure requires a tremendous amount of additional investment. Even with this source of stable funding in place, the SJTPO still requires adequate levels of funding to improve or replace the existing transportation infrastructure.

The SJTPO region historically receives between 4% to 6% of available funds (excluding statewide programs). For FY2004-2006, the SJTPO region is receiving 3.8% of the \$5.7 billion transportation program (excluding statewide programs), while NJTPA, the MPO for northern New Jersey is receiving 81.1% and DVRPC, the MPO for central New Jersey, is receiving 15.1%.

AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY

The RTP must demonstrate conformity with Federal Clean Air Act requirements as set forth in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations. The term "conformity" means that the MPO's plans, programs, and projects *conform* to the goal of improving air quality. Specifically, the transportation conformity process is intended to ensure that transportation plans, programs, and projects will not:

- create new violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS);
- increase the frequency or severity of existing NAAQS violations; or
- delay the attainment of the NAAQS in designated nonattainment (or maintenance) areas.³

³ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/conform.htm>, accessed April 15, 2004

Under the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA), the U.S. Department of Transportation cannot fund, authorize, or approve Federal actions to support programs or projects which are not first found to conform to the Clean Air Act requirements,⁴ so without demonstrated conformity, the Plan cannot be fully adopted and the advancement of transportation projects is severely limited.

In order to demonstrate conformity, an assessment of air quality in the SJTPO region was performed. The purpose of the assessment is to show that the improvements proposed in the Plan would result in the generation of emissions that are below the emissions budgets established for the region, thereby demonstrating conformity.

As the SJTPO region is designated non-attainment for ozone, emissions of volatile organic compounds and oxides of nitrogen, precursors of ozone, were evaluated. Portions of the SJTPO have also been designated as maintenance areas for carbon monoxide (CO). Therefore, carbon monoxide emissions were evaluated in Salem and Atlantic Counties.

Requirements for interagency consultation were met primarily through an in-person meeting on conformity issues at NJDOT held on March 15, 2004. At this meeting, the interagency consultation group concurred on all planning assumptions, applicable tests and budgets, demonstration and analysis years, and models and inputs.

Computer models were used to generate estimates of mobile source emissions resulting from the highway system. Conformity was determined by testing estimated emission levels against applicable emission budgets for the required analysis years. These years included: 2005, the Ozone attainment year; 2007, the CO budget test year; 2015, the interim year; and 2025, the RTP's horizon year.

Demographic forecasts were input to the modeling process to generate future travel demand values. Network changes resulting from the addition of improvement projects were used to define the action scenarios based on the year the proposed improvement would likely be constructed. The combination of demographic changes and network changes were run through the modeling process, and resulted in the overall estimates of VMT, VHT, and emissions generated in the SJTPO region.

Results of the analysis demonstrate that the Regional Transportation Plan complies with Federal CAAA regulations and is a conforming plan:

- SJTPO VOC and NOx budget tests for analysis years 2005, 2015 and 2025 all passed
- Atlantic and Salem County CO budget tests for analysis years 2007, 2015, and 2025 all passed

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO's) are required to focus increased attention on "Environmental Justice" and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative

⁴ Ibid.

environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. Meaningful involvement means that: (1) potentially affected community residents have an appropriate opportunity to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment and/or health; (2) the public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision; (3) the concerns of all participants involved will be considered in the decision making process; and (4) the decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.⁵

The SJTPO's Environmental Justice report was issued in June, 2002. The report includes a discussion of the findings from an outreach program directed toward community-based organizations, social service agencies and others who work with, or advocate on behalf of, low-income and/or minority populations.

TIP projects were reviewed to verify an equitable distribution of projects and funding among the region's Minorities and Low-income residents. The SJTPO concluded that local safety, enhancement, and preservation projects are being equitably distributed in the 2004 – 2006 TIP.

Evaluation Findings

Approximately one-third of SJTPO TIP projects are deemed to benefit minority and low-income communities.

Minority Communities

- Nearly one-fourth of the roadway/intersection preservation and enhancement projects and one-half of the pedestrian/bicycle facility improvements are still deemed to benefit minority communities.
- Nearly one-third of the funds continue to be allocated to roadway/intersection preservation and enhancement projects and over one-half of the funds allocated to pedestrian/bicycle facility improvements are still deemed to benefit minority communities.

Low-Income Communities

- Nearly one-third of the roadway/intersection preservation and enhancement projects and one-half of the pedestrian/bicycle facility improvements are still deemed to benefit low-income communities
- One-third of the funds allocated to roadway/intersection preservation and enhancement projects and over one-half of the funds allocated to pedestrian/bicycle facility improvements are still deemed to benefit low-income communities.

Conclusion

Minorities and Low-income residents still constituted nearly one-third and one-tenth of the region's population in 1990 and 2000 (31% and 9.9% respectively). Since the percentage of projects in each category and funds associated with them are similar to or greater than the percentage of minorities and persons in poverty throughout the region, it is reasonable to conclude that local safety, enhancement, and preservation projects are being equitably distributed in the 2004 – 2006 TIP.

⁵ <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/>, accessed April 7, 2004

The SJTPO recognizes that achieving environmental justice is not a desktop exercise, but active and continuing process that can be highly creative and challenging. At its core, environmental justice requires a commitment from its partners and stakeholders to be at once more inclusive----to fully recognize and explore the needs of all its citizens when making transportation decisions----as well as more comprehensive in the assessment of how existing and prospective priorities and processes distribute the benefits and burdens across all socioeconomic groups including race and income.

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

TEA-21 requires States and larger MPOs to utilize a congestion management system as part of the planning process. A Congestion Management System (CMS) is a systematic process for managing congestion that provides information on transportation system performance and alternative strategies for alleviating congestion and enhancing the mobility of persons and goods. The purposes of the CMS are:

- To provide strategies that provide the most efficient and effective use of existing and future transportation facilities.
- To manage congestion and enhance mobility in the region.
- To provide an effective tool for decision-making.

Although NJDOT has developed a statewide Congestion Management System (NJ CMS), and it has been useful in other part of the state, the NJ CMS has severe limitations when applied to the unique travel conditions, time periods, and peaking characteristics of the SJTPO region, where congestion is most severe on summer weekends for recreational and shore-oriented travel, and weekend evening travel related to the Atlantic City Gaming industry.

To address these deficiencies, the SJTPO Congestion Management System (SJ CMS) was conceived as a long-term, multi-phased effort to develop the data resources, tools, and procedures relevant to transportation planning efforts in the SJTPO region. Phase I of SJ CMS development was completed in 2002; Phase II was completed in 2003. The development and application of the SJ CMS is described in more detail in the Implementation Plan section.