



CONNECTING THE REGION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: INVESTMENTS FOR OUR FUTURE

2014 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION

MEADOWLANDS REGIONAL CHAMBER – A HISTORY OF TRANSPORTATION ADVOCACY

With this policy statement, the Meadowlands Regional Chamber (MRC) continues its long history of transportation advocacy. As noted in the 2012 White Paper, the MRC has been at the forefront of mobility issues for over 30 years. As conditions in our district, region, state and nation are ever dynamic and evolving, a periodic re-examination of priorities and current issues is warranted. This document can be viewed as a “State of the Meadowlands” regarding transportation, a wish list, and foremost a set of priorities for advocacy by the MRC, the businesses and the citizens of the Meadowlands and North Jersey to press for needed infrastructure investments.

First, let’s clarify what we mean by the Meadowlands. Though the Sports Complex is part of the Meadowlands brand, and may be what first comes to mind, the Meadowlands is much more – a broad spectrum of industries, neighborhoods and cultural institutions. The 14 municipalities that make up the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission District form the MRC’s home area, but the businesses of the Meadowlands district have economic ties to the larger North Jersey area and indeed to the State as a whole, serving as an economic engine for New Jersey. Thus, when we refer to Meadowlands transportation issues, the term really encompasses North Jersey.

The Meadowlands and North Jersey are also defined and supported by linkages to New York City, and our locational advantage stems from that proximity, as well as our situation at the hub of road, rail and air travel systems. Given those connections, the transportation projects and advocacy positions articulated here have impacts far beyond the district.

What has changed since 2012? What is new?

- **Superstorm Sandy** hit the region soon after our 2012 Transportation Summit. It devastated many of our local communities, damaging homes and businesses, interrupting travel on roadways, subways and rail, introducing the word “resilience” to the conversation and prompting numerous studies and design concepts regarding flood management and protection from future storm surge events. While the Meadowlands District is certainly no stranger to flooding, the awareness of our vulnerability reached a new level. Flooding remains a major concern for businesses and can impair future growth without a focused effort to address the issue for neighborhoods and transportation systems.
- **Super Bowl** is behind us, the focus of so much attention since 2012. It carried its successes and disappointments. From the standpoint of transportation, the event required a massive coordination of travel for employees, visitors, and other personnel. While much publicity was given to New Jersey Transit’s logistical challenges in moving passengers after the game, the volume of those choosing public transit demonstrated that it is a viable option to reach the Sports Complex and District destinations, and should continue to be enhanced and improved, particularly considering additional proposed attractions.
- The **American Dream** project is moving closer to reality. This development will require a comprehensive public/private transportation strategy. It can be a magnet for transportation service, drawing employee and patrons from a large region. We need to assure that solutions being developed by Triple Five, New Jersey Transit and others will address the appropriate geographic areas, facilitate mass transit alternatives and systems, and mitigate potential traffic impacts.
- **Major projects** are underway in the region: the Route 3 widening and bridge replacement project is nearing completion. Work is ongoing to raise the Bayonne Bridge and accommodate a new era of shipping – which highlights the need for efficient goods movement to fulfill the potential of post-Panamax–related industrial and logistics growth for our region. Rehabilitation is underway on the Pulaski Skyway and replacement of the Goethals Bridge has been initiated. These are all part of an essential regeneration of aging infrastructure - close to a century old, in some cases - to maintain the function of the nation’s primary metropolitan region.

Our region and State continue a steady, if labored, recovery from the Great Recession. While office vacancies remain high, industrial demand has accelerated, and multi-family rental housing is on the upswing. With respect to the latter, the desirable and successful multi-family locations are those near transit – underscoring the significance of accessible transportation to households and development opportunities.

Transportation investment is the fuel for the fire of economic opportunity and job growth. Mobility enables workers to get to jobs, goods to get to consumers and from ports and factories. In this dense and broad metropolitan region it is vitally important to create and maintain a comprehensive and world-class network of regional connections, otherwise our economic potential and quality of life cannot be sustained or improved. Employment locations need to be accessible to employees, to provide realistic job opportunities. Businesses need to know their employees can get to work on time, and products can get to consumers efficiently.

We are in a high-cost area of the country, which is a challenge in business attraction and retention. This region should offer to industry, in addition to a skilled work force and a large adjacent market, an infrastructure system commensurate with its national stature.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL GROWTH

In the last two iterations of the MRC's Transportation White Paper, the focus was largely on the need to improve intra-state and intra-Meadowlands travel, and the advocacy of flexible, cost-effective systems to create connections. While that remains a primary concern, we cannot deny our close association with New York, and the volume of commuters and business connections that link the Meadowlands to the City. Superstorm Sandy, accidents, and maintenance emergencies have pointed out deep vulnerabilities in the system of aging trans-Hudson crossings. Concurrently, the demand for public transit has increased and is straining the capacity of both rail and bus facilities. Those constraints will ultimately suppress the growth opportunities in the region. Thus, we have turned our attention to major initiatives with the long-range ability to address these constraints.

TRANS-HUDSON TRAVEL

The MRC does not accept that the days of large-scale, forward thinking and action are over. There is a duty to future generations to identify and move ahead with infrastructure that ensures economic opportunity. While these solutions are expensive, even more expensive is the inevitable decline of a region with an unreliable, crumbling transportation system. And, as New York is a prime employment destination for New Jersey commuters, so the Meadowlands District is an entertainment destination for residents of the tri-state area and beyond. Transportation constraints and transportation improvements will impact or benefit our Meadowlands attractions. The following projects are components in a comprehensive regional network that will respond to these urgent needs.

1. AMTRAK GATEWAY PROGRAM / NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

The Northeast Corridor (NEC) of Amtrak, linking Boston and Washington, D.C., passes through our Meadowlands District. This route carries 2200 trains each day, including Amtrak, freight and, in the majority, commuter rail lines. Ridership

is projected to double from its 2009 level by 2040. The Gateway program is a long-range plan to accommodate the demands of this ridership growth in the New York-New Jersey region, construct new facilities, and repair existing infrastructure. The key elements are:

Tunnels

The NEC relies on two tunnels beneath the Hudson River to reach the New York hub, Penn Station. These tunnels, which carry 40 trains daily, are a century old. Flooding from Sandy has caused lasting damage from the effects of salt water. Temporary closures for maintenance are occurring, but comprehensive rehabilitation is necessary, yet these tunnels cannot be taken out of service for repair, as there is no redundancy in the system.

The Gateway plan includes two new tunnels between Penn Station in New York and Newark Penn Station, expanding permanent capacity but also allowing for repair of the existing facilities and better resilience. These tunnels will also provide additional capacity for NJ Transit trains.

Penn Station

Penn Station in New York City is overcrowded and over capacity. The station experiences 600,000 daily trips, about a third from the Long Island Railroad, but 160,000 are NJ Transit trips – our fellow commuters. Phase I of the Gateway program includes the Moynihan Station, a new station created from the historic James Farley Post Office building across 8th Avenue from Penn Station. This development is underway. In addition, the existing Penn Station will be extended with new concourses to the south. The project will increase the current station capacity by 50%.

New Jersey Facilities

Improvement of the NEC to contemporary standards and capacity is not only a regional, but a national issue, given the key location and volume of rail traffic on this route. However, the MRC's concern is always how infrastructure plans will affect New Jersey and the Meadowlands. Capacity, redundancy and security are all important to the thousands of travelers between New Jersey and New York. There are certain elements in the Gateway program that are critical to New Jersey's economic development, and our advocacy needs to be maintained to assure their implementation.

- **Bergen Loop** – this is a track configuration, long studied as part of ARC, which would allow the Bergen, Main and Pascack Valley Line trains to ride directly into New York, without requiring a transfer in Hoboken or in Secaucus and Newark. While we recognize the increased reliability that would be conferred on the NJ Transit lines that now directly access Penn Station, without the Bergen Loop, the Gateway project, while regionally significant, would confer limited advantages to the economic development of Bergen and Hudson Counties.

Cooperation between Amtrak and NJ Transit regarding funding, design and construction is imperative, and it is apparent that New Jersey will be required to assume some funding responsibility for this part of the project.

- **Portal Bridge** – a 100-year old structure west of Lautenberg Station, this swing bridge has experienced malfunctions when it fails to lock closed, blocking rail traffic. The Gateway program includes replacement by two new spans. The North Bridge is the first part of this effort, which has been designed. Construction funding of \$900 million is being pursued. The South Bridge construction would complete the project. Capacity would be increased from two to four tracks, as well as reliability.
- **Frank R. Lautenberg (FRL) Station Stop** – at present, the Gateway program does not include a Northeast Corridor stop at FRL Station. This is an important issue for the Meadowlands region, particularly in light of the attractions represented by the Sports Complex and American Dream, as well as the concentration of industry, and more recently, residential development. The station itself was intended to be surrounded by new development, and that potential remains. The existing and future ridership potential must be considered by Amtrak. **An NEC stop in Secaucus is an important economic issue for New Jersey and would provide additional redundancy for trans-Hudson travel.**

Gateway Status

Independent elements of the program are underway, including the first phase of the Moynihan Station construction. As noted above, final design of the North Bridge of the Portal Bridge replacement has been completed.

Feasibility studies have been undertaken over the past four years, including river crossing alignments, grades and geological conditions. A critical right-of-way preservation was accomplished in the Hudson Yards development in Manhattan, reserving the future pathway of the Gateway tunnel. Construction of the concrete encasement continues.

The Gateway program is included in the NEC Future planning process. This plan is the subject of an Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision anticipated to be completed in 2016. Securing funding to implement the project is, of course, of major concern. **Governor Christie, Governor Cuomo, elected officials, residents and the business community should speak with one voice to advocate funding – and to include the facilities noted above that are important for our area.**

2. EXTENSION OF THE NO. 7 SUBWAY TO SECAUCUS

The concept of subway connections between New York and New Jersey has existed since the 1920's. However, no new rail tunnel has been built across the Hudson River in 100 years. More recently, former Mayor Michael Bloomberg revived and advocated the extension of the No. 7 line from its planned terminus in Hudson Yards, at 34th Street and 11th Avenue, to the FRL Station in Secaucus. An initial feasibility analysis was completed in 2013 which identified a potential alignment and reviewed preliminary data on ridership, geotechnical conditions, engineering and legal issues, finding no fatal flaws.

Facilities

The key elements of this project would include:

- A new tunnel extending the No. 7 line to FRL Station, leaving room for expansion of the NEC right-of-way and approximating the ARC alignment, enabling reuse of physical data gathered for that project.
- A new No.7 terminal station and expanded multimodal bus facility at FRL Station
- Train storage, maintenance and operations facilities in Secaucus.

The potential benefits of this project to North Jersey and the Meadowland are impressive. The No. 7 line connects the new Hudson Yards development to Times Square and Grand Central Station and east to Flushing. Further connections to Metro-North and Penn Station extend its regional reach.

An extension of the No. 7 line would provide a direct route to Grand Central Station and the East Side of Manhattan for New Jersey workers – improving access to a wealth of higher-wage job opportunities. This would be a boon for commuters as well as reinforcing and facilitating access for the businesses and attractions in the Meadowlands. Daily trips on a Secaucus extension are estimated at 128,000 over a 20-year planning period, with diversions anticipated from existing rail and bus trips as well as automobile travel. Though not an ultimate solution, these diversions would relieve overcrowding and capacity pressures at the PABT and Penn Station.

Further economic benefits would be felt in the area surrounding the FRL Station as well as development opportunities in municipalities with NJ Transit rail stations that link to FRL and would now have quick connections to the East Side.

Our view is that the No. 7 extension project could be complementary to the Gateway program, adding benefits for New Jersey commuters and businesses to the inter-city access afforded by Gateway and providing further redundancy for Hudson River crossings. Study of coordination between these projects should be pursued, particularly identifying cost-saving opportunities.

Next Steps

The New Jersey Assembly adopted a resolution of support for the No. 7 extension, citing the improved access to jobs and economic viability it would bring to New Jersey. More vocal support is needed from our elected officials and the business community to move this project forward. The next phase of study would include an advanced feasibility analysis to refine alternative alignments, cost projections, ridership, revenues, design and financing. This is estimated to cost in the range of \$2 million. **The MRC supports funding this essential step, and urges the Port Authority, as the bistate transportation agency, to assume a leadership role, in coordination with NJ Transit. We encourage Governor Christie and the legislature to firmly support this effort.**

3. PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown New York City opened in 1950 and was last upgraded substantially in 1979. Over 200,000 commuters pass through the station daily, about half from New Jersey. The facility serves more New Jersey riders than NJ Transit or Amtrak trains. By 2040, peak hour passenger car traffic is expected to increase by 35-51% and peak hour bus traffic by 25-39%, according to the Authority.

As has been featured prominently in the news, the terminal is overcrowded, over capacity, and in poor repair. Malfunctioning air conditioning and escalators, lack of information and long lines are frequently cited. The lack of bus storage has led to travel delays, idling buses congesting New York streets, and costly inefficiencies, as buses are staged in New Jersey.

While major improvements to the terminal were not included in the Port Authority's most recent capital plan, public outcry has led to a proposal by the Port Authority to dedicate up to \$260 million on improvements. This funding is welcome to alleviate present conditions, but **the permanent solution must entail a new bus storage facility and a new terminal.** Conclusions of the ongoing Midtown Bus Master Plan should be factored into the solution, but **the mandate to the Port Authority must be to construct these essential facilities for the next generation of commuters.**

MEADOWLANDS MOBILITY

Our renewed attention to trans-Hudson issues does not supplant the continued commitment of the MRC to mobility within the Meadowlands and the North Jersey counties that comprise our economic web. Our region is home to thousands of jobs and residents. New housing will be increasing the district's population and local commuters. Retention and attraction of business is a priority and is influenced by the perception and reality of connections or congestion. We need to continue to find better ways to connect jobs and citizens.

1. OPTIMIZE BUS TRAVEL

Buses can provide a flexible and responsive system to address changing needs without extensive structural requirements. The expansion of bus capacity at the Frank R. Lautenberg Station by NJ Transit is a needed improvement to reinforce the multimodal potential of that investment. New potential rail service in the future, as outlined above, will require further bus facilities. In the interim, new routes and systems must be examined to maintain the greatest utility of bus transport in the Meadowlands and North Jersey.

Bergen BRT

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a premium bus system that entails high-frequency service and limited stops, connecting major destinations and population concentrations. BRT can employ a variety of measures to expedite travel speed, such as exclusive bus lanes, traffic signal priority, and advanced technology for fare collection. Modern, high-end equipment and sophisticated marketing and branding are typical of BRT systems, and integral to their success in attracting riders from single-occupancy vehicles. BRT has proved to be successful in many parts of the country, and with the density of North Jersey, this is an ideal local for a pilot project.

The Bergen County Bus Rapid Transit Study was initiated in 2012 and is a joint effort between Bergen County and NJ Transit. The initial phases of the study reviewed travel routes and destinations in the County and developed several potential routes for a pilot system. These alternatives have been evaluated and narrowed over the study period and at present there is a short list of five candidate routes for further refinement.

The MRC urges the selection of a route that connects important activity centers to the Meadowlands. In particular, we encourage adoption of a route linking Paramus, a node of employment and population, with the Sports Complex and the FRL station. Termination at the station will enable further regional connections and enhance the station as a transportation hub. Stops at the Hackensack University Medical Center, a major employer, and the Hackensack bus terminal would reinforce the County seat's revitalization efforts. A connection to American Dream is also important to serve both employees and patrons. **This pilot route is an important test that could be a precedent for future alignments expediting intra-Bergen travel, and should receive a firm commitment of implementation funding.**

Route 3 Corridor

- **BRT** – Past MRC White Papers have focused on the significance of the Route 3 corridor as a spine through the Meadowlands, noting that approximately 30,000 riders travel in about 1,000 bus trips daily on this route. This concentration would make Route 3 an ideal candidate for another BRT study and route.

The Route 3 and Passaic River Bridge improvement project is approaching completion, however, as was pointed out two years ago, the expansion of Route 3 is constricted at two bridge overpasses, Orient Way and Ridge Road. Reconstruction of those bridges to match the adjacent expansion was deleted as a cost-saving measure. As a result, shoulders are interrupted and the potential of a BRT that could utilize the shoulders is lost or sharply limited. **The MRC urges NJDOT not to foreclose the potential for priority bus movements on this corridor, and to program the completion of these overpasses.**

As an example, the Route 9 corridor in Ocean and Monmouth Counties has been the route of a BRT line using highway shoulders. This has been successful and is being expanded. **A study of a similar opportunity on Route 3 should be conducted.**

- **Bus Interconnections** – Most of the bus routes utilizing Route 3 do not stop in the Meadowlands. Interconnections should be provided between these New York-bound routes and local routes. This concept could provide a limited number of hubs where residents could connect from local routes to express buses, thereby distributing passengers among routes where capacity is available. **It is recommended that NJ Transit study this possibility, and identify locations that would function for inbound and outbound travelers.** These locations could include Meadowlands Parkway, American Dream and the Route 3/Route 17 service road.

Meadowlands Routes and Frequency

The Meadowlands is continuing to experience both residential and commercial growth. In addition, the reinvention of the Sports Complex as an entertainment destination through the new racetrack, MetLife Stadium and American Dream will draw ever greater numbers of employees and visitors. It is important that planning for bus service is done concurrently with this development, providing new, direct connections with New York City and employee sources. **Planning for a bus transit center at American Dream should be a cooperative effort between Triple Five and NJ Transit to accommodate and expedite bus movements and provide information to customers, employees and tourists.** In fact, planning should extend beyond the American Dream bus hub to improved circulation within the Sports Complex itself, with connections between the rail station, racetrack, stadium, Izod Center and perimeter transit stops, as well as connections to the surrounding municipalities.

Bus routing must also meet the needs of industrial sectors, such as in Carlstadt and Moonachie, for businesses to remain competitive and accessible to employees.

Stations, Equipment and Operations

Transit use is increasing with recovery from the recession. The commitment to provide safe, convenient access to transit must be sustained. This includes safe, protective bus stops and terminals, strategically located Park and Ride facilities, and fulfilling demands for buses and drivers. **The park and ride center studied by NJ Transit for the Route 3/Route 21 interchange holds promise as a multimodal hub, particularly given the nearby Main Line, and we urge further action on this site, to not lose the opportunity to plan for future demand.** We also encourage NJ Transit to study a park & ride location on Rutherford Avenue in Lyndhurst, convenient to a heavily used bus stop at the corner of Polito Avenue.

Properties near transit are maintaining and increasing their value as the population looks for automobile alternatives and congestion relief. The number of rail stations is limited, but attention to bus service and BRT planning can add to development opportunity and market demand in more North Jersey locations.

2. OPTIMIZE RAIL TRAVEL

We have discussed above the need to create new trans-Hudson facilities to maintain the region's economy. Within New Jersey, there are many opportunities to improve access and travel conditions:

- **The Northern Branch** – the most recent effort to put the “Bergen” into the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system includes an extension of service from the Tonelle Avenue Station in North Bergen, the current terminus of the HBLRT, north along the Northern Branch rail line to Ridgefield, Palisades Park and Leonia, ending at Englewood Hospital. This line would open up a north-south commuter route where opportunities are presently limited, connecting to the cross-Hudson ferries, the PATH train, and employment centers in Hoboken and Jersey City. The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be completed this year. While not a direct line to the Meadowlands, the Northern Branch opens up important links for Bergen County, including connection via Hoboken to the FRL station, Newark and the Sports Complex. **Continued planning and design is a regional priority.**
- **FRL Station/Secaucus Junction** – to leverage the most opportunity from this investment, improvements must keep pace with the level of development in the area and consequent ridership. The current improvements to provide additional bus bays and accommodate more shuttles, and the completed platform extensions to serve 10-car trains are examples of the enhancements that will continue to be needed with additional growth in the Meadowlands,

including the completion of American Dream. For example, the frequency of rail service to the Sports Complex must respond to the level of employment and travel to this attraction over time. Realization of either Gateway or the No. 7 extension will also require additional bus facilities.

Improvements at the station should be complemented by better wayfinding signs throughout the district. The need for parking at FRL Station has been demonstrated with the existing park and ride lot, and should be monitored to assess continuing demand. In addition, future implementation of the commercial development contemplated above and adjacent to the station will capitalize on the economic and transit benefits of the station and reinforce its position on the Northeast Corridor.

- **Local Station Improvements** – with the exception of the Sports Complex rail station, local rail stations are generally on the fringes of the Meadowlands. Major improvements are scheduled for the Lyndhurst rail station to modernize the facility and provide ADA improvements. A new station on the Bergen County line is planned as a public/private partnership as part of the Wesmont development in Wood-Ridge.

The Pascack Valley line stations in the Meadowlands include Teterboro and Wood-Ridge, adjacent to Route 17. These are small stations, yet improvements could enhance their use. In particular, the Teterboro station has access problems, exacerbated by a fence preventing pedestrians from the Hasbrouck Heights/Route 17 area from crossing the tracks to access the station platform. While this was done in response to safety concerns, the result is a fairly inaccessible station with a small parking area, requiring pedestrians to use a circuitous route on busy Route 46 to reach the station. Considering the adjacent development of Teterboro Landing, a commercial project, improvements to access, platforms and parking at this station should be evaluated, perhaps as part of a public/private partnership.

Similarly, the Wood-Ridge Station is located in an area of industrial and residential use. Long-range planning should consider enhancements to the facility and parking. There should be an evaluation of the need for surrounding sidewalks and lighting, to facilitate safe pedestrian access.

- **Long-Range Planning** – While there are many urgent needs to optimize rail service to the Meadowlands, we cannot lose sight of longer-term projects to complete the rail network in the district. These include:
 1. **Phase II of the Sports Complex rail loop** to the Meadowlands would consist of a two track elevated rail spur coming off the Bergen Line, along the western spur of the New Jersey Turnpike and connecting to the FRL Station. This project would allow rail access to the Sports Complex from both north and south, from the Bergen Line as well as the Pascack Valley

Line. This direct connection will be important in the future to serve and maintain transit ridership to the destinations at the Sports Complex. With the advent of American Dream and its associated growth potential and discussion of further development of the Complex as a destination with a possible casino and/or convention center, this will become a necessary element in the system.

2. **The HBLRT extension from Hudson County into the Meadowlands** should remain under study to examine alternative routes maximizing investment by connecting critical residential and economic concentrations in the district.

3. LOCAL MOBILITY - EXTEND AND PROMOTE INTERNAL MEADOWLANDS/NORTH JERSEY NETWORKS

Shuttle Systems

Shuttle systems are playing an increasing role as a commuting alternative. These flexible routes can link employers, employees and transit stations, or cover the “last mile” when public bus or rail systems are not available or feasible for a limited ridership. In the Meadowlands, shuttle routes operated by Meadowlink connect residential communities, corporate parks and major employers, the FRL Station and local transit stations, serving more than 1,000 riders daily during peak hours.

The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission and NJ Transit took an important step in this direction several years ago by initiating the Meadowlands Corporate Center shuttle. This initial service, still operated by Meadowlink, connects the Meadowlands Corporate Center with bus service at Polito Avenue, as well as the Lyndhurst and Rutherford rail stations.

These services increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the public transit system. They connect the Secaucus Junction train station with, respectively, Harmon Meadow, Harmon Cove, employers in the Carlstadt/Moonachie area, and North Bergen. A Tonnel Avenue route between the HBLRT terminus in North Bergen and Journal Square station in Jersey City is also in operation, as well as a Route 3 shuttle from Clifton/Nutley to Secaucus Junction, which, in the future, could also incorporate American Dream. Another route originates in North Arlington and provides access to the Harrison PATH station.

These examples illustrate not only the potential of an intra-Meadowlands shuttle network to move residents and commuters around the district, but also what can be achieved with public-private partnerships, as businesses and developers play a critical role in funding, and are encouraged to combine forces for cost efficiency. Public support of these systems is warranted by the increasing ridership and ability to bridge gaps in public routes. Funding, though, should incorporate flexibility to adapt routes to new corporate locations and employee needs.

Many recent planning and real estate articles have highlighted the market and demographic shifts attracting young people to more urban, transit-friendly areas to live and work. This generation is less inclined to driving and car ownership than earlier cohorts. We see examples of this trend in the Meadowlands with new residential development in Lyndhurst, East Rutherford and Secaucus designed with an eye to transit access and utilizing shuttle services.

Shuttle routes should be designed to benefit from the synergy of including both residential and commercial nodes -- serving both Meadowlands employers and residents using the transit hubs. The chief hubs for these services continue to be the FRL Station, the Rutherford and Lyndhurst rail stations and the Polito/Rutherford Avenue bus stop in Lyndhurst. Ridership is expected to grow. There is also an opportunity for shuttles to interface with the proposed Bergen pilot BRT route, feeding commuters to the line, and for routes along the Hudson River corridor in Hudson and Bergen counties.

More generally, we have seen an evolution in community mobility over the past several years with the advent of bikesharing and carsharing. Use of these new modes is likely to increase with demographic trends – from both the younger generation and the growing population of seniors forgoing car ownership for short-term rentals or driving services.

Safe Walking and Biking Infrastructure

This category of planning and improvement could fall under the bus, rail, or road heading. Trends have shown increased use of biking and walking for commuting or for the last leg of a trip on bus or rail transit. In many areas of the Meadowlands, particularly industrial zones, safe conditions for walking or biking are lacking. Street improvements should accommodate these needs by providing sidewalks or widths sufficient for biking, as feasible. It is suggested that a study assessing these needs within the Meadowlands be conducted, perhaps by the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission.

4. ROAD NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS

The policy priorities in this paper have focused heavily on mass transit options, as we do not expect to see new or extensively expanded highway systems developed in our region. It is evident, though, with the age of much of our infrastructure, that repairs and maintenance will continue to be imperative to maintain the safety of our roads and bridges and cannot be ignored or deferred. This is borne out by major, ongoing investments that we applaud: the raising of the Bayonne Bridge, maintaining the viability of the Port; the rehabilitation of the Pulaski Skyway; the replacement of the Goethals Bridge.

Given the limited funding and land availability for new road construction, operational improvements, such as intelligent highway systems and real-time

traffic information, must be explored to maximize the capacity of our existing roads. The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission's adaptive signal project, MASSTR (Meadowlands Adaptive Signal System for Traffic Reduction), is adjusting signal timing based upon actual flow of traffic rather than fixed timing. Signals are constantly coordinated through a high-tech system. The program incorporates 144 traffic signals throughout the district, including 16 added to accommodate detours from the Pulaski Highway reconstruction. This effort was awarded a \$10 million grant from USDOT, and will reduce travel time, congestion and fuel consumption. It represents the type of innovative thinking that will be necessary to optimize our existing network.

The main arteries in the Meadowlands are Route 3, Route 7, Route 17, and the New Jersey Turnpike. Feeding into and from these thoroughfares are Paterson Plank Road, Washington Avenue/Moonachie Road, Meadowlands Parkway, Route 120 and West Side Avenue. These secondary routes provide access to concentrations of homes and businesses, and involve ongoing needs for repair, improvement, pedestrian facilities and flood resilience to maintain the viability of those areas. While recent years have seen considerable access improvements in the Sports Complex area, other needs remain:

- **Route 17** – Address the bottlenecks between Route 80 and Route 4. This situation has been studied and restudied for years. **It is time for a commitment and cooperation at the Federal, State and local levels to get a consistent six-lane roadway completed between Route 3 and the Garden State Plaza and remove this obstruction to north-south travel through Bergen County.**
- **Paterson Plank Road** – This road is a gateway to the Sports Complex, and will be further taxed with visitors to the new stadium, racetrack grandstand and American Dream. This route also serves as major access to a concentration of industrial uses. A proposed expansion from four to six lanes, together with pedestrian and aesthetic improvements would reinforce redevelopment efforts headed by the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission as well as private initiatives to revitalize older industrial parcels.
- **Route 7/Belleville Turnpike/Wittpenn Bridge** – Redevelopment efforts have continued in this area to create a modern warehouse/distribution hub. This roadway is also part of the Portway, a corridor serving freight and industrial travel to the Holland Tunnel and trucking destinations. Two projects are planned by NJDOT: one is a \$30 million effort to address severe flooding conditions in Kearny that cause periodic road closures, including elevation of the roadway, new drainage systems and pump stations, which is in the design phase, and not expected to be completed until 2018. The second is the replacement of the Witpenn Bridge over the Hackensack River, including realignment of the Fish House Road intersection west of the river. This work is divided in to five contracts with the first two under construction. Completion is anticipated for 2020.

While these improvements may appear to be in the distant future, their importance is underscored by the urgency for our industrial infrastructure to accommodate the new era of post-Panamax shipping enabled by the raising of the Bayonne Bridge, and measures to expedite their completion should be explored.

THE ROAD AND RAIL AHEAD – AN INSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION

The litany of projects outlined above capture the investment necessary to maintain and improve mobility in the Meadowlands and North Jersey – to keep our area moving forward, our economy thriving and our quality of life flourishing.

We recognize the formidable price tag associated with these critical improvements, and that many take years of planning and complicated funding structures. Some may culminate so far in the future that it is challenging to think they can ever be accomplished – yet they are essential to move this region through the 21st century. The time it takes to accomplish major infrastructure improvements is no excuse not to start now and plan for the future. It does, though, create a challenge to find interim solutions for mobility that can be deployed – whether those are bus routes, ferries, shuttles, greater utilization of the George Washington Bridge Bus Terminal or other operational improvements.

The salient point is that to maintain the position of this region in a national and global economy where competition is fierce requires us to plan and to act – to not be defeated by the scope of the challenges ahead, but to respond to them.

1. REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND COORDINATION

To begin, there should be a revitalized commitment to cooperative regional transportation planning, recognizing that economic routes of people and trade transcend political and jurisdictional lines. We are all connected in this bi-state and tri-state region, and the urgent needs for improved interstate travel must be addressed on a regional basis. We recommend the establishment of a formal bi-state or tri-state entity to set a course for coordination and collaboration addressing the region’s pressing needs – including implementation and funding of new trans-Hudson facilities, strategies to address emergencies and natural disasters, and to reach consensus on a transportation plan that assures a sound economic opportunity for the region.

This entity should include leaders of the transportation and economic development agencies from both states. It may be that new leadership at the Port Authority can open the door to a new collaborative approach, and that recently formed committees such as the MTA’s Transportation Reinvention

Commission and the Port Authority's Special Oversight Committee can foster a new climate. **We urge Governors Christie and Cuomo to advocate interstate communication on transportation and support the creation of a new interstate coordinating committee.** The prosperity of both states hangs in the balance.

2. NEW JERSEY TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

New Jersey is in the throes of a transportation funding crisis. Our needs for fundamental repair and maintenance are great, even without the system improvements required to maintain our economy. A new, concentrated effort is required to address the funding shortfalls, particularly in light of likely limitations on Federal contributions. **We propose the formation of a special blue ribbon panel charged with examining all the options and identifying a long-term permanent funding source for transportation in the state. Such a panel should include transportation experts, business leaders, transportation officials and representatives from the financial sector.**

3. MEADOWLANDS PLANNING

On a more local level, we urge the reauthorization of the Meadowlands Transportation Planning District and updating the 2007 Transportation Plan in coordination with Hudson and Bergen Counties and NJ Transit, NJDOT and the Port Authority. This should entail a review of the transportation fee formula and the priority of improvements to be supported by fee collection. In a larger context, New Jersey Meadowlands Commission planning must also address how the growth from the development of the area as an entertainment, sports and business destination can be accommodated through not only transportation but land use patterns and flood control.

4. ADVOCACY

For the businesses and residents of our district, this paper can be a blueprint for your advocacy – if needed projects are long-term or expensive or difficult to achieve, they still cannot be forgotten or allowed to lie dormant. Vigorous and repeated advocacy can make these projects happen. We have seen only recently that vocal citizens and responsive elected officials can cause change – for example, in allocation of funds for improvements at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. The MRC intends to lead in this capacity and urges your participation.

Finally, we must view transportation in a comprehensive picture of Meadowlands vitality – one that incorporates employment, housing, education, health, environmental systems, and flood control – an integrated transportation, economic and social framework.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

This policy paper is intended to provide basic information on essential projects, impart the urgency of implementing the transportation improvements, and provide a blueprint for broad advocacy. It is imperative that we in this region present a unified front for public funding of planning, construction, equipment and operations to achieve the modern transportation network necessary for the region to grow.

To this end, the region needs a revitalized recognition of the link between transportation investment and economic development. We require a new commitment to interstate, collaborative regional transportation planning. Interstate planning frameworks of the past have come and gone, but a new structure is needed to respond to today's challenges and the potential of the future.

The chief challenge facing New Jersey today is the condition of the depleted Transportation Trust Fund. There is no doubt, of the real need for bipartisan, creative thinking to identify a permanent funding source for transportation investment. To this end, we propose and urge the creation of a blue-ribbon panel composed of qualified public and private members tasked with identifying a long-term funding solution for meeting New Jersey's transportation needs.

Our goals are to advocate and expedite needed repairs on our aging infrastructure, maintain safe conditions, provide new opportunities for the workforce and industry to connect, and position the region to achieve its true potential in the 21st century. The following is a summary of our recommendations:

- 1 Reinvent regional transportation planning and collaboration through a new bi-state or tri-state institutional framework transcending political boundaries, such as an interstate transportation coordinating committee involving agencies and stakeholders from both sides of the Hudson River.**
- 2 Convene a bipartisan public/private blue-ribbon panel of experts to identify a long-term permanent transportation funding source to meet New Jersey's needs and remain competitive.**
- 3 Support funding for the Gateway program, to provide necessary redundance in the Northeast Corridor rail tunnel and alleviation of Penn Station overcapacity. Support and require the inclusion of the Bergen Loop and a rail stop at the FRL station as part of Gateway. Without these elements, the benefit to North Jersey will be limited.**
- 4 Support the next phase of feasibility studies for the extension of the No.7 New York City subway line to Secaucus. This connection could be an economic boon to North Jersey, facilitating travel to the employment**

concentrations on the East Side of Manhattan and stimulating economic development in the Meadowlands and many rail transit towns. As a bistate agency, the Port Authority is the logical leader for this effort, but advancement of this project would benefit from firm support by Governor Christie and the New Jersey Legislature.

- 5 Support rapid implementation of overdue Port Authority Bus Terminal repairs and operational improvements, and identify a comprehensive solution for the outdated and congested terminal, including a new terminal and bus storage facilities.**
- 6 Support extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail to the Northern Branch line in Bergen County.**
- 7 Fund and implement a pilot BRT route in Bergen County that serves the Sports Complex and the FRL Station.**
- 8 Plan and implement the multimodal park and ride facility at Routes 3 & 21 in Clifton.**
- 9 Continue a public/private effort to establish successful public transit strategies to access American Dream, to forestall congestion and enable the greatest employment opportunities, incorporating interstate and intraregional bus routes, rail frequency, shuttles and an on-site transportation hub.**
- 10 Through public/private efforts, design and implement flexible shuttle networks linking residential and commercial and transit nodes. Coordinate with Bergen BRT pilot route.**
- 11 Complete design and funding of the Route 17 bottleneck expansion south of Route 4. Break down bureaucratic barriers to construction.**
- 12 Fund a study examining options for preferential road space expediting bus travel on the Route 3 corridor.**
- 13 Explore solutions for the “last mile” or half-mile of commuter travel, including better bike lanes and pedestrian facilities, where employment concentrations are not directly served by bus or rail stops.**