

**Statement of the Honorable James S. Simpson
Commissioner Designee,
New Jersey Department of Transportation
Before the New Jersey State Senate Judiciary Committee
March 1, 2010**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I believe one of the highest honors bestowed upon an American citizen is to sit before a United States Senate Committee or a state Senate Committee for a confirmation hearing. If confirmed by this body, it will be my seventh state or federal confirmation. I am both humbled and honored for having the opportunity to come before you today.

I am also honored that Governor Christie has placed his trust and confidence in me, deciding to nominate me to the position of Commissioner of Transportation. I want to thank all of the members of the Judiciary Committee for taking the time to meet with me to discuss the many pressing transportation matters facing the Garden State.

Let me say at the outset, if confirmed as Commissioner of Transportation, I will work with this committee and all the

members of the Legislature, as we craft enduring solutions to the many challenges ahead. This committee and the Legislature as a whole have a wealth of experience and wisdom. If confirmed, I will continually seek your counsel and advice.

Some of you may be aware of my previous transportation experience as administrator of the Federal Transit Administration and commissioner and board member of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

While I'll be happy to discuss with you how those jobs have seasoned me for the task at hand, I want to first share a less-known side of my history, one that goes beyond titles and notches in a career belt.

As a soon-to-be resident of New Jersey, I want you to know I'm not new to New Jersey. I have experiences here stretching back to my childhood that will help shape my approach to the job as NJDOT commissioner.

Whether I was in a car heading to the Shore, commuting by train to Manhattan, or driving a truck on the Turnpike, I've known for a long time how important New Jersey's transportation network is for getting to work, for running a business and for getting to some of the best recreational destinations anywhere.

As a youngster, I spent summers with my grandparents at Tuckerton and Union Beach.

Later, as a young adult, I got a job working in lower Manhattan. But I still spent summers at the Shore with family. Every day I'd take the old Central New Jersey Railroad, the predecessor to NJ TRANSIT, from Hazlet to Newark, and catch a PATH train to the World Trade Center.

Then in the early 1980s, when I was young father with a small business and living on Staten Island, I would take my family almost every weekend to Seaside Heights, Lavallette or LBI. And in those days, no matter when we headed down the Shore or headed home, we never hit traffic on the Parkway. And that was before the expansion.

At that time, in the early 80s, many companies were fleeing urban centers like Newark, Trenton and Camden. But I invested in New Jersey.

Because I knew New Jersey offered opportunities. The kind of opportunities that every one of us in this room must work to ensure are there for the young men and women of this state who are starting out in the world of work and business now.

My relocation company had grown from a few trucks and a storefront to an international company. That's when I invested in East Orange, with its proximity to major highways, airports, public transportation and ports. East Orange was and still is an ideal business location.

In the early 1990's, I further invested in New Jersey by building one of the first distribution warehouses at exit 8A, in Jamesburg. Once again, the highway access along with the ports and airports along with the free -flow highway conditions on the New Jersey Turnpike made New Jersey a great investment.

Unfortunately, with the growth in traffic volume, the same can't be said today. The congestion on New Jersey's roads are choking economic growth and threatening our quality of life. While the turnpike expansion will relieve some of the congestion south of 8A, we cannot keep building highways even if we had all the funding in hand.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure we use every available technology and management tool to fight highway congestion, which is the largest hidden tax and destroyer of our quality of life in New Jersey and America.

Let me hit the fast-forward button for about a decade, to 9-11. I was at the World Trade Center that day, and remain grateful that I am alive. Shortly after that horrific attack, I was in Jersey City, looking across the river at the place where the towers once stood.

But then I started focusing on my immediate surroundings, and I could not believe the transformation and rebirth of historic Jersey City. I saw economic development all around me, especially the construction of an almost completed light rail line adjacent to new mixed-use real estate development.

So I made another bet on New Jersey. I purchased land and built a state-of-the-art office/distribution facility, overlooking the Statue of Liberty and the New York City skyline.

The new light rail line coupled with good public transportation already in place, including Port Authority Path trains, is what convinced me to build in New Jersey once again. I moved to Jersey City during this time as well.

These are my New Jersey experiences that give me the knowledge and understanding of what we have here and why we

need able leadership from government and the private sector to maintain the edge we have.

As a former Administrator at the U.S Department of Transportation, I can say with certitude that New Jersey's transportation network of highways, rail, transit, aviation and ports is second to none in the entire country.

Our transportation infrastructure is a national treasure, home to a commerce corridor that fuels the state, national and even global economies.

If confirmed, I will work hard to ensure that the federal executive and legislative branches realize how vital New Jersey's ports, roads, rails, transit and airports are, and the strain they are under as the number one transportation artery(for all modes) in the country.

I will do my best to ensure that New Jersey gets every discretionary dollar it deserves from the various federal transportation programs.

Another key ingredient to business success is a skilled and educated workforce. And in that regard, New Jersey can

compete with anyone, anywhere. We have one of the strongest, most diversified workforces in America, with no shortage of blue-collar, white-collar and highly technical workers. As an employer, I learned this first-hand by hiring hundreds of New Jersey's best employees.

Transportation expansion projects should be viewed as economic and environmental development projects that have a return (where all the social benefits and costs are measured) on the investment of the taxpayer's dollar.

Transportation is the circulatory system of the economy and as the old saying goes "time is money!" If we can save transportation users time, we are making everyone more productive, not only helping the economy, which is a requirement for lasting employment, but improving the quality of lives of our citizens and the environment as well.

If confirmed as Commissioner of Transportation, I will work diligently with all stakeholders to foster economic development through transportation, enhance mobility for older Americans, for people with disabilities and the transit dependent, in suburban and urban communities alike.

I will work to reduce traffic congestion and increase safety for all who share our roads – motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians -- and will work to strengthen the capacity, the operations and the security of our ports, airports, and rails, roads and bridges through cost-effective spending and professional management of our transportation network.

My qualifications to serve as Commissioner of Transportation derive from lifelong leadership roles in the transportation field, from my tenure at the New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority – the nation’s largest transit, commuter rail and bridge and tunnel system, to serving the President of the United States; first as Chairman of the St. Lawrence Seaway, then as Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration; to my experience as President of my own company, as well as from my background as a licensed tractor trailer driver having driven thousands of miles on New Jersey’s roads and as a licensed jet pilot utilizing Newark, Morristown, Atlantic City, Teterboro and Linden airports for over twenty years.

My appointment to the MTA in 1995 by Governor George E. Pataki exposed me to a decade of oversight of large-scale, extremely complex transit systems.

For most of my two terms at the MTA, I simultaneously served as Chair of the Real Estate and Planning Committee, Chair of the Safety and Security Committee, member of the New York City Transit Committee, member of the Finance Committee, and member of the Corporate Governance Committee.

After 9-11, I served as Liaison between the Governor and Mayor for transportation issues around the World Trade Center site.

In 2004, I was appointed to the St. Lawrence Seaway by President Bush and after confirmation by the United States Senate I served as Chairman.

In 2005, President Bush appointed me as Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration. Prior to my second United States Senate confirmation, I served briefly as the Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Transportation at the United States Department of Transportation.

At the Federal Transit Administration, I managed an annual budget of over \$10 billion dollars and led a staff of more than 1,000 employees and contractors in Washington, D.C. and ten regional offices around the country. My primary duties included: serving as the nation's Chief of public transportation; approving

the funding of transportation infrastructure projects; communicating the Administration's key initiatives on public transportation; and, disseminating policy guidance to Congress and transportation stakeholders.

At FTA, I oversaw \$30 billion dollars of transit construction, and managed one of the largest discretionary programs in the federal government. I worked to reduce the financial risk associated with large-scale construction projects and to reduce the time it took to get major capital projects from the planning stage through construction and into operation.

I also enhanced safety and security programs, emergency preparedness, alternative fuels and green technology research. I championed public private partnerships, transit oriented development, the formalization of capital planning and "state-of good-repair" programs and pushed to standardize the manufacture of rail cars and buses. As Administrator, I held a security clearance above Top Secret.

In the private sector, I have spent over twenty years running my own company. I believe my knowledge and experience in the fields of management, leadership, finance; planning and

organization of my own company have prepared me for many of the challenges inherent in the administration and management at the New Jersey D.O.T.

My approach to leadership is firm but responsive to the need of the various stakeholders. I expect to be held accountable to you and the public and I expect accountability from others. I manage through leadership and I lead by being engaged.

My experience in both the public and private sectors has shaped my philosophy about management. I assure you that, if confirmed, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, New Jersey Transit, The New Jersey Turnpike Authority and the South Jersey Transportation Authority will be firing on all cylinders to provide improved customer service and operation efficiencies to all the citizens in every part of New Jersey.

I believe it is important to emphasize transparency in decision-making and collaboration to resolve issues, to build consensus, and to make tough choices. I further believe “good policy is good politics!” I have achieved success in both the private and public sector because I have actively managed each enterprise. I will do the same if confirmed by this body.

Because we live in a resource-constrained world, we must be disciplined in evaluating our choices, our options---weighing the costs and consequences of our actions and insisting on measurable results.

Yes, we have many transportation problems, but with every challenge comes an opportunity to improve our transportation network and the economy in New Jersey. It is the real possibility of progress that motivates me.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Judiciary Committee, I have made public service an integral part of my life. I believe it should be an endeavor undertaken by all responsible citizens. Serving the citizens of the Garden State and the Governor would be an immense privilege and honor, and if confirmed, I would apply my knowledge, skills and experience to the successful management and advancement of New Jersey's transportation network.

Thank you.

