



New Jersey's Long-Range Transportation Plan
Focus Group Summary Report

August 2006

Introduction

As part of the public participation process for the New Jersey Long-Range Transportation Plan Update, a series of four focus groups was held throughout the state. These focus groups, which involved a variety of constituencies, were conducted to garner public reaction to various transportation issues in New Jersey. The groups were convened between August and November 2005.

To obtain a variety of responses, each of the focus groups was comprised of different users. Their locations and focuses are listed below.

Location	Focus
Hamilton	Disabled travelers
Jersey City	Low-income/minority travelers
Newark	Urban travelers
Vineland	Rural travelers

Flyers giving a toll-free number to call and announcing that an incentive would be awarded to qualifying participants were distributed in the following manner. The disabled group participants were recruited by the director of Project Freedom-Hamilton, an assisted-living community in Hamilton and Robbinsville, suburbs of Trenton. The director distributed flyers to residents from both Project Freedom facilities. The low-income and minority participants were recruited by the director of Worldwide Educating Services in Jersey City. This is an organization that assists welfare recipients in their efforts to rejoin the workforce through education, ESL, driver training, etc. The director distributed flyers to individuals who participate in their various programs. The urban group was recruited via flyer distribution during the A.M. peak travel period at Newark Penn Station to users of NJ TRANSIT trains, buses, PATH, and Newark subway. The rural group was recruited through flyer distribution at Vineland City Hall, the Vineland Public Library, and at the community booth at the Cumberland Mall.

A screening method was devised for each focus group to ensure that candidates were qualified to participate in the study. Individuals who called the toll-free number on the flyer were asked a series of questions by staff of Howard/Stein-Hudson to assess eligibility. These questions related to age, sex, race, income, and transportation usage. Individuals who were employed by public relations firms or directly by transit agencies were automatically disqualified from participating in the study. Qualified candidates that participated in the focus group discussions were provided a stipend of \$100.

Discussion guides designed to aid the facilitator during focus group sessions were prepared. All participants were asked questions pertaining to their transportation usage: how and when they travel; how transportation affects various aspects of their daily lives; and their opinions, good or bad, about the present state of transportation. Participants were also asked what they anticipated transportation to be like in the future, what new technological improvements they expected, and the effect they thought these improvements would have on their lives. The discussion guide for the disabled group was tailored to their specific needs.

Overarching themes

While many of the discussion guide questions generated mixed responses, there were points of agreement and themes that arose during the focus groups.

- The groups have extremely different needs and perspectives.
- Many drivers do not feel safe in their cars for a variety of reasons including: aggressive drivers; overall congestion; and trucks and SUVs.
- Use of and reaction to E-ZPass is different among urban and rural users, with much higher usage and customer appreciation among urban users.
- Drivers considered the cost of gasoline in how and how often they travel by car.
- There is general agreement that more bus shelters and better marked bus stops are desirable.
- Some participants found the printed and on-line bus schedules to be confusing.
- There was desire expressed for bus stops with real time information about delays in service.
- The disabled group has significant problems with Access Link and relies on regular bus service if possible because it is easier for them. Train travel is difficult for members of this group as well.
- Some disabled participants suggested hands-free transit passes.
- Everyone agreed that congestion would get worse in the future. Many had issues switching to transit as service currently exists.
- The High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane concept was not attractive to drivers in the urban and rural groups.
- Participants cited GPS technology and text messaging to cell phones and palm pilots as attractive options for transmitting information on service changes and delays to transportation users in the future.

Trends

The results of the focus groups in 2005 were compared to those conducted for the last Long-Range Transportation Plan update in 2000. There are a number of similarities and some differences which are summarized below.

- For disabled users, one significant difference from the previous group is that many of these participants had switched back to NJ TRANSIT buses due to difficulties with Access Link. Also, in the 2000 group, participants felt that transportation had improved in the past 5 years, but the 2005 did not share that opinion. Similarities across the groups include:
 - Problems with bus schedules and transfers
 - Bus drivers who do not stop or claim that their lifts are broken
 - Frustrations with Access Link wait times, scheduling, availability of service, and driver behavior
 - Desire for on-line reservations for Access Link
- For low income/minority users, certain concerns and desired improvements remain the same since the last focus groups. These include:
 - More transit service on nights and weekends
 - Need for cleaner buses and PATH trains
 - More frequent bus service in general, and bus routes to more locations
 - Easier access to transit schedule information
 - More security on buses and at bus stations
 - Safety belts on buses
 - Hudson-Bergen light rail continues to garner praise from low-income/minority participants.
- For urban users, similarities between 2000 and 2005 include:

- Difficulty in using NJ TRANSIT's web site
- Desire for more frequent trains on nights and weekends
- Complaints about bus shelter safety and cleanliness
- Unmarked bus stops and bus drivers who do not automatically stop
- Request for buses to be equipped with schedules
- Interest in multi-use transit cards
- Desire for access to transit information on hand held devices
- For rural users, similarities between 2000 and 2005 include:
 - Lack of sidewalks inhibiting walking and biking
 - Identification of improving road safety as an important issue
 - Interest in computer navigational systems on cars and along roads

Summary of Focus Group Responses

Below is a summary of each group's responses to the discussion guide questions.

Introduction of the Participants

- Disabled –
 - 7 of the 11 participants were wheelchair confined.
 - The participants relied on two primary forms of travel: Local NJ TRANSIT buses, and Access Link. Car and train travel is rare. Car travel is almost entirely as passengers.
 - Travel is limited to a localized area.
 - The bus stop in front of Project Freedom-Hamilton was moved to further down the road. Now people have to rely more on Access Link.
 - About half of the participants were employed full or part time.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - The bulk of participants were unemployed and attending classes at Worldwide Educating Services.
 - All are regular users of NJ TRANSIT buses.
 - No car owners, and car travel is rare and very local.
 - Participants occasionally used PATH to go to NYC
- Urban
 - Most participants were employed and took NJ TRANSIT trains or buses to work in NJ or NYC, with some transferring to PATH, light rail or shuttles.
 - A few participants carpooled.
 - Those that owned cars used them only on weekends.
- Rural
 - All but two participants commuted regularly to work. Of those, three commuted by bus and the rest by car.
 - Most participants had some experience with NJ TRANSIT trains and buses, private coach buses, and/or PATCO.

Current Conditions – Tell me about the last time you traveled in a car. Was the roadway smooth? Have you noticed whether roads are more or less smooth over the past 5 years?

- Disabled
 - Roads are smooth, particularly locally.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Mixed responses
- Urban

- Many felt that major roads had gotten better, but there were still many potholes.
- Rural
 - Agreement among all participants that major roads and highways were smooth but local roads were bumpy and had potholes.

Were there enough information signs available? What types of signs did you notice?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - Signs are good on the Turnpike.
- Urban
 - Agreement that Turnpike signage is better than on the GSP.
 - Particular concerns were expressed about the lane markings leading to the toll plazas on the GSP.
 - E-ZPass should be taken in more lanes in the toll plazas.
 - Signage is worse in the southern part of the state, particularly the southern part of the Turnpike.
- Rural
 - Mixed responses.
 - Two participants felt that there were too many signs.

Did you experience any delays? What kind? Do you know why?

- Disabled
 - There are delays but unless it is obvious like snow, they did not know why.
- Urban
 - Delays due to accidents, rubbernecking, summertime traffic, construction, merging of lanes, traffic lights.
 - Signage regarding construction is better on major roads than smaller ones.
- Rural
 - Delays attributed to traffic congestion and driver behavior at merge points.

Did you see (or were you involved in) any vehicle crashes on the way? Have you seen more (or fewer) crashes over the last 5 years? Why do you think that is?

- Disabled
 - Fewer crashes
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Fewer
- Urban
 - None reported
- Rural
 - More crashes attributed to speeding and driver distraction.

Do you feel safe in your cars? Have you witnessed or experienced road rage?

- Disabled
 - Most felt safe
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Most did not feel especially safe.
 - Most attributed this to other drivers who drive wildly, ignore stop signs, and have road rage.
- Urban
 - Many participants did not feel safe in their cars due to aggressive drivers, SUVs, road rage, too much volume, and pedestrians walking in front of cars

- Rural
 - Some participants felt unsafe on the roads due to large trucks and buses.

Do you use toll roads? Do you use E-ZPass?

- Disabled
 - Those who drove did.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Most did not travel on highways, so did not have E-ZPass
- Urban
 - Everyone loved E-ZPass, but some complained that they are notified too late if the balance is running low.
- Rural
 - One participant had E-ZPass and felt the program should expand
 - Two did not want it for the “aesthetic” reasons due to the need to display the transponder on the windshield.

Do you car pool or participate in any ridesharing program?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - No
- Urban
 - Participants who carpooled felt it was a great savings on gas and transit passes.
- Rural
 - Three participants carpooled, in part due to the increased cost of gasoline.

Do you think about the cost of gasoline?

- Disabled
 - Yes, it informs choice of how/how often to travel.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - No
- Urban
 - Public transit is cheaper by comparison due to the price of gas.
 - Participants thought twice about driving.
 - One participant thought NJ TRANSIT trains were more expensive than driving.
- Rural
 - Several participants were reducing their trip making to save on gas.
 - One was considering purchasing a smaller car.
 - One was considering public transit where possible

What are other obstacles or barriers for you to get to the place you might want to go by car?

- Disabled
 - Participants identified people parking illegally in spots for disabled people. One suggests parking photo IDs.

Tell me about the last time you traveled on transit. Was the vehicle clean? Comfortable? How about the bus stop? How about the station?

- Disabled
 - On the Hamilton city buses it is difficult to identify the bus stops.
 - Drivers don't stop or claim their lift isn't working
 - Bus shelters are too small for wheelchairs
 - Buses are considered clean

- Low-Income/Minority
 - There was general agreement that buses and bus stops are for the most part clean although a few said buses were dirty.
 - Buses are crowded
 - They would prefer more bus shelters
 - PATH trains should be cleaner
 - PATH trains should have better AC
- Urban
 - There were mixed reactions based on the train station location
 - Some bus stop locations are unmarked
 - Some buses are dirty
 - Underground subway stations are a mess
 - Many typically have to stand on trains
 - Bus drivers need to be waved down as they don't automatically stop
- Rural
 - Users of the NJ TRANSIT 553 bus to Atlantic City found the buses to be clean and felt safe with the driver.

Did you feel safe in the vehicle or stop?

- Disabled
 - A couple of participants do not feel safe waiting for the bus
- Low-Income/Minority
 - There was agreement that they felt safe at the bus shelters
 - Some expressed concern over drivers speeding
 - They suggested seat belts for bus passengers
 - Homeless people are a problem in bus shelters
 - PATH trains should have better security.
- Urban
 - Newark Penn Station has improved, but not Newark Broad St.
 - Some felt that it was scary to wait at certain bus stops (e.g. Central Ave. and 7th St.)
- Rural
 - Participants recommended that there be more enclosed shelters
 - There should be phones and schedule information at bus shelters

Did you get to your destination on time? If not, do you know why? Did you know before hand that you were going to be late, or why? Does this happen often, or only occasionally?

- Disabled
 - Buses are less dependable in the middle of the day due to traffic.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Bus lateness seemed to depend on the route.
 - Some routes are chronically late
 - Riders cite traffic and driver behavior (stopping to talk) as the reasons for lateness.
 - They would like more frequent weekend bus service
 - PATH should run more on weekends and after midnight.
- Urban
 - Most participants did not experience delays
 - Buses are late in the late afternoon due to traffic
 - Electronic monitoring of buses would help as there is no one to ask about delays.

- Rural
 - Three participants experiences delays in buses and attributed it to accidents and traffic.

Was it easy or hard to find information about the schedule?

- Disabled
 - Timetables should be available on the buses
 - The on-line format was considered frustrating and not printer-friendly by some
 - Others thought it was easy to find information.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Most felt that it was easy to find information, but some had trouble finding the schedules.
- Urban
 - Many participants felt that schedules were hard to find and understand.
 - Schedules should be posted on platforms.
 - Paper schedules should be available on buses
 - Posted schedules often have graffiti
 - One thought that schedules were easy to get on-line.
- Rural
 - Participants found is easy to find schedule information at the bus station, on the bus, at the library and on-line.

Does your trip require you to transfer from one bus to another or between trains? What is that like?

- Disabled
 - One participant felt that their transfer went smoothly
 - Two had trouble with transfers, both to find information about schedules, and where to find the bus stop.
 - Some sited lack of notification of changes to the schedules
- Low-Income/Minority
 - A few transferred and said it was straightforward except sometimes the bus drivers do not wait to pick up transfers
- Urban
 - No
- Rural
 - No

Do you use any jitney or shuttle bus services?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - No
- Urban
 - A few used company shuttles but did not find them very convenient because of the infrequency of service.
- Rural
 - Many suggested local shuttle services to a main transit hub
 - Some felt that on-call services would not work due to the long wait to reserve them

Do you purchase weekly or monthly transit passes?

- Disabled

- A few had passes.
- Suggested discounts on passes for disabled people.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Many purchased monthly passes and some received passes through Welfare.
- Urban
 - Most purchased monthly passes, although some purchased weekly passes.
- Rural
 - One purchased a weekly bus pass

Are you able to take advantage of the pre-tax transit program, sometimes called TransitChek, through your employer?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - No users
- Urban
 - Five participants had it but others did not know what it was.
 - TransitChek makes it difficult to purchase transit passes because the machines do not take them, and the stations are not manned.
- Rural
 - None used TransitChek and only one had heard of the program

What are the other obstacles or barriers for you to get to the places you might want to go on transit?

- Disabled
 - Many had significant problems with train travel:
 - Some had difficulty with buying tickets in general and validating them on the River line
 - Trains are considered too tight for wheelchairs
 - Elevators do not always work
 - There is not enough time to board or disembark from trains.

Tell me about the last time you traveled on paratransit. What type of vehicle did you travel in?

- Disabled
 - Access Link

Did you get to your destination on time? If not, do you know why? Did you know before hand that you were going to be late, or why? Does this happen often, or only occasionally?

- Disabled
 - They had significant issues with Access Link and getting places on time.
 - There is too large a window of arrival times
 - They are never sure how long trip will take
 - There is no effort to consolidate trip making – if three people call, three vehicles will come
 - It is hard to use for commuting to work because the arrival time is not dependable
 - There are long waits at transfer points – riders are left to wait without sufficient information about when the next vehicle will arrive.

Was it easy or hard to schedule the trip?

- Disabled
 - There are significant issues with scheduling Access Link trips

- There is no on-line option for reserving appointments and some cannot be understood on the telephone
- Appointments need to be scheduled a week in advance
- Regular commutation has to be scheduled weekly. There are long telephone waits to talk to the scheduler
- The schedule has changed and Access Link is no longer available for night trips

Now I would like to switch our focus to the future, and I have some questions about what you see as the critical issues that need to be addressed in the next 25 years. What should NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT focus on in the future specifically to meet the needs of the disabled?

- Disabled
 - Some suggested allowing wheelchairs to enter in the front of the bus where there is more room
 - Buses need better design for wheelchairs
 - Access Link should be made part of NJ TRANSIT rather than run by independent contractors. NJ TRANSIT should not run Access Link just because it is required, they need to care about disabled customers
 - Disabled riders should be more involved with design and operation of buses and paratransit vehicles
 - A web site is a better tool to help with providing information on transfers
 - Hands-free debit/transit cards should be created
 - Bus schedules should be easier to read, with larger print

Do you think congestion on the roads will be worse in 25 years?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - All agreed that congestion would worsen citing population growth, people moving to suburbs, longer commutes, and people tiring of public transit and opting to drive as among the reasons.
- Urban
 - They agreed that congestion will worsen due to companies and people moving to NJ, population increases, and ease of financing car purchases
 - One felt that hybrid cars will make people less concerned about gas prices
- Rural
 - The majority felt that congestion would get worse due to more people moving to the suburbs, and growth in driver population.

For those of you who drive, what would it take to get you to switch to transit?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - Participants felt that transit would need to be more reliable, have more options and be more frequent.
- Urban
 - Participants needed more efficiency, options, flexibility, frequency and safety
 - One suggested that NJ TRANSIT should give out free passes to get people to try transit
 - NJ rail should honor bus passes
 - Some felt that child care requires more flexibility than transit offers
 - The cost of transit was considered too high
 - Some felt that shuttles to train stations would help
- Rural

- One participant would consider transit if it was in walking distance and the cost was low.
- One felt that congestion would have to worsen before they would consider a switch to transit.

For those of you who drive alone, what would it take to get you to carpool?

- Urban
 - Carpool lanes would be a good incentive, but it is hard to find partners.

Would you be willing to pay a toll or a higher toll for use of a special lane that would allow you to make a faster, less congested trip?

- Urban
 - Most thought specific lanes would not help citing the XBL lane to the Lincoln Tunnel
- Rural
 - The participants were against this idea
 - The lane would get congested
 - Cars already travel at too high speeds
 - Existing roads should be fixed first
 - It is wrong to send the message that if you pay more, things will get done more quickly

For those of you who use transit, if you had a choice, would you prefer to have more frequent trains or buses along current routes, or would you like to see more routes to go to more places beyond the existing transit network?

- Disabled
 - Most preferred more routes to different places
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Some felt that NJ TRANSIT should reexamine the routes they have to determine whether they are optimal.
 - They suggested that there be better coordination between NJ TRANSIT and the private bus operators
- Urban
 - Most preferred more routes over more frequency.
 - They suggested that bus service be expanded where roadways are most congested
- Rural
 - The participants wanted a mixture of both options

Would you be willing to pay more for more transit service? Or for transit to more places?

- Disabled
 - The majority would support paying more.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Participants felt like they were already paying enough.

Are you aware of any big transit projects that the state is currently considering? What do you think of them?

- Disabled
 - One was aware of the River Line
- Low-Income/Minority

- Many had taken the Hudson Bergen Light Rail and gave it good marks for frequency of service, and ease of getting baby carriages on
- Urban
 - Four had heard of a tunnel to 34th St.
 - Two had heard of potential extensions to the Hudson-Bergen light rail
 - One had heard of a potential connection between the Raritan Valley line and the Northeast Corridor line
- Rural
 - One had heard of the River Line in Camden
 - One had heard of a potential high speed train line from Camden to Atlantic City

Have you heard of Access to the Region's Core, which is studying creating an additional rail tunnel to Manhattan. How did you hear about it? Do you know what it is called? (THE Tunnel = TransHudson Express) What do you think of that idea?

- Disabled
 - No one had heard of this project
- Low-Income/Minority
 - One had heard about this on the news
- Urban
 - Four had heard of this but not by name
- Rural
 - No one had heard of this project

Would any of you consider switching to biking or walking to work or other destinations? What would need to take place over the next 25 years to help you make that choice?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - Some felt that it is currently too dangerous to ride bikes with driver misbehavior.
 - Others felt that it was currently too dangerous to walk due to menacing homeless people
 - They felt that bike lanes and sidewalk repairs would help
- Urban
 - A few would consider biking if there were bike lanes and if bikes were allowed on trains and buses during peak travel hours
 - Many said they could not afford to live within walking distance to train stations
- Rural
 - One would consider walking or biking but said there are no sidewalks, shoulders or bike lanes nearby

With more trucks on our roads, do you think it makes sense to try to shift more freight to trains? As a tradeoff, do you think you and your neighbors would accept more freight trains running if it meant fewer trucks on the road?

- Disabled
 - The participants expressed no particular support for rail freight as there would still need to be local truck trips
 - Some cited at-grade crossings for freight trains is an issue for traffic
 - Some suggested that trucks should run on cleaner fuels
 - DOT should monitor trucks for compliance
- Low-Income/Minority
 - There were mixed responses, with some liking freight by train because it would keep trucks off the highway.

- Others felt trucks cause traffic accidents and intimidate smaller cars.
- Those against rail freight said there would still need to be trucks on the roads
- They also felt that trains are noisy and dangerous at crossings
- Urban
 - There were mixed reactions with those in favor of rail freight saying it would be safer, and better for the environment
 - Those against said that trains created traffic at crossings, trucks would still be necessary for local deliveries, no one would want a freight train in their back yards, trains are noisy, and would have a negative impact on property values.
 - One suggested that towns could be given incentives to allow freight trains to run through them
- Rural
 - There were mixed reactions with those in favor of rail freight saying it would be safer, and cost less
 - Those against rail freight said that truck drivers would be out of work, people would complain about noise, and trains can transport dangerous materials.
 - One suggested that more cargo be shipped by air.

Let's talk about where you live. Would you like to live nearer to transit? Would you be willing in the future to live in a more densely developed place in order to preserve more "open space" or land that does not have houses or commercial buildings on it?

- Urban
 - The majority felt that it was better to live with more space, even if that was farther from transit
 - A couple of participants would prefer to live in a more dense area and be closer to transit
- Rural
 - Three participants said they would like to live in a denser area as it would be worth it for the convenience of being nearer to transit

We have identified a lot of issues and a lot of future needs. What do you think is the best way to pay for all of this? Who should take responsibility for solving these problems? What should NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT focus on in the future?

- Disabled
 - Some felt individual travelers should pay for these needs
 - Others said there should be more use of public transit
 - One felt the transportation system needs to be more comprehensive to provide people with an incentive for them to pay more
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Some felt government and corporations should pay
 - One felt that technology could bring down costs in the future, but would not want to replace people with machines as that would leave no one around to help in case of emergency
- Urban
 - Suggestions included eliminating waste at NJ TRANSIT
 - One said that bonds would need to be issued
 - One said that the Federal government should pay
 - One felt that communities would not mind higher taxes if service was good
- Rural
 - One asked once a toll road is paid for, where does the money go?

- Taxes on transportation should be used for transportation projects
- One asked where has the surplus gone? Spending more wisely is the answer
- One suggested a lottery specifically for transportation
- One said to reduce the number of state troopers to reduce money spent on salaries
- One suggested dedicating money from speeding tickets to pay for roads

Now I want to talk about the Role of Technology. What kinds of technology do you think will be available in the future that will improve or enhance transportation possibilities?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - Heated bus shelters
 - Trucks on barges
 - More manufacturing in NYC to reduce long haul trucks
 - Timed stop lights
 - PATH ticket machines equipped to take dollar bills.
- Urban
 - Palm pilots and wireless internet connections
 - Schedules available on cell phones or Palm Pilots
 - A multipass for any means of transportation
 - Increased train speeds.
 - Wireless internet on all trains
 - E-tickets for transit
 - Mag lev
 - Stop underfunding Amtrak
- Rural
 - GPS systems like “Onstar” where you can call people from cars
 - Smart highways that can signal drivers about alerts and about exceeding the speed limit
 - Replacing road signs with Onstar and MapQuest on dashboards
 - Better lit signs
 - More roads and highways

What do you think about extending the capabilities of something like the E-ZPass? For instance, one card that would pay tolls, transit, buy gas, and enable you to make phone calls.

- Disabled
 - One liked the idea of one card that would serve multi-purposes. Most had difficulty with using their hands.
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Two liked the idea of one card for multi-purposes.
- Urban
 - Some were worried about credit card security
 - Some liked the system in Secaucus where you put your ticket through a turnstile – conductors are too primitive
- Rural
 - The majority liked the idea of a multi-functioning card
 - One was concerned about losing their identity
 - The card should operate with a fingerprint to prevent hacking

*What kind of technology would you be interested in to get more information about traveling?
Prompt for:*

- *Trip planning*
- *En-route information*
- *Transit and highway*
- *Local and long-distance*
- Disabled
 - Automated voice mail updates to cell phones
 - Online information
- Low-Income/Minority
 - Updates to NJ TRANSIT's web site so it is less confusing and has more information about best choices for trip planning
 - Bus schedules with bigger type
 - Information about bus delays
 - Text messages to cell phone with transit information
 - Phones at shelters to contact dispatcher and inquire about delays
- Urban
 - TV
 - Touch screen kiosks
 - Monitors with information on alternative routes
 - Text messaging
 - Better communication in emergencies and delays
- Rural
 - Navigational systems which provide information early enough to make proper decisions

What kind of technology would you be interested in that would make your trip faster? Safer? More comfortable?

- Low-Income/Minority
 - More security officers
 - Panic buttons that connect to police
 - Bus drivers should let passengers sit before moving the bus.
- Urban
 - Modernize trains and stations
 - Express trains
 - One ticket for all
 - More frequent service
 - More metal detectors, military presence
 - Better sound systems on trains
 - Better trained personnel
 - Improved bus dispatching
- Rural
 - Earlier information about traffic and accidents
 - More ergonomic seats and seatbelts
 - Seatbelts on buses
 - Airbags all around the car

Other thoughts?

- Disabled
 - NJ TRANSIT should decide whether it is running a paratransit system merely as a federal request or because it is good for the community.
- Urban

- One wants more information and more focus groups to take place
- Rural
 - Insurance costs are too high
 - There is concern about uninsured immigrant drivers
 - NJ needs another North/South highway
 - Eminent domain should be avoided
 - There needs to be more public meetings

APPENDIX A: Focus Group Logistics and Demographics

Disabled

Location: Project Freedom in Hamilton

Recruit from Project Freedom in Hamilton and Robbinsville

August 2, 2005, 6-8 PM

11 Participants

HAMILTON DISABLED FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT GRID

Sex	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Transit user?	Paratransit user?	Regular Commuter to Work or School?	Disability
F	Caucasian	25-34	Yes	No	No	Back and HIV
F	Caucasian	35-44	Yes	Yes	Yes	Tarsal Tunnel
F	African American	55-65	Yes	Yes	No	Legally blind, Arthritis
F	African American	35-44	No	Yes	No	Cerebral Palsy, Visual
M	Caucasian	35-44	Yes	Yes	Yes	Spinal injury
M	Caucasian	35-44	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cerebral Palsy
M	African American	35-44	Yes	No	Yes	Learning Disability
M	Caucasian	35-44	No	Yes	Yes	Cerebral Palsy
M	African American	35-44	No	Yes	Yes	GB Syndrome, Momentary Arthritis
M	Caucasian	25-34	No	Yes	Yes	Cerebral Palsy
M	Caucasian	45-54	Yes	Yes	Yes	Cerebral Palsy

Low-Income and Minority

Location: Worldwide Educating Services

Recruit from Worldwide Education Services

August 9, 2005, 6-8 PM

13 Participants

JERSEY CITY EJ FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT GRID

Sex	Income	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Bus user?	Car user?	Transit user?	Regular Commuter to Work or School?
F	Below \$10,000	African American	35-44	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	African American	18-24	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	African American	35-44	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	African American	35-44	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

F	\$20,000 to \$40,000	African American	18-24	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	Caucasian	45-54	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	African American	18-24	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	Caucasian	25-34	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	African American	25-34	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	\$10,000 to \$30,000	Hispanic	18-24	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	Below \$10,000	Hispanic	25-34	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
M	Welfare	African American	45-54	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
M	Below \$10,000	Hispanic	45-54	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Urban

Location: NJ TRANSIT Headquarters
 Recruit from Newark Penn Station
 August 17, 2005, 6-8 PM
 13 Participants

NEWARK URBAN FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT GRID

Sex	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Train user?	Bus user?	Car user?	Regular Commuter to Work or School?
F	African American	18-24	Yes	No	No	No
F	African American	45-54	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
F	African American	45-54	Yes	No	No	Yes
F	African American	45-54	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
F	African American	45-54	Yes	No	No	Yes
F	Caucasian	25-34	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
F	African American	25-34	No	Yes	No	Yes
F	Caucasian	35-44	Yes	No	No	Yes
M	African American	45-54	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
M	Other	35-44	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
M	Caucasian	45-54	Yes	No	No	Yes
M	Hispanic	35-44	No	Yes	No	Yes
M	Caucasian	35-44	Yes	No	No	Yes

Rural

Location: Vineland City Hall
 Recruit from Vineland City Hall, Public Library, Community Booth at Cumberland Mall
 November 3, 2005, 6-8 PM
 12 Participants

CUMBERLAND RURAL FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT GRID				
Sex	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Bus user?	Regular Commuter to Work or School?
F	Hispanic	45-54	No	Yes
F	African American	55-75	No	No
F	African American	45-54	No	Yes
F	African American	25-34	Yes	Yes
F	African American	55-75	No	No
F	Caucasian	25-34	No	Yes
F	Other	55-75	No	No
M	African American	45-54	Yes	No
M	Caucasian	35-44	No	Yes
M	African American	35-44	No	Yes
M	African American	45-54	Yes	Yes
M	Caucasian	55-75	No	Yes

APPENDIX B: Sample Screener

New Jersey DOT and NJ TRANSIT 2030 Long Range Plan

DRAFT SCREENER

FOCUS GROUP: Urban
LOCATION: NJ TRANSIT Headquarters, Newark
DATE: August 17
TIME: 6-8 PM

SOURCE FOR RECRUITING:

- Recipients of flyers at Newark Penn Station

RECRUITING GOALS:

- Mix of incomes
- Recruit 14 participants, so that 10 –12 will show up for the focus group.
- Approximately 50/50 mix of men and women.
- Try for at least 4 Hispanic/Spanish/Latino or non-Caucasian participants.
- Recruit a mix of ages between 18 and 65.
- Try for a minimum of 4 bus users.
- Try for a minimum of 4 train, PATH, HBLR or Newark Subway users.
- Try for a minimum of 4 car users.
- Try for a minimum of 4 regular commuters.

Date: _____

Name of Screener: _____

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for calling in response to the flyer you received in the past few days regarding a focus group that the New Jersey Department of Transportation and NJ TRANSIT are holding as part of the update to their long-range transportation plan. .

What color is the flyer you received? [GO TO CORRECT SCREENER]

This focus group will be held on **Wednesday, August 17 from 6-8 PM in Newark**. You would receive \$125 for attending and be served a light meal. If selected, you will be contacted at a later date with further information. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group? If so, then I need to ask you a few questions.

GENDER

- Male
- Female

Try for a 50/50 mix

1. Are you or any member of your household employed by ... **READ**

- A market research company
- A public relations firm
- An advertising agency
- A public transportation company **READ (PATH, AMTRAK, NJ TRANSIT)**

IF YES TO ANY, THANK AND TERMINATE

2. Which mode of transportation do you usually take? **READ**

- Bus **Try for a minimum of 4**
- PATH
- Newark Subway
- Hudson Bergen Light Rail
- NJ TRANSIT Train **Try for a minimum of 4 train users**
- Car **Try for a minimum of 4**
- Other **THANK AND TERMINATE**

Respondent should pick one mode that they use most frequently (unless they use two modes as part of their daily trip)

3. How many times a week do you use this mode? **READ**

- Less than once a week: **TERMINATE**
- Two to three days a week
- Four—Five days per week

4. Do you use this mode to commute to work?

- Yes **Try for a minimum of 4**
- No

5. At what time of the day are you most likely to travel? **READ**

- Morning (6:00 AM – 10:00 AM)
- Mid-day (10:00 AM - 2:00 PM)
- Afternoon (2:00 PM – 6:00 PM)
- Evening (6:00 PM – 10:00 PM)
- Night (10:00 PM – 1:00 AM)

***Note: Two possible times can be given to complete the round-trip**

6. Which category best describes your age? **READ**

- Under 18 **THANK AND TERMINATE**
- 18-24 years old

- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-65 years old
- 66 and over **THANK AND TERMINATE**
- Refused **THANK AND TERMINATE**

GET A MIX

7. What is your race or ethnicity?

- Caucasian/White
- African American/Black
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other

Try for a minimum of 4 non-Caucasian

8. What is your household income? **READ**

- Below \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$35,000
- \$35,000 to \$50,000
- \$50,000 to \$75,000
- \$75,000-\$100,000
- \$100,000+

GET A MIX

RECRUIT

We would like to invite you to participate in a focus group about transportation in New Jersey. This discussion will last 2 hours and you will receive **\$125** for your time. Can we count on your participation in our focus group?

- Yes-----RECRUIT 14 FOR 10-12 TO SHOW
READ DESCRIPTION BELOW
- No -----THANK AND TERMINATE

The two-hour focus group will be held at NJ TRANSIT HEADQUARTERS, located at 1 PENN PLAZA EAST, NEWARK, NJ.

A MEAL AND BEVERAGES WILL BE PROVIDED.

Respondent's Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Recruiter: _____ Date: _____

I WILL BE SENDING YOU A CONFIRMATION LETTER WHICH WILL INCLUDE DIRECTIONS TO THE MEETING FACILITY. DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A FAX MACHINE OR AN E-MAIL ADDRESS? OTHERWISE I WILL OVERNIGHT YOU A COPY.

Fax: _____

E-mail address: _____

IT IS CRITICAL THAT YOU BRING THIS LETTER WITH YOU ALONG WITH A PHOTO ID.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR FOCUS GROUP.

Follow up call:

Confirmed by: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Sample Discussion Guide

Revised Discussion Guide for Newark Urban Focus Group

1. Introduction by Facilitator (0:00-0:05) 5 Minutes

Facilitator thanks everyone for coming. He states that this focus group is sponsored by New Jersey DOT and NJ TRANSIT as part of the public involvement component of the New Jersey Long-Range Transportation Plan update. The agencies hope to understand how residents think and feel about transportation issues in their communities, and across the State.

The facilitator explains how a focus group works:

- Facilitator will ask questions
- Participants are encouraged to give their opinions
- There are no right or wrong answers

The three basic groundrules:

- Don't interrupt the speakers
- No side conversations
- Facilitator may need to cut off discussion at different points in order to cover all the topics.

At the end of the focus group, each participant will receive his/her payment

Participants are told that this meeting is being audiotaped, so that a summary can be written. For the same reason, there is a note taker. There will be no attribution of any of the comments to a specific person and nowhere in the summary will the names of the participants appear.

Also, participants are told that the additional people in the room are observers who have a keen interest in their thoughts and ideas. They are here to gain immediate, first-hand knowledge of what is said today, but they won't be participating in the discussion.

Any questions?

2. Introduction of the Participants (0:05-0:15) 10 Minutes

Participants are asked to introduce themselves, telling us:

- Name
- Where they live
- What their most typical trip is like
- What mode of transportation they use
- How do other family members travel
- Origin and destination points
- Time of day they travel
- How many times per week they travel
- Purpose?

3. Brief Overview of the Transportation Choices 2030 (0:15-0:20) 5 minutes

The moderator will then give a brief overview of Transportation Choices 2030.

- The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and NJ TRANSIT are preparing the latest update to the New Jersey Long Range Transportation Plan, known as *Transportation Choices 2030*. States are required to prepare long range transportation plans and update them every five years.
- Why does New Jersey plan ahead for transportation choices 25 years from now? We all know that it takes a long time to plan for and pay for changes and improvements to the transportation network. New Jersey has a complex system of roads, airports, public transit, and freight transport. There are a number of challenges facing the state in the next 25 years, and NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT are making sure that these challenges will be met for the benefit of the entire state.
- These are just some of the critical issues facing the state's transportation network:

Innovative financing

Federal, state and local transportation funds are not sufficient to meet the increasing transportation needs for New Jersey residents, visitors, and businesses. We need to find new ways to pay for our highways and our public transit.

Increasing Congestion

The state's roads are among the most heavily traveled in the nation. Congestion is making travel more difficult and increasing the amount of time we have to spend simply running errands and getting to and from work.

Aging Infrastructure

New Jersey has made an enormous investment in its highways, bridges, public transportation, ports, and airports. As these facilities age, maintaining them takes a large portion of the money dedicated to transportation and this amount continues to increase.

Access to jobs

Everyone must be able to get to his or her workplace. One of the chief transportation challenges facing urban residents is getting to jobs that are now often located in the suburbs.

Mobility for an aging population

As the Baby Boomers age, their transportation needs are changing. We need to better accommodate older drivers and transit users, and provide transportation for people who can't drive or don't want to and who can't use public transportation or don't have access to it.

Safety & Security will continue to be crucial.

Transit capacity and expansion

NJ TRANSIT operates the nation's largest statewide public transportation system providing bus, rail and light rail services. Even so, more and more people want to be able to use this system to go where they want to go when they want to go there. They would like more service, and in many cases for longer hours.

While our main focus this evening is to talk about the future, I want to spend a bit of time on what it is like to travel in 2005.

4. Current Conditions – Tell me about the last time you traveled in a car.

(0:20-0:35) 15 minutes

- Was the roadway smooth? Have you noticed whether roads are more or less smooth over the past 5 years?
- Were there enough information signs available? What types of signs did you notice?
- Did you experience any delays? What kind? Do you know why?
- Did you see (or were you involved in) any vehicle crashes on the way? Have you seen more (or fewer) crashes over the last 5 years? Why do you think that is?
- Do you feel safe in your cars? Have you witnessed or experienced road rage?
- Do you use toll roads? Do you use E-ZPass?
- Do you car pool or participate in any ridesharing program?
- Do you think about the cost of gasoline?

5. Current Conditions – Tell me about the last time you traveled on transit

(0:35-0:50) 15 minutes

- Was the vehicle clean? comfortable? How about the bus stop? How about the station?
- Did you feel safe in the vehicle or stop?
- Did you get to your destination on time? If not, do you know why? Did you know before hand that you were going to be late, or why? Does this happen often, or only occasionally?
- Was it easy or hard to find information about the schedule?
- Does your trip require you to transfer from one bus to another or between trains? What is that like?
- Do you use any jitney or shuttle bus services?
- Do you purchase weekly or monthly transit passes?
- Are you able to take advantage of the pre-tax transit program, sometimes called TransitChek, through your employer?

6. Now I would like to switch our focus to the future, and I have some questions about what you see as the critical issues that need to be addressed in the next 25 years.

(0:50 – 1:44) 54 minutes

- Do you think congestion on the roads will be worse in 25 years?
- For those of you who drive, what would it take to get you to switch to transit?
- For those of you who drive alone, what would it take to get you to carpool?
- Would you be willing to pay a toll or a higher toll for use of a special lane that would allow you to make a faster, less congested trip?
- Would a continual increase in gas prices influence your travel by car?
- For those of you who use transit, if you had a choice, would you prefer to have more frequent trains or buses along current routes, or would you like to see more routes to go to more places beyond the existing transit network?
- Would you be willing to pay more for more transit service? Or for transit to more places?
- Are you aware of any big transit projects that the state is currently considering? What do you think of them?

- Have you heard of Access to the Region's Core, which is studying creating an additional rail tunnel to Manhattan. How did you hear about it? Do you know what it is called? (THE Tunnel = TransHudson Express) What do you think of that idea?
- Would any of you consider switching to biking or walking to work or other destinations? What would need to take place over the next 25 years to help you make that choice?
- With more trucks on our roads, do you think it makes sense to try to shift more freight to trains? As a tradeoff, do you think you and your neighbors would accept more freight trains running if it meant fewer trucks on the road?
- Let's talk about where you live. Would you like to live nearer to transit? Would you be willing in the future to live in a more densely developed place in order to preserve more "open space" or land that does not have houses or commercial buildings on it?
- We have identified a lot of issues and a lot of future needs. What do you think is the best way to pay for all of this? Who should take responsibility for solving these problems? What should NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT focus on in the future?

7. Now I want to talk about the Role of Technology (1:44-1:59) 15 Minutes

- How many of you have a cell phone? How many of you had one 5 years ago?
- What kinds of technology do you think will be available in the future that will improve or enhance transportation possibilities?
- What do you think about extending the capabilities of something like the E-ZPass? For instance, one card that would pay tolls, transit, buy gas, and enable you to make phone calls.
- What kind of technology would you be interested in to get more information about traveling?
Prompt for:
 - Trip planning
 - En-route information
 - Transit and highway
 - Local and long-distance
- What kind of technology would you be interested in that would make your trip faster? Safer? More comfortable?

8. Conclusion (1:59 – 2:00) 1 minute

Moderator will ask the observers if they have any questions. He/she will then thank the participants and ask that they stop by the sign in table to collect their honorarium.