



MIDDLESEX COUNTY
Endorsed Plan Submission to the New
Jersey State Planning Commission

Strategic Planning Area Plan Report for
Group One: The Arthur Kill, Raritan River
and Raritan Bay Area and the Metropark
Area of Middlesex County,
New Jersey

ADDENDUM REPORT—July 12, 2005



PREPARED BY THE
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MIDDLESEX COUNTY

STRATEGIC PLANNING AREA PLAN REPORT



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PREFACE

This Addendum to the Group I Strategic Planning Areas Report addresses questions and issues raised at the Pre-petition Meeting held on November 23, 2004 at the Office of Smart Growth. At that meeting representatives of the Office of Smart Growth and the various State agencies provided comments and questions regarding the Draft Group I Report that had been submitted earlier to the Office of Smart Growth.

The State agencies' major questions and comments that were recommended to be addressed in this Addendum to the Report are as follows:

1. NJ Transit—Define and recommend Transit Villages and identify Metropark as a Regional Transit Hub,
2. NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)—Identify and discuss the Environs, Environmental Resources, Water supply demand conservation, and Historic Resources in the Group I Areas,
3. NJ Department of Transportation (DOT)—Identify the status of the County Transportation Plan, include a discussion of all modes, and identify the issue of freight movement,
4. NJ Council on Affordable Housing (COAH)—Identify the need for affordable housing and insert a Housing Mission Statement, and
5. NJ Commerce Commission— Describe County-municipal coordination of economic development and the importance of Endorsed Plan status for State assistance.

These questions and comments were discussed and reviewed by the Middlesex County Smart Growth Task Force at its meeting of March 22, 2005. Subsequently an outline of the proposed response to the State agencies' comments was distributed to the Group I municipalities and the municipalities were requested to respond by April 29, 2005. No additional comments were received.

In order to comply with the NJ State Planning Commission's Endorsed Plan requirements and procedures a public hearing regarding the Group I Plan has been scheduled for 6:00 pm on July 12, 2005 in the Middlesex County Planning Board Meeting Center in the Elks Building, Livingston Avenue and New Streets, New Brunswick, NJ. The municipalities within the Group I planning area are requested to submit official endorsements of the Plan by August 31, 2005. The Middlesex County endorsement will be obtained by September 15, 2005. The Plan Report will be officially submitted to the NJ Office of Smart Growth on or before September 30, 2005.

PART ONE

TRANSIT VILLAGES

The identification of “centers” is a major component of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan. This supports the objective of concentrating development in areas with existing or planned infrastructure capacity. The delineation of centers will promote new or re-development in the most cost effective and environmentally sound manner. Concentration of future growth will reduce the spread of low density development in suburban areas that do not have adequate infrastructure capacity. This will reduce the need to invest scarce resources in new infrastructure and thereby maximize past investment in the urban areas of the State. It will also allow the preservation of natural resources and open space that would otherwise be lost as a result of new land development.

Centers presently designated under the State Plan are in Cranbury, Metuchen, Milltown, and South Brunswick. A recent example of a proposed center is Carteret, Port Reading, and Sewaren Regional Center. Woodbridge has substantial development occurring along Port Reading Avenue and is currently conducting a visioning process to determine the future shape of the redevelopment of the Sewaren waterfront. It is extremely interested in participating in conversations to discuss the center designation and its boundaries.

A key component of centralization or “compact development” patterns is the new movement to encourage transit oriented development (TOD) or “transit villages”. A transit village can be defined as:

- An area of walkable size (generally with a radius of one quarter to one half mile) surrounding an existing or programmed mass transit facility (serving scheduled rail, bus and/or ferry service),
- Well designed, mixed use development (that must include housing) at densities that support transit use,
- Pedestrian/bicycle oriented, and
- Supported by adopted plans, ordinances and a capital improvement program.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation and NJ Transit have established a Transit Village Program designed to encourage TOD in New Jersey. Designation as a Transit Village qualifies an area for special funding and technical assistance to support appropriate transportation and community development projects.

To date the State of New Jersey has designated two Transit Villages in the Group I Strategic Planning Areas:

- **Downtown Metuchen**—Centered on the NJ Transit/NE Corridor rail service at the Metuchen Train Station. Metuchen has promoted mixed use development with new housing in downtown and a vibrant downtown commercial area that is walkable, pedestrian oriented.
- **Downtown South Amboy**—Centered on the NJ Transit North Jersey Coast Line rail service at the South Amboy Train Station and the South Amboy to New York ferry service terminal at the waterfront on Raritan Bay. This is part of the plan to create a multi-modal transportation center in conjunction with the revitalization of the downtown and new housing on Raritan Bay.

There are several significant opportunities to designate other Transit Villages in the Group I Strategic Planning Areas. Brief descriptions of the potential proposed Transit Villages are as follows:

- **Carteret**—Centered on the proposed Carteret to New York ferry and a future Sewaren to Elizabeth light rail line. The Transit Village would revitalize the Chrome area with new mixed use development and tie in existing and future new housing, the civic and town hall complex and the new Carteret Waterfront Park. (The specific location of the Transit Village needs to be defined with Carteret and NJ Transit input.)
- **Edison**—Centered on the existing Edison Train Station on the NJ Transit NE Corridor rail line. The Transit Village would encourage proposed mixed use development and link to the existing municipal government complex and redevelopment of former industrial properties.
- **Old Bridge**—Centered on the proposed train station on the NJ Transit North Jersey Coast Rail Line near Laurence Parkway and the Garden State Parkway. The Transit Village would encourage development and redevelopment of the area between Route 35 and the Garden State Parkway with mixed use (commercial and housing) and improved access to Parkway Interchange 120 and Route 35.
- **Perth Amboy**—Centered on the existing Perth Amboy Train Station on the NJ Transit North Jersey Coast Line. New redevelopment of housing and mixed use and the adjacent vibrant downtown core of the City would be supported by Transit Village designation. The proposed Perth Amboy to New York ferry could be incorporated in the Village and would add to the City's accessibility.

- **Woodbridge**—Centered on the existing Woodbridge Train Station on the NJ Transit North Jersey Coast rail line. The Transit Village would support proposed mixed use redevelopment and link to the existing Woodbridge Main Street downtown, the municipal government complex, and coordinated redevelopment of former industrial properties.

The Group I Strategic Planning Areas offers an additional opportunity for the designation of a regional transit center. The Metropark area in Edison and Woodbridge is a major regional transit hub.

The existing Metropark Rail Station serving both AMTRAK (Boston to Washington service) and NJ Transit on the NE Corridor rail line will continue to be a major facility. Improved access to and from the Garden State Parkway and the potential for continued higher density development of commercial, retail and housing in the surrounding area make this a major regional growth area. Bus service links the station to the surrounding area. The area incorporates parts of two municipalities, Edison and Woodbridge Townships. Both municipalities and the County should coordinate planning to achieve well designed new development and redevelopment that is pedestrian friendly, addresses water resources concerns, especially stormwater management, flooding and wetland protection, and achieves economic development objectives.

Figure One that follows identifies the designated and proposed Transit Villages and the Metropark Regional Transit Hub. The Figure also shows the proposed centers for the Group I Strategic Planning Areas.

PART TWO

THE ENVIRONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

- It is the intention of the Middlesex County Strategic Planning Process to develop strategic plans for the seven growth areas (the strategic planning areas (SPAs) that have been delineated by the Smart Growth Task Force. The plans will be presented in three group reports. This is the first of the three Reports.
- The areas outside of the delineated SPAs are considered to be the “environs”. These are recommended to be “low growth” areas. The Plan Implementation Agenda for the environs will be specifically addressed in a County-wide compilation report to be prepared after the completion of the three SPA group plan reports. The delineations of the SPA boundaries for Groups II and III are not yet finalized, therefore the environs have not been identified. It is expected that the environs will contain the bulk of the important environmental resources in the County. However, the SPA Plans will also need to consider the protection of those resources that exist within their boundaries.
- The identification of environmental resources that should be protected or managed is based upon information obtained from the following sources:
 - Environmental Resource Data from the NJDEP Habitat GIS Data layers, developed for the “Landscape Project”.
 - Wellhead Protection Areas from the NJDEP Geologic Survey GIS Data layers.
 - Stream Corridors/Flood Plains from NJDEP GIS Data layers

The environmental resource data available from the NJDEP Landscape Project allows identification and mapping of the following:

1. Beaches

The waterfront areas of the Raritan Estuary and the Raritan Bay provide the major beach habitat areas of Middlesex County. The majority of the waterfront of the Raritan Bay in Old Bridge has been preserved as public open space and can be managed by the County and the State of New Jersey. The Raritan Bay Waterfront Park in South Amboy and Sayreville also preserves a significant beach area. The City of Perth Amboy also has a beach area on the Raritan Estuary. The beach areas on the Bay and estuary are susceptible to erosion by coastal storms. Beach replenishment and restoration and erosion protection are a high priority. Protection of coastal water quality is also a priority. Control of stormwater in the coastal areas and in tributary watersheds is important to prevent nonpoint source contamination and floatables from impacting the habitat and causing beach closures. The Beach areas in the Group I SPAs are shown in Figure Two.

2. Emergent Wetlands

Figure Three shows the remaining non-forested wetlands in the Group I SPAs. These areas are protected by the NJ Freshwater and tidal wetlands regulations. Future disturbance of these areas will be limited. Consideration should be given to future acquisition of these areas through open space programs at the County and municipal level.

3. Forest

Figure Four depicts the remaining upland forest habitat in the Group I SPAs. These areas are not protected by regulation. Municipalities can consider adopting tree protection ordinances that could prevent clear cutting or major disturbance of forest lands. The most effective protection of the forest resource would be through future acquisition as protected open space.

4. Forested Wetlands

Figure Five shows the remaining forested wetlands in the Group I SPAs. These areas are protected by the NJ Freshwater and tidal wetlands regulations. Future disturbance will be regulated by the state. However consideration should also be given to future acquisition of these areas through open space programs at the County and Municipal level.

5. Combined overlay (Beaches, Emergent Wetlands, Forest & Forested Wetlands)

This overlay depicted on Figure Six shows the extent of the combined beach, emergent wetlands, forested wetlands and upland forest resources.

6. Peregrine Falcon Nesting Areas

The NJDEP has identified two Peregrine Falcon Nesting Areas in the Group I SPAs. The areas are shown on Figure 7. The areas (one in the vicinity of the Garden State Parkway and Route 9 Raritan River Crossings and the second near the Outerbridge Crossing on the Arthur Kill) represent potential nesting sites in industrial areas removed from residential areas. The continuation of industrial/non-residential land use in these areas will help to maintain the relative isolation of the nesting areas from populated areas.

7. Wellhead Protection Areas

The Group I SPAs possess three concentrations of public water supply wells—in Sayreville near the South River (the Sayreville Well Field), also in Sayreville near the Raritan Bay and Cheesequake Creek, and in Old Bridge, near the Raritan Bay. In addition wells in the Runyon Wellfield in Old Bridge, and the South River wellfield near East Brunswick and the South River have wellhead protection areas that extend into Sayreville. While the acquisition

and protection of these entire areas is not practical, municipal actions through ordinances and public/private stormwater management measures can reduce the potential for contamination of ground water supplies. The Tier 1 wellhead protection area (the inner ring closest to the well point) is the area with the two year time of travel for ground water and requires the highest level of protection. The Tier 2 protection area has a five year time of travel and the Tier 3 area has a twelve year time of travel with correspondingly less immediate protection need.

8. Stream Corridors/Flood Prone Areas

Figure 9 delineates the major stream corridors and their related flood prone areas in the Group I SPAs. Areas with the highest probability of flooding should have the most rigorous regulation. Flood proofing, buy-out of frequently flooded properties or flood protection alternatives should be investigated for these areas. Management mechanisms selected should reflect local community desires based upon effective public education and input. Areas with some, but not frequent, risk for flooding should be considered for regulation with flood proofing as a preferred management mechanism. Stream corridor protection requirements should be in place at the municipal level for all mapped streams. Stormwater management requirements established by the NJDEP Stormwater Management Rules should be met at the County and municipal levels.

Water Supply Demand Conservation

- The need for water supply demand conservation is critical for New Jersey. There are limited opportunities for new supply resources. Projects proposed for the Raritan River Basin include the planned Confluence Project involving withdrawal of Raritan River high flows and pumping to add to the Round Valley Reservoir storage and the future (long term) Trap Rock Reservoir involving the diversion of Millstone River/D&R Canal high flows into an off stream reservoir using the completed Trap Rock quarry near Kingston. The projected year of closing of the Trap Rock Quarry is not yet known. It is also understood that other areas of New Jersey will be looking to the Raritan Basin to meet future water supply demand.
- In order to assure adequate supply the Lower Raritan and Arthur Kill watersheds are dependant on the proper management of existing supply sources (increased and augmented where possible with an interconnection plan). The management plan must include water supply demand conservation.
- The Lower Raritan and Arthur Kill watersheds can establish conservation through:
 - Protection of sources (There are no significant sources other than ground water supply wells in the Group I area.)
 - Promote residential use conservation measures.
 - Promote industrial process use conservation.

Promote commercial use conservation.
Promote appropriate wastewater treatment and reuse wherever possible.
Promote irrigation management (time and amount) and use of drought tolerant landscaping.

Resource Conservation and Sustainable Development

- In addition to water use conservation, other conservation and resource management measures can be incorporated in future development and redevelopment in the Group I SPAs. Energy conservation and water quality and quantity protection mechanisms should be promoted. In this regard the County, municipalities and private entities should consider adopting sustainable development, “Green Building” policies and standards to include:
 - Energy Star ® compliance in construction (High energy efficient appliances and systems, off peak use, use of solar, wind and alternative fuels)
 - Low Impact Development compliance (Green roofs, rain gardens, reduced pavement, porous pavement, bioretention, sustainable site planning, etc.)
 - Promote Community/Urban Forestry planning, implementation and management (adopt and implement Community Forestry Management Plans).
 - Promote sustainable community design (establish community design protocols to include public involvement and visioning, environmental resource protection, open space objectives, and economic objectives and establish a framework for allocation of resources and stakeholder education.)

Historic Resources

- There are a number of historic and architecturally significant resources in the Group I Strategic Planning Area. The County and the municipalities in the Group I area should coordinate efforts to assure the preservation of these sites. The sites are mapped on Figure Ten as follows:
 1. The Thomas Edison Memorial Tower and Park—This is a State owned and managed park facility in Edison Township. The tower commemorates the nearby Menlo Park Laboratory facility (no longer in existence) that was the site of many of Edison’s first electrical experiments and development of electrical devices.
 2. The Barron Arts Center—This is a former Library built in 1877 in Woodbridge Township and now used as a cultural center.
 3. Trinity Church—This is an existing church in Woodbridge Township.
 4. Simpson United Methodist Church—This is an existing church in Perth Amboy.

5. Tottenville Ferry Slip—This is the restored ferry slip for the former Tottenville (Staten Island, NY) to Perth Amboy ferry.

6. Surveyor General's Office, Proprietorship of East Jersey—This structure, adjacent to the Perth Amboy City Hall, survives from the colonial era when Perth Amboy was capital of the East Jersey Colony.

7. Perth Amboy City Hall—This structure, one of the oldest municipal buildings in continuous use in the US, continues to be the City Hall for the City of Perth Amboy.

8. St. Peter's Episcopal Church and Cemetery—Located in Perth Amboy the site was first used as a church in 1719 by the oldest Episcopal parish in New Jersey (1685). The current structure was built in 1852. The adjacent cemetery includes the burial sites of many early settlers of the area.

9. The Proprietary House—This structure built c. 1762-1764, located in Perth Amboy, is the only remaining British colonial governors residence in the US.

10. The Kearny Cottage—Located in Perth Amboy and built in 1781, this was the home of Commodore Lawrence Kearny responsible for establishing US-China relations in 1842.

PART THREE

THE MIDDLESEX COUNTY TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

The most recent Middlesex County Transportation Master Plan was adopted by the Middlesex County Planning Board in May 1999. The plan set goals and objectives consistent with the strategic planning process of the County.

Integration of Transportation Modes

- The goals and objectives of the Group I Strategic Plan reflect the need to develop a transportation system that provides for the efficient movement of goods and people. Alternative modes of travel should be available for most trips. Transportation planning and implementation for the Group I SPAs should achieve the following:
 - Provide adequate facilities to support safe and efficient movement by auto, bus, rail, ferry, bicycle, and pedestrian modes as are desired by the SPAs.
 - Provide for regional transportation hubs that connect auto, bus, rail, ferry (if water access is available), and pedestrian and bicycle modes. Continue to support the development of the South Amboy Transportation Center and develop a feasibility study and implementation plan for a similar Center on the Arthur Kill in Perth Amboy or Carteret. Continue efforts to improve the Metropark Rail and Bus transportation center and improve connections with cores and nodes.
 - Promote and enhance the Transit Village concept.
 - Develop a publicly acceptable freight movement plan that meets the objectives of the NY/NJ Port Authority and economic development interests for efficient movement of goods and materials to and from the Port through and within central New Jersey. The plan should meet public objectives for public safety and control of congestion, noise, and air pollution from truck and rail traffic.

PART FOUR

FREIGHT MOVEMENTS

The major goods transportation corridor in the Group I area is between transportation hubs in the north and more southerly warehousing clustered along the New Jersey Turnpike, according to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's ***Access and Mobility: the 2025 Transportation Plan for Northern New Jersey***, the premier study of this subject. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's report points out that bulk shipments come into North Jersey primarily by truck across the land bridge from the West Coast, by ship into Port Newark-Elizabeth, and by plane into Newark Airport. After goods are trucked, shipped, or flown in bulk into transportation centers in Essex and Hudson counties, they are dispersed by truck to regional warehousing along the NJTPA's Corridor 2, the Turnpike. From Carteret to South Brunswick, major investments have been made in warehousing that have made warehousing employment one of Middlesex County's fastest growing employment sectors by percent. These warehouses are often the major Northeast goods distribution points for large corporations. Goods from these locations are then distributed to local outlets in the Northeast.

Thus, there is a three-step process in which goods are shipped into the transportation hubs of North Jersey, transshipped to warehousing in North and Central Jersey, and then distributed to local outlets in the northeastern US. The impact of Corridor 2 is to put large volumes of truck traffic onto the New Jersey Turnpike and other north-south roads, especially Routes 1, 130, and 27, caused by the dispersal of warehousing away from Hudson and Essex counties.

The NJTPA advocates a greater concentration of warehousing near the transportation hubs to the north to reduce truck traffic involved in the transshipment of goods from transportation hubs to regional warehousing. It is inventorying the numerous brownfield sites in old industrial areas to this end.

The NJTPA also recommends a greater use of rail to reduce truck traffic. If this is to occur, several problems must be addressed, especially local resistance to increased rail traffic, procedural difficulties in providing government funding to the private corporations that own rail freight operations and that need large infusions of cash to quickly expand their operations, and capacity issues on the Northeast Corridor Line, already so heavily used by passenger traffic that freight traffic is confined to nighttime use of the line.

Other efficiencies in goods movements may be gained by creating an improved freight system database at NJTPA, which, by providing a better understanding of goods movement in the region, will enable better planning for improvements in shipping. It will

put major focus on truck shipping because greater efficiencies in this dominant mode of goods movement will reduce costs for shippers and taxpayers alike. One major proposal it is considering is a semi-dedicated truckway among the major transportation hubs and warehousing of North Jersey, which would make trucking more efficient even as it freed existing roads for other traffic. Comparable Middlesex County routes in the Group I region are the Industrial Highway in Carteret and the proposed “Riverside Drive” between Raritan Center and Route 287 / 440 in Edison.

Freight (goods and materials) Issues

- The major artery for truck freight in the Group I area is the New Jersey Turnpike, along which goods move from port facilities north of the County to various points from Carteret to Cranbury. The principal areas receiving, storing, and distributing goods along the Turnpike in the Group I area include Carteret (western Carteret and shoreline areas such as Tufts Point) and Woodbridge (Port Reading and Sewaren) (both accessed by Interchange 12) as well as Edison (Raritan Center) (Interchange 10).
- Other freight is shipped by rail on existing freight rail rights of way. The NJTPA advocates increased use of rail to reduce truck induced road congestion.
- An unresolved issue is the transport of NY City’s solid waste from transfer stations to disposal sites to the west and south. (Virginia is preparing landfills in the tidewater area in the lower James River and Chesapeake areas, to receive additional solid waste. Existing landfills in Pennsylvania and Ohio are being used.) Initial proposals called for using rail lines through northern Middlesex County to haul solid waste to western and southern landfills. Currently much of the city’s solid waste is hauled by truck transfer trailers using the NJ Turnpike and US Route One. An alternative to truck and rail is the use of barges to transport the waste to the tidewater area for disposal. New Jersey must monitor this.

PART FIVE

HOUSING NEEDS

It was felt desirable to add a housing goal to the strategic plan for Group I, as follows.

Housing Goal. The municipalities and the County will cooperate to achieve, through their plans, capital programs, and land development codes, the development and redevelopment of housing types and densities that meet the needs of all socio-economic groups and that support and are consistent with Smart Growth Principles.

Like most of Middlesex County, the Group I region is experiencing rapid growth not only in the construction of housing but in the price of housing and land. The result is that construction of upper class housing is booming but the availability of housing for the middle and lower classes is substantially less. These needs will must be addressed if the Group I region is have an adequate housing supply for all its inhabitants.

The New Jersey Coalition on Affordable Housing presents the following levels of housing need on their website (COAH Municipal Status Report, [www. state.nj.us/dca/codes/affdhsgguide](http://www.state.nj.us/dca/codes/affdhsgguide)).

Carteret: Need not identified.

Edison: Need not identified.

Metuchen: 21 units (rehabilitation)

Old Bridge: 0 units

Perth Amboy: Need not identified

Sayreville: 22 units (6 rehabilitation, 16 new)

South Amboy: 0 units

Woodbridge: Need not identified.

PART SIX

COUNTY-MUNICIPAL COORDINATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There are two major channels through which the County coordinates economic development with its municipalities. One is the County's Office of Economic Development. The OED has an economic development contact in each municipality, whether this be the mayor, director of planning, or industrial commission. Through this avenue, the County frequently reaches out to each municipality (and vice versa). The County director of economic development often meets with economic advisory panels and the contacts listed above regarding cooperation on various projects and programs. Often, the director will brief municipal officials on available programs on job training, economic development financing, urban enterprise zones, and other state and federal programs that may be applicable to their jurisdiction. The director is also in contact with many employers and frequently facilitates business problems such as requests for zoning changes or conflicts on regulatory issues between businessmen and municipal officials.

The Office also administers a County grant program to provide funds to municipalities to implement downtown improvements that support economic revitalization efforts.

The other means by which the County reaches out to the municipalities is through the County Improvement Authority (MCIA), which conducts a number of programs and projects that involve the municipalities. Below is a list of some of their principal activities in this regard.

1. The MCIA authorizes bond issues for the lease-purchase of capital equipment for both the County and its municipalities.
2. The Common Sense program makes available to municipalities the same vendor prices as the County receives.
3. Energy Aggregation: a program under which energy is purchased as a bloc for both County and municipal facilities.
4. The MCIA has lent an economic development advisor to Perth Amboy who works chiefly on relocations of existing residents and businesses displaced by extensive ongoing redevelopment.
5. Sayreville and the MCIA are seeking RFPs for the cleanup and development of the former National Lead site.

6. The Authority has a program for cleaning up tanks at abandoned gasoline stations in which Old Bridge and Metuchen participate.
7. The Authority is working with Rutgers in Piscataway to create College Town, a project that will provide housing and retail facilities at a relatively remote campus.
8. The MCIA handles recycling for 16 of the County's 25 municipalities and subsidizes the recycling programs of the remaining localities.
9. Performs due diligence in acquiring land for open space. Municipalities benefit from this activity when purchases are municipal-County joint ventures.

A final important aspect of economic development in New Jersey is the recent stipulation by the New Jersey Economic Development Commission that only jurisdictions with endorsed plans will be considered for economic development assistance. This means that it is essential for any entity desiring State economic assistance to insure that its plans become endorsed by the New Jersey Planning Commission.

