



## 2011 NJ Legislature Candidate Survey on Transportation and Land Use Policy

As a candidate for NJ State Legislature in the upcoming election, we hope you will take a few moments to answer this short, yet important, questionnaire regarding the transportation issues facing our state. Please feel free to attach sheets as needed.

### Organizational Overview:

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more efficient, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. Since the mid-nineties, the Campaign has played a critical watchdog role in the field of transportation policy, helping state transportation agencies reform their approaches to solving transportation problems. Our work has increased funding for infrastructure maintenance and repair, created more effective road projects and led to millions of dollars in new funding for walking, cycling and mass transit projects.

### Purpose and Process:

Transportation policies directly impact New Jersey's citizens in a variety of ways. Elected officials influence the development of these policies and how certain transportation systems are funded and built, thereby impacting constituents' daily lives. This short questionnaire will be used to inform the public on the incumbents' or candidates' positions in key areas of transportation policy. The questionnaire will provide you with an opportunity to present your views and vision on how to address the transportation issues facing New Jersey residents at the state and local levels. Please be as detailed as possible when describing your positions. **The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-partisan organization that neither supports nor opposes any political party or candidate for office.** Questionnaire responses, however, will be posted on our blog at [blog.tstc.org](http://blog.tstc.org) and in our newsletter, *Mobilizing the Region*.

Upon completion, the survey may be emailed to [janna@tstc.org](mailto:janna@tstc.org), or faxed to (212) 268-7333 attention Janna Chernetz. Or mailed to: Tri-State Transportation Campaign, attn: Janna Chernetz, 350 W. 31<sup>st</sup> Street #802, New York, NY 10001. **Please return the surveys no later than close of business October 19, 2011.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Jason O'Donnell \_\_\_\_\_

Party Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_ Democrat \_\_\_\_\_

District Represented: \_\_\_\_\_ 31 \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_ PO Box 1063 Bayonne NJ 07002 \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact and Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jenny Davis, Chief of Staff, 202-431-2800 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Questionnaire:**

### **Transportation Funding:**

New Jersey's Transportation Trust Fund relies upon substantial transfers from the state's general fund over the next five years – contributions from the general fund will be \$76 million in 2012, increasing to \$605 million in 2016<sup>1</sup> – and contributions from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. However, there is no indication as to how New Jersey plans to find this money year after year without indentifying new revenue. (This summer, PANYNJ announced substantial fare and toll increases to meet budget demands.)

1. Do you believe New Jersey will be able to meet the general fund transfers over the next five years?  
Y\_\_\_\_ N\_\_X\_\_\_ If "yes," where will this money come from? If "no," why?

Explain: \_\_\_\_ Currently there is no new source of revenue that will help alleviate this economic problem. We need to develop new, innovative, and renewable sources of revenue to increase contributions to the NJ Transportation Trust Fund. Such a new source of revenue might come from something as simple as a modest increase in the gas tax, which I believe should be seriously considered.

2. Do you support increased funding for transportation? Y\_\_X\_\_ N\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_ Yes, there should be increased funding for transportation, to both maintain existing infrastructure and also fund new transportation projects improving peoples quality of life and creating new job opportunities.

3. Through Local Aid, municipalities can apply for and receive funding for a variety of infrastructure and safety projects on a competitive basis. Local Aid has generally been funded at \$10 million annually. Do you believe this funding level to be adequate? Y\_\_\_\_ N\_\_X\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_ Funding for local aid projects is woefully inadequate. We need to make serious investments in our transportation infrastructure and safety projects if we are to preserve our existing transportation systems and keep New Jersey's economy going. Forcing municipalities to compete for funding to improve safety and infrastructure does not address all of the problems that currently exist.

### **Roads and Bridges:**

New Jersey has made progress in reducing the backlog of deficient bridges since it mandated a "fix-it-first" policy in 2000. "Fix-it-first" means existing road and bridges are repaired before new ones are built. But as of 2010, over 200 of New Jersey's bridges and 50% of New Jersey's roads<sup>2</sup> remain in substantial need of repair. Spending on new roads and bridges has also increased in recent years.

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<sup>1</sup>Transportation Funding Sources [http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/552010/pdf/TCP\\_Slides.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/552010/pdf/TCP_Slides.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>NJDOT Report on Roads <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/publicat/lmreports/pdf/pavementreport2010.pdf>

1. How will you ensure that New Jersey is adhering to its “fix-it-first” policy?

Before we embark on investment in new infrastructure, we should always make certain that what we have is safe and in good repair. I support the concept of “fix it first” and I would look to allocate funds on that basis.

## **NJ Transit:**

Transit saw 247 million riders last year statewide, an increase of 10% since 2008, yet state support for the transit system has decreased.<sup>3</sup> In 2004 nearly half, 49%, of the NJDOT Capital Construction Program was dedicated to NJ Transit.<sup>4</sup> Since 2004, that amount has steadily decreased to a third, or 33%, in 2012.<sup>5</sup>

1. Do you ride trains or buses? Y (light rail, NJ Transit) When and Where? For Leisure activities with my family and within the county
2. What would you do to address the increasing demand for public transportation?

A robust Public Transportation system is an absolute necessity in a state like NJ. People’s quality of life is impacted by their ability to move about the region in an efficient and cost-effective way. Our mass transit system should not be beholden to the whims of a fluctuating economy. It should be reliable, stable and predictable. People make life decisions based upon transit routes and these services should not be eliminated during economic downturns unless absolutely necessary. We must increase our funding to at least match what we used to put into our Transit system. Our Transit system is not only important economically, but it is also environmentally sound. New Jersey continues to attract people to live here because of our good mass transit systems.

3. Do you think the current level of public transportation service in NJ is adequate? Y\_\_\_\_ N \_X\_\_

Explain: New Jersey has a good mass transit system. We should continue to invest in and expand these systems to meet the growing needs of our citizens. We should make strategic decisions that would alleviate road congestion and traffic. Again, public transportation is both economically and environmentally sound. A good public transportation system attracts businesses and taxpayers to New Jersey. There should be a concentrated effort to continuously improve and promote public transportation in New Jersey.

4. In 2010, Governor Christie cancelled the ARC project which would have doubled capacity across the Hudson River.<sup>6</sup> The Lincoln Tunnel Exclusive Bus Lanes and the Port Authority bus terminal are at capacity.<sup>7</sup> In addition, this past month, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey raised fares and tolls on PATH and Hudson River crossings.

Do you believe improvements to the cross-Hudson commute are necessary? Y\_\_X\_ N \_\_\_\_

If yes, what measures and/or projects would you promote to improve the cross-Hudson commute?

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/pages/ridershipreport.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> NJDOT FY2004 Capital Program <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/capital/tcp04f/>

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 4 above.

<sup>6</sup> NJ Transit’s rail ridership has quadrupled since 1984 <http://www.arctunnel.com/about/>

<sup>7</sup> Wall Street Journal article April 19, 2011 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703916004576271150274132500.html>

Explain: Being a representative from Hudson County, I was extremely disappointed when the Governor cancelled the ARC project. Not only would the ARC project have doubled capacity across the Hudson, it also would have increased jobs in our area.

Hudson County is too densely populated to not have new transportation projects launched. My hometown of Bayonne is a peninsula sandwiched between a single turnpike extension and the Bayonne Bridge to Staten Island. The transportation options here must be expanded. There is absolutely no excuse not to improve the transit within the cross-Hudson area.

### **Traffic Safety:**

1. In 2009, there were 549 fatal automobile crashes on New Jersey's roads: of these, more than 171 were with pedestrians or cyclists. The total death count was 589.<sup>8</sup>

Do you believe current traffic safety measures are adequate? Y \_\_\_\_\_ N X \_\_\_\_\_

How will you address traffic safety in your district?

We should employ the latest technology in traffic management and utilize every available resource to make certain that our intersections and areas where pedestrians and traffic intersect are as safe as possible.

2. Do you regularly walk or ride a bicycle?  
Not regularly

### **Sustainable Communities:**

Smart growth development policies (which encourage development around transit hubs and economic centers), sustainable communities and increased public transportation are often more effective and fiscally sound methods of curbing traffic growth while bringing economic, environmental and health benefits to municipalities.<sup>9</sup>

1. Will you promote smart growth planning and development in your district?  
Y X \_\_\_\_\_ N \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: I support Smart growth planning and sustainable development in my district and throughout the state. We need to renew our urban centers to make them safe, livable, transportation friendly communities.

### **Sustainable Communities continued:**

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<sup>8</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (FARS) <http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/States/StatesCrashesAndAllVictims.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> US EPA <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/topics/eb.htm>

2. In 2012, the nationally recognized Transit Village program will be defunded. The program provides small grants to help towns promote development near train and bus stations. Previous funding levels were between \$1 and \$3 million annually.

Will you support the restoration of funding for the Transit Village program?

Y\_\_\_X\_\_\_ N\_\_\_\_\_

If so, at what level?: Both Bayonne and Jersey City are prime communities for the Transit Village program. I believe we should restore funding for the Transit Village program at as high a funding level as possible.

### **Above & Beyond:**

Is there anything else we should know about your goals regarding transportation?

People's lives are affected by their ability to move around and access all that the region has to offer including jobs, access to the arts and entertainment and the outdoors. It is imperative that we provide our citizens with a manageable commute and with the tools necessary to move about easily. It's good for the economy and for our quality of life.

***Thank you for taking an interest in the future of New Jersey's infrastructure.***