

HOW DO TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS GET FUNDED?

All transportation projects receiving state and federal funding must be approved by one of the state's three Metropolitan Planning Organizations or MPOs. Somerset County is a member of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) serving 13 counties and the two largest cities, Jersey City and Newark, in Northern and Central New Jersey. All three MPOs approve the state's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for their respective area and the New Jersey Department of Transportation forwards the TIP to the state Legislature for approval at the end of March each year. Basically the process can be broken down into three broad areas:

Regional Transportation Plan Development

- **Monitor and Forecast Demographic Performance.** The NJTPA with County input gathers the best available data and runs complex computer models, which analyzes the region's past, present and future mobility measures, and how the transportation system can best serve the region.
- The NJTPA sets **Regional Goals and Investment Priorities** related to transportation service, environmental protection, sustainable economic growth and other public values and develops performance indicators to evaluate progress toward meeting these goals
- The NJJTPA and partner members like Somerset County and NJDOT **Identify Specific Needs and Improvement Strategies** through the use of management systems like bridge or pavement management to target areas around the region with specific mobility needs and begins to examine potential solutions.

Project Development Work Program

- **Develop Concepts for Projects.** Building on the above work, the NJTPA and its partner agencies start refining their understanding of these mobility needs through more technical data collection and community feedback and start conceptualizing possible improvements through studies.
- Project sponsors (including the County) **Investigate Project Feasibility and Begin Design** for the selected project candidates and all project benefits and impacts are quantified and evaluated using specific performance measures.

Transportation Improvement Program

- With a pool of possible project candidates, the NJTPA **Prioritizes and Selects Projects to Implement** by using the best available data and applies a set adopted performance criteria, which relate back to goals, investment policies and measures, on a project-by-project basis.

- **Identify Funding and Schedule Projects.** This completes the planning and funding cycle, but year-to-year financial realities and unforeseen project delay problems must also be considered, resulting in TIP Amendments or new TIP schedules which can be captured in the annual TIP Construction Program
- **Monitor and Forecast Demographics and Transportation Performance.** The planning and project cycle repeats by the NJTPA continuing to gather relevance performance data on population, employment and mobility indicators like accidents and congestion delay as well as the specific performance measures of completed projects.

Source: NJTPA, One Newark Center, Newark, NJ 07102. Additional information on the regional transportation planning and project implementation can be obtained by contacting the NJTP at www.njtpa.org