NEW JERSEY FUTURE

137 West Hanover Street
Trenton, NJ 08618
(609) 393-0008 *Tel.*
(609) 393-1189 *Fax*
www.njfuture.org

STATEMENT

New Jersey Common Ground Initiative

Statement on Federal Stimulus Principles

April 7, 2009

Contact: Peter Kasabach, Executive Director, 609-393-0008 ext. 104

Introduction

These times of economic crisis, shrinking budgets, and growing competition for land and water provide a unique opportunity for bold action to improve the economic, environmental and social quality of life in New Jersey.

Leading New Jersey environmental protection, affordable housing, and sustainable development organizations have come together to shape a common agenda for transformative change during these challenging times. The first outcome of this convening is a vision for using the economic stimulus program.

Today we offer a set of principles to guide stimulus spending and examples of the kinds of projects that illustrate these principles in action. These eleven principles and examples show how our public investments can be directed to meet New Jersey's short and long-term environmental, social, and economic needs.

We ask the Governor, Legislature and other policy makers to embrace these principles, and shape stimulus spending accordingly. Additionally, stimulus funding should not free up other infrastructure funds to be used for projects that are at odds with these principles. This approach offers the best chance to seize the extraordinary opportunities the current crisis offers our state to set a course for the future that ensures a healthy and diverse economy, protection of natural resources, social equity, and a green energy future that will sustain economic growth.

Principles

1. Invest in "green" transportation. We have a vast road system that represents one half of our transportation system. We now need to complete the other half of the transportation system that includes mass transit, biking and walking. Stimulus funds should be invested in maintaining and expanding this green transportation network. A robust mass transit system, coupled with a network of supporting pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, gives New Jersey a competitive advantage in today's increasingly global economy and offers the most efficient and environmentally sustainable means to keep our state moving.

2. Fix-It-First. Our existing roads, bridges and environmental infrastructure are in dire need of repairs. Continued expansion of our road network and other infrastructure will soon become untenable both financially and environmentally. Stimulus funds should be used to repair or replace existing infrastructure that has come into disrepair or is anticipated to

in the near future.

Support greenhouse gas reduction. Infrastructure spending will have a direct result on our state's ability to meet our ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets. Projects supporting greenhouse gas reductions should be prioritized, and projects that make the situation worse should be disregarded.

3. Advance innovative projects that reduce congestion through smart land use decisions. The traditional approach to relieving traffic congestion by building bigger roads has time and again proven ineffective. Instead, state transportation projects can be combined with localized planning efforts to create solutions that are more cost effective, relieve congestion, and build healthier, more walkable communities. NJDOT's pioneering New Jersey Future in Transportation (NJFIT) program is a good example. Stimulus funds should go to support this approach instead of trying to pave our way past congestion.

4. Promote redevelopment. In a state with as little open space as New Jersey, using stimulus funds to extend infrastructure or build projects in undeveloped portions of the state would be wasteful, irresponsible and unacceptable. Instead, funds should be used to encourage redevelopment, including parks, in already developed areas. Stimulus funds should go to projects in developed areas and not subsidize or support infrastructure or projects outside of these developed areas.

5. Choose solutions that benefit the economy, social equity AND the environment. Too often we allow project level decision-making to be based on false trade-offs between these three critically important themes. Federal stimulus funding should be prioritized for projects that demonstrate positive outcomes across all three areas, such as environmentally sensitive affordable housing; and projects that offer dramatic win/lose tradeoffs should be rejected.

6. Invest strategically for the future. Infrastructure lasts a long time. Stimulus spending should go to infrastructure, remediation and pollution prevention that is part of a comprehensive strategic plan and that will foster long-term economic, social and environmental benefits, and not cause foreseeable long-term problems to any of these.

7. Use the principles of capacity-based development as a guide for spending. Stimulus spending should be aligned with the goals and policies of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, the Highlands Regional Master Plan, the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, the Water Quality Management Plan rules, and other information that supports a capacity based approach to growth. The State Planning Commission can play an important role in coordinating these efforts.

8. Direct stimulus funds to labor-intensive green projects to increase the number of jobs created. Putting people to work on projects that are not capital intensive is an effective way of utilizing limited dollars to create a maximum number of jobs and paychecks. For example, one approach is to establish a Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) that could be up and running more quickly than complex projects requiring competitive bidding, hiring

of contractors and subcontractors, thus infusing funding more quickly into the economy. The CCC could use existing systems, such as State Parks and Forests, to hire people for a variety of tasks, including: mitigating global warming through plantings which sequester carbon, reducing flooding and erosion through stream bank stabilization and restoration, installation of solar panels and windmills, installation of energy efficient improvements in buildings, and construction of new trails in our parks and greenways.

9. Increase the state's inventory of energy efficient and green buildings (especially homes). Improving the energy efficiency of buildings reduces greenhouse gas emissions and minimizes operating costs. Retrofitting buildings to be green reduces impacts on the environment, reduces the waste stream, and improves indoor air quality. Stimulus funds, especially production, weatherization and public housing modernization monies, should be targeted to measurable energy efficient and green building improvements.

10. Ensure transparency and accountability. The process for choosing projects (including the broader policy goals being accomplished), project descriptions and project progress must be transparent and explained in plain words that the public can understand. Lists and details of stimulus projects must be made public in a timely and consistent way. The state must have a system of accountability in place and be prepared to explain how these projects adhere to broader environmental, social and economic goals. Timely updates will ensure that the public is informed and understands the direct benefit of stimulus spending.

Examples

The following provides examples or illustrations of projects that fit or conflict with the principles stated above. These are concrete examples. They do not exhaust the list of possible positive and negative projects that could receive federal or state stimulus funding. Some of these projects are already on state government agency lists, such as the NJ Department of Transportation's project list, for stimulus funds. Others may become candidates in the future as the full extent of the federal stimulus program unfolds.

Projects that Fit the Principles

A) Transportation

In general, transportation projects that provide new or expanded transit, or repair existing infrastructure such as bridges, advance the principles we have outlined. The New Jersey Department of Transportation, NJTransit, and Municipal Planning Organization lists that have been published are generally in line with our principles. Additional outstanding examples of current proposals include:

- Building the ARC Rail Tunnel and linking the ARC Tunnel with regional transit in New Jersey. ARC is a new 3.5 mile passenger rail tunnel connecting New Jersey to Manhattan. It will double transit capacity across the Hudson River, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 124,000 pounds/year, produce 6,000 jobs annually during construction, and improve service for all NJTransit riders. Once the tunnel is complete, eight NJTransit rail lines will have

new, direct, one seat rides into New York City. Ridership on NJTransit has grown 340% since the eighties, and continues to rise. ARC will also create opportunities to improve connections between the tunnel and New Jersey's existing regional transit systems.

- Connecting the River Line with the Atlantic City Line. NJ Transit has already demonstrated considerable ingenuity in adding new connectivity to the existing transit system, with such projects as the Secaucus Transfer, which allows transfers among all seven of NJ Transit's North Jersey commuter rail routes. A station connecting the River Line and the Atlantic City line where they cross in the Delair section of Pennsauken will serve as a smaller-scale, South Jersey analog to the Secaucus Transfer, facilitating movement among branches without having to travel all the way into the central hubs of Philadelphia and Camden and simplifying moves that presently require multiple transfers. The project would increase access to jobs, reduce commute times and create further incentives for increased rail ridership.
- Repairing bridges, such as the Pulaski, Mathis and Route 72 Bay Bridges.
- Upgrading existing transit through projects such as enhancing signals on the North Jersey Coast Line and providing low-floor buses for NJ Transit.
- Completing bike and pedestrian projects, such as the Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to Schools (especially in urban areas), Safe Routes to Transit, and Bikeways programs.

B) Water Infrastructure

Upgrading, repairing and retrofitting our state's infrastructure for the conservation and provision of clean water both for people and for natural systems is urgently needed and should be a central part of the stimulus spending program. Key areas on which the state should focus stimulus work include:

- Upgrading and repairing leaking water supply infrastructure. This broken infrastructure wastes water and leads to excessive use of water sources. Priority areas for this work include Highlands water receiving areas such as Newark and other highly populated receiving areas such as Atlantic City. An example of smaller-scale projects that advance this objective is the Leshin Lane and Mercer Street Water Mains in Hightstown Borough, Mercer County.
- Eliminating combined sewer systems. National Clean Water Act policies seek to eliminate combined sewer systems, because of the environmental and fiscal harm these systems cause when they overflow during storms. The cost of separating sanitary sewer and stormwater systems in older communities has slowed or prevented progress in many areas. Stimulus funds could jump-start such labor-intensive projects.
- Retrofitting and repairing stormwater systems. Recent analyses have shown that poorly designed and improperly constructed stormwater systems, particularly basins, are contributing to the contamination of waterways and key economic, recreational and natural resources like Barnegat Bay. These systems can and should be retrofitted and repaired to better remove contaminants from stormwater and prevent flooding. Ocean County and the Barnegat Bay Estuary Program, for example, have identified basins in the Barnegat Bay Estuary needing repair and retrofit, and they have demonstrated the efficacy of this strategy.

C) Sustainable Communities

There are many opportunities to direct stimulus funds, such as Community Development Block Grants, to projects that will make our communities more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, and will support the growing number of municipal sustainability projects around the state. Examples include:

- Housing rehabilitation and in specified circumstances, the creation of new affordable housing. These housing projects bring long-term economic and social benefits to both distressed and prospering communities. They can also promote environmental goals through measures such as energy efficient construction, re-use of buildings and integration of new housing into walkable and transit-friendly community planning.
- Renovation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. The reuse of existing historic buildings has been shown to be highly efficient in terms of energy and other resource usage, and to raise property values in the surrounding neighborhood. Such projects bring lasting benefits by promoting ongoing economic activity and strengthening loyalty to place in such neighborhoods.
- Demonstration construction projects for energy and water efficiency. The state should support such demonstration projects in order to advance industry and public understanding of the benefits of building and renovating for greater resource efficiency. An example of such a demonstration project would be the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association's Watershed Environmental Center.
- Urban parkland development. Good urban park projects provide a range of benefits that improve the quality of life and desirability of our existing cities. Examples of current projects include Newark's Passaic Riverfront Park and Jesse Allen Park proposals.

D) State Parks

Improving the quality of state park, forests and wildlife management areas brings both recreational and environmental benefits, while promoting the state's critical tourism industry. The Department of Environmental Protection has identified key infrastructure needs in its Natural Capital Report (2007).

Projects that Conflict with the Principles

While we emphasize the many and diverse infrastructure projects that should receive stimulus funding because they advance smart economic, social equity and environmental goals, we believe it is also important to show what kinds of projects would conflict with the principles we have outlined. Two illustrative examples follow. It must be noted that these examples do not represent a complete list of projects failing to meet the principles, and that projects not listed here are not being implicitly endorsed by omission.

- Widening US Route 206 through Byram Township in the Highlands. Route 206 serves as the border between the Preservation and Planning Areas of New Jersey's Highlands region, and the proposed widening of the road in this area would contradict the goals embedded in the Highlands Water Protection & Planning Act. The project would take Route 206 from two to five lanes through a state-designated Village Center in Byram, undercutting the goal of making a walkable, pedestrian-friendly main street. The project would also simply shift

the existing traffic bottleneck to an environmentally sensitive area where the road crosses a Category One stream. A better approach is to "fix it first" by improving a key substandard intersection to alleviate congestion at far lower cost.

- Expansion of Route 55 in Cumberland and Cape May Counties. The extension of this freeway is a major project that resurfaces on the state's transportation agenda every few years. It is the kind of expensive construction project on which stimulus funds should not be spent because it would violate the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan; heighten development pressures in two of the state's most important and sensitive natural areas (the Cape May Peninsula and Delaware Bayshore) far from the state's existing population and business centers, while bringing no sustainability benefits; have severe environmental impacts through fragmenting forest, filling wetlands, and harming water quality; require the diversion of state, local and federal conservation lands; and bring little if any benefits to meeting transportation needs.

Supported by:

• American Littoral Society
• Association of NJ Environmental Commissions
• Clean Ocean Action
• NJ Environmental Federation
• Edison Wetlands Association
• Housing and Community Development Network of NJ
• New Jersey Audubon
• New Jersey Future
• New Jersey Conservation Foundation
• New Jersey Highlands Coalition
• Pinelands Preservation Alliance
• PlanSmart NJ
• Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
• Tri-State Transportation Campaign
• Trust for Public Land