

Presentation to Transportation Transition Team
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Integrate issues/Integrate government:
Developing a shared vision of the future of New Jersey

Over our 40+ year history, PlanSmart NJ has analyzed many of the problems that New Jersey now faces – problems related to ***jobs, housing, transportation, water, critical habitat and patterns of racial and economic segregation***. We have found that the number one obstacle preventing us from effectively dealing with these problems is the fragmentation of government.

Think about transportation, for example. If it had limitless money, DOT could invest in highway expansion everywhere without making a dent in traffic congestion. That's because local zoning would create an endless flow of new traffic with its low densities, separate uses, love of free parking and abhorrence for workforce housing.

On the other hand, if DOT wanted to help NJ Transit expand transit service – creating a road network for a Bus Rapid Transit system, for example – DEP would obstruct the densification of growth areas, because of their aversion to growth. Even DOT's own Highway Access Code has an aversion to congestion that works against redevelopment for density and mixed use.

For DOT, as it is for all state agencies and for the Governor-elect's new administration, success will depend on reframing your mission. For DOT it is to change the view that your mission is to prevent congestion. Your mission, I would argue, is to improve the functioning of the transportation system.

Success also depends on your understanding that you have the power to pursue your mission. You need not be at the mercy of local government, because you have what they need – their transportation problems can only be solved at the state and regional level. You need not be at the mercy of DEP or other state agencies, because your mission is equally important to theirs, and your mission should be understood as part of the shared vision of the future of New Jersey.

PlanSmart NJ has developed a number of new solutions that provide a new structure for integrating the issues that are currently divided up among different

state agencies, which allows them to work on their piece of the issues in ways that are often at cross-purposes to others. Our new planning framework connects the issues and then connects statewide goals to each other and to local government actions – connecting all the players in the land use decision-making system. It moves away from the old “command-and-control” structure and moves to a “performance-based” structure, as global companies are doing.

We see the land use system as not just about **plans**, but also including **zoning** and state agency **regulations** as well as **infrastructure investments** that affect land use, and therefore affect jobs, housing, and all the rest of it. This is too big for a command-and-control approach.

Our approach sees the issues and government as part of a kind of Rubric’s Cube: each player’s is trying to line up the squares on one side, affecting the ability of the other players who are trying to line up the squares on the other sides. Each player must be held accountable for pursuing his own goal, without obstructing the goals of others.

The trick to this is to have each player focus on **outcomes**, not on tactics. And not to fall prey to objectors who feel that this structure creates winners and losers. Or objectors who see things as either/or. New Jersey is too small and in too much trouble to allow this to go unchallenged. Not winners and losers, not either/or. A regional approach is a strategic tide that can lift all boats.

We believe our approach will help Governor-elect Christie and his Cabinet frame issues in ways that will empower them to do the hard things that need to be done.

- **It can build a resilient economy to respond to future challenges** – building the capacity to grow. This means building workforce housing, improving infrastructure strategically – like investing in the ARC Tunnel which will double transit capacity to more than three quarters of the population – and changing zoning and state agency regulations that obstruct growth in identified growth areas.
- **It benefits the environment** – redeveloping cities, older downtowns and First Suburbs, as well as in suburban employment centers and retail hubs reduces the consumption of open land and allows for conservation investments that will improve functioning eco-systems. It also promotes transit-friendly densities, which makes transit more feasible, which reduces GHG emissions, etc.
- **It can reduce costs**, by reducing the concentration of poverty (law enforcement, failing schools, health issues, etc.) and by building on previous investments. This means focusing on redevelopment and strategic infrastructure and conservation investments, and promotes revenues by working with the current market and future demographics.

- **It allows for priorities to be set** – making possible more strategic investments that will improve conditions for everyone.

For transportation, the strategic approach is to turn the system on its head and make the mission of the pursuit of a functioning **transportation system focused on public transportation**. I don't mean that we expect most trips to be on transit, but that the state's planning and investment strategy will be to capture as many trips onto the public transit system as possible.

And this will not be all about NJ Transit, either. Most transit is road-based. It does mean DOT, working with NJ Transit, must identify key transportation corridors, based on where transit service can be extended and the road network be connected well enough to serve it. This helps other agencies, as well as DOT to set priorities. And it will make clear what land use will be required.

We feel that this integration of issues and government should be mapped out in a newly constituted State Development and Redevelopment Plan by a newly constituted State Planning Commission and Office of State Planning (more later).

We see the power of the State Plan being generated not by its command and control over other agents of government, but by **articulating a shared vision of the future of New Jersey on jobs, housing, transportation, water, critical habitats and a pattern of racial and economic integration**. Right now there is not a single word in the Plan about the economy. Right now the Plan sits there waiting for change to bubble up from below. Right now the Plan does nothing to help state agencies work together. This must be changed.

It can be done: We all agree that the land use decision-making system is broken. But see that the state does have the means to change it. Previous Governors have pandered to Home Rule, allowed some Commissioners to act independently from – and sometimes in conflict with – other Commissioners, and punted when hard decisions had to be made. You control your state agencies, you can integrate their various statutory powers, you can prioritize state investments.

There is no time to waste – the new administration must undo the damage that others have done and get the state back on track. PlanSmart NJ is ready with solutions that will help.