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How to Handle Mega Municipal Issues

During a recent event at Rutgers University, I was asked “What is the consuming issue that the League is dealing with at this time?” I was nearly at a loss for words. The year 2018 seems to have been “the year of the mega issue” for New Jersey municipal government.

Was our consuming issue the response to federal changes in SALT deductions? Was it the expiring police contracts with no cap on arbitration awards? Was it the establishment of a new PFRS board of trustees? As if any of those would not be enough, 2018 saw the release of the expansive Path to Progress report; the Supreme Court Report on Municipal Court Operations; the Governor’s Strategic Economic Plan with its ambitious array of programs; and, of course, the cannabis legislation and the Gateway Project funding. Throw in the many issues related to the State budget funding and 2018 was the year of mega issues.

No matter which issue is your mega issue, you can continue to rely on the League to assist with research, analysis, training, and, perhaps most importantly, leadership. As leaders in your own community, you know sometimes what is needed is to point out the way forward. To help you with that direction the League has adopted a number of resolutions to focus our policy agenda and call attention to issues critical to our municipalities and our state. Those resolutions were proposed by individual municipalities to exemplify the mega issues we all face.

Also, at the Annual Conference the League elected new leadership for 2019 with Colleen Mahr, Mayor, Fanwood, elected president. Take a moment to review the full League leadership on page 1. They will be working hard on your behalf handling the mega issues during 2019.

Together we will continue to grapple with mega municipal issues in 2019 and beyond. I hope you will continue to share your thoughts and concerns with me so the League can be sure our focus is on the most important of these issues.”

Michael Darcy
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NRDC Studies NJ Roads
Report envisions Northeast Regional Initiative for modern, clean transportation in NY & NJ

By Bruce Ho, Senior Advocate, Natural Resources Defense Council

A new research paper from the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), “Transportation Reimagined: A Roadmap for Clean and Modern Transportation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region,” provides a blueprint for modernizing congested roads and crumbling infrastructure in New York and New Jersey. Transportation Reimagined puts forth detailed policy solutions and public health and transportation facts illustrating how states in both the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic can fix outdated transportation systems.

NRDC’s report focuses on 11 states and D.C.: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. All are members of the state-led Transportation and Climate Initiative, which has worked to address clean transportation solutions since 2010. Virginia recently joined this group of states as well.

Among the findings of Transportation Reimagined: 9 million New Jersey residents currently live in areas that do not meet national air quality standards, putting residents at risk of respiratory illness. Compounding this public health crisis, traffic congestion in the New York City area cost the local economy close to $34 billion in 2017. To address these growing problems, New Jersey is among eight Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States committed to having 2.4 million zero emissions vehicles on the roadways by 2025.

NRDC’s research on clean transportation is part of an effort to inform state policymakers in New Jersey and other Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States and Washington, D.C., who are exploring the idea of a regional clean transportation policy with stakeholders and residents. The overarching objective is to cut climate-altering carbon pollution from the nation’s largest source—the transportation sector.

An opportunity to lead
New Jersey has an opportunity to lead in this critical effort, at both the state and local levels, to fix what’s broken and

Specific Community Benefits

NRDC's report offers specific benefits and opportunities for urban, suburban, and rural communities from transforming the transportation system.

Rural Communities
- Expand public transit—providing flexible route bus service and better rapid transit could ease key rural problems. Rural households spend 7% more of their budgets on transportation compared to their urban counterparts. Rural workers travel 38% more than urban workers, and low-income rural workers travel 59% more.
- Improve mobility options for older Americans in rural communities to keep them independent, decrease isolation, and connect them with medical services.
- Create walkable, bikeable Main Streets to improve quality of life.
NRDC Studies NJ Roads

transform the region’s transportation system so it’s healthier, cleaner, and works better for everyone. The state should aim to make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists, improve public transit, expand clean electric vehicles powered by homegrown renewable energy, and ensure that the transportation system is more equitable and serves low-income residents.

The report showcases strategies that cities, towns, and states around the country have already piloted that are suitable for New Jersey, such as substantially expanding electric cars, trucks, and buses (EVs); encouraging more walkable and bike-friendly living areas; upgrading public bus, train, and subway transit; and addressing rural and low-income communities whose transportation needs are particularly underserved.

Positive outcomes
Following NRDC’s roadmap will yield enormous health and environmental benefits in New Jersey, generate economic

Urban Communities
- Incentivize more compact, multi-use developments with housing and businesses, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, and improved public transit, all of which could reduce roadway congestion.
- Ensure development of affordable housing near public transit. This can revitalize vacant parcels, while preventing displacement from gentrification.
- Deploy more electric buses and other clean vehicles, reducing emissions, making neighborhoods quieter and improving air quality.

- Switch to electric-powered heavy trucks and other equipment at ports, airports, and truck depots to reduce pollution in surrounding neighborhoods, which often are low-income.

Suburban Communities
- Improve pedestrian walkways and bike lanes in suburban communities, and link them to transit corridors.
- Expand intercity rail to help commuters get to their jobs, particularly low-income and service workers. Electrified commuter trains and other infrastructure upgrades could reduce emissions and improve speeds and efficiency.
- Develop more electric vehicle charging stations, which would support transitioning drivers out of gasoline-fueled vehicles to electric vehicles, reducing emissions.

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Mayor John McCormac
Township of Woodbridge

JPM helped to hire two members of our Senior Management Team and handled everything tremendously.

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Township of Denville

Dan and his team at JPM were instrumental in recruiting exactly the right person as our first Executive Director of our newly created Business Improvement District.

Mayor Fred Tagliarini
Township of Aberdeen

JPM provided an outstanding Temporary DPW Director, and completed an outstanding Efficiency Study of our DPW.

Mayor Beth Holtzman
City of Verona

Best decision we made; Maria Mento and Joe Verruni are very knowledgeable and always accessible.

Stephen Mountain
Manager, Township of Randolph

JPM was very responsive to our needs and utilized a process that was fair and organized. They helped us select the best professional for the position.

Mayor Richard Onderko
Borough of Manville

Best Municipal Government Advisors I’ve met in 10 years in elected office. Helped us recruit a fantastic Administrator. Thanks Dan and JPM.

George Jackson
Administrator, Borough of Eatontown

JPM’s thorough recruitment and selection process led us to just the experienced professional we were looking for.

Mayor Dina Long
Borough of Sea Bright

One of the best decisions we made after Sandy was bringing experienced professionals from JPM onto our team. Joe Verruni and Debbie Smith provided the expertise and guidance we needed to navigate the recovery and rebuilding.

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growth, create jobs, improve safety and mobility, reduce respiratory illnesses and asthma, and help create a safer climate.

Benefits from a cleaner transportation system in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region include:

• Reducing gasoline consumption, which costs consumers more than $50 billion a year at the pump, by improving efficiency, expanding public transit, switching to EVs powered by cleaner, lower-cost electricity, and easing commutes.

• Creating 125,000 new jobs and adding $17.7 billion per year to the region’s economy by 2030.

• Reducing pedestrian and cyclist deaths, which numbered 970 and 115 people respectively in 2016.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, MT, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org and follow us on Twitter @NRDC.
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The to-do list for local government rolls on, seemingly for miles and miles. And that’s never clearer than in the matters of transportation and parking. From road repair to the forward-looking impacts of good planning, the work on this most critical consideration may not be the most glamorous item on that to-do list, but it does make living better now and into the future possible.

In this issue, we look at the very pressing issues within the National Resource Defense Council’s (NRDC) report on “Transportation Reimagined: A Roadmap for Clean and Modern Transportation in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region.” NRDC expert Bruce Ho tailored this Mid-Atlantic-focused report for the League to zoom in on the specifics pertaining to New Jersey, looking at strategies for improved public transit and reduced energy consumption, as well as a greener overall impact by the commuters and citizens of the Garden State.

We also share a look at the planning implications of parking on towns’ economic development. Walking the fine line making sure that folks can park to enjoy town centers without eating up too much valuable real estate with parking lots can be a critical formula in reinvigorating shopping areas, main streets, and commutation hubs.

NJ Municipalities’ December issue also touches on topics like the importance of political parties in the retention of control of local government and the opportunities for local governments to work with philanthropies for ongoing successes.

As we wrap up 2018, we’d like to thank you for reading NJ Municipalities. For more than 100 years, it’s been our pleasure to share information and ideas with local officials to make daily governing the best it can be. Have an idea? Please let us know...we look forward to spreading the news in 2019! $
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