

# Beyond Red & Blue

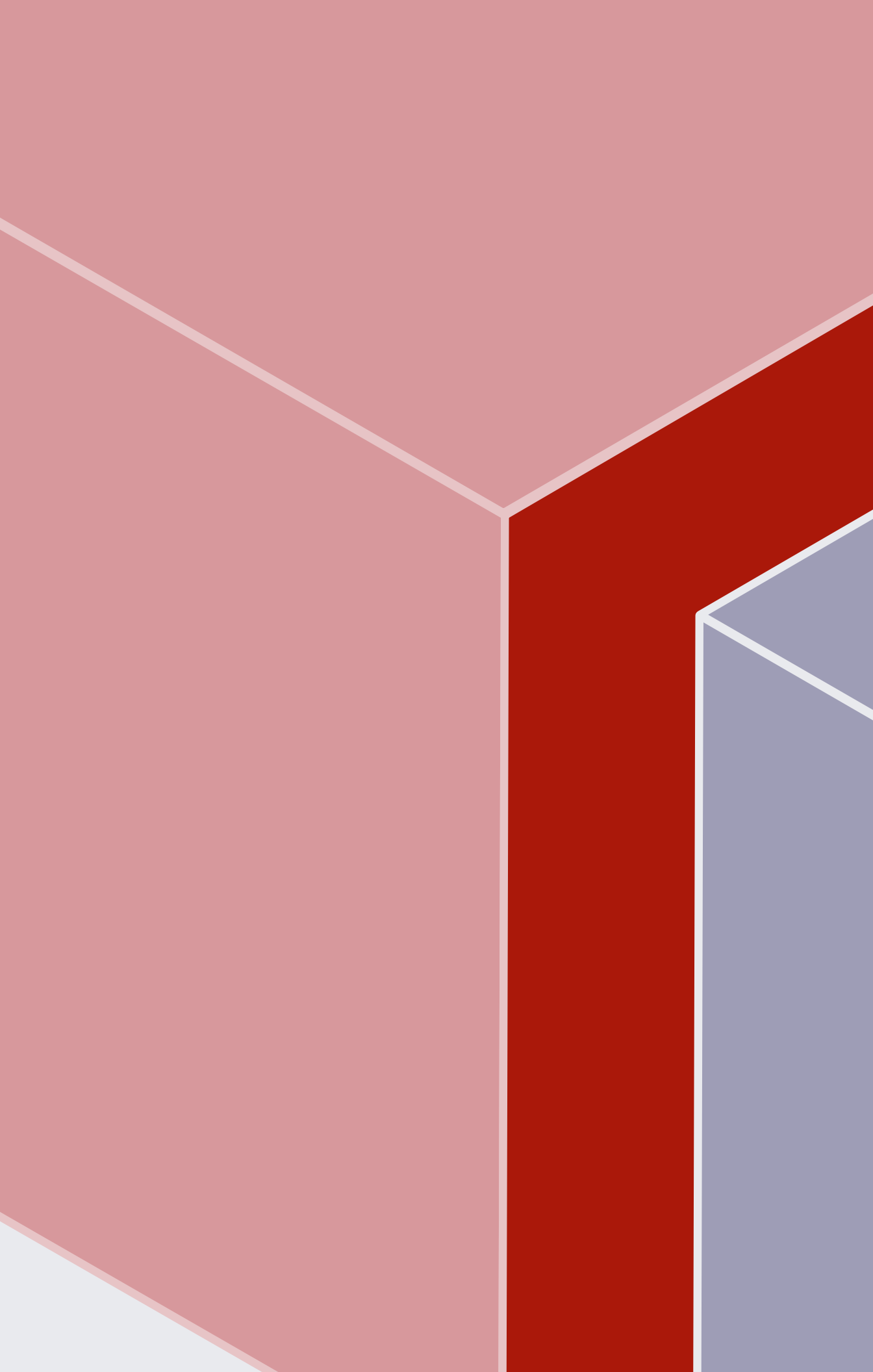
The image features two large, three-dimensional cubes. The cube on the left is colored in a gradient of red, from a light pinkish-red on the top face to a darker red on the side faces. The cube on the right is colored in a gradient of blue, from a light lavender-blue on the top face to a darker blue on the side faces. The cubes are positioned as if they are overlapping, with the red cube in front of the blue one. The background is a solid dark blue.

## **Regional Assembly Magazine**

The Waldorf–Astoria, New York City

April 29, 2005

Regional **Plan** Association  
NJ CT  
NY



# Beyond Red & Blue

## Regional Assembly Magazine

The Waldorf–Astoria, New York City

April 29, 2005

2 **Foreword**

Michael J. Critelli

4 **Welcome and Introduction**

Robert D. Yaro

6 **America 2050**

Toward a National Strategy for  
Prosperity, Equity and Sustainability  
Robert D. Yaro

8 **The Region's Transportation System in Crisis**

Jeffrey M. Zupan

10 **The Regional Response to National Fiscal Policy**

Christopher Jones

12 **The Politics of Sprawl**

Thomas K. Wright

14 **Finding Green in the Red and Blue**

Federal Support for Landscape  
Conservation in the Region  
Robert Pirani

16 **Securing the New York Region**

Infrastructure and Urban Design in the  
Post 9/11 Age  
Petra Todorovich

18 **Demystifying the Political Landscape**

Jennifer M. Cox

## Regional Plan Association

# Board of Directors

**Chairman**

Peter W. Herman

**Vice Chairman and  
Co-Chairman, New Jersey**

Christopher J. Daggett

**Vice Chairman and  
Co-Chairman, New Jersey**

Hon. James J. Florio

**Vice Chairman and  
Co-Chairman, Connecticut**

John S. Griswold, Jr.

**Vice Chairman and  
Co-Chairman, Connecticut**

Michael P. Meotti

**Vice Chairman and  
Chairman, Long Island**

Robert A. Scott

**President**

Robert D. Yaro

**Treasurer**

Brendan J. Dugan

Robert F. Arning  
Hilary M. Ballon  
Charles A. Bauer  
Laurie Beckelman  
Stephen R. Beckwith  
J. Max Bond, Jr.  
Roscoe C. Brown  
Richard J. Carbone  
Frank S. Cicero  
Edward T. Cloonan  
Tina Cohoe  
Jill M. Considine  
Michael R. Cowan  
Paul A. Crotty  
Alfred A. DelliBovi  
Nancy R. Douzinas  
Douglas Durst  
Barbara Joelson Fife  
Michael Golden  
David Hilder  
Kenneth T. Jackson  
Ira H. Jolles  
Richard A. Kahan  
Richard D. Kaplan  
Shirley Strum Kenny  
Matthew S. Kissner  
Robert Knapp  
Susan S. Lederman  
Richard C. Leone  
Charles J. Maikish  
Joseph J. Maraziti, Jr.  
John L. McGoldrick  
The Very Reverend  
James Parks  
Morton  
Peter H. Nachtwey  
Jan Nicholson

Kevin J. Pearson  
James S. Polshek  
Richard Ravitch  
Gregg Rechler  
Thomas L. Rich  
Mark F. Rockefeller  
Elizabeth Barlow  
Rogers  
Janette Sadik-Khan  
Stevan A. Sandberg  
H. Claude Shostal  
Susan L. Solomon  
Luther Tai  
Karen E. Wagner  
Mary Ann Werner  
Paul T. Williams, Jr.  
William M. Yaro

# Foreword

I am honored to serve as Chairman of Regional Plan Association's 15th Annual Regional Assembly, to be held at the Waldorf-Astoria in Manhattan on April 29, 2005.

RPA's Regional Assembly is the Tri-State Region's preeminent civic event – the only place where leaders from the business, government and civic communities from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut gather to debate the most urgent issues facing the metropolitan area. This year, the Assembly focuses on the theme “Beyond Red and Blue” – how the region relates to the federal government and to the rest of the country in the aftermath of last fall's divisive Presidential election.

Our goal is to identify new ways in which leaders can work across economic sectors, party affiliations and political boundaries to better advocate for the region's needs, both here and in Washington. And these needs have never been greater: the Tri-State Region's highways and transit systems are choking on congestion, our economy is constrained by rapidly escalating housing prices, many of our urban centers and their citizens remain outside the economic mainstream, and sprawl is consuming open land and compounding our transportation concerns. Debates are underway in Congress on tax and spending bills that will have an enormous impact on all of these concerns, and on every community in the region.

Finally, Assembly participants will debate the implications of recent research that RPA and others have done on the rapid population growth and emerging development trends for the region and the nation, and how we can capitalize on these trends.

This Assembly Magazine provides background information on all these issues. I look forward to joining you in a vigorous debate at the Assembly on April 29.

Sincerely,

**Michael J. Critelli**

Chairman and CEO, Pitney Bowes Inc.  
Chairman, 2005 Regional Assembly

# Welcome

**T**he 2004 national election was a wake-up call to this region. The perception – rightly or wrongly – is that our mostly “blue” region is out of step with a mostly “red” nation, in disagreement on the issues that played most strongly among voters across the country. As urban problems receive little attention in the current federal agenda, the densely populated New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Region must reassess the hand that has been dealt to metropolitan America before determining the best path forward.

A host of urgent national issues pending in Congress will have serious implications for the Tri-State Region, from proposed changes to tax policy and the outcome of the federal surface transportation bill to funding formulas for distributing homeland security dollars. Changes in state policies, such as the Oregon referendum overturning years of progressive land use policies, also signal a need to look more deeply at national social, economic and political trends that could soon affect us. On one hand, structural changes can clear the way to address longstanding issues. For example, can new federal tax policies reduce the imbalance between what the region pays to Washington and what the federal government spends here, and can it spur state and local reforms? On the other hand, proposed cuts in federal funding for human services, housing and infrastructure will have clear and tangible effects on the residents, businesses, and quality of life in the region, and will increase burdens on state and local governments and the private sector to compensate for these reductions.

These changes – and the political climate that engenders them – are the subject of this year’s Regional Assembly. The day’s discussions will focus on strategies to address the region’s problems in the broader context of national metropolitan policy, seeking to bridge rather than widen the perceived “red” and “blue” divide. What do national trends tell us about the politics of sprawl and how to address them? Are there new paradigms of transportation finance that we need to consider? How do we address new security needs? Can federal policies help preserve nationally-significant environmental landscapes in the Tri-State Region?

We will also debate the implications of national growth trends that have been the focus of research by RPA, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, and the University of Pennsylvania. This research concludes that more than half of the robust growth the nation is expecting – a population increase of 140 million by 2050 – will take place in eight major “mega-regions,” including our own Northeast Corridor that stretches from Washington, D.C. to Maine. As these mega-regions emerge, their similar challenges could create opportunities to craft federal policies that promote coordinated metropolitan growth through investments in transit and environmental infrastructure, quality of life improvements and related activities.

The essays contained in this report provide background information to the six workshops at the Regional Assembly. An additional piece describes how maps can be used to tell different stories about the new political geography of the nation and the Tri-State Region. They are written to jumpstart the day’s discussions, but are relevant to the larger question of the region’s relationship with the rest of the country. Thank you for your interest in this important topic. We look forward to working with you to strengthen the region’s relationships with the nation.

## **Robert D. Yaro**

President

April 2005

## America is growing.

While our fellow developed world nations of Europe and Japan are experiencing flat or declining population rates,

**Robert D. Yaro**

President

in the United States high birth and immigration rates are expected to keep its population rising. In the next half century, the United States is expected to add an additional 140 million Americans. Where will these people live, play and work?

If the trends of the past continue, then about four million of them are

expected to come to the Tri-State Region by 2030. Other

metropolitan regions are expected to grow even faster. All in all, most of the 140 million additional Americans projected by 2050 are expected to locate in the Northeast and seven other “mega-regions” across the country. If recent growth patterns continue, this would require that we develop four times as much land in the next 45 years as we have in the past 250 years.

Is this what we want to do? Are the growth patterns of the past, which are essentially land consumptive suburbanization, either sustainable or optimal? What are the most stable and prosperous patterns for growth, if we could shape them? This in essence is the question taken up in examining whether the nation should have a more conscious strategy for its growth.

In 2004 Regional Plan Association, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the University of Pennsylvania launched a major research project on how the nation, the Northeast, and other regions across the country could accommodate expected growth by mid-century. Inspired by the European Union’s large scale approach to planning for metropolitan growth that spans regional and national borders, the project began with a Penn Graduate Planning Studio that investigated the underlying trends and policy implications and developed county-level population, household, employment and land consumption forecasts through 2050.

Research found that America is experiencing a host of unsustainable growth patterns, which combined with rapid population growth could threaten the nation’s competitiveness and compromise our qual-

ity of life. Below, briefly discussed are the trends and their implications for the creation of a national growth model, the “New Mega-region.”

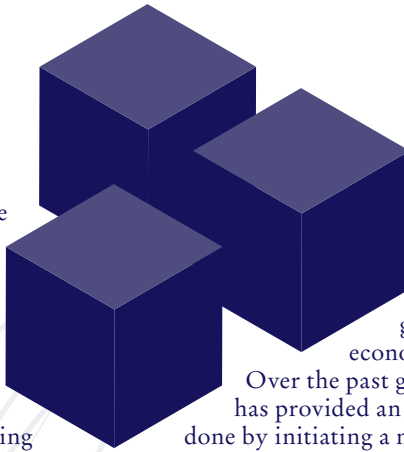
**The building-out of suburban America:** Since the 1970s, urban growth in America has largely been focused in the sprawling outer rings of 30 major metropolitan regions. While some cities and inner-ring suburbs are now experiencing infill development and renewed population growth, many others are approaching “build-out,” which increases traffic congestion and commuting times, contributes to loss of farmland, and creates conflicts between new development and green infrastructure, such as public water supplies and wildlife habitat.

**Uneven and inequitable growth patterns:** Most population and economic growth has been in large metropolitan regions, while large rural regions where resource-based economies or groundwater reserves are in permanent decline, are left without the means to support even basic services. Meanwhile, large urban centers and second-tier cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, St. Louis and New Orleans have lost a third or more of their populations since 1960. Even in cities where the outer-ring suburbs have grown, many inner cities and inner-ring suburbs have lost residents, tax base and economic activity, and poverty has become highly concentrated. Many of these places have high concentrations of African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and poor whites who will be increasingly disadvantaged as economic opportunities in these regions decline.

**Limited infrastructure capacity:** Metropolitan infrastructure of all kinds, most of it built in the last half of the twentieth century, will reach its capacity limits in the first decades of the twenty-first century. Unless new capacity is created in roads, rails, airports, seaports and other systems, the nation’s economic potential will be artificially limited. Federal transportation investments over the past decade have been largely focused on maintaining the existing infrastructure, not on expanding the capacity of these systems.

**Emergence of the Mega-region:** Between now and 2050 more than half the nation’s population, and perhaps as much as two-thirds of its economic growth will occur in the places like the Northeast Mega-Region (the Boston-Washington corridor) and seven other emerging mega-regions whose extended networks of metropolitan centers are linked by interstate highway and rail corridors.

**The New Mega-Region:** The unsustainable nature of these growth patterns points to a new model for cooperation among the cities and regions in the U.S. that are growing together and creating diseconomies in congested transportation networks, which in turn affect the economic vitality and quality of life of these regions.



This model is based on the idea that if the cities in these colliding regions work together they can create a new urban form that will increase economic opportunity and global competitiveness for each individual city and for the nation as a whole.

To facilitate the development of mega-regions, the U.S. could focus on creating a truly intermodal network linking rail, highway and air transportation. Such connections will relieve congested airports and provide greater options for freight movement, and the resulting transportation flexibility will be less vulnerable to terrorist attacks and disaster. Furthermore, regional infrastructure and development focused around rail stations will shape and redirect urban growth in more efficient, less sprawling patterns.

Already six distinctive regions can be identified

technological and cultural innovation where the vast majority of immigrants who are driving population and economic growth will assimilate into the economic and social mainstream.

Over the past generation, the European Union has provided an example of how this could be done by initiating a new large-scale approach to planning for metropolitan growth, mobility, environmental protection, and economic development. Europeans use the umbrella term “spatial planning” to describe this process, involving plans that span regional and national borders and encompass new “networked cities” spread out over hundreds of kilometers. The EU is also mobilizing public and private resources at the continental scale, with bold plans and investments designed to integrate the economies of, and reduce the economic

# America 2050

## Toward a National Strategy for Prosperity, Equity and Sustainability

based on common history, geographic location, and topography: the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, Southwest and West. Most of the nation’s rapid population growth, and an even larger share of its economic expansion, is expected to occur in eight emerging networked metropolitan areas spread over thousands of square miles and located in every one of these regions. These mega-regions are becoming America’s economic engines: centers of

disparities between, member states and regions, and to increase the competitiveness of regions and the whole continent in global markets.

Though the United States has not attempted a national policy addressing land use on this scale in recent years, there are important historic precedents for a federal role in shaping national and regional growth. National development and conservation strategies were prepared by President Thomas Jefferson and President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1807 and 1907, respectively. These plans stimulated the major infrastructure, conservation and regional economic development strategies that powered America’s economic growth in its first two centuries.

Today, these systems are approaching their capacity limits. Consequently, a new strategy for America’s third century is urgently needed to create the foundation for the nation’s future competitiveness and quality of life. As America begins the twenty-first century, it has the opportunity to set a bold and progressive framework for itself that matches some of its past ambitious and successful plans.

**T**oday a perfect storm of transportation disinvestment is gathering both in Washington and in the three states that make up the New York Metropolitan Region. If this trend is not reversed, it will soon cause our economy and quality of life to decline.

At the national level, Tom Downs, President and CEO of the Eno Transportation Fund, argued at a recent national conference that the nation's means of financing transportation, as well as its underlying strategy, is fast becoming obsolete. Federal transportation legislation has become nothing more than a revenue sharing program, Downs says, with each state grabbing its share. This contrasts with 1991's groundbreaking Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), a program with a national vision and purpose. Making matters worse, the federal gas tax can no longer be relied on to grow because the tax yield is flattening out as vehicles become more fuel efficient. Meanwhile, the states are contributing less to transportation in the face of budget woes and an aversion to raising broad-based taxes, including those on gasoline. The states, seeking "not-in-my-term-of-office" financing with "in-my-term-of-office" ribbon cuttings, have in recent years relied too heavily on borrowing and are just now realizing that creative financing and debt

develop a new strategy that provides substantial, sustainable and predictable funding to transportation investments." The panel's November 2004 report said the State "must examine all possible sources of revenue," including "user fees, taxes, tolls and private investment." The state's bridges and road surfaces are in particular need of attention. Projected growth of traffic, particularly of trucks, will create severe overcrowding on a large portion of the roads in the New York metropolitan area, the panel found. Despite these findings, Governor George Pataki's executive budget, released early this year, has proposed to spend about \$2 billion less than suggested on road needs, and much of the funding it does propose comes from adding to the state's debt.

On the transit side, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which carries the vast majority of all transit riders in the State, submitted a five-year capital plan of \$27 billion late last year. To begin the funding debate, MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow proposed a number of funding measures. His courage in doing so reflects his understanding of the magnitude of the crisis and he should be praised for his independence. Governor Pataki responded by proposing an ex-

# The Region's Transportation System in Crisis

instruments are not long-term solutions. Nor does Downs see much of a future in public-private partnerships to fill the void, since they can only work where there is a funding stream attractive enough for private investment, such as toll road projects (a tiny part of the transportation need). Downs suggests that a desirable approach would be a shift from a per gallon tax to a gasoline sales tax tied to the price of gas, to overcome the declining volume of gasoline sold, but he is skeptical about whether it is politically possible.

With federal financing of transportation lacking direction and focus, there is a greater need for the region's three states to fund transportation more comprehensively. Instead, political leaders are for the most part retreating from long-term commitments to transportation needs. Here is a quick review of the situation in the three states.

In New York, a 12-person multi-disciplinary panel convened by the Governor's Transportation Commission concluded that "New York State must

executive budget that would not keep the current system in a state of good repair, and which proposes paltry and inadequate sums for two major expansion projects, the Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access. As this article was going to press, negotiations in the Legislature were nearing a conclusion that is rumored to fund most of the system's core needs but falls far short on key expansion projects. The weak funding proposals jeopardize billions of dollars of federal contributions to the two expansion projects, which the federal Department of Transportation has already stamped "highly recommended." On the operating side, the need to meet deficits has led to the second fare increase in a year, and more can be expected.

Most troubling is that whatever final figure the Legislature and Governor reach, it will include far too much borrowing, not enough new revenues, and potentially even a bond act that would be put before voters this fall. These measures are inadequate; RPA has proposed a variety of longer term revenue sources

## Jeffrey M. Zupan

Senior Fellow, Transportation

# The nation's means of financing transportation, as well as its underlying strategy, is fast becoming obsolete.

to consider for closing the budget gaps.

The next stop is New Jersey. In the Garden State, the Transportation Trust Fund is bankrupt and debt will soon consume all remaining resources. This fund has been the principal source for both highway and transit capital projects, including those projects receiving matching federal funds and local monies. Without this money, several transportation problems in New Jersey can be expected to get worse. New Jersey's bridges and roads, like New York's, face serious deterioration. NJ TRANSIT's capital budget has been hampered for years, in part because \$360 million a year has been shifted out of capital funds to keep fares down. Despite this, fares are now going up and more increases can be expected. Without an infusion of transportation funds, maintenance of the transit system will halt and service will decline. New Jersey

travelers will be paying more and getting less, which will threaten the state's economic growth.

Where can more funding be found in New Jersey? In late 2003 a state-led Blue Ribbon Commission proposed a 12.5 cent per gallon gasoline tax increase. Then-Governor James McGreevey embraced it – and then rejected it after only one week of political heat. The problem will not go away. RPA concludes an even higher gas tax increase would be insufficient to meet NJDOT's and NJ TRANSIT's capital and operating needs.

RPA is currently examining the situation anew and will publish a report later this year that will speak of the reforms needed, the revenue options available, and a strategic process to match needs with resources that promotes a smart development pattern.

In Connecticut, a hopeful sign is that new Governor M. Jodi Rell has recommended a series of new funding measures for transportation, including increasing the gas tax by six cents over several years. Governor Rell is responding to decades of underfunding of transportation that have produced a crisis. Congestion in the I-95 corridor is damaging the state's economy and funds are inadequate to rehabilitate the New Haven rail line. Publicly and privately, many legislators are expressing concern over the Governor's proposed revenue raisers, but no one disagrees that improvements are desperately needed on the rails and the roads. Consideration might have to be given to previous recommendations for funding sources from the Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) formed by the previous governor, including increases in the personal income tax or the sales tax. And although the TSB report did not recommend tolling, that option should be considered as well. This session of the legislature is a critical one for transportation, and therefore for Connecticut's ability to compete nationally and internationally in the future.

In sum, the steps being taken by our three states are uncertain and limited, even as the federal government is similarly lacking direction. Yet, our region's highway network and our transit system are both large and old – the oldest in the nation – and thus particularly in need of care. Our transit system is a proud but aging giant in the need of renewal and expansion in a City that added more people in the last decade than any jurisdiction in the nation. We are past clichés about transportation being the lifeblood of our economy. The day of reckoning is here for the transportation system in our region.

**N**o issue has the potential to redefine the region's relationship with the rest of the United States as much as federal tax and spending policies. The effects of national fiscal policy on New York, New Jersey and Connecticut are pervasive, even beyond the obvious impacts of tax policies that send over \$250 billion to the federal government each year and federal expenditures on which both state and local governments have come to depend. National deficits and monetary policy have a large impact on the borrowing costs of states, towns, cities and authorities that have escalating piles of debt. Key industries from Wall Street to pharmaceuticals can boom or bust as a result of budget decisions made in Washington. Even state and local tax codes are often so tightly intertwined with federal codes that changes in national regulations will have an immediate effect on the balance sheet of other units of government.

**National sales tax:** A more radical proposal would institute a national sales or consumption tax as either a full or partial replacement of the income tax. Proponents claim that it would increase the nation's low savings rate while opponents argue that it would be far more regressive than the income tax and that the impact on savings is greatly exaggerated. In theory, it might reduce the amount of tax revenue flowing from the region to Washington for this reason. However, a change of this magnitude would have far-reaching implications, and the impact on geographic winners and losers is difficult to predict.

**Medicaid and entitlement caps:** The cost of several entitlement programs, such as Medicaid and Unemployment Insurance, are shared by federal and state governments. The President's current budget proposal contains substantial cuts in entitlements, and several

# The Regional Response to National Fiscal Policy

## What Does Washington Have in Store?

The November elections have triggered a slew of far-reaching proposals that could fundamentally change the way the nation taxes its citizens and pays for entitlement programs. While Social Security currently dominates the domestic policy debate, several other proposals could have even more profound implications for the economic and fiscal health of the region. All of these require intense scrutiny for their impact on U.S. fiscal stability, fairness and economic growth. In addition, as indicated in the examples below, they would also have an impact on which parts of the country have the most to gain or lose.

**State and local tax deductions and the alternative minimum tax:** Deductions for state and local taxes largely benefit high-income states, to the tune of \$64 billion in 2002 for New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Proposals to eliminate these deductions have been floated and could well be part of a package of reforms that emerges later this year. Meanwhile, the alternative minimum tax, originally intended to prevent a small percentage of the very wealthy from escaping paying taxes, is becoming a middle-class tax that disproportionately affects taxpayers who deduct state and local taxes. The number of taxpayers affected could rise from 1 million in 1999 to 36 million in 2010. There will be increasing pressure to reform this tax, but the budget implications would be substantial.

proposals have been made in Congress to place a cap on the federal contribution to some or all of these programs. Medicaid in particular is a huge issue in all three states, consuming a large and growing share of state budgets (and of New York City and county governments in the case of New York). Most of the heavy lifting for controlling costs needs to take place at the state level, but Washington will have an enormous impact through funding levels, formulas and incentives for state reforms.

## Shifting the Mindset from Dependence to Interdependence

The magnitude of these proposals and their impact on the region call for an examination of both political and budget strategies. Yet a large reliance on the federal government combined with shrinking political influence in Washington has resulted in a largely defensive posture. In addition to thinking more broadly about levers of influence, it also requires an examination of how state and municipal fiscal policies might be changed to take advantage of national policy debates. A first step requires recognition of the region's contributions to the U.S., as well as its need for federal resources.

The late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan never tired of pointing out that New York and most other Northeastern states received far fewer dollars from federal expenditures (including payments to individuals as well as grants, procurements and salaries) than

they sent in tax revenue. A recent report by the Tax Foundation (Federal Tax Burdens by State, Sumeet Sagoo, December 2004) demonstrates that New York, New Jersey and Connecticut still hold the dubious honor of being among the leading “net contributors” to the federal government. In fact, New Jersey receives less per dollar of tax revenue (57 cents) than any other state. Connecticut is third (65 cents) and New York is ninth (80 cents).

However, while this is often portrayed as a geographic and political inequity, the real issue is not so much a question of fairness as it is of how to nurture the economic bond that benefits both the region and the nation. By and large, most of the imbalance between revenues and expenditures is the result of a progressive tax structure. Residents of the Tri-State region generate more tax revenue than the average U.S. citizen because they have higher incomes. For example,

in 2003 the average Connecticut tax payer paid \$10,053 compared to \$6,025 nationwide. On the expenditure side, the picture is mixed. Connecticut receives more than average per person – \$6,570 versus \$6,025 – but not enough to make up for the difference in revenue. New Jersey receives one of the lowest

per capita expenditures, \$4,865, while New York is about average at \$6,008. There are certainly reasons for states and localities in the region to complain about specific program allocations, but it is impossible to argue against wealthier states contributing more to the national budget without arguing against the fairness of progressive taxation.

Somewhat obscured by this accounting is the importance of the region to the national economy. High

incomes are not only important for filling federal coffers. They also stem from a high productivity economy that serves a number of critical national functions, from centers of global financial transactions to concentrations of international media, arts and culture. With these functions come a number of demands that are disproportionate to those in other parts of the United States, including an expensive transit network that supports the urban density necessary for this high-value service economy, high security needs, and the need to assimilate the large, diverse immigrant population that is drawn to this job-rich metropolitan economy. A high cost of living and doing business also makes the health of this economy somewhat precarious. Providing the resources to address these needs should be a national as well as regional priority.

## Fiscal and Political Implications

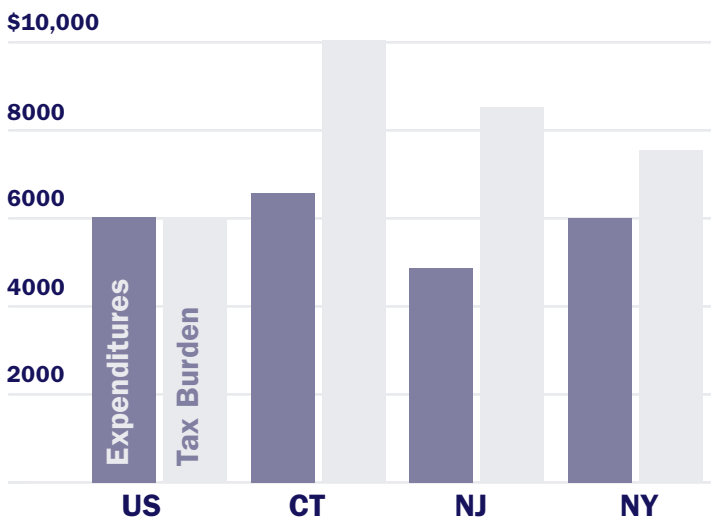
As always with issues of this size and complexity, it is far easier to point out problems than implement solutions. Coming up with effective answers will require extensive debate on a number of questions. On the political side, are there ways of creating more effective issue-based coalitions that go beyond the usual partisan or geographic-based alliances? There are many growing metropolitan areas in the South and West, in addition to those in “blue” coastal and Midwestern regions that have increasing affluence and are beginning to face similar problems of financing infrastructure and assimilating growing immigrant populations.

Internally, are there state and local reforms that can either help shape national policy or take advantage of new or proposed policies? Medicaid is certainly a candidate for an issue where state and federal reforms need to be in sync. Amtrak and interstate high speed rail is an area where Northeastern states could fill a void in funding and leadership on the federal level. The alignment of state and city tax codes with the federal government is also a place that may require some fresh thinking.

The region has a long history of enacting reforms that led the way to national policies, from infrastructure investments like the Erie Canal to labor and social welfare reforms enacted in the early 20th century. In the current climate, it is even more important to try and devise proactive, rather than reactive, fiscal and political strategies.

# Policy

## Per Capita Federal Burden and Expenditures, 2003



Source: Tax Foundation

## What are the politics of sprawl?

If sprawl is the predominant local issue in politics and, as the famous saying goes, all politics is local, then is sprawl the new national political phenomenon? All over this country, citizens and developers are at war with each other over every major development project. How do these issues play out on the larger scale of metropolitan regions, states, and even the federal government? Just as previous national elections have supposedly hinged on “soccer moms” or “values,” will Smart Growth ever have its political day in the sun?

The Smart Growth movement, which promotes development within existing walkable centers, mass transit spending, and preservation of open space and farmland, has built enormous support over the past decade, as rising housing prices, growing traffic congestion, and eroding community character galvanized diverse interests. Groups as varied as urban advocates, organized labor, and fiscal and social conservatives have supported Smart Growth principles, although not always all of them.

A recent poll by the National Association of Home Builders found that commuting less than 45 minutes is the top priority for 79 percent of new home buyers in choosing where to live. “Thousand Friends” groups are now operating in states across the country, monitoring state policies and raising alarms over “Dumb Growth” development projects. A key indicator is that open space preservation is the closest thing to a sure bet in public referendums, even as new taxes for public education and sports facilities bite the dust. USA Today has reported that in the 2004 election, communities in 25 states approved 111 of 147 state and local measures designed to raise public funds for protecting land for parks and open space with a price tag of \$2.4 billion.

And yet, so little seems to have changed. According to the National Resources Inventory, the United States continues to develop land at a rate of about a million acres a year – a trend that goes back to the 1960s. The American Farmland Trust warns that loss of farmland to development is accelerating, and that the most fertile and productive land is the first to be developed. So, is the political tide moving in one clear direction, with the wave of Smart Growth building support year after year? Or will home rule and parochial leadership always beat back the forces of change, even as more land is paved for sprawl?

Nationally, density and sprawl do translate into voting tendencies. In the 2004 presidential election, people who live in higher density and larger communities generally gave their votes to John Kerry, while people who live

in less dense areas or smaller communities tended to vote for George Bush. Density equals Democrats. Yet despite this trend, sprawl per se is not a “red” or “blue” state issue. In urban, suburban and rural America, concern over sprawl is fodder for strong editorials, large town gatherings, and ambitious political campaigns. Although some anti-government conservatives have railed against some elements of Smart Growth, there are still no clear Democratic or Republican positions on the subject. To advocates, this makes Smart Growth an opportunity for both parties.

Despite this enticement, no national figure has yet been able to build a national agenda on fighting

# The Politics

sprawl. This is in part because Americans are suspicious of Big Government invasion into their affairs – including whether they want to add a family room to their house or move up to a larger subdivision across town. Politicians at the federal level seem to intuit this political lesson pretty well, even though current federal policies on transportation, community development, mortgage deductions for interest payments, affordable housing and environmental regulations are in effect already a national policy on growth. The net result of this blindness is very little consensus on the federal government’s role in addressing sprawl, and relatively little leadership from

Washington.

The only major

politician so far to dip a toe into these waters was Vice President Al Gore. In speeches at the Brookings Institution and elsewhere in 1998, the Vice President highlighted the success of Smart Growth initiatives and called for their expansion. His platform included funding for more parkland (up to \$2 billion over ten years), mass transit, and brownfields redevelopment. But as the campaign rhetoric heated up, Gore talked less about “Local Strategies for Livable Communities” and more about a Social Security lockbox.

So the real action on Smart Growth has been occurring on the state level, where governors have broad powers over funding, regulations and other tools that can shape and direct metropolitan growth patterns. In the 1990s, Governor Whitman of New Jersey and Governor Glendening of Maryland, a Republican and a Democrat, were both national leaders in growth management. Today, Governors Schwarzenegger of California and Romney of Massachusetts seem poised to take over the mantle. However, administrations change, and policies in favor during one period can fall out during the next. Even Oregon, the North Star of Smart Growth efforts since the 1970s, has now passed a public referendum which threatens to undo decades of progressive planning. (Perhaps the most confusing polls in the country last year showed that even as a solid majority of Oregonians liked the effects of their strong growth management laws, a solid majority also thought they should do away with those laws. Go figure!)

State growth management initiatives have several common components. They focus on coordinating government plans across agencies (horizontally) and between levels of government (vertically), funding open space preservation, and creating incentives for communities to zone and plan for mixed use, affordable housing, and densities which promote alternatives to automobiles. In some states, these efforts include strong state mechanisms – even mandates which may overrule local land use regulations. But in most instances, state leaders assure municipalities that they would never dream of challenging home rule. These efforts are only advisory – although the state may choose to spend more or less of its own dollars in accordance with these advisory plans.

A deep and growing dissatisfaction with the quality of new American communities is driving the anti-sprawl agenda. Several trends elevated sprawl to its current level of national consciousness. The

**Thomas K. Wright**

Executive Vice President

# of Sprawl

prosperity and peace of the 1990s was one of them. Rising employment meant more people were driving more often, buying larger houses, and worrying about things that would have been luxuries during a depression or war. The aging Baby Boomers also fed the trend. As they hit their peak earning years, they bought more and larger houses (McMansions) and cars (Suburban Assault Vehicles). Then they tried to pull the drawbridge up after them, to keep their bucolic suburban communities from being overrun. And the vicious cycle continues: as Alex Krieger of Harvard has pointed out, most sprawl is caused by people fleeing sprawl.

Generally speaking, these new suburbanites instinctively resist anything that can be labeled government intrusion. Yet they also instinctively react against disturbances to their bucolic landscape – or at least their idealized version of it. So which instinct will win out? It leaves us with a question: in short, what are the politics of sprawl?

It is now more urgent than ever that we protect our farms, forests, mountains, streams, rivers and open space from development. A new form of “hyper-sprawl” – very low density residential subdivisions and dispersed big box retail and commercial development – now threatens the region’s life-support systems of public water supply watersheds, wildlife habitat and estuaries.

Continued disinvestment in traditional urban centers have starved cities and older suburbs of the resources needed to establish new parks along our waterfronts or even manage existing parkland – vital quality-of-life amenities that help retain and attract residents and businesses.

This new regional threat demands a regional response.

In 1996, RPA’s Third

Regional Plan proposed the establishment of a metropolitan “Greensward” that could shape the future of the Region in the same way that Olmsted and Vaux’s 1858 Greensward plan for Central Park shaped the future of Manhattan and New York City. The Greensward is a conscious attempt to

**Robert Pirani**

Director of Environmental Programs

**The success of the Sterling Forest model ... has led directly to two more recent conservation success stories in the Highlands.**

# Finding in the Red

## Federal Support for Landscape

limit development at the periphery of the Region through a series of greenbelts while creating new and improved open spaces at its core. The 12 regional greenbelts that would be protected and enhanced include the Appalachian Highlands, New York Harbor, and Long Island Sound. Encompassing more than four million acres, these large systems represent the region’s “green infrastructure” of public water supply watersheds, wildlife habitat, recreational landscapes, and coastal estuaries.

Over the past decade, thanks to the efforts of RPA and many other organizations, this vision has moved steadily closer to reality. New regional, public institutions have been established in critical areas like the New York City drinking water watersheds in the Catskills, along the Hudson River, and in the Long Island Pine Barrens. Major new regional parks have been built or planned along the Manhattan, Hudson County, and Brooklyn waterfronts. Regional planning initiatives are now in place in the New Jersey Highlands and the Long Island Sound. Nearly two billion dollars has been invested in these and other open space efforts. Consequently, the region now has more than one million acres of protected lands.

But, as successful as we have been, the race between development and protection efforts continues. Preliminary results from RPA’s build out analyses indicate that if current trends continue, the amount of land in the region used for houses, businesses, and roads will double by 2020 – over two million additional acres of forests and farm fields paved over. If this happens, critical watersheds in the Highlands, Pine Barrens, and Catskills will simply not continue to deliver the cold, clean water that residents and wildlife depend on. The last chance to preserve the remaining wetlands and natural coastlines of Long Island Sound and the NY-NJ Harbor will be lost forever.

The cost of such an effort is not for the faint of heart. Recent estimates of the cost of acquiring the remaining important undeveloped lands in the New Jersey Highlands alone – about 300,000 acres – is two billion dollars.

# Green

## & Blue

### Conservation in the Region

#### Finding an Appropriate Federal Role in the Highlands

In the 1960s, Regional Plan Association's "Race for Open Space" helped set the stage for two pioneering federal initiatives – the Land and Water Conservation Fund and designation of the first urban National Park Gateway National Recreation Area. These and other policy initiatives have stretched federal agencies beyond their traditional role as stewards of National Parks, Forests and Fish and Wildlife Refuges to a variety of partnership models where the federal government teams with state and local government to conserve lands and water. The last several years have seen such federal-state-local partnerships take root in the Appalachian Highlands, which provide clean drinking water for 15 million residents.

In 1998, a remarkable public-private partnership was formed to preserve the 18,000 acre Sterling Forest. The success of the Sterling Forest model – federal research and funding partnered with state and local management – has led directly to two more recent conservation success stories in the Highlands. The update of the Highlands Regional Study, completed in 2002 by the Forest Service, was used as the scientific basis for the recent passage of the Federal Highlands Conservation Act (HCA). By some accounts the only environmental success story from Congress last year, HCA will provide up to \$100 million for land acquisition and \$10 million for stewardship activities over the next ten years. Broad leadership from the region's federal representatives and governors, led by Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, overcame resistance from western members of Congress not usually inclined to support land conservation. A key selling point was the fact the bill would achieve its conservation goals without adding new federal properties.

But perhaps even more critically, the Forest Service study was also the scientific basis for passage of New Jersey's Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act last year. This Act designates about 400,000 acres as a preservation area where development will be limited through new state regulations, a regional plan, land acquisition, and a transfer of development rights system. While the implementation of the Act by the newly created Highlands Regional Council poses some substantial challenges, it is clear that New Jersey has taken a bold step forward.

In the 1960s, Regional Plan Association's "Race for Open Space" helped set the stage for two pioneering federal initiatives – the Land and Water Conservation

#### But Will It Play in the Sound?

Long Island Sound is one of the most valuable estuaries in the nation, but its coastal areas are also among

the most intensely used and developed. Less than 10 percent of the land in coastal counties is protected and only 23 percent of the total shoreline is accessible. Use and development demands continue and remaining opportunities for protecting natural areas and improving public access are limited and expensive. Action needs to be taken now to preserve and enhance the most valuable coastal lands.

The Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative is helping people, communities, and organizations take action by identifying the Sound's valuable natural and recreational areas and by fostering voluntary action to protect and enhance these sites for future generations. An early success is New York State's recent acquisition of the Keyspan property in Jamesport, Long Island, the largest remaining expanse of open space on the Sound. Five hundred twenty acres of open space have been preserved as a state park and working farmland – creating what could be a flagship site for the Stewardship System.

A proposed federal Long Island Sound Stewardship Act would move this initiative to the next level by establishing a federal system to identify, protect, and enhance designated Stewardship sites along the Sound. The bill will authorize \$40 million annually over seven years for the acquisition of land and the implementation of management plans to address threats as identified by a federal, bi-state and local committee led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Like the Highlands Conservation Act, the success of the Stewardship Act depends on overcoming resistance from western representatives that control key committees. Despite strong support from our local elected leaders and the two states, its prospects are far from certain.

In conclusion, the initiatives taken and achieved in the Highlands and Long Island show that action is both possible and desirable. But the continuing threat to these and other regional open spaces also shows that more and ongoing victories in the halls of Congress down to the City Council are necessary to achieve healthy growth and long-term environmental stewardship.

**T**he subject of counter-terrorism and security is so broad and so challenging that it overwhelms both the funding available and the scope of imagination to conceive of and try to prevent every possible attack. There are three areas, however, that have received attention in the New York Region for their shortcomings or vulnerabilities in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11: how federal funding is allocated to high risk areas like the New York Region; how to secure marine ports – particularly the Port of New York and New Jersey; and how to secure public spaces and city streets. Though these three subjects comprise both policy and place-based strategies, the common theme is the immensity of the need or risk, and the limited supply or scope of resources to satisfy the need or counter the threat. Thus, federal policy makers and local leaders are required to make choices about where to allocate resources. The choices that are made define our current counter-terrorism and security strategy.

## **At the National Level Funding Formulas**

In his first public address last month at George Washington University, new Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff offered a peek into the department's thinking about where to focus the nation's limited resources. Chertoff signaled that he will employ a risk-based approach and measured strategy, recognizing that the war against terrorism "is a marathon, not a sprint," and must be integrated into our daily lives. His challenge will be to guide an agency that was created in response to the 9/11 attacks to one that can function over many years, separating catastrophic threats from minor ones and providing guidance to the American public on where to focus their vigilance.

National policy is already moving in this direction. After 9/11, Congress dramatically increased spending on grants to state and local governments for "first responder" programs that prepared fire fighters, police and emergency workers with training and equipment. Almost half of these initial grants were distributed evenly across the nation, however, with little attention paid to level of risk. Each state received .75 percent of the total amount of homeland security grants as a starting point. As a result, states like Montana and Alaska received the greatest funding per capita and states like New York and California received the least. These formulas were rightly criticized for wasting limited dollars protecting rural towns with low risk, while leaving New York City to spend its own funding on increased security and counter-terrorism efforts. In the federal budget for Fiscal Year 2006 the formulas have been changed, reducing the minimum distribution to each state from .75 percent of total grants to .25 percent. Additional grants will be awarded on the basis of risk, benefiting larger cities like New York, and conforming with Chertoff's risk-based philosophy.

---

# The challenge of screening the millions of containers that enter the port ... raises the question of strategy and where to direct limited resources.

---

## **At the Regional Level Marine Ports**

Agencies like the Metropolitan Transportation

Authority, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, NJ TRANSIT, and state and city departments of transportation have the responsibility of protecting the region's vital infrastructure like the airports, marine ports, bridges, tunnels, commuter trains, subway lines and stations. These agencies are eligible for grants from the Department of Homeland Security and they rely on federal directives for policy guidance. Yet the agencies also have a degree of autonomy to create their own strategies. The Port Authority, whose history is now inextricably intertwined with the terrorist attacks in our region, is intimately familiar with the responsibility, challenges, and repercussions of security and counter-terrorism.

The Port Authority also manages the largest port on the East Coast and the 15th largest port in the world, The Port of New York and New Jersey. Despite increased security efforts since 9/11, the port remains a prime terrorist target because of the diverse origins and sheer numbers of containers that move through it, the location of the port in a dense metropolitan region, the importance of the port to the region and nation's economy, and the crippling effect that a port shutdown would have on the economy. Moreover, terrorists may use containers to smuggle weapons of mass destruction or bomb making materials into the United States, since it is next to impossible to screen and search every container that enters the port.

The challenge of screening the millions of containers that enter the port each year again raises the question of strategy and where to direct limited re-

sources. While marine port security has received only 13 percent of the Homeland Security grants that have been provided to commercial aviation security, even dramatically increased funding levels might not be sufficient to screen every container. To lower the risk presented by unscreened containers, Anthony Coscia, Chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, argued in a recent *Star Ledger* editorial that increased authentication and cooperation with foreign governments along the length of the cargo supply chain may be a more effective strategy. This systematic approach would begin with authentication and inspection of a container at its loading point, certification of every handler along the way, and coordination of standards between all parties involved.

### **At the Local Level Perimeter Security and Urban Design**

Personal vigilance and protection of city streets, civic plazas and places of business are of utmost importance and infinitely challenging. One component of this challenge is securing the perimeters of high risk buildings from car or truck bombs. Measures to protect places like the Stock Exchange in Lower Manhattan and the Capitol and major monuments in Washington, D.C., were implemented shortly after 9/11 and have been in place at embassies across the world since the 1998 Al Qaeda bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. These barricades usually take the form of unsightly concrete “Jersey barriers,” guard posts, parked trucks, weighted barrels and metal fencing that degrade the quality of public spaces and promote a mood of fear and defensiveness.

Washington, D.C., which faces many of the same problems as New York City in securing the perimeters of sensitive buildings, has been guided by a comprehensive urban design strategy for perimeter security of federal buildings called

Personal vigilance and protection of city streets, civic plazas and places of business are

the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan. Completed in October 2002 and coordinated by the National Capital Planning Commission, the plan promotes an arsenal of attractive landscaping elements and street furniture such as trees, decorative fences, bollards, planters and hardened street furniture to serve the role that temporary Jersey barriers and terminally parked trucks currently play in New York. This type of strategy is befitting to the long-haul nature of the nation’s security challenge.

The recognition that the threat of terrorism is here to stay is an important concept to guide counter-terrorism strategy at every level. From the federal formulas that distribute homeland security dollars to states, to the infinite challenge of monitoring containers at marine ports, to the chaos of securing public spaces and crowded city streets, a strategy must focus on reasonable threats and risks. The three examples provided above illustrate how the vastness of the threat can be focused at some level to provide security with extra benefits, such as a more coordinated and secure supply chain for international shipping, and more beautiful and secure public spaces.

# Securing the New York Region

## Infrastructure and Urban Design in the Post 9/11 Age

