



## **PLANYC 2030 TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES: RESPONSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*This report was written by the AIA New York Chapter Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and adopted by the Chapter as an official position in March 2008.*

### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In early 2007 the AIA New York Chapter Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (AIA T&I) initiated a series of committee meetings and workshops with the goal of providing an evaluation of the City's PlaNYC 2030 transportation initiatives by the professional design community. These efforts provide a parallel and complementary track to the recently expanded mission of New York New Visions (NYNV), which is examining all three policy areas of PlaNYC – growth, infrastructure and the environment.

The intent of this document is to summarize the AIA T&I's observations and recommendations developed during the year relative to the PlaNYC transportation goals and to serve as a policy brief to the AIA New York Chapter (AIA NYC) Board of Directors. By directly engaging in the public dialogue surrounding the projected population growth of almost one million additional City residents by the year 2030, along with the related quality of life issues for the City's residents, the AIA NYC continues its role in helping to shape the destiny of the built environment.

This response largely parallels the transportation initiatives offered in the *PlaNYC Report* released on April 22, 2007 and the complementary *New York City Mobility Needs Assessment 2007-2030*. To provide context for the response, we offer a series of overall planning principles for a better city, developed by New York New Visions during their complimentary efforts, as well as five more detailed transportation principles.

#### **Planning Principles**

1. Plan at all scales in a regional context
2. Plan inclusively
3. Plan for quality
4. Plan equitably
5. Plan for environmental sustainability
6. Plan for preservation and growth
7. Plan for jobs and economic development
8. Plan for housing and community development
9. Plan for maintaining and enhancing infrastructure
10. Plan for maximum accessibility and connectivity
11. Plan for recreation and cultural amenities
12. Plan as a continuing process

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (cont.)**

### **Transportation Principles**

1. Promote city growth in areas that would be most beneficial to the general populace.
2. Improve the quality-of-life of the urban streetscape through a balancing of the transportation modes and the enhancement of the pedestrian environment
3. Coordinate the different modes of transportation to maximize connectivity and improve land use
4. Foster a cultural shift within the general populace as relates to sustainability and public health
5. Contribute to the sustainable goals and aspirations as outlined by the Rio Summit and World Summit on Sustainable Development of 1992

The response identifies the need to develop priorities, both to demonstrate that successful strategies can be achieved with “early action” plans and to sustain the longer-term programs or projects that will extend over many years and decades. The costs and benefits along with the need for public support, political capital and funding resources must be considered when establishing the priorities.

Following this, the response analyzes the 16 transportation initiatives introduced in PlaNYC along with observations and comments. During the AIA/NYNV workshops, 4 additional initiatives were developed which could reinforce the goals of the City. We suggest that these be considered for incorporation when updating the plan in the future.

The workshop discussions uncovered a range of opinions on the impacts – positive and negative - of the City’s initiatives in achieving its stated goals. By airing the issues at a grassroots level and identifying unintended impacts early, possible mitigations and opportunities can be identified which improve the chances that the plan realizes its potential. This differs from the formalized environmental review (EIS) process, which affords little room for a sincere consideration of alternative points of view. We recognize the City’s significant commitment to meaningful public outreach and encourage its inclusion in further development of specific policies.

There are several common systemic obstacles, which could affect the City’s ability to accomplish the far-reaching goals of PlaNYC. They include the lack of support for strong regional planning, the long timeline for achieving many of the initiatives, the limitations of the formalized EIS process, and competing political goals of the City and State governments. While not strictly the subject of PlaNYC, these obstacles could hinder the success of the plan if not anticipated and addressed adequately.

We are immensely encouraged by the bold leadership the City has assumed by taking a fresh look at identifying critical challenges to a better future and taking the responsibility to address these challenges through the integrated PlaNYC program. The AIA New York Chapter offers these observations on the transportation initiatives in the spirit of a shared interest in a better environment for all. We look forward to continuing our dialogue as PlaNYC matures and moves forward into detailed planning, design and implementation.

## **II. INTRODUCTION AND GOALS**

The PlaNYC 2030 program, initiated by Mayor Michael Bloomberg in response to a projected population growth in the context of anticipated worldwide challenges related to resource depletion and climate change, has been a positive force in provoking discussion and action in the City and neighboring communities. To be effective, this dialogue and the resultant changes need to continue beyond the current Mayor's term. The goal of sustainable growth can only be accomplished through a change in consciousness among the general public, leading to a new normalcy that is well underway in Europe and other developing regions. New York City, already in the forefront of dealing with these issues in this country, needs to go even further in order to maintain its stature among the world's urban centers. The resultant changes will hopefully not only make New York a more productive and sustainable city, but also a safer, more pleasant and healthier environment for those who live and visit here.

The movement of people, utilities and goods is essential to the quality of modern life. Many of the initiatives proposed in the PlaNYC program relate to these movements. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the AIA New York Chapter developed this response as part of its mission of advocacy for quality planning and design of transportation and infrastructure. To begin, we commend the vision and reach behind the development of the plan. To continue the effort, we offer these observations and recommendations, with the belief that this voice can make a difference in shaping the public policy that will guide our City's, and our metropolitan region's development over the coming decades.

## **III. OVERALL PLANNING PRINCIPLES**

The following principles have been identified to help frame the ongoing dialogue regarding the stated goals of PlaNYC to plan for sustainable, responsible growth. The principles are broad ideals that can be used to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the City's individual initiatives.

### **1. Plan at All Scales in a Regional Context**

Adopt an integrated approach to physical planning involving public, private and civic stakeholders at a regional level, incorporating opportunities for action at all scales – from individual to neighborhoods, boroughs, city and regional context, establishing a model for national and global response.

### **2. Plan Inclusively**

Develop maximum ownership of policies and consensus for action through an open planning process with meaningful public and stakeholder participation.

### **3. Plan for Quality**

Incorporate objective data collection and research, successful "best practice" case studies in other locales and use of innovative planning and design to achieve the highest quality policy initiative and physical improvements.

### **4. Plan Equitably**

Promote social and economic equality, maximizing benefits and minimizing negative impacts to all segments of the population.

### **5. Plan for Environmental Sustainability**

Promote energy efficiency, ecological integrity, open space preservation, healthy living conditions and conservation of resources.

### III. OVERALL PLANNING PRINCIPLES (CONT.)

6. **Plan for Preservation and Growth**

Maintain and leverage the value of quality buildings, neighborhoods and infrastructure while maximizing opportunities for appropriate community growth.

7. **Plan for Jobs and Economic Development**

Promote economic health, stability and continuing growth of the City and region

8. **Plan for Housing and Community Development**

Ensure the preservation of quality housing stock and creation of new residential development, serving all income groups in the context of inclusionary mixed-use neighborhoods.

9. **Plan for Maintaining and Enhancing Infrastructure**

Repair and maintain existing utilities, transit lines and roadways while implementing initiatives for needed new or expanded systems.

10. **Plan for Maximum Accessibility and Connectivity**

Maintain and enhance existing public transportation systems through capacity increases and new connections, optimizing vehicular circulation by managing congestion and enhancing alternative means of transportation.

11. **Plan for Recreation and Cultural Amenities**

Promote well located parks and opportunities for fitness, pedestrian and bicycle linkages and community and city-wide arts and cultural facilities.

12. **Plan as a Continuing Process**

Track, measure and report on funding and implementation at regular intervals, including re-evaluation of plan objectives and initiatives on an established cycle that transcends political terms.

### IV. TRANSPORTATION PRINCIPLES

The following transportation principles can be used to help assess the proposed initiatives in PlaNYC, and point the way to additional initiatives that may serve to advance the overall goal of sustainable growth for the City.

1. **Promote city growth in areas that would be most beneficial to the general populace.** Historically, the construction of the East River transportation crossings, the extension of the subway system into the boroughs away from the City center, and the development of key intermodal connections such as the airport connection at Jamaica have proven how transportation can be the spark that provides incentive for private development to occur. The decision-makers and the populace base their decisions on where to live and work in large part relative to the ease and efficiency of access established by the transportation systems.
2. **Improve the quality-of-life of the urban streetscape through a balancing of the transportation modes and the enhancement of the pedestrian environment.** The streets, sidewalks, underground and above-ground rights of way that occupy the public realm have the potential for numerous modifications towards this end, both from a physical as well as operational standpoint. Great cities promote the pedestrian, which needs to be thought of as one of the primary modes of transportation.

#### IV. TRANSPORTATION PRINCIPLES (CONT.)

- 3. Coordinate the different modes of transportation to maximize connectivity and improve land use.**  
The subways were initially designed as independent lines, but interventions have occurred and continue to occur, such as the Fulton Street/ World Trade Center transit hub, that seek to mitigate this lack of connectivity. The coordination needs to be expanded further to the different modes of transportation, especially the most efficient ones, such that each mode can work with the others to operate more effectively.

One example of this in Manhattan relates to the fact that the subway system is extremely effective in transporting people north- south, but not as effective in the east-west direction. Buses are a mode that could be more effective towards improving that condition, but it requires a better level of service than presently exists, and more seamless connections to the subway stations.

The intermodal improvements need to extend beyond the confines of the City for it to be most effective. The City can provide incentives to outside entities to achieve these goals that would ultimately benefit the entire region.

- 4. Foster a cultural shift within the general populace as relates to sustainability and public health.**  
Transportation is a key component towards this goal. The promotion of bicycles and walking, although limited in distances that are efficient, as well as more subject to weather conditions than other modes of transport, can be effective modes of transportation. The safety and security issues associated with these modes need to be better addressed for this shift to occur. Cities such as Munich, which provide designated bicycle lanes at the sidewalk level, have provided an example of a culture that embraces this mode in a way that is compatible with the other transportation modes. The cultural shift needs to be “jump-started” with early action initiatives that provide examples of alternatives to the present transportation systems to build public consensus for other changes that will take longer to implement and have higher initial costs.
- 5. Contribute to the sustainable goals and aspirations as outlined by the Rio Summit and World Summit on Sustainable Development of 1992.** New York City, with its dense urban fabric and use of mass transit as the primary way for people to travel is probably the most “sustainable” city in the United States. A “carrots and sticks” approach can be developed to achieve even greater gains. Even with deterrents to the use of private vehicles for many trips, it is critical that mass transit be perceived to be the mode of choice to further increase its use throughout the City. Providing a high quality transportation experience as defined by system capacity, on-time performance, reasonable waiting times, environmental comfort, ease of wayfinding, clarity of information, architecture of facilities and design of the transportation modes promotes the use of this mode. This requires proper maintenance of existing facilities, improvements where appropriate and expansion. The use of new technologies, such as GPS systems, should be used where it can be made effective. However, new does not necessarily imply better, as witnessed by the introduction of tandem “articulated” buses on routes that result in less frequency and slower rides. The challenge offered by the 2030 plan is to show how the anticipated growth of the City can occur in a manner that will make New York City an exemplar to this country and the world.

## V. PRIORITIES

Recognizing the realities of limited funding resources, competing needs and logistical constraints, priorities need to be established to guide in the decision-making process to implement the goals and initiatives of PlaNYC. Some initiatives proposed by the City are existing programs that are partially or fully funded - some may have already produced tangible results. Often, these are the easiest to sustain and will yield the earliest reward. New, but easily achievable policies could also fall under this category of “low hanging fruit”. Examples include the expansion of bicycle lanes and requirements for sustainable design in the construction of new city facilities.

At the other end of the spectrum are difficult, but potentially worthy initiatives which require massive capital or operational funding, new technologies, significant political realignments or cultural shifts by the public which could be considered risky (controversial, subject to an unpredictable political process, dependent on uncommitted funding, reliant on untested technologies, etc.).

To create a balanced blueprint for action, the benefits and costs of the various initiatives must be evaluated, considering both quantitative and qualitative factors. Care should be taken to identify achievable results but not to be so risk averse as to avoid greater challenges that could have far greater positive impacts.

PlaNYC has taken steps to categorize some initiatives with near-term results such as an expanded bicycle network and progressive street management policies, however all of the initiatives should be ranked in a system that establishes a prioritized action plan. A suggested ranking could establish 3 levels of priority based on benefit, cost and risk criteria as well as qualitative goals. We have taken a first step at this process in the ranking of large-scale projects listed under the City’s initiatives 1, 2 and 3 below.

## VI. AIA RESPONSE TO PLANYC TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES

This section provides specific responses to the 16 transportation initiatives identified in PlaNYC. It is intended to highlight strengths and suggest areas, which could benefit from further evaluation and discussion. To this end an additional 4 categories have been identified in the AIA and NYNV workshops that are recommended for further development.

### ***1. Increase Capacity on Key Congested Routes (Fund Five Projects that Eliminate Major Capacity Constraints)***

- *Second Avenue Subway*
- *Third Track on the LIRR Main Line*
- *New Trans-Hudson Tunnel to Penn Station - Access to the Region’s Core (ARC)*
- *Moynihan/Penn Station Redevelopment*
- *Lincoln Tunnel Express Bus Lane*

### ***2. Provide New Commuter Rail Access to Manhattan***

- *East Side Access*
- *MNRR/Penn Station Access (Hudson and New Haven Lines)*
- *Lower Manhattan Rail Link*

### ***3. Expand Transit Service to Underserved Areas***

- *Staten Island North Shore Alignment*
- *#7 Line Extension 10th Avenue Station*
- *Nassau County Hub Transit Link*

**VI. AIA RESPONSE TO PLANYC TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES (cont.)**

AIA Response:

The eleven projects included in Initiatives 1, 2 and 3 seek to build on and expand the transit infrastructure. The 3 separate categories are somewhat arbitrary; therefore, the projects can be better understood as a single group and evaluated according to their potential benefits, costs and other factors. While all could be considered worthwhile by their constituencies, many other projects have been studied and could be added to the lists. These range from completing critical transfer connections between transit lines such as Bleecker/Broadway-Lafayette Station, providing rail access to LaGuardia Airport or extending rail access to underserved neighborhoods as a way to stimulate higher-density, transit-oriented development.

In its April 2007 PlaNYC document, the City projected that the proposed SMART Fund financing model could pay off the debt of 21 specific “First Priority” projects, including the unfunded portion of the 11 projects listed above, by the year 2050. Although we support a more reliable funding mechanism for transit improvements, it seems prudent to establish a rough ranking of priority in case the proposed SMART Fund does not materialize or perform as expected. In addition to the benefits and cost, factors considered include the likelihood of funding commitments, political support and the potential to achieve the overall goals of the PlaNYC.

There is general consensus that the projects that are in an advanced stage of design or already in construction such as the Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access should receive the highest priority for funding. Others in earlier phases of design but with the potential for very significant benefits such as the Third Track on the LIRR Main Line, ARC and Moynihan/Penn Station Redevelopment should be next in priority. Those with more limited potential or significant obstacles such as the Lincoln Tunnel Express Bus Lane, MNRR/Penn Station Access, the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station Fit-out on the #7 Line Extension or the Nassau County Hub Transit Link should be given a moderate priority. Finally, those that have not demonstrated their potential, even if funding has been identified, should have the lowest priority.

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Capital Cost*</b>	<b>Existing Funding*</b>	<b>Unfunded*</b>	<b>Priority Ranking</b>
Second Avenue Subway				
Phase I	\$3.8 B	\$2.8 B	\$1.0 B	High
Phases II	\$3.4 B	\$1.7 B	\$1.7 B	High
Phases III, IV	Not Identified	Not Identified	Not Identified	High
Third Track on LIRR Main Line	\$0.8 B	\$0.4 B	\$0.4 B	High
New Trans-Hudson Tunnel to Penn Station (ARC)	\$7.4 B	\$3.7 B	\$3.7 B	High
Moynihan/Penn Station Redevelopment	\$1.0 B	\$0.5 B	\$0.5 B	High
Lincoln Tunnel Express Bus Lane	\$1.3 B	\$0.7 B	\$0.6 B	Moderate
East Side Access	\$6.4 B	\$4.4 B	\$2.0 B	High
MNRR/Penn Station Access				
Hudson Line	\$0.5 B	\$0.2 B	\$0.3 B	Moderate
New Haven Line	\$0.4 B	\$0.2 B	\$0.2 B	Moderate
Lower Manhattan Rail Link	\$7.5 B	\$3.7 B	\$3.8 B	Low
Staten Island North Shore Alignment	\$0.4 B	\$0.2 B	\$0.2 B	Low
#7 Line Extension 10 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Station	\$0.5 B	\$0.2 B	\$0.3 B	Moderate
Nassau County Hub Transit Link	\$0.7 B	\$0.4 B	\$0.3 B	Moderate

\*The projected costs and funding information was taken directly from the PlaNYC report and may be more or less certain depending on how advanced the projects are in the planning and design process.

#### **4. *Improve and Expand Bus Service***

- *Bus Rapid Transit*
- *Dedicated High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes on the East River Bridges*
- *Improvements to Bus Service*

AIA Response:

For a number of reasons New York City has not capitalized on the potential for quality bus transit service to complement its highly effective rail transit system. In order to achieve the goal of reducing congestion across the City, and within the core in particular, commuters living or working in areas not adequately served by rail transit need to be provided with a convenient, reliable and effective bus network. The MTA and NYCDOT should commit to the early implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as a demonstration for new technologies, operating modes and service typologies that could be quickly expanded and integrated into the larger bus system.

Other approaches that might be used to manage roads more efficiently include the use of HOV lanes as a replacement for dedicated bus lanes. This would allow for other high-density vehicles, such as vans, to use bus lanes that would otherwise not be utilized to full capacity.

In addition to the ideas described in PlaNYC and current BRT plans (limited express service, dedicated bus lanes, signal prioritization, etc.), the MTA should consider innovations used successfully in other cities such as pre-payment to reduce bus stopping times and real-time arrival information (GPS technology). As this response is written, initiatives are being taken to test of this type of technology locally. Bus stops need to be located for their potential for inter-modal connections. Rather than treating the bus stops simplistically as transit improvements, an urban design approach should be initiated to integrate the shelters, curb extensions, signage, etc. into the entire streetscape.

#### **5. *Improve Local Commuter Rail Service***

- *Expand Local Use of MNRR and LIRR Stations*

AIA Response:

As described in PlaNYC, the goal of this initiative is to encourage the use of commuter rail (MNRR and LIRR) stations for local commuter use. The biggest obstacles discouraging this mode choice, are the higher fares and less frequent service and in some cases, capacity constraints, especially during rush hour. In areas where capacity is adequate, fare structures and schedules should be developed which encourage the use of the commuter rail system, thus providing better transit service and better system efficiency through increased ridership.

Consideration should be given to building new stations along existing commuter rail lines where this is the most effective way to offer rail transit to underserved neighborhoods with high densities or the potential for new transit-oriented, high-density development.

Although not explicitly addressed by PlaNYC, more attention needs to be given to the suburban commuter rail stations as major inter-modal transfer connections – auto-to-rail or bus-to-rail. Adequate and well-designed parking (structured where the need exists) should be provided to encourage park-and-ride use. Local bus routes and sheltered bus stops at the rail stations should be part of a coordinated regional transit strategy.

## 6. *Improve Access to Existing Transit:*

- *Facilitate Access to Subways and Bus Stops*

AIA Response:

In too many cases, bus stops and transit stations are designed as stand-alone facilities with inadequate attention given to how they are accessed. Among the reasons are jurisdictional boundaries, cost limitations, expediency and failure to take responsibility for the adequacy of the experience to the users. PlaNYC correctly identifies congested sidewalks or even lack of sidewalks as problems. The increasing need to provide space for bike racks is also cited.

In actuality this is a much more significant issue requiring that the agencies recognize that every transit stop or station is a part of the entire public way and an inter-modal connection. Most often and on the simplest level, this connection is from pedestrian (walking) to rail or bus but can include transfers from other transit modes and must work for all levels of physical ability. In higher density areas sidewalks may be adequate for the pedestrian traffic and permanent street furniture. Temporary obstacles such as sidewalk sheds or construction barriers can further restrict access. The MTA, NYCDOT and other affected agencies should consider ways to improve total access including zoning regulations requiring off-street subway entrances in all new developments in high-density zones.

A priority should also be given to increase funding to provide more ADA-accessible stations with elevators and increased level-of-service with escalators.

## 7. *Address Congested Areas Around the City*

- *Develop Congestion Management Plans for Outer Borough Growth Corridors*

AIA Response:

This initiative is described by PlaNYC as the development of congestion management strategies for nodes of localized congestion by commuters and non-commuters, many outside of Manhattan. The City has suggested nine corridors for intensive study considering the immediate need for traffic/transit improvements. These studies should be seen as an opportunity for innovation by conducting an open, inclusive process with community input and buy-in rather than the imposition of standardized traffic management practices. Opportunities for inter-modal connections should be identified with pedestrians and non-vehicular modes of transportation being given priority consideration over vehicular traffic. Short-term fixes should be identified but growth potential should be anticipated with the goal of developing targeted proto-typical solutions for particular neighborhoods or boroughs.

PlaNYC does not address a number of conditions and uses within the public streets and sidewalks that contribute to congestion. A comprehensive review of these uses should be made to identify street management strategies that could be implemented to reduce congestion and enhance the quality of life. Without making specific recommendations for each item on the following list it should be recognized that all constitute the use of public resources for private benefit and potentially create a burden to the general public. Public policy should establish a mechanism to limit the burden and/or recoup an equitable payment for the burden or cost.

- Temporary Sidewalk Sheds
- Temporary Construction Barriers
- Temporary Film Permits
- Street Fairs
- Sidewalk Displays of Merchandise
- Sidewalk Cafes
- Sidewalk Vendors

## **7. Address Congested Areas Around the City (cont.)**

Easily overlooked among the other transportation initiatives, the City plans to expand the study to identify the land use potential for future “Growth Areas”. This speaks to the critical dependency of land use and transportation planning when developing a comprehensive approach to guide sustainable growth. The importance of the selection and evaluation of potential “Growth Areas” suggests that the City should seek the full participation of the City’s Planning Department and affected infrastructure agencies, neighborhood and community groups, professional organizations and the general public in this process.

## **8. Expand Ferry Service**

- *Expand privately-operated ferry service to emerging residential neighborhoods throughout the city*
- *Improve ferry/bus connections, and initiate the use of MetroCards for ferries and connecting bus service.*

AIA Response:

As is properly described in this initiative, ferries can provide an effective means to improve transportation in coastal locations that are presently not well served. They also provide a critical back up to the other modes, as was witnessed after 9/11. It is not clear whether the continued reliance on private operators for this service is best for the long term. Ferry service improvements have already been progressing through the construction of new terminal facilities in the City and the region. Other improvements may occur through requirements that ferryboats limit the sound and air pollution often associated with this mode. The ferry is used for airport access in limited instances, but there is the potential to expand this transportation resource.

## **9. Promote Cycling**

- *Advance ridership through a 2 phase effort that will ultimately realize a 1,800 mile bicycle network of on-street routes and off-street greenways. Many public and private entities are involved, and the increased network, bicycle parking, promotion, enforcement/ education and cultural shifts (mainstreaming) are intended to create a world-class bicycle network.*

AIA Response:

We support the goals of this initiative while noting that other cities, such as Munich, have integrated bicyclists more into the transportation network than is envisioned in this proposal. Mainstreaming can best be developed by making a greater level of commitment to bicycles than is proposed by the City. Limiting conflicts between bicycles and the other transportation modes can only help. For more people to use bicycles as a form of transportation in New York City, safety and convenience needs to be improved. Given the fact that bicycles have limited use in inclement weather conditions, it is difficult to consider them to be a year-round transportation mode; however, they complement and reduce dependencies on other transportation modes.

## 10. *Pilot Congestion Pricing*

- *Use Congestion Pricing to Manage Traffic in the CBD*

AIA Response:

Perhaps the boldest transportation proposal in PlaNYC is the City's stated commitment to traffic congestion relief through a 3-year congestion pricing demonstration project within a defined congestion zone below 86th Street in Manhattan. Citing London, Stockholm and Singapore as models for this market-based system, the City has established a goal of reducing vehicular traffic by 6.3% within the congestion zone. Capital costs to start up the system would be provided by a grant from the US Department of Transportation and City and State funding. Among the start-up costs are near-term transit improvements such as increased bus service to areas currently underserved by mass transit. Revenues generated by the congestion charge beyond the system operating costs would be reserved for a mass transit improvement fund, proposed elsewhere in PlaNYC as the SMART Fund.

The elegance of the concept of congestion pricing is that it simultaneously discourages inefficient use of the road and bridge network, encourages more efficient modes of transportation, reduces energy use and air pollution from vehicular use and provides a reliable mechanism to fund improvements to the mass transit system. Significant externalities such as the recapture of enormous costs attributed to traffic congestion and measurable improvements to the health and quality of life of residents and workforce have been identified. Indeed this concept is the key to providing a comprehensive transportation strategy, which addresses current limitations as well as growth for the City.

A process has been established to recommend a final congestion relief strategy ("Implementation Plan") starting with the NYC Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission recommendations, followed by approval of the proposed strategy by the City Council and State Legislature. This process should be conducted using the most reliable, objective data along with public input to achieve a fair and equitable outcome.

Acknowledging the steep political resistance that must be overcome to gain the needed State approval, the City should remain flexible and open to suggestions that could make the strategy more effective. Recent studies have shown that suggested alternatives to congestion pricing such as license plate rationing, truck reduction strategies and traffic management enhancements would not achieve the traffic reduction goals achievable with the City's congestion pricing strategy. However, consideration should be given to variations of the City's proposed strategy in order to minimize potential negative impacts. As a result of the workshops, held by the AIA T & I, some co-sponsored by NYNV, a number of suggestions were developed prior to the Transportation Mitigation Commission's interim report. They included the following, which was delivered by the AIA NYC to the Commission as testimony on October 25, 2007.

- *Simplify the detection system to reduce operating costs and provide a more understandable congestion zone system for the public. This can be achieved by shifting the congestion zone portals to the East River bridges along with a demarcation line across upper Manhattan – 86<sup>th</sup> Street has been recommended by the City, and 60th.*
- *Examine all boundary zones to assure that there is not an inequitable increase in adverse traffic impacts to surrounding neighborhoods. Parking regulations such as parking permits in residential neighborhoods and Muni meters in commercial neighborhoods should be evaluated.*
- *Consider variable or dynamic pricing – not just a flat cost during the effective charging period – in order to spread traffic more evenly across non-peak hours.*
- *Establish clear urban design goals with the intent of reducing the visual impact of the detection equipment and other potential negative impacts. The City has suggested that a gantry support structure similar to what has been used in Stockholm and Singapore could be used. This has a very significant visual impact to neighborhood streets and could work much better at a limited entry portal such as a bridge or tunnel approach.*

## 10. *Pilot Congestion Pricing (cont.)*

- *Establish a congestion surcharge for taxis operating within the congestion period. There is already a precedent for this with the peak-hour surcharge. This reinforces the principle that the benefits of using the public street should be offset by a reasonable cost.*
- *Evaluate using congestion pricing to encourage the use of more efficient vehicles. London has proposed a system with a sliding scale of congestion fees based on the vehicle fuel efficiency.*
- *Evaluate the congestion pricing structure to encourage the use of mass transit for reverse commuting.*
- *Evaluate other congested business cores such as downtown Brooklyn as potential congestion pricing zones.*

After the NYC Transportation Mitigation Commission's Interim Report, the AIA T & I through the AIA NYC, provided an additional statement to the Commission on January 23, 2008. In this statement, the Chapter was *"heartened to see that all of the suggestions from our October 25, 2007 public testimony (attached for reference) are either acknowledged, or included in one or more of the four alternative plans developed by the Commission."*

Of the five options presented in the Interim Report, the Chapter felt that the "Alternative Plan" came closest to achieving the principals mentioned while qualifying for the funding. The January 23 statement further recommended that, *"Whether this Alternate Plan is further modified by the Commission in its final recommendation on January 31, 2008, or whether complimentary programs are initiated independently by the City, certain policies should be introduced to further improve congestion mitigation and fund transportation programs. They include:*

- *Develop a parking permit system throughout the city on a neighborhood basis. Besides generating revenue, it would allow for flexibility to respond the special needs of each neighborhood, in particular those adjacent to the congestion-pricing zone.*
- *Introduce market rate street parking, in particular within the congestion-pricing zone. The reduction of the number of vehicles coming into the zone might allow for the elimination of some street parking in certain streets, providing real estate for additional bike paths and/or enhancement of the pedestrian environment.*
- *Increase the recommended fees for taxis, liveries, and other car services that are exempt with the Alternate Plan. These users of the city's streets should also contribute to the SMART Fund."*

With the publication of the Commission's *Recommended Implementation Plan*, dated January 31, 2008 the Chapter is once again heartened to see a great deal of acceptance of the Chapter's recommendations.

It has been suggested that an action with the potential for negative impacts such as this should be subject to the State and/or City environmental review process. It is our hope that the Mitigations Commission's data collection and public review process along with the 3-year demonstration period would satisfy this point of view. Whatever the decision, this question should be resolved early to avoid the potential for a legal roadblock to implementation of an approved plan.

The "Implementation Plan" recommended by the Commission includes provisions that assure that funding generated from congestion pricing be reserved for transportation capital improvements to remove the temptation to divert funds to operating costs to avoid future fare increases. We support this aspect of the plan.

Considering all of the above, it is critical that the City, State, and public focus on achieving the goals set out for congestion pricing in a truly effective and politically feasible way.

### **11. *Manage Roads More Efficiently***

- *Expand the Muni meter program*
- *Implement an Integrated Traffic Management System based on Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)*

AIA Response:

We support the use of new technologies by the City as a means to more efficient road management, in particular when the technologies are able to provide real time information to multiple agencies and constituencies.

The use of Muni meters to help regulate commercial deliveries and allow for non-commercial use at appropriate times is a proven concept that should be expanded. However, on-street commercial and non-commercial parking needs to be considered as a totality, looking at the non-vehicular street functions of pedestrian activity and bicycle lanes, in conjunction with strategies to limit vehicles “cruising” for parking locations. An assessment of parking and service locations within impacted neighborhoods, including off-street loading docks and parking structures, can be conducted in order to determine the appropriate number of parking spaces and fee structures. Efficient use of streets can reduce much waste, and create opportunities for expansion of non-vehicular street functions. Greater parity between City and commercial parking fees might go a long way towards this goal.

Another strategy for efficient street management that should be considered is the use of resident parking permits in certain residential neighborhoods. This could generate more income for the SMART Fund and reduce cruising for parking by both visitors and residents. It would need to be reviewed within the context of private parking facilities and servicing needs in the neighborhoods to assure that the requirements of private vehicle needs are balanced with positive changes in the quality of life for the area’s residents.

The ITS opens a broad range of possibilities beyond the ability to coordinate the timing of traffic signals to enhance traffic flow. Ultimately, this information can be used to minimize traffic congestion on a real-time basis to operators of vehicles while they are driving, not just before they leave. The use of this system to speed bus service and transmit bus information real-time to those waiting at bus stops can only help to encourage more use of this type of public transportation through an increased level-of-service for the public.

As the technologies advance, one could imagine a scenario where visitors to the city would be given real-time information as to the availability of parking space in proximity to their destination, with a recommended route that avoids and thus limits congestion.

### **12. *Strengthen Enforcement of Traffic Violations***

- *Expand the number of traffic enforcement agents*
- *Facilitate “block the box” ticketing*
- *Expand the use of traffic enforcement cameras*

AIA Response:

The increase in enforcement personnel, modification of policy and expansion of technology will help reduce violations with a goal of reduced congestion. Expanded enforcement should also include the goal of increased safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. A cultural change needs to take place within the driving community to recognize the responsibility to minimize traffic accidents between vehicles and bicyclists/ pedestrians.

Several enforcement issues not addressed by PlaNYC but having a major negative impact in some neighborhoods include parking placard abuse (excessive number of legal permits and illegal forging of permits), uncontrolled double parking of commercial delivery vehicles (parking fines are insufficient to discourage the activity), and idling of buses and other waiting vehicles (generates significant exhaust fumes).

### **13. Facilitate Freight Movements**

- *Improve access to JFK*
- *Explore “HOTT” Lanes*

AIA Response:

This initiative focuses on two specific freight movement improvements, and is presented within the context of establishing other initiatives, such as congestion pricing and managing roads more efficiently, as ways to improve freight movements. The proposals have merit, but the discussion appears to be limited to truck traffic. Other means of freight movement, such as increased use of barges and rail have been proposed in the past without implementation. Given the far-reaching goals of the plan, it is worth re-examining these proposals with an eye towards reducing the amount of truck traffic in the City, and a greater diffusion of truck use from peak hours. This needs to be balanced with some of the quality-of-life conflicts that may result from such a change, in particular where applied to largely residential areas. New York City, with its fame as a 24-hour city, could certainly afford increased deliveries in its commercial districts during off-peak periods.

PlaNYC contains no comprehensive approach for improving essential goods movement activity to complement its ambitious vision for transit enhancements and traffic management. It cites useful initiatives to make more efficient use of arterial highways for goods movement and especially to ensure more reliable vehicular access to JFK. The City must continue to work with the NYS Department of Transportation, other agencies, and concerned business sectors to pursue operational improvements, revised regulations and routing for trucks, and targeted capital improvements. Other strategies include better recognition of the need for adequate accommodations to handle freight deliveries and other truck-borne services in City zoning and building-code revisions, and planning for major development projects.

Continued efforts to shift some cargo to rail and waterborne modes are important strategies, but most goods will continue to move via the city's streets and highways. Even intermodal shipments nearly always will move by truck for their "last mile" or more in the five boroughs. In that regard, zoning policies and economic-development incentives should encourage the development of intermodal terminals, local distribution centers and sustainable delivery modes at suitable locations across the city.

### **14. Close the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's State of Good Repair Gap**

- *Have the SMART Authority provide the MTA with a one- time grant to cover its unfunded need to achieve a state of good repair.*

AIA Response:

The proposed congestion pricing initiative in PlaNYC anticipates approximately \$400 million per year in net revenue. The unfunded need of the MTA is presented as a \$9.5 billion deficit. Given these discrepancies, it is clear that the SMART Funds can only provide a portion of the needs. It is critical that all of the funding sources to achieve this state be identified and that City/State funding commitments be secured. Other funding sources, which might not be limited to City controls, can be linked to surcharges on less efficient modes of transportation, such as gasoline taxes.

**15. *Achieve a State of Good Repair on the City’s Roads and Bridges***

- *This initiative relates to the conditions of the City’s roads and bridges. It describes the increased vigilance that the City has established in relation to this vehicular network.*
- *Use the SMART grant to make the necessary repairs to be paid out over 20 years.*
- *Increase the use of recycled asphalt pavement.*

AIA Response:

Similar to Initiative 14, there is concern that without the SMART Funds there will not be a sufficient means of funding the necessary state of good repair for street resurfacing. A limited grant over a 20-year period would help reverse the current negative trend.

In addition to the use of recycled pavement to improve efficient replacement, other sustainable initiatives are included in the Department of Design and Construction High Performance Infrastructure Guidelines. The implementation of these guidelines by other agencies will have a positive impact toward achieving the goals of PlaNYC.

**16. *Establish a New Regional Transit Financing Authority***

- *Establish a Sustainable Mobility and Regional Transportation Authority (SMART), which would serve as a transportation infrastructure bank for the region.*

AIA Response:

In addition to the potential revenue generated by congestion pricing, the proposed SMART Fund relies on legislative commitments by the City and State to provide significant annual contributions. The three revenue sources would allow the Financing Authority to issue bonds for capital improvements. Concerns have been expressed about the cost of an added City / State bureaucracy, and assurances that the funds will be authorized for transportation improvements. The maximum benefit will only be reached through collaboration between the City, its regional stakeholders and the State.

**ADDITIONAL PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES RECOMMENDED BY THE AIA  
(NOT INCLUDED IN PLANYC)**

As expansive as the PlaNYC is, there are a number of transportation initiatives that could be considered to reinforce the goals of the program. Some of these initiatives are partially addressed in the program, but none fully. We describe the additional proposed initiatives below, continuing the numbering used in PlaNYC to suggest that they would be worthwhile to add in future analyses.

**17. *Facilitate Inter-Modal Transportation***

The transportation initiatives largely address transportation systems separately. As indicated in the Transportation Principles, the quality of connections is key to a positive commuting experience. For example, if one can bicycle to a subway stop with facilities to safely store the bicycle, transfer from subway to bus and then walk a reasonable distance to a destination, all with convenient, comfortable and quick transfers, then new or expanded transportation opportunities open up. A focus on inter-modal initiatives could help advance the use of more sustainable modes of transportation in areas that are presently under-served as well as improve the overall efficiency of the individual systems.

### ***18. Evaluate Taxi and Livery Use***

Taxis and livery vehicles are an important part of the overall transportation menu. They often represent the highest quality transportation experience that one might use. However, they also represent one of the least efficient modes of transportation since they often carry only a single passenger. To help remediate this condition, an evaluation of this mode should be made with an objective towards reduced congestion and increased environmental responsiveness.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in creating change within this organized industry, there have already been initiatives by the City, such as requirements for the use of hybrid vehicles that begin to improve the current situation. Other initiatives could also contribute towards efficiencies. The use of “share-a-ride” could be expanded beyond its present limits. There does not appear to be any reason why taxis should be exempt from congestion pricing fees, in particular if the fees are paid, much like bridge and tunnel tolls, by the customer. The implementation of additional taxi stands, use of new technologies to “hail” taxis and limitations on cruising could increase the efficiency of this transportation mode. The “black car” represents a largely unregulated form of transportation that often adds to congestion through double parking.

The work done in 2007 by the Design Trust for Public Space, “Designing the Taxi” has a number of suggestions that respond to these concerns. An attempt should be made to further develop many of these proposals into policy.

### ***19. Plan Pedestrian, Vehicular and Mass Transit Right-of-Ways to Promote Balanced Urban Streetscapes***

The aspirations of PlaNYC include not only a reaction to the changes brought on by population growth and a commitment to sustainable improvements, but also a “...faith in a better future, and a courage to seek it out...”. The urban streetscape is largely impacted by zoning regulations and the development of street, sidewalk and other public space. Changes to the rights-of-way provided for the various transportation modes can have a major impact on the urban streetscape. Analysis and planning should be developed for a number of locations with a goal of promoting a more balanced use of this public space. With less space reserved for vehicular use on a given street through elimination of a lane of parking or a reduction of travel lanes, more space could be allotted to pedestrians, bicycles or landscaping. Certain streets or areas may be best utilized mostly as pedestrian environments, with service functions occurring in non-peak hours. The pedestrian mode of transportation is the most sustainable form, and it promotes public health. If pedestrian use is given equal priority with vehicular use of the streetscape, the result will be an improved environment for residents, the workforce and visitors.

### ***20. Establish an Early Action Program***

PlaNYC will not be considered a success unless the commitment is embraced through successive administrations since many of the initiatives will require far longer implementation schedules than the present City administration’s term. The determination to continue must be provided by the will of the general public. The general populace needs to be engaged as an advocate for the plan through a series of early action initiatives. These initiatives should be prioritized not only relative to their functional benefit, but also the need to have a recognizable impact, so that future public officials will recognize the plan’s importance and maintain the momentum.

As a way to engender greater public understanding and support for the PlaNYC goals and initiatives as well as to advance the policy planning to the next level of physical planning and design, it is important to identify demonstration projects which could test the initiatives against local conditions, various scales, various levels of complexity, differing cultural expectations, etc. We recommend that two demonstration projects be identified in each borough with the potential to establish a standard for what can be achieved there – one with short term impacts and one with longer term results.

## VII. UNINTENDED IMPACTS

Responsible planning procedures should attempt to identify the potential impacts – positive and negative – of a given policy or initiative early in the process to assure that the optimum decisions are made. In contrast to the normal mandated environmental review process (SEQR, CEQR, etc.) where a conceptual design is created prior to a formal environmental review, evaluation of the potential impacts of alternative options should be part of the formulation of the concept.

To be effective, this requires a level of public openness and transparency, which is not always encouraged by public agencies. By seeking to identify and mitigate negative impacts to achieve a broad consensus early on, a worthy initiative can be strengthened to withstand narrowly based challenges. Opportunities may be identified which expand the goals of the program. The potential benefit is greater public buy-in, fewer false starts and an earlier understanding of requirements for resources.

## VIII. SYSTEMIC OBSTACLES

- **Marginalized Regional Planning**  
Effective planning in the NY region has often been hampered by the lack of a regional planning perspective, which could mediate among the myriad overlapping local, state and interstate interests. While a single comprehensive regional planning authority that could bridge these jurisdictions may not be politically viable, it is reasonable to expect more cooperation among the agencies and authorities with similar missions.
- **Changing Priorities of Succeeding Administrations**  
Acknowledging the natural tendency for each administration to establish its own agendas and programs, it is important that key elements of PlaNYC be firmly established by the end of this administration. This can take the form of early action programs to garner public support as noted earlier, legislative actions which are difficult to reverse, executive policies and procedures that are embedded into the agency culture, and the establishment of capital programs with secured seed funds and a commitment to future funding needs.
- **Overly Rigid EIS Process**  
While it is beyond the purview of this report, many public policy observers have called for reform of the State and City environmental review process. Previous sections on this report recommend a public project review process with more transparency and input; however a thorough overhaul of the system could lead to a more responsive, less burdensome and ultimately more equitable system.
- **Balancing of NY State Control Over NY City Laws and Regulations**  
This is a complex issue with many political, legal and economic overtones. It may be time for a review of certain state legislation, which is overly restrictive of locally important aspects of home rule control by the City.

## **IX. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In reviewing the transportation initiatives, we have found that they tend to be mode-specific, and generally fall into the following categories:

- Increase capacity of public and environmentally friendly transportation systems (7)
- Increase the efficiency or quality of the transportation systems (5)
- Facilitate freight movements (1)
- Provide for a state-of-good repair in transportation systems (2)
- Develop a political entity to finance the transportation initiatives (1)

In general, the comments offered by this response are in agreement with the initiatives offered, and we have provided further counsel in respect to how to further develop responses to the initiatives. The greatest concern that this committee has relates to the fact that the initiatives oftentimes are presented without an overall framework to make the sum greater than the parts, do not clearly establish the initial momentum that will help move the plan, and seldom talk to the quality of the public transportation experience. In response to these concerns, the committee offers the following four proposed initiatives:

- *Facilitate Inter-Modal Transportation*
- *Evaluate Taxi and Livery Use*
- *Plan Pedestrian, Vehicular, and Mass Transit Right-of-Ways to Promote Balanced Urban Streetscapes*
- *Establish an Early Action Program*

## **X. NEXT STEPS**

In our role as public advocates, it is the hope that the AIA T&I can continue to respond to the PlaNYC program in a positive manner. We await the Interim Report on the plan that is scheduled for April, and are hopeful that we can continue to sponsor efforts that may:

- Advance planning policies into physical planning
- Serve as a resource to the City, State, and other stakeholders that needed to work together in response to the plan
- Provide continuity and serve as “watchdog” beyond the present administration’s term.

The T&I AIA will be happy to serve should the City express an interest in engaging us directly towards modifications or supplemental efforts related to the plan. Mayor Bloomberg’s efforts should not only be commended, but supported, as a vision that goes well beyond a political term or a particular urban boundary.

We sincerely hope that these initiatives will be seen as a historic response to a new enlightenment of humankind’s impact on our planet. The work done to date gives hope that sustainability, growth, and improved quality of life are not mutually exclusive.