

## Regional Plan Association Comments on the State of New Jersey Energy Master Plan

RPA is an independent, non-profit regional planning organization that works to improve the prosperity, infrastructure, sustainability and quality of life of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan region. We pursue these goals by conducting independent research, planning, advocacy and vigorous public-engagement efforts. A cornerstone of our work is the development of long-range plans and policies to guide the region's growth. Since the 1920s, RPA has produced three landmark plans for the region and recently completed a fourth plan, tackling the urgent challenges facing our region, including climate change, fiscal uncertainty and obstacles to opportunity.

We strongly support Governor Murphy's directive to update New Jersey's Energy Master Plan, particularly in light of the re-emergence of New Jersey as a leader in climate change mitigation, and at a time when the consequences of climate change are becoming more dire and evident, and the urgency to act ever greater.

Drawing upon the research and recommendations from our own Fourth Regional Plan, as well as our deep knowledge of New Jersey issues within the broader context of the region, RPA offers the following input to the State as it embarks on this effort.

### Clean and Renewable Energy

New Jersey has set a timeline to achieve 100 percent clean energy by 2050. As the latest science tells us, this is no longer an ambitious target; it is a necessity and a very real deadline. In order to achieve this goal, New Jersey will need to simultaneously – and dramatically – increase production of electricity from clean sources (solar, wind and storage), while ramping down fossil-fuel based power generation.

*Prioritize offshore wind and collaborate with New York State to position the region as the epicenter of offshore wind manufacturing.*

As the Murphy Administration has also demonstrated, RPA sees great promise in the proliferation of offshore wind for the region. The full force of the administration should continue to be behind this effort to achieve and surpass stated targets for offshore wind generation. New York State has made similar commitments to offshore wind development and is ahead of the game in moving towards

implementation. To be clear, the development of offshore wind should not be a competition for which state wins the race, but instead should be a shared and combined effort to ensure that the maximum benefits are achieved, both in the leasing areas offshore, and on land where a new industry of offshore wind manufacturing can take root and flourish. Working together collaboratively will ensure that the Tri-State Metropolitan Region will be the winner, with maximum benefits in each state.

Along with New York State, New Jersey should be working closely with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to determine how to best position Port Authority managed properties in and around New York Harbor as places to establish what could be the region's next thriving industry.

*Continue to advance solar and explore opportunities for large-scale solar*

New Jersey established itself years ago as a leader in the development of solar energy, particularly at the local level. To achieve the goal of 100% clean energy, the State must continue to invest in solar, and should also work closely with local communities to consider the land use opportunities and implications for large solar farms. Further, the State and local municipalities should collaborate with grassroots organizations on education and economic development to develop long term plans for how land could be used to host solar arrays.

*Chart out a long-term pathway for nuclear power*

Nearly half of New Jersey's power comes from nuclear energy, which emits nearly zero greenhouse gases, but has other environmental impacts of concern. New Jersey's nuclear facilities are also aging. RPA calls on the State to work with utility companies to lay out a long-term vision for New Jersey's nuclear power plants in a way that ensures the State meets its commitment to 100% clean power by 2050 and ensures the safety and well-being of its residents. Replacing a nuclear power plant with a fossil fuel-powered plant would likely steer the State way from its goal.

*Responsibly ramp down fossil-fuel power*

New Jersey should work closely with utility companies and other stakeholders to clearly chart a path to phase out fossil fuel-powered plants in a way that ensures reliability and fair rates. Such a vision should consider how the region moves away from existing power plants, over what time period and if there is a point at which the State will no longer approve new fossil fuel plants or infrastructure. Working closely with community and environmental justice advocates will ensure that communities that have disproportionately borne the burden of polluting energy infrastructure can gain the most from these shifts.

*Rejoin and look beyond RGGI*

RPA strongly supports Governor Murphy's commitment to rejoining RGGI. The State should have never left in the first place and progress towards curbing emissions and generating revenue has been lost in the process. As the State navigates its way back in, it should consider how the cap-and-invest model could be expanded to other sectors (including transportation, *see below*), but also if there are better models (such as a carbon tax) that could have similar or additional benefits in the power and other sectors. Particular attention should be paid to historically burdened neighborhoods that suffer public health and other impacts from existing power generation and other energy uses.

**Clean and Reliable Transportation**

Transportation is the single largest contributor of greenhouse gases – and other air pollutants – in New Jersey. Despite a well-connected train and bus network, driving remains the primary means of transportation for New Jersey residents. The Energy Master Plan must consider a full range of strategies for getting more residents out of their cars more often, but also – acknowledging that car culture is the American way – make our transportation sector clean. Participating more formally in the Transportation and Climate Initiative will help to broaden strategies and promote regional collaboration.

*Support the proliferation of electric and clean-fuel vehicles and associated infrastructure*

As New Jersey aims for 100% clean energy by 2050, the surest way to reduce emissions from vehicles is by electrifying the vehicles we drive and ride in, or switching to other clean fuels. The State should explore ways that incentive programs for EV and other clean fuel vehicles can be expanded and made more attractive while at the same time investing in infrastructure that supports these vehicles (and reduces range anxiety). The State can take a leadership role with the fleets of vehicles it operates, as well as advancing innovation with New Jersey Transit Buses.

*Make public transit the best choice*

As the State develops the Energy Master Plan, it should link with existing efforts to improve New Jersey Transit's rail, bus and light rail network. As the system has fallen into disrepair due to neglect, we risk turning riders into drivers. A clean transportation future must include a robust New Jersey Transit system.

### *Build Gateway Tunnel*

As New Jersey Transit is restored to a world class system, the infrastructure that supports it must be expanded and enhanced. The existing tunnels under the Hudson River are both at capacity and in need of significant repair from a century of use and damage from Superstorm Sandy. The most important capital project in the region is Amtrak's Gateway Tunnel. Building Gateway would expand capacity by 30% and provide redundancy should issues arrive with existing tunnels. Building Gateway will expand users of New Jersey Transit and will lead to the reduction of auto emissions, and should be included in the Energy Master Plan.

### *Ensure walkable, bikeable streets*

How we develop our communities and use our streets have a significant impact on auto use. New Jersey has served as a leader in transit-oriented development, and there is an opportunity for the Energy Master Plan to endorse future development around rail stations and other hubs as a way of reducing auto use. Similarly, safe, walkable streets that support alternative transportation options such as biking should be pursued in the Energy Master Plan as a way of reducing vehicle emissions.

## **Build a Modern, Sustainable and Resilient Grid**

The region's electrical grid has not kept pace with advances in energy technology and will require greater investment and coordination among energy providers and regulators across the three states to become a lower-emitting, reliable, and flexible system.

### *Plan for a more electrified, renewable region*

As New Jersey's population, and the region around it, continues to grow and vehicles and buildings become more electrified, more electricity will be needed. RPA recommends that New Jersey consider forming a regional energy policy task force that brings together regulators, public officials, utility executives, generators, and other stakeholders and advocates to plan more effectively for the future of energy production.

### *Adapt the grid for the greater variability of cleaner, renewable energy*

The future grid will need to be more flexible, with the ability to store power, distributed with local generation and able to facilitate communication between supplier and user. New Jersey should consider what relationships and investments will be required to usher in this new grid.

## **Reduce Energy Consumption**

Energy conservation through efficiency measures is the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the short term. The most opportune places to enhance conservation are in New Jersey's cities. The State should explore ways it can support cities and other municipalities to comprehensively evaluate existing construction codes to ensure energy conservation is achieved. A multidisciplinary task force of public, business, and civic-sector experts should determine which new requirements are adopted to promote sustainability in buildings, and which should be removed. New York City's Green Codes Task Force is a good model of this type of initiative, while Energy Code Collaboratives are a model for an ongoing task force focused on code compliance.

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