

IV. Key Planning Issues

The two SPAs identified in this report have planning issues that are unique in some ways and similar in others. The issues can be organized as follows:

Traffic Congestion — The concentration of population and jobs in the State of New Jersey and its surrounding region has created significant traffic congestion. The reliance on the single occupant automobile as the major mode of transportation has added to congestion on virtually all of the area's roadways. The lack of convenient alternative modes of transportation has not helped. The Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA has major transportation routes provided by the major State toll roads (the Garden State Parkway and the NJ Turnpike) other State highways, and County roads. The toll roads have generally been the best maintained and provide the greatest capacity. They, however, were originally designed to handle significant through traffic and the addition of new interchanges to allow more local access greatly increases congestion. The Metropark SPA is served by the Garden State Parkway and the US Route One corridor from the Roosevelt Park area to the Middlesex and Union County boundary. Route One functions as a service road for commercial development that lines it. Both SPA's require improvements to State Highways and County roads to handle existing trips. There are significant physical constraints to adding new roadway capacity in both SPA's.

The Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA offers the potential of ferry transportation to link areas of future development along the shoreline. The ferry alternative to land route systems (automobile, bus, and light rail) now available from South Amboy and coming to Perth Amboy, may become more popular in the future as the ability to expand land routes becomes exhausted. The Metropark SPA must continue to develop ways to utilize the capacity of the Metropark Station as a hub for regional transportation. However, the impact of this regional hub (as, for example, high speed interstate and intrastate rail service expands on the Northeast Corridor Main Line) must be reflected in planning for future land uses in the SPA. Shuttle transit services (taxi, bus, light rail) and other alternatives including pedestrian and bicycle routes throughout the SPA and linking major activity nodes need to be evaluated as alternatives. Since the North Jersey Coast Rail Line of NJ Transit serves the Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA, major regional transportation hubs can be developed in Perth Amboy and South Amboy. The Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA also offers the potential for a waterfront trail from Carteret to the existing Bayshore Trail in Monmouth County. Connection along the Rahway River into Union County to link with the Rahway River Greenway in Union County would also be possible. The newly acquired Middlesex Greenway on the former Perth Amboy Conrail (CSX-Norfolk Southern) Branch right-of-way will further provide pedestrian and bicycle linkages between the Metropark and Arthur Kill/Raritan SPAs.

Water Supply — Both SPAs rely on a private water purveyor to deliver potable water supplies. There are no local problems in the existing or apparent future ability to provide adequate water supplies. Programs to assure the maintenance and expansion of water supply delivery systems are controlled by the private sector. The sources of the water supply are outside of the SPAs and are managed by the NJ Water Supply Authority.

The Authority must continue to assure that adequate supplies are available to the region. Central New Jersey's water supply is partially provided by the Delaware & Raritan Canal, which delivers water from the Delaware River drawn from New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. New Jersey may have to rely even more heavily on Delaware River water to meet its future needs. The State of New Jersey must work in cooperation with New York and Pennsylvania to assure a safe and reliable water supply. Additional supplies are from groundwater resources outside of the SPAs. These resources need to be protected into the future. Regional cooperation is necessary to assure that these resources will continue to be available. The State of New Jersey should consult with and coordinate its future water supply development planning and implementation with the County and its municipalities. The resources of the Raritan Basin which are the current primary supply resources for the SPAs are adequate for the foreseeable future, unless needs of additional areas outside the basin are to be met from the Raritan Basin. In that event an open water supply planning and allocation process involving all stakeholders will be required.

Water Quality — Point source discharges from industry and other direct wastewater outlets have been either eliminated or controlled. The quality of surface water in the streams and rivers of the SPAs is now more affected by nonpoint sources pollution from roadway and parking lot runoff, fertilizers used on lawns and managed landscape areas, and other stormwater-related sources. Planning and implementation for nonpoint pollution control has been initiated in the Metropark SPA by a NJDEP/USEPA Federal Clean Water Act Section 319(h) grant given to Middlesex County for the South Branch of the Rahway River Subwatershed. Similar activities should be carried out in the other subwatersheds of the Arthur Kill/Raritan and Metropark SPAs.

Public Health and Safety — Facilities for public health are available in both SPAs. The John F. Kennedy Medical Center serves the Metropark and surrounding area and the Raritan Bay Medical Center in Perth Amboy and Old Bridge serves the Arthur Kill/Raritan area. Major regional hospital facilities in the City of New Brunswick make available health care that was once only available in New York City. Other public health services are available at the municipal and county level and are expected to continue to improve in quality and scope. Police, fire and first aid services are also expected to remain adequate. The creation and maintenance of stable residential communities through renovation and redevelopment in both SPAs will continue to reduce crime rates and help reduce public concern for health and safety. Expected growth of the elderly proportion of the population will require additional planning for facilities and services to address their future needs. Middlesex County's ongoing initiative to rebuild the Roosevelt Care Center nursing home will help meet present and future needs for affordable care.

Education — The continued investment in new and rehabilitated public school facilities will maintain the quality of the education system. The Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA will possess especially important facilities at the County College in Edison and Perth Amboy that will continue to expand to meet the needs of the entire County. The SPA is well positioned to take advantage of the College's ability to develop a relationship with the

businesses and industries within the SPA for employee skill development and training. The County's new Vocational and Technical High School in Perth Amboy also offers opportunities for the SPA and should participate with the college in the training effort.

Flooding/Stormwater Management — Both SPAs have stormwater-related issues that need addressing. The Metropark area has flooding impacts related to the South Branch of the Rahway River. The handling of future stormwater requires a drainage basin planning effort. Similar problems exist in the Woodbridge Creek area of the Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA. The Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA also is subject to tidal flooding and to potential wave action from the Raritan Bay. Needed are continued efforts to stabilize the waterfront in urban areas of the SPA and to assure the protection and restoration of beaches and coastal wetlands that absorb the impact of coastal storms.

Open Space and Recreation and Cultural Facilities — Both SPA's possess important recreation resources. The County's Merrill and Roosevelt Parks are heavily used local recreation resources in the Metropark SPA. Adequate maintenance and improvements to these facilities is crucial to the quality of life in the area. In addition, the Roosevelt Park Outdoor Theater is a major regional attraction. The summer Plays in the Park program is popular: attendance at performances continues to increase and may soon reach capacity. The continuation of this program will require planning for future facility improvements. Similar considerations apply to the County's Joseph Medwick County Park, The Raritan Bayshore County Park, and William Warren County Park in the Arthur Kill/Raritan SPA. Maintenance and monitoring of the newest County parks (the Alvin P. Williams Park in Sewaren and the Old Bridge Waterfront Walkway along the Raritan Bay) should also be a priority. Consideration should also be given to preservation of historic structures in Perth Amboy and the development of a Raritan Bay Heritage Museum at an appropriate location, such as the former South Amboy Public Works Building. An inventory of remaining unique or significant structures should be prepared for the SPAs. Cultural diversity is an issue that has not been effectively addressed in the development of comprehensive planning at the governmental level. Middlesex County is now experiencing the establishment of new ethnic communities with desires for new recreation and cultural resources. The participation of the residents and businesses located in those communities is crucial to the success of the planning process. To meet their needs, it is important to get communities involved as soon as possible.

Tourism — The Arthur Kill/Raritan Bay SPA has potential for tourism development in relation to recreational boating on the Bay. The feasibility of the development of lodging should be assessed in relation to marina expansion in Perth Amboy (consider bed and breakfast use of large older homes in the Marina area, for example). In addition, new lodging capacity should be developed in Sayreville, South Amboy, and Old Bridge to serve marinas in those areas. The development of the Waterfront Trail will also increase public access to the waterfront and bring tourists who will support new or expanded commercial retail and entertainment facilities. Expanded cultural facilities in the Perth Amboy and South Amboy areas would also attract tourism. The existing Edison Memorial Park in the Metropark SPA is a potential tourist attraction. The deterioration of the Memorial needs to be addressed by the State; planning for the future improvement of the facility needs to be conducted.

Housing and Employment Opportunities—Locations for concentrating new and redeveloped/rehabilitated housing and job-creating development should be addressed in each of the SPA's municipalities. Downtown and suburban redevelopment areas should be designated. The planning for future development of housing and job opportunities should reflect the proximity to regional transportation and commuting facilities and the waterfront resources and recreation potential of the Arthur Kill, Raritan River and Raritan Bay areas.