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WE ARE A REGION!

A Report for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council Long Range Plan:

*Critical Issues-Critical Choices, A Mobility Plan for the New York Region Through the Year
2015*

New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
December , 1995

Abstract

This report is an attempt to demonstrate the mutual interdependence of the NYMTC region. What ties it together? How does diversity contribute to it as a region? This report seeks to answer these questions. A second objective is to use this report to provoke a discussion of regional issues for the update of Critical Issues-Critical Choices, A Mobility Plan For the New York Region Through the Year 2015.

This report was prepared in partial fulfillment of PT119680101, Long Range Plan. It was written by Howard J. Mann, Associate Transportation Analyst and reviewed by Raymond R. Ruggieri, Director. Juliette Bergman, Associate Transportation Analyst, provided technical input.

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WE ARE A REGION!

Region - *An area of interest or activity; a sphere*

Regionalism - *Political division into partially autonomous regions*

- The American Heritage College Dictionary-3rd edition

What makes the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council area a region? Just calling it a region does not define exactly what the NYMTC region is. One may be inclined to view its similarities or commonalities as the justification for defining it as a region. Another factor is the interdependencies within a region. Interdependent factors are largely economic but these factors also touch on how a region's people travel and where they live and work. Planners tend to identify a region as a broad area linked by transportation and popular attractions.

Ironically, the definitive report on the demise of Tri-State Regional Planning Commission, New Directions for Regional Planning (January 1981), supported the concept of the interdependence of the region. It said, *“Although the region contains diverse communities with distinctive characteristics and specialized subregional economies, the future of each community is linked with the future of other communities and the region as a whole. Economic trends and total tax burdens, for example, in the suburbs and in the region’s 44 towns and cities of over 50,000 population are interdependent and are affected by such regional factors as skills and mobility in the labor force, transportation linkages between jobs and homes, energy and water supply, and the quality of culture, daily life and environment that attracts (or fails to attract) job-producing people. In our view, Tri-State can be a major force in the region through the influence of the information and ideas it can generate on these mutual needs.”* Although the preceding passage was written several years ago, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey in its report, *Regional Economy*-April 1995, reinforces the importance of regional ties. It points out the similarity in private job growth rates between the subregions. It says, *“This similarity underscores the important linkages between the two states, the region’s cities, and suburbs.*

This report will cover the following factors:

Physical, demographic, political, finance, transportation facilities, recreation, and communication

It will attempt to demonstrate that a region is defined by its similarities, diversity and the interdependent and dynamic nature of the communal life of its residents and businesses.

Why NYMTC Is a Region

Background - Physical, Demographic, and Political Characteristics

The NYMTC region is encapsulated in the table below.¹

² This report will also from time to time touch on the counties that are not members of NYMTC. Here referred to as the extended region, these counties play an important part in the region. This area includes: New York State- Orange, Dutchess, Sullivan and Ulster; New Jersey- Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic, Morris, Union, Somerset, Monmouth and Middlesex; Connecticut- Fairfield, and New Haven Counties. The extended region contributes part of the work force, the water supply, part of the transportation network, and contribute to the regional economy by supplying the food we eat and goods and services we consume.

NYMTC BAEDEKER		
COUNTIES	GEOGRAPHY	DEMOGRAPHICS (in millions)
New York Richmond Bronx Kings Queens Nassau Suffolk Putnam Rockland Westchester	2,440 sq. mi. (6,318 km.) 9 cities, 43 towns, 138 villages Highway miles- 19,974 Rail miles-	Population-11.2 Employment- 5.1 Labor force- 5.5 Registered veh.- 4.7 Vehicle miles/day- 136 Transit use riders/day-5.9 Freight hauled tons/annually-700

The factors just described are overall characteristics of the region but additional factors reveal commonalities , diversities, and interdependencies which taken together give the region its even more multifaceted appearance and its ability to function as a single entity.

Population and Employment - Suburban Similarities and Differences

The features of the region which gives it an inimitable face are the smaller portions which resemble each other. Subregions within the region share similar characteristics. One may be tempted to conclude that issues are city versus suburb or auto versus transit or that travel is represented by through movements versus local movements. A more detailed view of the region reveals an intricate matrix of complex variables.

Suburbs, in general, experienced large but still very different rates of growth in population in the post-World War II period. For the 50 year period 1940-1990, suburban counties grew at rates ranging from 100 percent to over 500 percent. This growth has leveled off. The suburban percentage of the region's population increased from 15 percent in 1940 to 27 percent in 1960.³

¹Various sources-Critical Issues-Critical Choices, A Mobility Plan for the New York Region Through the Year 2015; U.S. Census; Analysis of Highway Performance Monitoring System 1990NYSDOT; Regional Transportation Status 1993NYMTC 2/95; Intermodal Management System Inventory NYMTC 12/94

²U.S. Census

³U.S. Census

By 1990 it was 34 percent.

Trends for various indicators for the period 1980-1990 reveal similarities and differences between suburbs.⁴ Suburban counties that are similar in certain ways are Nassau and Westchester. Putnam, Rockland, and Suffolk are also similar. In general, Nassau and Westchester are more maturely developed than the other counties for various reasons. For example, housing unit permits grew in Orange and Putnam counties between 1983 and 1993. Between 1980 and 1990 the populations of the inner counties of Nassau and Westchester decreased by 2.6 percent and increased by 1 percent respectively while the outer counties grew the most by between 2.3 percent to 8.7 percent. These population trends are mirrored by job growth trends, the outer counties grew more than the inner counties. Westchester and Nassau also share similar journey to work characteristics such as trips destined for Manhattan. Conversely, Putnam and Suffolk have similar journey to work shares destined for Manhattan.

Another important factor that ties certain counties together is the age of the population. The percent of the population 65 years of age and older in 1990 was about the same for Westchester and Nassau, about 14 percent, whereas for the outer counties it was between 9 and 11 percent.

Even portions of New York City grew in a pattern similar to New York's suburbs. Staten Island has certain characteristics that reflect a suburban style. Population grew by about 117 percent between 1940 and 1990. Staten Island's owner/renter housing ratio is similar to suburban ratios. Also, Staten Islanders rely on the automobile more heavily than transit, similar to suburban patterns.

New York City and Suburban Counties are Inextricably Tied Together⁵

The history of the region dating to the previous century, has always been one of continuous economic growth that transcends the fixed borders of political jurisdictions. New York City grew from its roots in lower Manhattan northward, eventually enveloping another city, Brooklyn. The Long Island Rail Road began, unsuccessfully, as a main line feeding steamers at Greenport bound for Boston and other New England points, and became a major region-shaping transportation facility. Some of the region's highways began as local farm to market routes and became region-shaping facilities in their own right. The nucleus of the subway system started in 1904 as a quicker way "uptown" and as it grew, it helped develop residential areas in now familiar areas such as the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, Queens Boulevard in Queens, and several areas of Brooklyn. The City's plans for the subway system were always done with a view of a larger New York City economy. In fact, this region has always invested in its infrastructure to meet the next wave of growth.

Transportation ties together NYMTC and the extended region in the most obvious way: physically. The highway and transit system is comprised of links running through each of the areas of the region. Commuter rail serves both city and suburban residents. This is equally true for the highway system which has developed to serve a wide variety of trip types covering the entire NYMTC and extended region, thereby making it possible to live here and to work and to play there. The transportation system ties the land and its people together, thereby allowing

⁴U.S. Census, Regional Transportation Status 1993-NYMTC

⁵U.S. Census

social interaction possible in diverse ways. Available data focuses on the work trip.

One of the main features that creates the bond between the suburban counties and New York City is journey to work trips to the Manhattan central business district (CBD). In 1990 twenty three percent of NYMTC suburban workers worked in the Manhattan CBD. For the tri-state region about 24 percent of all workers residing there worked in Manhattan. There is no stronger employment center anywhere in the United States. The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey reports New York City comprises about half of the economic activity of the region.⁶ On the other hand, New York City residents are increasingly relying on employment in suburban areas. Although the predominant rail commuter travel market is suburb to Manhattan CBD, another growing intraregional travel market is the so-called reverse commute. This market is, as all the other travel markets, expected to grow through 2015, the end year of the projection, although it is expected to still remain a small portion of the total travel market. New York City to New York suburban county work trips only numbered about 140,000 in 1990. There was an overall 48 percent increase from 1980 to 1990 in the number of New York City residents who travelled in the reverse commute. Percent increases vary from a low of 40 percent (79,000 trips in 1990) for NYC-Nassau trips to over 300 percent (334 trips in 1990) for NYC-Putnam trips.

Another statistic that reinforces the interdependence of the counties on each other lies in the data concerning the distance traveled by workers. U.S. Census data from 1990 suggests that people are indeed travelling further to reach their jobs. For example, the number of persons travelling from Suffolk County to New Jersey work sites increased by 43 percent. This contrasts with other areas such as Chicago where 8 of 10 people work in their county of residence.⁷

Suburbs Are Interdependent Too

RESIDENT WORKERS	
County	Workers living and residing in county in 1990 (percent)
Westchester	67
Rockland	65
Putnam	79
Suffolk	88
Nassau	68

The suburban-city commute characteristic, as important to the region as it is, has changed over the last ten years. Suburban counties have been increasingly home to, and employment attractions of, their own residents or residents of other suburban counties. Resident workers in New York suburbs increased by 15 percent from 1980 to 1990. At the same time the amount of total employment for the same time period grew by almost 20 percent. In 1990, on average, 73 percent of all workers both lived and worked in the same suburban county. Individual New York suburb resident-worker data are as shown in the accompanying table.

In addition to suburbs being employment centers for their own workers, they are also employment magnets for other suburbs. According to a journey to work forecast prepared for MTA in 1989 the number of

⁶Regional Economy Review 1994 Outlook 1995 for the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region-PANYNJ- April 1995

⁷Regional Economy Review 1994 Outlook 1995 for the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region-PANYNJ- April 1995

workers traveling between suburban counties in the NYMTC and extended region reached approximately 300 thousand in 1990 and will increase to about 400 thousand by the year 2015. These 300, 000 workers represent at least one million trips per day. Added to these journey to work trips may be other non work trips. This characteristic is known as trip chaining. According to 1990 Census figures for Westchester County the worker-resident trends reveal a decrease from 1970 to 1990 in the share of resident workers. This can be explained by the increase in the share of workers from New York City, the so-called reverse commute, and by the increase of workers from other suburban counties such as Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, and Nassau.

The Future of Journey To Work Travel- 1990-2015 ⁸

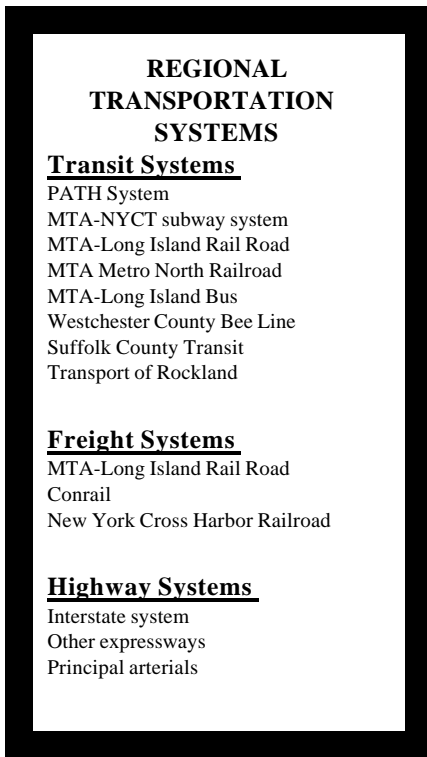
Projections for the future indicate a continuation of current interdependent trends. The trend from 1990 to 2015 indicates increases in all travel markets. There are more detailed trends for each travel market. Interregional trips (trips between the NYMTC region and the extended region) are projected to grow but will be small relative to the other categories. Even so these trips are projected to number over half a million in 2015. The traditional commute into Manhattan's central business district from the outer New York City boroughs will continue to remain strong, with a very significant increase in work trips from Brooklyn. There will also be a noticeable increase from New Jersey. The greatest increases will be for: trips that stay within counties, reverse commute trips, and for CBD-bound trips.

A Joint Bank Account

The matter of finance serves to illustrate the interconnected workings of the region, both NYMTC and extended. Where does the money come from for transportation services? The federal transportation funding authorization Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act or ISTEA, provides greater flexibility in the modal use of these funds. This puts an increasing emphasis on more effective regional decisionmaking. Decisionmakers have decided a regional transit system is important enough to allow cross-subsidization from highways to transit. Each time a motorist crosses an MTA-Bridges and Tunnels facility a portion of the toll paid goes toward the capital program of MTA-New York City Transit and the two commuter railroads. NYMTC's long range plan, Critical Issues-Critical Choices A Mobility Plan for the New York Region Through the Year 2015, refers to the possible future use of regionally-based levies. It says, "There may be significant benefits to having a regionally-raised, regionally-controlled, and regionally-accountable transportation funding mechanism. Indeed, under the precedent set by the New York State Legislature in creating the funding programs that sustain the capital needs of the MTA, creating a "downstate" transportation fund based on locally-generated revenue sources is not implausible." There are regional taxes that are used to subsidize MTA services. These taxes are the long lines or telephone bill tax and a portion of the petroleum business tax.

The major issue is; it requires unity at all levels of government to support the regional transportation system.

⁸Critical Issues Critical Choices A Mobility Plan for the New York Region Through the Year 2015
Adopted by NYMTC-3/94



Shared Regional Facilities

Are there facilities that are truly regional in their scope of services and their benefits to areas that they are not located in? Yes.

Transportation

Major transportation facilities such as railroad terminals, airports, marine terminals for freight and passengers, river crossings-both tunnels and bridges, as well as all facilities that enable the region to function cohesively are regional transportation facilities. A bridge or tunnel that allows someone to travel from home to a meeting in New Jersey is a shared facility benefiting the extended region. Regional commuter railroad operations carried about 129 million people in 1993.

About 1 billion people utilized MTA-New York City Transit subway or bus services in 1993. A significant portion of these people use these services in addition to their primary mode of travel such as commuter rail

or suburban bus service.

The regional facilities which benefit the extended region are shown in the accompanying map and box.⁹

In addition to these facilities there are others which complete the transportation system and allow for the final portion or access part of the trip. The local road system is a major component.

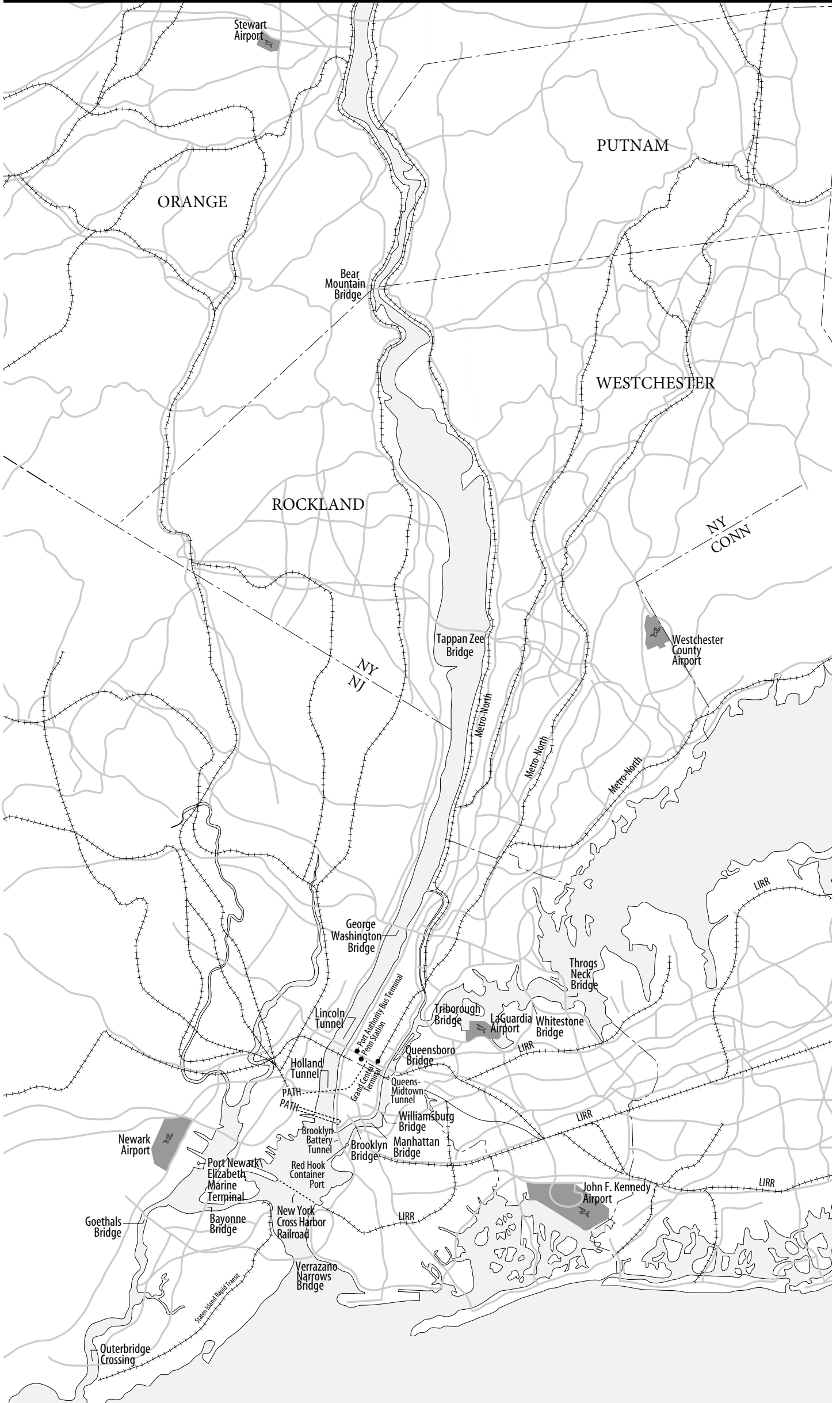
In all cases the transportation facilities listed are operated and maintained by a “regional” operator. The differences between the operators are the limits to the boundaries of those regions. The boundaries are defined by taxing districts, bi-state agreements, service territory or other characteristic. Airports and marine terminals are important to the regional economy and, in addition, are vital to this being a viable, competitive region. The Port Authority in its report, Regional Economy, reports that improving economies regionally, nationally, and internationally have translated into increases in passenger travel at the Port Authority’s three airports and an increase in the value of goods handled in the New York- New Jersey Customs District.

The Role of Water In the Making of a Region

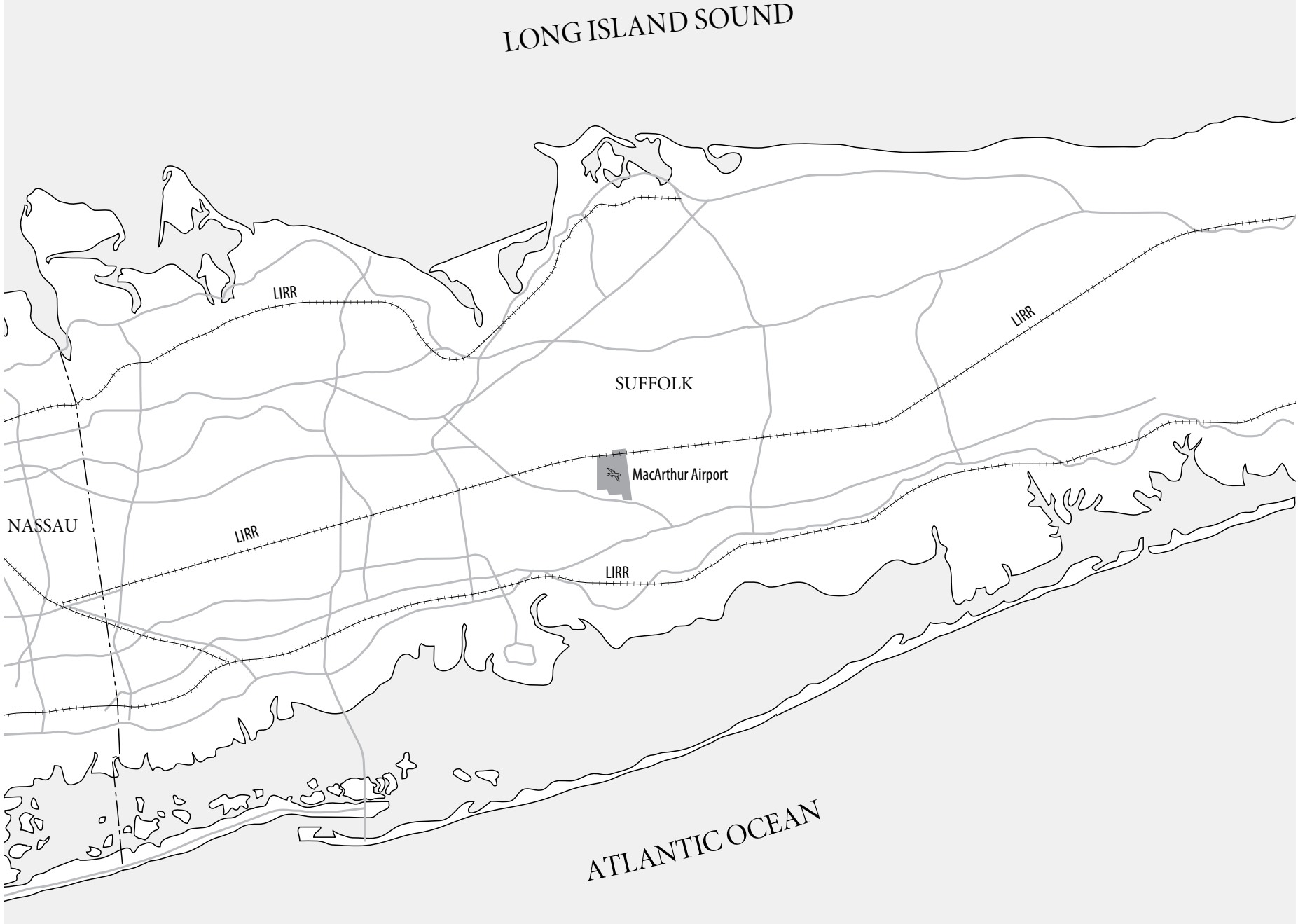
Water plays an important role in defining this area as a region. There are two aspects of this substance which bring cohesiveness to the region. One concerns the use of water as a resource

⁹Critical Issues Critical Choices A Mobility Plan for the New York Region Through the Year 2015
 Adopted by NYMTC-3/94

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES



REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES



for daily living and the second concerns water as a means of transportation.

New York City obtains its potable water from reservoirs in the county of Westchester as well as in the city itself. The city's watershed comprises the following counties from the extended region: Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster. Although the city owns the land within these facilities the City is reliant on cooperative relationships with the counties to maintain the quality of the water supply. Approximately 90 percent of the City's water comes from the extended region.¹⁰ This issue has recently taken on new importance since the quality of the water has come into question due to the infiltration of waste into the reservoirs. The city is faced with either drawing up agreements with watershed counties to acquire additional land to curtail the infiltration or to construct treatment plants at a cost of \$2 billion.¹¹ This relationship highlights the interdependent nature of the region, including counties not located within the NYMTC region.

Water is also a transportation resource. The region is dependent on waterways for the transportation of people and freight.

There are several waterways vital to the commerce of the region.¹² The waterways are shown in the table below.

REGIONAL WATERWAYS		
Hudson River	Upper and Lower New York Bays	Kill Van Kull
East River	Gowanus Canal	Long Island Sound
Harlem River	Arthur Kill	Great South Bay

Waterways such as Hudson River, Long Island Sound, Arthur Kill, Kill Van Kull and Upper and Lower New York Bays, provide a means to carry freight between the extended region and the NYMTC region. Barges carrying crushed stone and cement ply these waterways thereby making construction possible in New York City, Westchester and Nassau.

Carfloat operations use the Upper

New York Bay. This makes it possible for rail freight arriving in New Jersey to arrive at destinations on geographic Long Island. Waterways such as Arthur Kill, Kill Van Kull, and the Gowanus Canal provide local access to industry from various parts of the extended region.

The primary passenger waterways are the Upper New York Bay, Hudson River, Great South Bay and Long Island Sound. Over the last ten years ferry services have undergone a revival. Regional waterways have allowed new services between New Jersey and Manhattan, La Guardia and Manhattan, and there are proposed services between Rockland and Manhattan and Westchester and Manhattan. Ferries carrying passengers and vehicles connect areas within the NYMTC region as well as the NYMTC region with the extended region including Connecticut.

Recreational Facilities

¹⁰Limits Urged on New York City Watershed Plan-New York Times-3/17/95

¹¹State Approval Sought for Stricter Watershed Regulation-New York Times-12/29/94

¹²Intermodal Management System Inventory-NYMTC-12/94

There are limited data concerning non-work trips in the NYMTC region. However, we can determine from the New York sample of the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey of 1990 (NPTS) that certain trips such as recreational trips and others, intra-regional trips are made regularly. Approximately 19 percent of motor vehicle trips over a 24 hour period in 1990 were for social or recreational purposes. The NPTS data also reveals that, for the nation, social and recreational trip lengths, on average, have increased from 19.8 miles in 1983 to 20.2 miles in 1990 for vacation/pleasure driving. The same trend holds true for visits to friends and relatives, 7.2 miles to 8.0 miles. There is little origin/destination data. The section below looks at recreation as a regional attraction and discusses this more.

Regional facilities are not only defined by how people get to their destination but also by where they are going. Many recreational areas are regional in nature because they attract people from areas outside of where it is located and because they contribute to the regional economy.

Waterfront areas are an attraction. Beaches and river waterfronts attract millions of people each year. Although most of the users come from areas surrounding the beach or waterfront, a large portion come from other areas. New York State parks can also be considered well utilized regional facilities. The table below reports on visitation to state parks in three areas. Over 4.5 million people visit these parks from outside of the region. These visitors generate over \$70 million annually in economic benefits to the region¹³.

PARK VISITATION BY COUNTY of ORIGIN (NYSR&HP 1985 Visitor Survey)

	From LI	From NYC	From Rockland	From Other
To LI parks	67% (14,041,000)	24% (5,029,000)	-----	9% (1,886,000)
To NYC parks	-----	88% (12,188,000)	-----	11% (1,524,000)
To Rockland parks	-----	55% (3,536,000)	28% (1,799,000)	17% (1,117,000)

Broadway theater has always attracted people from all over the extended region. Broadway shows attracted 8.6 million theatergoers in 1994¹⁴. Other regional recreational facilities include the sports facilities: Yankee Stadium, Shea Stadium, Madison Square Garden, Nassau Coliseum, and the Meadowlands Sports Complex. The Port Authority estimates that tourism for the region translates into benefits for sales (\$20.7 billion), employment (268,000 jobs), wages (\$6.5 billion), and taxes (\$1.4 billion).¹⁵

¹³Data by FAX -NYS Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation-5/8/95

¹⁴Research Office of the New York Convention & Visitors Bureau-September 1994

¹⁵Regional Economy Review 1994 Outlook 1995 for the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Area-PANYNJ-April 1995

Who Else Considers It a Region?

In the field of advertising, the area of impact for products and services is the extended region. Advertising agencies routinely consider the demographics of the target market when deciding on the design of a magazine advertisement or radio or television commercial.

In broadcasting, Nielsen Media Research, the ratings company, uses a Designated Market Area which includes the counties of ¹⁶; New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Putnam, Rockland, Westchester, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster in New York State; Passaic, Bergen, Morris, Essex, Hudson, Union, Somerset, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Ocean, Sussex, and Warren in New Jersey; and Pike in Pennsylvania.

In the field of finance, lower Manhattan is home to the nation's and many of the world's most influential banking, international trade, stock brokerage, and real estate companies. In a December 12, 1994 Newsday article, Joseph Rose, Chairman of City Planning Commission, stated, Lower Manhattan is "one of the most important economic engines not just in the city or the region but in the world." Even with some decentralization of back office finance jobs, it is the excellent transportation and communications system that enables the parts to function as one huge economic entity. Other facilities considered regional facilities are; Jacob Javits Convention Center, major research and specialized medical institutions, and educational institutions. Each of these facilities attracts people from a wide range of locations.

How NYMTC Fits Into the Picture

Regional thinking has taken on added significance with the advent of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. The array of choices facing decisionmakers and the traveling public are numerous. Planning raises questions as well as answers them. NYMTC, as the designated metropolitan planning organization, provides regional perspective. Finding and building the most effective projects becomes even more difficult with the constraint that funding plays. Other concerns, no less important, include the quality of life issues of environmental concerns as well as those of encouraging economic activity.

NYMTC planning activities support regional decisionmaking. NYMTC is an organization of local officials coming together to act in a regional context. Operators, planners, and other decisionmakers, with public input, work cooperatively on major planning tasks. One of these is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a capital program of \$20.3 billion ¹⁷. It represents the programmed improvements for the NYMTC region. It takes regional decisionmaking by Council members to determine the projects that go into this document. The document that lays the groundwork in policy for the projects that go into the TIP is the long range plan. Another important planning activity is the Forecasting Working Group (FWG) whose members represent not only New York agencies but also New Jersey and Connecticut. The job of the FWG is to agree on a set of demographic projections. It will take regional thinking and regional consensus to establish a range of values that will be used as a standard for planning agencies in and out of the NYMTC area.

The current plan, Critical Issues-Critical Choices A Mobility Plan for the New York Region

¹⁶Telephone Discussion-Nielsen Media Research-5/95

¹⁷1994/95-1998/99 Transportation Improvement Program-NYMTC

Through the Year 2015 , was a four year effort involving transit and road operators as well as planning agencies. This effort encouraged all of these players as well as the public to act as one mind, sifting out and incorporating the vital ingredients that a policy document of a large region demands. In an effort to coordinate planning with the extended region the plan was coordinated with neighboring metropolitan planning organizations.

NYMTC is also involved in the coordination of major investment studies or MIS. Council members are performing several MIS projects. The purpose of NYMTC's involvement in these MISs is stated in the mission statement, "*The purpose of this project is virtually the essence of the mission of NYMTC as a metropolitan planning organization: to ensure that NYMTC performs its critical role as the focus of decisionmaking by and for the regional community in stating and achieving its desired regional transportation system for the future.*" The ultimate purpose of the major investment studies is to determine how regional investments in transportation are made.

NYMTC has undertaken the development of two management systems, the Intermodal Management System and the Congestion Management System. The development and operation of these management systems was done across state lines, reaching out to neighboring MPOs and state departments of transportation.

The theme of the most recent edition of the NYMTC annual report is Progress Through Partnerships. Partnerships extend to public participation. Working with public interest groups and individuals from around the NYMTC region and beyond is paramount to effective public communications.

Conclusions

Having made the point that we are indeed a region, intertwined, interdependent, and in need of each other, what of the future? The future health of the NYMTC region and the extended region depends upon a growing economy and making the right transportation improvement choices. The venue for these discussions is the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council. Our future depends on us, acting together with a regional mindset.

In a recent Long Island Suffolk Life newspaper article the editor bemoaned the lack of a unified community similar to those around other metropolitan areas.¹⁸ At a recent visit to NYMTC's offices, Mr. Richard T. Anderson, President of the New York Building Congress, said "... we need to focus on a regional economy and that regionalism extends to other issues as well."¹⁹ Most decisionmakers have a vision to preserve this region as a whole in the future. The information presented herein supports the fact that we do indeed function as a region in all aspects of life.

¹⁸Love the LIE's HOV lanes -Suffolk Life, Wednesday April 26, 1995

¹⁹NYMTC Council Contact 4/95