



NEWS RELEASE

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New Report Warns Northeast's Economy, Quality of Life will Degrade Unless States, Cities Work Together

Growing Traffic Congestion, Poor Infrastructure, Lagging Job Growth, High Housing Costs Cited

Road Map for Improvement Provided; Calls for Major Amtrak, Rail Investment

NEW YORK, NY – Regional Plan Association released a new report today warning of threats to the Northeast's economic competitiveness, quality of life and environment if issues such as traffic and airport congestion, ailing infrastructure, lagging job growth and high housing costs are not addressed in a coordinated, cross-border fashion.

The 31-page report entitled, *Northeast Megaregion 2050: A Common Future*, urges states and municipalities in the Northeast "Megaregion" – the area stretching from Boston to Washington D.C. – to work collaboratively by forming regional governing alliances to solve the issues that extend beyond the boundaries of each of the twelve states and five major metropolitan areas that make up the megaregion.

"Today in the Northeast we have a choice: coordinate our enormous political capital to work for better transportation, cleaner air and smarter housing policies or witness declining prosperity because commutes are too long, our roads too poor and our housing too expensive," said Petra Todorovich, Director of RPA's America 2050 project, which produced the report.

The report cites several contributing factors to the potential decline and offers solutions.

Among the factors contributing to the Northeast Megaregion's uncertain future include:

- Rapid fringe development on the edges of metropolitan regions leading to sprawl and lengthened commutes;
- Lagging rate of job growth despite immense wealth, productivity and concentrated knowledge sectors;
- Lack of investment in regional rail transportation and growing airport congestion;

- High income disparities and manufacturing communities left unable to transition to a services-based region; and
- Diminished political influence because governance is divided amongst 12 states.

The report recommends establishment of a regional investment strategy and governing alliances to address mobility, carbon emissions, sprawl and environmental protection. Successful precedents including the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the I-95 Corridor and Highlands Coalitions are cited in the report.

“An alliance of Northeast interests – be they governors, business and civic leaders or mayors – can provide the leadership to secure investments in transportation and land use to chart a different direction for the Megaregion,” said Todorovich. “More high speed rail, a strengthened urban core, protected watershed areas and a reduced carbon footprint can become a reality if political and geographic boundaries are put aside.”

The report comes on the heels of a Senate vote last week to authorize nearly \$2 billion a year for Amtrak investment and reports that Amtrak ridership is up 6.3% nationwide and nearly 20% on high speed lines in the Northeast.

“Advancing a strategic vision for the Northeast Corridor and intercity rail to ease massive congestion at our airports and on our streets, curb global warming and address skyrocketing oil prices is exactly what’s needed to treat a stunted Northeast Megaregion,” Todorovich said.

Todorovich added, “Now is the time for Congress to act – and the Northeast to unify politically – behind this opportunity. The Northeast Megaregion’s future hangs in the balance.”

The Northeast Megaregion is one of eleven such regions around the United States. A Megaregion is defined as an area with common economic, transportation and planning challenges that spill over the boundaries of major metropolitan areas.

Northeast Megaregion 2050: A Common Future is part of RPA’s America 2050 project, a national planning initiative to address rapid population growth, demographic changes and infrastructure needs in the 21st century. The complete report can be found on web at www.rpa.org and www.america2050.org. This report was made possible through the generous support of several foundation including The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, The Surdna Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The William Penn Foundation and The J.M. Kaplan Fund.