

CHAPTER 160

AN ACT requiring a study of the viability of Personal Rapid Transit applications as a supplement to transportation system options and making an appropriation.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. New Jersey's transportation needs are broad and diverse. It is in the State's interest to actively improve and diversify the system that has proven fundamental to its long-term economic success; which has as its hallmarks the ability to move large volumes of people and goods through an extensive intermodal network of roads, rail, seaports and airports.

b. As new technologies have been made viable, the State has benefited from being an early-adopter, implementing a combination of public and user-fee funded roads, heavy and light rail networks, an extensive public bus system, and most critically, integrating these parts through intermodal transfer stations. This system has proven to be a bedrock of economic growth for the State, enabling it to diversify its economy over the years, by being a leader in shipping transfer through its ports and heavy-rail systems, and more recently, able to move large workforce populations and support tourist and entertainment venues through its passenger and light-rail systems. The key to the system's success has been the linking of the parts, in which passengers can rely on intermodal transfer, from rails to roads.

c. It is in the State's economic interest to investigate new types of service which may improve the usefulness and integration of existing platforms, provide fast, inexpensive travel options, reduce capital costs of projects, and reduce pollution from motor vehicle travel. Personal Rapid Transit (hereinafter "PRT") is one such technology currently being made available.

d. According to the Federal Transit Administration, average capital cost per two-way mile for heavy rail is \$150 million, and for light rail is \$70 million. For operating cost per passenger mile: heavy rail is \$1.20, light rail is \$1.80. However, PRT has the potential to cost much less than heavy and light-rail applications, carry high capacity, be flexibly located, and require much less physical "footprint," potentially reducing easement impact for currently scheduled projects. PRT studies have shown a capital cost of about one-tenth the cost of existing rail technology, with similarly low operating costs. A demonstration of PRT in Minneapolis, Minnesota found that PRT can be built for \$15 million per two-way mile, has an operating cost of about \$0.40 per passenger mile, and operated at a break-even fare (including depreciation) of \$0.60 per trip.

e. The transportation system of New Jersey may benefit greatly from fostering a niche role for profitably managed rapid transit as a supplement to its current system. It is in the State's interest to consider the integration of PRT into its transportation system.

2. The Commissioner of Transportation, in consultation with the Executive Director of the New Jersey Transit Corporation (hereinafter, the "corporation"), shall prepare and submit, within one year of the effective date of this act, to the Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee and the Chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee, or the respective successor committees, as appropriate, a written report which evaluates the viability of PRT as a supplement to the corporation's current project plans and future possibilities. The report shall include the following:

a. A complete and thorough description of PRT technology, and a comparison with the corporation's current light rail and heavy rail systems, including potential differences in capital and operating costs, ridership, and break-even fares, and State subsidy required.

b. A detailed examination as to the extent PRT application could be expected to reduce traffic congestion in various regions throughout the State.

c. An assessment of the estimated savings or costs of PRT applications, including the acquisition of property and rights-of-way, which compares current cost estimates for future rail stations with that of locating such stations in less expensive easements and supplementing the stations with PRT.

d. A recommendation as to which options overall are most sensitive to the environmental concerns of the region as well as to the feasibility and safety of traffic management and impact in the region.

3. There is appropriated from the General Fund, for the purposes of implementing this act, \$75,000 to the Department of Transportation for the costs in preparing a study in accordance with section 2 of this act.

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved December 7, 2004.