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**Contacts:**

John Reichman, BlueWave NJ, [john@johnreichmanlaw.com](mailto:john@johnreichmanlaw.com), 917-626-8025  
Doug O'Malley, Environment NJ, [domalley@environmentnewjersey.org](mailto:domalley@environmentnewjersey.org), 917-449-6812  
Dave Pringle, Clean Water Action, [dpringle1988@gmail.com](mailto:dpringle1988@gmail.com), 908-967-1672  
Matt Smith, Food & Water Watch, [msmith@fww.org](mailto:msmith@fww.org), 201-321-1967  
Jimmy Lee, Safe Streets JC, [jamesmlee@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmlee@gmail.com), 908-601-9514  
Tracy Carluccio, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, [tracy@delawareriverkeeper.org](mailto:tracy@delawareriverkeeper.org), 215.692.2329

In this press packet you will find:

1. Press release
2. Quotes from local activists and state environmental leaders
3. Additional background on the controversial project
4. Some pictures attached, but more media available by request

## **Backlash against Murphy endorsed Turnpike/Holland Tunnel Boondoggle Grows From Jersey City to Woodbridge, Residents, Elected Officials, Activists Push Back**

**Jersey City / Woodbridge, NJ** -- Opposition to the Turnpike's plan to make the bottleneck into the Holland Tunnel worse is growing in the wake of Governor Murphy's just announced support for the fiscally irresponsible and environmentally unjust plan. Last night over 100 residents turned out to see the Jersey City Council by a vote of 8 to 0 to condemn the project and this morning Day 3 of EmpowerNJ's 50-mile 5 day NJ Climate March is highlighting the project at a 10:30 am rally at the Turnpike's HQ in Woodbridge.

The resolution mirrors one passed by the Hoboken City Council last week and raises similar concerns that Mayor Steven Fulop raised to the NJTA [in a letter this January outlining his opposition](#) to the current project. Close to 200 people turned out to last night's meeting where countless organizations and Jersey City residents testified in opposition to the proposed highway expansion during last night's lengthy Jersey City Council meeting, which stretched for more than six hours and concluded after midnight.

This morning, activists and some Jersey City residents joined the third day of a 50-mile NJ Climate March to oppose the Turnpike Extension at the New Jersey Turnpike Authority's headquarters in Woodbridge at a rally this morning.

The Council vote and the massive outpouring of public opposition to the Turnpike expansion was a direct rebuke of Gov. Phil Murphy who gave his support for the Turnpike Extension project on Tuesday during a [News 12 Ask the Governor segment](#). The reason Governor haltingly gave for the project – "It's quite ambitious, it's needed... There's not one magic wand here in terms of where the future will take us. But the combination of electric vehicles, green buses, railcars, all of which are working safely and on time, that makes you a lot cleaner, better environmental New Jersey." – did not address the multitude of reasons why there is opposition to the expansion.

These include that it will make traffic worse, not better; its massive \$4.7 billion cost; increased greenhouse gases and more air pollution. Gas powered trucks and cars will constitute the majority of vehicles on our roads for the next 20 years. Vehicles account for more than 40% of the State's net greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), the largest source in the state. Gov. Murphy's support of the Expansion flies in the face of Executive Order 274 that he signed last November, mandating as state policy to reduce climate pollutants 50% by 2030.

This morning, public opposition to the project continued. [EmpowerNJ](#) activists and Jersey City residents [rallied outside of the NJTA Headquarter offices in Woodbridge](#), near the convergence of the NJ Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway, as part of the EmpowerNJ Walk the Talk Climate Rally and March targeting seven fossil fuel projects under active consideration by Gov. Murphy's Administration. Last

month, the [NJTA denied EmpowerNJ's legal petition](#) opposed to NJTA Capital Plan, including the Turnpike Extension.

EmpowerNJ organizations and community organizations, who testified last night and rallied outside the Turnpike Authority this morning and have been leading opposition to the expansion, responded:

“The Jersey City Council and Mayor Fulop are listening to the public and the laws of induced demand by opposing the Turnpike Expansion. We desperately need to electrify our state’s cars and trucks but Gov. Murphy’s support for expanding the Turnpike Expansion because we’re getting more EVs on the road is nonsensical. Expanded highways generate more air and carbon pollution – larger highways means more cars and traffic creating an induced demand vicious cycle of pollution. More traffic means more toxic air pollutants like PM 2.5 and ground-level ozone – we should be investing NJTA dollars into NJ Transit and electrifying vehicles, not paving more highways through the heart of our second largest city. Hudson County has the state’s worst air toxics levels – we shouldn’t be fighting NJTA’s Eisenhower highway expansion mentality in 2022 at the same moment Gov. Murphy committed to reducing climate pollutants by 50% by 2030,” **said Doug O’Malley, Director, Environment New Jersey.**

“This project is a slap in the face to everyone in Jersey City, Hudson County, and all of urban northeastern New Jersey. For Gov. Murphy to tout it as some kind of improvement in pollution or traffic congestion—two problems it would definitely worsen significantly—adds insult to injury,” **said Ayla Schermer, President, Bike JC.**

“Jersey City’s resolution shows that Governor Murphy’s shameless support for the \$4.7 billion Jersey City Turnpike expansion, is in direct defiance of Jersey City’s unified opposition to the project. As the Council has recognized, the project is egregiously wrong for so many reasons. It flies in the face of our climate goals, will bring more traffic to Jersey City, will make our air more toxic, is fiscally irresponsible, and won’t even accomplish its purported purpose of easing traffic congestion. The Governor’s explanation for the “need” for the expansion was gibberish. It shows that he is cravenly siding with highway interests over the health, safety, welfare and economic interests of New Jersey citizens. The resolution is only the beginning of the fight. Now is the time for Jersey City and its legislative representatives to use all their resources to fight this horrific project,” **said John Reichman, Environment Committee Chair, BlueWave NJ.**

“We are stunned that Governor Murphy is actively undermining his own stated goals to fight climate change by supporting the NJ Turnpike expansion. In this day and age, we must work to provide better transit options that aren’t single occupancy vehicles,” **said Chris Adair, President, Bike Hoboken.**

“Even though electric cars are here, and more resources are coming to make them accessible to everyone, we need to move away from the individual transportation mindset. New Jersey should be focusing and investing on improving our public transportation system by making it electric, accessible and equitable, which is ultimately the most effective way in reducing emissions. We should also expand and improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure,” **said Anjuli Ramos-Busot, NJ State Director for the Sierra Club.** “An expansion to the Turnpike without addressing the elephant in the room, the Holland Tunnel, does not fix the bottleneck traffic in Jersey City, it will ultimately bring more emissions to the area.”

“Either the Governor’s people have sold him snake oil or he’s selling out Jersey City, Hoboken and his reputation as a climate justice crusader. Common sense and science dictates you can’t grow your way out of a bottleneck in either electric vehicles or gas engines, which will still be on the road decades from now. Expanding the NJ Turnpike Hudson County Extension to the Holland Tunnel without expanding the tunnel itself is just making traffic congestion and air pollution worse in already overburdened communities. The Governor should take the environmentally just and fiscally responsible route by replacing the aged Turnpike bridge over Newark Bay and invest the billions saved in mass transit,” **said Amy Goldsmith, Executive Director, Clean Water Action.**

Other community members and organizations outlined the deficiencies with the proposed NJTA highway

expansion of the Turnpike Extension through Jersey City:

“The Turnpike expansion plan is not the answer for Jersey City. It is the pinnacle of inefficiency. You do not fix a bottleneck by widening the bottle, when you are left with the same neck. Satellite navigation software already diverts massive amounts of traffic off of the bridge, and the infrastructure downtown is ill equipped to handle an influx of more cars using local streets to circumvent the extension approach,” **said Eric Hofmann, Village Neighborhood Association President.**

“Our neighborhood is located between Exit 14C and the Holland Tunnel. Like most neighborhoods in Jersey City, we are considered an overburdened community under the New Jersey Environmental Justice Law. We oppose widening the Turnpike extension because the induced demand and ensuing bottleneck would worsen congestion and air pollution in our community, hurting our health and our quality of life,” **said Eleana Little, Harsimus Cove Association President.**

“As a parent, I oppose the \$4.7 billion plan to add lanes in order to expand the NJ Turnpike extension. This structure extends over the Mary Benson field and playground where the estimated 680 children that attend PS5 spend their recess every day. Our community has already had to deal with lead paint raining down onto the playground during a repair project to the extension in recent years. I am concerned that this project will bring back those dangerous conditions to the playground and surrounding areas. The children in urban areas have an increased exposure to pollutants and this plan will further impact their health and safety in a negative way. Furthermore the expansion does nothing for improving access to NYC. The funds should be spent on more effective transportation solutions,” **said Catherine McElroy, PS5 PTA President.**

“Cities like ours are on the front lines of climate change impacts. The NJ Turnpike Authority’s plan for the I-78 turnpike extension is an environmental health hazard for Jersey City residents. We have the highest prevalence of asthma in Hudson County. This project would exacerbate air quality conditions for 700+ children and seniors living in Jersey City Housing Authority sites, as well as 19 schools within 1500 feet of the turnpike extension. Sustainable Jersey City, and our partners strongly oppose this project and implore the Turnpike Authority to adopt more environmentally responsible solutions,” **said Debra Italiano, Sustainable JC President.**

“We in Hudson County cannot tolerate any more vehicular congestion on our streets. Invest in transit and active transportation not freeways,” **said Emmanuelle Morgen, Hudson County Complete Streets.**

“The air quality in Hudson County is already a public health crisis. It is unfathomably cruel to add to it with a project that accomplishes no discernible transit goals,” **said Rob Howley, Jersey City resident.**

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#### Background Information on the Proposed Turnpike Extension Expansion

**Induced Demand:** Studies, reports, and experience from all over the country have shown that highway expansions in urban areas create induced demand. Expanded highways quickly fill to capacity, providing little or no long-term relief from traffic congestion, often making traffic worse. Increased volume on the Turnpike Extension will spill over into local streets in Jersey City, snarling city streets and doing nothing to relieve the Holland Tunnel bottleneck. Notably, NJTA has provided no study, report or evidence showing that the Turnpike Extension expansion would either help traffic or not cause induced demand.

No highway expansion project should be planned absent a long-term traffic study that is available for public review and comment, which activists called for Jersey City to allocate budgeting for attorneys and the ability to perform traffic studies for the project (which NJTA has failed to do so far).

**Increased GHG Emissions:** Because highway expansions increase the number of vehicles, they also increase carbon emissions. The primary source of carbon pollution in New Jersey is fossil fuel-powered vehicle use, accounting for 40.6% of the State’s net carbon emissions. NJTA is not complying with

Executive Order 274, which requires that GHGs be reduced by 50% by 2030. That reduction is needed to avoid climate catastrophe. No highway expansion project should be considered without taking and passing a climate test, i.e., that the project would not cause increased emissions.

**Environmental Justice:** Vulnerable communities that border the highways would be harmed the most and benefit least from the highway expansion. Scores of homes and businesses would have to be taken through eminent domain and demolished. Building interstate urban highways has had a devastating impact on minority communities. The federal government, and many state and local governments, are developing plans to take down many of these highways. The NJTA is moving in the opposite and wrong direction.

**Air Pollution:** Traffic-caused air pollution - particulate matter and ground level ozone, a/k/a smog - is an invisible killer and causes temporary and permanent lung damage, Vehicles are the largest contributors to smog.

These pollutants disproportionately harm people of color and low-income communities. Poor air quality is one reason that people of color die disproportionately from COVID-19. African- Americans are three times more likely to die from asthma. Climate change and car pollution increase the risk that pregnant women have premature, underweight, or stillborn babies with African American mothers affected the most.

New Jersey and Hudson County in particular already suffer from having some of the worst air in the country, consistently ranking as with F for ground level ozone in the American Lung Association [annual State of the Air report](#).

**Public Transportation:** The exorbitant funds spent on highway expansion would be far better spent on public transportation, bikeways, walkways and safe streets. Public transportation improvements stimulate far more economic development and jobs than expanding highways, decrease traffic congestion and are a lifeline for low-income families and essential workers, and there's a clear need in Jersey City for expanded investments in NJ Transit bus service.

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