

2. PURPOSE AND NEED

2.1 NJSEA Public Purpose and Mission

NJSEA was created by legislation enacted into law on May 10, 1971 (N.J.S.A. 5:10-1 et seq L. 1971, c. 137, § 2), called the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority Law. In creating the NJSEA, the Legislature declared that “the general welfare, health and prosperity of the people of the State will be promoted” by the creation of sports and entertainment venues in the Meadowlands (N.J.S.A. 5:10-2). Additionally, the Legislature specifically directed the NJSEA to “promote industry and development in the State”, “provide a forum for public events” and to “stimulate the needed development of said meadowlands.”

Pursuant to this legislative directive, the NJSEA developed and now owns and operates Giants Stadium, the Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands Racetrack and other facilities on a site located in the Hackensack Meadowlands of East Rutherford, New Jersey, commonly known as the Meadowlands Sports Complex.

2.2 Project Purpose and Mission

Section 5(x) of the Authority’s enabling Legislation requires the Authority, when undertaking a Project under the jurisdiction of the NJMC, to consult with the Commission on the location, type and character of the Project (N.J.S.A. 5:10-5(x)).

Section 23 of the Authority’s enabling Legislation requires the Authority, when undertaking projects at the Meadowlands Sports Complex, to consult with the NJMC and the NJDEP with respect to ecological factors constituting the environment of the Hackensack meadowlands, to the end that the delicate environmental balance of the meadowlands may be maintained and preserved.

In 1972, the Authority undertook this consultation process with the Commission and the Department in connection with creation of the Meadowlands Sports Complex, including development of the Meadowlands Racetrack and Giants Stadium. Following completion of a thorough environmental analyses and extensive public hearings. The Hearing Officers’ Report and Recommendations that was issued in connection with the consultation process found in part:

...there is potential for the development of mass transit rail facilities in the area of the proposed site(s). There is no question that at the very least development of... (a) rail line...would be highly desirable. Some would call it essential. ...every effort should be made to develop such a system at the earliest possible date. We recognize that this obligation cannot be imposed solely on the Authority. State and federal agencies... must be brought together. The end... to be achieved would obviously reduce traffic congestion and relieve the threat of air pollution. It is suggested that the Sports Authority participate

in meetings among appropriate officials from the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission... to explore alternative methods to accomplish this stated goal.

In 1978, the Authority again entered into a formal consultation process with the Commission and the Department on the proposed Sports Complex Multi-Purpose Arena. The Hearing Officers' Report and Recommendations issued in connection with this consultation process found in part:

Regarding the role of mass transit for the region... and the Sports Complex, we find... direct rail access... to remain particularly attractive... we believe that the mass transit requirements imposed on the Authority are consistent with and in furtherance of the region's transit and air quality needs. The Sports Authority's participation in any future rail transit system... remains a recommendation of this Hearing Officers' Report.

In 1994, the Authority prepared a Master Plan Concept for the Meadowlands Sports Complex to guide development at the Complex into the 21st Century. The strategic goals of that Master Plan included:

...expanding and improving the entertainment product mix at the Complex; improving access to the Sports Complex; and assisting the region in achieving federal clean air act compliance. Development of one of the central elements of the Master Plan, rail access, was viewed as essential to providing increased patron access, decreased parking demand, and assisting in fulfilling regional transportation and air quality directives. Upon completion of that Master Plan, the Authority, in collaboration with New Jersey Transit undertook an extensive analysis of the options available for making rail access to the Sports Complex a reality.

In 2003, the Authority again entered into a formal consultation process with the Commission and the Department on the proposed Meadowlands Xanadu Redevelopment Project. The Hearing Officers' Report and Recommendations issued in connection with that proposed Project found in part:

While mass transit improvements are not part of this Xanadu project proposal, the Hearing Officers acknowledge the importance of the proposed NJ Transit Phase 1 and 2 heavy rail plans.... The Hearing Officers will hold additional public hearings in the future should mass transit facilities be proposed on the Meadowlands Sports...Complex Site. The \$150 million provided by the NY/NJ Port Authority for this rail project is critical not only for the Sports Complex/Meadowlands Xanadu project, but will have significant regional benefits.

In order to provide an attractive level of service to and from the Meadowlands Site, it is advantageous to connect the new rail spur into NJ TRANSIT's existing Pascack Valley line. This allows existing commuter rail equipment the opportunity to shuttle passengers from NJ TRANSIT's Secaucus Station and maximize access to the new service for most rail patrons in New Jersey and New York City. The long range plan is to connect the new spur directly with the

Bergen County Line just west of the NJ Turnpike. Phase 1, which is the subject of this FEIS, is aligned to accommodate this Phase 2 connection at a later date. When completed, the "full build out" will allow through service from the Bergen County Line to the Pascack Valley Line and make the new Meadowlands Station a regular stop on the "new" Pascack Valley Line. The Phase 1 alignment takes advantage of the existing commuter rail infrastructure and minimizes the need to acquire additional property. The new service allows the opportunity to provide direct commuter rail service from both Hoboken and the Pascack Valley Line. The use of ten car commuter trains during high volume events allows for enough capacity to handle the projected 10,000 to 12,000 patrons that will utilize the station immediately after a major event concludes. The new Meadowlands Rail spur and station is designed to be able to remove these patrons within one hour of the end of the event.

Subject to necessary funding, the Phase 2 of the Project, which would entail a connection to the Bergen Line from the Sports Complex, will be considered in a manner comparable to this project, including consultation with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, permitting with appropriate state and federal agencies, and presentation of an Environmental Impact Statement for consideration and comment by NJDEP and the public.

In the more than 25 years since the Meadowlands Sports Complex was created, it has grown to be a major regional destination for sporting, entertainment and cultural events. It will continue to grow as a destination with the development of the mixed-use commercial, recreational and entertainment facilities that are a part of the Meadowlands Xanadu Redevelopment Project, a renovated or rebuilt Giants Stadium and a renovated or repositioned Continental Airlines Arena.

With the growth of development in this vicinity, the NJSEA identified transportation-related needs within the Sports Complex area that include:

- Limited modal choice to reach the area because existing available modes include only automobile and bus;
- Inability of existing modes to keep up with the growing demand for trips to this area;
- Limited access to the area for the transit-dependent populations of eastern New Jersey and New York City;
- Unpredictable travel time to the area due to congested conditions on area roadways during weekday peak periods and during events; and,
- Lack of interconnection to the extensive NJ TRANSIT regional rail network, despite the proximity (only 4 miles) of the Sports Complex to the Frank R. Lautenberg Rail Station at Secaucus Junction, which links all major rail lines in Northern New Jersey.

The proposed Meadowlands Railroad and Roadway Improvement Project was developed to respond to these local and regional transportation needs. In developing rail options to address the identified needs, the following guiding principles or goals were applied:

- Minimize environmental impacts;
- Build off of and maximize use of the existing NJ TRANSIT rail network;

- Serve multiple uses in the study area including: the Sports Complex, the proposed Meadowlands Xanadu Redevelopment Project and the Paterson Plank Road area;
- Minimize capital and operating cost;
- Accommodate high volumes of passengers; up to 10,000 to 12,000 riders for events at Giants Stadium;
- Minimize the number of transfers; and,
- Optimize trip times.

The purpose and mission of the proposed Meadowlands Railroad and Roadway Improvement Project is to create a new rail service operating to the Meadowlands Sports Complex. The rail service would create a new travel choice, in addition to automobile and bus, to reach this extensive entertainment, sports, hotel, and office destination located only eight miles from Manhattan. The rail service would assist in meeting the growing demand for trips to this area, which is projected to continue to increase into the future. Schedules for service would consider events and trainsets would be sized to accommodate the high volume of passengers typical of these events.

The proposed Meadowlands Railroad and Roadway Improvement Project would create a method for reaching the Sports Complex area with reliable travel times. The newly constructed Frank R. Lautenberg Rail Station at Secaucus Junction, only 4 miles from the Sports Complex, has created an opportunity to develop a rail project in the Meadowlands that within minutes could reach this facility and from which connections to NJ TRANSIT's extensive 11-line Northern New Jersey regional rail network can be made. With these service connections at Secaucus, including service to Penn Station New York, the Meadowlands Rail service would improve access to the area for the public transit-dependent populations of eastern New Jersey and New York City.

The alignment for the proposed Meadowlands Railroad and Roadway Improvement Project was selected to minimize to the greatest extent possible environmental impacts and construction costs, while creating an efficient rail service to meet the area's unique needs.

Implementation of the Meadowlands Rail Project fulfills a longstanding regional development goal to bring rail service to the region and the Meadowlands Sports Complex.