



March 31st, 2025

The Honorable Michael L. Testa, Jr.
New Jersey State Senator, District 1
610 East Landis Avenue
Vineland, NJ 08360

The Honorable Vincent J. Polistina
New Jersey State Senator, District 2
3100 Hingston Avenue
Egg Harbor, NJ 08234

The Honorable Antwan McClellan
New Jersey General Assembly, District 1
Schoolhouse Office Park
211 South Main Street, Unit 104
Cape May Courthouse, NJ 08210

The Honorable Claire Swift
New Jersey General Assembly, District 2
3100 Hingston Avenue
Egg Harbor, NJ 08234

The Honorable Erik K. Simonsen
New Jersey General Assembly, District 1
Schoolhouse Office Park
211 S. Main Street, Unit 104
Cape May Courthouse, NJ 08210

The Honorable Don Guardian
New Jersey General Assembly, District 2
3100 Hingston Avenue
Egg Harbor, NJ 08234

Dear Senator Testa, Senator Polistina, Assemblyman McClellan, Assemblyman Simonsen, Assemblyman Guardian, Assemblywoman Swift,

I am writing to express concerns shared by the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce and our local community regarding the State of New Jersey's current funding formula for county aid, which calculates awards based solely on a combination of road mileage and permanent population.

While we understand the importance of objective metrics in determining aid allocation, the current model poses a challenge for counties in South Jersey, particularly in Legislative Districts 1 and 2, encompassing Cape May, Cumberland and Atlantic Counties and does not truly reflect the impact that seasonal population has on infrastructure.

In February at the County Chamber's membership meeting, State DOT Commissioner Francis O'Connor was asked to comment on this issue. His response was that it would require legislation to amend the funding formula. Hence our letter proposes an amendment that takes into consideration the increase in population during the summer months.

Cape May, Cumberland and Atlantic Counties experience significant seasonal population increases, especially during the summer months, which place additional strain on our infrastructure, roadways, and public services—without a corresponding increase in aid. Cape May County is particularly unique since its

Supporting • Strengthening • Unifying

13 Crest Haven Rd., P.O. Box 74, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
(609) 465-7181 • info@cmcchamber.com • www.capemaycountychamber.com
Mission: To stimulate the growth and prosperity of members and communities in Cape May County through advocacy, services, education, collaboration, and leadership.

population changes from a ranking of 20th in the State to 2nd in the State from the period of late May through late September.

The reliance solely on permanent population figures fails to recognize the unique demographic and geographic characteristics of our coastal and tourism-dependent regions. As a result, counties like Cape May, Cumberland and Atlantic are disadvantaged in their ability to maintain critical infrastructure and ensure road safety throughout peak periods. From a practical perspective, Cape May County sees more intense infrastructure wear due to the peaking population spikes that are not accounted for in the current formula. This is further exaggerated since that population increase results are concentrated on the limited road mileage within the county that exists to service a relatively small full-time population.

Cape May County is in a unique position. A permanent population of approximately 98,000 residents experience a substantial seasonal influx six months out of the year, which increases to approximately 800,000 residents in the height of the season. This ranks us 2nd in the State for that time-period, significantly increasing the demand for local infrastructure and services and in turn placing critical burdens on its infrastructure and services. In addition, Cape May County ranks 1st in the nation for second home construction. This redevelopment results in the need for constant utility upgrades and road openings to service the growing second-house market resulting in constant changes to the road systems.

The existing formula brings many challenges. The existing funding formula's reliance solely on permanent population figures does not account for these substantial and extreme seasonal variations. Consequently, counties like Cape May, Cumberland and Atlantic face difficulties in securing adequate funding to maintain and improve infrastructure that can support both fulltime residents and our significant number of seasonal residents and our short-term visitors (day trippers), plus the commercial traffic that services both. The infrastructure system is always in a dynamic state of change, and we would argue that this places us at a distinct disadvantage relative to other counties within the State that may have larger but constant populations that do not require constant upgrades to their infrastructure due to seasonal and development demands.

To address these disparities, I respectfully urge you to advocate for a review and revision of the county aid formula to incorporate factors such as:

- Seasonal Population Data that includes metrics that account for peak seasonal populations to reflect the true demand for infrastructure.
- Tourism and Economic Activity reflects the economic contributions of tourism and the associated infrastructure needs. There is a specific need to factor in the economic contributions of tourism by considering metrics such as hotel occupancy rates, tourism-related sales tax revenues, and visitor counts. This added approach would acknowledge the additional infrastructure demands associated with supporting a robust tourism industry.
- Peak Seasonal Infrastructure Usage Rates would evaluate true and accurate road usage data during peak seasons to determine funding needs according to more accurate usage data.

- **Traffic Volume and Congestion Levels:** Areas with higher traffic volumes and congestion require more maintenance and improvements. Incorporating this traffic data into the funding formula would direct resources to communities with greater infrastructure strain.
- **Emergency and Evacuation Routes:** Counties serving as critical points for emergency evacuations need well-maintained roads to ensure public safety. Prioritizing funding for these essential routes would support the increased demand for emergency services, including police, fire, and medical responses, during peak tourist seasons, thus enhancing emergency preparedness. Higher visitor numbers often lead to a proportional rise in incidents requiring emergency attention, necessitating additional funding to maintain lifesaving public safety standards.
- **Economic Activity Levels:** Regions with higher economic activity generate increased transportation demands. Factoring in economic indicators would level funding with areas contributing significantly to the state's economy.
- **Environmental Impact Considerations:** Acknowledging the environmental pressures that come with seasonal population surges, such as increased waste generation, water quality from the effects of stormwater runoff, water consumption and poor air quality. Allocating State funds equitably to address these environmental impacts will ensure a sustainable tourism economy and the highest protection of natural resources.
- **Socioeconomic Factors:** Integrating socioeconomic indicators, such as median income levels and unemployment rates, will ensure that counties with limited fiscal capacity receive adequate support to manage both permanent and transient populations effectively.

By advocating for the inclusion of these additional criteria, the funding formula can be adjusted to more accurately reflect the unique challenges faced by counties with significant seasonal population and economic activity increases. This approach promotes fairness and ensures that all counties have the necessary resources to maintain infrastructure and public services year-round. At a minimum, if developing a formula to include the above noted factors will be problematic, we would request that the current formula consider a weighted yearly population total for both Cape May and Atlantic Counties. This would change the population component from being solely based upon a permanent population amount to a weighted population amount averaging all monthly populations during a typical year for counties with extreme seasonal population variations.


We are respectfully asking that State legislators and the NJDOT consider revising State funding to a pro-rata population quantification method in lieu of the current funding formula, to more accurately supply funding to counties within the State that have an extreme variation of annual population, and consequently an extreme variation of road traffic within these subject areas.

We respectfully urge you to consider advocating for a review and potential revision of the county aid formula to incorporate seasonal population impacts and other flexible metrics that more accurately reflect the demands placed on our counties throughout the year.

We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss this matter and work collaboratively toward a more equitable funding solution that supports the well-being and economic stability of all New Jersey communities.

Thank you for your continued service, your attention to this critical issue and your collaboration in developing a funding strategy that reflects the unique dynamics of our region.

Sincerely,



Barbara Stafford Jones
President & CEO

cc: Cape May County Chamber Board of Directors
cc: Cape May County Commissioners
cc: Robert Church, PE, Cape May County Engineer
cc: Cape May County League of Municipalities
cc: Atlantic County League of Municipalities
cc: Cumberland County League of Municipalities