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## Movement Through the Region Wrap-Up Summary

The group discussed the revisiting of the role of the APA and the New York region as it relates to transportation in the area. From that point the session revolved around creating a draft mission statement for the New York Metro Chapter.

The group identified many transportation issues that are important to the area. For example, NYC is an international city for visitors and for goods movement. Transportation issues go beyond the city, however, so transportation solutions must be thought of on a regional scale. However, the feeling was that there has been a lack of regional transportation vision. In dealing with transportation issues, agencies often focus only on their narrow priorities and mix politics with transportation policy. Given these concerns, there are no simple solutions for our region's transportation challenges.

One of the key issues discussed was the movement of international freight through the area. There is an unbalanced modal split for freight movement between rail and truck. It should be looked at whether commuter rail lines could be used to move freight during off-peak hours.

In discussion of what should be done in regards to transportation within the area, the group identified the concerns about funding, the need for additional dedicated funding sources for transit, establishing priorities given limited funds, and developing a long-term vision of transportation strategies in the region.

The group was asked to answer the following questions:

1. *How could the APA Metro Chapter help define the transportation issues in the region?*
2. *What actions can the Chapter take to address these issues?*

**A. Engage the Transportation Committee in outreach beyond its membership.** Committees dealing with related issues should come together to discuss the issues. The Transportation Committee could also meet with their counterparts in other APA chapters in the Tri-State. Finally, there should be more meetings/presentations for the general membership and the committee members should communicate more effectively with the general membership.

**B. Utilize email blasts to keep members informed.** Make it known that speaker/events are open to everyone. Also, committees could coordinate an "Open House" on the subject. As far as developing transportation goals, it was concluded that transportation and land use issues should be looked at together.

**C. Create and delegate specific tasks for the Transportation Committee.** For example, include developing advocacy positions on specific transportation issues, playing a more active role in transportation policy, identifying major transportation projects and creating a ranking system to prioritize projects. One of the problems

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faced by the Transportation Committee, however, is that it is made up of agency employees and consultants who may have a conflict of interest in advocating certain stances. As an option, it was asked whether the Executive Committee could publicize these stances instead. Another option could be for the Metro Chapter to present the issues without taking a stance, simply as a public education tool to help frame regional issues.

Given these suggestions, the following question was raised:  
*What is the role of the Metro Chapter: advocacy or education?*

While that question was not answered directly, there were suggestions of what the Metro Chapter should be doing.

- A. **Create a forum for debate on issues.** There needs to be more advanced planning of events in order to “get the word out” ahead of time. There was also a discussion of what the vision should be.
- B. **Long-term visions should be developed for the next 50+ years.** Suggestions included; creating a venue to think strategically for the future like electrifying of all NJT and LIRR lines and converting ELS to subway and striking a balance between confronting more immediate challenges while thinking long-term. Through this process, it was hoped that the Chapter would be forced to “take sides” on certain issues.
- C. **Create a “Top 10” list of priorities.** The high cost of APA membership prevents the organization from recruiting more members. Taking a stance on some issues could alienate potential members instead of attracting them, but on the flip side, by taking a stance on issues, the APA will “appeal more” to members. Other organizations create “top 10” lists which really articulate their priorities so maybe the Metro Chapter could create a list of 10 regional priorities.
- D. **APA needs to represent both the planning profession and sound-planning practice.** Other advocacy groups operate with a much narrower focus but the APA has the ability to see the “big picture”. With this “big picture” the APA can even look overseas to study innovation and ultimately demonstrate the importance of planning, while advocating for a rigorous planning process.

The final question that was asked of the group was:  
*What can you do as a professional to support these issues?*

**Members could publicize events/activities to the APA membership.** They could volunteer to be part of a speakers’ bureau that could reach out to communities on a pro bono basis. Members should have a commitment and follow-through to committees, especially those that are under-attended. The members should also set up a community board task force to establish an APA representative for each community board. Finally, the group felt that everyone should become involved in their local community board/town board each person can bring their own experience to that body.

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