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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Proposes Funding Plan for Transportation Improvements and Open Space Preservation

Gov. Christie Whitman today announced a plan to enhance the safety and quality of life for New Jerseyans by funding the improvement of roads, bridges and mass transit throughout the state and the preservation of farmland and open space.

The Governor proposed that New Jersey voters decide in November whether to dedicate funds from a seven cent increase in the gas tax, a surcharge on certain shortterm car rentals, and a general revenue contribution for transportation improvements and open space preservation.

The funding proposal would support the first five years of the comprehensive transportation vision the Governor announced earlier this week. It will also achieve Gov. Whitman's inaugural pledge to preserve 300,000 acres during her second term and 1 million acres over the next decade. Five of the seven cents would be dedicated to fund transportation projects and two cents would be used to save open space.

"The condition of our transportation network, the health of our environment, and the access to parks and recreational facilities are integral to the quality of life of all New Jerseyans," said Gov. Whitman. "Today, I am proposing that we give the residents of this state the opportunity to decide how we proceed to make New Jersey a better place for their children and grandchildren."

The gas tax increase would be included in legislation to reauthorize the Transportation Trust Fund. Under the proposal, TTF spending from state revenue sources would increase by nearly 50% from \$700 million in FY98 to \$1 billion in FY 01-03. When combined with federal funds, total TTF spending over the next five years will be \$10 billion.

Gov. Whitman's proposal will move the state away from funding open space and farmland preservation through bond issues and toward a more stable funding source. This will allow for better planning and management of preservation efforts.

Funding for the preservation of farmland and open space would total \$170 million annually for ten years. Of that amount, \$130 million would be utilized for the acquisition of open space and farmland and \$40 million would be used for development and maintenance of parks in cities and towns, and for historic preservation.

The gas tax would make up half of the Governor's stable funding plan. \$50 million would come from existing general fund revenue and \$36 million from a \$3 per day surcharge on certain short-term rental cars. The 2 cents for open space will revert to the TTF after 10 years.

"Never before have we made such a long-term commitment to preservation," said Gov. Whitman. "Never before have we stated so clearly that keeping New Jersey clean and green and livable is a legacy our children deserve."

On Monday, Gov. Whitman unveiled her \$30 billion, 12-year transportation vision, New Jersey FIRST, which will improve and expand all facets of the state's transportation network -highways and bridges, public transportation, access to ports and airports.

"Investing in New Jersey FIRST and a stable source of funding for open space will guarantee a higher quality of life for all who live in New Jersey," the Governor said.