



407 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08618
PHONE (609) 695-3481 • FAX (609) 695-0151
EMAIL league@njslom.com • www.njslom.com

William G. Dressel, Jr., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michael J. Darcy, CAE, ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 26, 2004

Timothy J. Touhey, Chairman
State Planning Commission
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
101 South Broad Street
P.O. Box 204
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0204

Dear Chairman Touhey:

I write to alert you to some emerging concerns regarding the map data layers that were sent to municipalities in January.

According to your letter of January 9, every municipality was sent *"a CD that contains an electronic version of the data layers and information we received from the State agencies, and a spreadsheet of the comments that DEP received during the outreach they conducted on their environmental data layers."*

Furthermore, your letter goes on to state, *"The purpose of sharing this information with you is to give you an opportunity to take one more look at the State Plan Policy Map in its current form, as well as to compare it to the new data layers submitted by the state agencies - in advance of the formal cross acceptance process."*

We have heard from our affiliates in the planning fields they have not been able to fully digest all the data. At this point, I have no full explanation for this but feel we must bring it to your attention. Since your other letter (January 30th, addressed to "Interested Parties") gives a deadline of February 28 and the preliminary map is scheduled to be introduced in March, we will quickly do our best to ascertain why this is happened. More importantly, we will try to address it as best we can.

This is compounded by our concerns expressed in our earlier correspondence. In our letter of November 14, 2003, we, along with the New Jersey Planning Officials, The New Jersey Association of Counties and the County Planners Association stated that local governments would need at least 3 additional months to review the data layers. We asked, therefore, for a 6 month window. We requested the date of May 15, assuming that the data layers would be sent out on November 15. Since they were not, in fact, sent out until January 9th, local governments have had approximately 6 weeks to respond, and not 6 months.

It seems reasonable to say that this delay is a contributing factor to and certainly compounds our concerns. Furthermore, it was our understanding that the Office of Smart Growth was to integrate the

data provided by the State Agencies. We had also requested that the agencies data be “cross-accepted” between the agencies to eliminate inconsistencies and overlapping information. Unfortunately, neither of these options was done and the counties and municipalities are apparently left with the onerous task of eliminating errors in a statewide map.

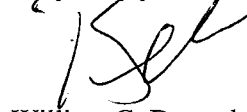
We believe that many municipalities possess neither the equipment nor personnel to deal with the data you have provided. We are further concerned, as I am sure you are, that these issues will result errors in the data layers and the map, and undermine the cross-acceptance process.

As mentioned before, we will survey our membership in as timely fashion as possible, and will share whatever we find. But I cannot understate the importance of this to us. The League has always been a vocal support of the cross-acceptance process. We realize that this may not be our only “bite at the apple.” But it is certainly our best opportunity to provide input early in the process.

It is our understanding that the cross-acceptance process has been pushed back 30 days to accommodate the Highlands Task Force. In view of that, we request that this comment period also be extended a minimum of 30 days. In fact, the validity and creditability of cross acceptance will be served if the counties and municipalities are granted the 6-month window that we believed was appropriate. Furthermore, the League will be sending a “Dear Mayor” letter to our membership on this very subject, calling it to the attention of Mayors. We would like to provide them with the time-table for this entire process. So, we request that the Office of Smart Growth provide such a time-table to us.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,



William G. Dressel, Jr.
Executive Director

cc: Adam Zellner, Executive Director, Office of Smart Growth
The Hon. Susan Bass Levin, Commissioner, DCA