NPI PLAYBOOK SUMMARY FAQ

This document provides an overview of the key elements included as policy recommendations in the NPI Playbook.

GOAL 1: MAXIMIZE INVESTMENT FOR JOB & SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

Q: How can local and targeted hire be used as tools to support recovery?
A: Innovative job creation incentives for infrastructure projects can squeeze the most out of every recovery dollar spent by creating good jobs. The federal government can encourage local agencies to use local and targeted hire practices focused on recently unemployed individuals.

Q: How can the federal government support recovery and sustained growth for small and minority-owned businesses?
A: The federal government can scale local innovations by 1) creating a national Medium Business Size Standard to compliment the Small Business Size Standard and 2) provide start-up capital to stand up local small business prime/on-call contract and medium-sized business programs.

Q: How can the federal government support sustained workforce training and skills development?
A: The federal government can create a national training center for workforce development and apprenticeship programs for infrastructure and support and invest in national research hubs to cultivate a labor force prepared for future trends and technologies.

GOAL 2: EMPOWER LOCALITIES WITH EFFECTIVE TOOLS AND PROCESSES

Q: How can the federal government promote procurement efficiencies?
A: To promote the adoption of accelerated local procurement processes, federal agencies like USDOT, that may be dispersing stimulus funding through emergency response grants, can require grant applicants to identify ways to make procurement processes more efficient for their respective projects.

Q: How can projects be developed responsibly in accordance with environmental regulations if NPI is advocating for accelerating the environmental review process?
A: The expansion of SEP-15 to accelerate environmental review processes is meant to apply to low-impact projects – which comprise the majority of infrastructure projects – and is focused on reducing the administrative burden rather than environmental stewardship responsibilities.

Q: How can the federal government address the complexities of P3 delivery?
A: The federal government can help local officials overcome challenges with navigating the P3 process by 1) providing a bench of on-call technical support secured by the Build America Bureau for small under-resourced project sponsors, and 2) creating an elective fast-track program for local project sponsors using federal financing programs, like the TIFIA, RRIF, and the WIFIA.

Q: How will empowering localities to use emergency relief dollars for betterments improve community resilience?
A: Broadly allowing local jurisdictions to use federal relief dollars for betterments will allow communities to build back better following a devastating event such as a flood, storm or fire.
Q: How can the federal government promote greater broadband deployment to help close the digital divide, which is critical during the COVID-19 pandemic and an evolving economy?
A: Greater funding is of successful programs like E-Rate and Lifeline that serve rural, low-income and minority communities. Secondarily, preempting state laws that block local governments from building out their own networks or disseminating model regulations for states to adopt voluntarily.

Q: Should localities have greater control over state-owned “orphan highways” that pass through their jurisdictions but aren’t meeting transportation needs and being well-maintained?
A: Yes. States control about 19% of the roads nationally, but it can exceed 60% in some cases. The federal government can incentivize transfers through technical guidance on key terms, special funding, and models for “readiness scans”. When done properly, these transfers can help create complete streets and make broadband and other technologies possible.

GOAL 3: FUNDING AND FINANCING FOR COMMUNITY-SERVING INFRASTRUCTURE

Q: How can federal funding be better allocated to support local decision-making?
A: Through a federal revenue-sharing program, federal dollars can be directly to cities to use the money for their most critical needs. In addition, providing more infrastructure funding directly to regions via MPOs, ensures investments reflects local priorities.

Q: Why should State of Good Repair be the first priority?
A: Targeting first dollars toward SOGR will allow for the greatest positive impact for communities in the shortest amount of time, while reducing the maintenance backlog burden for local governments, particularly under invested in neighborhoods.

Q: What is a primary obstacle for small- and medium-sized jurisdictions to advance shovel-worthy projects?
A: A lack of both human and financial capital impedes smaller jurisdictions from developing key infrastructure projects needed to benefit their communities. To support these cities, the federal government should 1) create a pre-development fund targeted toward small and medium-sized cities to provide needed capital for the planning phase and 2) provide technical assistance.

Q: How can the federal government create additional financial flexibility for cities?
A: To drive long-term economic recovery, a new class of securities is needed to increase stability in the market and promote economic growth. The federal government can also expand the use of federal credit programs, like TIFIA, to allow cities to refinance at a lower rate and reinvest in improvements.

Q: How can the effectiveness of existing federal grant programs be expanded or improved?
A: BUILD, INFRA, and CBDG provide flexibility to fund projects, however, program requirements make it difficult to fund cross jurisdictional and innovative infrastructure projects like social infrastructure. An expanded scope of federal discretionary programs will support communities most needed projects.

GOAL 4: MAKE TRANSFORMATIVE INVESTMENTS FOR A MORE RESILIENT FUTURE

Q: Should there be more inter-agency coordination at the federal level on infrastructure policy and programs?
A: With 57 different programs across 14 federal agencies just on broadband alone, infrastructure policy, funding, and regulation all need to be better aligned with coordination from the White House or a presidential sub-cabinet to act more effectively and efficiently.

Q: Why should the federal government provide increased regulatory and permitting flexibility to cities to support the development and improvement of water infrastructure?
A: Outcome-based permitting and pre-approved variances provide flexibility for allow cities to take the lead on accelerating long overdue improvements to water infrastructure to address public health concerns and racial inequality.

Q: Why use accelerated depreciation as a tool to incentive development of resilient and sustainable infrastructure?
A: By allowing developers to account for more of the depreciation of an asset earlier in its life, accelerated depreciation can help make local resilient and sustainable infrastructure projects more financially feasible and attractive, despite high up-front capital costs.

Q: What is the purpose of recommending a national set of “complete streets” design principles?
A: National complete street design principles are not meant to dictate how cities should approach and develop complete streets but is meant to coalesce the vast local knowledge and innovation to support local officials across the country to reimagine the right-of-way in their own communities.

Q: How will expanding EV tax incentives and allowing the installation of EV charging infrastructure on the NHS support electrification in local communities?
A: Allowing EV charging infrastructure on the NHS will support the electrification of the entire transportation ecosystem including the purchase of EVs, growing local electrification networks, and alleviate range-anxiety. Further, allowing charging on the NHS will support the electrification of freight, benefitting communities that live proximate to freight corridors.