

CHAPTER 179

AN ACT concerning transportation research and amending P.L.2019, c.196.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. Section 4 of P.L.2019, c.196 (C.27:1B-21.36) is amended to read as follows:

C.27:1B-21.36 New Jersey Transportation Research Center.

4. a. The New Jersey Transportation Research Bureau within the Department of Transportation, hereinafter referred to as the bureau, shall serve as a transportation research center for the State.

b. The bureau shall award research contracts to New Jersey public research institutions of higher education to conduct the research activities of the bureau. The award of those research contracts shall be subject to all relevant existing State and federally established public bidding regulations and processes.

c. The bureau shall identify specific areas of transportation expertise for New Jersey public research institutions of higher education, where all research undertaken by the bureau in that area of expertise is to occur, and shall be subject to all relevant existing State and federally established public bidding regulations and processes.

d. The Commissioner of Transportation shall appoint a manager for the bureau. The duties of the manager shall include but not be limited to:

- (1) Administering and operating the bureau;
- (2) Overseeing research undertaken by the bureau;
- (3) Establishing and maintaining relationships with New Jersey public research institutions of higher education;
- (4) Supporting New Jersey public research institutions of higher education in obtaining and maintaining University Transportation Center status under the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration's University Transportation Center Program; and
- (5) Authorizing competitive bidding for research contracts to include entities in addition to New Jersey public research institutions of higher education, notwithstanding the provisions of subsections b. and c. of this section to the contrary, after making a written determination that the department stands to benefit from additional competition in terms of quality of work product, timeliness of work product delivery, or availability of expertise in one or more specific transportation areas.

e. Any contract entered into pursuant to this section shall include a provision that requires research conducted under the contract to consider the transportation and mobility needs of New Jersey residents with physical, sensory, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.

f. For purposes of this section, "entities" means an entity that is organized as a non-profit organization. "Entities" shall not include a municipal planning organization or a municipal planning organization-related entity, regardless of whether it is organized as a non-profit organization.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved November 27, 2023.