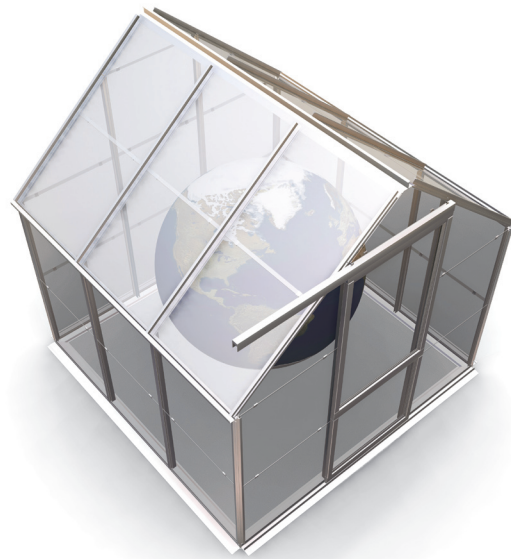


GREAT CHALLENGES, GREAT POTENTIAL

AUTHOR: Anthony R. Coscia is chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The following is from his keynote remarks at NJIT's 2007 commencement, in which he spoke about the potential of technology and the talent of NJIT graduates to meet challenges such as global warming, and announced a Port Authority initiative to address this major 21st-century concern.



Technology can be used to overcome the great challenges of our time. But we are barely scratching the surface of our ability to harness technology's potential. In part, that's because the economics of certain technologies are not practical for widespread use. But it's also because we as a nation haven't intellectually embraced the true potential of technological enhancements.

Let's just look at global warming. Imagine if the willpower existed to put a solar panel on every warehouse rooftop in New Jersey. Or, as Governor Corzine urged us to do last year in his economic development plan, if unused land at our airport terminals were converted to solar grids and the unused land at our port facilities were converted into farms to harvest wind power. Or if future buildings were designed to be energy self-sufficient.

Would there be a cost? Of course. Would there be engineering challenges? Of course.

But instead of letting those issues drive us to reject the possibilities outright, we should be pushing the envelope to find how far we can go. If we have the courage to try, we may just surprise ourselves.

So today I am pleased to announce that the Port Authority will develop a comprehensive strategy over the next two years for implementing alternative energy solutions at our airports and ports — a combination of efficiency, renewable energy and renewable energy credits — with the ultimate goal of reducing carbon emissions, our so-called "carbon footprint," by 80% at these facilities.

What does this mean in English? Think of it like the signs outside parks telling you to take out what you bring in. We can't literally have zero carbon emissions at our facilities, but we can end up with a greatly reduced net impact from these structures. How?

By efforts like geothermal heating and cooling of buildings, on-site generation through the use of fuel cells, use of renewable energy from wind and solar projects.

Having planes use docking stations to power up while they are at our facilities rather than idling with their engines on, using electrified tugs and other rampside equipment.

Moving to planes that not only carry more passengers in one flight but are more environmentally efficient, and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing renewable energy credits.

Our strategy would also seek to offset emissions by tapping into the market of large-scale clean energy generation in our region. In this way, the Port Authority would not only be helping to avert global warming, it would also be contributing to a promising sector of our regional economy.

Port Authority staff are already putting together a series of near-term targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the appropriate metrics to monitor our progress. As chairman of the Port Authority, I expect the agency to reach the goals we set. But by just taking on this challenge, we'll achieve more than we ever thought possible today.

I have delayed your celebration long enough. Go out and enjoy your family, enjoy your friends — it only gets harder from here, but also infinitely more rewarding.

The world will rely on the training and skills you have received here, but it is your responsibility to make yourself heard. Advocate for your ideas — we need to hear them. We, in the region and the nation, are counting on you. And with all that you have achieved already, I am confident that our region and the nation are in able hands. ■