

# Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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## NEWS

### Transport Politics: Govs Throw Bones to Travelers of All Stripes

• **Motor Voters** After doing right by NYC transit riders with the recent announcement of unlimited-ride transit passes and last year's free bus-subway transfers, NY Governor Pataki may have felt pressure to provide new benefits to drivers this year. The election-year executive budget the Governor released this week provides a **\$200 million increase in road and bridge work** during the next two fiscal years. Funds available for NY State DOT engineering work will also increase. The Governor said the increases will create 3,500 new jobs. Closer to drivers' pocketbooks, Governor Pataki also proposes a 25% reduction — \$13 — in car registration fees. The budget estimates the change will reduce state-collected motorist fees by \$50 million per year.

In crafting its proposals, the Pataki Administration may also have had an eye on driver frustration vented (primarily over high insurance rates) during last year's gubernatorial race in New Jersey. Fallout from NJ motorist anger continued to manifest last week when Governor Whitman and the legislature agreed on **raising the speed limit on selected interstates** to 65 mph. Whitman, who had maintained firm opposition to the increase during her first term, was outflanked by strong majority support for the increase in the legislature. Law-makers explicitly drew on last fall's driver angst in pressing the measure. Nonetheless, Whitman managed to preserve misgivings about higher speeds in the deal.

The speed limit increase will undergo an 18-month **trial period**, after which NJDOT may recommend changes to the law. The bill enacting the speed increase also **doubled penalties for aggressive driving offenses** and for traveling 10 mph or more over the limit. Still, a 1996 study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety states that "A wealth of research has established a clear relationship between highway speed limits and fatalities...[speed monitoring studies] suggest that significant increases in highway crash fatalities, injuries and injury severity should be expected."

• **The Bicycle Ballot** The biggest percentage and policy change winners this budget season look to be New Jersey bicyclists and pedestrians (even though NJ's executive budget is not yet out). In her inaugural address Tuesday, Governor Whitman called for construction of **2,000 miles of bikeways** (over 10 years) and for better pedestrian environments around schools and senior centers. The Governor **pledged \$15 million** to get these initia-

tives underway this year, possibly a significant commitment since bike/ped projects have until now been excluded from capital funding except for reliance on highly competitive ISTEA "enhancement" funding. For several years, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign has pressured the Whitman Administration — the Governor describes herself as an avid bicyclist — to live up to the goals of the excellent 1995 NJDOT NJ "Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan." NJDOT also recently began an analysis of engineering treatments to reduce NJ pedestrian fatalities in the near-term. The latter development is at least in part due to publication last September by the Campaign and NJPIRG of a report (*Walking Away* — available on the Campaign web page, or see *MTR #145*) that focused on high NJ pedestrian fatality rates and the absence of state action to address them.

The Governor situated her bicycle/pedestrian initiative in the context of a "strategic transportation plan for the 21st Century" that will address transit expansion sometime in the next two months. It is also related to a **new anti-sprawl campaign** that the Governor said would, with open space acquisition, expedited development approvals for municipalities complying with the State Plan and other Plan-strengthening measures, buoy urban areas and preserve farms and woodlands.

• **Transit Taxpayers** In addition to increasing road funds, Governor Pataki also proposes boosting state support to the MTA by \$132.7 million. Nearly \$30 million is for commuter rail lines, the rest for the Transit Authority. In NJ, it would be a big surprise if Governor Whitman's budget failed to maintain the **7-year lid** on NJ Transit fares.

### 60 Extra Deaths: Who's Responsible?

NYC's pedestrian-motorist wars moved from the midtown barriers to City Hall's doorstep this week, as the *Times* joined *Newsday* in reporting that **pedestrian deaths jumped by 25%** last year while **police ticketing of drivers fell by one-third**. Like crime trends, traffic crash and fatality rates are in large part a function of public policy. Pedestrian advocates say officials like Mayor Giuliani and Police Commissioner Safir should be held responsible for traffic safety, and that pedestrian and traffic deaths and crashes should be elevated as a basic measure of city government performance.

These days, however, city officials are tight-lipped with road accident data. The city's last report on traffic

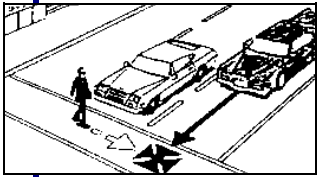
fatalities covers 1994. On Jan. 14, however, an NYPD spokesman let slip to *Newsday* that overall traffic fatalities of 507 last year included 302 pedestrian and cyclist deaths, vs. 245 in 1996. The increase of 55-60 qualifies as the **biggest one-year jump** in pedestrian and cyclist deaths in at least a decade, **larger in percentage terms** than the **1996-97 decline in homicides**. Today's *Times* story embellished the figures with the finding that 80% of motorists deemed at fault from driving into pedestrians last year received no summons.

What makes the surge in pedestrian deaths such a bombshell is that **police ticketing plummeted over the same period** due to a job slowdown by disgruntled cops. As the Mayor looked the other way, **ticketing for mov-**

**ing violations plunged** from 1.21 million in 1996 to only 819,000 last year. Accident researchers said that the 400,000 drop in tickets, by reducing the deterrent to motorist lawlessness, would account for many of the additional pedestrian deaths.

The fact of 60 more New Yorkers killed trying to cross the street does more than call into question the mayor's claims of a safer city. It suggests that millions of New Yorkers are put at risk by the city's incoherent traffic safety policies. Instead of stunts like crosswalk barriers, **NYC needs to permanently address driver speeding**, red light running and violation of pedestrians and bicyclist right-of-way. On this quality of life – and death – issue, our leaders, so far, are strangely silent.

### City Traffic Successes to Build On



As we reported last week, the flap over Mayor Giuliani's pedestrian barricades and where city traffic enforcement efforts are best placed is kindling traffic policy proposals from

a number of quarters. This week, Brooklyn State Senator Seymour Lachman proposed legislation to allow New York City to **impose low speed limits** on city streets to protect pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. At present, state law prohibits local speed limits lower than 30 mph except in special cases like school zones. Lachman's proposal closely resembles legislation sponsored last year by Assembly member Deborah Glick and State Senate Transportation Chair Norman Levy. The Glick/Levy bill failed to win home rule approval in NYC when then-city Transportation Commissioner Chris Lynn refused to support it (see *MTR* #140).

The slow speed legislation would enable the city to implement **more effective traffic calming measures** than at present, since devices like speed humps today must conform to the legal "design speed" of 30 mph, reducing their effectiveness in controlling speeds. The legislation would complement the positive reception city government is enjoying in communities hosting the few traffic calming installations carried out to date, and could accelerate the pace at which the city develops **slow speed zones** in neighborhoods and commercial districts.

An often-overlooked NYC traffic law enforcement achievement is a **30% reduction in red light running** where NYC DOT has deployed **red-light cameras**. The camera is set to photograph the license plates of motor vehicles that run the red light. When the film is developed, a printing process affixes a copy of the photo directly to a summons that is mailed to the driver. State law allows the city to install 50 of the cameras. In 1997, the city expanded its initial pilot program to 30 cameras.

NYC DOT reports good results from the program all around. Due to a high conviction rate from the photographic summonses, the program is in the black. More importantly, it is **reducing infractions and improving safety**. At intersections where the city installed its first 18 cameras in 1994, red light running is down from an

average of 30.4 instances per day to 21.2. The program deserves to be expanded by the city to **all 50 cameras** this year. The legislature has tried to keep its reins on the program by limiting the number of cameras and insisting on the program's reauthorization after five years. In view of worsening traffic safety, the legislature should **authorize NYC red light cameras for good** and remove limits on their number.

Both red light cameras and traffic calming devices possess the strong advantage of building responsible vehicle operation and compliance with the law **into the infrastructure of the street**. Once built or installed, they are immune to the ebb and flow of policing priorities. But to get them in place in sufficient numbers, they will need strong support in City Council and State Legislature, as well as in the city administration.

#### NYC Pedestrian Policy on the Web: Find these resources at the TSTC web site:

- *Speeder City*: Transportation Alternatives documents non-existent traffic law enforcement on NYC streets.
- *The Wrong Foot Forward: Projected Traffic Safety Investments in NYC: 1999-2002, 1994-1999 T.A./TSTC*
- Midtown barricades slow pedestrians more than they speed cars — statistical analysis.
- Link to Transportation Alternatives' coverage of the Midtown barricades.
- Survey of major Midtown traffic studies and report on action/inaction re: their recommendations.

<http://www.tstc.org>

#### Segmenting Super Seven

Citizens for a Sensible Seven in the corridor from **Norwalk to Danbury** in western Connecticut have enlisted U.S. Rep. James Maloney to back their demand that any major expansion of **U.S. Route 7** undergo a major investment study (MIS) before proceeding.

In a December letter to a Federal Highway Administration regional office in Glastonbury, Maloney writes that his constituents were assured in the spring of 1996 that an MIS would precede any work to develop "Super

7,” as the long-discussed highway project has been dubbed. But in an August, 1997 meeting, concerned citizens from the area were told that ConnDOT and the FHWA had agreed that an MIS was not necessary.

Maloney contends that the three segments of Super 7 contemplated for construction or expansion by ConnDOT — totaling \$100 million — must be looked at as one large investment and subjected to a rigorous **alternatives analysis**. The segments ConnDOT and FHWA appear to be treating as separate projects are: extension of the divided superhighway from its current terminus in Norwalk to Wilton; widening of the 2-lane Rte 7 surface road through Wilton; and widening of Route 7 from Danbury Airport to Branchville.

### ConnDOT Seeks to End Griffin Line Debate

ConnDOT appears to be seeking a final showdown with the Hartford metropolitan planning organization, the **Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)**, over the proposal to build the Griffin Line, a light rail transit link from Bradley Airport to downtown Hartford. Conn-DOT has long opposed the project and says the state cannot afford to build it. CRCOG has endorsed the line and wants to put a funding package for it together with the state’s participation.

Reportedly, ConnDOT has told the COG that if it includes the Griffin Line in its next capital plan, or “transportation improvement program” (TIP), ConnDOT will retaliate by **holding up other CRCOG projects** and funding. CRCOG will meet Jan. 28 to formally consider “de-designation” of the Griffin Line. Transit supporters throughout greater Hartford have organized a

### Wanaque Ends Quest for Bypass

Officials in Wanaque, NJ have dropped support for a plan to double capacity on Passaic County Rte 511 (the **“Ringwood Avenue Bypass”**) which would provide a high-volume connection from I-287 to environmentally-sensitive areas in the NJ highlands.

The road plan was opposed by citizens, environmental groups and water companies associated with area reservoirs, and was criticized by NJ DEP. Ringwood-based Skylands Clean and Wanaque’s Coalition Against Alternate 3 deserve recognition for leading the fight to stop what many feared would be a **“can-opener” for development** in the highlands and Sterling Forest.

Wanaque is now seeking designation as a “center” under the NJ State Plan, which could open new sources of state aid to the town, and apparently does not want its application to refer to a project whose chances for realization have grown slim. Citizens who fought the road expansion support the notion of developing a more attractive and coherent Wanaque town center but are wary of any efforts to promote Wanaque as a regional center. They fear the latter course could lead to development that will in turn generate more proposals like the Ringwood Ave. Bypass.



### Goethals Twin Moving Slowly, But Won’t Go Away

At a NY Building Congress breakfast today, Port Authority executive director Robert Boyle did not mention the Goethals Bridge “twin” project among the many capital projects he described to construction interests as pieces of an ambitious five year building program.



The Campaign has learned that the PA is likely to set aside **\$5 million** in its **1998 capital budget** for planning and design expenses related to the Goethals twin. The proposal to construct a second I-278 span, which would run between NJ and Staten Island, has met with harsh criticism from citizens groups, elected officials, and the media on the grounds that building an additional bridge in the corridor will increase traffic levels and aggravate congestion on local roadways.

Though the Port Authority has said a second Goethals span would not be constructed in the face of community opposition, the agency **continues to try to sell the project**. A new tactic involves traffic scare tactics. At a Goethals information forum in early December, PA officials said upcoming deck rehabilitation work could shut down half the lanes on the existing bridge, and suggested **chaos would ensue without a second span** to take up the slack. When pressed for details, however, PA staff have stated that not enough preliminary analysis has been completed to know how many, if any, lanes might need to be shut down for the deck rehabilitation, or how long the closures would last. Fortunately, not every road agency says it needs a new bridge each time an old one comes in for extensive maintenance. However, that theme has been sounded recently regarding spans along both the Garden State Parkway and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.

### — Job Announcement —

#### Tri-State Transportation Campaign Communications coordinator

The Campaign needs an energetic staff member who is committed to public policy advocacy, likes to write and is computer- and internet-literate.

Send resume and writing sample to:

Tri-State Transportation Campaign  
281 Park Ave. South, NYC 10010  
fax: 212-777-8157 e-mail [tstc@tstc.org](mailto:tstc@tstc.org)

### — Public Hearing —

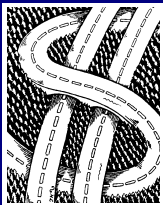
#### “The Future of Mass Transit in New York City”

NY State Assembly Committees on Corporations,  
Transportation, Ways and Means, Labor

for formal notice, call 518-455-4881

Friday, Jan. 30 10 AM 270 Broadway, Manhattan

## Mobilizing the Nation



➤ The development of Congressional debate over **ISTEA-2** this year may depend heavily on the **House of Representatives' budget resolution**, usually voted on in spring. House Transportation Chair Bud Shuster's **ISTEA-2** bill is premised on big expansion of federal transportation spending (at almost \$30 billion over transportation's share of last year's balanced budget agreement). If new funds are not found, the **sectional peace bought** by Shuster's **high funding levels** could collapse, leading to a renewed House fight between groups of states over federal transportation funds. The House leadership opposes legislation that would break the balanced budget. Last year, Shuster led an amendment to the budget resolution that came close to adding large new funding to transportation. Variables that could shape debate this year include the size of any projected federal budget surplus and the influence of various interests vying for a piece of it.

House Budget Committee members from this region are CT's Chris Shays and NJ's Bob Franks. The seat formerly held by Susan Molinari remains open.

➤ As the country prepared to remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s commitment to a more just society, the State of Georgia approved a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the **Atlanta region** that faces challenges on civil rights and environmental grounds. Opponents include environmentalists, civil rights activists, suburban homeowners, Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell, U.S. Reps John Lewis and Cynthia McKinney, EPA and FTA. Atlanta is shaping up as a test for federal environmental and civil rights law enforcement.

The fight is over air pollution that will be generated by **sprawl-inducing new roads** (the region admits it is falling far short on its clean air plan), and over urban and inner suburban **accessibility to new jobs** being pushed to the region's outer edges by ill-planned transportation investments. A large share of the \$900 million in road projects that GA DOT says are "exempt" from federal environmental laws are in outer areas that have no or very poor public transportation. Many say Atlanta transportation **discriminates against blacks and the poor** and is an emerging front for civil rights enforcement.

Dr. King had recognized in 1968 that "Urban transit systems in most American cities [are] a genuine civil rights issue...because the layout of rapid-transit systems determines the accessibility of jobs to the black community...A good example of this problem is my home city of Atlanta, where the rapid-transit system has been laid out for the convenience of the white upper-middle class suburbanites who commute to their jobs downtown. The system has virtually no consideration for connecting the poor people with their jobs."

## CALENDAR

**JAN 26 8:30 AM** ISTEAs Works for NJ, strategy gathering with words from NJ congressional delegation. NJTPA, 1 Newark Center. 732-225-1180.

**JAN 26 6 PM** Auto-Free NY monthly meeting: "NYC's Task Force on Regional Planning." A. Gifford Miller, City Council member. At Transportation Alternatives, 115 West 30th Street #1207, NYC 10001. 212-475-3394.

**JAN 27 3-5 PM & 7:30-9:30 PM** Mid-Hudson South long range transportation plan "town hall meeting." Rockland County Community College. 914-634-1100.

**JAN 27 7:30 PM** Committee for Transit debates the Port Authority on airport access rail plan. Hosted by Concerned Neighbors of Southeast Queens. Union United Methodist Church, 126-22 150th Street, Jamaica, Queens. 718-529-1826.

**JAN 28 9:30 AM** MTA Board meeting. 347 Madison Ave., 5th fl, Manhattan. 212-878-7448.

**JAN 29-30** Workshop on Walkable and Bikeable Communities. NYS Assn of Transportation Engineers, FHWA, APA. W/ Dan Burden, Florida DOT. Suffolk County Community Collage, Brentwood. \$50 516-952-6128.

**FEB 4 4-7 PM** Mid-Hudson South long range transportation plan "town hall meeting." County Center, White Plains 914-285-5180.

**FEB 5 11:45 AM** Transportation Research Forum luncheon meeting. "Future Vision for Intercity Passenger Rail Service," former NJ Governor James Florio. 100 Washington Street, Manhattan. Lunch fee \$20-28. 212-435-4086.

**FEB 5 Noon** MTA Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee Forum on Airport Access. Participants from PA, CBT, Mayor's Office, MTA. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan. 5th floor. 212-878-7087.

**FEB 18 3:00 PM** "Rail Freight and Passenger Service: Coexistence or Conflict?" NYC Bar Association Transportation Committee. W/ officials from Norfolk Southern, CSX, Metro-North, others. 42 West 44th Street, Manhattan. 212-382-6600.

**FEB 23-24** NY Public Transit Association Winter Conference & Lobby Day: "Partners in Transit." Holiday Inn, Albany. 518-434-9060.

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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