

# Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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## NEWS

### The Line on NJ Rail Politics

❖ Montclair town officials settled their long-standing fight with NJ Transit this week, opening the way for the 1,200 foot **Montclair Connection** project first proposed decades ago. The connection will permit trains on NJ Transit's **Boonton Line** to reach **NY Penn Station** via the Morris & Essex line and Kearny connection. Until completion of signal work, rail congestion on the route into Penn Station will limit Boonton Line access to Penn Station to only three trains in each direction per day.

❖ NJ Transit and Bergen County officials were scheduled to present rail options from the **West Shore** major investment study to NJ Transportation chief John Haley yesterday. Bergen County officials favor an **east-west** cross-county option. NJ Transit reportedly backs reviving commuter service on the north-south West Shore line. Ironically, **Metro-North RR** may be strengthening Bergen County's hand because it hasn't anted up its share of the study's costs. Thus, potential West Shore passengers between W. Nyack and W. Haverstraw are not being counted in ridership comparisons between the various options.

**Brooklyn Reps Call for Car Free Prospect Park**  
NYC City Council members say Prospect Park, Brooklyn's most renowned and cherished open space, should be **free of car traffic** this summer.

The park's Frederick Law Olmstead design features a **loop roadway** which over the years has been integrated into the city street system as a **high speed bypass**. Traffic on the road generally intrudes on the park environment and endangers the cyclists, runners, skaters and pedestrians who now use the loop in large numbers.

Council member **Stephen DiBrienza** will call for the park to be shut to traffic for a two-month trial period at a press conference this coming Monday. DiBrienza's district encompasses the park, and he has the support of council members Ken Fisher, Una Clarke and Angel Rodriquez, all from neighboring districts.

Transportation Alternatives (T.A.) and local activists have pressed for a trial closure of the loop drive. NYC DOT studies have shown that traffic impacts will be small, even without accounting for shrinkage in car trips due to the roadway's closure. "A two-month trial closing will prove conclusively a car-free Prospect Park will work," said T.A. Brooklyn Committee Chair Carl Biers.

Brooklyn Borough President Golden has scheduled a **public hearing** on the Auto-Free Prospect Park proposal for **6PM Tuesday, April 21** at Borough Hall.

### Giuliani Announces Major Traffic Calming Step

New York City announced Tuesday it would begin systematic efforts to install traffic calming devices and other plans and rules to **slow traffic near schools**.

Mayor Giuliani and acting city transportation commissioner Richard Malchow said speed humps, 15mph zones and flashing yellow lights were on the menu for slowing cars and improving pedestrian environments around 100 city schools this year. The city says it hopes to allocate \$80 million over four years to improve pedestrian safety around most or all schools in the five boroughs, but this spending figure is preliminary.

Mayor Giuliani had identified traffic calming near schools as a major aspect of the traffic safety initiative he announced in February.

The development of "safe routes to school" has been a strong priority for citizen initiatives like the Neighborhood Streets Network, which says that **being hit by a car** is the number one cause of death and injury for New York City **children aged 5-14**. Transportation Alternatives hailed the city's move as a big leap forward for traffic calming in the city and in the U.S.

Reducing speeds on local streets makes a big pedestrian safety difference because the chances of death for a walker struck by a car drops from 40 percent to seven percent as vehicle speed declines from 30 to 15 mph.

Demonstrating the changing attitudes about car traffic, motorist behavior and neighborhood safety and liveability, the NYC City Council also took up the issue of pedestrian-safe school zones this week. The Council's transportation committee considered several bills to require the NYC DOT to install speed humps or other traffic slowing devices around schools. The city opposes at least one of the measures, saying it is too prescriptive given the wide range of conditions and street types around NYC's hundreds of schools. The important thing is for the Mayor and Council to keep pushing and ensure that real traffic calming and other safety measures are put in place around the city's schools.



The *Daily News* reported that a Quinnipiac College poll found 92% of New Yorkers support the city's **crack-down against speeding drivers**. Apparently, everyone is looking forward to the next zero tolerance day.



Meanwhile in **Newark**, State Education District Superintendent Beverly Hall asked **Mayor Sharpe James** this week to secure funds from NJ DOT to begin a major **traffic calming program** there. Newark has more

pedestrian injuries than other NJ municipalities, and the city's share is disproportionate to its population.

The Tri-State Campaign and a dozen Newark civic leaders have also asked James to make pedestrian safety a major city priority in 1998.

### Bronx I.D.'s Dangerous School Zones

A tour of streets around a half-dozen Bronx schools sponsored by Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer and Transportation Alternatives' **Safe Routes to School project** last week brought NYC DOT planners, consulting engineers, school officials and parents together to develop a common understanding of dangers faced by young pedestrians, and to identify possible traffic calming solutions.

A briefing book compiled by T.A. effectively sketched out the main student walking routes, crash locations and other safety problems at each school. The project is expected to fit well into the school zone safety initiative just announced by the city.

### Slow Speed: a Must Pass Bill for Albany

The NY State legislature's transportation committees and top leadership should promote the Slow Speed bill now pending in Albany (A3969, S6872) to "must pass" status for the **current session**. The bill would let New York City set speed limits below the minimum of 25mph established in state law. This change holds the promise of significantly improving public safety and the city's quality of life. We commend the measure's sponsors, Deborah Glick of Manhattan and Frank Padavan of Queens, for pressing the issue.

The bill is backed by Mayor Giuliani, and is unopposed by any major interest group. Moreover, the prospects for an early NY State budget agreement this spring are strong. Thus, **this is the bill's best chance ever**: there seems to be no reason that it shouldn't pass this session. But it can be hard to trust in the arcane ways of Albany, so we urge the bill's sponsors and their staffs to aggressively seek and maintain momentum for the bill whenever possible.

The lives of NYC children, elderly and other citizens are at stake. The Slow Speed bill must pass in 1998.

### Road Rage Run Down ?

Almost nothing has been heard from Albany lately about the "Road Rage" legislation **Gov. Pataki announced** with legislators **in mid-February**. The bill creates a new crime of "aggressive driving," with several degrees.

Some sources suggest that some in Albany are not eager to add to existing reckless driving statutes.

But existing laws have not deterred high NY State crash and roadway death rates. The "Road Rage" bill is worthy of strong consideration and should be acted upon by the relevant legislative committees if it can give prosecutors a way to charge those who hurt others while breaking traffic laws.

The NYC City Council recently passed a resolution endorsing the Governor's Road Rage bill.

### Germany's Bicycle Boom

The current *Transportation Quarterly* carries an article by Rutgers University planning professor John Pucher that documents a dramatic 20-year increase in bicycle transportation in Germany. Not only has German cycling increased absolutely, it has **gained as a proportion of total travel** (while car driving's travel share has fallen).

Pucher eliminates factors like climate and topography as explanations for cycling's far greater presence in European than in North American transportation, and says that even longer average U.S. urban trip distances cannot account for the dramatic gulf.

Country	Percent of Trips by Travel Mode (all trip purposes)				
	bicycle	walking	public transit	car	other
Netherlands	30	18	5	45	2
Denmark	20	21	14	42	3
Germany (western)	12	22	16	49	1
Switzerland	10	29	20	38	3
Sweden	10	39	11	36	4
Austria	9	31	13	39	8
Germany (eastern)	8	29	14	48	1
England/Wales	8	21	14	62	4
France	5	30	12	47	6
Italy	5	28	16	42	9
Canada	1	10	14	74	1
United States	1	9	3	84	3

Source: Pucher (from various transport ministries and depts., latest avail., year)

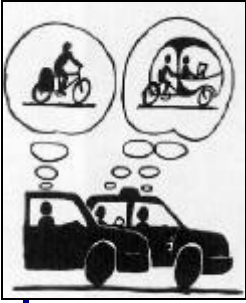
Pucher's argument is: "In short, bicycling has been thriving precisely in those countries that have adopted policies to make bicycling faster, safer and more convenient. Bicycle use has been falling in those countries that have been neglecting the needs of bicyclists."

The article examines in detail how western German cities have nurtured bicycle use. Pucher says the German examples are in fact more interesting than those of Danish and Dutch cities because **cycling was not particularly prominent** in Germany in the 1970s, and the big cycling increases since then have come about alongside rapid suburbanization and the second highest (after the U.S.) rate of car ownership in the world.

Among German cities, as in many countries, university towns have the highest rates of cycling (though the article notes that one reason for this is strong representation by the Green Party in such municipalities' local governments, and that cycling has increased in spite of cheap student passes to very good transit systems). But even in major cities like Munich (Germany's 3rd largest), cycling's share is 15% of all trips.

Germany's most extensive **bicycle systems** consist of elements like:

- Bicycle **path networks** reaching all major commercial and residential areas. These are generally separated from traffic and feature ample sign systems and color-coded route plans.
- **Traffic calmed local street networks** that slow and circuitously route car traffic while providing easy, direct access for cyclists. Many cities with high cycling levels



also have policies that restrict urban parking and highway capacity supplies.

- “Bicycle streets” that permit auto traffic but are designed to give priority to bikes — others are one-way for cars but have 2-way bikeways.

- Traffic signals that give intersection priority to bikes.

- Strong public education on bike safety and the many personal, social and environmental benefits of cycling.
- Adequate parking facilities of scale that varies from large central bike parking depots to wide coverage of low capacity on-street parking racks.

### Cycling Infrastructure for NYC Neighborhoods

One of NYC’s pro-bicycling programs (“CityRacks”) has slowly installed several hundred bicycle racks along sidewalks throughout the five boroughs.

Transportation Alternatives is trying to give the bike rack effort more visibility. It wrote recently to NYC DOT, urging concentrated installation of racks at specific sites in **Williamsburg, Brooklyn’s north side neighborhood**. The community’s demographics, density, layout and poor bus service all contribute to relatively robust levels of cycling. During the 1990s, the neighborhood has emerged as a center for artists and others fleeing lower Manhattan rents. On most days, **bikes are piled** several deep against railings and signposts near the Bedford Ave. L-train subway stop. The city should act on T.A.’s highly sensible, well-conceived proposal.

Separately, the contract for the next round of CityRack installations will permit the racks to be placed in privately owned **parking garages**. NYC Dept. of Consumer Affairs and the Metropolitan Parking Assn. are increasing efforts to persuade parking establishments to include bicycle parking.

### ISTEA Watch

President Clinton again **criticized the spending levels** in Congress’ ISTEA reauthorization bills this week. At an event promoting his education plans, Clinton criticized Republicans he said would rather build roads than schools. Both the administration and Republican budget hawks have criticized the ISTEA-2 funding levels for exceeding last year’s balanced budget agreement.

However, at week’s end, the federal government began revising its estimated budget surplus upward.

Although Congress is in recess at present, the staffs of the relevant committees are working to prepare for the **Senate-House conference committee** that will meet later this month. Some sources say it now looks like Congress will finish with ISTEA sometime around Memorial Day rather than by the expiration of the

### Goethals Pen-pals

In response to a leading Staten Island conservation group’s objections to the Port Authority’s proposal to construct a **second Goethals Bridge**, agency chief Robert Boyle wrote back recently with a commitment not to seek approval of the project until a “regional consensus” on the matter has been developed.

Much of his reply, however, focused on impending reconstruction of the 65-year old Goethals crossing. PA officials have recently tried to justify the need for a second crossing with claims that deck work on the existing structure is going to cause extensive delays.

When the **rationale** for a major project **begins to shift**, it’s a sign that the need for it may not be so pressing. The Goethals “twin” was originally proposed to **increase road capacity on I-278**; asserting now that a \$340 million project is needed to facilitate a reconstruction project seems like sleight-of-hand. If it wants a “regional consensus,” the PA should be **explicit about its goals**. If the agency is looking to give trucks an

### Around the Region



➤ **New Jersey Transportation** Commissioner John Haley has appointed Carol Hollows as the state’s overseer of **EZ-Pass implementation**. Hollows, a veteran of NJ’s Treasury Dept. and NJ DOT, is to see that the electronic toll collection system is installed as a seamless system on the NJ Turnpike, Garden State Parkway and Atlantic City Expressway, and is integrated with the Port Authority crossings and toll highways in Delaware. The whole system is supposed to be running by January, 2000.

➤ **Transport Workers Union Local 100**, representing **NYC Transit** bus, subway and other workers, is seeking to schedule the re-run of its union elections for May, though the dissident New Directions groups wants the election to be later. The election is being held a second time under orders from the TWU international headquarters following complaints by New Directions. Observers give New Directions a strong chance of winning the election, but how the group’s militancy within union politics might translate to union policy under New Directions leadership is unclear.

➤ Riders of NJ Transit’s **Raritan Valley Line** included fixed up stations, better station drop-off and ticket purchasing areas and new train cars in their wish list of rail line improvements. After extensive complaints caught elected officials’ ears, NJ Transit named 1998 the “Year of the Raritan Valley Line.” More service is being added to the line this month.

➤ Governor Rowland has followed through on his intention to invited US EPA Administrator Carol Browner to tour ConnDOT’s proposed site for the **Route 6 freeway east of Hartford**. EPA and other federal agencies have balked at the environmental harms the project will inflict. EPA regional officials based in Boston said ConnDOT and the Rowland Administration were the stubborn and dogmatic parties to the dispute. *Courant*

option to the chronically congested George Washington Bridge and Cross-Bronx Expressway, officials should let the affected communities know.

If road and truck capacity are the issue, then a number of current projects noted in Mr. Boyle's letter, including enhanced rail float car operations and the cross harbor tunnel, might more effectively address the region's freight movement troubles. The PA should see where those projects are going before seriously considering the Goethals twin. Adding highway capacity should be the last thing considered for a region whose air quality is the worst in the country, save Los Angeles.

### Pricing on the Bridges?

Mr. Boyle's letter to the Staten Island groups also confirms the agency's wariness about congestion relief pricing on its bridges — and reiterates that perceived political difficulties are the reason. But his concerns may be misplaced. A study commissioned by Borough President Guy Molinari last fall called for a study of congestion relief pricing on all four of Staten Island's bridges (so far, nothing has come of any of the Borough President's recommendations). And four Staten Island elected officials have endorsed congestion relief pricing as a means of managing congestion on the Staten Island Expressway. Given a choice between variable tolls and an onslaught of truck traffic, and that big bureaucracies are generally the last to get around the curve of anything new, Staten Islanders might be more willing than the PA thinks to give congestion relief pricing a try.

### Internet Resources

1000 Friends of Oregon's nationally acclaimed LUTRAQ (Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality) project is on-line. LUTRAQ has been an important part of the emergence of innovative regional planning in metropolitan Portland, and has been cited in other regions where transportation demand management has been given a chance over highway construction. A number of key LUTRAQ reports are provided in Portable Document Format (PDF) (read using Acrobat Reader). [www.teleport.com/~friends/LUTRAQ.htm](http://www.teleport.com/~friends/LUTRAQ.htm)

Somewhere between the "solution" and "problem" sides of the sprawl equation is a site containing an on-line slide show by *Edge City* author Joel Garreau, an *Edge City* database and a set of maps. Judging by the collection of "Edge City News," newsletters, however, this project ran out of steam over a year ago. [http://policy.gmu.edu/edge\\_city/ec1.html](http://policy.gmu.edu/edge_city/ec1.html)

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Visit the Tri-State Transportation Campaign Web Site

<http://www.tstc.org>

MTR#169. Contributing: Lisa Schreibman, Bill Yates

## CALENDAR

**APRIL 15-16** Transaction 1998: NJ State Transportation Conference. Atlantic City. For registration or vendor information, call 908-903-1077.

**APRIL 16** Metro-North Commuter Council monthly meeting. 347 Madison Ave., 10th floor, Manhattan. 212-878-7087.

**APRIL 16 7:30pm** Public Dialogue on Passaic County bicycle planning effort. Oakland Public Library (municipal plaza). Sponsored by North Jersey Group, Sierra Club. 201-461-4534.

**APRIL 20** Albany Earth Day Lobby Day. Contact Environmental Advocates, 518-462-5526.

**APRIL 20 10am** NJ Clean Air Council (DEP advisory body) public hearing on Clean Air Act compliance, Trenton. Reserve speaking slot by 4/13. 609-633-6198 / [eindelic@dep.state.nj.us](mailto:eindelic@dep.state.nj.us)

**APRIL 21 5:00 pm** Technical advisory committee, NYC DOT/City Planning Bicycle Network Development Program. East River bridges update, next phase of bike lane implementation. 212-442-7686.

**APRIL 21 6pm** Public hearing on banning or limiting car traffic in Prospect Park. Brooklyn Borough Hall. Call Transportation Alternatives, 212-629-8080 for more info.

**APRIL 21 6:30pm** Working group organizational meeting for Bronx arterials (Cross-Bronx, Major Deegan) major investment study. Bronx Borough President's office, 198 E. 161st St. 718-482-4549

**APRIL 23 6:00pm** Hudson Valley Regional Conference community forum on I-287 light rail options. Common Council Chamber, White Plains City Hall (225 Main St). 914-762-5512.

**APRIL 24 9:30am** University Transp. Research Center Visiting Scholars Seminar: "Sustainable Transportation," David Banister, University of London. 1 World Trade Ctr., 43rd Fl., 212-650-8050

**APRIL 27 7:00pm** "East Side 2000" forum on transportation issues. W/ John Kaehny, Transportation Alternatives, Gene Russianoff, Straphangers Campaign. Sponsors, Council members Andrew Eristoff, Gifford Miller. 111 E. 59th St. 212-818-0580.

**APRIL 29 7:00pm** Dutchess County Planning Federation "short course on planning and zoning." Route 44, Millbrook, NY. 914-486-3600.

**MAY 4-7** ITS '98 conf. Detroit. 202-484-4847.

**MAY 5** RPA's 8th Regional Assembly: "Creating the Capacity for Growth." 212-253-2727.

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