

# Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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## NEWS

### Transit and Green Groups Back NJ Bond

At a Trenton news conference today, New Jersey environmental and transportation advocacy groups announced strong support for the \$500 million transportation bond issue being put before New Jersey's voters. The "Statewide Transportation and Local Bridge Bond Act of 1999" will be Public Question Number 1 on Tuesday's ballot. Last week, DOT released a comprehensive spending plan for the bond proceeds.

"New Jersey should **vote 'yes'** on this bond question," said Greg Meyer of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. NJ DOT's spending plan for the bond issue represents a strong step toward a capital program that emphasizes **highway maintenance and investment in alternatives to cars and trucks**. A "yes" vote will send a strong signal to Trenton that the public approves of this approach.

NJ Transportation Commissioner James Weinstein has pledged repeatedly that monies from the bond will be directed to fixing existing infrastructure, and will not be used to add new sprawl- and traffic-inducing highway capacity.

"If you build it, they will come. If you fix it, they will remain. Preserving the transportation we've already got is a means to focus growth in already developed areas without encouraging sprawl on the fringe. The bond plan follows this principle," said Meyer.

Jeff Tittel, Executive Director of the **Sierra Club-NJ Chapter**, considered the spending proposal for the bond issue a positive departure from past DOT capital plans. "In the past, DOT has spent too many resources paving open space. The current plan holds DOT's feet to the fire to fix what's been ignored for too long."

Speakers also noted that NJ Transit will receive \$80 million of the bond issue. William Wright, a director of the **NJ Association of Railroad Passengers**, stated, "The transit projects listed in the bond spending plan are improvements that will benefit travelers across the State. While there's much more to be done, we endorse the bond issue."

**NJPIRG Citizen Lobby** also backed the bond issue.

The bond spending plan allocates \$9 million to bicycling and pedestrian projects, and \$8 million to rail freight infrastructure. "Demand across the state for better cycling and walking is high. Meanwhile, New Jersey is being overrun by trucks. The bond plan will help New Jersey attack these problems," said Meyer.

### Stop the Kensico Expressway

The deck was stacked ten-to-one against proposed highway expansion projects along the Kensico Reservoir at a public hearing on in Armonk on Wednesday.

The projects would **widen Route 120** in Harrison and North Castle and expand I-684 interchanges 2 and 3

The spirited crowd of 150-200 rallied against the \$61.5 million plan, displaying signs such as "Highway Expansion Means More Traffic and Pollution" and "Where's the Congestion?"

The Natural Resources Defense Council's Eric Goldstein bluntly summarized the message delivered to the state administration: "Note to Governor Pataki — your state transportation department is jeopardizing the downstate drinking water supply and endangering your environmental legacy." Goldstein said the organizations and officials assembled at the hearing were **firm and united in their resolve to stop the road expansion**.

At the end of 1997, Governor Pataki sent NYS DOT back to the drawing board regarding the project after it encountered stiff resistance (see *MTR #'s 148, 155*), but the changes DOT made are minimal from the perspective of the project's overall impact.

Much of the winding two-lane Route 120 passes directly adjacent to the Kensico Reservoir, the linchpin of the water system that supplies 1.3 gallons a day to NYC and Westchester County. Much of the environmental objection to the project stems from water pollution impacts. NRDC noted that environmental scientists universally recognize that expanding impervious roadway surface increases pollution runoff into nearby waters and removes natural buffers that capture contaminants.

But commentators also focused heavily on the project's strong potential to **increase traffic** and sprawl development. Indeed, State DOT documentation strongly suggests the aim of the project is to transform a local road into a regional commuter expressway, and that it is **intimately linked with large scale office construction** plans in the watershed area.

Scenic Hudson's Jeff Anzevino challenged NYS-DOT's outmoded and unsupportable assertion that development in the corridor is a phenomenon independent of roadway expansion, citing news reports that explicitly linked corporate-government negotiations to the road project. He outlined a number of safety, operational and transit improvements the state could undertake without expanding the highway itself.

Charles Komanoff, on behalf of the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, pointed out that DOT's analysis omits treatment of additional traffic that will be induced by the initial time savings offered by a wider highway and by likely development in the corridor. Federal highway officials are increasingly adopting methods to account for these factors, and thus are able to **develop more realistic estimates** of the traffic flow effects of highway expansions like the Route 120 project.

North Castle officials and representatives of the construction industry and the corporate parks along Route 120 spoke in favor of the project.

State Assembly Environmental Committee Chair Richard Brodsky said the DOT's draft environmental statement "cannot sustain a decision to go forward." He said data in the document was outdated and failed to acknowledge the road's relationship with development. Assembly member Naomi Matusow also hoped the project could be changed to better accommodate environmental concerns.

### **Transit Service, "Stubway" Draw Fire — Assembly Reps at Work on "Dump Diesel" Position**

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's capital program proposal came under renewed criticism this week over its approach to the future of transit in NYC.

On Wednesday, Straphangers Campaign activists trick-or-treated the MTA board meeting, seeking more bus and subway service, a full-length Second Avenue subway line and cleaner buses. The event punctuated several weeks of public debate anticipating negotiations in Albany over the MTA proposal.

The Straphangers Campaign spotlighted the capital proposal's likely impacts on city transit service. While NYC Transit acknowledges that **insufficient buses and subway cars** are a major **constraint on adding rush hour service**, bus and subway car purchases in the MTA 2000-2004 proposal will only provide a 2% increase in city transit service. Booming ridership has already far outstripped modest service increases, worsening crowding and further impacting service regularity. A recent needs assessment by the Regional Plan Association recommended purchase of 500 cars and 1,000 buses more than the totals recommended by the MTA.

Possibilities and pitfalls of a Second Avenue subway line also continue to focus attention on the capital program proposal. Transit advocates charged Monday that

the "stubway" plan — running trains from a short 125th St.-63rd St. Second Ave. tunnel and then down the N and R express tracks — would head off long hoped-for plans to speed N/R express trains through downtown Brooklyn and

**State legislators** may in fact be in a strong position to stop or influence the project. The **State DOT** will seek to finance the project in its **next 5-year capital plan**, which the NY Legislature will have to take up and approve early next year. The financing scheme DOT lays out for the project in NY Metropolitan Transportation Council documents includes about \$15.5 million in NY State transportation capital funds.

Few who spoke against the Route 120 widening opposed the I-684 interchange improvements. All favored stormwater management system for I-684.

Others attending to contest the project included staff for Rep. Nita Lowey, Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer and NYC Comptroller Alan Hevesi, and Harrison Councilwoman Elizabeth Pritchard, who said the project provides "economic benefit to few and environmental detriment to many."

Comments will be accepted until November 8th. Address them to Joseph Foglietta, NYSDOT Region 8, 4 Burnett Boulevard, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603.

across the East River. Work on the Manhattan Bridge has rerouted N/R service along a longer route and halted express service in Manhattan for years. The "stubway" plan could also affect Queens riders by congesting the 63rd Street tunnel, which should open to Queens Boulevard trains in 2001.

**Business and construction industry** groups last week told the *New York Post* they supported Assembly Speaker Sheldon **Silver's position** that the MTA capital program must contain more funding and a fleshed-out plan for a full-length Second Avenue subway. "We will be supporting the Speaker. This is about the economic future of New York City," Frank McArdle of the General Contractors Association told the paper.

Earlier this month, Manhattan Assemblymember Scott Stringer began to organize Assembly colleagues for a campaign to make **converting NYC Transit's bus fleet to cleaner fuels** a top MTA capital program priority. The organizing drive is gaining considerable support.

Stringer and his allies support Speaker Silver's stand on the Second Avenue Subway, but say they will also urge him to support a **"no more diesels"** policy in negotiations over the capital program's final contents. Such a policy would **phase diesel powered buses out of the fleet** by ending their purchase. The Assembly members' draft position notes that three out of every four buses slated for purchase in the MTA proposal are diesels, and states that "conversion of the MTA's bus fleet to clean-fuels is a policy that, if realized, would positively impact the health and well being of every single NYC resident for decades to come."

The Assembly will convene a public hearing on the capital program Wednesday, November 3rd with daytime and evening segments (see Calendar section).



## Garbage Out



The NYC City Council heard testimony from city sanitation officials yesterday on the plan to divert NYC residential trash away from the Fresh Kills landfill. Fresh Kills is scheduled to close in 2002. Under an "interim" municipal waste export plan, **the city will send its trash out of town**, mostly in trucks.

About 65% of Brooklyn's residential waste is now exported in 18-wheelers from several transfer stations. Some of these trucks drive across Staten Island to the Goethals Bridge. Others ply Manhattan streets on their way to the Holland Tunnel.

Next week, a new phase of trash export is scheduled to begin, with Staten Island and Manhattan trash being **hauled directly in city garbage trucks** to transfer stations in **Elizabeth and Newark**, and to a Newark incinerator. Next year, the remaining Brooklyn waste and all of Queens' trash will be removed from the city, most likely in trucks headed for New Jersey. Only the Bronx' trash, which is loaded into trains in the South Bronx, does not add to NYC's huge truck burden.

NYC Dept. of Sanitation officials told a City Council panel that the plan would have no significant environmental impact. Council members immediately took

exception to the finding. Sunset Park's Angel Rodriguez told the officials, "either your investigation is terribly flawed or you are giving the wrong information to the City Council." Manhattan's Christine Quinn said, "The Holland and Lincoln Tunnels are nightmarish. I am concerned about impacts on people living near them. How can [the new truck flows] not be a significant impact?" Brooklyn's Stephen DiBrienza said, "I don't know why DOS **locks us into truck based export.**"

This week, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign and the *Big Apple Garbage Sentinel*, an Internet newsletter that monitors New York City's changing solid waste policies, developed an overview of likely garbage export impacts at Hudson River crossings. The calculations were based on Sanitation documents and bridge and tunnel truck volumes compiled by NYMTC.

Their analysis found that contracts to ship Manhattan and Staten Island garbage to New Jersey will likely increase the number of trucks on the Lincoln Tunnel by 6%, or 76,000 additional trucks during the next year, and increase truck traffic by over 4%, nearly 40,000 more trucks per year, at the Staten Island-New Jersey Goethals Bridge.

Those numbers could **climb higher next year** if the city also decides to move garbage from Queens and Brooklyn across the Hudson in trucks. The cumulative impact of a citywide truck-based garbage export system could see truck traffic climb over 1997 totals by nearly 15% at the Lincoln Tunnel, over 6% at the Goethals Bridge, 5.5% at the Holland Tunnel and 3% on the George Washington Bridge.

"If you live near the Lincoln or Holland Tunnels and believe truck noise, traffic and fumes can't get any worse, think again," said Tri-State's Lisa Schreiberman.

*Big Apple Garbage Sentinel* [www.garbagesentinel.org](http://www.garbagesentinel.org)

### Route to a Rail Plan ?

A recent Port Authority offer to resolve its battle with Union County and Elizabeth could lead to progress on reactivation of a rail link from Staten Island to the U.S. railroad network. Such a link could be an important piece of a rail-based NYC garbage export policy.

The NYC Economic Development Corp. has refurbished track and yard facilities in Staten Island, and the connecting rail bridge over the Arthur Kill, as part of its work to bolster the reopened Howland Hook container port. The line through Union County still needs work, but renovation has fallen hostage to a dispute over land and money between Elizabeth and the County on one side and the Port Authority on the other. Issues include payments for the use of land for Newark Airport and the future of a large land parcel adjacent to Port Elizabeth.

The Union County *Home News Tribune* cited Elizabeth Mayor Christian Bollwage this week describing a new Port Authority offer as "worth exploring" and potentially beneficial for Elizabeth. He said the pro-

<b>Hudson River Crossings: Additional trucks due to NYC municipal waste export</b>				
	Goethals	Holland	Lincoln	GWB
— Trash truck trips in one direction —				
Today	15,540	23,310	0	0
As of 11/99	39,936	21,216	53,664	33,696
As of 12/00	8,400	12,550	75,747	75,747
Total	63,876	57,076	129,411	109,443
All 1997 one-way trucks	947,000	1,022,000	879,000	3,714,000
% Increase over 1997	6.75%	5.58%	14.72%	2.95%
<b>Figures assume:</b>				
1. 40% of trucks currently exporting Brooklyn waste use SIE/Goethals. 60% use Canal St./Holland Tunnel				
2. 40% of trucks used to export remaining Brooklyn waste (starting in 2000) will use SIE/Goethals. 60% will use Canal St./Holland Tunnel.				
3. 50% of Queens waste (beginning in 2000) will reach NJ via Lincoln Tunnel, 50% via GWB				
DOS plans assign garbage trucks from Manhattan community districts 1-4 to Holland Tunnel, 5-8 to Lincoln Tunnel, 9-12 to GWB.				
Waste export truck data derived by <i>Big Apple Garbage Sentinel</i> from <u>Request for Proposals to Receive Solid Waste at a Marine Transfer Station and Dispose of Solid Waste Received at an Out-of-City Facility</u> . NYC Department of Sanitation. June, 1997. Appendix A. 1997 bridge and tunnel truck volumes compiled by NYMTC.				

posal was comprehensive, and addressed the issue of rail access through the county. The Port Authority wants the rail link so Howland Hook operations can be expanded to meet rising port commerce.

But since some of NYC's garbage trucks are scheduled to flow into Elizabeth in the near future, getting the rail line working is now a more urgent issue for Elizabeth and Union County as well. And to the extent NYC government comes to feel public heat for its truck-based trash export plan, a functioning link could factor into Dept. of Sanitation planning as well. NYC officials contacted by the *Home News Tribune* said it would be safer to move trash in sealed rail containers than by truck, and noted that garbage is flowing out of the city in trucks that cross Staten Island now.

### **Officials Seek to Revive Discredited CT Highway Plan**

Visions of a **Route 6 Expressway** continue to capture the imagination of local officials east of Hartford. In August, news stories reported an effort by leaders in Bolton, Columbia, and Windham to re-interest ConnDOT in the highway construction plan that had gone down to **decisive defeat in 1998** at the hands of federal agencies, Connecticut environmentalists and other nearby towns fearing the road's likely sprawl, natural habitat and traffic impacts. The plan would replace the two-lane Route 6 with a four-lane limited access road from the current terminus of I-384 eastward toward RI.

An east-west highway connecting Hartford and Providence has been on the state's wish-list for over thirty-three years, and had strong support from Governor Rowland. Rowland vowed to build the road even after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rejected an application for a wetlands-filling permit for the project.

It's unclear the new effort will go anywhere, but the project's **long life on ConnDOT's books** has expressway foes wary. Local backers of the expressway may be looking for Congressional allies to pressure the Corps.

Still, the *Journal Inquirer* cited ConnDOT's Richard Martinez, who said that the Corps had made it clear that "anything north of the Hop River was not permitted."

Opponents of the road plan **hope the brawl is not re-opened**. "The EPA and the Corps were decisive in their opposition to the massive wetlands fill envisioned in the expressway plan, and a local consensus favoring the road does not exist," said CT Fund for the Environment director Don Strait. If the issue were brought back to the table, "highway advocates would lose again, after another time- and money-consuming debate," he said.

Better news is that the DOT is testing center-line "rumble-strips" on Route 6 between I-384 and Bolton. The strips are aimed at reducing head-on collisions, a problem on the highway cited during the expressway debate. The method has shown success in Maryland.

## **Calendar**

**Nov. 3, 10am-4pm, 5:30-7pm** NY State Assembly public hearing on the MTA capital program. 10-4, NY County Lawyers Association auditorium, 14 Vesey St., Manhattan. 5:30-7:00, NY State Office Building, Assembly Hearing Room, 270 Broadway, Manhattan, 11th floor. 518-455-4881.

**Nov. 3 Noon** NYC Transit Riders Council President's forum, with Lawrence Reuter, NYCT President. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan, 5th floor. 212-878-7087.

**Nov. 3, 6pm** LIRR public information meeting on East Side (Grand Central) access project. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan, 5th floor. 718-558-7520

**Nov. 4 11:45am** Transportation Research Forum luncheon: Bernie Wagenblast, TransCore: "Traveler Information in the NY Market." 100 Washington St., Manhattan. \$ 212-435-4086, pgressner@paynynj.gov.

**Nov. 4, 5:30-7:30pm** Long Island Railroad Commuter Council President's Forum, w/ LIRR President Thomas Prendergast. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan. 5th floor. 212-878-7087.

**Nov. 4, 8pm** Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist ("the urban superhighway should be relegated to the scrap heap of history") on "Downtowns in America in the 21st Century." Cooper Union Great Hall, 7 East 7th Street, Manhattan. Info: 212-353-4195.

**Nov. 5, 9am-3pm** Alternative fuel vehicle forum w/ workshops on incentives, technology, etc. NYMTC, NYS Environmental Business Association. NY Hall of Science, Flushing Meadows Park, Queens. \$ 518-276-2164.

**Nov. 9, 5:30pm** Metro-North Commuter Council President's forum, with Peter Cannito, MNRRC President. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan, 5th floor. 212-878-7087.

**Oct. 26, 6pm** Town hall meeting to craft a West Bronx traffic safety plan. NYC City Councilmember Adolfo Carrion, Jr. PS 279, 2100 Walton Avenue., Bronx 718-584-6955.

**Nov. 9, 6pm** LIRR public information meeting on East Side (Grand Central) access project. 101 Court Seat Drive, Mineola. 718-558-7520

**Nov. 10, 8:30am-3pm** Alternative fuel vehicle forum (see Nov. 5) Westchester County Center, White Plains. \$ 518-276-2164.

Visit the Tri-State Transportation Campaign Web Site:

**[www.tstc.org](http://www.tstc.org)**