

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Number 293

November 6, 2000

NEWS

Straphangers Campaign's Halloween List Past Year's Top Ten Scariest Transit Events

1. More bury-them-alive crowding, as service fails to keep up with booming ridership. Rider gain since 1997: 19% on subways, 31% on buses. Service increases since 1997: only 6% on subways, 9% on buses. The chance of getting a seat worsened on 12 of 19 lines, according to July 2000 report by the Straphangers Campaign on the state of the subways.

2. Riders boo subway and bus crowding in MTA's annual opinion poll of its customers. The poll found "crowding has led to a decrease in overall satisfaction with bus and subway service." (March 2000)

3. Atlanta Brave's John Rocker finds # 7 riders too scary to ride with. (December 1999)

4. Two derailments—one in Brooklyn, one in Manhattan—injure scores of riders and raise concerns about subway maintainence. (April and June 2000)

5. A terrifying plan to borrow \$22 billion for vital transit repairs without resources to pay them off is approved by Governor Pataki and state legislature, burying system in debt and raising the "specter" of **higher fares and less service**. (May 2000)

6. An attempt to cool hell-like Union Square subway station flops, as new fans in the just-renovated station only blow hot air and debris. (July 2000)

7. Riders continue to be caught and dragged by subway car doors, as transit officials keep 1,400 "maroon" cars in service without retrofitting their doors to be more sensitive. (spring and summer 2000).

8. The MTA blocks fare discounts for the mentally ill, first evading a new law granting half-fare to Medicaid/SSI recipients with mental disabilities, then harshly administering the law. (spring and summer 2000)

9. Newer subway elevators and escalators are breaking down more often than older ones, according to a study by the office of **Public Advocate Mark Green**. (September 2000)

10. It's "trick, not treat" as transit officials propose to **change how they rate subway and bus service**; if adopted, on-time performance would skyrocket and bus bunching plummet—but only on paper! (Sept. 2000).

In late November, the Straphangers Campaign will release its annual list of things for subway and bus riders to be most thankful for in the last year.

Green Thumbs Up for NJ Question #1...

Last week, a dozen environmental groups joined the Tri-State Transportation Campaign in publicly **endorsing New Jersey ballot question #1**. The question asks voters to dedicate the remainder of the existing gas tax (1.5 cents) and a portion of the sales tax to the Transportation Trust Fund, which pays for highway and mass transit capital projects in the state. Without an infusion of new funds, all anticipated Trust Fund revenue will be spent paying off existing debt.

Environmental organizations support the dedication because the Transportation Trust Fund renewal act, which authorized the financing plan, **directs the NJ DOT to show annual progress towards five year goals** of repairing half the state's deficient roads and bridges and building 1,000 miles of bicycle paths. Also, the law now requires that all new highways must be approved by both houses of the legislature, **giving state representatives more control over sprawl-inducing projects**. Groups backing the ballot question include: the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, the American Littoral Society, Clean Ocean Action, Environmental Defense, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the NJ Conservation Foundation, the NJ Environmental Foundation, NJ Environmental Lobby, NJPIRG Citizen Lobby, NY/NJ Baykeeper, and the NJ chapter of the Sierra Club.

The measure is also promoted by the NJ Association of Railroad Passengers, the NJ Automobile Club, the South Jersey AAA, the NJ Association of Counties, the League of Municipalities, the Alliance for Action, the heavy and general construction laborers union, the iron workers union, and the United Transit Union.

In general, **editorial boards are also urging a Yes vote** for Question #1. Favorable editorials have appeared in the *Bergen Record*, *Star-Ledger*, the *Courier Post*, and the *Home News Tribune*, among others.

...While Enviros Pass on NY Transpo Bond

In contrast, environmental groups in New York have generally stayed away from NY's Ballot Question #1, the transportation bond act. That's because NY State DOT's highway program is not bound by any legislative guidelines that would restrain sprawl- and traffic-causing highway expansion. Thus, the **bond act sets a trap** for green groups — they can back needed city transit funding along with increased funding for potentially harmful highway projects, or they can reject bad elements in the DOT program at the expense of mass

transit. Public interest groups whose focus is confined to New York City and transit back the bond, along with major newspapers, most city elected officials and suburban and upstate business and road industry groups favoring more highway development. Opponents generally point to the **state's heavy debt burden** or the absence of clear transit benefits for their area.

The final sides on NY State Transportation Bond Act (Proposal #1 on the ballot) were chosen last week. The *NY Times* and *Daily News* wrote on the issue this week,

NJ Senate Candidates: Transportation Goals Seem Similar

To fill his large shoes, the successor to Frank Lautenberg's U.S. Senate seat must have ambitious transportation goals for New Jersey and know how to bring back the federal funding to make them happen.

In recent weeks, Republican candidate Congressman Bob Franks and his Democratic opponent, Jon Corzine, have shown they can think big in terms of transportation capital improvements. Both men have repeatedly emphasized the importance of **a new tunnel beneath the Hudson River** to serve the ever-growing demand for commuter rail in New Jersey, a project estimated to cost at least \$5 billion. Drawing on his experience as a member of the House Transportation Committee, Congressman Franks even has a particular vehicle in mind for obtaining the money, a "Regional Investments for National Growth" (RING) bill. It would **authorize the US DOT to choose 5 projects every year** with significant regional economic impact for which the agency would offer 50% matching funds. The Republican candidate has promised to champion this bill in his first year in the Senate and would work to ensure the Hudson River tunnel is one of the first projects in line.

Both men have pledged to **support new rail starts** across the state. Franks has called the Hudson-Bergen light rail part of the solution to congestion in northern New Jersey and promised to fight for funding for it as well as the West Trenton Line and the Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex Line. Corzine has also spoken favorably of light rail development in various parts of the state. Both also say they would continue Amtrak's funding, as long as Congress keeps a close watch.

Franks has made repairing the state's bridges a campaign issue. Corzine has said that congestion could be ameliorated through tax incentives and grants to encourage inner-city development.

Both candidates named **traffic congestion as their "least favorite thing about NJ"** in a recent *Star Ledger* questionnaire.

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urging a yes vote. A pro-bond press conference by State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Assembly colleagues was bumped off of most news pages late in the week by **Mayor Giuliani's comments** that essentially withdrew his endorsement of the act.

The box below summarizes \$3.8 billion bond act backers and detractors who we've heard from or seen mentioned in the press:

For	Against
Brooklyn BP, Howard Golden Committee for Safe Roads and Better Transportation (representing transportation industry companies). <i>Daily News</i>	Assembly Member Michael Bragman Citizens Budget Commission NY City Council Member Ken Fisher
Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields Long Island Association General Contractors Ass. NYC Public Advocate Mark Green NYS Comptroller Carl McCall <i>Newsday</i> <i>New York Times</i>	NY Motorists Association S.I. Borough President Guy Molinari <i>Crain's New York Business Journal-News</i> New York Conservative Party <i>New York Post</i>
Governor George Pataki Regional Plan Association Straphangers Campaign Transportation Alternatives	

NY Senate Candidates: In Their Own Words

Rick Lazio and Hillary Clinton answered questions on environmental issues put to them by the NY League of Conservation Voters. Full responses are at www.nylev.org Here are excerpts from answers to transportation- and sprawl-related questions:

Hillary Clinton ...one of the best ways to reduce pollution is to persuade more of our fellow citizens to leave some of their cars in their garages and get on the bus or the subway or the train to go to work. That is why I will also fight for New York to get its fair share of transportation funding, especially supporting mass transit funds...investments in mass transit lower vehicle air pollution, specifically nitrogen oxide emissions which contribute to increases in ozone pollution.

I would fight to preserve our vital open space and revitalize industrial wastelands because I believe sprawl is not only a threat to the environment but to our communities as well. I supported the Administration's development of the Better America Bonds proposal that would help communities work together with local environmentalists and business leaders to come up with solutions to community development challenges. Through full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, I support grants to states for land acquisition to preserve the Adirondacks, Sterling Forest and other sensitive areas. I also believe that we should examine our transportation policies and other federal initiatives to ensure that we are not encouraging sprawl.

Rick Lazio Growing up on Long Island, I have seen the loss of our farms and our open spaces to suburban sprawl. I saw the effect our new road systems had on our development pattern, and I saw the effect these new developments had on Long Island's historic towns and cities. As a county legislator, I opposed an attempt (by my own party) to divert sales tax revenue from the acquisition of open space in the Pine Barrens to county tax stabilization. As a Congressional representative, I was very active in guiding the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, CARA, through Congress and successfully worked with Republican leadership to ensure it reached the floor. ...CARA is crucial since it devotes \$900 million annually to the acquisition of open space. If elected to the Senate, I would support measures which allow states and local governments to carry out their own conservation priorities, whether through zero interest bonds or through other mechanisms.

We need to preserve the farms and open spaces adjacent to the ring of current development, and that are the most vulnerable to future development...

I also strongly support the redevelopment of brownfields in order to promote "in-fill" development in many of our older cities and towns. For example, I co-sponsored H.R. 2262, which would help improve the economics of redeveloping older industrial sites. Brownfield development would continue to be a priority if I were elected to the Senate. I also have worked diligently and successfully to strengthen our public housing systems so that many of our urban areas will attract people rather than lose them.

There are a host of federal policies that are in dire need of reform, whose unintended consequences have led us to the sprawl conditions we see today. If elected to the Senate, I would continue to support the identification of federal policies which encourage sprawl and changes to these policies to encourage more rational development.

I also would support a greater portion of the Highway Trust Fund for alternative transportation choices. The mass transit systems we currently operate have helped get a large number of cars off the road while meeting the transportation needs of our people. Throughout the country, we have seen the ability of mass transit to increase population density, whereas we have seen that the effect of highway construction was to reduce this density. An adequate transportation system is critical to the economic success of a region and one that improves the living conditions of New Yorkers is the one we need to encourage. We also need to **encourage construction of sidewalks and trails whenever highway construction is performed**, to make communities less dependent on cars.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign Web Site

www.tstc.org

Hudson Hopefuls Weigh in on Traffic, Transit Candidates Signal Rough Road for Tappan Zee II

On Oct. 30, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Rockland civic groups and Hudson Valley municipal officials released results of a survey of state legislative and congressional candidates on transportation issues facing the lower Hudson region.

The survey revealed **strong levels of opposition or unease** among those holding and running for office in the lower Hudson Valley **toward the NY State Thruway Authority's plan to replace the Tappan Zee Bridge** with a larger span. It also found strong support for new mass transit capacity and high levels of interest in other congestion-busting policies.

The Campaign was joined by Tarrytown Mayor Paul Janos, Orangetown Supervisor Thom Kleiner, the Rockland Civic Association and the Ramapo River Committee in sending questionnaires to candidates in State Assembly districts 84 through 94, State Senate districts 35 through 38 and Congressional districts 18, 19 and 20.

The survey asked about NY State Thruway and Metropolitan Transportation Authority recommendations to build a new Tappan Zee Bridge and an Orange/Rockland/Westchester commuter rail line, about congestion pricing toll policies on the Tappan Zee Bridge and other mass transit and transportation issues. The questionnaires also posed different general policy questions to state legislative and congressional candidates.

Out of 27 questionnaires mailed, the issuers received 14 written responses. The responses were heavily concentrated in Rockland County and in lower Westchester districts along the Hudson River, though some came from candidates in Orange County and northern Westchester. Two respondents — Assemblymembers Richard Brodsky and Michael Spano — answered by letter rather than responding specifically to the questionnaire.

"The survey results **suggest the outlines of a regional consensus on key issues** — opposition or strong concern about the Tappan Zee II plan and unanimous backing for West Shore commuter train restoration," said Orangetown Supervisor Thom Kleiner.

Incumbents and challengers, Republicans and Democrats feel highway expansion will not resolve the lower Hudson's transportation woes. Candidates further east in Westchester apparently don't feel a strong stake in weighing in on the questions the survey raised.

Only one respondent, Assembly 94th district incumbent **Nancy Calhoun**, offered unqualified support for replacing the Tappan Zee Bridge and building an Orange/Rockland/Westchester commuter rail line across it.

Every respondent backed West Shore rail restoration. Some also thought that a Stewart Airport rail link is important, but thought that West Shore line access might be preferable to the plan to link Stewart to Westchester via a new Tappan Zee rail line.

Respondents indicated growing support for **congestion pricing on the Tappan Zee Bridge**. Of those offering an opinion on the topic, eight candidates sup-

ported the idea, while four said they opposed it. Others wanted to know more about specific pricing scenarios before taking a position.

Candidates were mixed on the idea of using the **Tappan Zee reversible lane for a carpool- and bus-priority lane**. Some were supportive, but others were skeptical of HOV lane performance elsewhere in the metropolitan region, and still others said there was not enough mass transit in the I-287 corridor yet to warrant a dedicated lane.

Candidates for state legislature generally favored more **state attention to bicycle and pedestrian programs**, and a return to more predictable multi-year appropriations of state aid for local mass transit systems like Westchester's Bee Line.

Several Rockland candidates expressed negative views toward the MTA in response to a question about long term transit financing. Assembly incumbent Sam Colman called specifically for Rockland and nearby counties to form a Lower Hudson Transportation Authority independent of the MTA. Rockland candidates also conditioned their support for increased rail freight operations with a more cooperative stances by railroads on locomotive idling problems and track-sharing with new commuter rail services. The survey and a summary of candidate responses are available on-line at www.tstc.org/tz/candsurv.html

CALENDAR

November 9, 9am-1:30pm "Clean Fuels in the Hudson Region" symposium. Rockland Community College. NYMTC and Rockland County Executive. 914-364-3445 or 212-938-3355

November 9, Noon Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council monthly meeting. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan. 10th floor. 212-878-7087.

November 13, 1pm North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority monthly meeting. 1 Newark Center, 17th floor (Noon lunch, \$). 973-639-8406.

November 15-17 NY Public Transit Association conference and expo, Saratoga Springs, NY 518-434-9060. www.nytransit.org

November 16, Noon NYC Transit Riders Council monthly meeting. 347 Madison Avenue, Manhattan. 5th floor. 212-878-7087.

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Mobilizing the Region

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On Transportation, Bush and Gore Do Differ

While transportation policy has been on the periphery of the presidential campaign, the general flavor of the candidates' approaches can be gleaned from published comments and rarely discussed proposals:

Vice President Al Gore is the only candidate to put forward a distinct set of transportation directives. Although general, **his goals focus mainly on rail transit**. He supports increasing federal funding for new transit rail projects and for upgrading existing rail systems. He would offer financial incentives for redeveloping neighborhoods and business districts around rail stations and added federal grant monies for rail station improvements. The Vice President is committed to developing high-speed rail corridors across the country and told the *Associated Press* that he would "fight for new grants for Amtrak." A June 29 *Associated Press* report on Gore's proposals suggested the range of new federal investments in transit would equal \$25 billion.

In addition, Gore has proposed federal investments to aid the conversion of **public and school bus fleets to cleaner fuels**. Answering a **League of American Bicyclists** survey, the Vice President voiced consistent support for "giving local communities flexibility to use federal highway funds for alternative transportation projects" and said he believed that **Americans would choose to cycle to work** or shop if given "useful, practical, and safe facilities" and that "encouraging more people to bike will result in fewer motorists on the road." Neither Governor Bush nor Ralph Nader responded to the League's questionnaire.

The theme of Governor George W. Bush's answers to questions of transportation policy seems to be that decisions on transportation spending and land management should **rest with state and/or local government**. However, news sources report him speaking favorably regarding public/private partnerships in financing transportation improvements, while others suggest that he supports the "**streamlining**" **federal environmental review processes** for transportation and other construction projects. He has also proposed relieving congestion in metropolitan areas through "appropriate" highway expansion. In the same *AP* article on Amtrak, Governor Bush called the national railroad network an "economic lifeline" and a "crucial component of our public transportation system." He also said he supports current efforts by the legislature to "make Amtrak more efficient and competitive."

Ralph Nader has spoken little about specific transportation initiatives. However the Green Party candidate has named "massive investment in roads and highways at the expense of public transit" and "federal subsidies for suburban roads" as prime causes of sprawl and traffic. He would increase support for transit as part of an effort to turn back suburban sprawl.