

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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It's Official: Red Light Running Rampant

NYC Comptroller and mayoral candidate **Alan Hevesi** released a report last week quantifying what people on NYC streets experience every day — many city drivers **regard stopping on red as optional**. Based on extrapolation from a week of observation, the report concludes that drivers citywide run more than 1 million lights during a typical 7am-7pm workday. The report also found that typical violators are not trucks, taxis, or tourists, but cars and SUVs with NY State plates. Hevesi used the findings to call for an expanded **red-light camera program**, showing that NYC lags other cities in this department.

The number of stoplight scofflaws varied significantly from intersection to intersection and borough to borough. The worst intersection — E 70th St and Madison Ave. in Manhattan — was the site of an average of 56 violations per hour, or nearly one per minute. On average, just one driver per hour in Staten Island blows a light, but in Queens the average is almost 18. The *Daily News* reported that the five worst Brooklyn intersections were all near schools.

The report underlines what advocates like Transportation Alternatives and Right-of-Way have long noted: **disrespect for traffic laws is widespread** among NYC drivers and deadly for NYC cyclists and pedestrians. In its *Killed by Automobile* analysis, Right-of-Way found that vehicles driving through red lights or stop signs were the **3rd greatest cause of pedestrian and cyclist death** in NYC, resulting in 10% of 1,024 fatalities from 1994-1997 (MTR #212).

Eight years after approval of NYC's pilot red-light camera program, only 32 cameras are sprinkled among 11,000 traffic lights. In Washington, San Diego and Baltimore, the ratio of red light cameras to red-light controlled intersections ranges from 22 to 33 per 1,000. Even with 18 cameras the city expects to install by the end of next month, NYC's ratio will equal just 4.5. Studies have found red-light cameras to be effective, reducing light running up to 40%.

A bill introduced by Assemblyman Lafayette and State Senators Padavan and Goodman would make the pilot program permanent and double allowable cameras to 100. It is supported by NYC DOT and Transportation Alternatives. Hevesi argues the city must **expand its program to at least 250 intersections** to be on a par with other U.S. programs.

Wagging the Dog: Queens Subways in Turmoil Due to Plan for Stranded Tunnel

Although community groups say NYC Transit's new steps to address the truncation of the Brooklyn-Queens G subway are not enough, a much **bigger outcry** against the changes coming to Queens subway service may come **once F trains are re-routed** through the 63rd Street tunnel.

This fall, V-train local service will replace the F express in the 53rd Street tunnel. **The F will thus miss critical connection points** it now meets at Queens Plaza and Lexington Avenue. Riders from the eastern end of the F train will also lose their one-seat ride to Manhattan's east side. The likely result is that E-trains, which are already sardine cans, will become intolerably packed, while V and F trains will be relatively underused (MTR #'s 303 and 306 provide more details on the service plan).

The service changes will stem from Transit's recent connection of the Queens Boulevard subway tunnel to the 63rd Street tunnel under the East River. The 63rd Street tunnel was designed to serve **new subway lines in Queens** that have never been built. One level of the tunnel will be used to connect LIRR trains to Grand Central Terminal.

Last week, NYC Transit announced that, in response to pressure to save G-train access to Queens, it would build a moving walkway in the sprawling Court Square/23rd St. station to make up for the loss of G connections at Queens Plaza, and run G service into Queens at night and on weekends (presently, night and weekend G service stops at Court Square).

Reality Check in Parkway Land? Demise of the "Toll Holiday"

In under a week, Acting Governor DiFrancesco launched, then abandoned an effort to lift toll levies from the Garden State Parkway for one day only, July 4th. The story broke on Saturday, May 19th, when the *Star-Ledger* reported the Acting Governor was pursuing the initiative as a symbolic step towards **removing tolls permanently** from the 173-mile limited access highway.

By Tuesday, strong editorials in the *Ledger* and *Asbury Park Press* had **denounced the proposal**, calling it respectively a "stunt that...smacks of image-building" and an inexplicable "campaign stunt" by the Republican ex-candidate. The papers said the

move would provide no real respite from Parkway traffic problems and would benefit out-of-state holiday travelers over the daily commuter. On Wednesday,

Brookhaven Projects, Planning Request in Limbo ?

The fate of a March request by Brookhaven Town Supervisor John LaValle to **NY State DOT** for collaboration on a “**sustainable development study**” with the town, Suffolk County and stakeholder groups regarding the futures of NY Routes 347, 25 and 112, is so far unclear.

LaValle made the request in a letter to DOT Commissioner Joseph Boardman and Suffolk County Executive Robert Gaffney.

Several Westchester, Rockland and Long Island East End municipalities are collaborating on “sustainable development studies” with NY State DOT regional offices and other agencies (*MTR* #'s 311, 314). The studies are attempts to combine a variety of policy tools, including town zoning and state transportation investments, to address the fragmentation of **land use and transportation decision-making**. The studies have encouraged strong citizen participation, community “visioning” processes and development of a variety of policy scenarios. In some cases, like along Route 303 in Rockland County, the process is helping resolve differences between the State DOT, local officials and citizens. Staff of the NY Metropolitan Transportation Council have been instrumental in developing the approach.

In northern Brookhaven, NY State DOT has active capital projects to widen Routes 347, 25 and 112. The projects for 347 and 25, have already run into strong civic opposition (*MTR* #'s 282, 290).

LaValle's letter said that “the community visioning and joint land use/transportation perspectives that sustainable development studies employ **can best resolve the debate over the future of Route 347** as well as issues that have arisen regarding Routes 112 and 25. Overall, the joint planning approach seems like the best chance to produce a positive outcome.”

The Metropolitan Transportation Council March annual meeting, chaired by DOT Commissioner Joseph Boardman, lauded the sustainable development studies. Governor Pataki's Quality Communities Task Force praised them and urges NYS DOT to increase collaboration with local government.

At a March 2 meeting in Hauppauge, a DOT official said that if Brookhaven requested a sustainable development study for Route 347, the Dept. was open to that approach. But it's unclear how or whether DOT has responded to Brookhaven in this case. Calls to the Brookhaven Town office for information this week were not returned.

day, a spokesperson from the Governor's office announced DiFrancesco was no longer pursuing the July 4th goal, telling reporters that a toll-free day was “far more complicated” than originally imagined.

The central difficulties mirror in miniature the challenges facing the movement to remove tolls from the Parkway for good: substantial **loss of revenue**, opposition from labor, and the potential to create even **worse traffic jams** by drawing more drivers to the highway. The Acting Governor and gubernatorial candidates would do well to take the events of last week as a cautionary tale as they pursue practical and sustainable solutions to Parkway toll booth back-ups.

Brookhaven Groups Not Waiting for DOT

In early May, the Longwood Alliance and Sustainable Long Island hosted a **walking tour and traffic calming seminar** to further develop a community-friendly plan for **NY Route 25** in Brookhaven.

Dan Burden, a traffic calming and road design expert who served as Florida DOT's bicycle/ped coordinator for 15 years, was the featured speaker.

Burden showed that an approach using **roundabouts**, walkways, street trees, and planted medians instead of road widening could address the quality of the streetscape and traffic congestion. Burden emphasized that roundabouts are **more efficient** and **much safer** than traditional traffic signals.

Burden's presentation underscored the importance of streetscapes, showing that in towns which have had the courage to remake streets into attractive places, businesses and communities have flourished. The Longwood Alliance is obtaining a CD of Burden's presentation, and will be happy to provide it to interested civic or community groups (contact the Campaign's Long Island office at 516-719-9330).

Newsday Backs Call for City Speed Cameras

A *Newsday* editorial last Thursday called on the NYC City Council to back state legislation introduced by State Senator Frank Padavan and Assembly Member Deborah Glick allowing the city to deploy **photo-radar equipment** in New York City.

Photo-radar automatically detects and issues summonses to **drivers who speed** through targeted intersections or street segments. A recent report by Transportation Alternatives cited examples of photo-radar's strong record easing speeds in cities around the world (*MTR* #317)

“Putting the cameras in place would go a long way toward slowing traffic by signaling motorists that the city means business,” said the paper.

The Giuliani administration backs the bills. A supportive resolution from the City Council is needed before Albany can approve the legislation.

Unfortunately, the State Assembly Transportation Chair, David Gannt of Rochester, appears to take a dim view of automated traffic law enforcement. In a

recent interview, a Gannt staffer snidely told the *NY Post* that NYC should “hire more police” if it has concerns about traffic enforcement.

NJ Candidates Talk Transportation

On May 20th, Gannett newspapers in NJ published a survey of the transportation views of **New Jersey’s main gubernatorial candidates**. The coverage revealed consensus on many issues, including an interest in removing tolls from the Garden State Parkway, an aversion to increasing the gas tax, and support for large mass transit and highway improvements. The obvious **fiscal collision** implied by these priorities across the entire slate of candidates should raise concern over the future of infrastructure investment and the sustainability of the Transportation Trust Fund. More details on candidates’ positions from Gannett’s coverage are summarized here:

Robert Franks Republican, represented 7th Congressional district for four terms

- **Funding:** Will not consider raising the gas tax in the near term.
- **Congestion:** Says “Building more lanes has become increasingly difficult and is environmentally impossible in most areas of New Jersey. To rely on additional lane construction is a fool’s promise.” Believes that the best solution to congestion is to shift drivers onto mass transit. Supports new Hudson River passenger rail tunnel, M-O-M line and Lackawanna Cut-off.
- **Parkway:** Wants to remove tolls because: “It makes very little sense in the most densely populated state to have barrier tolls. The Turnpike isn’t a toll barrier and it’s more efficient and seamless.” Would replace barrier tolls with high-speed tolls if removal of toll levies is found to be financially impossible.
- **Freight:** Believes the way to stem increasing truck traffic statewide is to make strategic investments in freight rail to remove rail system bottlenecks.

James McGreevey Democrat, currently mayor of Woodbridge:

- **Funding:** McGreevey criticizes the current administration for breaking the fix-it-first promise made to voters during last year’s renewal of the Transportation Trust Fund. Believes that \$90 million diverted to the General Fund from sales and gas taxes earmarked for the Trust Fund should be returned. He “will look at all existing revenue before considering an increase of the gas tax.”

- **Congestion:** Believes that building new lanes and highways may be necessary in some cases. But also supports increased operating funding for NJTransit tied to on-time performance goals and ridership levels and these new commuter rail projects: Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (M-O-M) line, the Lackawanna cut-off, and the West Trenton line.

- **Parkway:** Toll elimination plan includes option of merging the New Jersey Turnpike and Atlantic City Expressway Authorities with the NJ Highway Authority. Would implement high-speed E-ZPass readers on the Parkway if finances would not allow toll elimination.

- **Freight:** Supports construction of three “international intermodal corridors” between the ports of Newark/Elizabeth and Camden/Philadelphia. These projects include NJ DOT’s Portway, a truck-only highway linking the ports of Newark and Elizabeth to sites in Essex and Hudson Counties.

Bret Schundler Republican, currently mayor of Jersey City

- **Congestion:** “These people who want to take a position to not build any more road capacity are nuts. You should do what makes sense.” Also backs expanded rail transit generally and increased ferry service from north Jersey to Manhattan as well as investment in housing and the economies of cities to encourage land use changes that reduce driving.
- **Parkway:** Is “committed to removing tolls within my first nine months.”
- **Freight:** Supports improving rail infrastructure to remove trucks from the roads. “You’ll find (building new) infrastructure will allow you to move more freight by rail and that will alter trucking routes.”

New Jersey City Mayor Could End Bergen Arches Highway Plan

The two Jersey City mayoral candidates left standing after a five-way primary in early May now say they support using the abandoned Bergen Arches right-of-way for a **new transit line** rather than the four- to six-lane highway championed by departing Mayor and Republican gubernatorial candidate Bret Schundler.

The proposed highway would run from the new Turnpike interchange at Secaucus through Tonnelle

Circle to the Holland Tunnel plaza and the Jersey City waterfront. A major investment study for the project was altered to include transit and other alternatives after protest by residents and the Hudson Alliance for Rational Transportation (HART).

Schundler hired an engineering firm to draw up conceptual plans for the highway and a consultant to lobby for Trenton's support of the highway plan (MTR #306). But candidate and Councilmember **Tom DeGise** told listeners at a community sponsored debate last Monday that he favors transit in the right-of-way and that his administration would accept adjacent land offered by a developer for park land, blocking highway development. Candidate **Glenn Cunningham** reportedly also favors light rail for the Bergen Arches as part of his platform of neighborhood revitalization.

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Community outreach meetings for the Bergen Arches major investment study were held last week by consultant Howard Stein Hudson. But invitations were strangely limited. The meetings were never announced to interested parties like HART and the Tri-State Campaign. Only after last minute scrambling were members of HART able to attend.

Silver Backs Better Chinatown Subway Deal

NY State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's office let us know last week that the Speaker has been an outspoken advocate for transportation services to mitigate the four-year disruption of normal subway service at Chinatown's Grand Street station. In an April 5 statement, the Speaker said NYC Transit should go beyond the shuttle bus it has agreed to provide between Grand Street and Canal Street by extending a planned subway shuttle and increasing service on the M and F lines.

Silver has also introduced legislation to require NYC Transit to hold hearings for **service changes lasting longer than six months**. Transit declined to hold hearings on the changes affecting Grand Street because it labeled the disruption "temporary."

So far, however, NYC Transit has declined to offer services other than the Canal Street bus and a subway shuttle between Grand St. and Broadway-Lafayette.

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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CALENDAR

May 29, 1pm NJTPA Board Meeting, NJTPA Headquarters, One Newark Center, 17th Fl., Newark, NJ 973-639-8406

June 2-9 Trenton Bike Week: cycling tours and races, bicycle riding, ownership + maintenance classes, cycle to work day, etc., trentoncycling@aol.com, www.pagespider.com/tcr

June 2, 11:00am Dedication of first NY link of the East Coast Greenway. Pelham Parkway and Holland Ave., Bronx. 212-352-9330

June 6, 4:30pm MTA public hearing on 2001-2002 federal funding request. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan, 5th floor. Registration to speak closes at 6pm. To register, call 212-878-7483.

June 7, 1pm "Ca\$h for Tra\$h", Women's City Club lecture w/ NYC Dept. of Sanitation deputy for long-term solid waste export Marsha Hirst. 105 E 22nd Street, Manhattan, \$, 212-353-8070 or info@wccny.org

June 9 Mid Atlantic Regional East Coast Greenway Association Meeting, Wilmington, Delaware, RSVP dave.lutz@treebranch.com

June 7-10 9th Annual Congress for New Urbanism. New York City. Registration info, 800-788-7077, www.cnu.org

June 10, 10am-3pm NY Harbor railroad cruise. Waterfront rail facilities past and present. Narrated by Tom Flagg, author, "NY Harbor RR's in Color." Starts at 42nd St., Manhattan. \$ eppc@worldnet.att.net

June 12, 6pm LaGuardia subway access citizens advisory committee meeting. 31-09 Broadway, Astoria. 212-490-9090.

June 20, 7:30pm Monthly meeting of the CT Metro-North Shore Line East Rail Commuter Council, SACIA, 1 Landmark Square, Stamford. www.trainweb.org/ct, 203-655-0138.

Find additional calendar entries at www.tstc.org

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign Web Site

www.tstc.org

- [Daily news and links updates](#)
- [Links to new reports, events and on-line resources](#)