

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Number 327

July 30, 2001

NEWS

Pataki says Trade Center Funds may Support Transit Construction

Governor George Pataki said last week that revenue from the Port Authority's lease of Manhattan's World Trade Center could be used to **support large transit projects** like the LIRR's connection to Grand Central Terminal and the Second Avenue Subway. NY and NJ will each receive about \$50 million annually under the terms of the lease.

Last week marked the beginning of a 90 day period during which control of the buildings will be transferred from the PA to new private operators.

The LIRR-Grand Central and Second Avenue projects have recently suffered **less-than-hoped-for federal appropriations** (MTR #322). Moreover, this year's NY State budget will not fill the holes in the MTA capital budget opened by failure of NY's 2000 transportation bond act. Both projects will need bigger funding infusions than the World Trade Center lease proceeds to reach fruition.

It was unclear what New Jersey's plans are for the money it would receive, though in a release, Acting Governor Donald DiFrancesco mentioned PATH upgrades, connecting the Newark Airport monorail to the passenger rail network and bridge and tunnel upkeep as important PA priorities.

Governors Pataki and DiFrancesco could further augment PA funding available for mass transit projects by directing the PA to drop its **Goethals Bridge "twin"** construction project, which could cost over \$350 million and would increase car and truck traffic between New Jersey and Staten Island. Staten Island is now particularly in need of a larger NYC Transit express bus fleet (see MTR #323). The Goethals Twin plan has been held up for years by political and civic opposition. It has come in for another round of criticism this year by candidates on Staten Island and recently by NYC mayoral candidate Fernando Ferrer.

Campaign Suit Dismissed

As we went to press, the NJ Superior Court dismissed the Campaign's lawsuit over NJ DOT's discarding of spending goals set in 2000's Transportation Trust Fund Renewal Act. The Campaign warned if legislative spending goals cannot be enforced, multi-year transportation planning can only take place according to the whims of NJDOT.

Port Authority Allots Money for Freight Rail, But Truck Dependence Still the Rule

Last Thursday, the Port Authority board of directors approved the creation of a \$50 million fund for new freight rail projects in New York and New Jersey. **Each state garners \$25 million** to be spent on projects to be determined by state transportation and economic development agencies. Projects funded could include increasing clearance on the Bay Ridge Line in Brooklyn, improvements to the Harlem River Yard intermodal terminal in the Bronx, the construction of the Waverly Loop track to bypass a low clearance tunnel in Jersey City, and the expansion of the Oak Island Yard in Newark.

At the same meeting, the Port Authority board authorized the agency to pursue deepening the Kill Van Kull, the Arthur Kill and five other channels to 50 feet directly, leapfrogging plans to dredge to intermediate depths of 41 and 45 feet. The more aggressive schedule will **allow the industry's largest ships** — with capacity for 6,000 containers each — to begin utilizing NY Harbor seven years earlier, by 2009. The Port Authority estimates that accelerated dredging would reduce the \$3.1 billion price tag for channel deepening by at least \$800 million. Simultaneously, the board created a second fund with \$60 million for the purchase and preservation of lands important to the ecological health of the harbor estuary. Port Authority officials told the *NY Times* they hoped the habitat and rail freight funds would temper opposition to the dredging plan.

The accelerated dredging schedule will speed the **quadrupling of port container traffic** expected in the next two decades. For transport reformers and the region's communities, this adds even greater urgency to the need for significant investments in rail freight. Because 88% of all goods entering and leaving NY Harbor ports come and go by heavy truck, this level of port expansion stands to **add tens of thousands of trucks** to clogged metro area roads.

Including the \$50 million fund, the Port Authority's \$1.8 billion port capital expansion budget designates a welcome \$234 million for investments in rail freight that will expand and relocate Elizabeth Port's ExpressRail, build an intermodal terminal at Howland Hook and a rail clover-leaf that will link the reacti-

vated Staten Island Railroad and the Chemical Coast Line, among other projects (MTR #324).

However, regional rail needs dwarf these funds, and until the PA and other agencies invest enough in rail and barge capacity to begin to balance the port access and egress picture, NY/NJ will remain **North America's most truck-dependent major port**.

Experts estimate that the additional track capacity, yard space, and clearance improvements on both sides of the Hudson needed to improve freight efficiency enough to significantly reduce truck dependence stands at \$1 billion. A cross Harbor rail freight tunnel that models suggest will remove approximately 1 million trucks from regional roads annually is projected to cost at least \$2 billion.

Port's Pilot Rail, Barge Shuttles on the Way
The Port Authority says it hopes to begin developing the first elements of a port **"inland distribution network"** that could reduce trucking to and from port terminals in New Jersey. PA officials recently told the *Journal of Commerce* they hoped to see **regular container barging** services from NY Harbor to Albany and Bridgeport by year's end. They also said that they will announce a **new regular train service** to an inland depot in 2001, but did not identify it.

The main aim of the inland distribution network is to identify "dense trade clusters" 75-400 miles from the NY/NJ port that can be served by rail or barge container shuttle services. If the network can be developed, the port would stand a chance of growing rapidly without inflicting a huge increase in truck traffic on the region's roads.

Bridgeport planning officials said they hoped to test barging runs this fall, using both roll-on/roll-off and container crane technologies. Roll-on/roll-off barges require less expensive port infrastructure than container lift operations, but barges geared toward the latter technique can carry **three times as many containers** on the same size barge.

It's unclear what projects or services the Port Authority would pursue for the **network's "second phase"** of implementation. Extensive development of the network is not part of the PA's construction budget, but the concept points the way to capital investment for a less truck-dependent port future.

New London Shows Barge Port Potential

A recent Connecticut DOT study found that barges served by an intermodal port in New London could move goods from NY-NJ ports to destinations in eastern Connecticut, central Massachusetts, and Rhode Island far more cheaply and efficiently than trucks. Trucks traveling from the ports to central Connecticut spend, on average, 25% of their trip idling and 50% at slower than 30 mph due to congestion along major routes, the study reports.

Bus Lane Enforcement Works

Last November, London began aggressively enforcing the "bus only" priority of its **700 bus lanes**. By 2002, enforcement detection capabilities will have been increased by 600%, route monitoring by 333% and more than 100,000 summonses will be issued per year. Even preliminary statistics show the success of this program. By early July, commuters were **saving over 10 minutes** on the average bus ride and reliability had gone up by as much as 12.5 per cent.

Highlights of the London program include:

- Installation of cameras that detect and issue summonses — 900 on buses and 500 roadside. These take pictures of offenders' license plates much like the NYC red light cameras already in place.
- The 33 boroughs of London have raised the fines for bus lane violations from \$50 to \$130.
- Fine income goes to fund further improvements in transport, rather than into a general fund. The cameras are expected to cost \$25 million and added personnel time \$8.25 million. If the goal of 100,000 tickets is reached, the program will more than pay for itself.

Only a dozen or so bus lanes exist in NYC and of those, only the one on Madison Avenue receives any level of enforcement. But with tickets of only \$55 and a **mere 9,421 summonses** issued from July 1999-June 2000, even that lane is often blocked. The numbers explain why the MTA once put out a report on bus service called "Faster Than Walking?" and why the federal government rates NYC's as the slowest big-city transit buses in the U.S.

Orangetown Follows Through With Transportation-Efficient Plan

Officials in Rockland County's Orangetown set deadlines for themselves last week in **changing zoning laws** to influence development **along Route 303**. The zoning rewrite is an integral part of the Route 303 "sustainable development study," which has brought state, county and local officials together with citizens and business interests to produce a consensus plan for the corridor. In part, the process grew out of feuding between local interests and the NY State DOT, which wanted to widen the highway.

Town officials now say they will finish zoning changes before the **development moratorium** they imposed on Route 303 expires on Oct. 31. The moratorium was designed to prevent inappropriate development while the planning study was underway. While specific zoning change proposals were not detailed in news accounts, the study appears to be set to recommend development of several **mixed use, pedestrian-friendly hamlets** along Route 303, as well as additional infrastructure for cycling and walk-

ing. A specific set of State DOT projects has not yet emerged from the study, though it is set to conclude this year (see www.route303.net).

So far, the sustainable studies (similar collaborative work is underway in Westchester County and on Long Island's East End), first set forth as a new approach by staff at the NY Metropolitan Transportation Council, seem the best way anyone has come up with to infuse **the region's home rule environment** with smart growth policies and sensible transportation projects. Their inclusive nature also will tend to minimize some of the bruising **battles over road projects** the metropolitan region has become accustomed to.

It would be heartening to see some **larger corridors** begin to adopt this approach. Long Island's East End study involves five towns and nine villages, together with the relevant state and county agencies. Why not a similar approach in the **Tappan Zee/I-287 corridor**, where projects proposed by state agencies have led to big fights before and where **town governments are banding together** in anticipation of more struggle with the Thruway Authority and MTA over plans to replace the Tappan Zee Bridge?

Gov. Pataki's Leadership, Diplomacy Needed to Rescue West Shore Line

With Bergen County interests lining up to either support other alignments or to insist that it will proceed with three new lines at once, it may be up to NY Governor George Pataki to develop some momentum behind restoration of passenger service on the West Shore line. Of the three Bergen County alignments under consideration, only the West Shore line will reach New York. Assuming that a scenario where all three lines are built together is unlikely, the **West Shore ridership potential** stands out above that of its competitors. Governor Pataki needs to make the West Shore Line a priority of his administration, and of his diplomacy with NJ once a new state administration is in place there. Other issues the Governor could help overcome: the MTA's allergy to cooperating with other agencies, and the need to purchase additional right of way in the West Shore corridor due to heavy freight train traffic on the line.

Corridor	Ridership for stand alone alignments	New transit riders, stand alone implementation	Ridership for simultaneous implementation of 3 lines
West Shore	15,300	5,400	10,900
Northern Branch	11,350	4,550	7,050
Cross County	4,500	850	4,350

Source: Edwards and Kelcey West Shore Region MIS/EIS Alternative Matrix 4/30/99

Officials Call for Common Sense Steps to Alleviate Staten Island Bus Crunch

Earlier this month, Congressman Vito Fossella and State Senator Vincent Gentile called on the MTA and NY State to take steps both have called for in the past to improve **mass transit options for Staten Islanders**. Their recent urgings were in the context of the collapse of much of Staten Island's private express bus service. Academy Bus Lines' June withdrawal from S.I. left about 3,100 riders in the lurch.

Fossella urged NYC Transit to provide bus service between Staten Island and the **Hudson-Bergen light rail** line terminus in nearby **Bayonne**. The *Staten Island Advance* reports that such a service would attract between 700 and 1,200 Staten Island riders. A Hudson-Bergen connection would provide a partial short-term solution to Academy's pull out of Staten Island as well as long-term relief for people destined for Manhattan's west side and big employers in Hudson County.

Gentile pointed out that extending a local bus by just one stop to the Hudson-Bergen terminal could attract people to the new rail line. He suggested extending the S53, which could reduce commute times for people who used to depend on Academy's Forest/Victory service.

Gentile also called on the NY State DOT to **speed up the clogged Gowanus Expressway HOV lane** by making it bus-only during rush hours. Over 80% of people using the HOV lane are express bus riders, but DOT prefers to have them wait in traffic caused by a small number of motorists. Many Staten Island north shore residents are clamoring for more NYC Transit express bus runs via the Goethals Bridge, NJ Turnpike and Lincoln Tunnel because the Gowanus is so slow, and because many of Transit's express buses route Midtown passengers through lower Manhattan and miles of jammed up city streets.

Agencies Set Steep Fare for Newark Air-Train
Last Thursday, the Port Authority and NJTransit announced an agreement over the price and frequency of rail service to Newark Airport. The Port Authority is also in discussions to negotiate Amtrak stops at the new Newark Airport train station on the Northeast Corridor.

According to the agreement, a train will leave NY Penn Station and Newark Penn Station for Newark airport roughly **every twenty minutes** between 6am and 9pm on weekdays. Northbound service to the airport on the Northeast Corridor line and North Jersey Coast line will have similar headways. Overnight and weekdays, airport-bound trains will leave every 30 minutes. A **monorail** will leave the airport train station for terminals **every three minutes**. This schedule is an improvement over the one

floated by NJTransit in May with **just two trains** leaving every hour, even during peak traveling periods (*MTR #316*). However, because trains will make all other stops along both lines, NJ Transit chief Jeff Warsh warned that rush hour travelers may be forced to stand and will have limited room for baggage.

Although fares compare favorably to exorbitant taxi rides from Midtown Manhattan or downtown Newark, they are less competitive with overnight parking. For example, for **the price of a round-trip fare** from NY Penn Station, an air passenger can **park in economy for three days**. The high prices come in part from a \$3.50 surcharge added to each ticket by the Port Authority to pay for the cost of the station and monorail extension and operating costs for the monorail. But the Port Authority already receives a \$3 user fee from each passenger who departs from Newark to pay for construction costs. Advocates question why train passengers are being charged to use the monorail, while passengers who drive to the airport and park can ride for free.

The Port Authority plans to offer **monthly discount rail passes** for **airport employees** and frequent travelers, but has not stated a price for these. The Port Authority told the *Bergen Record* that over 1 million passengers are expected to use the facility in 2002 and up to 3 million by 2010.

Air-Train Oneway To Newark Airport From:	Cost
NYC Penn RR	\$ 11.15
Bay Head RR	\$ 11.95
Princeton RR	\$ 12.35
Newark Penn RR	\$ 6.65
NJTransit (From → To)	
NYC Penn RR → Elizabeth RR	\$ 4.15
Bay Head RR → Newark Penn	\$ 6.95
Princeton RR → Newark Penn	\$ 7.35
Newark Penn → Newark Airport (Airlink Bus)	\$ 4.00
Overnight Parking Newark Airport Per Day	
Economy Long Term	\$ 8.00
Monorail Parking	\$ 12.00
Taxi Fares To Newark Airport From:	
Midtown Manhattan	\$ 40.00
Downtown Newark	\$ 12.00

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



MTR#327 Contributing: Adelman Lilliston, Lisa Schreiberman Editors: Jon Orcutt, Kristen Fountain Executive Director, Janine Bauer

240 West 35th Street #801, New York, NY 10001 tel. (212) 268-7474 fax (212) 268-7333 tstc@tstc.org

Is Your Booth Closing?

NYC Transit officials have announced plans to close or reduce hours at 122 token booths; 53 are scheduled to take effect by September.

Many groups — including the Straphangers Campaign and Tri-State Transportation Campaign — oppose these cuts because they will force riders to choose between their safety (entering at unstaffed locations) and convenience (having to travel further to staffed entrances). To see if you are affected, check the list at:



www.straphangers.org/boothclosing/intro.html

CALENDAR

August 4 First public meeting for the Sustainable East End Development Study. Southampton Village Hall. 631-477-0300.

August 8, 4-9pm Open House for Southerly Crossings Corridor Study (Mercer Cty, NJ/Bucks Cty PA). Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission. College of NJ. 610-896-9909.

August 9, Noon Long Island Railroad Commuters Council monthly meeting. 347 Madison Ave., Manhattan 5th floor. 212-878-7087.

August 19, 11am NY Transit Museum tour along original South Brooklyn Railway and NY Cross Harbor RR, RSVP. www.mta.nyc.ny.us/museum 718-243-8601

August 28, 6-8pm Auto-Free New York meeting, “Lower Manhattan Transportation,” walking tour, 104 Washington Street (near Rector St.), Manhattan, 212-475-3394

September 13-16 Rail-volution conference, San Francisco. “Building Liveable Communities with Transit.” Federal Transit Administration, APTA, BART, City of Portland, others. 800-788-7077 www.railvolution.com.

September 26-29 TrailLink 2001 trails and greenways conference, St. Louis. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. 202-331-9696, www.railtrails.org.

November 27-28 Northeast regional conference on “context-sensitive design.” ConnDOT, Northeast Assn of State Transportation Officials, other agencies. \$ Westbrook, CT. 860-486-1384.

See additional calendar items at www.tstc.org