

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Number 365

May 13, 2002

NEWS

NYC's V-line: a Train in Vain

Despite cheerful NYC Transit platform announcements urging Queens subway riders to use the local V train, ridership on the new service is still lagging. The *Daily News* reported last week that the V runs at a “**roomy 49% of capacity,**” in contrast to its maxed-out express counterpart, the E-train.

Not deterred by rider behavior, Transit is augmenting its V marketing pitch. But it should bow to the inevitable and **switch the V and F service routes.**

The V was initiated last December when the F was rerouted to a new track between the Queens Boulevard line and the 63rd Street tunnel. While the F runs express through most of Queens, the V makes frequent stops. However, the new F route runs north of major workplace destinations. The result has been continued **sardine-can crowding on the E,** lower F ridership and only modest diversion to the V.

NYC Transit says it will distribute 120,000 brochures in several languages, run newspaper and cable TV ads and put up “**Stay on the V!**” posters urging riders to make the switch. The agency is also taking up the Straphangers Campaign’s facetious suggestion to offer door prizes – it will give MetroCard holders to V riders as part of the campaign.

“Ordering riders to stay on the V, or rewarding them with MetroCard holders, isn’t going to change the strong preference to take an express E train. Like the V itself, the ad campaign is destined to flop,” said Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers Campaign.

NYC Considers Ending Franchise Bus System

Last week, the Bloomberg Administration floated the idea of transferring the city’s franchise bus operations, primarily in Queens, to NYC Transit. The idea is worth pursuing, because the **bifurcation of bus management** in the city never really made sense. However, the change may be more of a challenge and less of a cost-saver than the city might think. If NYC hands the routes over and doesn’t want to see service cuts, it will need to increase its operating and capital contributions to NYC Transit. It’s unclear how the city’s commitment to **compressed natural gas buses** would fare under NYC Transit. In general, by Transit’s standards, the city services are undercapitalized and would require significant investment.

Community Planning at Work

Community leaders and municipal officials joined with planning consultants in the **Coram/Middle Island** area of Suffolk County over the past few weeks to articulate a new vision for **NY Route 25.**

The road is one of several highways within the town of Brookhaven that the NY State DOT would like to widen. Civic leaders have pressed DOT to consider traffic calming and a more pedestrian-friendly approach for years, without much success.

With the series of open meetings and site visits that the new visioning process set in motion, the community has essentially seized the planning initiative itself. The DOT sent a representative to the sessions, but was not a leader in eliciting local preferences. Sessions were attended by town council members and by Brookhaven Supervisor John LaValle. Municipal buy-in to a “new urbanist”-style plan that **pedestrian attractions,** good architectural design standards and a balanced view of **the road’s transportation, economic and social functions** will go a long way to winning overall agreement for a solution that does not significantly add capacity to Route 25 and fuel sprawl development in the area.

Other highways the DOT would like to widen in Brookhaven are NY Routes 347 and 112. The county aims to expand Suffolk Route 16 in the town.

Connie Kepert of the Longwood Alliance and the Affiliated Brookhaven Civic Organization and Town Councilmember Eugene Gerrard were leaders in the effort. Vision Long Island developed the process and engaged the planning consultants.

The community’s vision will be available on-line shortly at middlecountryrdproject.com.

Beeps Slam Brookfield LIRR Plan

At a press conference last Tuesday, Brooklyn and Manhattan Borough Presidents Marty Markowitz and Virginia Fields joined the Straphangers Campaign and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign to oppose the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation’s proposal — first proposed by Brookfield Properties, the owners of the World Financial Center — to **hijack A/C subway tracks** for Long Island Rail Road service to lower Manhattan.

The Brookfield plan was included in the Lower

Manhattan Development Corporation's preliminary rebuilding outline, issued in April (*MTR #361*). The plan would route C or A trains running between Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan to the F line to **make room for LIRR trains**, displacing over 100,000 subway riders and overburdening 6th Avenue service.

"Simply put, the numbers do not come close to justifying the massive disruption this suggestion will cause if implemented," said Ms. Fields. "Moreover, a new LIRR tunnel from Brooklyn would expend critical resources that are needed to build the Second Avenue Subway."

The Campaign made a statement supporting the borough presidents' opposition, saying "The LMDC plan would provide a first-class suburban commute by compressing already crowded city subway riders into fewer trains and tunnels. For Brooklynites, that is a plan with no light at the end of the tunnel."

The Straphangers Campaign also urged the Lower

Stewart Airport Advocates Recruit Friends in the Right Places

Signaling that earmarks in next year's federal transportation bill may include money for Metro-North's scheme to run a **commuter rail spur into Newburgh's Stewart Airport**, Congresswoman Sue Kelly arranged for key congressional leaders — Jack Quinn from the Buffalo area, chair of the House subcommittee on railroads, and Florida's John Mica, chair of the House aviation subcommittee — to visit the area a week ago.

The premise of the commuter rail plan is that Stewart could become an alternative to crowded NYC and Newark airports, but that it will need a rail link to fill such a role. Metro-North and Orange County real estate interests want to link the **Port Jervis** commuter rail line into the railroad's east-of-Hudson network across a **new Tappan Zee Bridge**. Stewart primarily serves air freight flights at present.

It's unclear why **shuttles** between the airport and the **Beacon Metro-North station**, running across the uncongested Beacon-Newburgh Bridge, do not fit the bill for Stewart rail access. It's also doubtful whether the market for commuter rail service linking Rockland and Westchester is strong enough to justify the project's expense.

The *Journal-News* reported that the NY State DOT has developed a proposal for a \$300,000 federally funded study of options to connect Stewart airport to the rest of the metropolitan region.

Manhattan Development Corp. to include the Second Avenue Subway and said, "If the downtown real estate interests talk the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation into this proposal, it will be nothing less than a case of grand-theft subway. We urge **Governor Pataki** and **Mayor Bloomberg** — who control LMDC — to put a stop to it."

After the press conference, representatives from the borough presidents' office handed out flyers to A and C subway riders, urging them to write to the LMDC and the MTA to oppose the Brookfield plan and to ask for Second Avenue Subway project.

Markowitz also sent a letter urging LMDC Chairman John Whitehead not to consider any proposal for using subway tracks for Long Island Railroad Service, writing, "A full-length Second Avenue subway that extends to Brooklyn's Atlantic Terminal is a much better alternative for improving lower Manhattan commuter access."

According to New York City Transit, the plan to run LIRR trains on subway tracks may not be feasible. "We cannot comment without seeing a plan," said an agency spokesman, "But as it stands now, LIRR cars would not physically fit into the Eighth Ave. subway tunnel."

ARC Misses the Mark

The Access to the Region's Core project (ARC), a tri-partite study by the MTA, the Port Authority and NJ Transit to explore options for providing additional rail access across the Hudson River, is completing the second phase of its work. A draft environmental impact statement is expected to result soon.

At a recent Citizens' Advisory Committee, ARC's study manager described the three "build" alternatives. They each include construction of a **new rail tunnel under the Hudson**. Alternative "G" would continue the new line to Grand Central Terminal with the potential to operate NJ Transit trains to the east side and Metro North trains to Penn Station. Alternative "P" would end the line in a new terminal below Penn Station. Alternative "S," after stopping at Penn Station, would continue the new line in a new East River tunnel into Queens at Sunnyside Yard to provide storage capacity for NJ Transit trains.

Unfortunately, each of these three raises serious issues that weaken their prospects. In the case of "G," there is concern about its **impact on Metro North operations** and of its constructability, among other issues. It would divert the largest numbers of passengers from the overcrowded exclusive bus lane leading to the Lincoln Tunnel and from autos, but would add the least number of new peak hour train "slots" for NJ Transit.

Alternative "P" would require a deep terminal un-

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign web site:

www.tstc.org

der Penn Station platforms 1-4, presenting steep access and additional crowding issues. **It would not provide direct access to the east side** where the concentration of jobs is high. "S" would also fail to provide direct access to the east side and would require the use of a portion of **Sunnyside Yard** by NJ Transit in an area also coveted by New York City Transit for trains for Second Avenue subway trains and other operations.

Both "P" and "S" would add capacity for a significant number of new peak hour trains that could be used for new services from New Jersey, including the West Shore line.

It is unfortunate that ARC, after at least four years of study, has not found a solution without major operating or construction stumbling blocks that would get New Jersey riders to the east side and add substantially to peak hour capacity. One of the reasons for this failure has been the **rejection of alternatives that do not pass through Penn Station**. But the strong interest in systems redundancy in light of last year's terrorist attacks should re-open the issue of a tunnel and rail line removed from the Penn Station complex that could be extended to the east side along a more northerly alignment. In light of the absence of a clear winner, ARC should go back to the drawing board.

ARC website: www.accesstotheregionscore.com/

JFK AirTrain Will Reach A-Train in 2003

According to the Port Authority, service on AirTrain rail service to JFK Airport could begin in fall of 2003. The system will eventually link the airport to city subway and Long Island Railroad lines.

Construction at airport terminals and the Howard Beach station, where AirTrain will connect with the A subway, is moving quickly and should be **open next fall**, PA officials told the *Flushing Times*. The line linking AirTrain to the Long Island Railroad and E, J, and Z subways is expected to open in 2005.

The Port Authority says it is in the process of determining fares for the new service. Riders who use the free airport shuttle bus from Howard Beach would likely oppose a high fare. However, if Newark AirTrain fares are any indication, transit riders may pay more than drivers for airport access.

Train riders pay \$11 one-way to get to Newark terminals from NYC Penn Station and \$6.95 from Newark Penn Station, while drivers pay \$8 a day for long-term parking and ride the monorail free. In the past, the Port Authority has expressed an interest in using the same fare structure for its JFK service.

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Calendar

May 12-19 NYC Bike Week. Variety of events sponsored by Transportation Alternatives and the NYC Dept. of Transportation. www.transalt.org

May 13, 6-9pm Southern Brooklyn Transportation Investment Study public meeting. Edward R. Murrow High School, 1600 Avenue L, Brooklyn. 212-799-8803x22, SouthBrooklynTIS@zetlin.com

May 14, 8-10am Regional Business Partnership's Annual Transportation Award, presented to Dr. Saul Fenster, New Jersey Institute of Technology President. 973-242-4219 or rbp@rbp.org

May 14, 12:30pm Metro-North Commuter Council meeting. 10th Floor Conference Room, 347 Madison Avenue, Manhattan. 212-878-7087 or mail@pcac.org

May 14, 3-9pm Kosciuszko Bridge Project public meeting. Martin Luther High School, 60-20 Maspeth Avenue, Maspeth. 718-482-4683 or kosciuszko@gw.dot.state.ny.us

May 15 Region-Wide Waterfront Conference. Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, conference@waterwire.net or 1-800-364-9943

May 17, 8:30am-2pm "Transportation Workforce Development In a Time of Technological Change & Reconstruction" Transport Workers Union Local 100. Namm Building, NYC Technical College, 300 Jay Street. 212-873-6000 x2175

May 21, 3-9pm Kosciuszko Bridge Project public scoping meeting. St. Cecilia's Roman Catholic Church, 84 Herbert Street, Brooklyn. 718-482-4683 or kosciuszko@gw.dot.state.ny.us

May 21, 6:30-8:30 Smart Growth Task Force Public Visioning Session for the Metropark/Arthur Kill/Raritan Estuary and Bay Region of Middlesex County. Rutgers Labor Education Center, Ryders Lane and Clifton Avenue, New Brunswick. 732-745-4167

May 22, 6-9pm Southern Brooklyn Transportation Investment Study public meeting. Lafayette High School, Benson Avenue & Bay 43rd Street, Brooklyn. 212-799-8803x22 or SouthBrooklynTIS@zetlin.com

[more calendar entries at www.tstc.org](http://www.tstc.org)

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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