

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

Proposed Clean Air Act Waiver for NY Would Prohibit New Highways Before 2005

The U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce approved an amended version of the Clean Air Act exemption sought by the Pataki administration, with two important limitations: the **prohibition of new highway projects** and a requirement that air quality impacts of construction in downtown Manhattan be offset by corresponding emission reductions.

The state says it needs the rules that require conformity between transportation and clean air plans to be waived to expedite transportation reconstruction downtown, and because the NY Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), which develops the conformity plan, had its offices and much of its accumulated work and data destroyed in the September 11 attacks (*MTR #372*). However, the original bill would have allowed agencies to add highway capacity projects to the Transportation Improvement Program **throughout the NYMTC region** without considering or offsetting air quality impacts. NYMTC's jurisdiction extends from Rockland and Putnam Counties to Long Island's East End.

The amended bill waives NY State's obligation to maintain a transportation plan that conforms with the Clean Air Act's emissions targets until 2005. But it requires that the state file an interim report in 2003, detailing progress toward clean air compliance (*MTR #372*). The provision addressing highway capacity says, "During the period of the [waiver]...no **regionally significant capacity expanding highway project** shall be added to the Regional Transportation Plan and no such project should be advanced from the out years of the plan into the TIP..." except projects south of Canal St. and West of Broadway in NYC.

The amendment, submitted by Rep. Vito Fossella of Staten Island, resulted from efforts by environmental groups to stop an unconditional waiver, spearheaded by **Environmental Defense**. The groups also fear that a Clean Air Act waiver bill traveling through Congress will attract amendments from other states.

A spokesman for Senator Schumer told the Staten Island *Advance* that he and Senator Clinton are working on a waiver bill for the senate. He said that the senators liked the current legislation, although "there might have to be some tweaks and changes."

More Sprawl Highways For NJ

On September 17, the elected officials who comprise the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, who include rerepresentatives of Gov. McGreevey, NJ DOT and NJTransit, are scheduled to vote on the **2003-2005 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** and newly revised Regional Transportation Plan. These plans would upload to the "study and development" part of project pipeline **scores of new highway capacity projects**.

Many of the projects will lead to unchecked development in places that are targeted for preservation under the State Plan, and concomitant traffic and congestion. In the 13 northern NJ counties alone, ten possible highway widenings or bypasses are in the Highlands, three are in the Pinelands or Coastal region, two are in the Meadowlands and seven impact rural farmland or environmentally sensitive areas.

Once highway projects get into the project development pipeline, they tend to build momentum within NJ DOT and raise developers' expectations. Later, it is too late to pull back and objectively study the sprawl impacts of highway capacity addition.

The inclusion of these highway projects in the study and development phase of DOT's work runs contrary to the "smart growth" principles enunciated by Gov. McGreevey in Executive Order 4. (*MTR #351*). Both the **Governor and Transportation Commissioner**

Pinelands/Coastal Region

Rt. 9 (31 miles)

Rt. 70 (9.7 miles, Dover, Manchester and Lakehurst)

Rt. 88 (9.9 miles, Lakewood, Brick Pt. Pleasant - Rt 35)

Highlands Region

Rt. 31 (Clinton, Lebanon and Highbridge, I-78 -Rt. 94)

Rt. 31 (15.8 miles, County Road 513 to Rt. 46)

Long Valley Bypass (CR 513 and CR 517, Morris Cnty)

Rt 15 (2.7 miles, Rt 181 to Rt 94, Sparta, Lafayette)

Rt 15 (19 mile Sparta, Lafayette, Sandyston, Branchville)

Rt. 23 (5 miles, Hardyston Township)

Rt. 605 Connector (Morris/Sussex County)

Rt. 57 (21 miles, Warren County, Rt 22 to Rt. 182,

Rt. 206 (17 miles, I-80 to Rt. 15)

Rt. 206 (from I-78 to Newtown, Somerset County)

Rural Countryside, Parks, Rivers and Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Eisenhower Parkway (Rt. 280 to Rt. 46, takes wetlands)
I-287 (3.5 miles, new Raritan River crossing)
U.S. 1 (8.5 miles, South Brunswick, wetlands and rural)
Rt. 18 (7.7 miles, Rt. 34 to Rt. 138)
William Paterson University Bypass (Passaic County)
Rt. 31 (Flemington, Rt. 202 to Rt. 31)
Rt. 202 (8.4 miles, Somerset Regional Center)

James Fox have the authority to **ask for changes to the TIP**, and the governor can veto the minutes of the NJTPA, if these projects advance.

The Governor's smart growth council has been meeting for several months but has no plan as yet. **No anti-sprawl criteria or principles have been adopted.** It is reported that all transportation, economic development, environmental protection and utility projects will have to be put through a smart

Road Widening Top Issue in NJ Mayoral Race

The proposed widening of Route 206 has taken center stage in the race for mayor of Byram Township, in New Jersey's Sussex County. Current Mayor **Michael Marotte** has actively opposed the state Dept. of Transportation's plan to add two lanes to the highway, which runs through the center of Byram (*MTR #374*). Sussex County Emergency Management Director **Eskil "Skip" Danielson**, who is challenging the mayor, is in favor of the expansion.

"I was not particularly crazy about the current council's approach to the Route 206 problem," Danielson told the *Star-Ledger*. "I think **an expansion is necessary**, although I'm not sure I fully agree with the (DOT) plans hanging on the wall at town hall. I'm in favor of working with the DOT to come up with a viable solution."

Marotte told the paper that the town council has been working with DOT, but wants a scaled-back project that does not conflict with the township's efforts to create a **pedestrian-friendly main street**. Byram has received an \$80,000 smart growth grant from the Office of State Planning.

In May, Mayor Marotte sent a letter to state officials, writing "This plan **far exceeds what is necessary** to resolve the **rush-hour and weekend traffic congestion**. This project will destroy several small businesses along 206 and cut our Township in two – thus effectively destroying our long-standing plans for a village center there."

In response, NJ Environmental Protection Commissioner Bradley Campbell and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority urged DOT to rethink the project.

Meadowlands

Bergen Arches and Secaucus Transfer Station
Rte. 280 (Essex County through to the Meadowlands)

growth screen, but the criteria aren't well-defined yet. The smart growth office director just started his job.

Recently, Fox has told developers that he'll "walk through walls to build transit villages but will throw up obstacles to greenfields highways." Rather than represent a "sea change" in transportation policy, though, this TIP looks suspiciously like a down payment on the NJDOT DOT long range plan developed under Governor Whitman, which called for 502 new lane miles to be built by 2025. Who's in charge?

New Trains for NY, but CT Still Waiting

Although the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has approved a purchase for hundreds of high-tech train cars for Long Island and Metro-North Railroad service, **New Haven Line riders** will be the **odd commuters out**.

The new NY cars, a model known as the M-7, will feature ergonomic seats, more reliable lighting and air conditioning systems, more legroom and on-board pay phones. They run on the **third rail power** used by the LIRR and Metro-North's Hudson and Harlem Valley lines, but are not compatible with the overhead power lines used on CT's Northeast Corridor line.

Beyond power systems, the biggest difference for the New Haven Line is that its capital budget is largely **managed by ConnDOT**, not the MTA. The New Haven Line, the busiest commuter rail line in the U.S., has a capital investment backlog. While major work is being done to modernize the catenary power system and Stamford's busy station, it may be years before a sizeable train car purchase hits CT. The state has made small purchases to try to keep up with surging ridership, but the money hasn't been allocated to modernize or significantly expand the fleet. Meanwhile, Governor Rowland's Transportation Strategy Board seems to be floundering in its efforts to recommend transportation spending increases to the revenue-averse administration (*MTR #381*).

For the New York systems, the MTA will make an initial purchase of 858 M-7 cars, at a cost of \$2.3 million each. The agency is also planning a future purchase of 400 more, which will cost \$1.7 million each, since the design cost will already be paid. By 2006, three-fourths of the Long Island Railroad fleet will be M-7s, the first of which could be running as early as the end of next month. Metro-North will get

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180 cars in 2004 – half of its electric fleet.

One drawback of the new model is that it holds 13 less passengers per car. Since capacity is maxed at Penn Station and congestion is high in the East River Tunnel, adding more peak hour trains is not an option. According to the *NY Times*, LIRR will run **more trains to Brooklyn and Long Island City** until the East Side Access project opens up more space at Grand Central Terminal (MTR #124).

MTA also announced in late July that it will purchase 660 new NYC subway cars at a cost of \$1 billion. The trains, will run on the A, C, E, J/Z, L, M, N and Q lines starting in 2006.

EPA Study Supports Diesel-Lung Cancer Link

The Environmental Protection Agency issued a study last week that confirmed that long-term exposure to **diesel exhaust causes lung cancer** and other respiratory illnesses, while short-term exposure causes irritation and exacerbates existing conditions.

After decades of research, agency scientists found evidence of the cancer-diesel link in tests of emissions on animals and human occupational exposure.

The study's findings mirror results found in previous research. Research published earlier this year in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* also linked exposure to particulate matter in diesel exhaust to lung cancer (MTR #356). The fact that this study comes from the EPA, however, is significant in terms of national policy, since it sets Clean Air Act standards. **Diesel emission reduction deadlines** set by the Clinton administration would cut emissions of particulate matter by 90 percent and nitrogen oxides by 95 percent, beginning in 2007.

Although the Bush administration has expressed support for the mandate, it has recently expressed interest in a market-based emissions reduction plan. Under that system, a cap would be set for the total emissions of on- and off-road diesel sources, and diesel polluters could bargain for off-sets. The scheme could reduce incentives for truck and bus manufacturers to produce cleaner-running vehicles.

In our region, several transit operations are leading by example. **Long Island Bus** and the **NYC DOT** franchise bus system are the only transit operators actively pursuing a non-diesel fleet. The entire LI Bus system is likely to be running on CNG by early 2004. The fate of the NYC DOT CNG bus program is unclear, given Bloomberg administration budget cutting priorities and the mayor's desire to hand city-supervised bus lines to NYC Transit.

Calendar

Sept. 10, 8am Transportation Strategy Board. Housatonic Community Technical College, 900 Lafayette Blvd., Bridgeport. 860-594-2073 or www.opm.state.ct.us/igp/TSB/tsbinfo.htm

September 12, 11:45 am Transportation Research Forum, "Update of NJ Transit's Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System," Donald Nelson, Washington Group International, Inc. Giovanni's Atrium, 100 Washington St., Manhattan. 212-435-4226 or pgessner@panynj.gov

Sept. 12, 5 pm Voorhees Transportation Center, "Making National Transportation Policy: The Next Surface Transportation Act," Emil Frankel, U.S. DOT Assistant Secretary. Bloustein School, 33 Livingston Ave., New Brunswick. cdanku@rci.rutgers.edu, 732-932-6812 x700.

September 17, 10am to noon Milano Graduate School Public Seminar, "Carried Away: Resolving New York's Garbage Crisis." Wolff Conference Room, 65 Fifth Avenue. 212-229-5418 or www.newschool.edu/milano

September 17, 4:15-6:15pm or 6:45-8:45 pm Long Island Sound Waterborne Transportation Community Planning Workshop. Stamford Gov't Center, 2nd Floor. 888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford. crya@hshassoc.com, 917-339-0488

Sept. 17, 6-8pm Southern Brooklyn Transportation Investment Study Community Liaison Committee. Brooklyn College Student Center, E. 27th St./Campus Rd., 4th Floor. 212-799-8803 x24, www.southernbrooklyntis.com

September 18, 3-7pm Public scoping meeting for widening of Route 9 in Ocean County, NJ. Lakewood Municipal Building, 231 Third Street, Lakewood. 609-530-4899.

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

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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