

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

Port Authority Begins to Tackle Lincoln Tunnel Capacity Crunch

This week, Port Authority staff presented the agency's commissioners with a plan to study ways to get more out of the Lincoln Tunnel's jammed lanes. The main problem facing tunnel managers is that the Exclusive Bus Lane cannot fit more buses.

Adding a second bus lane to the tunnel's peak direction will be tough because it will displace car traffic, but there isn't much choice without closing off the growing **New Jersey-Manhattan commuter market**. The PA appears to want to ease into the second bus lane by allowing some cars to use it, at least during the years before it fills with buses. But they would be subject to a toll surcharge to prevent the lane from being overwhelmed with car traffic.

That would be a variation on the "**high occupancy toll**" (HOT) lanes developed in California, where some drivers pay to use uncongested toll lanes adjacent to clogged-up freeways. An interesting aspect of the PA study will be its estimates of the market for such a lane, with toll rates over and above today's \$5 peak E-ZPass toll, and how much the surcharge will have to be to prevent the uncongested lane from becoming oversubscribed by drivers for whom time is money. ❖

South Orange Forges "Safe Route to Transit"

The "Rahway River Corridor Pedestrian and Bike Path" project was unveiled Tuesday when Congressmen Bill Pascrell and Donald Payne announced they expected to receive \$400,000 for the project in pending federal legislation.

The pathway is notable as a "**safe routes to transit**" project. Few bike-pedestrian projects that provide direct access to train and bus stations have been developed in our suburbs, despite **parking crunches** throughout the regional rail system and the mobility benefits of better connecting cyclists and pedestrians to rail hubs. South Orange officials did thoughtful work, but state DOTs and commuter rail planners need to help foster more such projects.

The path will run along the Rahway River and link residential areas, downtown South Orange, the South Orange Middle School and the South Orange train station. Designers also hope to link it to paths in neighboring municipalities. ❖

West Street Plans — No Grand Boulevard

NY State DOT officials may soon begin work on the southern-most section of the reconstruction of West Street (Route 9A) in lower Manhattan, from Battery Park to W. Thames Street. Because the roadway there was not severely damaged during the Sept. 11 attacks, it still has the same number of lanes as it had previously and is not undergoing formal environmental review. The plan would create a promenade along the west side of the road, and create a needed pedestrian refuge and turn-around lane at Battery Place and **extend the Rte. 9A bikeway** into Battery Park. But it would also leave a disappointingly narrow sidewalk strip along the road's eastern edge — hardly a boulevard feature.

NY State DOT plans for the West Street segment near the World Trade Center site are much the same as they were last winter. The plans are in the midst of a supplemental environmental impact statement, which may be completed in the next month or two, with a hearing tentatively scheduled for the end of June. Most striking to participants at a recent presentation is how closely the "short tunnel" option resembles the "at grade" alternative, with the exception of an expensive, four-lane underpass in the former. Proponents of the tunnel — most notably, **Governor Pataki** — say depressing the lanes will create a better pedestrian environment. However, the at-grade option doesn't have any more surface lanes than the tunnel option, and the ramps leading into the tunnel themselves present barriers to pedestrian crossings. The tunnel plan seems to have very little public support. ❖

4-Year Route 92 EIS Released

The Army Corps of Engineers released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the much-disputed Route 92 Thursday. Early reading by New Jersey's media suggests the Army Corps report favors construction.

According to the *Star-Ledger*, "while the study made no recommendation on which route the road should take, it did say that the plan proposed by the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, coupled with the actions the authority proposed to help minimize damage to the environment, had the least environmental impact."

The Campaign has yet to fully review the 800-page DEIS document, though we will summarize our findings here in coming weeks. It will be especially interesting to compare the DEIS traffic projection vs. that done for the Route 92 environmental assessment some years ago. The latter found Route 92's construction would bring about **10,000 more cars and trucks** onto Route 1 each day by 2015.

It will also be interesting to know whether any results of a McGreevey administration review (*MTR #419*) of the Route 92 project announced in mid-2003 will be incorporated into the DEIS or released in any way as the study is considered by the public.

In a May 2003 letter to the Army Corps of Engineers, the Turnpike Authority's Chief Engineer requested that Corps delay the release of Route 92's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) so that the Authority can work with New Jersey Department of Transportation, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the Governor's Office of Smart Growth to "ensure that all land use, environmental, and transportation issues are ade-

Traffic Calming Works

Speed hump installations are associated with a **53%-60% reduction** in a child's chances of being hurt or killed by a vehicle, a recent study of traffic calming in Oakland, CA has found.

The study, published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, analyzed children who were admitted to a local hospital after being hit by cars, and mapped out locations of speed humps in Oakland. During the study period from 1995-2000, the city installed 1,600 speed humps on residential streets.

The study found that children living within a block of a speed hump saw a 2.5-fold reduction in the chances of being hit by a vehicle on their street.

"Our findings suggest that speed humps make children's living environments safer," wrote the study's authors.

Being hit by a vehicle is the **leading cause of death** among children ages 5 to 14. For the past 20 years, boys and lower income children are the most likely to be involved in such accidents.

A Danish study cited in the report found 72% fewer injuries on streets with traffic calming measures and speed reductions versus "control" streets with none of these infrastructure improvements.

The findings suggest that municipalities in our region should redouble their traffic calming efforts. NYC should energize its once-vigorous speed hump program, and the NJ Legislature should pass pending bills that would empower cities and towns to do more install more traffic calming devices. The report can be found in the April 2004 *American Journal of Public Health* at www.ajph.org/. ❖

quately addressed." What was the outcome of this broad consultation, and how would a road project here fit with **Governor McGreevey's anti-sprawl agenda**? Is a new-alignment highway the best use of transportation dollars (even if they are Turnpike toll revenues) when the state is borrowing heavily to keep its capital program moving?

Some Route 92 supporters are trying to give the plan a smart growth sheen. They say it makes sense to build a highway to accommodate traffic "that will develop on its own," whether the road is built or not. That is the same sophistry many road agencies employ when they forecast population and land use trends without any reference to the transportation system itself.

Of course the presence of Route 92 will influence how and to what extent southern Middlesex County develops, and the fate of the project will be a major test of the governor's campaign for smart growth. ❖

XX Queens Boulevard

Mayor Bloomberg and the NYC DOT have announced they will implement more safety improvements along Queens Boulevard.

But critics, including Transportation Alternatives and Forest Hills pedestrian activists say that while they support the new safety measures, the city still needs to undertake a major overhaul to re-make the boulevard into an attractive, safe place for walking.

The city has installed new fencing to help prevent pedestrians from jaywalking, and has implemented Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) at certain intersections, which give pedestrians more crossing time. Last month, the city installed plastic barriers at the intersection of Queens Boulevard and 65th Place to keep cars in specified turning lanes. It has also added more red light cameras and signs that mark where pedestrians were killed.

Critics say that these improvements cannot overcome the **dangers that are inherent to the boulevard**. Ultimately, DOT has to decide whether it wants Queens Boulevard to be a highway (over a busy subway line that pours out pedestrians) or a boulevard. From 1993 to 2000, there were 72 pedestrian fatalities along the 7.1-mile road. In 2001, there were four; in 2002, there were two; and in 2003, there were five.

Transportation Alternatives considers the street fundamentally flawed. "A rebuilt Queens Boulevard should have a substantially **narrowed roadway** without service roads, a greatly widened median with gardens, playgrounds and ball courts, separated bicycle lanes on the street in both directions and trees on both sides to emphasize the parkway aspects," said a recent Transportation Alternatives publication ❖

Foul Air? Look to Cars, Trucks

Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that over 470 U.S. counties, including every county in New Jersey and Connecticut, and all of New York City have failed the EPA's health based standards for ozone pollution. The EPA findings have led to the standard finger-pointing, with many politicians citing Bush Administration stationary source policies and Midwestern power plants as the cause for the region's bad air. But experts say much of the blame lies at home, in the region's **excessive vehicle emissions**.

NJ Sierra Club Executive Director Jeff Tittel told the *Bergen Record* that cleaning up every out-of-state power plant wouldn't put New Jersey in compliance with federal air standards. He said New Jersey must work harder to reduce the number of cars on the road before looking to blame other states.

Environmental Defense's Andy Darrell opined in a *Newsday* piece, "(New York) needs to invest in clean transportation. It's not news that our roads are choked with congestion, and congestion generates air pollution." Darrell noted that trucks pollute heavily, and a shift of the region's freight from trucks to rail could reduce highway congestion considerably.

Top officials in the region are in fact taking action on car pollution, imposing tougher vehicle emission standards. New York, along with Massachusetts, was one of the first states to do adopt strict California emissions standards in the early 1990's. Governor Pataki and the MTA have also helped significantly reduce **transit bus particulate emissions**, though truck pollution remains an unconquered air pollution frontier.

This past winter, New Jersey adopted the California-level pollution standards, which will start with the 2009 model year. "Automobiles in New Jersey contribute 40% of the pollution that diminishes our air quality, and more than 80% of airborne carcinogens," said Governor McGreevey upon the bill's passage. New Jersey, as our readers know, has also made huge investments in the expansion of its mass transit system over the past decade.

And on Earth Day, the **CT House of Representatives** passed the California standards by a 143-1 vote. The regulations would start with 2008 model year, and along with the new emissions standards, require that 10% of vehicles sold in the state have low or no emissions. Governor Rowland stuck to the "out of state power plants" line, and has beggared mass transit during his tenure, but news reports say he is expected to sign the legislation. ❖

Xanadu No Pleasure Dome for Drivers

The Mills Corp. and Mack-Cali Realty Group may ultimately regret calling their huge development proposed for the NJ Meadowlands "Xanadu." In Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, Xanadu features a "sacred river" in "caverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea ... [where] twice five miles of fertile ground with walls and towers were girdled round..."

The measureless caverns planned for 104 acres in the Meadowlands, mostly on the Continental Arena site, amount to 4.96 million sq. ft. of buildable space, including a 520 room hotel, office buildings, sports and entertainment facilities, and more. Total construction cost: \$1.3 billion. Principal mode of access? **Driving on Route 3** in Bergen County.

A Xanadu project hearing on Tuesday, April 27th is devoted to transportation and air quality. We urge the public to attend the hearings and raise questions — there are many.

The biggest is why the developer did not include any information about the project's traffic impacts on the **morning peak hour** in the DEIS. There is no background information for how much traffic is on Route 120 south, flowing into Route 3 east (toward the Lincoln Tunnel), for instance, and how the project's 1.76 million sq. ft. of office space will impact rush hour. The developers hide behind an arcane and out-of-context NJ DOT regulation about highway access permits, for excluding this vital information.

The project would build **12,500 parking spaces** at full build-out in 2009. The run-off from this much paving alone could lead to a lifeless sea. The office towers will be "twinned" so that they can share parking. A good idea, but the parking management plan referenced in the DEIS is not yet available.

Perhaps the NJ Sports and Exposition Authority (NJ SEA) declared Mills and Mack-Cali the bid winner for the site too quickly? Shouldn't it have awaited the results of the hearings, or held hearings where all developers would have exposed their plans to public scrutiny? Certainly we question the basis for the choice of Xanadu from transportation and environmental perspectives.

NJ SEA's authorizing law requires it to "consult with the Meadowlands Commission and DEP with respect to the ecological factors constituting the environment of the Hackensack meadowlands to the end that the delicate environmental balance of the meadowlands may be maintained and preserved" and to "consult with the Meadowlands Commission before making any determination as to the location, type and character of any project under the jurisdiction of the Meadowlands Commission." If NJ SEA's mind is made up, the burden will fall to DEP and the Meadowlands Commission to ensure this isn't **grid-lock-inducing dumb growth** with a fancy name. ❖

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign web site:

www.tstc.org

IKEA Plan Sparks Brooklyn Jobs, Traffic Fight

IKEA's proposal to build a large new outlet in Red Hook, Brooklyn is dividing the community. Part of it, represented by the Red Hook Civic Association, opposes the plan because of the traffic it will bring. The other, including the Red Hook Tenants Association, wants the 600 or so jobs the store promises. The split is generally along race and class lines.

The store, on a 22 acre site, will be IKEA's largest in the United States. It will generate about **11,000 total car trips** on a busy day, and 100 trucks the company says will mostly run in off-hours. 34% of trips to the store would come from the Gowanus. The plan calls for weekend ferries from Manhattan and new bus service —NYC Transit has reportedly agreed to extend the B77 and B61 buses. The plan would also involve a number of road widenings (including 5-6 lanes around the site on Beard St.). About **1,500 parking spaces** are planned.

The company says Red Hook residents will get a two-week head start to apply for IKEA jobs, which will include benefits. Many who favor the store are still concerned about its transportation impacts.

Of course, development in New York City does not have to mean excessive traffic, but public officials have to be willing to make the company break from its suburban drive-up model.

There is no evidence IKEA is investigating much beyond the transplant of its Elizabeth/Hicksville-type stores to Brooklyn. IKEA consultant Sam Schwartz says at the Elizabeth IKEA, about one third of goods bought by New Yorkers are delivered and the rest taken away by car. Delivery prices there are a flat \$100. Schwartz said a Red Hook delivery company may be able to provide cheaper service, giving customers less reason to drive. Limiting the amount of parking, and charging for it, would also obviously affect how customers travel to the site.

The **Manhattan Institute** has called for Red Hook to be rezoned prior to any major development decisions. "Let's get the rezoning and see what the private sector proposes," Julia Vitullo-Martin wrote in the group's March 2004 newsletter. She chided top officials for ignoring appropriate neighborhood development in favor of projects like stadiums. Another development group, with the support of the Red Hook Civic Association, is discussing a 70-acre mixed use village development in the neighborhood. But that plan may not bring as much new employment to the area as IKEA.

The city land use review process for the IKEA proposal will likely start in the next few months. IKEA wants to open the store by 2006. ❖

Calendar

April 28, 3:30pm-5:30pm, 7:00pm-9:00pm, NYMTC Job Access & Reverse Commute Grant Program Public Grant Application Workshop. 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, Manhattan. 718-472-3032 or dkletsman@dot.state.ny.us.

April 27, 9:30am-8:00pm NJ Meadowlands Xanadu Project, Transportation and Air Quality Hearing - Public Sessions: 11:00am, 3:00pm, 5:00-8:00pm. The Stadium Club, Giants Stadium, 50 State Route 120, East Rutherford. - 201935-8500.

April 27, 7:00pm CT/MTA public hearings on proposed fare increase. Bridgeport Transportation Center, 525 Water St. 860-594-2000.

April 28, 7:00pm CT/MTA public hearings on proposed fare increase. Stamford Gov't Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. 860-594-2000.

April 29, 7:00pm CT/MTA public hearings on proposed fare increase. @ New Haven Union Station, 50 Union Ave. 860-594-2000.

May 2, 7:30am [Bike New York](#): The Great Five Boroughs Bicycle Tour.- car-free bicycle tour of NYC. Starts at Battery Park. 212-932-2453 www.bikenyork.org.

May 4, 3:30pm-5:30pm, 7:00pm-9:00pm, NYMTC Job Access & Reverse Commute Grant Program Public Grant Workshop, Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon St. 718-472-3032 or email dkletsman@dot.state.ny.us

May 4, 12:00pm-1:00pm New York State Bar Association presents: NY's Transportation Problems: Lessons from London.-Speakers Steven Polan, Jeffrey Zupan, Prof. Philip Weinberg. Association of the Bar, 42 West 44th Street, Manhattan.

May 5, 5:30pm Voorhees Transportation Center's Speaker Series, "NJ's Transportation Financing Challenges," NJ Assembly Transp. Chair John Wisniewski. Bloustein School, 33 Livingston Ave., New Brunswick. 732-932-6812, vtc@policy.rutgers.edu

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

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