

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

Opposition to West Side Stadium Swells

The NY Public Interest Group said it would fight construction of a football stadium on Manhattan's west side in a release issued Wednesday. The organization said stadia have a poor track record generating revenue, expressed skepticism about City claims that 70% of the new stadium's patrons will get there by public transportation, and noted the stadium's position and bulk would block off the Hudson waterfront.

NYPIRG also cited troubling legislation proposed by Governor Pataki, which would limit environmental challenges to the related expansion of the Javits Convention Center and possibly to the stadium (see *MTR* #463). The group did not take a position on the **larger redevelopment** of the far West Side, including extension of the #7 subway train, but called on the City and Metropolitan Transportation Authority to have an independent appraisal made of the value of the yards and said that the **MTA must receive fair market value** for its property.

Some observers expect Bloomberg Administration interest in west side development to wane precipitously if the stadium project appears doomed, while others say the stadium itself could create a "dead zone" around it and act as a brake on other development in the area. A majority of New Yorkers polled on the issue oppose public subsidies for stadium construction.

The Regional Plan Association also took a position against the stadium at its board meeting last week, despite concerted lobbying of the group by City Hall. "There is no compelling need to place this facility in a part of the city that should be devoted to high-value, high-density office and residential development," according to a draft RPA report obtained by the *NY Times*. RPA transportation analysis has also said that extending the #7 subway in isolation from other city subway improvements like building the 2nd Avenue line is likely to have disruptive impacts elsewhere in the subway network, especially at the Grand Central station. ❖

Rowland Unlamented by Transit Advocates

Aides for soon-to-be governor of Connecticut **Jodi Rell** told the *Stamford Advocate* that transportation would be on of her top priorities. Although the newspaper piece did not elaborate, Governor Rowland had begun to appreciate the need to invest more in the state's mass transit system after last winter's terrible New Haven Line service outages and as his political fortunes sank under the weight of corruption charges.

Rell will ultimately decide whether the state can find and spend **\$1 billion** to replace the New Haven Line fleet. Rowland said recently he was giving his Office of Policy and Management and ConnDOT until the end of the year to figure out how to buy the new rail cars. Also likely at issue in the near term is whether the I-95 "**commuter shoulders**" project to open the highway's safety shoulders to rush hour car traffic in Fairfield County. The project appears to have been pushed more by Rowland than by ConnDOT, and has aroused a significant chorus of oppositions and safety reservations. Will the project continue or recede along with Rowland?

Rell takes over for Rowland on **July 1st**. While Rell's stances on particular are unknown, it would take some doing for her administration to treat mass transit and transportation as badly as Rowland did over 10 years. His tenure was marked by several attempts to close smaller commuter rail lines, underinvestment and erosion of existing transit infrastructure, and the launch of the Transportation Strategy Board, which outlined problems and consumed considerable public attention but did not result in significant changes in policy or spending. ❖

Hearing Confirms Dislike of West Street Tunnel

The people have spoken: They don't want a West Street Tunnel.

Politicians, civic and environmental advocates and many Lower Manhattan residents spoke against the proposal to build a bypass tunnel under West Street last Thursday at the final public hearing on the rebuilding of West Street.

Of the 31 speakers, only one – a representative of the NY State Contractors Association – spoke in favor of building the tunnel.

The draft supplemental environmental impact

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign web site:

www.tstc.org

statement studies three different options for rebuilding the portion of West Street that was destroyed in the September 11, 2001 attack. These include keeping West Street an at-grade six-lane road, adding two lanes to make it an at-grade eight-lane, and building a bypass tunnel. The tunnel would cost \$860 million – almost \$700 million more than the at-grade options.

Governor Pataki supports the tunnel, and proponents claim it will reduce noise around the 9/11 memorial, but politicians, businesses, and residents don't agree. The tunnel will make it more difficult for pedestrians to cross significant portions of the highway and could attract more traffic to Lower Manhattan.

Representatives for State Assembly **Speaker Sheldon Silver**, Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, and state Senator Martin Connor spoke against the tunnel, as did representatives of the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown, Regional Plan Association, Coalition to Save West Street, NYPIRG-Straphangers, and the Tri-State Campaign.

If overwhelming opposition to the tunnel does not give the Governor enough incentive to call NYS DOT off of the project, the **legal challenges** likely to ensue if the tunnel is pursued might give him pause. Speakers raised doubts about the legality of supplementing an EIS that was drafted in 1994 when the conditions in Lower Manhattan were markedly different and when the tunnel question was not even on the table. Speakers also questioned the sufficiency of the SDEIS's cumulative impact analysis and plans to minimize air impacts during construction.

NYSDOT will continue to accept written comments on the project until **July 28**, the last day comments can be postmarked. ❖

Where Train Lines Cross But Don't Meet

Transit advocates and elected officials gathered Friday to urge NYC Transit to provide a permanent MetroCard street transfer between Broadway station on the G line and Hewes Street station on the J/M line. Advocates said it would be a simple customer service improvement for north Brooklyn subway riders, who will be inconvenienced by periodic L train service shutdowns as a new signal system is installed. NYC Transit has agreed to implement temporary paper transfers between the two stations during the shutdowns, but refuses to continue the initiative permanently with MetroCards. Data from February indicate that 49% of subway riders still pay per ride, rather than use unlimited ride MetroCards that already permit the transfer.

The Campaign was joined at a news conference by State Assemblymember Joseph Lentol and staff of State Senator Martin Malave Dilan. ❖

NYC Street Safety Held Hostage

One of many unresolved legislative issues as Albany fumbles its way into summer is the legal status of New York City's red light cameras. The state legislature maintains control over the survival and extent of the camera program by including sunset clauses each time it authorizes the program. The city's authorization to use its 50 cameras will expire at the end of 2004 unless the legislature extends it. Traffic calming advocates want the program expanded, because the cameras have a clear track record in reducing crashes at intersections they are deployed in.

The State Senate has acted on extending the program. However, the State Assembly has held the program up. **Assembly Codes Committee chair Joseph Lentol** surprised traffic safety advocates by suggesting in recent news articles that the cameras' purpose and placement have been more about revenue for the city than deterrence. Last winter, Lentol presided over the NYS Assembly's fact-finding hearing on reducing injuries and deaths caused by reckless or negligent drivers (MTR 449), and helped push truck route safety legislation through the legislature last year. Many witnesses at the February hearing, including NYC DOT Commissioner Iris Weinshall, testified to the efficacy of red-light cameras in deterring dangerous driving.

NYC would like more of the cameras, because they work well. Commissioner Weinshall declared in a recent letter to the editor that NYC red light camera intersections saw a 10% overall reduction in collision-related injuries and a **19% decline in pedestrian injuries** over six years, as well as lower incidence of light running. The NYC City Council recently passed a home-rule resolution – a request to the legislature – that the camera program be expanded by another 50 and be extended until 2008. That measure has not been taken up in Albany.

This month, Brooklyn Community Board 1, in Lentol's district, agreed with the city in a resolution calling on the state to allow a minimum of 100 red-light cameras. Transportation committee members had heard that Lentol was holding the red-light camera program up to win funding to reopen several firehouses. The committee opposed holding one public safety issue hostage to another.

Transportation Alternatives denounced the bargaining tactic in a release, telling Lentol and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver to get out of the way of city traffic safety improvements once and for all. ❖

NJT Continues Look at Route 1 Rapid Buses

Last week NJ Transit held open houses in Lawrenceville and West Windsor to offer information about various alternatives to bring bus rapid transit (BRT) service to the Route 1 corridor, and to elicit feedback on general transportation along the route.

NJ Transit told the Central Jersey Transportation Forum less than two years ago that Route 1 BRT would be feasible only if key municipalities **greatly increase employment and residential densities**. Transit said West Windsor and Plainsboro townships would have to concentrate 26,000 jobs and 2,600 households in areas that would be served by the rapid bus service for it to attract 760 peak hour riders. Despite this, members of the forum have insisted that NJ Transit press on with the concept.

It is unclear whether the municipalities accept that transit viability requires greater density, or are part of an increasingly large group of local governments that insist on transit lines as an antidote to traffic congestion, without accepting the **basic conditions** mass transit needs to survive.

The current work is being undertaken to see if ridership and other projections meet Federal Transit Administration funding criteria.

The area studied, the Route 1 corridor between North Brunswick and Trenton, is known for high-levels of rush hour and weekend traffic congestion.

Most bus rapid transit systems being developed in the United States operate in cities like Boston and Los Angeles, or serve will express bus routes from suburbs to central business districts (for instance, the New Britain-Hartford busway — MTR #364).

NJ Transit may find greener pastures for BRT service along its busy **north Jersey routes**. According to 2002 NJ Transit data, the six bus routes with the highest ridership in the state are in and around Newark — improving speeds and reliability on these routes would offer some rare service improvements for NJ's bus riding population (who outnumber NJ train riders 2-1, despite overwhelming media focus on train issues), and would allow Transit to build a strong existing rider base rather than trying to create entirely new mass transit markets. ❖

Calendar

June 29, 4:00pm-8:00pm. New York City Economic Development Corporation: Cross Harbor Freight Movement Project - Public Hearing @ PS 11 Cafeteria 886 Bergen Avenue Jersey City NJ, 877-942-7347 www.crossharborstudy.com

June 30, 1 pm. Steering committee meeting for New Haven-Springfield commuter rail project. ConnDOT building, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington. 203-865-2191

June 30, 4pm. Public scoping meeting for rail freight yard project at the Pilgrim State Hospital site in Islip, NY. NY State Dept. of Transportation. Brentwood North Middle School, 350 Wicks Rd. 631-952-6647.

June 30, 4:30-7:30. Public info forum on the renovation of North White Plains train station. Metro-North Railroad. At the train station, Harlem Avenue, N. White Plains. 888-836-8301. www.mta.info (planning studies section).

July 1, 6pm. Manhattan Community Board 5 Land Use Committee meeting on Hudson Yards (stadium/Javits/#7 subway, rezoning) DEIS, Fashion Institute of Technology, 27th street between 7th and 8th Aves, Building C, 9th floor. 212-465-0907.

July 8, 12:15pm. Long Island Railroad Com-muter's Council monthly meeting. 347 Madison

Ave., 10th floor, Manhattan. 212-878-7087. www.pcac.org.

July 8, 6pm. Manhattan Community Board 5 public hearings on Hudson Yards (stadium/Javits/#7 subway, rezoning) DEIS, Fashion Institute of Technology Building A, 27th Street and 8th Ave, 8th floor. 212-465-0907.

July 21, 11 am. NY State DOT advisory panel hearing on long range state transportation plan. Offices of the Long Island Association. 80 Haupt-pauge Rd., Commack. 518-457-6400

July 22, 11 am. NY State DOT advisory panel hearing on long range state transportation plan. St. John's University, 101 Murray Street, Manhat-tan. 518-457-6400.

July 23, 9 am. Central Jersey Transportation Forum. BRT, long range plans and other top-ics. 201 Washington Rd. (Sarnoff), Prince-ton. Delaware Valley Regional Planning Com-mission. 215-592-1800, www.dvrpc.org.

July 27, 11 am. NY State DOT advisory panel hearing on long range state transportation plan. Orange/Ulster County BOCES, Gibson Rd., Goshen. 518-457-6400.

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