

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

Two Question 2's, Two Thumbs Up

We urge NY State voters to vote in favor of **Proposition 2** on next Tuesday's ballot. The measure will add a badly-needed \$2.9 billion to essential mass transit and state DOT construction programs.

We urge New Jersey voters to vote in favor of **Ballot Question 2**, which will create a dedicated funding source for a program to reduce emissions from publicly-owned diesel vehicles. ❖

Nassau Democrats Miss the Bus

Last week, the Nassau County legislature dismissed cries from bus riders and transit advocates for more funding for Long Island Bus service. The Legislature returned the County's budget to County Executive Suozzi for approval with a flat \$10.5 million allocation to **Long Island Bus**, the same allocation the agency received last year.

Because Long Island Bus is experiencing record ridership, anticipated at 31 million for 2005, and because service is inadequate to begin with, riders and advocates requested funds for modest service improvements. Unfortunately, Nassau legislators turned a deaf ear, some convincing themselves Long Island Bus has all the money it needed.

At public hearings on the budget, in response to TSTC testimony requesting more Nassau money, the legislature's Presiding Officer **Judy Jacobs** said in a perfect world, she could take the bus to work, but in reality could not because **it would take too long**. Though the comment indeed made transit advocates' case about lousy service, Jacobs continued to say that the service had all the money it needed. County funding levels are still lower than they were in 1999, despite the county's recent declaration that its fiscal crisis has ended.

Legislators Roger Corbin and Kevan Abrahams were the only two Nassau legislators to take a challenge issued by the Tri-State Campaign and Long Island ACORN to take the bus to work in Mineola once during the budget season. Legislator Francis Becker also said he would try to take the bus but never did. Republican leader Peter Schmitt and others seemed willing to increase Long Island Bus funding, but Jacobs' continued contention that the bus system needed no more, despite multiple explanations of the facts, sabotaged the debate. ❖

Forrester, Corzine Clearer on What They Won't Do

The hopefuls for governor of New Jersey have had little to say about transportation specifics. That is largely because any proposal would immediately be met with questions about how the candidates intend to pay for basic transportation needs, let alone any new initiative. New Jersey's existing sources of transportation revenue will be entirely allocated to debt service by mid-2006, and before election day, the candidates will not get behind a tax plan to resolve the issue.

Jon Corzine appears more accepting of the need for the state to **find new revenue** to keep improving its transportation system, but has ruled out a gasoline tax increase in the face of higher gas prices. Doug Forrester pledges to fund transportation from **existing state revenues**, which sounds like a recipe for a smaller overall program and constant jerry-rigging of transportation budgets. While there is some "bleed" from transportation-related revenues into the state general fund, recapturing will not provide enough for an adequate transportation budget. We fear fewer dollars for transportation will reduce likelihood for mass transit expansion, continue the squeeze on NJ Transit's operating budget. It would **slash investment** for bike/pedestrian infrastructure and an expanded rail freight system, both areas that need much more spending, not less.

The candidates recently gave the statements reproduced below to **New Jersey Future**, which published them in its #4, 2005 newsletter:

Forrester: I have signed a no-new-tax pledge—I will not raise taxes in New Jersey, including the gas tax. New Jersey families and seniors are already overwhelmed by our state's tax burden, and we cannot afford to levy another tax on New Jersey families. We can solve our transportation problems by putting the trust back in the transportation trust fund.

As governor, I will require the transportation trust funds to be set aside for exclusively transportation expenses. We must prevent the state government from using trust funds to cover other state expenses. I will also avoid recreating this crisis by requiring that revenues generated for capital and long-term infrastructure development are used only for those

purposes—not for annual operating expenses.

Similar to the action taken by other states, I would also like to examine a system that pools all of the transportation revenue — by streamlining DMV fees and other transportation-related income, we can appropriately match transportation revenue and expenses and reinvest those revenues in the state’s roads and bridges.

As a businessman, I understand the importance of maintaining our valuable infrastructure. As governor, I will reverse the poor planning, wasted funds, and irresponsible borrowing that have created a transportation mess in New Jersey.

Corzine: A world-class transportation system is vital to New Jersey’s economic future, and we must ensure that we have adequate funding to pay for necessary repairs and upgrades. We should not take any funding options off the table; however, given the recent spike in oil and gas prices that is squeezing family budgets, I believe we must find other alternatives to raising the gas tax.

We also need to reform the Transportation Trust Fund, which has been mismanaged for a decade. I will end the practice of raiding the Trust Fund to pay for operating costs and ensure the Trust Fund gets all of the gas tax revenue. My administration will fund transportation projects based on the needs and priorities of New Jersey drivers and rail passengers, not the needs or priorities of politicians. And I will oversee the management of the fund to ensure that it is no longer abused.

Mayoral Race: Positions, Perspective

Transportation issues have not weighed heavily in the NYC mayoral contest. There were brief exchanges about congestion pricing in the Democratic primary debates (*MTR #507*) and an argument about the mayor’s record of fighting transit fare increases in the most recent Bloomberg-Ferrer debate. But transport-watchers have to do a little digging to evaluate what the next city administration’s transportation priorities and policies may be.

Challenger **Fernando Ferrer** has not issued a transportation position paper, but various remarks and past positions show that he:

- Has opposed recent transit fare hikes.
- Supports building the 2nd Avenue subway and West Side #7 subway extension.
- Has not offered any details on how to better pay for future transit needs or big projects.
- Favors banning cars from Central Park.
- Supports the Cross-Harbor rail freight tunnel.

Ferrer seems all over the map on toll policy, probably promising the status quo in a future administration. During the primary debates, Ferrer

opposed East River bridge tolls, invoking the myth of the working stiff who drives to work in Manhattan, while incongruently pining that “we have to find a way to get them to use mass transit.” But Ferrer also appeared to say that tolls at MTA bridges should be raised to reduce traffic. During the 2001 race, Ferrer advocated removing tolls from the MTA’s Verrazano Bridge (*MTR #313*). In a recent NY League of Conservation Voters questionnaire, Ferrer said he supported congestion pricing, but **in the context of an overall plan** with expanded rail freight, an efficient subway system and more ferries. How’s that for a first-term agenda?

Ferrer says on his web site that he will give greater priority to mass transit security than Mayor Bloomberg has. Ferrer heavily criticized the city’s enforcement of Sunday metered parking rules, helping promote the City Council’s ridiculous suspension of those regulations this fall.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s campaign web page does not lay out a transportation policy or promises, in contrast to 2001 (*MTR #325*). Interestingly, Bloomberg’s list of accomplishments indicates that the problem of burgeoning **truck traffic in city neighborhoods** may be getting through — the theme of reducing truck impacts runs through the “environment” and “quality of life” sections. The mayor points to his solid waste plan (which we think is far from implementation) for its potential to remove from the city “3 million truck miles” annually, progress on a long-standing plan to activate a rail link between Staten Island’s Howland Hook container terminal and New Jersey rail lines (reducing “traffic on Staten Island by 100,000 trips a year”) and spotlights local projects to shift trucks from a residential corner of Astoria onto the Grand Central Parkway and to reroute trucks away from residential sections of Hunts Point.

Bloomberg also lists as accomplishments a 10% reduction in subway crime and his plan to reduce noise pollution (though he vetoed legislation to restrict after-market car alarms). He touts renovated Staten Island ferry terminals and new ferry boats, projects that began some years before he took office, as well as recent increases in S.I. Ferry frequency (largely an initiative of the City Council). He notes the progress of greenway projects around the city, especially around the Manhattan waterfront and in Queens.

Aside from official campaign materials, there is a broader Bloomberg record to consider. “MetroCard Mike” made a splash when he began to ride the subway to City Hall, and Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff is a some-time bicycle commuter. But it’s unclear their examples have much affected **municipal car culture**. A recent Transportation Alternatives report found that NYC bureaucrats drive to work at twice

the rate of the city's overall commuting population (MTR #508). This is largely due to city-subsidized parking for its workers.

Bloomberg's attempts to impact major MTA issues has been halting at best. His MTA board representatives voted in favor of the 2003 fare increase, but opposed this year's hike in discounted MetroCard prices. The mayor was all but silent on Governor Pataki's underfunding of the MTA 2005-2009 capital program, and attempted to push the transit system to **forego a fair price** on West Side rail yard development rights to promote the Jets stadium plan (and continues to promote major development plans without regard for transportation consequences or connections). The mayor now supports passage of the transportation bond act in next week's election. He has proposed that the city pay for extending the #7 subway to the Far West Side, but impetus for the project is unclear with demise of the stadium.

Bloomberg has taken the needed step of shifting the city's **franchised bus services to the MTA umbrella**, and has maintained city funding for those lines. The full transfer remains incomplete. Some Queens riders may still fault the mayor's hands-off approach to the 2002 bus strike, which probably prolonged the outage.

In 2001, Bloomberg campaigned for returning NYC Transit to city government, similar in concept to the city's absorption of the school system under the mayor's leadership, but has apparently dropped the idea (it was taken up by Anthony Weiner in the Democratic primary race). He also urged development of a "surface subway" — dedicated bus-ways — on Manhattan's East Side. The city is now working with NYC Transit on bus rapid transit ideas—reportedly, a study has been finished but the city is holding it back until after the election.

During the post-Sept. 11 fiscal crisis, the mayor floated East River bridge tolls, but generally left the field to critics intent on shouting down the idea. In a recent statement to the NY League of Conservation Voters, Bloomberg said he is open to congestion pricing but **cited London business groups' complaints** that congestion charging there has reduced business activity.

The city's street environment has remained largely unchanged in the Bloomberg administration. Traffic calming installation appears to have slowed. The city continues to add bicycle lanes, though generally on streets without heavy or dangerous traffic. Many cyclists may take more notice of the most aggressive police stance against cycling since Mayor Koch tried to ban bikes from three Midtown avenues. Mayor Bloomberg has supported a larger red light camera program, but has not exerted the public pressure needed to overcome the State Assembly's unreasonable opposition to the policy.

Below the Radar in New Jersey

Away from the televised attack-ads in the statewide race, candidates and advocacy groups are debating issues and projects that may affect the future economy, environment and quality of life in New Jersey.

The largest is state-wide **Ballot Question 2**. A "Yes" result there will create dedicated funding for a diesel cleanup program that was signed into law by Acting Governor Codey this summer. It requires New Jersey to retrofit publicly-owned **diesel vehicles** to reduce emissions. Without the constitutional amendment at issue on the ballot, the program will likely be starved for money in future years. Environmental groups strongly support the initiative.

The controversial Turnpike Authority plan to build "**Route 92**" across Middlesex County, though seemingly moribund, still attracts political attention. Republican state assembly candidates Bill Baroni and Mike Paquette firmly oppose the road. Democrats Linda Greenstein and Dan Benson won't give a firm position, saying they want to see the long-awaited final EIS before pronouncing judgment.

Potential rail projects are also a hot issue. There is disagreement on the possible alignment of a **Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex** (MOM) passenger rail line. Assembly candidates from Monmouth and Ocean counties generally support NJ Transit's preferred line from Lakehurst to Matawan, though some of that alignment has already become a greenway. Those in Middlesex are unanimous in backing the Monmouth Junction line, which would serve parts of South Brunswick.

Although NJ Transit has stated at public meetings that the development density needed to support rail in **Sussex County** does not exist, it has not stopped local Assembly candidates from pushing for activation of the "Lackawanna Cutoff," extending commuter service from Morris County into Pennsylvania. Among assembly candidates, only Democratic challenger Brian Murphy opposes the idea, stating he doesn't believe it will save many car trips.

Freight rail remains an issue in **Union County**. Despite the support of county Freeholders, there is near universal opposition among current legislative candidates to the reactivation of the Rahway Valley Line and the Staten Island Railway freight lines. Incumbent Republican Assemblymen Bramnick and Munoz say they oppose the plans, as does a Democratic opponent, Bruce Bergen. But Democrat Steven Merman supports expanded rail freight. NIMBY activists have opposed rail freight expansion plans in Union County towns for several years.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign web site:

www.tstc.org

Why Car-Oriented Development for S. Bronx ?

As environmental reviews for both the Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market — a large retail mall — and the new **Yankee Stadium** continue to move forward, questions about the true impact of the projects continue to mount – and South Bronx community groups are demanding answers.

On Tuesday, the NYSDOT gave a presentation to Bronx Community Board 4's Municipal Services Committee on the major rehabilitation of bridges and ramps it will perform in the vicinity of the projects. NYSDOT has been working with **Metro-North** to ensure that these projects leave room for the long-sought Yankee Stadium **rail station**.

Unfortunately, the station is not part of the project.

Instead, the Bronx is getting more parking. Four new garages with a total of 5,254 spaces will be constructed for stadium patrons, while 3,216 spaces will be added for Gateway Center, all in close proximity to the Major Deegan Expressway.

The Yankees, NYC Parks, and NYC Economic Development Corporation will have the opportunity to explain why there is no transit component to these projects on Nov. 17th at a town hall meeting with Bronx Borough President Carrión and CB 4.

Some of the questions interested groups would like answered:

- Why can't these private developers put money toward mass transit infrastructure?
- Why two separate environmental impact statements for projects that are literally right next to each other, when the parking, construction, and traffic impacts of the two projects will compound each other, and there may be shared use of some of the anticipated parking?
- Why do both studies cursorily assert that because the new stadium will have fewer seats than the old, there will be **no increase in game-day traffic**, despite the dramatic increase in parking?
- Why is there discrepancy between the two studies about existing parking — the stadium DEIS claims there are currently 7,079 spaces available in the vicinity, and the Gateway Center DEIS claims 8,072 ?

The meeting will be held Thursday, Nov. 17, at 6 PM, at the Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice, 244 East 163rd Street.

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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Calendar

November 10, 8:30-10:00am. Municipal Art Society: "Large-Scale Plans Removed from the Public Review-Case Study: Atlantic Yards." 457 Madison Avenue. RSVP to Maia Mordana at 212-935-3960 or planning@mas.org.

November 10, Noon. Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Ave., 10th Floor. 212-878-7087. Discussion of Tappan Zee Bridge transit/replacement project.

November 10, 12:15pm. Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council meeting. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor Board Room. 212-878-7087.

November 16, 8:00 a.m. Jan Gehl, renowned architect and urban designer, speaks at the NYU Rudin Center. on walking and cycling in urban environments, recent work in London. Register via mnn2@nyu.edu or 212-998-7545. 295 Lafayette Street, 2nd Floor.

November 17, 12:15pm. NYC Transit Riders Council meeting. 347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor Board Room. 212-878-7087.

November 17, 6pm. Bronx Borough President Carrion, Community Board 4—public meeting with city agencies on new Yankee Stadium, Gateway Center mall impacts. 244 E. 163rd Street, The Bronx.

November 22, 6:00-8:00pm. Auto-Free NY: "Light Rail in a Red State! Some Insights from Dallas and Houston." NYPD Center, 104 Washington St., Conference Room. 212-475-3394.

December 1, 8:30am-1:00pm. "Can Growth Work for NY's Communities? Community Development, Social and Environmental Justice, and the City's Future." Pratt Manhattan, 144 W. 14th Street, Room 213. 718-636-3486 x2678.

December 5, 8:15am-1:30pm. "Creating Sustainable Land Use and Transportation Plans," organized by the Municipal Land Use Center and Project for Public Spaces. Colts Neck, NJ. www.njsmartchoices.org.

December 8, 8:30-10:00am. Municipal Art Society: "How Much Can Rezoning Accomplish as a Planning Tool" - Case Study: Staten Island." 457 Madison Avenue. RSVP to Maia Mordana at 212-935-3960 or planning@mas.org.

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