

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

Bloomberg Gets Bad Advice from City DOT

New York City government has found another half-measure to implement on the inevitable path to banning cars from its centerpiece parks — **Manhattan's Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park**. In June, the city will institute a new rules that largely limit car use of the parks' loop drives to rush hour peak-direction travel. Thus, no use of the Central Park east drive above 72nd Street in the morning, and so forth.

The mayor announced the step a day before a City Council transportation committee hearing on Intro 276, a bill to close the park drives to all motor traffic for a summer trial period (*MTR #528*).

In the announcement, Mayor Bloomberg echoed the NYC DOT's long-standing but statistically-challenged position that the park drives are "key commuting arteries."

"It would be better if you didn't have cars in parks," the mayor admitted to the *NY Times*. But at the Council hearing, city transportation Commissioner Iris Weinshall and Deputy Commissioner Michael Primeggia claimed a park car-ban would significantly worsen traffic congestion. When Transportation Chair John Liu questioned why roads in parks are treated as part of the transportation network at all, Primeggia said that horse carriages and then cars have used the roads throughout the parks' history.

"It's always been this way" and bureaucratic turf defense are both sorry justifications for a policy that provides a route for a **miniscule fraction of cars** in Manhattan and robs many city residents of scarce recreational space, especially in a city that closes down major avenues routinely for reasons as obscure as tests of parade balloons.

The DOT's threats evoke the city traffic department's predictions of traffic chaos when cars were barred from traversing Washington Square Park in the 1950s, which turned out to be dead wrong. The City Council should give car-free summer in the parks a shot — Intro 276 offers both a trial period and a study to measure its success.

Transportation Alternatives is conducting a mobilizing campaign to persuade Council Speaker Christine Quinn to approve Intro 276 — transalt.org. ❖

Transit Funding Measure Awaits Rell Signature

Our coverage of the recently enacted Connecticut transportation funding legislation (*MTR #528*) used as its source a next-to-final copy of the bill considered by the legislature, rather than a later draft that eliminated some policy provisions we had described. That later version was ultimately approved by lawmakers and is expected to be signed into law by Governor Rell shortly.

The enacted law removed the provision for a new "**Undersecretary of Transit and Growth**" in the administration's Office of Policy and Budget (OPM), instead charging the entire OPM with coordinating the work of state transportation, environment and economic agencies. The legislation makes some provision for the use of certain state grants to promote transit-oriented development and retains the priority for mass transit projects we had described earlier. Only experience will show whether the state and an unreformed ConnDOT will begin to coordinate development and transportation investments with smart growth methods that minimize future traffic generation. ❖

A Price on the L.I.E. ?

Is he for or against? Nassau County Executive and NY State gubernatorial candidate Thomas Suozzi has been mincing words over the idea of tolls on the Long Island Expressway ever since he unleashed a media frenzy on the issue with an off-the-cuff remark at a Regional Plan Association conference in May (*MTR #529*). Last week, Suozzi announced he is against tolls but wants to study "congestion mitigation pricing."

What Suozzi seems to mean is that he opposes a flat toll for all drivers on the L.I.E., but may be for a system that charges tolls to solo drivers using the L.I.E.'s carpool lane — a so called "**high occupancy/toll lane** (HO/T)."

The political advantage of high-occupancy/toll lanes is that the only people who pay are those who choose to. A highway's general purpose lanes remain as they are now.

A May 26 *NY Times* piece on Suozzi's discussion of these issues attributed the writer's premise that special toll lanes amount to "Lexus lanes" to Tri-State Campaign director Jon Orcutt, when in fact

Orcutt told the reporter that HO/T lanes had won support across the socioeconomic spectrum in California because they are available to all on an as-needed basis, and are not used only by regular, well-off drivers. The article claimed the idea was going nowhere in this region because of equity concerns, but it is actually **under consideration** for existing HOV lanes in the **Hartford** area, the **Lincoln Tunnel** and for a replacement **Tappan Zee Bridge**.

It's likely the idea of high occupancy/toll lanes could go over better with Long Islanders if they understand how it works. Both Suozzi and the press will have to work harder to articulate the details.

Suozzi recently set up a task force that includes the Tri-State Campaign to recommend traffic busting initiatives for Nassau County. He deserves credit for broaching an innovative solution to a tough problem. Hopefully this "Traffic Working Group" will add light to the heat the issue has already generated. ❖

NJ to Carpoolers:

Make way for low-mileage SUVs !

New Jersey has started a pilot program to allow single-passenger hybrid vehicles to use NJ Turnpike carpool lanes. However, unlike New York and California, Governor Corzine's plan grants this benefit to all hybrid-powered vehicles instead of only those that achieve a minimum miles-per-gallon. New York has a 40 MPG limit. California's is 45.

In many cases, New Jersey allows vehicles with lower average fuel efficiency than standard-engine cars to use the HOV lane.

Fuel efficiency comparison for some hybrid and non-hybrid vehicles:

Hybrids (allowed in NJ Turnpike HOV Lanes)

	city/highway
Honda Insight Hybrid	61/66 mpg
Toyota Prius Hybrid	60/51 mpg
Honda Civic Hybrid	49/51 mpg
--- NY/California mpg cut-off for special lanes ---	
Honda Accord Hybrid	30/37 mpg
Ford Escape	36/31 mpg
Mazda Tribute Hybrid	33/29 mpg
Mercury Mariner Hybrid	33/29 mpg
Lexus RX400H Hybrid	33/28 mpg
Toyota Highlander Hybrid	33/27 mpg

Non-Hybrids (3 passengers to use Turnpike HOV)

VW Beetle (Diesel)	37/44 mpg
VW Jetta	35/42 mpg
Toyota Corolla	30/38 mpg
Pontiac Vibe	30/36 mpg
Mini Cooper	28/36 mpg
Nissan Sentra	28/35 mpg
Mazda 3	28/35 mpg
Ford Focus Station Wagon	26/34 mpg ❖

City Subway Use Soaring

Subway ridership in 2005 was the highest it's been since 1953 at over 1.4 billion total rides. The number, recently reported by NYC Transit, represents a 1.6% increase over 2004's total. Transit officials attribute the increase to a strong economy and last winter's holiday discount program.

Bus ridership, however, was down slightly (half of one percent) from 2004, to 736 million. Transit attributed the bus decline to the February 2005 fare increase, though obviously that also affected subways. Buses that are chronically mired in traffic is likely a factor as well.

Over ten years, there has been a massive rebound in subway use from New York City's struggles in the 1980s and early 1990s. Specific bus ridership numbers for the same period were not available, but NYC Transit charts indicate that demand for subways has rebounded much faster than bus riding. It's worth noting that buses now account for only one third of total transit trips in NYC. But in the 1960s and early 1970s, bus ridership made up a much larger percentage, at close to 40-45% of total transit use.

Annual Subway Ridership 1995-2005

	% change 1995-2005	% change 2004-2005	1995 total (mill)	2005 total (mill)
Manhattan	40%	1.60%	580	812
Bronx	49%	2.30%	81	121
Brooklyn	47%	1.80%	202	298
Queens	37%	1.10%	159	219
Total	42%	1.60%	1,021	1,449

Numbers may not total completely due to rounding. Also, NYCT adjusts ridership numbers slightly to account for fare beating and other factors. The 2005 adjustment is 1.5 million.

The numbers pose at least two questions for Transit. First, how can it speed implementation of bus rapid transit innovations so **buses become a more attractive option** and absorb continued growth in demand for transit service? Second, **is there enough room in the subways** for the million more people NYC is expected to gain in the coming decades? What subway improvements are necessary for each borough to ensure that they continue to thrive? ❖

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign web site:

www.tstc.org

For Tappan Zee Transit, Highest Ridership Option out of Running

Agencies conducting the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement project recently released detailed modeling results for a variety of potential cross-Hudson mass transit options.

A **commuter rail link** from Rockland to Manhattan via the Tappan Zee and Hudson Line, **coupled with Rockland-Westchester bus rapid transit** service would see the highest ridership of all options. Unfortunately, that alternative has been removed from further consideration by the Thruway, Metro-North and NYS DOT, because, study results notwithstanding, the agencies say that “Rockland County cannot support duplicative transit service.”

The study team should reconsider this option, since it will see high use in both the east-west and Manhattan-bound travel markets.

Two options that included light rail across the entire corridor have also been eliminated from further study as too costly relative to their benefits.

Full corridor bus rapid transit would serve the most east-west trips (the largest share of trips con-

gesting the Tappan Zee Bridge today), while full corridor commuter rail (with a one-seat ride to both Manhattan and east-west across Westchester and Rockland counties) would see the highest NYC-bound transit use.

The ridership model assumed various economic and demographic dynamisms. For example, full corridor BRT alone saw higher east-west use than full corridor BRT with a Rockland-Manhattan link. This is presumably because the model assumed the rail connection would increase jobs in Manhattan and proportionately reduce them in Westchester, and perhaps change housing locations for some. At some point soon, the lead agencies will have to better explain these assumptions to the public.

The environmental review still to come will take into consideration New Jersey’s plan for a new **commuter rail tunnel under the Hudson River** into an expanded Penn Station. The project has strong support and would improve service along the MNR/NJ Transit west-of-Hudson lines. It therefore has the potential to reduce the number of people interested in using a Rockland-Manhattan connection via the Tappan Zee Bridge.

Locations of stations and the potential for transit-oriented development could also affect future ridership. So far, the lead agencies have done very little in this regard.

Next week we will report on the capital and operating costs of the various alternatives.

Strong Demand for NJ Transit Villages

Forty-two different municipalities have applied to the NJ DOT/NJ Transit transit village program in the last three years, but only five have received the designation. 16 municipalities have become transit villages since the program’s inception in 1999.

For three years straight, Linden, East Orange, and Trenton and have applied to be transit villages and ten other towns and cities have applied twice. Of those that have applied multiple times, only Jersey City has become an official transit village.

The DOT says most applications are denied either because the municipality’s plan is incomplete or **does not include enough additional residential development** near a transit station. The most important part of a transit village application is a mixed use development plan with a large residential component.

Secaucus first with affordable housing

The Township of Secaucus is one municipality that is re-applying for transit village designation. Its application was rejected twice before because the transit village plans were not finalized.

Secaucus’ plan has been controversial, because

Transit Ridership in T-Z Corridor, 2025

	Total annual ridership, 2025	East-West ridership	Ridership to/from NYC
Full corridor commuter rail (CR)	57,000	24,400	32,600
Full corridor light rail (LR) *	28,000	22,800	5,200
Full corridor bus rapid transit (BRT)	49,000	42,000	7,000
Rockland-Manhattan-CR; full corridor BRT*	63,700	33,700	30,000
Manhattan bound CR; full corridor light rail *	55,400	27,400	28,000
Manhattan bound CR; LR in Westchester	54,000	21,400	32,600
Manhattan bound CR; BRT in Westchester	61,700	30,700	31,000

Source: *Alternatives Analysis*, Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 environmental review. Asterik (*) denotes options the agencies do not intend to study in the full EIS.

unlike other applicants, it does not hope to augment its existing downtown. Instead, it wants to create second one by adding a hotel, residential, and commercial properties on top of and surrounding Secaucus Junction train station. Currently, industrial zoning and freight facilities surround the station.

Secaucus' transit village hopes have also made news for another reason: it recently changed its plan to **include affordable housing**. If approved by the DOT, it would be the first transit village approval to contain such a component. Despite the DOT's request that applicants "incorporate some affordable housing within walking distance of transit," none now do. At a forum sponsored last fall by the Coalition for Affordable Housing and the Environment, **then-candidate Jon Corzine** promised to require that all transit villages include affordable housing.

Secaucus' plan also includes a 1.5 parking space per apartment requirement, a half-space per dwelling lower than the average development in the Meadowlands. To allow greater access to the station, a subsidiary of the Meadowlands Commission will institute a car sharing program, along with new trails and other bicycle facilities.

The NJDOT is expected to announce new transit village designees this summer or early fall. ❖

Finally, One Seat Ferry Ride on the Way for Rockland Residents

Last week, the Port Authority accepted New York Water Taxi as an operator for a new **Haverstraw-Yonkers-Downtown Manhattan ferry** service. \$4.2 million from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and \$1.2 million in federal funds, secured by Congresswoman Nita Lowey, will go towards the service. In Manhattan, the service will stop at the World Financial Center, the new Battery Park City terminal, and Pier 11-Wall Street on the Hudson River. The news is good for Rockland County transportation officials who have advocated the ferry link for years.

The boats will begin to run next spring and take about 45 minutes from Yonkers and 85 minutes from Haverstraw to reach lower Manhattan. Details about fares and schedules are still being finalized, though Rockland officials say it will cost about \$300-\$500 per month to use the service from the Haverstraw. ❖

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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MTR#530

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CALENDAR

June 5, 4:00-6:00pm and 6:00-8:00pm. NYC Bus Rapid Transit Study public meetings. Brief presentations at 4:30pm and 6:30pm. Hostos Community College, 120 E. 149th Street, Savoy Multi-purpose Room, Bronx. 917-339-0488.

June 6, 6:00-8:30pm. NYC DOT presentation of preliminary recommendations of the Truck Route Management and Community Impact Reduction Study. Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon Street, Brooklyn. 973-267-3555 x1157.

June 6, 3:00-7:00pm. Lower Manhattan Route 9A Project Open House. Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Place, Manhattan. Info: 800-714-0454 or route9a@dot.state.ny.us.

June 6, 7:30pm. Connecticut DOT Public Transportation Commission hearing on public transportation services. East Lyme Public Library, Olive Shendali Room, 41 Society Road, Niantic CT. 860-594-2800.

June 7, 4:30pm. MTA public hearing on federal funding for transit capital projects. MTA Headquarters, 5th Floor, 347 Madison Avenue, Manhattan. 212-878-7483.

June 7, 5:30-7:15pm and 7:15-9:00pm. NYC Bus Rapid Transit Study public meeting. Brief presentations at 6:00pm and 7:45pm. 126 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island. 917-339-0488.

June 8, 4:00-6:00pm and 6:00-8:00pm. NYC Bus Rapid Transit Study. Presentations at 4:30pm and 6:30pm. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, Manhattan. 917-339-0488.

June 13, 4:00-6:00pm and 6:00-8:00pm. NYC Bus Rapid Transit Study. Presentations at 4:30pm and 6:30pm. Queens Borough Central Public Library, 89-11 Merrick Boulevard, Jamaica NY. 917-339-0488.

June 14, 4:00-6:00pm and 6:00-8:00pm. NYC Bus Rapid Transit Study. Presentations at 4:30pm and 6:30pm. LIU Brooklyn Campus, 1 University Plaza (enter from DeKalb), Health Science Center Building, Brooklyn. 917-339-0488.

June 27, 6:00-8:00pm. Auto-Free NY meeting: "Residential Parking Strategies for Reducing Car Use in NYC" with guest speaker Jeffrey Otto, Citizens Housing & Planning Council. Conference Room, NYPD Downtown Center, 104 Washington Street, Manhattan. 212-475-3394.

More calendar items at www.tstc.org