

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

Lead-foot A.G.'s Last Traffic Stop

The end of Zulima Farber's short tenure as Attorney General of New Jersey will go unmourned by anyone who cares about roadway safety in the Garden State.

Farber was a known traffic scofflaw who publicly joked about her inability to remain within the speed limit prior to her appointment by Governor Jon Corzine. It seems no accident that her demise this week was again related to inability to take traffic law enforcement seriously.

The fact that Farber could become New Jersey's top law official is indicative of a culture, of which Governor Corzine is a part, that views traffic laws as optional guidelines rather than **essential protectors of public safety**.

If traffic deaths in New Jersey maintain their horrible pace during the first six months of the year, 2006 will be the deadliest year on the state's roads in over a decade. Through June 16, the 308 road deaths in New Jersey this year are an 18% increase over 2005. ❖

Death on New Jersey Roads

Recent road fatalities prove that dangerous driving is no laughing matter in New Jersey. A quick news search finds the following:

August 7: A tow truck driver died on the NJ Turnpike near Edison after being struck by a driver who fell asleep at the wheel.

August 14: Four people died on the NJ Turnpike in Teaneck when a speeding flatbed truck carrying bricks went out of control, smashing into three other vehicles and spreading bricks all over the road. In one car, only 4 year old Therese Christmas survived. Both her parents and her younger sister died. The driver of an SUV also died. Another adult and two children in the SUV survived with injuries. The drivers of two tractor trailers were not hurt.

August 15: A grandmother died when her car was struck by a tractor trailer along Route 527 in Ocean County. Her two grandchildren, who were in the car, were taken to the hospital in critical condition.

August 16: A driver was killed when he hit a truck on the shoulder of Route 1, near North Brunswick.

August 17: A 44-year-old woman was hit by a Ford truck while crossing the street in Rahway. ❖

Poll: New Yorkers Talk Traffic See Bloomberg in Slow Lane

In assessing Mayor Bloomberg's response to traffic congestion, **59% of New Yorkers say the mayor is doing only a "fair" to "poor" job** of reducing traffic jams and delays on city streets, highways and bridges. In only one other issue area, increasing the stock of affordable housing, does the Mayor receive a higher net negative rating (60%). Mayor Bloomberg receives the highest net positive marks for keeping parks clean and safe (63%) and reducing crime (57%).

These findings come from a random telephone survey of 800 New York City residents in the five boroughs conducted May 19 through June 4, 2006, by Michaels Opinion Research, a New York City-based public opinion research firm. For the survey, respondents rated Mayor Bloomberg's performance across a range of public issues and were asked about a variety of city transportation matters.

"The daily grind of gridlock and its impact rarely makes headlines, but the survey results show that New Yorkers have strong opinions about the problem and expect more action from Mayor Bloomberg to solve it," said Maureen Michaels, president of Michaels Opinion Research.

Discontent with the Mayor's performance on traffic congestion cuts across most segments of the city's population, but **residents of Staten Island appear especially angry** about traffic jams and delays – 82% give an overall negative rating to the mayor, despite his announcement of a new transportation plan for the borough this spring.

Drivers and Non-Drivers Agree

While 62% of motor vehicle owners give the Mayor a negative rating on reducing traffic jams and delays throughout the city, non-vehicle owners are not satisfied with his performance either (56% negative), nor are those who drive to work (70% negative).

Dissatisfaction with the Mayor's performance on traffic issues also cuts across age and income groups, though a solid third of middle and upper income residents give intensely negative ratings (33%-36% rate the job he is doing on traffic issues as "poor").

And among the working population, 59% of those

who work below 60th Street in Manhattan and 67% of those working outside Manhattan say the Mayor has done, at best, a fair-to-poor job reducing traffic on city streets, highways and bridges.

“Let’s face it – the Bloomberg administration has accomplished next to nothing on traffic problems since taking office. A few potentially promising initiatives, like speeding buses through traffic and enforcing truck routes, seem stuck as endless studies,” said Kate Slevin, associate director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

New Yorkers See Big, Multi-Faceted Problem

More than three-fourths of New Yorkers (79%) consider traffic jams on city streets to be a problem, including 53% who consider it a “major problem.” And fully half (50%) believe traffic congestion in Manhattan on a normal workday is unacceptable.

Those who drive to work are among those most likely to say traffic congestion in Manhattan is unacceptable (57%), but even those who use public transportation strongly share this view(50%).

Overcrowding on subways and buses is also considered a significant problem by New Yorkers, with younger adults (60%) and those traveling to work on public transportation most likely to express this view (56%).

In addition, seven-in-10 New Yorkers cite **truck traffic** (73%), the condition of roads and bridges (71%), and unsafe conditions for pedestrians from cars and trucks (70%) as **major or moderate problems** for the city.

Truck traffic is judged as an especially acute problem by those who use their own vehicles to travel to work (53%).

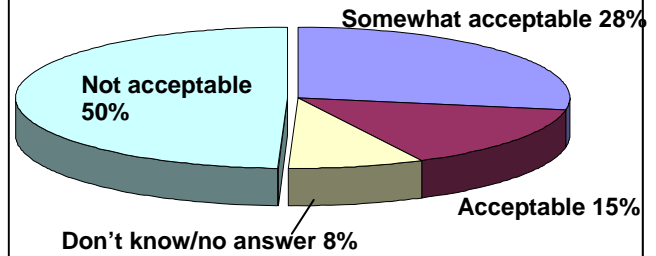
And Manhattan residents are more likely than residents of other boroughs to consider unsafe conditions for bicyclists a major problem (43%).

A third of New Yorkers also contend that slow moving public buses are a significant problem. Notably, those who are especially likely to consider slow moving buses a “major” traffic-related problem are city residents in their 40s and 50s (40%-46%) and New Yorkers who work in Manhattan above 60th Street (62%).

The public opinion data reported in the survey are the result of a random and representative telephone survey conducted May 19 through June 4, 2006, with 800 New York City residents, 18 years of age and older. Sample distribution includes proportional representation across all five boroughs. For total sample results based on weighted data from 800 completed telephone interviews, the margin of error calculated at the 95 percent confidence level is ± 3.5 percentage points.

More detailed findings are available in a report posted at www.tstc.org. ❖

New Yorkers Rate Traffic Congestion in Manhattan On A Normal Work Day



Base: Total sample. Weighted n=800.

Staten Island Bus Lane Moves More People

Despite complaints that the bus lane on the eastern portion of the Staten Island Expressway stands “empty,” it is the **most efficient** piece of pavement in the borough from a passenger transport perspective.

Recent vehicle and passenger counts done for the NY State Dept. of Transportation show that the bus lane moves more people in the morning and evening rush hour than the clogged-up general use lane next to it.

Morning peak	Vehicles	People	Travelers per lane
General use lanes	4280	4900	1633
Bus lane	53	1820	1820

Evening peak	Vehicles	People	Travelers per lane
General use lanes	4060	4770	1590
Bus lane	49	1790	1790

NYS DOT has told Staten Island officials concerned about the “empty” lane that allowing two-per-car carpools to use the bus lanes would be a bad step because the lane would bog down at current levels of vehicle occupancy and bus speeds would suffer tremendously. DOT thinks a three-per-car rule could allow buses to keep moving and keep populist pressure from ruining the public investment in the lane by creating yet another creeping queue of car drivers. DOT is likely to focus its future study

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign web site:

www.tstc.org

efforts in this HOV-3 direction. However, it says that allowing any cars into the new lane could require expensive retrofits, since the bus lane was designed only to allow for sight-lines from bus driver sitting high up over the road.

Borough President Molinaro takes the position that the new lanes **should remain bus-only**, arguing that allowing any cars into the lane is a slippery slope regarding enforcement and congestion.

One intriguing possibility as the DOT considers retrofitting the existing lane and extending it west is the construction of an enforcement zone with room for police to pull lane violators over without disrupting bus and possible carpool traffic. Police now have to pull violators all the way over from the left-most lane to the right shoulder to make a stop for illegal car use of the bus lane. A built enforcement zone would also send a stronger message to drivers than they get regarding special lanes today.

Some form of stronger message is clearly needed — the *Advance* found in July over 2,000 cars driving in the lane over two consecutive weekdays, with only 2 enforcement stops by the NYPD. The NYPD told the paper that it enforces the rules regarding the lanes, but resorted to the lame data excuse when it said it did not track summonses for special lane violations as a separate category. Thus, the police wouldn't say how much enforcement it really undertakes. The NYPD should begin tracking these types of summonses. ❖

Same Old Story with Route 347

NYS DOT's Long Island office recently announced that a hearing will be held Wednesday, August 23, concerning the NY Route 347 Safety and Mobility Improvement Project — very recently, in fact.

The Campaign received a mailed notice on August 17. **Less than a week** is not a lot of time to review a lengthy environmental impact statement for a project that involves the potential of adding lanes to 15 miles of roadway.

Last year, the Campaign had to request more time to review the project's latest scoping document (MTR #502). This came after a five-year period of inactivity on the project. (MTR #476, 269).

The NYS DOT has been struggling with how to deal with congestion on Route 347 for years. It suffers from the traffic impacts of low density, strip mall development. NYS DOT has proposed adding lanes—an outdated solution this doesn't address land use as the root of the problem. A smart-growth oriented solution could connect local land use planning, build pedestrian infrastructure, increase local street connections, and beautify the corridor. ❖

CALENDAR

August 22, 6-8pm. Ride the Hudson Bergen Light Rail with Auto-Free New York. Meet at Hoboken Terminal, Main Waiting Room. 212-475-3394, www.auto-free.org.

August 23, 3-9pm. NYS DOT public hearing on the NY Route 347 Safety and Mobility Improvement Project. State Office Building, 250 Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, NY. www.ny347.org. 800-449-6361.

August 23, 4:30-8:30, Public Hearing on Atlantic Yards Project, NYC College of Technology, 285 Jay Street, Brooklyn. For more info, call 212-803-3233 or see www.empire.state.ny.us.

August 23, 5pm. Connecticut DOT Transportation Strategy Board public hearing. Three Rivers Community College, Mohegan Campus, 7 Mahan Drive, Norwich CT. 860-594-2000.

August 23, 6pm, Public hearing and rally on new NYPD parade laws. 1 Police Plaza, Manhattan. For more info, see Transportation Alternatives website.

August 24, 12:00-2:00pm. New York City Transit Riders Council meeting. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor Conference Room, Manhattan. 212-878-7087.

August 24, 6:30pm. Brooklyn Community Board 6 Transportation Committee meeting on Atlantic Yards Draft EIS. Cobble Hill Community Meeting Room, 250 Baltic Street. 718-643-3027.

August 26, 8am-5pm. Transportation Alternatives' NYC Century Bike Tour training. 90 mile ride through NYC. 212-629-8080. www.transalt.org

August 26, 8pm, Screening of Contested Streets: Breaking NYC Gridlock, Solar1, East 23rd Street and the East River. For more info, go to www.transalt.org or call 212-629-8080.

September 10, NYC Century Bike Tour. 100, 75, 55, 35, and 15 mile rides. For more, see www.transalt.org or call 888-543-7223. ext. 4.

September 12, Community Forum on Atlantic Yards Project. NYC College of Technology, 285 Jay St. For more info, see www.empire.state.ny.us.

More calendar items at www.tstc.org

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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