

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

NYC: Rationing Won't Do the Trick

NYS Assemblymembers refused to pass Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan before the end of Albany's legislative session, but may hold a special session in July to entertain the proposal. The NY legislature must pass the plan by **July 16** in order for NYC to receive more than \$500 million in federal aid for the implementation of congestion pricing. NYC stands little chance of being selected as a federal grant recipient if the state legislative approval does not come before the deadline.

Unfortunately, Assemblymembers have proposed **several spurious "alternatives"** to congestion pricing, none of which have proven effective in reducing congestion and none of which would provide revenues for increasing transit capacity.

Assemblymember Richard Brodsky has argued for a car rationing scheme which would restrict car access to parts of Manhattan by license plate. As reported in MTR #558, a similar scheme in Mexico City **increased used-car purchases**, gasoline consumption, and driving, and decreased transit use.

Further investigation reveals, unsurprisingly, that Mexico City's policy has done **nothing to improve air quality**. A University of Michigan study found no evidence that the policy reduced emissions of five different pollutants—in fact, the policy increased emissions on weekdays.

Another issue with rationing is enforcement. The NYPD has consistently failed to enforce bus lane violations (see MTR #555). Similarly, the post-9/11 HOV restrictions at entrances to lower Manhattan eventually stopped being enforced by the police (MTR #s 379, 437). The only effective way to enforce a rationing scheme would be through the installation of license-plate cameras, which Brodsky is on the record as opposing.

CBS reported recently on other proposed alternatives to congestion pricing which display equal **lack of foresight**. For example, slashing rush-hour transit fares would sink an MTA already in precarious financial condition (MTR #557).

Assemblymembers will have a clear choice before them in July's special session: Pass congestion pricing for immediate improvements in traffic flow, transit capacity, and air quality, or choose the status quo without offering a legitimate alternative. ❖

Greenhouse Gases:

Getting to the Goal in New Jersey

When Governor Jon Corzine announced an executive order in February requiring New Jersey to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020, environmentalists applauded. However, while the NJDEP is busy creating a plan to execute the order, the NJ Turnpike Authority is fast pursuing an agenda that would undermine the plan's goals.

The Center for Climate Strategies (CCS) is advising NJDEP on how to craft regulations to curb greenhouse gases. CCS's most recent presentation, available at <http://www.state.nj.us/globalwarming/>, recommends many things NJ already does well: promoting transit usage, incorporating smart growth into transportation planning, and choosing a Fix-It-First capital spending plan in lieu of large traffic capacity enhancement projects. The presentation also goes beyond just boilerplate, and offers some more difficult changes for the state to pursue. These include:

- Requiring disclosure of carbon impacts from new transportation projects
- Creating greater roadway efficiency through pricing and demand management
- Finding a dedicated funding source to *roll back* recent transit fare hikes
- Requiring cash out parking

Unfortunately, NJ's plan to add a lane to the Garden State Parkway between exits 80 and 30 (MTR 552) subverts these admirable policies. Another proposed NJ Turnpike project, adding three lanes of traffic in each direction from exits 6 to 9 on its namesake highway, also raises similar concerns.

The Parkway project in its current form is old-fashioned capacity expansion, likely to induce more driving and increase congestion and air pollution in the state. Despite continued requests by the Campaign and environmentalists, the Turnpike has thus far refused to consider travel demand strategies like High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes that could help preserve the investment and curb emissions.

HOT lanes are HOV lanes that charge solo drivers a premium toll to use the lane. They have been well received across the country since they increase driver choice and preserve at least one lane that is congestion free. By reducing stop and go traffic,

which is associated with higher emissions than free flowing traffic, HOT lanes can help reduce air pollution. In fact, the NJ Turnpike found that after its implementation of EZPass seven years ago, emissions dropped 10%, likely as a result of reduced congestion at toll plazas. Because of premium tolls and HOV requirements, HOT lanes are also more likely to make a driver consider transit or carpooling and are less likely to induce sprawling development patterns than a general purpose lane. Keeping one lane moving is very appropriate in this case, since the Turnpike's own studies show that portions of the newly constructed lanes will fill up before construction is even complete (MTR 552).

Without better demand management strategies in place for huge transportation projects, Corzine's own agency could jeopardize his admirable emissions reduction goals.

Cleaner Air Won't Stop at the Hudson, Governor

Ironically, Governor Corzine's recent statements about congestion pricing also contradict his greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Corzine publicly questioned Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing plan (for more on PlaNYC, see MTR# 555), even though the **clean air benefits will be regional**, and not localized to NYC.

Corzine's main concern is that congestion pricing will greatly increase NJ Transit ridership and strain the system. However, NYC's data predict that the pricing plan will not result in a dramatic increase in transit ridership region wide.

NJ's transit increase is likely to be smaller than NY's, since Jersey drivers already pay tolls at Hudson River crossings to drive into Manhattan. These fees will be deducted from the proposed NYC eight dollar congestion pricing charge, meaning NJ commuters will only pay \$2-\$4 dollars to finish their trip in the pricing zone. With Port Authority tolls expected to increase within the year (MTR 546), the NYC pricing differential paid by NJ commuters will become even smaller. And as we have said before (MTR # 557), a few dollars is **not likely to cause seismic shifts** in travel behavior.

Even if a significant shift to transit were to occur, NJ Transit and the Port Authority are **well positioned** to handle additional cross Hudson riders. 279 new, multi-level NJ Transit rail cars should be in service by 2009. The PA is investigating an additional bus/HOT lane through the Lincoln Tunnel. Construction on ARC, the new passenger rail tunnel from NJ into Penn Station, one of the projects slated to receive funds from NYC's congestion pricing program, is scheduled to begin in 2009.

Instead, of trying to slow Mayor Bloomberg's worthy plan, Governor Corzine would be better off supporting it as a vital complement to his own greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. ❖

The Details: Federal Funding for NYC Congestion Pricing

In a recent letter to NYS Assemblyman Sheldon Silver, Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Oregon) cast doubt that NYC would receive \$500 million in federal money to help implement congestion pricing. He said that the USDOT did not have authority to hand out grants and that the program does not fit into federal funding guidelines. In a response letter to Gov. Spitzer, the USDOT clarified their role in administering the grants, "Congress has given the Department ample statutory and regulatory authority to fund and support the type of plan outlined by Mayor Bloomberg."

The USDOT letter says that, in fact, the NYC congestion pricing program is eligible for 80% of the funding program, specifically mentioning that new buses and congestion pricing fit perfectly into the guidelines. NYS Assemblymembers should ignore DeFazio's letter as D.C. politicking that has nothing to do with NYC's actual proposal.

The promised federal funds are from the Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) program, one of six components of the broader National Strategy to Reduce Congestion on America's Transportation Network announced last year. Metropolitan areas must apply to the U.S. DOT and must agree to implement a comprehensive policy response to urban congestion including the "four T's":

- **Tolling:** Implementing a broad congestion pricing or variable toll demonstration;
- **Transit:** Creating or expanding express bus services or bus rapid transit (BRT), which will benefit from the free flow traffic conditions generated by congestion pricing or variable tolling;
- **Telecommuting:** Securing agreements from major area employers to establish or expand telecommuting and flex scheduling programs; and
- **Technology & operations:** Utilizing cutting edge technological and operational approaches to improve system performance.

These initiatives will be funded through **thirteen existing federal programs**, including the Value Pricing Program, New Starts/Small Starts, the Bus and Bus Facilities Program, and the Intelligent Transportation Systems Program.

DeFazio claimed that the pricing program did not fit into grant categories such as the Mississippi Delta Transportation Development Program, even though the City's application only requests money from the applicable programs mentioned in the paragraph above.

NYC is among nine finalists for the five UPA slots up for grabs, but the USDOT has clearly stated that NYC will not be selected if the state legislature fails to approve the program by July 16th. ❖

Newark: Linking Redevelopment and Pedestrian Safety

After a 50 year population decline, Newark is revitalizing itself, and media outlets have taken notice. The *NY Times* reported that the updated 2006 census figures show the City's population has increased 3.3 percent since 2000, 0.5% between 2005 and 2006.

The population increase has also led to a revitalization of the housing market, with the first new luxury rental units to hit the market since 1961 under construction downtown at 1180 Raymond Blvd.

Newark's push to encourage growth goes **beyond the addition of new housing**: the city and state are also embarking on an aggressive complimentary plan to improve its run-down and unsafe streets. TSTC, along with the Regional Plan Association and others, has long said that **improving pedestrian safety and streetscapes** can help attract development and assist in revitalization efforts. Walking tours (MTR 542) prove much can be done to improve pedestrian safety in the resurgent city.

As reported most recently in *NJ Biz*, the Newark Urban Enterprise Zone is working to re-imagine Newark's downtown as a pedestrian's paradise. Broad St. is undergoing a complete makeover with better lighting, and larger, more visible pedestrian-friendly intersections. The centerpiece of the new design is a planted median to provide a safe harbor for pedestrians crossing the 92 ft. wide street.

NJDOT and Newark are partnering to fix Ferry St. from Penn Station into the Ironbound, and Market St. from Broad St. to Jackson Ave. DOT's recommendations for the corridors range from lowering pedestrian instructions signage to raising pedestrian crossings along the Ferry St. corridor.

The NJDOT/City of Newark partnerships each have an outside funding boost from current projects. The Ferry street plan is being funded by NJDOT streetscaping grants and a recent \$500,000 grant from NJDOT focused on pedestrian safety. So far the grants have paid for new engineering designs of the major Ferry St. intersections, re-stripped cross walks, and new signage for pedestrians and vehicles. Remaining plans for the corridor include installing ADA compliant sidewalks, bulb outs, and raised crossings at intersections.

The Market St. plan has benefited from money being spent on the new Newark Arena. These funds have been used to replace old street signs and relocate the stop bar at the busy intersection of Raymond and Market Streets. The sidewalks parallel Market Street will be widened and new lights will be put to encourage nighttime pedestrian traffic. The intersections along Market Street will also see raised crossings, along with new walk/don't walk signals.



Grading Energy Efficiency in Our Region

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), a D.C. based non-profit, released the "State Energy Efficiency Scorecard for 2006," rating all three of our tri-states in the top ten. Connecticut shared the top spot with California and Vermont, while New York and New Jersey were rated as numbers 7 and 8, respectively.

The scores are based on eight categories designed to give a broad snapshot of states' energy policies. The transportation category, representing only 5 of 44 points available, is determined by considering four areas of transportation policy: the adoption of California's tailpipe emissions standards; land-use policies; transit funding; and state fleet requirements. Non-transportation categories include everything from building energy codes to tax incentives for energy efficiency.

New York was the only state to earn a perfect "5" for transportation, with NJ and CT each receiving a 4. CT lost a point for **lack of controls in land use**, highlighting the state's current debate over transportation policy, growth patterns, and transit-oriented development. NJ lost points for lacking state fleet requirements, but received accolades for a "fix it first" roadway policy and for Smart Growth Planning Grants program. The entire document can be viewed here: acee.org ❖

Westchester DOT: Central Ave. BRT Promises Faster Travel, Improved Service

At an open house this week, Westchester County residents got their first look at a potential bus rapid transit route on the Central Avenue corridor. Representatives from Westchester DOT and consultant STV convincingly made the case that BRT could reduce travel time on Central Ave, increase ridership, and encourage transit-oriented development.

The 12-mile Central Avenue corridor stretches from White Plains to the Westchester-Bronx border. Annual corridor ridership is about 3.6 million and is split between the local No. 20 and the limited-stop No. 21 and BxM4C, an express bus into Manhattan. Weekday ridership on these three lines is over 10,000, representing **10% of total Bee-Line ridership**. Riders are traveling to jobs at both ends of the corridor; 30% of Central Avenue riders transfer to the subway at Bronx stations.

Naomi Klein, the principal planner for the project, noted that rising traffic congestion has slowed down service on the corridor. At the same time, **demand is increasing**. Weekend service was recently boosted to serve residents flocking to the renovated Yonkers Raceway. Klein predicted that an ongoing expansion of the Cross County Shopping Center and

the recent introduction of MetroCard (MTR #555) for fare payment will also increase ridership.

Specific details on routing, operations, and service planning are few at this point in the study, but Klein said the proposed BRT would offer limited-stop, bidirectional, 7-day service and likely replace the current No. 21 bus, which runs in one direction during peak hours. The BRT might operate in both dedicated curb lanes and general traffic lanes, and could use queue jumping, which prioritizes bus travel over private cars, at intersections. Kenneth Lin of STV emphasized that BRT features like **real-time bus information**, off-vehicle fare collection, and comfortable shelters with pedestrian and bike access would improve the customer experience.

Klein and Lin said opportunities for transit-oriented development existed for communities wanting to take advantage of them. Several vacant or underutilized properties along Central Avenue are prime TOD locations, and the proposed expansion of the Cross County Shopping Center could be integrated with the BRT to allow for better bus access.

The 40 or so members of the public at the open house seemed receptive to the concept of BRT, and several hoped to see immediate improvements. Such county projects, coupled with a state plan to add transit service to the I-287 corridor (MTR #558), could mean much better transit options for Westchester and Rockland residents in years to come.

For more information on Central Ave BRT, see www.westchester.gov. ❖

First Annual Jane Jacobs Award

The Rockefeller Foundation awarded the inaugural Jane Jacobs Medal to Greenmarket co-founder Barry Benepe and Omar Freilla, founder of the Green Worker Cooperatives, and former program director at Sustainable South Bronx. Mr. Benepe was honored for his efforts to establish what has become the largest farmer's market program in the U.S. An avid cyclist, Mr. Benepe also helped found Transportation Alternatives.

TSTC worked with Mr. Freilla during his time at Sustainable South Bronx to remove the Sheridan Expressway, a redundant 1.5 mile highway in the South Bronx. The mission of his present organization, the Green Worker Cooperatives, is to establish a construction waste recycling program, to which he is dedicating his reward.

The Rockefeller Foundation's relationship with Jane Jacobs dates back to the 1950s when the foundation awarded her an \$18,000 grant to research and write *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

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CALENDAR

July 9, 6pm. Manhattan Community Boards Four, Five, and Six are holding a public hearing on Mayor Bloomberg's congestion pricing proposal. Fashion Institute of Technology, 227 West 27th Street, Building A, 8th Floor. 212-465-0907.

July 10, 8am. Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board meeting. Location TBA.

July 12, 12:15-2pm. Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council meeting. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor Board Room, Manhattan. 212-878-7087.

July 19, 4:30-6:30pm. Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council meeting. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor Board Room, Manhattan. 212-878-7087.

July 20, 21, 22 - Tri-State Trek: A 270 mile, 3-day bike trip from Boston to New York, fundraising for ALS.

July 25, 6-9pm. Transportation Alternatives' 3rd Annual Summer Benefit, honoring special guest Mark Gorton. VIP cocktail reception: 6:15-7pm. Cocktails: 7-8pm. Dinner: 8-9pm. Village Restaurant, 62 West 9th Street, Manhattan. Advance RSVP by clicking [here](#). More information: Call David at 212-629-8080 or email david@transalt.org.

July 26, Noon-2pm. New York City Transit Rider's Council meeting. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor Board Room, Manhattan. 212-878-7087.

August 4, 9am-5pm. Savvy Cyclist class: a free, one-day introduction to biking for adults who want to improve their cycling (or NYC-cycling) skills. Class is usually held at Recycle-A-Bicycle's training center in Long Island City, Queens, but you should confirm before the class. See www.recycleabicycle.org.

August 9, 12:15-2pm. Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council meeting. MTA Headquarters, 347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor Board Room, Manhattan. 212-878-7087.

[More calendar items at www.tstc.org](http://www.tstc.org)

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



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