

Mobilizing the Region

A Weekly Bulletin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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NEWS

NJ Turnpike Enters the Information Age!

If imitation is indeed the highest form of flattery, the Tri-State Campaign should be blushing.

In the first major update to its website since June 2006, and coming mere months after the Campaign's "web exclusive" of environmental documents relating to the proposed widening of the Garden State Parkway from Exits 30 to 80 (MTR 552), the New Jersey Turnpike Authority put up its own webpage linking to all relevant documents and permit applications for the project. The webpage can be viewed here: state.nj.us/turnpike/GSP-Widening.htm.

The Authority should be applauded for making its documents readily available to the public, however, we must note that it took the Authority many months to upload the public documents, despite continued requests.

We hope the webpage is the first step of many that **results in a better project**. In its current design, the new Parkway lanes will be full of traffic before construction is complete. The Campaign is asking for the Turnpike Authority to study other alternatives, like High Occupancy Toll lanes, that will help preserve the new capacity of the road and ensure that at least one lane remains congestion-free (MTRs # 552, 559). ❖

Support Better Transit and Cleaner Air in the NYC Region!

If the NYS Assembly does not support congestion pricing by this *Monday, July 16th*, NYC will lose \$500 million in federal funding for transit and other improvements including:

- ◆ 400 new buses,
- ◆ automated bus lane enforcement,
- ◆ pedestrian improvements around bus stops
- ◆ new bus lanes on the East River Bridges
- ◆ implementation of congestion pricing

Call your state Assemblymembers today and tell them to stop playing politics with NYC's future and support congestion pricing and PlaNYC! For more information, see campaignfornewyork.org. ❖

NYC: Debunking the Alternatives

Instead of heading to Albany and working out legislation to ensure NYC receives federal aid for transit and congestion pricing, State Assemblymembers offered their own "alternatives" to Mayor Bloomberg's pricing proposal. Policy groups wasted no time in debunking the half-baked ideas.

NY Assemblyman **Rory Lancman's** (D-Flushing) bill called for six alternatives to pricing. The most effective congestion reduction provisions of the bill are stolen directly from Mayor Bloomberg's plan. Like PlaNYC, Lancman's bill would offer millions towards expanded transit service in the outer boroughs—but Lancman offers **no explanation of where the money would come from**. Presumably it would come from the state, at the expense of other state projects. On the other hand, Bloomberg's plan, if approved by Monday, would tap into \$500 million from the federal government and allow the purchase of nearly 400 buses, along with other necessary transportation initiatives.

Tri-State Campaign released a statement showing that options like telecommuting and carpooling, two of Lancman's other alternatives, have essentially failed to dent traffic congestion. Despite tax credits and other incentives in Maryland, Washington, Oregon, and many other states, the share of commuters carpooling to work nationwide dropped from almost 20% in 1980 to 12% in 2000, a decline of 38%. In New Jersey, which began offering employers a generous tax credit for supporting ridesharing programs in 1994, the share of commuters carpooling to work fell from 12.4% in 1990 to 10.6% in 2000.

Likewise, telecommuting is unlikely to significantly reduce driving to work. Telecommuting as a share of work trips has grown from only 2.3% in 1980 to 3.3% in 2000. However, even with technological advances that have made it possible to work from just about anywhere, the share of people working from home has dropped by 55% since 1960. Lancman's proposal specifically mentions Connecticut's telecommuting incentive program, perhaps the best in the country. But even there, telecommuting accounts for only 3.1% of all work trips.

The Campaign called the bill a "distraction" and asked Assemblymembers to treat it as such.

Meanwhile, a recent **Regional Plan Association** report rebuffed Assemblyman Richard Brodsky's assertion that car rationing could be a viable alternative to congestion pricing. The report said rationing, and other alternatives like reducing truck traffic, didn't come close to matching PlaNYC's traffic-reduction, air-quality, or transit-capacity benefits.

The report says congestion rationing, which would ban certain cars from entering the CBD on certain days based on license plate number, could easily be avoided by households owning more than one car. A rationing scheme would thus **unfairly discriminate** against one-car families, who make less money on average than multiple-car households. In MTR 558 and 559, we point out that such a program in Mexico City failed to reduce congestion and driving, or increase transit ridership.

RPA's report also takes issue with Congressman Weiner's congestion-fighting strategies which focus on trucks, including higher truck tolls and truck-only toll lanes. Simple math shows that strategies which ignore the automobile will have little effect on congestion, as trucks make up less than 4% of vehicles entering Manhattan's CBD. Lessening truck impacts is an important and worthy goal—but it is no alternative to congestion pricing (MTR 556).

The full RPA report can be viewed at www.rpa.org. ❖

Williamsburg Racks up More Bike Parking

DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, Councilman David Yassky, and **Teresa Toro**, Brooklyn Community Board #1 Transportation Chair and TSTC NYC Coordinator, held a press conference on Thursday to announce the completion of DOT's "Subway-Sidewalk Interface" project at the intersection of Bedford Avenue and North 7th Street in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

DOT converted three parking spaces into sidewalk, and installed several bike racks in addition to the racks installed last year. The newly added sidewalk space will help relieve pedestrian crowding and address a scarcity of bike parking around the busy Bedford Avenue station on the L line, where subway ridership is booming (see story, next page). The project is notable because it marks the first time that a New York City community has voluntarily converted car-parking spaces into bike parking. DOT and CB1 teamed up on the project in response to increased parking demand for Williamsburg's rapidly growing biking community. ❖

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign web site:

www.tstc.org

NYC Pricing Falsehoods Addressed

Despite the wealth of data compiled by transportation and environmental groups to combat the false information spewed by congestion pricing's opponents, many Assemblymembers are using bogus information to fight Mayor Bloomberg's plan.

The New York Times reported on Saturday that Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol (D-North Brooklyn) still believes that his district would become a parking lot, although studies of this so-called "border effect" in London and Stockholm have found significant **traffic reductions in nearby neighborhoods**, not increases. In fact, after congestion pricing was implemented in Stockholm, traffic declined 5%-36% on roadways around the zone. And as we have argued (MTR #557), the time and convenience costs of finding a scarce or non-existent free parking space in dense areas outside the zone near a transit stop will not be worth it to most driving commuters, who drive precisely because of the convenience.

Assemblywoman Joan Millman (D-Brooklyn) opposes the pricing mechanism claiming it will create undue hardships for many lower-income New Yorkers. In fact, according to the Census, most (74%) of lower-income New Yorkers (households earning less than \$30,000 annually) do not even own a car, let alone drive in Manhattan frequently. Finally, new analysis from Bruce Schaller shows that commuters who drive into Manhattan earn 23% more annually than their neighbors who take the bus or subway.

Meanwhile, Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan (D-Queens) told the *Daily News* that she can't see how anyone in Brooklyn or Queens could support pricing. This is surprising given that some communities in Brooklyn and Queens suffer from among the highest air pollution rates throughout the five boroughs. Asthma hospitalization rates in Williamsburg-Bushwick are among the highest in the nation; in Queens, some communities have rates 30-50% higher than the national average.

Assemblywoman Audrey Pheffer (D-Ozone Park) believes that businesses will pass the charge along to customers. This argument fails to take into account the cost savings of lowered fuel use and faster deliveries which will result from congestion reduction. These savings will likely offset the congestion charge. Brooklyn's business community apparently understands this, as evident in their overwhelming support of traffic mitigation measures according to a new survey from the **Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce**. NYC Councilmember David Yassky, chair of the Small Business Committee, and a number of Brooklyn business groups, released a report today which showed pricing would help, not harm, NYC business owners. ❖

Congestion Pricing:

Relief for NYC Transit's Ridership Crunch

The recently released 2006 edition of NYC Transit's *Subway and Bus Ridership Report* reveals that New York City mass transit ridership continued to grow last year, a testament to the need for more transit revenue from congestion pricing.

Subway ridership rose 3.4% over 2005, to its **highest level since 1952**. Nearly 1.5 billion subway boardings were recorded in 2006, 25% more than in 1998, the first full year MetroCard was used for fare payment. NYCT bus ridership (which does not include several routes administered by MTA Bus) inched up 0.6% compared to 2005 ridership, to 741 million.

While subway ridership increased nearly everywhere, certain rapidly developing neighborhoods stood out. In Manhattan, ridership gains were concentrated in the Lower East Side, around the World Trade Center, and in Harlem. Development in the South Bronx led to soaring ridership in Mott Haven and Tremont. Queens saw large percentage gains in the Rockaways. **Brooklyn** had the largest subway ridership gain of any borough (4%), with large gains in Williamsburg, Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, Fort Greene, Park Slope, Sunset Park, and Bensonhurst.

The soaring ridership statistics **underscore the need for congestion pricing**. Revenues from pricing would raise \$30 billion for our transportation network, going towards major capacity improvements like the Second Avenue Subway. Much of the over \$500 million in federal aid New York would receive if the state legislature passes congestion pricing by Monday will immediately go towards expansions in bus service. Because such transit expansions would precede the implementation of pricing, NYC Transit President Howard Robert has said the money will ensure NYC's subways and buses can easily absorb the commuters that would switch to transit after pricing is implemented.

In both the long- and short-term, the money from congestion pricing will allow more transit service, **relieving pressure** on the transit system, not exacerbating it. And the capacity relief afforded by congestion pricing will surely be needed as the city's residential population continues to soar. The Atlantic Yards complex and planned high-rise condos on Flatbush Avenue will add more than 8,000 housing units in downtown Brooklyn alone. Mega-development on the Brooklyn waterfront, in Coney Island, and on Manhattan's Far West Side is a near-certainty. Earlier this week, Roberts told reporters that, when it comes to increasing capacity, **"congestion pricing is critical."** We hope Albany is listening. ❖

-Brooklyn is Booming-

Residential growth in Brooklyn has pushed subway ridership in the borough skyward. Ridership gains at selected stations tell the story (listed are percentage gains in annual ridership from 2005 to 2006):

Williamsburg & Bushwick	Park Slope & Windsor Terrace
Central Av (M)—16.2%	15 St/Prospect Park (F)—10.1%
Lorimer St (JM)—11.1%	Ft Hamilton Pkwy (F)—12.7%
Marcy Av (JMZ)—18.0%	
	Sunset Park
Bedford-Stuyvesant	36 St (DMNR)—7.8%
Bedford-Nostrand (G) — 9.5%	59 St (NR)—9.5%
Classon Av (G) — 9.8%	Ft Hamilton Pkwy (N)—11.8%
	8 Av (N)—16.1%
Fort Greene & DUMBO	
Fulton St (G)—10.3%	Bensonhurst & Gravesend
Lafayette Av (C)—8%	Bay Pkwy (N)—14.2%
York St (F)—14.2%	18 Av (N)—13.7%

Ridership Gains in NJ, Too

NJ Transit posted record ridership last year, with nearly 251 million trips made on the agency's network of trains, buses and light rail lines. Altogether, ridership in fiscal year 2007 (which ended on June 30) **increased by almost 10 million trips**, a jump of 4.1 percent over 2006. The impressive growth may reflect commuters' reaction to rising gas prices, and bolsters NJ Transit's plans to expand service with ARC, double-decking train cars, and implementing BRT in Newark.

Ridership on the state's three light rail lines (Newark, Hudson-Bergen and the RiverLine) surged to nearly 19 million trips in 2007, up 22 percent over 2006. This growth was far higher than in 2006, which saw a 12.3 percent increase over 2005. Peak-hour travel propelled the growth in commuter rail travel, which jumped from 68.8 to 73 million trips in 2007, an increase of 6 percent over 2006. But off-peak travel also saw gains, growing 5 percent over the previous year. And weekend rail ridership increased 7 percent. ❖

CT Legislature: Promising Steps, Missed Opportunities

The CT legislature wrapped up its session last month and made several promising steps on smart growth and transit. While it missed a golden opportunity to increase bus transit this year, it stepped away from an ill-considered bus fare hike and approved more money for bus operations in 2009.

Transit advocates, environmentalists, and business leaders in the Transit for Connecticut coalition had been pushing for the passage of House Speaker James Amann's transportation bill, which, among other things, would have immediately increased bus operating and capital funding to \$12 million (MTR #553). On the other hand, Gov. Rell's proposed budget would have maintained the existing level of

bus service and raised bus fares (a one-way fare would have risen 25 cents to \$1.50). Neither of these scenarios came to pass; instead the approved budget gives an additional \$2.5 million to operate buses purchased in 2005 but left idle for lack of funds and a \$5 million increase in funding in 2009. Thankfully, these measures postponed a fare hike.

Unfortunately, other forward-thinking opportunities were defeated, including a bill for a state funded congestion pricing study (S.B.1353, MTR #552), and another bill for a pilot speed camera enforcement program in Avon and West Hartford.

Some worthy bills made it through intact. An approved smart growth bill (7090) will create a Responsible Growth Task Force to "identify responsible growth criteria and standards to guide the state's future investment decisions, and study the transfer of development rights laws, policies and programs." The bill also conditions state discretionary funding for municipalities on the timely updating of their conservation and development plans.

Smarter planning was also addressed in the 2008-09 budget implementer 1500, a catch-all bill for ideas that did not pass earlier in the session. The Housing for Economic Growth Program (sections 33, 38-50) allows grants to be provided to municipalities that create high-density housing near existing transportation infrastructure. However, the provision suffers from a potentially defeating flaw in its language that has not been fixed since the provision's original introduction as a separate bill (MTR #552). The areas available for inclusion in the program include not only transit and village centers, but just about anywhere the licensing authority deems adequate. Hopefully this language will not impact the goals of this worthy program. ❖

The Start of ConnDOT Reform?

The Campaign was heartened by Governor Rell's pronouncement in April that she wanted "a more responsive, more responsible DOT and a DOT that will continue to broaden its focus beyond highways." She set up a panel this week to work out the details, but unfortunately, the committee does not have the broad membership we would have hoped for. The DOT Reform Panel is heavily-weighted with representatives from Connecticut's business community and the state's executive branch. Only a handful of the appointed panelists have experience in transportation, and none can boast credentials for transportation reform. We hope the Panel, which has a Dec. 1st deadline, will involve transportation reform groups and smart growth advocates as it develops its recommendations. ❖

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CALENDAR

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 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, 8-10am. Professional Women in Construction Transportation Forum. Guest speakers: Jane Chmielinski, DMJM Harris; Richard Sarles, NJ Transit; Mysore Nagaraja, MTA Capital Construction; Jane Hegarty, PANYNJ; and Janette Sadik-Khan, NYC DOT. Tickets \$65 members/\$75 non-members. Yale Club, 50 Vanderbilt Avenue, Manhattan. For more information or to register, click here. 212-486-7745.

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 & mature teens 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. Click here to download/print the registration form in PDF.

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.

August 16, 4:30-6:30pm. Metro-North Railroad Commuter 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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