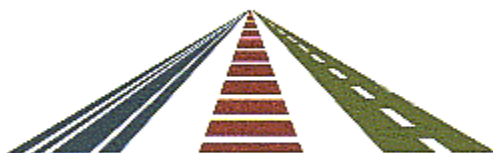


TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



*Mobilizing the Region*

Statement of Teresa Toro, Tri-State Transportation Campaign  
New York City Council Transportation Committee Oversight Hearing  
*How Do We Achieve PlanNYC 2030's Sustainability Goal to Improve Travel Times by  
Adding Transit Capacity for Millions More Residents, Visitors, and Workers?*

March 1, 2007

I am Teresa Toro, NYC Coordinator for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. The Campaign's mission is to achieve an environmentally sound, economically efficient and socially just transportation network.

The goal of improving travel times as the city grows by expanding mass transit capacity is simultaneously a very obvious requirement for growth and liveability and a complex challenge for city and regional institutions.

To stand any chance of meeting the goal, city government's approach to transportation and planning in general is going to have to change significantly.

First, the city has to exert more interest and ownership over the mass transit system. Today, NYC elected officials and relevant executive departments take almost no substantive role in transit planning or oversight, and mainly play a reactive role when immediate, small scale problems crop up. Nonetheless, work on massive capital investments and service plans that will help shape the city for decades or longer is going on daily at NYC Transit and the MTA. Everyone knows about the Second Avenue subway and #7 line extension, but what is the next generation of transit capacity projects in store for the city? What is being done about the Queens and Brooklyn neighborhoods whose subway lines are near or over capacity? What is the long term answer for Staten Island, which long ago began drowning in its own traffic? City Hall used to have a Mayor's Office of Transportation to raise these questions by acting as formal liaison to the regional transportation agencies and stay closely abreast of issues and plans. We are very encouraged by the can-do and collaborative attitude on the part of the new MTA leadership and urge you to explore regular, pro-active ways of joint city-MTA work.

It's not just from a transportation point of view that these questions need to be looked at. Our testimony regarding the massive Atlantic Yards development proposal stated that: "current planning procedures and functions in New York City are not sufficiently coherent across the spectrum ranging from the developer to the relevant city agencies and state public authorities, such as the city Dept. of Transportation, NYC Transit and the ESDC, to coordinate and promote the joint development, infrastructure and

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consensus building plans to smoothly integrate something of this scale and ambition into the fabric of the city.” The mayor’s 2030 plan looks ahead to far more commercial and residential development in the city, but there is simply no governmental function here today that jointly addresses the siting of development and the transportation requirements of that additional residential and commercial space and activity. As recently as last year, the NYC DOT commissioner’s office was passing off the problem of overcapacity on Brooklyn’s L-train as an MTA problem, even though it was city government that had just re-zoned Greenpoint and Williamsburg for 100% residential growth, even after the L-line had already become a 24/7 mosh pit and Transit officials admitted that the area’s growth had taken them by surprise. So a major question we urge you to raise and help solve is how you get the various planning functions pulling together for common goals.

There are some nascent beginnings of this. The Bloomberg administration’s interest in the #7 Line extension is one. Joint city DOT and NYC Transit work on bus rapid transit lines is another. We in fact believe that bus rapid transit is going to be one of the key ways that the growing city can meet its transportation needs, because BRT is so much cheaper and easier to implement than new rail lines. However, that will require a major change in attitude by the NYC DOT, which has long been preoccupied with keeping car traffic moving above all else. We are concerned that the present round of BRT planning has come up with half-hearted designs because of DOT’s unwillingness to reallocate lanes from car traffic to bus transit, and is heading in the direction of replicating the weak and discredited city bus lanes we have today, which are constantly blocked by cars, cabs and trucks. BRT plans implemented and being planned in cities like San Francisco have truly separate bus-ways that do not require police enforcement. But that necessitates ambitious overhauling of major avenues so that they function as true transit corridors, not just streets that happen to have a mix of buses and other traffic.

One quick point we urge is that you approve Intro 199, and emphasize the issue of travel times. Although the Bloomberg administration has opposed the bill, the fact is that the city does not collect information about travel times that could allow it to measure progress on the travel time goal it has set forth. Good Census data on this measurement is only done every 10 years, which is not nearly frequent enough to know whether commutes and other travel in the city is getting better or worse.

Finally, it is important to note that we are here today discussing mass transit expansion as the MTA prepares to announce the biggest budget deficits in its history. Paying for the transit system we need is going to require city, state and federal participation. Putting together the funding package for the things we are talking about is going to require hard work and constructive input from the city it can’t just be waved off as city officials so often do as “an MTA thing” or “Albany’s problem.”

Thank you for providing the opportunity to testify today.

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