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To: Friends of the Rudin Center
From: Elliot G. Sander
Re: Annual Update on the NYU Wagner Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management
Date: July 15, 2004

It is with pleasure that I write to update you on the activities of the NYU Wagner Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management during 2003-2004. It has been a very busy year and we have accomplished much in all of our three key areas: research, education, and public service. Additionally, we have moved our offices and are now located with the rest of NYU's Wagner Graduate School faculty and staff at the historical Puck Building. The new address is 295 Lafayette Street, 2nd floor, New York, NY 10012. Our phones and emails remain the same, but our new fax number is 212-995-4611.

Topics explored during the 2003-2004 season included high speed rail, NY State border needs, MTA capital programming, and variable pricing on Port Authority facilities. Work was commissioned by the New York State Department of Transportation, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the Mineta Transportation Institute, among others. The following paragraphs provide some highlights of the Rudin Center's accomplishments during the past year.

Research

During the past year, the Rudin Center was engaged in the following activities:

- **Context Sensitive Solutions in Large Central Cities.** Understanding Context Sensitive Design/Solutions (CSD/S) and sharing lessons learned and best practices is important for large central cities. However, because of their unique role in the nation's economy and society, there is something fundamentally different about large central cities that renders illustrations from less urbanized areas insufficient. A quick literature review showed that most of the published examples of CSD/S are from smaller cities or suburban or rural areas. Further, the few disseminated findings dealing with large urbanized areas (e.g. Route 9A in New York City), tend to focus on State-led projects rather than City-led initiatives. Thus, the Rudin Center held a 1½ - day peer-to-peer workshop on context sensitive design/solutions (CSD/S) in June 2003. The goal of the session was to lay a foundation for dealing with the state of the practice and processes related to context sensitive solutions, and to identify specific urban examples that could be used as benchmarks for lessons learned and best practices.
- **Evaluation Study of the Port Authority of NY & NJ's Value Pricing Initiative – Task 5: Monitoring of Media and Decision-Makers' Reaction to Value Pricing and Changes in the Toll Schedule.** Part of a larger project assessing the efficacy of value pricing and changes in the toll schedule on Port Authority facilities, the Rudin Center documented the decision-making process leading up to and immediately following the implementation of value pricing so as to derive lessons learned that could be utilized when implementing similar programs elsewhere.
- **High Speed Rail Projects in the United States: Identifying the Elements for Success.** Working together with San José State University, the Rudin Center is involved in an effort on high-speed rail (HSR), funded by the Mineta Transportation Institute. The goal of this study is to identify those lessons learned for successfully developing and implementing HSR in the United

States. Given the early stages of these projects, "success" cannot be based on implementation, but will be based upon whether a given HSR project is still actively pursuing development and/or funding. The work is proceeding in two phases. Phase 1 constituted a literature review that looked back to federal (and where warranted, state) legislation to determine what was intended in terms of objectives and criteria identified in the legislation; and briefly assessed all HSR efforts in the United States since 1980 to determine their history and current status. Phase 2 includes a more in-depth study of three of these cases (California, Florida, and the Pacific Northwest) along with a number of interviews. The study will provide a unique and valuable contribution to the field by providing a much-needed and strong foundation upon which additional research in this area could be based.

- ***The Impact of MTA Capital Spending.*** In 1981, with New York's transit system in a state of near-collapse, the state legislature asked New York's transit authority, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), to begin regular five-year planning of its capital program. Since that time, the MTA has developed five successive plans aimed at bringing the system to a state of good repair. With the current plan coming to a close and a new plan slated for release later this year, the Rudin Center is taking a close look at the transportation and economic impacts that have occurred as a result of these five-year plans. The study reviews the rationale for the initial five-year capital program, examines the relationship between particular capital investments and subsequent performance improvements (if any), and looks at how transit investment may have impelled economic development in the New York region. The study also explores the potential multiplier and economic development effects of future capital spending.
- ***New York State Border Crossing Needs.*** Canada is the United State's strongest trading partner, exceeding trade with Mexico and with the European Union. On land, this trade flows through 22 principal border crossings between the United States and Canada, with 90% of the value and three-quarters of the tonnage and truck trips originating in or destined for locations beyond the border states. Three of the six crossings are in New York State. However, up to one-half of the trips originate in or are destined for locations beyond the border states. Thus, while they generate economic value nationally, the burdens they bring are concentrated in border state. Recognizing the significance of the border states and the need for transportation corridors throughout the country to facilitate the projected growth in trade, Congress established the Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program and the National Corridor Planning and Development Program in 1998. However, these programs have fallen short of their goals, principally as a result of under-funding and earmarking. If the current funding levels and practices of the Borders and Corridors Program continue, there is concern that freight volume at the key crossings in New York will continue to grow without the ability to effectively and efficiently service it. The goal of this study will be to assess the implications for New York State and for the country if New York's border and corridor needs are unmet.

In May 2004, the Center began work on three additional studies that will continue well into Fall 2004:

- ***Identifying and Reducing Institutional Barriers to Effective and Efficient Freight Movement in Downstate New York.*** How to effectively and efficiently move freight continues to be an ongoing issue both nationally and regionally, and the difficulties are likely to grow over the next two decades. In New York City and the surrounding counties, this increase in freight movement is occurring against a backdrop of a highway system already plagued with severe congestion and aging infrastructure offering few alternate routes for trucks even though they are increasingly playing the pivotal role in the supply chain. Compounding the difficulties in moving freight within and through this region is a lack of infrastructure and critical linkages for rail, and poor access to the region's key air and marine ports. All of these issues must be tackled within a region that is home to numerous agencies with multiple jurisdictions and functions, as well as a variety of private actors that either own and/or maintain parts of the freight network. This fragmentation of responsibility makes developing and implementing solutions more difficult. Communication among the groups is said to occur and a number of studies are currently underway throughout the State. However, prioritization and additional action are still needed. The goal of this effort is to identify a set of four to five discrete actions that can be undertaken by the agencies in the

downstate region (and possibly beyond the region), and determine how they might be accomplished in a way that advances effective and efficient movement of freight within and through the region while reducing institutional and jurisdictional barriers.

- **Megacities.** Latin America includes some of the most urban of the world's developing countries, and its population is on the rise. As urbanization and population continue to increase in this region, the capacity of existing transportation systems to provide safe, clean and effective transportation will be surpassed. In turn, those functions dependent on transportation – economic development, quality of life, and urban vitality – will suffer. In fact, with transportation systems in the region already stressed, the following problems have begun to manifest: skyrocketing investment and maintenance costs; diminishing access to insufficient transport services; disinvestment in public transit; growing traffic congestion; pressure from private vehicle owners to expand highway infrastructure; escalating air pollution; rising oil dependence; and an inability of the public sector to compete with the informal economy in providing adequate transportation services. While some solutions have begun to emerge, it is critical that international and national NGOs work alongside public agencies to continue developing and implementing effective solutions. Specifically, the Rudin Center will be working together with Lima, Perú to survey key institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the selected urban transportation agencies and to develop a prioritized technical assistance project (to be implemented in later phases) focusing on executive training, benchmarking best practices among mega urban transportation agencies, as well as provision of technical assistance in a key area of need identified from the above-mentioned survey.
- **NYMTC Highway and Streets Planning Initiative.** The Rudin Center will be working with NYMTC members and staff to strengthen the analysis and recommendations of the highway portion of NYMTC's Regional Transportation Plan by evaluating highway initiatives being used to address regional highway needs in this and other regions; setting NYMTC's highway analysis and recommendations into a larger regional context that includes northern New Jersey, southwestern Connecticut and New York counties to the north of NYMTC's region; and preparing a highway issues report and holding a conference on the region's highway needs that will illustrate and educate a broad audience including elected officials, agency heads, and department commissioners about the need to address this region's highway needs. The conference will be held in Fall 2004.

Looking forward to 2005, the Center is engaged in discussions related to pursuing an extended study on high speed rail with additional cases; identifying the needs of public interest groups in the NY metropolitan area regarding the use of open source technologies to achieve their missions relative to transportation issues; assessing institutional issues related to integration of transit agencies in the region; and policy issues related to deployment of intelligent transportation systems.

Education and Outreach

The Rudin Center's educational activities during 2003-2004 included the ongoing New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) Executive Development Program for the region's most promising mid-career transportation executives, breakfast meetings with New York's most prominent transportation leaders, conferences, and the critically acclaimed *New York Transportation Journal*, which now has a print distribution of about 1,500 and is available via the website to reach a larger audience both within and beyond the region. Other education-related activities include the following:

- **A Senior Leadership Training Course for Transit Industry Professionals.** The Rudin Center completed its work with the National Transit Institute (NTI) to develop a mini-course aimed at executives in transit that is similar to the current NYMTC class. The first offering was held in April 2004 in Denver, Colorado and attracted a group of over thirty students. A second offering is being planned for Fall 2004 in Tampa, Florida.
- **The Fourth Annual Tri-State Transit Symposium – The Future of Intercity Rail and Financing Transit Capital Programs.** The Symposium was attended by nearly 200

representatives from federal, state, and city government, elected officials, business leaders, academics, and the media. The key topics of discussion were the upcoming MTA Capital Program and the future of intercity high speed rail. Speakers included William Millar, President of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA); Christopher Boylan, Deputy Executive Director of the MTA; Catherine Nolan (NYS Assembly, District 37), Assembly Representative to the MTA Capital Program Review Board; Richard Ravitch, former MTA Chairman; Samuel Reid, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs at the US Department of Transportation; Joseph Bress, Vice President of Labor Relations at Amtrak; Rod Diridon, Executive Director of the Mineta Transportation Institute and gubernatorial appointee to the California High Speed Rail Authority Board; and John Guinan, Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Passenger and Freight Transportation at the NYS Department of Transportation.

- **Regional Partnerships in Transportation Technology: Learning from and Building Upon Success.** Held on May 11, 2004, the goal of this conference was to provide a forum for objective discussion of policy and institutional issues relevant to deployment of intelligent transportation systems (ITS), in addition to celebrating E-ZPass and other regional successes in institutional collaboration and cooperation for implementation of ITS, including TRANSCOM and the I-95 Corridor Coalition. The conference attracted over 150 participants, many of whom were new to the Center. Speakers included: Jack Whaley, Executive Director, Transtar-Houston; Jeff Lindley, Director, Office of Transportation Management, Federal Highway Administration; Neil Shuster, President & CEO, ITS America; Michael Ascher, President, MTA Bridges and Tunnels; Walter Kristlibas, Executive Committee Chair, E-ZPass Interagency Group; Matt Edelman, Executive Director, TRANSCOM; John Baniak, Executive Director, I-95 Corridor Coalition; Robert Dennison, Regional Director - Region 8, NYSDOT; Ken Philmus, Director, Tunnels, Bridges & Terminals Department, The Port Authority of NY & NJ; and Federicka Cuenca, Director of Policy & Special Advisor on Safety & Environmental Issues, Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- **Policy Breakfasts:** The Center held two policy breakfasts during the 2003-2004 season: one with Kevin Corbett, Executive Deputy Commissioner, Empire State Development Corporation, and one with Katherine Lapp, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Both attracted over 100 participants. Summaries of the sessions are available on the Rudin Center website.

The Center is currently exploring educational opportunities with MTA New York City Transit and is working with the Dean of the Wagner school and several faculty members to begin developing a specialization in transportation at New York University.

Public Service

As in previous years, the Rudin Center continues to play a central civic role by providing leadership to the Empire State Transportation Alliance (ESTA), an organization it founded to bring together stakeholders in transportation from the civic, business, labor, and environmental communities. The Center also continues to act as a research, administrative, and policy advising body for the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO).

- **Annual Awards.** At the March 2004 Annual Meeting, 2 individuals and 2 agencies were honored. Emil Frankel, US Department of Transportation, was awarded the Public Service Award; Richard Ravitch of Ravitch, Rice & Co. was awarded the Civic Leadership Award. The Port Authority of NY & NJ and the NYC Department of Transportation shared the Public Agency Award for the AirTrain JFK and THRU Streets projects, respectively. Roughly 150 individuals attended this year's awards.