NYU Wagner rudin center for transportation policy & management

NEW YORK TRANSPORTATION JOURNAL

Volume VII No. 1 Fall/Winter 2003

www.nyu.edu/wagner/rudincenter

Overcoming the Challenges of Implementing AirTrain JFK

By Anthony G. Cracchiolo

Despite the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and the recent blackout of August 14, 2003, New York City has demonstrated — twice again — that it is a class act worthy of the designation "international capital" of the world. A destination point each year for millions of tourists and travelers from all over the globe, the City's primary international gateway is John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) — approximately 16 miles outside of Manhattan.

Courtesy of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

Primary access to JFK is via the heavily trafficked Van Wyck Expressway (VWE), which is used by 75 percent of JFK air passengers — because it is the only north-south Queens highway that allows commercial traffic and connects with the Long Island Expressway (I-495) and I-95 — and is also the main route for airport employees and air cargo/service vehicles. On airport, the heavy presence of buses, taxis, limousines and privately owned vehicles in the Central Terminal Area (CTA) creates congested terminal frontages and poses logistical problems to efficient traffic management.

To alleviate these problems, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) will put into service by the end of 2003, a $1.9 billion light rail airport access system that will relieve congestion on the VWE *and* improve intra-airport mobility. The new rail transportation system — called AirTrain JFK — is the first fully automated rail transit system in New York City, and is expected to carry an estimated 12.4 million passengers a year. Operating both as a rapid transit (airport access) system and an on-airport people mover, the 8-mile AirTrain JFK will connect JFK passenger terminals with each other, with the long term parking lot, with car rental facilities and, most significantly, with the MTA Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and New York City Transit (NYCT) stations at Jamaica and the NYCT station at Howard Beach. By reducing automobile trips and cutting transit travel time between JFK terminals and midtown Manhattan to less than an hour, and creating a new hub at Jamaica, AirTrain JFK — a safe, reliable and environmentally sound transportation alternative — will allow the airport to continue its growth and support New York City businesses and the City's $15 billion-a-year tourism industry.

The Challenges of Building AirTrain JFK

AirTrain JFK is the culmination of more than 30 years of efforts to build and implement an effective airport access system in New York. The development of AirTrain JFK has been a long and arduous journey, with many challenges along the way: from funding issues, a long regulatory process, opposition from various groups, coordination with the city and state transportation departments, coordination and agreements with the MTA and their operating agencies (LIRR and NYCT), to the actual

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Letter from the Editor

The leaves are falling, the weather is cooling and once again all roads and transit routes led to Yankee Stadium (though it did not end as we may have liked). Another tradition that continues is the lack of an agreement on the Federal budget for transportation. The financing dilemma is exacerbated this year by the lack of long-term reauthorizations of the highway, transit and airport funding programs. The temporary extension of the Federal funding programs will limit commitments to mega-projects such as the East Side Access Project and the Second Avenue Subway.

The lack of accord on the new authorization also means the continued defense of transportation funding for New York, New Jersey and the other Northeastern States from the Southern

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AirTrain cont.

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construction of the system.

Funding

Designed to take advantage of and complement New York's extensive regional rail transportation network (including compatibility with NYCT and LIRR systems to leave open the possibility of a future "one-seat" ride between Manhattan and JFK), the AirTrain JFK project received its Final Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision in July 1997 and FAA approval for partial funding in 1998 under the *1990 Aviation Safety and Capacity Expansion Act* (an amendment of the *Federal Aviation Act of 1958*), which authorized the creation of a program that would allow airport operators to collect a fee of up to $3, the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC), from enplaning passengers to fund eligible airport improvement projects. Seventy percent of AirTrain JFK funding comes from PFCs, the balance from Port Authority capital funds.

Overcoming Opposition

When environmental and initial funding approval was received from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for AirTrain, there remained other hurdles to overcome — not the least of which was opposition to the project from the airlines, transportation advocacy groups, and other special interest and community groups. Some critics insisted on a "one-seat ride" from Manhattan to JFK, while others suggested alternative routes. The airline industry, represented by the Air Transport Association (ATA), acknowledged that improved airport access was needed, but opposed the use of PFC funds to do so, maintaining that improved access is the responsibility of state and local government. Once the FAA approved the PA's PFC application two lawsuits were initiated challenging the approval; in both cases, two Federal Appeals Courts ruled in favor of the FAA's PFC funding approval and the project proceeded.

New York City required the project to undergo the Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP) in order to transfer City property interests necessary primarily for the Jamaica segment of the project. This process involved extensive community input and action by the Queens Borough Board, City Planning Commission and New York City Council.

Construction Challenges

The biggest challenge, by far, of improving access to JFK was the herculean task of physically *building* the system without severely impacting airport operations and peak period traffic on the VWE. Constructing both the on-airport and off-airport components necessitated an extensive outreach effort and coordination with diverse interests, including the airlines and airport operations personnel, the region's transportation agencies, the traveling public, and the surrounding communities.

Maintaining Airport Operations

The PA awarded a design/build/operate/maintain (DBOM) contract to the Air Rail Transit Consortium (ARTC) that enabled both parties to advance early construction while design was still underway. This strategy allowed both the PA and the contractor to fast-track construction while permitting the team to respond quickly to unforeseen field conditions, changing airport and highway operational requirements and community concerns; it also allowed for the avoidance of potential contract claims. To minimize the impact on airport operations, the PA and its consultants designed the one-quarter mile long tunnel under two airport taxiways, and relocated the on-airport North Service Road along the on-airport VWE to create the right-of-way for AirTrain's at-grade section. Project staff also worked closely with the airlines to construct the AirTrain stations at their terminals without reducing their ability to service air passengers. Also, unique design characteristics were incorporated in the Central Terminal Area stations to meet the special needs of each airline terminal and to maximize service options to airline passengers. For example, the AirTrain station at Terminal 4

The *New York Transportation Journal* is published by the NYU Wagner Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management in conjunction with the Rudin Center's Adivsory board, the Council on Transportation.

The Rudin Center gratefully acknowledges the foundation, corporate, and individual sponsors that make possible our efforts to promote progressive transportation policy, including the *New York Transportation Journal*.

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(the new International Air Terminal) is located within the building, allowing direct access to both arrival and departure areas, while Terminal 7's (British Airways) AirTrain station is integrated with a new parking garage.

Guideway Construction and Traffic Coordination

Due to its proximity to the active roadway and residences along the service roads, construction of the three-mile stretch of the elevated guideway in the eleven-foot median of the VWE between Jamaica Station (Atlantic Avenue) and the airport was probably the most challenging. In addition to the permanent easement granted by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) for use of state property along the VWE and over the Nassau Expressway and Belt Parkway, close coordination was required with NYSDOT and the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) for both AirTrain guideway construction and traffic management. The VWE's outside shoulders and on and off ramps were widened and the shoulders temporarily converted to travel lanes in order to maintain three traffic lanes in each direction during peak travel periods; at other times a minimum of two traffic lanes in each direction were provided to permit construction of the guideway.

> ***"AirTrain JFK is the culmination of more than 30 years of efforts to build and implement an effective airport access system in New York."***

When it was announced that VWE guideway construction would necessitate the temporary closing of travel lanes on area highways, motorists were convinced that traffic would be backed up for many miles beyond the project area. To minimize adverse traffic impacts, the project team developed and implemented a comprehensive Maintenance and Traffic Protection Plan together with a public information program. An around-the-clock traffic study was conducted along the VWE from South Conduit to Hillside Avenues, and at critical intersections during peak hours. Study results allowed traffic engineers to determine the best times to schedule construction with the least impact to motorists and area property owners. The sequence of construction had previously been coordinated with NYSDOT and NYCDOT, and the AirTrain project team worked in tandem with NYSDOT to complete an additional $34 million of NYSDOT funded infrastructure improvements along the corridor, including two bridge replacements at 109th and Foch Boulevard, improved on and off ramps with improved acceleration and deceleration lanes, and widened highway shoulders.

A VWE traffic control desk, located at NYSDOT's Joint Traffic Operations Center in Long Island City, was then set up to monitor construction and traffic flow using roadside cameras, Shadow Traffic and variable message signs. Traffic enforcement agents, Highway 3 Police and three on-site tow trucks were also dedicated to the effort. A general 800 number was installed, and an AirTrain Web site was created to provide project and construction information. When the time came to temporarily close the Nassau Expressway, Belt Parkway and North and South Conduit Avenues, a media blitz blanketed the area for days leading up to and during the closures and motorists were advised to use alternate routes. With the support and cooperation of NYCDOT and NYSDOT the closures ran smoothly and the contractor was able to complete construction of the approximate three miles of elevated guideway ahead of schedule, in a record 22 months.

Intermodal Terminal Construction

The AirTrain intermodal terminals at Howard Beach and Jamaica also required major construction adjacent to and over NYCT and LIRR tracks and platforms entailing close coordination with rail operations. The project included replacement of NYCT's Howard Beach Station subway mezzanine, complete rehabilitation of the NYCT platforms and canopies by the PA on behalf of NYCT. The project also included building a new LIRR Jamaica Station mezzanine, a portal roof over the five LIRR platforms and eleven tracks, and completely rebuilding the 1913 vintage platforms and canopies for the LIRR while allowing almost 700 trains a day to continue operating without delays. Close coordination and full support from NYCT and LIRR were essential to achieving successful construction results to date.

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AirTrain Facts & Figures

Fleet

The AirTrain fleet includes 32 vehicles, 60' long by 10' wide, able to travel at a maximum speed of 60 mph. The fleet vehicles are characterized by:

- Configuration for bi-directional operation;
- Capacity for single unit use or in multiples of up to four-car trains;
- Modern, streamlined exteriors with wide doors for luggage-carrying passengers;
- Interiors with seating, luggage racks, and open floor space for luggage carts;
- Full ADA-compliance with extra enhancements.

Guideway:

Single-track elevated	6 mi.
Double-track elevated	3.2 mi.

Command and Control:

- Fully automated, driverless operation controlled by moving block train control system;
- Automated storage yard complementing mainline operations.

Peak Period Headway:

Central Terminal Area	2 min.
From Howard Beach or Jamaica	4 min.

Travel Times:

Complete trip around CTA	8 min.
Midtown Manhattan to JFK on LIRR	45 min.
Downtown Manhattan to JFK on NYCT subway	60 min.

Fare:

Single trip	$5
Monthly pass (unlimited trips)	$40
CTA circulator, to long-term parking and car rental agencies	free

In the Region

A Healthy Investment in Transportation

By Congressman Jerrold Nadler

One of the main tasks before the U.S. Congress this year is to reauthorize the six-year transportation funding bill, known as the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Quality transportation infrastructure is an essential component of our everyday lives. In addition to being critical to our national security, transportation improvements will bring numerous economic and environmental benefits across the nation. Efficient roads and rails improve the flow of goods, lower the cost of doing business, make the economy more productive, and reduce pollution.

According to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) data, each $1 billion spent on transportation creates 47,500 jobs and $6.1 billion in economic activity. In today's economy, such an investment is not only wise, but imperative. As the senior Democrat from New York on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, one of my top priorities is to ensure that TEA-21's successor has enough funding to address adequately the United States' surface transportation needs.

The Transportation & Infrastructure Committee recently proposed at least $50 billion annually over the next six years for TEA-21 reauthorization. Unfortunately, the House passed a resolution authorizing only $39 billion a year, barely sufficient to maintain the status quo. We must do more than simply maintain our existing system. One of Congress' primary goals in TEA-21 reauthorization must be to expand and improve our transportation assets to reduce congestion, improve the flow of goods and people, and spur economic growth.

Rather than authorize sufficient transportation funds, some in Congress would prefer to fund some states adequately by shifting funds from other states. At least 17 states would lose transportation funds; New York alone would lose $300 million every year. To combat this, the Fair Alliance for Intermodal Reinvestment, of which I am a member, is working to ensure that the formula that allocates federal highway dollars to the states is protected.

> *"Building new roads alone cannot alleviate congestion. We must also find ways to divert freight from trucks to rail."*

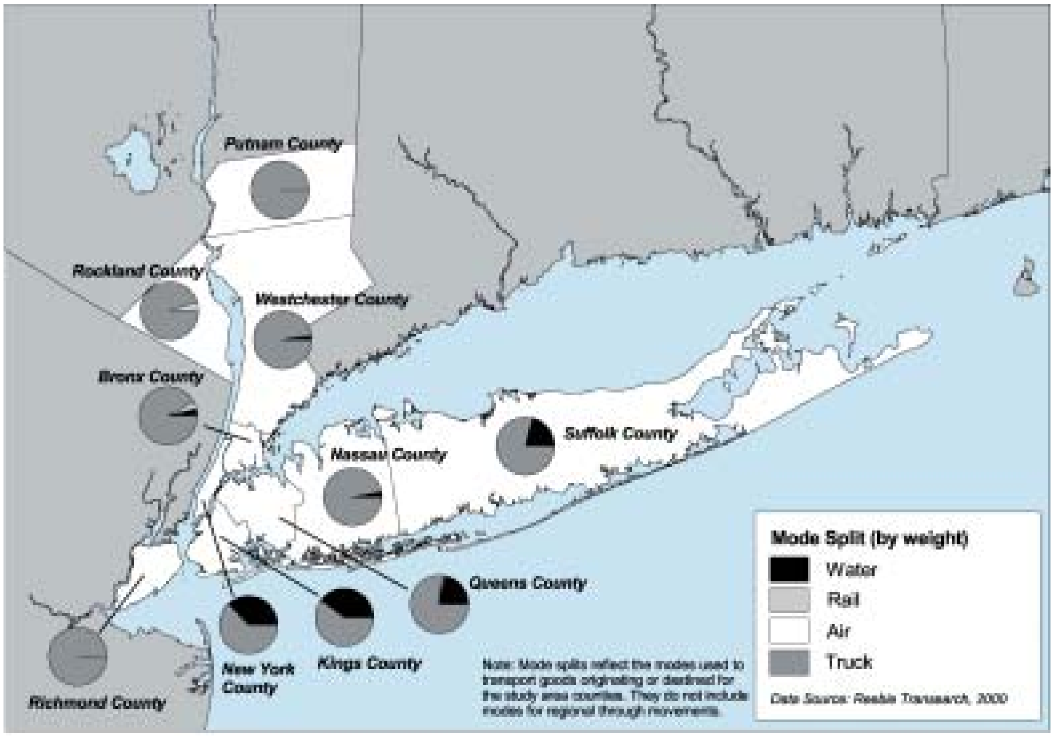
> *"Lawmakers have some tough choices to make...one of the most important investments we can make is in our infrastructure."*

The so-called SHARE Coalition, which advocates changing the current formula, argues that states like New York get too much back in transportation funds compared to what they contribute in gas taxes to the highway and transit trust fund. This is a very narrow view that misses the bigger picture. For example, New Yorkers rely heavily on mass transit, and therefore, contribute less in gas taxes than more gas-guzzling states. States like New York should be rewarded, not punished, for investing in mass transit and becoming more energy efficient. Congress should focus on ways to increase infrastructure investments to create jobs and spur economic growth, not on punishing energy-efficient states by taking scarce resources away from them.

Building new roads alone cannot alleviate congestion. We must also find ways to divert freight from trucks to rail. It is estimated that the volume of freight — therefore of truck traffic — entering the New York metropolitan region will increase by 79 percent in the next 20 years. Our already congested highway network (which cannot be substantially expanded) simply cannot be expected to handle a traffic increase of this magnitude. If not dealt with, our inability to accommodate the expected jump in freight volume will put a lid on economic growth in the region — to say nothing of the delays to be expected on the roadways.

Exacerbating this problem is the fact that New York is the only major port city in the United States that has never built a rail-freight connection across its harbor or river. Until such a connection is made, increased traffic on the I-95 corridor will continue to bottleneck in northern New Jersey and New York City. To provide the existing rail-freight system east of the Hudson River in New York with a major link to the rest of the continent, we must construct a rail freight tunnel under New York Harbor.

Fortunately, the Cross-Harbor Tunnel project is well under way. Congress appropriated funds to the New York City Economic Development Corporation for a Major Investment Study, which was completed in 2000, and for an Environmental Impact



Statement, which is expected to be released in September. These studies have confirmed that such a tunnel will be extremely successful in all respects, including providing an ample return on any public investment.

The Cross-Harbor Tunnel has a benefit-to-cost ratio of 2.2 to 1 — the highest of any major transportation project currently under consideration in New York. More importantly, the tunnel would remove at least 1 million tractor-trailer trucks per year from the roads in northern New Jersey and New York City. This means reduced congestion for passenger transports, cleaner air, lower-cost consumer goods, and a generally reduced cost of doing business for the area's more than 20 million people. It does not take much of an imagination to see the benefits of removing a million trucks from the highways entering New York City each year.

Truck congestion is not a problem for New York alone. Across the country, from Chicago to San Antonio to Los Angeles, cities have demonstrated a need to divert freight from trucks to rail. The Cross-Harbor Tunnel project is just one example of how freight and passenger transportation are intertwined. With domestic trade expected to double, and international trade to triple over the next 20 years, TEA-21 reauthorization must supply funding mechanisms for intermodal projects, including rail, so that freight congestion does not choke our highways.

In addition to alleviating severe traffic congestion, a Cross-Harbor Tunnel will address the region's needs for alternate shipping methods in the event of a terrorist attack. Our total dependence on trucks for the delivery of all freight — everything we consume — introduces a unique national security vulnerability.

Because of the lack of necessary 14-foot clearance for tractor-trailers at various access points, more than 90% of all freight bound for New York City and Long Island crosses the George Washington Bridge. Closure of this bridge would strangle the region. The only real answer to this threat is to re-introduce redundancy into our freight transportation system, so that freight can still be delivered even if one bridge (or other facility) is temporarily out of action. There are proposals in Congress to include a funding category in the TEA-21 Reauthorization bill for Projects of National Significance for National Security — funding for which the Cross-Harbor Tunnel project would qualify.

In these lean economic times, lawmakers have some tough choices to make. I have always believed that one of the most important investments we can make is in our infrastructure, precisely because infrastructure investment creates jobs and provides an economic stimulus. For our ailing economy, one of the best uses of federal funds is healthy investment in the next TEA-21.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D) represents New York's Eighth Congressional District.

Freight Facts

Freight Flows in the Region

Trips with...

No origin or destination in the region	11%
Either origin or destination in the region	74%
Both origin and destination in the region	15%

Freight Moved by Rail in NY Metropolitan Region

East of Hudson	3%
West of Hudson	15%
U.S. National Average	11%

Freight Moved by Truck in NY Metropolitan Region

East of Hudson	82%
West of Hudson	67%
U.S. National Average	58%

Top Commodities Moved in the 10-County NYMTC Region*

Inbound

By Weight	
Food or kindred products	17%
By Value	
Machinery, excluding electrical	13%

Outbound

By Weight	
Petroleum or coal products	30%
By Value	
Secondary cargoes and drayage	20%

*NYC, Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk and Westchester Counties

Source: Cambridge Systematics, NYMTC Regional Freight Flow Plan: Task 2 - Description of Freight Transportation System in the Region (April 2001)

The Boroughs of New York: Queens

More Than a Train

By F. Carlisle Towery

With the long-awaited arrival of AirTrain fast approaching, payoffs from the collaborative efforts of public, private and non-profit partners to capitalize on the project's potential economic benefits are becoming tangible. Transit planners have long argued for public investment in rail access to John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport, not only for the benefits it will bring to airport workers and passengers but also for AirTrain's potential for stimulating local economic development around one of the region's largest hubs — Jamaica Station.

Jamaica's Historic Past

Jamaica is one of the most heavily used commuter hubs in North America. Approximately 100,000 commuters pass through Jamaica during an average weekday rush hour on MTA's Long Island Rail Road (LIRR); 16,000 commuters use the subway lines at Sutphin Boulevard, and another 37,000 use the Jamaica Center terminal at Parsons Boulevard. About 40 bus services terminate in Jamaica, transporting thousands of customers from Eastern and Southern Queens and Nassau County.

Downtown Jamaica was shaped by regional transportation beginning in the early part of the 20th century when it gained prominence as a retail center serving Queens and Long Island; first, development centered around trolleys and then at the El terminus, and second, as the headquarters and hub the of LIRR. After World War II, the rise of automobile-oriented shopping centers steadily siphoned off Downtown Jamaica's customer base. The effects of regional malls were felt more dramatically as the years progressed. By the late 1960s, this downtown was suffering from the same ailments that plagued so many American cities and inner-ring suburbs as the mall became the new way for Americans to shop. Within one generation, Jamaica's downtown went from a thriving bustling hub of banking, government, retail and commerce serving three counties to a neglected and distressed shopping district serving a much smaller trading area.

In the late 1960s, challenged and supported by Mayor John Lindsay and the Regional Plan Association, the newly-formed non-profit Greater Jamaica Development Corporation (GJDC)

F. Carlisle Towery has served as President of Greater Jamaica Development Corporation, a private not-for-profit local development organization, for over 35 years.

Courtesy of Greater Jamaica Development Corporation

and community partnerships led serious efforts to begin revitalizing Jamaica and restoring it to its former status as a principal regional sub-center. With significant public investments, major blighting influences were removed (such as the Jamaica Avenue El), and strong public institutional uses — the City University's York College, the County's Civil and Family Courts, regional offices of the U.S. Social Security Administration and U.S. Food and Drug Administration — were established in Jamaica pursuant to a downtown plan. Recently, private sector interest has reawakened with the construction of a major cineplex entertainment center and retail project, and the first market-rate housing built in Downtown Jamaica in 30 years.

Vision for Jamaica Center

AirTrain's approval occasioned a comprehensive analysis and updated outlook for Jamaica. A consultant team, guided by GJDC and led by urban planning and architectural finrm, Jambhekar Strauss (now Fox and Fowle), examined the downtown's new position and growing role as a regional center. They received guidance from consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers and were advised by community and inter-agency task forces.

The result was ***Vision for Jamaica Center***, a transportation-based planning framework and development strategy for the economic transformation of the Jamaica Central Business District. The strategy was based upon AirTrain's potential for stimulating economic development. Because AirTrain offers quick (eight-minute) and frequent service (four-to-five minute headways at peak hours) between Jamaica and JFK Airport, the study determined that a singular opportunity exists for Jamaica to attract airport-related economic activities that require proximity to, but not location on, the airport. For the larger downtown area, it suggests specific traffic, urban design, and open space improvements to support development objectives.

The heart of this new vision is *JFK Corporate Square*, a 24-7, mixed use commercial development centered around the rebuilt intermodal nexus at Jamaica Station featuring residential, commercial and entertainment uses for a ten-block area that hub with the new AirTrain terminal. To realize the ***Vision*** — to attract and secure the office, hotel, and other conceived uses, and to insure connectivity and multiplier effects among those uses and transit facilities — GJDC is collaborating extensively with a number of agencies including the Queens Borough President, the City's Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Economic Development Corporation, the City's Department of Small Business Services, the Port Authority, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and Empire State Development Corporation. Key predevelopment actions to facilitate connectivity and to attract developers are underway. The Department of City Planning's work to rezone a 415-block area in the downtown is an important step that will generally update the ordinance and prescribe permissible uses for a largely unused manufacturing district, allowing for office, retail and residential development.

> *"The challenge lies in ensuring that Jamaica grows and is not merely exploited as a regional transit corridor, a mere transfer point among modes that denies the local community economic benefits from the new accessibility and airport connection."*

GJDC has also been coordinating public-private partnerships with elected officials, public agency intervention, and private sector investment, to assure the availability of large, low-cost sites for development and to assure land assemblage for roadway, open space, public parking, and other infrastructure improvements. The first office building, by the nationally known developer LCOR, is being marketed to airlines and foreign companies, and will be anchored by new offices for the Long Island Rail Road. So far, GJDC has secured $12.3 million of U.S. DOT funds have for specific public improvements supportive of the *JFK Corporate Square* project. The Port Authority is supporting pedestrian improvements to the LIRR underpass, and is enabling extension eastward of Atlantic Avenue. A targeted marketing program for *JFK Corporate Square*, supported by ESDC, is focused on sites closest to the AirTrain terminal.

In support of the effort, Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a non-profit planning organization, recently prepared a report, ***Change at Jamaica: Creating and Improving Public Spaces in Jamaica Center***. The study evaluated possible streetscapes and public space improvements to upgrade the area immediately surrounding the AirTrain terminal. Public workshops and interviews with the local community members and stakeholders produced the recommendations.

Challenges to Implementing the Vision

When the work to revitalize Jamaica began some 35 years ago, the negative effects of regional malls on the downtown's economy were plainly visible. With the arrival of AirTrain and the prospects for linking Long Island to Lower Manhattan via a Jamaica-to-Lower Manhattan "Super Shuttle," the overall goal is to strengthen this downtown as a destination — not just as a transfer point. The challenge lies in ensuring that Jamaica grows and is not merely exploited as a regional transit corridor, a mere transfer point among modes that denies the local community economic benefits from the new accessibility and airport connection.

In its report, Project for Public Spaces states that, *"Transit Oriented Development (TOD)," a concept being adapted in cities throughout the United States, is a reality in Jamaica where there is an active town center surrounding a transit station."* However, they also note that, *"The new development concepts, which include mixed use office buildings, retail, housing and hotel, focus mostly on a quick commute into Manhattan and a short trip to JFK. The challenge for Jamaica is to leverage its existing assets along with the new and proposed development to revitalize the area while retaining and enhancing the unique qualities of this…community."*

Persistence on the part of Jamaica's stakeholders with government entities is crucial, as they make good on their promises to help Jamaica capture new markets and re-invent itself in the current fiscal climate of

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(Letter from the Editor Cont.)

and Western States that already receive more funds from the overall Federal budget than the revenue they contribute in taxes. U.S. Congressman Jerrold Nadler makes a considerable contribution to the dialogue on the City's and the region's transportation needs in the context of increasing economic vitality with an article in this issue that describes the New York metropolitan region's cost-effective use of transportation funding and the need to improve the freight transportation infrastructure.

Mary Peters, the Federal Highway Administrator discusses Federal budget issues and the Bush Administration's reauthorization proposal, SAFETEA, in response to questions by Janette Sadik-Khan. Ms. Peters also replies to inquiries regarding innovative financing, safety, environmental streamlining, and other areas of interest to the New York metropolitan region.

Closer to home, we paired in this edition our feature article with our continuing *The Boroughs of New York* series to demonstrate the positive impact a major regional project can have on a local community. We first celebrate the opening of a major regional project, AirTrain JFK, with an article from the project's director, Anthony Cracchiolo of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Airtrain was many years in the making and Mr. Cracchiolo discusses the challenges encountered by the Port Authority in its design and construction.

Although a major regional project, AirTrain JFK is expected to have some substantial local effects. Its terminus is a grand new structure at Jamaica Station, which is envisioned as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the Jamaica Central Business District (CBD). Thus, in the second article in the pair, "More Than Just a Train," F. Carlisle Towery of the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation writes about the efforts of the Jamaica business community to effectively capitalize on the opportunities that AirTrain JFK offers.

We continue to monitor congestion pricing initiatives. Jay Walder of Transport for London follows-up on his article in the Fall 2002 edition of the ***Journal*** on the congestion charging initiative then planned for Central London with a preliminary report on what appears to be a highly successful effort.

Finally, we provide brief reports on a recent Policy Maker Breakfast with Kevin Corbett, as well as the Rudin Center's highly successful Fall Transit Conference.

As always, we hope you find these articles interesting and informative.

ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES

UP CLOSE WITH MARY E. PETERS, FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

BY JANETTE SADIK-KHAN

JSK: Apart from the question of funding levels, which most transportation industry stakeholders were disappointed about, what do you feel are the most far-reaching and important provisions in the Administration's reauthorization proposal?

MP: The Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA) $247 billion reauthorization proposal represents the largest surface transportation and public investment proposal in U.S. history. The proposal focuses on three areas: safety, congestion, and environmental streamlining. SAFETEA will increase funding and strengthen programs dedicated to safety and supports an approach that addresses key safety elements — the roadway, the driver, the vehicle, and emergency response. Our goal is to reduce preventable deaths to no more than one fatality per one hundred million vehicle miles traveled by 2008. To improve mobility, SAFETEA directs significant resources toward the improvement of the transportation system, the mitigation of congestion, and the development of new technologies and approaches to dealing with congestion. Finally, in the area of environmental streamlining, SAFETEA includes specific legislative changes that will facilitate timely project delivery while protecting the environment.

JSK: What are FHWA's top priorities for TEA 21 reauthorization?

MP: The top priorities at the Department are improving safety on our nation's highways, reducing congestion, and streamlining the environmental review process. SAFETEA proposes a new stand-alone "core" Highway Safety Improvement Program that places greater emphasis on highway safety initiatives and provides states with funds to institute data-driven strategic highway safety plans. The bill will expand funding flexibility at state and local levels. The six-year proposal consisting of a $247 billion investment in surface transportation would allow nearly all of these funds to be spent on projects and programs designed to relieve traffic congestion problems. SAFETEA aims at ways to operate the transportation system more efficiently and maximize the availability of existing capacity to help improve traffic flow and meet growing travel demands. SAFETEA will help ensure that transportation projects are completed on budget and on time while protecting the environment. It will enhance the delivery of transportation projects and streamline the environmental review process by improving linkages between the transportation planning and project development process and strengthening current law provisions that establish the timeframe for environmental reviews and decisions on permits.

> *"The top priorities at FHWA are improving safety on our nation's highways, reducing congestion, and streamlining the environmental review process."*

JSK: USDOT's SAFETEA reauthorization proposal emphasizes innovative financing, including a new private activity tax-exempt bond program. Can you elaborate on the various innovative financing provisions in the DOT bill?

MP: We have found that "innovative financing" techniques, which refers to financing methods other than the traditional pay-as-you-go grant funding, have been very successful in providing state and local governments with financing strategies better suited to specific projects. These financing techniques often allow projects to be completed sooner or at a lower cost. They sometimes help leverage non-government project funding. In SAFETEA, we propose to continue the state infrastructure bank program that allows approved states to use some of their federal funds to establish revolving funds. We continue the federal credit programs known as Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation, providing loans to large projects of national significance and the Railroad Rehabilitation Improvement Financing, providing loans to railroad projects. As you mentioned, we are also proposing to allow highway and freight transfer projects to qualify for private activity tax-exempt bonds. We believe this will encourage more public-private partnerships in developing these types of projects.

JSK: Regarding funding, the support for increased use of the GARVEE (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle) bond approach was defended by many on the basis that continued growth expected in highway funding would mitigate the impact of committing future years' federal funding to present day projects. Given the Administration's proposed funding levels, which are essentially flat, with a modest dip in the first two years, should that cause a reassessment of the wisdom of committing significant fractions of future federal aid?

MP: Several states have found GARVEE bonds to be an effective tool for helping them meet a pressing transportation need.

GARVEE bonds allow a state to build a critical transportation facility now instead of delaying it for years. A delay can have several effects, including an increase in construction and inflation cost and postponed safety and environmental safety benefits and improvements for the traveling public.

JSK: Safety is obviously a major priority with Secretary Mineta and yourself, especially after a 12 year high of almost 43,000 highway deaths in 2002. After so many years of improving safety of highway engineering and vehicles, in education of drivers, and in enforcement — especially seatbelt use — where do you see the opportunity for significant breakthroughs in safety, given the 100% increase in safety funding in SAFETEA?

MP: Secretary Mineta has said that saving lives would be the number one priority for the Department. In addition to a new core funding category for safety within the federal-aid highway program to increase visibility and funding beyond the current safety set-aside provisions, SAFETEA also creates a new safety belt incentive program to strongly encourage states to enact safety belt laws and achieve higher safety belt usage rates. While combining and expanding several safety programs into one consolidated grant program, the Administration's proposal also grants states broad new flexibility to transfer safety funds among the diverse safety programs administered by the department and provides increased funding for commercial vehicle safety and research programs. We believe that action at the state and local levels is the most effective approach to improving safety.

JSK: Congress has indicated a strong interest in goods movement and freight corridors. What does DOT's SAFETEA bill include that would facilitate freight or intermodal connections?

MP: The Department, through the FHWA's Office of Freight Management and Operations, and the Office of the Secretary's Office of Intermodalism, has worked vigorously in the years leading up to the reauthorization proposal analyzing freight movement and conducting an extensive outreach program with our public and private partners on the best way to address goods movement and freight corridors. The results of those efforts helped formulate DOT's SAFETEA proposal regarding freight initiatives. The proposal has a number of provisions to facilitate goods movement and freight corridors. These include the Freight Gateways program that will institutionalize freight considerations and needs into the traditional transportation development process and increase investments for intermodal improvements at our major freight gateways and connectors.

JSK: You have been a strong advocate of environmental streamlining, and are credited by many with the significant steps taken administratively as well as prospective steps incorporated in SAFETEA. Are you concerned that in the likely event a reauthorization bill is late, the focus on funding and the urgency to pass a bill will make it difficult to pass environmental streamlining provisions that are significant but controversial (such as Section 4(f) reform and delegation)?

MP: In SAFETEA, the Administration proposed a strong package of measures that support both environmental streamlining and environmental stewardship. We recognize that improved environmental stewardship must go hand-in-hand with streamlining, so SAFETEA emphasizes both. Most of our SAFETEA environmental proposals have been received positively in Congress, by the states, and in the transportation sector. There are some strong champions in Congress for both streamlining and stewardship.

JSK: New York State DOT is considered by some to be at the forefront among DOTs in its environmental stewardship ethic, which boils down to doing more than is minimally required to help the environment. Others also consider it as having gone too far in voluntarily investing more in environmental enhancement than is necessary to satisfy minimum requirements for avoiding and mitigating impacts. Which view do you support?

MP: Joe Boardman and Governor Pataki deserve great credit for their leadership on environmental issues. New York has won several environmental awards, and deservedly so. I support strong environmental stewardship like this and believe that elected officials and the citizens in each state should be allowed flexibility in determining how to balance the priorities they face.

JSK: New York saw the drastic impact on traffic of a major power failure on New York traffic a few weeks ago. Nothing moved. Given the probability of power loss in major cities due to grid failures or terrorist attacks, is FHWA working on any back-up procedures or technologies to keep vehicles moving under power failure conditions?

MP: FHWA has a well-established emergency

(Continued on page 12)

Mary E. Peters was sworn in as the 15th Federal Highway Administrator on October 2, 2001. As administrator, she leads efforts by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation, to improve safety and security, reduce congestion, and enhance mobility on America's roads and bridges.

Before her appointment, Ms. Peters was the director of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). She provided leadership to more than 4,800 employees in administering the state's transportation program. Ms. Peters joined ADOT in 1985, working her way up through the ranks to serve as contract administrator, deputy director for administration, and deputy director. Governor Jane Hull appointed her director in 1998.

Ms. Peters served on the board of directors for the Arizona Quality Alliance, Women Executives in State Government, and Project Challenge, an arm of the National Guard that helps troubled teens to become productive citizens. She also chaired the Highway Expansion Loan Program Advisory Board and was a member of the Greater Arizona Development Authority as well as the Governor's Diversity Advisory Council. In addition, she was a member of the Arizona Governor's Growing Smarter Commission, the Governor's CANAMEX task force, and the Governor's Transportation Vision for the 21st Century task force.

Ms. Peters has also been involved in transportation activities at the national level. She served on the board of directors for ITS America, chaired the Standing Committee on Planning and the Asset Management Task Force for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and served as a member of the AASHTO 2001 Reauthorization Steering Committee. She also hosted the 2001 meeting of the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Surface, Air, and Waterways: Focusing In

The Central London Congestion Charge: An Update So Far

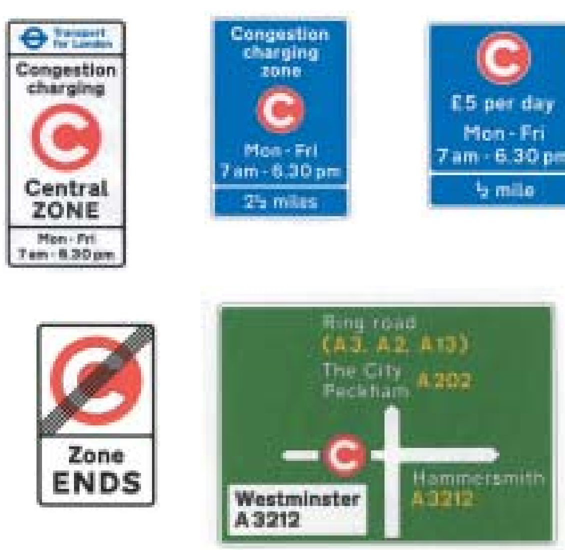
By Jay Walder

I wrote in the Fall 2002 New York Transportation Journal on the imminent introduction of the central London congestion charge. Now, following its successful introduction and after some 6 months of operation, it is timely to provide an update and explain some of the challenges Transport for London (TfL) has faced in implementing the scheme and provide an overview of the broader impacts.

Background

As previously reported, road congestion was crippling Central London. The average travel speeds in 2002 (9 mph) were less than in 1903 (12 mph). Studies showed that London's drivers spent around half their time in queues, incurring 2.3 minutes of delay for every kilometer they traveled. London First, a business membership organisation supported by over 300 of the capital's major companies, estimated the cost of congestion to business in London at around £2 billion ($3.2 billion) a year. Something had to be done to alleviate this great pressure on London's roads and economy. Following public consultation, Mayor Ken Livingstone decided to proceed with a Central London congestion-charging scheme as the best means to reduce traffic congestion in the heart of the city.

The challenges faced prior to the introduction of the charge were immense. Despite two-and-a-half years of detailed planning, "teething problems" were to be expected when the scheme went live on February 17, 2003. Opposition from all sides was rife. Threats of mass protest and motorists revolt were rampant. Mayor Ken Livingstone himself described it as a "massively hysterical reaction from opponents" which had been exacerbated by almost universally pessimistic media coverage. Typical of the media comments was one in the January 8, 2003 edition of the *Guardian* that stated, "The scheme will be condemned as a failure within days, perhaps hours, of it starting. The senior officials in Transport for London will be named and shamed. Livingstone will be told he must resign."



Implementation, Benefits, and Success

Despite all the nay saying, initial results show the congestion-charging scheme to be an immediate success. The first day ran virtually without a hitch. Nevertheless, most papers insisted that their predicted disaster had merely been delayed. Only the *Financial Times* felt able to admit that "Traffic ran remarkably smoothly." Others preferred to concentrate on reasons why the first day might just have been a fluke. All have been proven wrong.

Now months later, the benefits of the scheme are clear. The percentage reduction in traffic in the zone is beyond the high end of the forecasts with 16% less traffic and 38% fewer cars driving into the center of London. The reduction in "non-essential" traffic in London's center has encouraged businesses to increase their operations through these routes thus providing an important economic boost. Approximately 85% of people traveling in to Central London now use public transport with the average wait for a bus reduced, since the introduction of the congestion charge, to just one and a half minutes. Following the introduction of congestion charging, bus ridership has gone up by 14% during the peak period. Both middle class commuters and many in the business community are again using buses to travel to and from the Central London.

The environmental benefits have been another success of the congestion scheme with less noise and air pollution in Central London benefiting from the increasing numbers of people walking and cycling around the city. Initial figures show that accidents are down as well.

The success of the congestion charging scheme has been recognized by many political leaders, including many of its original sceptics. In an October 2, 2003 television interview, Prime Minister Tony Blair praised the scheme noting, "I was very,

very skeptical, but I think that it has made a difference, and I think that provided the money is ploughed back into transport, then I think that it is an interesting example on how we can manage transport policy for the future."

However, there is a downside to this success in terms of revenue. The statutory basis for the congestion-charging scheme provided that all monies raised will be devoted to improving local transport, including public transport. The net revenue from the scheme was originally forecast to be approximately £130 million. It is difficult to draw long-term conclusions, but due to lower levels of traffic and payment in the initial period, revenues are less than anticipated. TfL now estimates that net revenues will be limited to £65 million in the current fiscal year, rising to approximately £90 million when the scheme reaches a steady state. As a result TfL has delayed the introduction of some transport improvements that would have been funded from the congestion charging revenues.

> ***"The benefits of the scheme are clear: the percentage reduction in traffic in the zone is beyond the high end of the forecasts with 16% less traffic and 38% fewer cars driving into the center of London."***

Despite the positive traffic reduction, as expected, minor "teething problems " have arisen specifically with the administration and processing of the charge. Often mistakes such as human error mistaking O's for 0's and 1's for I's have occurred. Also, the number of vehicles entering the zone without a permit is much higher than had been expected, which has in turn highlighted a lengthy and cumbersome penalty process. Improvements have been identified from the experience gained in the first months of running the scheme and efforts are being made by TfL and the contractor to amend these issues.

Central to these efforts is an improved data management system and new quality performance regime requirements with payments to the contractor tied more tightly to reductions in the number of errors made, improved customer care and response time, and increased compliance. With these changes, TfL will be able to take a tougher line on the small minority of motorists who seek to avoid the congestion charge. The full program of improvements will be completed by the end of March 2004.

Concerns have been raised by retailers since the scheme's inception that it is adversely affecting their business. TfL still needs to determine the social and economic effects of the congestion charging scheme. However, there are several factors at play in the current slump in some retail businesses in the city. A general economic recession had begun well before the introduction of the congestion-charging scheme. A decline in visitors to London due to the economy, fears of terrorism, the war in Iraq and the SARS virus scare has also played a part. And the closure of the London Underground Central Line due to a major accident in the period when the scheme was being introduced removed more than 600,000 daily trips from the line that runs through the heart of Central London's major retail district.

Again it must be stressed that the perception is usually far more negative and biased than the actual effects. In a recently commissioned survey of their membership base, London First found that of the companies surveyed, 49% said they believe congestion charging is working. The general acceptance of the charge is underlined by the fact that only 2% of companies say they would consider relocating to a site outside the zone as a result of congestion charging.

What the Future Holds

The Central London scheme is an important initiative that fulfils a remit in the government's national 10-Year Transport Plan to reduce congestion and to fund public transport alternatives. It is a significant milestone in the development of effective, sustainable measures for reducing traffic congestion. Experience gathered from its oper-

(Continued on page 13)

Jay Walder is Managing Director of Finance and Planning at Transport for London.

Rudin Center Highlights

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Leadership in Transportation Awards

Each year, the Rudin Center in conjunction with the Council on Transportation honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to the field of transportation within the New York metropolitan region. Award recipients are chosen for categories including Public Servant, Civic Leadership, and Pulbic Agency. This year's awards night is scheduled for **January 28, 2004.**

Featured Report

Context Sensitive Solutions in Large Central Cities

On June 19 – June 20, 2003, the Rudin Center hosted a peer-to-peer exchange session, funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and supported by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), on context sensitive design/solutions (CSD/S) in large central cities. Participants at the session were drawn from departments of transportation or public works in 9 major cities (Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York City, and Philadelphia) and 3 states (Illinois, Maryland, and New York).

Representatives from the NACTO cities agreed that understanding CSD/S and sharing lessons learned and best practices is important for large central cities and that 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. However, 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. The goal of the session was to lay a foundation for dealing with standards, processes, and the implementation of context sensitive solutions and to identify specific examples that could be used as benchmarks for lessons learned and best practices.

Report will be available soon at www.nyu.edu/wagner/rudincenter.

(Mary Peters Cont.)

management program, using an approach of addressing "all-hazards," which is supported throughout the emergency management community. Specific to the blackout, FHWA initiated a detailed study of what happened to surface transportation in areas affected by the blackout, with a particular focus on what techniques worked well in sustaining movement of both people and goods. We are coordinating closely with our colleagues at the Federal Transit Administration in this study. We are continuing to study ways of reducing the vulnerability of the transportation system to disaster.

JSK: The ASCE Annual Rating of Infrastructure condition in 2001 gave Highways a very low grade of D+. The Interstate Highway System is approaching its 50th anniversary with double the population and dramatic increases in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). Do we need to reinvent a dramatic upgrade in total miles and capacity of the Interstate System?

MP: We agree with the need to preserve our nation's highways. Investing in the Interstate Highway System over the last 50 years has been one of the most important stewardship roles of the Federal Highway Administration. Annual expenditures for highway capital improvements by all levels of government are at an even higher level today than they were at the peak of Interstate construction in the late 1960s, even when accounting for inflation. The overwhelming majority of this investment is for preservation and capacity expansion on existing routes. Maintaining the physical condition and operational performance of our highways and bridges into the future will require a mix of strategies, including sound management practices to extend the useful life of pavements and bridges; utilizing technology to increase the effective capacity of major arterials; targeting capacity additions and expansion where appropriate; and employing alternative transportation improvements and strategies to manage highway demand.

JSK: After September 11th, it was clear that much more needed to be done to protect U.S. infrastructure against potential terrorist threats. Two years later, are you satisfied with progress in this area? What do you see as the most significant challenges in funding and deploying enhanced security measures for bridges and highways?

MP: Immediately following the events of September 11, 2001, FHWA and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) partners began taking steps to address highway infrastructure security. A task force on transportation security was established at AASHTO, and FHWA took an active role in the activities. The FHWA Administrator appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel and published the report, "Recommendations for Bridge and Tunnel Security," and since then FHWA, AASHTO, and the states have taken actions to address many of the recommendations from the BRP report. FHWA established an "Engineering Assessment Team" to lend expert assistance to states in risk assessment, structural hardening, and infrastructure security. We are definitely better prepared today in this area, although there is still much to be done. Working with our program partners at AASHTO and the homeland security specialists in the Transportation Security Administration, we are encouraging state and local governments and even private owners of the transportation infrastructure to undertake vulnerability assessments to identify critical transportation infrastructure and cost-effective counter measures in the event of an attack. We are working with the Corps of Engineers to better understand how structures respond to blast induced loadings and will be revising existing computer models to simulate these loads. We're also working with AASHTO to develop design guidance for new structures. In addition, FHWA has undertaken a pooled fund study to evaluate new surveillance and detection technologies to see how they can be used to enhance bridge and tunnel security.

JSK: Immediately after September 11th there was great concern expressed about the lack of redundancy of our transportation system. It became apparent that the sudden and long-term closure of a critical transportation facility could have devastating consequences on our nation's economy. Is consideration being given for some sort of federal program or financial support to build redundancy into our transportation system at critical locations?

MP: Actually, there is a great deal of redundancy within the transportation network in most major urban areas, and on our rural road network from a national perspective. What we often lack is additional capacity, the ability for those redundant routes to absorb the traffic that was being carried by another damaged transportation facility. The level of investment in the transportation infrastructure has not kept pace with the tremendous growth in demand for transportation services over the last 30 years. That is why we are seeing congestion worsen in most of our urban areas and even now on some of our rural corridors. As a result of this loss of reserve capacity, we are less able to accommodate the diversion of traffic from damaged or destroyed facilities.

JSK: On a personal note, you have been very well received by members of the highway community as a breath of fresh air, as an articulate and informed leader, and as a very warm and sincere person. You have also been under great pressure as a result of unexpected challenges. What do you hope will be the legacy you leave to the highway community when the time comes to retire from this position?

MP: As part of the Bush Administration, I will work to increase the public's confidence in our national transportation system and make our highways safer. President Bush has shown his commitment to transportation with the SAFETEA proposal, which calls for the greatest federal transportation investment in our nation's history. This legislation will affect transportation for decades to come. I am especially committed to making environmental streamlining and stewardship my legacy at the FHWA. With this Administration, I believe we can all work to improve the environmental review process by making it more efficient and less redundant while being respectful stewards of the environment. I believe a balance can be achieved in this area. Finally, I want to help ensure that the public receives the best value in exchange for its taxpayer dollars and that every dollar yields the maximum benefit.

(London Congestion Cont.)

ation will inform the debate about long-term, nation-wide congestion charging solutions. Already, over 35 major cities in the UK have expressed an interest and huge interest has been displayed across the world. Delegations from cities from around the world, including New York City, have visited London, to examine congestion charging and road pricing and its potential applicability.

Due to the unquestionable success of the scheme in terms of traffic reduction, the Mayor has asked TfL to investigate extending the scheme. TfL is concentrating its research on a western extension to the central scheme for a number of reasons. The western extension appeared to be preferable because: (1) there is more of a need to reduce traffic and congestion in western London as all day congestion comparable to that in central London currently exists; (2) the west is better served by public transport; and, (3) there is an easily defined boundary between western and central London. In terms of timing, TfL will undertake a public consultation process in February 2004 with the potential earliest date of implementation of a western extension in 2006.

Beyond London

There are some doubts on the possibility of translating the scheme to other areas of England and the UK. London had very unique problems, which required unique solutions.

Change is always difficult. If other similar schemes are to be introduced throughout Europe, as with the London scheme, there will need to be strong political will to overcome the inevitable opposition. The UK transport secretary famously refused seven times to offer any support for the principle of congestion charges. Now the government has moved to open a national debate on the matter after conceding it was working "far better" than expected. The successful implementation of the Central London scheme has shown the government and local authorities that traffic can be regulated through a well planned scheme rather than simply building more roads. As with its tube and bus networks, London has become a pioneer of city traffic regulation.

Charging people more for using scarce resources — such as road space — is not a new idea. Congestion charging was suggested by Sir Alan Walters, later Margaret Thatcher's economic adviser, in an undergraduate paper in 1953. What has been talked about for many years is now a reality. We hope that through advances in technology more efficient systems will be developed which will lead to further extensions encompassing the whole of London. This may involve utilizing electronic pricing systems with different charges during the day depending on what time you enter and leave the zone. Whatever systems are developed, congestion charging seems certain to remain, and be expanded in the years to come.

(More Than a Train Cont.)

stretched resources. One of the most essential goals of the ***Vision for Jamaica Center*** is to ensure that the uses and activities at *JFK Corporate Square* will not come to a halt at 5 p.m. It is vital that stakeholders collaborate to see that retail, office, housing, arts and cultural uses

Courtesy of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

thrive together at *JFK Corporate Square* as tenancy recruitment gets underway. The development has the potential to have a much broader economic impact on Queens, due to the ease with which airline passengers can use AirTrain.

Conclusion

Air travel is indispensable to the regional economy. The introduction of AirTrain offers special opportunities for local economic revitalization and for realization of Jamaica's role as a strong regional center supportive of JFK Airport. Overall success depends upon the continued commitment by all stakeholders to capitalize on public investments to facilitate connectivity and to build synergies among transit facilities and economic enterprises.

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(Airtrain Cont.)

Community Commitments

The Southeast Queens community — particularly those residents that live along the VWE service roads — was concerned about potential adverse traffic conditions during VWE guideway construction (and potential health and environmental consequences), construction noise, property values, and the permanent alteration of their neighborhood. One of the major goals of the guideway design was to minimize its visual impact on the adjacent community by providing an attractive, sleek profile guideway that would also shield the community from any vehicle noise.

The PA also agreed, in 1999, during ULURP to coordinate community interests with AirTrain construction. A position was created for an Outreach Manager to be located full-time in the community, and the PA hired a member of the community to assist the agency in developing construction procedures that responded to community concerns, draft community-sensitive communications, and interface with local elected officials, community boards, and residents within the project area. The outreach effort included regularly scheduled meetings with the above parties, newsletters and construction updates, as well as the tracking and response to calls coming in on the 24-hour, 800-hotline number over the 4-fi year design and construction period. The construction program included pre-construction property surveys, provisions for property damage insurance, noise and vibration monitoring, a rodent abatement program, and an emergency response vehicle staffed by two Jamaica Hospital emergency medical technicians.

Courtesy of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

The PA further committed to a beautification program in the project vicinity that is consistent with community expectations. The design, incorporating concepts for fencing, lighting and landscape treatments, was recently presented to the community boards, local elected officials and the City's Art Commission. Preparatory cleaning, landscaping, and installation of fencing and lighting along the VWE mainline and service roads are planned. When the beautification work is completed in Fall 2004, the three-mile stretch of the VWE from Jamaica to JFK will be more aesthetically pleasing to residents and motorists, as well as AirTrain passengers to and from JFK.

The Challenges Ahead

After September 11, 200l, and the fatal accident that occurred during on-airport system testing on September 27, 2002, the PA required the contractor to further enhance the system's safety and security. AirTrain JFK's originally scheduled opening date was postponed after the accident and all system testing was suspended. A comprehensive six-month investigation was then undertaken by the PA Safety Board, which determined that the system was sound and that the accident was unrelated to its design and construction. The Safety Board's investigation found that certain areas of the operation — such as communications and training — by Bombardier Transportation (the contractor operating the system) needed enhancement. Bombardier has implemented the Board's recommendations and has taken a number of steps to augment and strengthen its staff training, operations and procedures to ensure the highest level of safety during both system testing and subsequent passenger service. The Safety Board also established a permanent AirTrain Safety Oversight Board to monitor operations and maintenance conformance of both AirTrain JFK and AirTrain Newark utilizing established industry safety standards and current practices. The National Transportation Safety Board has also conducted an independent investigation and released a report on September 17, 2003.

Conclusion

Due to Governor Pataki's leadership, AirTrain JFK is now a reality for the first time in the history of planning for improved airport access in New York. AirTrain JFK is expected to begin operations before the end of this year; the system will provide a new reliable and efficient way for JFK passengers and employees to get to and around JFK from points throughout New York City and Long Island using the region's extensive regional commuter rail and transit network.

In its dual role as airport manager — committed to improving customer service — and regional stakeholder, the PA will continue to make every effort to ensure that JFK remains the pre-eminent international gateway, and that the airport continues to support and enhance regional growth and opportunity. Consistent with this objective, the PA has recently partnered with the MTA, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the New York City Economic Development Corporation to evaluate improving airport access from JFK to Lower Manhattan — including alternatives for a "one-seat" ride — to support the revitalization of this critical Lower Manhattan central business district.

RUDIN CENTER POLICY BREAKFAST

A BREAKFAST WITH KEVIN CORBETT
SEPTEMBER 25, 2003

TRANSCRIBED BY ADRIENNE LOMBARDO

More people in government and the public need to recognize the link between transportation and economic development in their planning strategies, said Kevin Corbett, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Empire State Development Corp., at the opening session of the Rudin Center's Policymaker Breakfast series on Thursday, September 25, 2003.

"I am honored to be here," he said. "I think the turn out today reflects the appreciation that this crowd has for the nexus between economic development and transportation."

Corbett said he has helped to bring the weight of the Empire State Development Corporation to supporting our transportation agencies focus on "the core mission of transportation." According to Corbett, "If you get the transportation infrastructure right, economic growth will follow in the wake."

After September 11th, one of New York's top priorities was the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan. Businesses and government cooperated better than they ever had in achieving this goal. Corbett is confident that the PATH train will be opened by the Thanksgiving target date.

"It's remarkable what has been done," he said. But when the national economy took a dive, it diverted the momentum of the collective endeavor for transportation. The pressure was on to find funding for transportation projects not just downtown, but all over Manhattan, including East Side Access and the Second Avenue subway project.

"When times are tough, the discretionary spending for transportation is vulnerable," Corbett explained, and with so many different agendas in Washington, it's important that state representatives are reminded that transportation is a priority for New York, particularly in the post 9/11 political environment.

In tough economic times, Corbett suggested finding funding alternatives for on-going transportation projects. For example, the Port Authority has begun deeper dredging of the NY/NJ Harbor, making it easier for larger ships to travel through. Pre-funding has allowed the project to continue, even before receiving the cash from Washington. "It proves that where there's a will, there's a way," said Corbett.

Finally Corbett stressed the importance of students pursuing careers in the transportation industry. The industry needs future managers, and also knowledgeable people in the public sector, to maintain the goals of transportation.

(Transit Symposium Cont.)

Executive Director of the Mineta Transportation Institute and Governor appointee to the California High Speed Rail Authority Board, described California's efforts to implement a high speed rail (HSR) system that could compete with the aviation industry with respect to time spent in travel. Using steel-wheel-on-steel technology similar to the systems Japan and France, California's HSR would run at 220 miles per hour on its own grade separated right of way. Given that the United States is the only developed country in the world without true HSR, the success of California in this effort is critical and could pave the way for additional systems around the country.

Finally, John Guinan, Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Passenger and Freight Transportation at the NYS Department of Transportation, closed the session with some written remarks from Commissioner Joseph Boardman. Outlining the a recently published report by the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), Guinan explained that based on ridership growth projections, $60 billion over the next 20 years will be needed for intercity passenger rail. To get there, the Federal government must recognize that it has a responsibility for ensuring a national passenger & freight rail network since "a robust national rail transportation network that moves both passengers and freight effectively and efficiently" is essential to the country as well as our region.

Rudin Center Symposium

Summary of the

4th Annual Tri-state transit Symposium: The Future of Intercity Rail and Financing Transit Capital Programs

By Allison L. C. de Cerreño, Ph.D.

On October 29, 2003, the NYU Wagner Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management held the 4th Annual Transit Symposium, co-sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, and the University Transportation Research Center. Attended by nearly 200 representatives from federal, state, and city government, elected officials, business leaders, academics, and the media, the topics of discussion were the upcoming MTA Capital Program and the future of intercity high speed rail.

William Millar, President of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) set the tone for the day in his morning keynote address, quoting a soon-to-be published APTA survey that provides some insights into the difficulties faced by transit as the Federal government continues to grapple with reauthorization of TEA-21. Roughly 73% of the transit properties in the United States have embarked upon major cost-cutting programs during the past 18 months; about half have instituted hiring freezes or layoffs; 46% have raised fares; and some 44% have reduced service. All of this is happening even as ridership remains at the highest level in history. Millar urged the participants to seriously consider new ways of funding transportation since, while fuel taxes have served well historically, they cannot be relied upon in the long-term.

Among the panel highlights, Christopher Boylan, Deputy Executive Director of the MTA, outlined some of the features likely to be included in the 2005-2009 MTA Capital Program, stressing that the MTA is "committed to maintaining a state of good repair" at the same time as system expansion, the latter of which is critical to maintaining competitiveness and fostering economic growth. Catherine Nolan (NYS Assembly, District 37), Assembly Representative to the MTA Capital Program Review Board, was frank in her assessment of the political landscape relevant to the capital program. She pointed out that building a broad-based coalition that includes both business and labor as well as other interested parties, is critical to obtaining dedicated funding for transportation initiatives. Richard Ravitch, former MTA Chairman, agreed with Nolan's appraisal, adding that the tremendous imbalance between public needs and private wealth is a fundamental value that needs to be addressed.

Turning to the second topic of the day, Ronald Hartman, Executive Vice President of Yellow Transportation/Connex, began by challenging us to think of intercity rail from a regional or local perspective, rather than nationally. He noted that for too long, we have been grappling with the issue of intercity rail because while we have a vision, we have never moved beyond it. Instead, there remains disagreement on the purpose, who plays what role, whether Amtrak and intercity rail are synonymous, who benefits, and what the measures of success should look like. He argued that the inherent difficulty in creating a national policy is that the value placed on intercity rail varies by location. Thus, it is time to rethink the approach and recognize that "not one size fits all." Samuel Reid, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs at the US Department of Transportation, painted a picture in which there is more consensus between the federal government and the States than one might think: the current situation is serious; the status quo is unsatisfactory; and the administration has "not yet put its money where it's mouth is." Joseph Bress, Vice President of Labor Relations at Amtrak, further highlighted the gravity of the existing conditions by pointing out that all of the passenger trains between New York and New Jersey are supported by only two cables, one of which is spliced, and both of which date to the 1930s. Agreeing with a statement he once heard, that "trains rarely leave politicians in one piece," Bress underscored the importance of capital investment if intercity, be it high speed or other, is to have any future.

Rounding out the session, Rod Diridon,

(Continued on page 15)

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