

# NIAGARA ERIE REGIONAL COALITION

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## MEMORANDUM

**To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Barry Weinstein, MD**

**From: Transportation Chair Peter Wendel**

**Re: June and August 2007 Meetings**

**Date: September 7, 2007**

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The Niagara Erie Regional Coalition Transportation Subcommittee met June 15, 2007 at the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA), and August 17 at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED). Present for the June meeting were subcommittee members Wendel, Ferraro, Gower, and Morse (proxy by Doug Struckel). Present for the August meeting were subcommittee members Wendel, Burmaster, Ferraro, Gower, and Morse, as well as Pat Whalen from the World Trade Center of Buffalo Niagara, Ron Reinas of the Peace Bridge Authority, and Luke Rich from Rich Results (the latter two via conference call).

### GBNRTC 2030 Long Range Plan:

Following discussion of the plan at the May 11 general meeting, an update was given by Doug Struckel of the GBNRTC. The public hearings have been completed, and web and mail comments have been reviewed. The hearings in Buffalo, Amherst, and Niagara Falls were well attended; Lockport was sparse (though representatives from that area attended the Niagara Falls hearing).

The overall reaction to the plan was positive, and the multi-modal focus and concentration on rebuilding what we have were well received.

In Niagara Falls the plan to remove the Robert Moses Parkway and increase access to the waterfront was given support, although there are a minority who strongly feel it should remain. In Buffalo, alternate transit was an issue; Amherst spoke of traffic on Main Street and development. In all the hearings people tended to speak to specific issues rather than the overall plan.

The Regional Coalition initiative of getting people to jobs in the suburbs via public transit was well received.

There will be no substantive changes following the public comment period; the final document will be released around July 1.

Subcommittee Chair Wendel voiced his continued frustration that nobody is addressing the east-west system disconnect. Struckel replied that there are indeed corridor studies looking at some of these disconnects in Lockport and Lancaster. However, he added that community reaction is usually vocal opposition to proposed changes on these streets.

Wendel also asked how initiatives like the plan and the Framework for Regional Growth fit together. Subcommittee member Samuel Ferraro explained that convenience, congestion, and growth are the three factors involved. The Framework works on growth, as does the Niagara County comprehensive plan; the GBNRTC plan is complimentary to these. Subcommittee member Robert Gower added that when agencies are doing their plans they can and should refer back to the Framework.

#### September 7 General Meeting:

Regional Coalition Co-Chairs Burmaster and Weinstein requested that the September 7 general meeting be a focus on transportation – specifically, cross border issues. To develop the agenda for that meeting Pat Whalen from the World Trade Center of Buffalo Niagara, Ron Reinas of the Peace Bridge Authority, and Luke Rich from Rich Results (the latter two via conference call) were present at the August subcommittee meeting.

Following much discussion, the three plus Tom Garlock from the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission and Howard Zemsky, chair of the Binational Tourism Alliance agreed to speak on a panel on the issues of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, the Shared Border Initiative, and cross border intermodal/freight plans.

#### Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included the GBNRTC freight study, NFTA transit rerouting in Niagara County, the Niagara Falls International Airport (construction starts in October), and the Niagara County comprehensive plan.