

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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MEMORANDUM

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

From: Transportation Chair Peter Wendel

Re: February & March, 2006 Meetings

Date: March 31, 2006

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Transportation Subcommittee met February 21, 2006 at the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) and March 20, 2006 at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED). Present for the February meeting were subcommittee members Wendel, Burmaster, Ferraro, and Morse. Present for the March meeting were subcommittee members Wendel, Burmaster, Ferraro, and Morse, as well as ENRP Co-Chair Weinstein.

Public Transportation / Job Access Policy:

Following successful completion of the pilot, the resulting policy has been adopted in an informal manner. While it is happening, work still needs to be done to formalize the process and in turn advertise that it is an additional economic development and job creation tool in the region. Subcommittee member Morse mentioned the possible tie-in to a human services transportation plan being developed by the GBNRTC and NFTA to access federal funding, as well as to the Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program and the old 5310 program.

NYSDOT Transportation Master Plan:

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) released its draft master plan following a series of hearings across the state; ENRP testified at the local hearing at Erie Community College. Comments on the plan are now being received. GBNRTC is submitting comments that commend the effort as being "a comprehensive and progressive approach to addressing the emerging needs of transportation in New York State", but that offer several suggestions for improving the draft and call for implementation schedules and strategies for the plan. Please see the attached sheets for the comments in their entirety.

Subcommittee member Ferraro noted that we should be naming and explaining efforts such as the Framework for Regional Growth, the Bi-National strategy, the GBNRTC long range plan, the Greenway plan, and the Regional Economic Development Strategy as we request that NYSDOT's plan be integrated with these efforts.

Cultural Tourism Signage:

The subcommittee was examining the possibility of bundling the Niagara Falls downtown wayfinding, Niagara Greenway, and Buffalo cultural tourism directional signage proposals for state funding. Both the Niagara Falls and Greenway projects are moving forward independently and have funding attached to them, so the subcommittee is referring the Buffalo signage project to the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee for further action.

Niagara Greenway:

The memorandum of understanding is pretty much signed for the trail, and the Greenway Commission has been formed. The enabling legislation is specific as to what they have to accomplish in a set period of time. They have to develop a greenway plan by spring, 2007, develop a local government advisory committee, and convene a local citizens advisory committee. One challenge will be to knit these groups together toward a common goal. Also, to date there has been no designation as to the parameters of the greenway. Commission's website is www.niagara-greenway.org The subcommittee will continue to examine how ENRP might fit into this effort, and believes the full group should be informed as to the Greenway Commission's activities.

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Transportation Subcommittee recommends that the Niagara Greenway Commission be the guest speaker at the June 2, 2006 ENRP general meeting.

Traffic Signal Coordination:

Morse told the subcommittee about a possible opportunity for intermunicipal collaboration – traffic signals. Currently in Erie County, municipalities are responsible for the purchase and maintenance of traffic signals on local roads (more investigation is needed to determine the situation in Niagara County). Joint purchase and maintenance could result in cost savings, and coordination of signals offers many benefits in terms of traffic flow, public safety, and environmental impact. The subcommittee will further examine the issue and determine if there is a role for ENRP.

GBNRTC Long Range Plan:

The long range plan was completed in 1999 and has been revised since then, but GBNRTC is examining the plan in more detail for further revision. They are especially looking at the cumulative impact of the over \$5 billion in possible federal, state, and local investment in transportation projects.

On March 21 GBNRTC is holding a forum on the plan, where community leaders – including those from outside the transportation profession – will be asked to comment on four points; are the plan's goals still relevant, are the proposed projects still the right ones to meet the goals, what other revenue sources are there to finance the projects, and how do we better coordinate land use and transportation planning.

There will be additional forums, and a website will be set up for comments. GBNRTC is interested in possibly bringing this topic to a cross section of the ENRP for comment as well.

Coordination of Efforts:

Co-Chair Weinstein noted that there are three “big issue” right now; tearing down the Skyway, eliminating the Buffalo tolls, and the Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA). He asked if ENRP should support the Skyway and toll efforts (we already support development of the NFIA). This led to a discussion on the importance of coordinating efforts between the many groups working on these topics. Specifically, Ferraro replied that the Buffalo Niagara Partnership is releasing its regional agenda that it developed with input of the counties and cities, and that the Skyway and elimination of the tolls are not part of that agenda. It was agreed that while instances may occur when ENRP should stand up on an issue even if it is the only voice on the matter or when we believe strongly in a position that is contrary to the prevailing thought on an issue, for the most part we should add our voice to a collective effort in order to help achieve success on our regional priorities.

On a related note, subcommittee member Burmaster suggested that at some point the subcommittee should invite representatives from surrounding counties and from Southern Ontario to discuss transportation issues.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included bio-fuels, and the Lewiston-Niagara on the Lake ferry.