

NIAGARA ERIE REGIONAL COALITION

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MEMORANDUM

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

From: Transportation Chair Peter Wendel

Re: March and April 2007 Meetings

Date: May 11, 2007

The Niagara Erie Regional Coalition Transportation Subcommittee met March 30, 2007 at the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) in a joint meeting with the Economic Development Subcommittee, and April 20 at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED). Present for the March meeting were subcommittee members Wendel, Burmaster, Ferraro, Gower, and Morse (proxy by Tim Trabold), as well as Economic Development Subcommittee members Titus, Doolittle, Konst, and Roll. Present for the April meeting were subcommittee members Wendel, Burmaster, Ferraro, and Gower.

Framework for Regional Growth:

The Framework for Regional Growth report was completed in late 2006. The Niagara County Legislature approved and accepted the report in January 2007, and the Erie County Legislature approved it in April 2007. In Niagara County the chair of the town supervisors association and the three cities all expressed support for the plan. In Erie County the Legislature held several hearings on the Framework and heard support from everyone from VOICE Buffalo to the Association of Local Governments (and also the Coalition through the Government Affairs Subcommittee chair and the executive director). In fact, the committee holding the hearings could not find anyone to speak against the Framework.

The next step for Erie County will be the creation of a county planning board (Niagara County already has one). Those two planning boards would then be able to work together on common interests. Economic Development Subcommittee member Kathy Konst noted that the creation of the Erie County planning board may take some time in light of the changeover of administrations at the end of the year. Executive Director Kniazuk reported that the county administration does not plan to clock-in a local law creating the

board immediately, but rather circulate a draft for comment and revision so that the version eventually considered would be one with widespread support.

It was also noted that several Erie County legislators – including some not on the Coalition – mentioned that the Niagara Erie Regional Coalition should play some role in the Framework's implementation. The executive director will follow up on this. Subcommittee member Ferraro added that a steering committee will remain in place to work on implementation.

GBNRTC 2030 Long Range Plan:

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council is in year two of its current five year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) that ends in 2010. It is therefore working on a long range plan that would end in 2030. The TIP capital plan is also being updated to 2012.

May 5 begins a 30 day public review of the draft plan. Two public hearings are scheduled in Erie County and two in Niagara County. A major project on the agenda is the Outer Harbor access bridge. Executive Director Kniazuk also noted the continued presence of the public transportation-job access program, a Coalition initiative.

The Transportation Subcommittee will provide comments on the draft, and Co-Chair Burmaster also put the topic on the agenda of the May 11 general meeting.

Niagara County Comprehensive Strategic Plan:

Niagara County has secured grant money to produce a countywide comprehensive strategic plan. RFQs have just been issued for a consultant to work with the NCCED and county manager on the plan. Ferraro spoke of the importance of having a plan in place as money from relicensing and the greenway; it will help the Niagara County Legislature prioritize and use the money wisely. Ferraro added that a recent addition to his staff, Ben Bidell, will be playing a major role in the project and is one of the best users of GIS he has seen. Bidell is a graduate of the UB Urban Planning Master's Program and just before coming to the NCCED was employed with the City of Buffalo in the CitiStat project.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included local planning efforts, a recent state report on transportation-land use connections that did not have any representation from Western New York, the freight study, and NFTA transit rerouting in Niagara County.