

**ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**  
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**Memorandum**

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

**From: Transportation Subcommittee Chair Hal Morse**

**Re: June & July 2004 meetings**

**Date: July 30, 2004**

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The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership's Transportation Subcommittee met June 18 and July 9, 2004 at the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth. Present for the June meeting were subcommittee members Morse, Ferraro, Ruzala, and Wendel, as well as ENRP Co-Chair Weinstein, Bob Gower from the NFTA, and the GBNRTC's Doug Struckel. Present for the July meeting were subcommittee members Morse, Burmaster, Lehman, and Ruzala, as well as ENRP Co-Chair Weinstein.

**Job Access & Public Transportation:**

The project continues on track, with the corridors and process in place. An "operations manual" is being developed for entities like the IDAs and Workforce Advisory Boards to use to consider public transportation needs in their decision-making processes. Municipal IDAs and other business groups in the pilot areas will also be identified for outreach. While the Erie County corridor is just emerging, a concrete service could be developed in Niagara County. In the meantime, the long-term process must continue to be developed to be a fit with the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) and Framework for Regional Growth.

**Niagara Falls International Airport:**

In the last subcommittee report, it was stated that the subcommittee feels we need to continue to be supportive of efforts to develop the NFIA and acknowledge the new terminal as a necessary and integral component for Western New York. It was also suggested that perhaps we can act as a conduit to other efforts, making sure the NFIA is properly recognized in economic development and tourism efforts currently underway. To that end, we need to be kept up to date on developments at the NFIA, but

also need to make sure that the NFTA is aware of the regional efforts underway and how the NFIA fits into them. **The Transportation Subcommittee requests approval to invite representatives from the Niagara Frontier Transportation Agency to be the guest speakers at the October 1 general meeting to give an update of efforts at the Niagara Falls International Airport, and for the NFTA to receive an update from ENRP on efforts such as the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS), Framework for Regional Growth, and Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative and how the NFIA fits into them.**

Possible Action Items for 2004:

The results are in from the survey the membership filled out regarding possible subcommittee action items:

- Niagara Falls International Airport – 13
- Regional transportation priorities – 12
- Cross border / Grand Island bridge problem definition – 8
- Regional rail needs – 6
- Shoreline Corridor implementation – 5
- Regional traffic trends – 4
- Signal systems upgrades and coordination – 3
- Increase public transportation ease of use between counties – 1
- Warehousing for truck traffic – 1
- Transportation re: regionalism – 1
- Light rail – 1
- Route 531 planning – 1
- Tourist transportation (with ENRP T&C Subcommittee) – 1
- Highway facilities ownership – 0
- Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program – 0

NYSDOT Testimony:

On August 3, 2004 the New York State Department of Transportation will be in Buffalo soliciting testimony regarding its restructuring and transportation priorities. While we expect that many will come forward with project-specific requests, the subcommittee sees ENRP as a good fit for delivering testimony regarding regional transportation priorities. There are several, which are detailed below. This testimony would be delivered jointly by the co-chairs on behalf of the entire body. As such, **the Transportation Subcommittee requests approval of the following testimony for delivery to NYSDOT at their August 3 meeting at the ECC City Campus.**

## **PROPOSED ENRP TESTIMONY POINTS NYS ADVISORY PANEL ON TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

Western New York is an essential component of the NYS economy. As a gateway to Canada, a reborn tourism destination, and an emerging center of 21st century economic clusters, the area has specific and unique transportation needs.

Statewide transportation policy needs to be visionary, specific, and fully integrated through the tiers of government to level the playing field and yield consistent benefits.

The demands on local tax revenue sources in County government are significant. Equitable treatment in distribution of state fuel taxes and greater efficiencies in planning and provision of transportation services and facilities among the various levels of government are crucial.

### Significant issues for Niagara and Erie Counties:

1. Need to recognize the localized impacts of continued BiNational cooperation and global trade corridors. The ability to absorb and distribute traffic into the local areas is a significant responsibility and an essential component in generating the economic benefit of these trade corridors. In this regard, wise use of the state dedicated fund may include support for regional strategic initiatives and linked support for subtier supporting projects on the local level. Local roads providing access to major international crossings are an example of this and need to be accommodated in a comprehensive manner.
2. Need to focus on rebuild and maintenance of existing infrastructure. This includes overall asset based management approaches to infrastructure at all levels of ownership, as well as demand management and ITS solutions to congestion. Better use of existing facilities, such as investment and improvement to the Niagara Falls International Airport, would benefit this area by improved air linkage for the emerging economy.
3. A comprehensive revision of facilities ownership should be accomplished. Centuries of change in population densities, travel volumes, jurisdictional changes, etc have created a sometimes-inconsistent inventory of transportation facilities ownership as it relates to function. This can create duplicative organization and

maintenance responses and inefficiencies. In some instances, Towns and Counties own roads carrying higher levels of traffic that may be better owned at a higher level, as opposed to maintaining them at local cost. Similarly, there may be State owned routes that are providing primarily local service and would be better owned locally.

4. Local bridges are a concern and often do not compete well with state bridges in competition for federal dollars. A comprehensive, universal approach to bridge maintenance needs to be immediately implemented to better manage the overall inventory of bridges in the area.
5. Finance strategies need to be developed to permit a strategic approach to planning and program management, with a fire walled, truly dedicated, state transportation fund; innovative financing techniques made available at the county level; and a consistent, fair and predictable consolidated highway improvement program (CHIPS) revenue stream. Overall funding levels have lagged behind need and need to be addressed in the near future.
6. Project delivery is a critical element of transportation system improvement. Local governments are challenged in ability to deliver federal aid projects in particular. An intelligent, graded approach to the administrative procedures for federal aid projects should be developed and deployed.
7. Statewide policy needs to be strategic and linked to related issues all the way from global economic approaches to local land use integration. Specific linkages, not references, need to be developed and implemented. Plans and policies must focus on measurable outcomes and accountability, and be consistent with county and regional plans for developmental patterns and goals.
8. Innovative approaches need to be sought out, developed and deployed in a variety of areas including travel demand management, project management and finance, and the construction areas of design, materials, and construction techniques. These tools need to be made available to local governments to maximize efficiency and cost savings. A technology and innovation sharing effort would help all governments reap the benefit of research and new techniques available.

9. The frenetic pace of change, coupled with the outsourcing of manufacturing around the world, has made the delivery of goods and services a tremendously complex engineering task. This complexity necessitates the creation of transportation and logistics solutions that allow businesses to optimize supply and demand cycles. It is no longer possible for firms to separate their supply chain strategy from their business strategy. As a result, firms cannot survive in regions where the synchronization of vendors, customers, and suppliers is difficult or too costly. Therefore, a sophisticated transportation and logistics infrastructure becomes a crucial competitive necessity for regional economic development and job creation.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed include the Shoreline Corridor MOU, a bicycle route guide, signage, and accountability for those undertaking transportation efforts.