

GBNRTC

Newsletter for the GREATER *BUFFALO-NIAGARA* REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL
Metropolitan Planning Organization For Erie and Niagara Counties

Security, land use are issues for Long Range Plan 2030

The GBNRTC in 2006 will be putting together Long-Range Plan 2030, which will, in the words of Executive Director Hal Morse, “guide transportation investment for Erie and Niagara Counties in the coming decades and influence regional development.”

A vital factor will be the citizen input from public meetings to be held in the two counties beginning this spring as part of an exhaustive undertaking that will include financial and demographic projections, focused around the year 2030, as well as embodiment of anticipated economic opportunities and regional goals.

The plan is expected to be finalized by the summer of 2007 for approval by the region’s political and transpor-



tation leadership, as represented by the GBNRTC’s Policy Committee, comprising the mayors of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, Erie County executive, Niagara County Legislature chairman and leaders of the New York State Department of Transportation, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority and Thruway Authority.

The plan will reflect changes mandated by the National Transpor-

tation Act, adopted last summer by Congress and known as SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act –A Legacy for Users). These suggest, among other things, greater involvement in security and land-use and environmental issues.

Morse said that security partnerships would be facilitated by new binational planning initiatives. He

First Quarter 2006

Security, land use are issues for Long Range Plan 2030

Growing role for Buffalo-Niagara as international gateway

Technology aimed at drunk driving

UB researcher studies bridge vulnerability in Katrina

GBNRTC gets grant to serve as model on safety

added that land-use collaboration would be advanced through an emerging “Framework for Development” in Erie and Niagara Counties.

The SAFTEA-LU also includes a new requirement for states to develop a comprehensive safety plan in which Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), such as GBNRTC, would play a role. A new Statewide Transportation Master Plan, to be finalized by this spring, will also be factored into Long-Range Plan 2030. The state plan is expected to include a focus on trade corridors and connectivity of major urban and international centers.

Douglas Struckle, a principal transportation analyst, will be leading preparation of Long-Range Plan 2030, in cooperation with a professional Long-Range Plan Advisory Committee.

Barbara Courtney, senior transportation analyst, is coordinating the demographics work. U.S. Census statistics indicate a 1.3 percent population loss between 2000 and 2004. However, Morse recently told the Policy Committee that the “region’s population may be stabilizing” with the “rate of decline decreasing,” although further statistics would be required to establish that trend.

Population growth has been mainly in second and third-ring suburbs and rural towns. An increase in building permits for residential units since 2000, but slightly off in 2004, was concentrated in Amherst, Clarence, Lancaster, Orchard Park, Town of Lockport and Wheatfield, al-

though there were “spikes in areas of Buffalo, as well as Cheektowaga and West Seneca.”

Employment in the region is “slowly recovering” after having bottomed out in 2002 as a result of the recession and the impact of the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster.

Struckle said “the biggest challenge” in putting together the 2030 plan will be to find “the best combination of projects to help shape regional development and further our economy.”

Public outreach on the plan is expected to start throughout the two-county region in March and April, he said, with meetings anticipated in late 2006 or 2007 as the plan evolves. “We want public input,” he said.

He said that bridges, including the Grand Island bridges, were in need of attention, along with the Interstate 90-290 interchange. He added that a stronger focus on a strategy for public-transit projects was needed to assist people who lacked access to cars and to counteract the roadways congestion.

Long-Range Plan 2030 will provide a blueprint for federal, state and local funding for the region’s transportation infrastructure.

It is the fourth such plan for the region, the first, adopted in 1993, was Long-Range Plan 2010, succeeded by Long-Range Plan 2020 and Long-Range Plan 2025. Each was periodically updated.

Congress in the 1970s began requiring an MPO for transportation in every metropolitan region of more than

50,000 population because population and market explosions, and associated transportation needs, were getting increasingly beyond the control of traditional political jurisdictions. The emphasis on regional planning has grown with the increasingly pessimistic outlook for transportation revenues.

A recent report by the Federal Highway Administration and the Urban Land Institute concluded:

“Because growth does not happen only in one jurisdiction, it must be looked at on a regional level... In order to plan for the most effective use of the transportation system, all agencies that influence transportation infrastructure should be involved in the transportation planning process, which should include goals mutually agreed to by all players.”

Federal regulations require a Long-Range Plan to have “at least 20-year horizons,” with the suggestion that it would be “prudent” for MPOs to adopt plans with 23 to 25-year horizons.



New York State Thruway I-90 and Youngmann Memorial Highway I-290

Growing role for Buffalo-Niagara as international gateway



Lewiston/Queenston Bridge

Growing commercial traffic across the Niagara Falls bridges has boosted Buffalo-Niagara Falls to the No. 3 position in the nation as a land port, surpassed only by No. 1 Detroit, at the Canada border, and No. 2 Laredo, at the Mexican border, according to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS).

And it continues to rank No. 1 as a gateway for personal vehicles entering the U.S. from Canada, having overtaken Detroit for that category in 2003. Both ports have experienced declines in personal-vehicle crossings from the impact of 9/11.

The latest ratings, based upon value of shipments in 2004, moved the "Port of Buffalo-Niagara Falls," from its No. 4 position in 2003 to displace Michigan's Port of Huron as No. 3. Buffalo-Niagara had lost the No. 2 position to Laredo in 2000 and the No. 3 spot to Port Huron in 2001.

Value of exports through Buffalo-Niagara Falls was \$68.4 billion in 2004, with \$36.6 billion in imports and \$31.7 billion of exports. The 2003 total was \$59.4 billion, comprising \$32 billion of imports and \$27.4 billion in exports. In 1999 the value figure for the port was a high of \$70.8 billion, the low was \$55 billion in 2002.

In 2004, there were 1,175,254 commercial truck crossings and 153,665 freight railcar crossings for the regional port, compared with 1,162,961 and 149,916 respectively in 2003. In terms of the number of truck crossings, Buffalo-Niagara continues to rank as No. 2 in the U.S., behind Detroit. It ranks No. 5 for rail crossings.

In terms of all foreign trade gate-

ways, including water and air ports, the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Port was promoted in 2004 from No. 9 to No. 8. John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City displaced the water Port of Los Angeles as No. 1. The water Port of New York-New Jersey dropped from No. 4 to No. 5.

The number of personal vehicles entering the U.S. from Canada in 2004 was 6,148,983, down from 6,414,415 in 2003 (and 7,441,959 in 1999), in contrast to the increase for commercial traffic in 2004.

In a 2003 summary of the Port of Buffalo-Niagara, the BTS reported: "Trucks' share of the value of goods passing through Buffalo-Niagara Falls has remained relatively steady for the past five years, hovering between 75 and 79 percent..."

"Buffalo-Niagara Falls is an international gateway that serves every state. About 80 percent of the value of truck freight passing through Buffalo-Niagara Falls originates or terminates outside of New York. Nearly 76 percent of truck imports and 84 percent of truck exports passing through Buffalo-Niagara Falls are to and from other states. The top three states served by Buffalo-Niagara

Falls' land transportation facilities are New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan, which account for 38 percent of the merchandise trade transported through Buffalo-Niagara Falls.

"Over one million trucks per year use the Peace Bridge in Buffalo-Niagara Falls and the Lewiston/Queenston Bridge to haul freight into the United States from Canada. Between 1994 and 2003, the number of trucks entering the United States through these facilities increased by 31 percent."

No comparable report was available for 2004. However, Roger Lotz of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration said that 91.6 percent of the value of trade with Canada passing through Buffalo-Niagara Falls in 2004 originated or terminated "outside New York State."

Luke Rich, senior consultant to President Andrew Rudnick of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, said the statistics verify that the economy has been growing faster "in other parts of the country than here," but he emphasized that an increase in international truck traffic produces a



“growing demand for logistics services — for freight forwarding, legal, accounting and trucking services, etc. — that have a positive effect on the economy of our region.”

He added, “A development that will have even greater impact for the region is the expected opening next summer of an ‘Intermodal Inland Port’ by CSX Corporation, Inc. This facility, demanded by the Port of New York and New Jersey, is designed to relieve the pressure of increased container traffic at the seaport. Trains will bring containers to Buffalo where they will be inspected by Customs and transferred to trucks for delivery throughout the country. Partial containers would be broken down here and possible final assembly activities would likely also be conducted here. All of this will require more warehousing and logistics services that will create new jobs in Western New York.”

CSX would use the extensive and partly idle Seneca Yard in South Buffalo, Lackawanna and Hamburg, as the terminal for shipment of containers from the Port of New York and New Jersey on flat-bed cars from which they would be unloaded to trucks. The state reportedly has agreed to financial support in converting the yard into an inter-modal center.

Commercial truck traffic has doubled for the nation over the past two decades, “about the same as highway travel as a whole,” according to transportation analysts. However, truck traffic is concentrated at “major hubs of activity,” including border crossings, which are expected to experience “some of the most severe congestion problems ... stemming from the

rapid growth of international trade.”

Trade using surface transportation between the U.S. and Canada increased by 14.1 percent in September 2005 over September 2004, to a total of \$40.4 billion, the highest monthly level ever recorded, according to the BTS. Trucks carried 53 percent of imports and 79 percent of exports by value.

A report by the University Transportation Research Center at City College of New York, in cooperation with the state and federal highway agencies, noted:

“Buffalo and the state economy more generally reap significant benefits from cross-border trade. However, to the extent that the state serves as a conduit for through traffic — which the Buffalo-Niagara region does in large measure — most of the border’s economic opportunities pass it by. Thus, another key challenge in the selection of border infrastructure investments is figuring out how to bring positive economic returns to the state.

“In some cases, this may require upgrading key corridors so that heavy truck volumes do not provide a safety or congestion hazard to local traffic. In other cases it could include strategic investments in inter-modal cargo facilities or freight infrastructure to strengthen the role of alternative modes, and make New York State a more efficient location for manufacturing, warehousing and other economic activities.

“Another challenge is to identify a more equitable way to balance the costs of needed border investments shouldered by the border states with the non-border states that reap the benefits of cross-border trade.

“... The single largest project in the state is the realignment of U.S. 219 in Western New York (\$613 million), which will potentially play a critical role as a trade corridor supplementing the existing overburdened network.

“The next largest project is the proposed expansion of Buffalo’s Peace Bridge, estimated at \$310-\$340 million...”

Construction is expected to begin this spring on extension of the Route 219 freeway from Route 39, at Springville, to Peters Road in Cattaraugus County, and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) plans further extension of the freeway to intersect with Interstate 86 in the Southern Tier.

Recently, a “design jury” selected a two-tower concept for a companion span to the Peace Bridge. The national transportation act, SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act), adopted in 2005 by Congress, earmarked \$25 million for Peace Bridge improvements.

SAFETEA-LU provides a dramatic increase in funding for highway corridors and includes a new Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program that provides \$833 million in funding through federal fiscal year 2009 for projects, selected by the states, to “expedite safe and efficient vehicle and cargo movement at or across the land border between the U. S. and Canada and the land border between the U.S. and Mexico.” For the first time, it allows funding, “under certain conditions,” for border projects in Canada or Mexico. This would appear to include funding toward a consolidated tolling plaza at Fort Erie for the Peace Bridge.



Route 219 Southbound at end of expressway, Springville New York

Technology aimed at drunk driving

“If you drink and drive, you might find Big Brother breathing down your neck and wrapped around your ankle, too.” That’s how Tom Blakely of the Norman Transcript, opened his report on the Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor (SCRAM), an 8-ounce bracelet introduced in Oklahoma to monitor the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of troubling drunk-driving offenders 24 hours a day.

Michael Iiams, chairman of Alcohol Monitoring Systems, Inc., which produces SCRAM, was quoted at a recent convention of the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) in New York City, as saying that SCRAM is “absolutely not” Big Brother and, in fact, “keeps offenders struggling with an alcohol addiction from being locked away.”

It’s part of the increasingly sophisticated technology that’s being used to deal with the DWI (Driving While Intoxicated) problem. Electronic supervision is often used as an alternative to incarceration, or with DWI offenders on probation or parole.

According to an APPA study, “DUI (driving under the influenced) offenders often do not ... fit well in jail or prison populations. And for those with addictions, treatment resources may be limited or nonexistent while they are incarcerated. Thus, when they are released, they may again become a danger to the public. Alternative sentencing in the community with ... electronic supervision may be an especially good ... technology.”

Added the California Department of Motor Vehicles in its annual report: “Given both the ineffectiveness and cost of jail as a criminal justice countermeasure, there is growing acceptance of house arrest (electronic confinement) for nonviolent criminal offenders, in-

cluding many DUI offenders.”

Genesee County has been among the first jurisdictions in New York State to commit to the SCRAM technology. More widely used in the state is the kind of home-monitoring bracelet that was widely publicized recently when worn by TV personality Martha Stewart after her release from the federal penitentiary. It is used by the courts and probation and parole authorities in both Erie and Niagara Counties.

Also used in both counties are Alco-Sensors – sophisticated “breathalyzers,” which use a fuel cell to detect alcohol levels.

But the favored technology in Erie

while they are drinking.”

The Senate report notes: “Courts may require persons convicted of DWI to install an Ignition Interlock system on the car. Current law requires that individuals with two or more offenses related to driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs have an Ignition Interlock device installed on their vehicles ... while the offender’s license is suspended.”

Judith Hoffman, an Erie County supervisor of probation, said it was the kind of technology that allowed a DWI offender not only to avoid imprisonment but to continue going to work and supporting the family. She acknowledged that the county’s financial crisis has imposed some limits on the program.

In Niagara County, Sobrietors are used for certain DWI offenders on probation. Sobrietors use a combination of voice-recognition technology and alcohol measurement. The subject follows voice prompts at certain intervals to pass a voice identification test and to have his breath analyzed for alcohol. The results are monitored by BI, Inc., in Boulder, Colorado, and relayed to the county probation officials.

Greg Schuler, probation supervisor in Lockport, reported that the county has also begun using Ignition Interlocks and would soon be using GPS (Global Positioning Systems) technology that employs satellites orbiting the Earth to monitor the movement of high-risk offenders.

Schuler observed that the technology not only allowed offenders to avoid imprisonment but saves

money for taxpayers. Imprisonment costs taxpayers an average of \$27,000 a year per offender, he said, whereas judges in most cases order the offenders to pay the \$143 a month cost of Sobrietors, for example.

A similar policy prevails in Erie County, where offenders are required to pay, for example, about \$70 a month for use of Ignition Interlocks. Ms. Hoffman said the money goes to local suppliers of the interlocks rather than to the county.

In Genesee County, the SCRAM bracelets, which cost about \$1,600 each, will be financed through the county’s DWI program. In most states, the offender is obliged to pay, an average of about \$12 a day, for their use, but that has been resisted in New York State,



County for dealing with repeat DWI offenders is the Ignition Interlock, which can prevent a drunk driver from starting his car. It is described in a report by the New York Senate on drunk driving as “a sophisticated system that tests for alcohol on a driver’s breath” by requiring “a vehicle operator to blow into a small handheld alcohol sensor unit that is attached to a vehicle’s dashboard.” The car won’t start if a BAC is “above a preset level (usually .02 percent to .04 percent BAC).”

John Sullivan, the STOP DWI coordinator for the county, said, “I think it is really the answer for repeat offenders. Treatment is one thing but if they waver it’s a good thing to make sure they’re not driving

and that's why the technology has "not been adopted sooner in the state," according to an industry spokesman.

Frank Caccia, the STOP DWI coordinator for Genesee, said that 10 SCRAMS would be put into use in 2006 at the recommendation of Gary Clark, director of probation, who reported that the technology would be part of a research into hard-core DWI cases, "at least four times repeat offenders."

"I have noticed an increase over the last 10 years in DWI felons under treatment," said Clark. "We want to know why the treatment isn't working. We plan to team up with a local university for research. The answer may turn out to be a need for medication."

The SCRAM bracelet uses "a breakthrough technique called transdermal analysis" to measure "ethanol" (the basic ingredient of alcohol) migrating through "insensible" perspiration on the skin, to determine the Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC).

The measurement is made once every hour, but "if alcohol is detected, the system automatically begins sampling every 30 minutes until alcohol is no longer present." Readings and alerts are sent to a modem in the wearer's house and the modem conveys the data via the house telephone line to a SCRAM Network on the Internet that is accessed by probation officers.

At a predetermined time each day, the wearer is required to be in the same room as the modem so the bracelet can "communicate with the modem."

SCRAM is described as "the only system that does not require the offender to report to a specific location for testing" because it "goes everywhere the offender goes." It also contains electronics for tamper detection.

Other developments are under way. The New York Times reported that a \$600 sensor implanted in a car's steering wheel has been patented that would prevent the vehicle from starting if the blood-alcohol exceeded the legal limit. The inventor was Dennis Bellehumeur, who was quoted as saying that he developed the device after his teenage son was injured while driving drunk and hitting a utility pole. Bellehumeur's goal is to have it installed in every car.

The APPA study found that each of the technological options "has benefits and disadvantages." The report cautioned: "Technology will increasingly drive us, but we can not lose sight of our purpose, which is to effect change with offenders. The personal bond between a corrections staff member and an offender is fundamental to that occurring. The notion of a personal relationship must not be lost in the technology."

Clark, in Genesee County, said, "No system is perfect." Michael Canazzi, an Erie County probation officer, described the SCRAM as "a good idea, and may be the answer down the road, but it has some flaws, and is still a work in progress." He said that "certain kinds of food" can cause false readings with SCRAM as well as with other electronic monitoring, including interlocks.

Sullivan, the Erie County STOPDWI coordinator, said that good maintenance was essential for Ignition Interlocks. He described their operation as "an uncomfortable dance between the electrical system of the car and the instrument itself." Improvements are being developed, he added.

"But there has to be a probation officer, or somebody, to provide personal contact with the violators to make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be doing. That was hard enough even before the cutbacks and it's even more difficult now. That can make the courts



Photo illustration of *BI Sobrieter*.

reluctant to impose these restrictions.

"Some of the good news is that the social war on drunken driving has been won. People don't joke about it anymore. Back in 1982, when the Stop DWI program was established, there were 72 alcohol-related fatalities in Erie County. Last year there were 19. That's a significant improvement, although for those 19 victims and their families the problem's never been worse.

"The problem now is that the statistics, nationally and locally, have tended to plateau and going that final mile is where the tough work comes."

The report on drunk driving by a New York State Senate committee concluded: "While tougher laws and greater public awareness may have had an effect on the occasional drinker, unfortunately the 'hard-core drinkers' are not deterred and continue to be a danger to public safety."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, impaired driving is still the "most frequently committed violent

crime in the United States" and repeat offenders have "4.1 times the risk of being in a fatal crash as ... intoxicated drivers without prior DWI arrests."

"There are actually two DWI populations," said Sullivan. "There's the first-time offender, and don't get me wrong, it's the first time they were caught. But a lot of people respond to the sanctions that are applied the first time. There need to be strict penalties applied the first time so we don't see these people again.

"The chronic offender requires a lot of different, various approaches, including some sort of treatment. Alcohol has become a regular part of their life and they need to manage that or we're just going to see them again."

He credited the courts, the district attorney and a series of DWI stories in the Buffalo News as contributing to improvements in the county's enforcement.

In a recent report, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) noted that New York State "is recognized nationally as a leader in traffic safety, in particular for continual progress in reducing alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes and fatalities." In a review of the state's STOP-DWI Program, the NHTSA reported:

"In 2002, the New York fatality rate was .36 versus .61 for the United States... New York's STOP-DWI program is the nation's first and, to date, only self-sustaining impaired driving program. Other states have implemented components of self-sufficiency, but none to the degree of New York State.

"... It is also important to note that, in 2001, admission to alcoholism and substance abuse treatment facilities in New York State numbered over 286,000 residents, or 151.2 county residents per 10,000 persons. The ... approach to prevention is grounded in the principle that alcohol and substance abuse is preventable and that prevention is the most cost-effective element ...

"Also of significance is that, among the offender supervision programs, there are currently seven legally mandated Ignition Interlocks programs ... in Albany, Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Onondaga, Suffolk and Westchester Counties.

"... However, changes in priorities and availability of resources have affected the program at all levels. The paradox of an impaired-driving prevention program that relies on offender fines is that effective countermeasures may reduce the availability of funds to support the program..."

UB researcher studies bridge vulnerability in Katrina



Photo: J. O'Connor (for MCEER)

The superstructure units for the US 90 bridge at the east end of St. Louis Bay in Mississippi have been displaced to the north and many have dropped off the piers. The failure pattern is typical of what has been witnessed in past earthquakes.

“Most of us probably drove over a bridge today and didn’t think much about it,” observed Jerome O’Connor, transportation researcher for the University at Buffalo’s Multidisciplinary Center for Earthquake Engineering Research (MCEER).

“But along the Gulf Coast area affected by Hurricane Katrina, people now understand and appreciate the importance of that facility.”

O’Connor, accompanied by Paul McAnany of Hornell, a volunteer on vacation from the New York State Department of Transportation, was sent by the center to the Gulf Coast to study the impact of Hurricane Katrina on transportation, especially on bridges.

Their job was to look for structural factors involved in the collapse or resistance of bridges to the devastating power of the hurricane. They were among several reconnaissance teams sent to the scene by MCEER under the sponsorship of the National Science Foundation. Highlights of their findings were reported at a fall seminar in the UB Center for the Arts.

The maintenance and upkeep of bridges is an increasingly critical issue across the nation and in the state and region because of financial pressures. Bridges are also regarded as particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and potentially to terrorism.

“You may be wondering why an earthquake center is interested in hurricanes,” Michel Bruneau, MCEER director, told the seminar. “The objective is to enhance the resilience of the nation against a broader spectrum of hazards. We have been involved in other types of extreme events for a number of years, particularly since the World Trade Center disaster.”

In fact, the center sent investigators to the 9/11 scene to “compare the effects of natural versus human disasters.” Since then “multi-hazard activities” have grown to “25 percent of our research funding and we see that ratio increasing over the years.”

When established in 1986, partly through the influence of then Congressman Jack Kemp, the center was known as the National Center for Earthquake Engineering Research (NCEER). With expansion of its role, “national” became “multidisciplinary.”

O’Connor suggested, in an interview, that as the center’s role continues to evolve, its name

may undergo even more significant change.

“An earthquake background provides a good foundation for understanding other threats. And although ten years ago no one would think about the possibility of someone intentionally destroying a bridge, we have to be concerned about that hazard now.

“So we try to learn from the earthquake experience and see what parallels there are” and sometimes “the problems are very similar.”

He recounted the nightmarish experience of a shrimp fisherman they interviewed on the Mississippi Gulf Coast who was caught in his boat in open water because a non-operational swing bridge blocked his entrance to an inlet to escape the brunt of the storm:

“It’s an experience that rivals the Biblical story of Noah’s Ark. He was near the eye of the storm and he and his boat were caught up in a surge of water that was probably 30 or 40 feet above high tide for 30 minutes to an hour.

“He saw these islands floating by and was worried about getting hit by one of them. And there were wild animals darting around, close enough that he could see the terror in their eyes, like nothing he had ever seen before. He didn’t know what was going on. It was a very weird feeling.

“The really dangerous part, he felt, was when the water began to recede, just kind of gushed out from under him and the boat in both directions but taking him to the north. And then he was in some treetops, above the power lines. And the boat tipped over and he was left hanging from the edge of the boat. And he was getting tired — was just going to give up when all of a sudden the boat popped up straight again and he was able to crawl back inside.

“The boat finally landed on dry ground miles away from where he had been caught up in the surge. When we saw him, about nine days later, he was working on his boat and getting ready to sail again. He told us that he had decided to name the boat ‘Katrina’ and said that a new bridge was needed, a high-rise type not dependent upon mechanical operations.”

O’Connor said he was “very cautious about blaming anybody” for bridge failings because many had been designed before research on earthquakes had uncovered potential vulnerabilities and often “we just don’t have enough money to go around for improving bridges.”

He added, “This guy’s story just reaffirms that people just take roads and bridges for granted. They think it’s a boring topic, even though we depend on them every single day for getting to and from work or school, or getting supplies into the area ... for grocery stores and department stores, which are only there because we have the infrastructure to support them.

“One thing I would point out is that people down in that area never expected an earthquake and they didn’t get an earthquake but they got something just as bad.”

Some fairly simple design details can be incorporated into bridge structure to help protect against “earthquakes and things like hurricanes.” He said that such features as the “shear block,” which prevents the superstructure from moving too far transversely, “don’t cost a lot more but provide a lot of protection.”

O’Connor’s role includes spreading the word and discussing the Katrina findings with research and engineering groups across the nation.

Sponsors of the MCEER include, in addition to the National Academy of Science (and the associated Transportation Research Board), New York State and the Federal Highway Administration, which pays O’Connor’s salary. MCEER was allotted \$3 million in “high-priority” funding under the recently enacted Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Act (SAFETEA-LU).

Both O’Connor and McAnany are registered engineers trained in bridge inspection. O’Connor has written more than 40 technical papers, has nearly 30 years experience as a civil engineer with a focus on bridge-management strategies, vulnerability assessments and structural integrity evaluations. He was formerly with the New York State Department of Transportation, where he was given a Civil Service Award for Meritorious Service.



I-10 over Lake Pontchartrain, Orleans Parish, Louisiana. The concrete bridge was built as a series of simply supported prestressed spans, prefabricated off-site for ease of construction.

Photo: J. O'Connor (for MCEER)

GBNRTC gets grant to serve as model on safety

The GBNRTC has received a grant from the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to enhance safety-analysis procedures for locally-owned roadways in Erie and Niagara Counties. Project concepts will serve as a model for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) across the nation.

The \$49,003 grant, to be matched 100 percent by GBNRTC, will be used to develop new computer tools for consolidating highway and accident data to aid identification of roadway intersections and sectors that may pose problems that need to be addressed. For the first time, transit incident data from the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority would also be integrated into the comprehensive highway safety picture.

GBNRTC's 19-page application, compiled by Hector Boggio, a GBNRTC transportation analyst, was one of three awarded nationwide. The other two winners were the North Central Texas Council of Governments in Dallas-Fort Worth, and the Community Planning Association in Boise, Idaho.

Winners were selected by a panel of experts from the Transportation Research Board, University of Tennessee Center for Transportation Research, Mineta Transportation Institute, American Public Transportation Association, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

One of the tools to be developed by GBNRTC would "produce collision diagrams for intersections and linear highway sections prioritized for detailed safety investigations."

"The primary benefits are the identification of areas of potential safety concern and the ability to quantitatively prioritize those areas for detailed investigative study. Investigations allow screening results to be verified, location-specific safety problems identified, probable causes determined and alternative treatments developed. These tasks have not been previously undertaken by the MPO.

"... The present criteria allow 52 of 1,427 local/off-state federal-aid road sections and 39 of 518 intersections to make up the safety study location candidate pool."

Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council

Phone: 716-856-2026

Fax: 716-856-3203

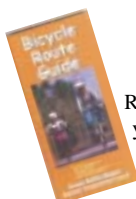
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GREATER BUFFALO-NIAGARA
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

438 Main Street, Suite 503
Buffalo, New York 14202-3207



Gotta Minute?

We're updating our Bicycle Route Guide and would like your input. Come to our website www.gbnrtc.org and fill out a quick survey.

Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council

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David Thielman - New York State Thruway Authority

Meeting Calendar

Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC)

meetings begin at 9:30 A.M.

February 8 Buffalo

City Hall
Buffalo, New York

March 1 Erie County

Public Works Department
Buffalo, New York

April 5 Buffalo Niagara Partnership

665 Main Street
Buffalo, New York

Policy Committee

February 24 Hyatt Regency Buffalo

Two Fountain Plaza, Buffalo, New York

*Meeting dates and times are subject to change:
please call (716) 856-2026 for confirmation.*

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