

# GBNRTC

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

## Good Going for Earth Day

The GBNRTC is collaborating with a coalition of regional businesses, agencies and organizations to encourage their employees and members to help themselves and the planet by using carpooling or alternative transportation on Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

In partnership with Ecology & Environment, an international firm with headquarters in Lancaster, the GBNRTC has upgraded a Good Going web site that facilitates carpooling and provides helpful information also for use of public transit or biking..

Sponsors include such entities as NFTA (Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority)-Metro, Buffalo Place, Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Buffalo-Niagara HRA (Human Resources Association), Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, LP Ciminelli, Malabar, Parrinello Printing, UB Green, Daemen College, League of Women Voters, Cannon Design, Online Thymes, Niagara Frontier Bicycle Club, and National Fuel.

Two Orchard Park High School sophomores, Katie Pataky and Mindy McCabe, have designed a bison logo to symbolize the region's Earth Day initiative. Both are members of a high school ecology club and submitted their creation in a contest held by E & E. They and their biology teacher, Mark VanDerwater, accepted a \$500 check, on behalf of the school, for "design and implementation of a sustainable effort of the school's choosing."



*Buffalo-logo has an earthy look.*

"The fate of the world is now in my generation's hands and I think we should do as much as we can do while we can. I mean – it's our home," declared Pataky.

McCabe declared, "Our logo shows that things done in the Buffalo area can help to make the world a better place – greener for our generation and the generations to come."

Emissions from motor vehicles are among the major sources of a carbon-dioxide imbalance that has been associated with the Greenhouse Effect and climate change.

Good Going's GIS (Geographic Information System) technology provides maps for each user's locality that can be used not only to find other potential ride sharers in the neighborhood

but also display public transit and bicycling options.

The maps pinpoint start and destination sites as well as potential car-pooling partners for the user to contact. It allows for matches on the basis of day of the week or gender or smoking habits. At the same time the system is designed to protect maximum privacy for its users.

GBNRTC's Executive Director Hal Morse has noted that 81.7 percent of the 520,350 people who commute to work in the Buffalo-Niagara region drive alone.

The federally-funded web site is at [www.goodgoingwny.com/](http://www.goodgoingwny.com/). Recent upgrades have enhanced the functionality of the site.

Typical of the Earth Day initiatives was that announced by a spokesman for National Fuel: "As part of Earth Day, National Fuel will encourage employees to use alternative transportation to work. We will direct employees to the GoodGoingWNY Web site for suggestions. This information will be posted at all of our work locations in New York."

### Second Quarter 2008

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# Does regional travel data reflect economic surge?

**M**otor-vehicle travel in the Erie-Niagara region reached an all-time high of 20.6 million miles in 2006, an increase of 4.6 percent from 2003 and 8.5 percent from 2000.

In a report to the GBNRTC's Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC), Steve Szopinski, a principal transportation analyst, noted that the increase was in spite of a slight 2006 dip in travel for the Northeast section of the nation. A leveling off of roadway travel nationally has been associated with a sharp increase in the price of fuel.

GBNRTC Executive Director Hal Morse said the regional anomaly may reflect "a number of dynamics, including the fact that we may be seeing a stronger regional economy at work."

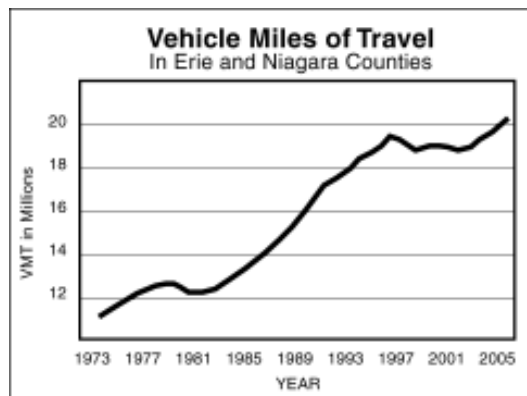
The latest U.S. Census projections show a continuing decline in population for Erie and Niagara Counties but it also shows a rebound in employment levels over the past three years, after several years of decline. The region continues to rank among the lowest among large metropolitan areas for traffic congestion and time of commute to work.

"We've seen recent statistics showing that employment in general is up in the region and, in fact, it has been reported as being in the top third of the nation for new-jobs creation," said Morse. "That would mean more people creating more transportation demand.

"Also, we are seeing greater

cross-border travel, based not only on the stronger Canadian dollar recently but also on the overall strength of the Toronto area economy and its impacts on our region, including overall travel statistics.

"And finally we are seeing an increase in the movement of goods by truck, on roadways across the nation, but apparently especially in this region."



Szopinski's report to the PCC focused upon traffic increases on the area freeways, Interstate routes and international crossings. The most dramatic increases were on the Niagara Thruway, Interstate 190, after tolls were eliminated at Black Rock and Ogden Street in the fall of 2006 and the toll barriers in the fall of 2007.

Szopinski and Morse indicated that further traffic studies would be made this summer to "help us to understand better where this traffic may have shifted from." Thomas Pericak, division director for the New York

State Thruway Authority, declared, "We all recognize that there are still gaps in the data."

The travel survey shows a daily traffic increase of 27 percent at Black Rock and 29 percent at Ogden. This included a 36 percent increase in north-bound trucks and 31 percent in south-bound trucks at Black Rock and 29 percent for north-bound and 34 percent south-bound trucks at Ogden. Trucks make up 7.8 percent of daily traffic at Black Rock and 12.5 percent at Ogden.

Traffic on the Peace Bridge in 2007 was "up for the first time in five years," Szopinski reported. This included an increase of 9 percent for trucks and 3 percent for cars. But traffic was down in 2007 by 1.7 percent for the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge, including a drop of 4.3 percent for trucks, and 2.7 percent for the Rainbow Bridge, which is limited to cars.

Overall, weekday traffic on the free section of the mainline Thruway, Interstate 90, was up more than 10 percent, in October of 2007 as compared with October of 2005, according to Szopinski's report, which was based upon the Authority's statistics. And it was up by 19 percent on Main Street in the vicinity of the Youngman Highway (Interstate 290) at Williamsville.

And on the Youngmann Highway, Interstate 290, the traffic increase ranged from 6.6 percent, since 2003, between Main Street and Sheridan Drive, to 13.6 percent since

2000 near Niagara Falls Boulevard, and 6.8 percent since 2004 east of Delaware Avenue to the Niagara Thruway.

Traffic increases ranging from 6.7 percent to 8.5 percent were registered along the Kensington Expressway. But overall traffic was down by 18.7 percent on the Scajaquada Expressway, Route 198, east of Delaware Avenue, although the decrease was only 3.5 percent in the western sector, apparently because of a diversion of west-bound traffic from Delaware Avenue to the Niagara Thruway.

On the mainline Thruway, Interstate 90, traffic was down beyond (east of) the Williamsville and Depew Toll Barriers by 2.8 percent, although trucks, which make up 30 percent of the traffic, were up by nearly 25 percent west-bound and 17 percent east-bound.



*A traffic scene at the Lackawanna Toll Barrier.*

However, I-90 traffic just beyond (west) of the Lackawanna Toll Barrier was up by about 5 percent and another 5 percent increase was registered for a nearby sector of the Southern Expressway, Route 219, although Pericak reported that traffic is down overall on I-90 between the Lackawanna Toll Barrier and the Pennsylvania border.

Traffic volume on the Skyway sector of Route 5 showed an in-

crease of 6.7 percent over two years from 2005 to 2007, according to the survey. This increase appears to contradict a forecast by a consultant, representing anti-Skyway groups, that the removal of the two tolls on the Niagara Thruway would result in "some diversion of trips" from the Skyway.

Pericak, the divisional Thruway manager, cautioned against associating the traffic changes exclusively with toll removal: "There are a number of factors that go into this, including the increased value of the Canadian dollar, and economic trends, especially when it comes to truck traffic."

Regarding the increase on the free section of the mainline Thruway, he said, "These increases are based on data for specific times of the year and may not represent the traffic volumes throughout the year. Additional

data and analysis are needed in order to determine longer term trends."

He took note of a significant traffic increase on the Grand Island sector of the Niagara Thruway in spite of continued tolls at the Grand Island bridges. "I would attribute a lot of that to Canadian travelers from what I hear from local retailers," he said.

Further surveying, he said, would show that a part of the increase on the Niagara and mainline Thruway would

be related to traffic decreases on such arterials as Niagara Street, Delaware Avenue and William Street.

He said it was well known, for example, that when the Ogden Toll Barrier was still in operation drivers often exited the mainline Thruway at William Street to avoid the toll.

Pericak acknowledged that "certain parts of the Niagara Thruway are now pretty much at capacity during peak hours."

He said the Thruway is "restarting" its Buffalo Corridor Study on Interstate 90 between Exits 49 (Transit Road) and 53 (Interstate 190) and on the Youngmann Highway (I-290) between I-90 and Main Street after it was postponed while impacts of the toll removal were assessed. The I-90 sector between Exit 50, to the Youngmann Highway (I-290), and Exit 51 to the Kensington Expressway (Route 33) has been described as having the "highest volume of traffic outside the New York City area."

Overall, Pericak said, "Thruway traffic is down system-wide, although there are certain segments where it has increased. Basically, Thruway traffic is following national trends. This is the longest period in the 27 years the Federal Highway Administration has been keeping traffic data that there's been a flat line or an actual decrease in traffic for two and a half years.

"The price of fuel is a big part of it now, although the post-9/11 period obviously had an impact initially. What they are saying is that discretionary trips are down. On the Thruway we can measure trip length and we see that the average trip length is down. The Thruway Authority's independent traffic engineer, Stantec Consulting, is expecting that by 2010, traffic will pick up again."

# 'Significant' increases

# in freight traffic for region

**T**ruck freight traffic in Erie and Niagara Counties is expected to double between 2004 and 2035, from 161.9 million tons to 339.6 million tons, even if there is a relatively low growth in population and employment.

A major increase in rail freight shipments, from 47 million tons to 93 million tons, is also predicted, especially in inter-modal shipments involving containers, which is projected to increase by nearly 130 percent over the same time frame.

Marine cargo is expected to double, although it “represents a small fraction of freight flowing into and out of the Buffalo-Niagara region.”

Those are the forecasts in the third phase of a \$680,000 federally funded analysis of regional freight issues undertaken on behalf of GBNRTC.

The largest percentage gain for truck freight, at 166 percent, is projected for international traffic passing through the region, mainly to and from Canada, followed by an increase of about 105 percent in outbound traffic, according to the report by Wilbur Smith Associates, a worldwide consultant. Senior Transportation Analyst Richard Guarino, AICP, is the project manager...

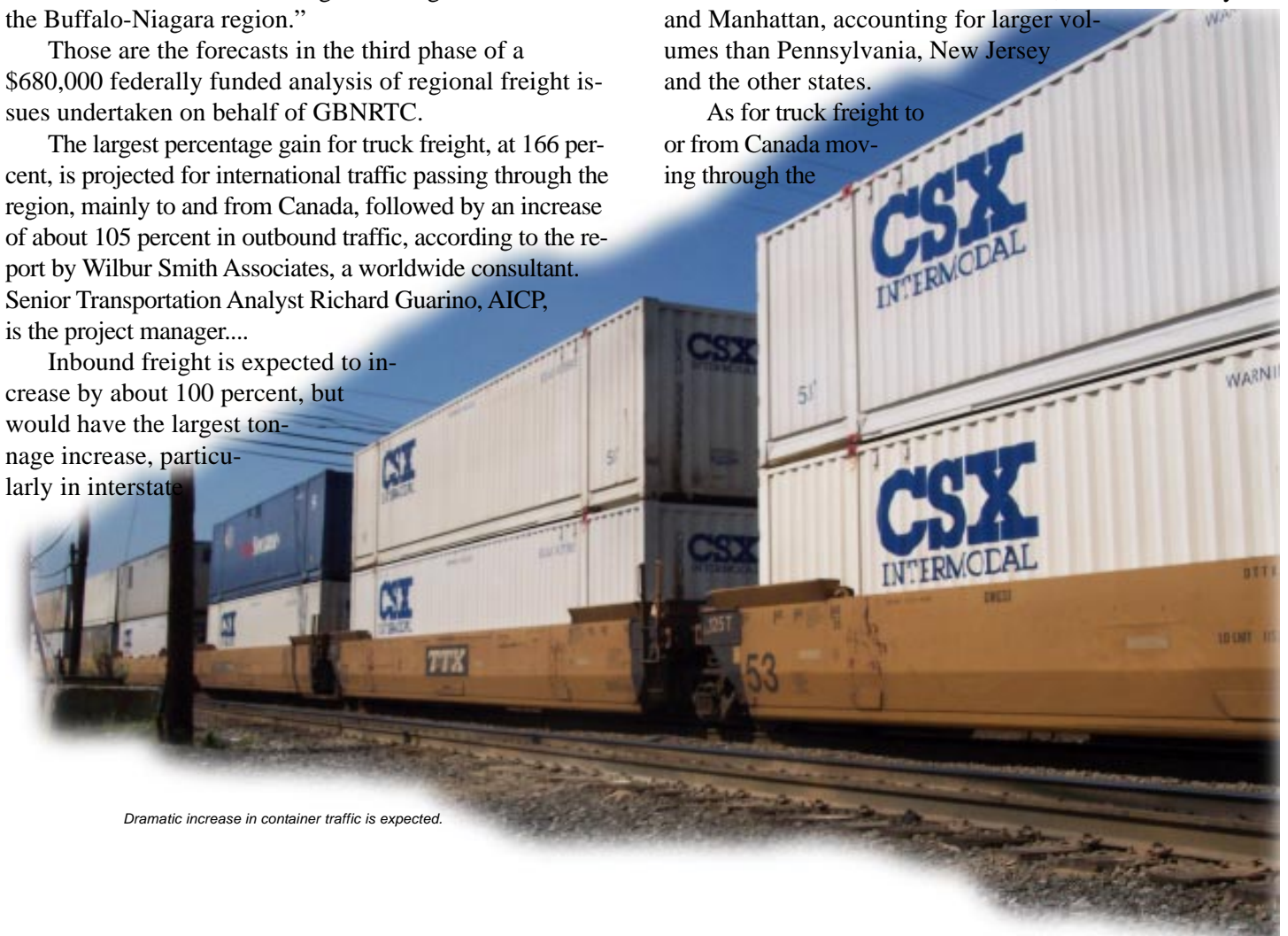
Inbound freight is expected to increase by about 100 percent, but would have the largest tonnage increase, particularly in interstate

shipments from distribution centers to retail outlets within the region, reflecting a significant regional employment gain that is forecast in retail and wholesale sectors.

New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Illinois “are expected to account for the greatest volume of in-bound interstate traffic” while New York City would continue to account for the largest volume of intrastate inbound traffic followed by Albany and Monroe Counties.

Shipments from distribution centers within the region to retail outlets would be a major factor in outbound shipments but with intrastate destinations, such as Brooklyn and Manhattan, accounting for larger volumes than Pennsylvania, New Jersey and the other states.

As for truck freight to or from Canada moving through the



*Dramatic increase in container traffic is expected.*

region (without originating or terminating in Erie or Niagara Counties), transportation equipment would continue to be major commodities, along with pulp paper, chemicals and machinery. But electrical equipment will show the fastest growth, according to the consultant's report.

"Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Jersey will generate the largest overhead motor carrier traffic volumes in 2035, with traffic from Michigan expected to experience significant growth due to the increase in shipping of transportation equipment.."

A "small amount of traffic" that flows over the Buffalo-Niagara region to or from Mexico is "expected to increase substantially, but the total volume is not enough to cause a significant impact on Buffalo-Niagara highway networks."

Domestic overhead traffic (originating and terminating in other states) is forecast to increase by 75 percent, and mainly involves traffic flows through the region between the Midwest and the East Coast and New England.

On rail freight, the survey indicates that "carload" traffic would continue to account for the largest volume of tonnage through 2035, even though the most dramatic percentage increase would be in inter-modal container shipments, involving truck and perhaps water shipment, in addition to rail.

Car-load rail traffic is projected to increase from 35.5 million tons in 2004 to 59.7 million tons in 2035, but most of it, an estimated 36.8 million tons, would be flowing through the region. Inter-modal container traffic is projected to increase from 11.6 million to 33 million in 2035, but 31 million of the latter would also be "overhead" shipments.

In-bound and out-bound rail shipments, terminating or originating in the region, are also expected to increase but less dramatically. Coal and base metals, from such areas as West Virginia or northeast Indiana, are typical in-bound commodities, while chemicals and waste-scrap are "the largest commodities shipped from the Buffalo-Niagara region."

"Although inter-modal traffic originating or terminating in the region is relatively low at this time, all railroads expect that inter-modal and trans-load facilities will grow... With the recent opening of the CSX inter-modal terminal at their former Seneca Yard, the region will have a modern facility with an estimated capacity of 60,000 annual lifts. With the proposed inclusion in the Port of New York New Jersey's PIDN network, container traffic will become an important rail business segment in the region

"Cross-border traffic by rail also has the potential to grow. Carriers and shippers in the region echoed the findings of previous studies that identified commodities that can be diverted from truck to rail. This could be supple-

mented with greater improvements in customs and rail services across the border along with the planning and implementation of efficient facilities that could tap into these opportunities.

"Finally, warehouse/distribution is another area for potential growth. Carriers and shippers pointed to the growing demand of warehousing and value added distribution, stressing the importance of supporting 'just-in-time' delivery logistics by providing the essential 'buffer' in scheduling and inventory control. This relationship makes rail a more 'time-sensitive' delivery method and, thus,

provides a more cost competitive alternative too all-truck delivery."

Water-borne freight was forecast to increase from 1.6 thousand tons in 2004 to 2.9 thousand tons in 2035: "The largest increase is in the movement of coal, measured in terms of both absolute increase in tonnage or rate of growth. Sand and gravel shipments are also expected to increase measurably."

An analysis of trade between the Erie-Niagara region and the adjacent Ontario sectors noted that about "26 percent of all the Canada-U.S. exchange" travels through border crossings along the Niagara River and "goods transported by truck and exported or imported from the State of New York account for 20 percent" of all the import and export from and to the U.S., which is estimated at about \$360 billion a year.

In 2006, 2.2 million trucks crossed the border via the Peace Bridge (1.3 million) and Lewiston-Queenston Bridge (.9 million). However, 2002 was the peak year for cross-border truck traffic and there has been a decline of 11.5 percent between 2002 and 2006. An explanation for this "needs to be explored by the consultant," Guarino noted.

Due to the continued growth of the transportation and chemical commodities, cross-border rail traffic is projected to nearly triple by 2035, from 6.4 million tons to 18.2 million tons.

Guarino added: "The cross-border freight estimates do not take into consideration the international trade that may be generated by building additional inter-modal rail terminals/distribution centers.

"In addition cross-border maritime freight can increase dramatically if short seas shipping with Canadian ports such as Hamilton can be initiated. These and other cross-border freight opportunities will be fully explored in upcoming reports."



About 26 percent of "Canada=U.S. exchange" travels Niagara River crossings.

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# Exploring the roots of regional roadways

**D**uring construction of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's Metro Rail system, in June of 1980, the logs of a corduroy road from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, were discovered about 5 feet under Main Street between Allen and Carlton Streets in downtown Buffalo.

Also uncovered in the road debris were part of a hand-made iron horseshoe and a brass coat button, both from the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

A study of the site by Ecology and Environment, Inc. (E & E), of Lancaster, for the NFTA confirmed that the planks were part of Van Staphorst Avenue (later Main Street), opened in 1803 by Joseph Ellicott, agent for the Holland Land Company, as the western part of what became known as the Buffalo Road, connecting Buffalo (Ellicott called it New Amsterdam) and Batavia.

"It is unlikely that the logs were in place prior to 1798," according to the E& E investigation. "Before that date Main Street was an Indian trail. In 1798, the trail was widened to accommodate wagon traffic. Log causeways were employed shortly after the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Documentary evidence places construc-

tion between 1800 and 1810.

"... The purpose of the logs was to fill in a low wet area to prevent vehicles becoming mired in mud. Soil was then placed between and on top of the logs to level the surface of the logs and to provide a more permanent road."

According to Joanne Barbara Koszuta, author of an authoritative 1969 Master's thesis at the University at Buffalo on the history of trails and roads of the region, the Buffalo Road paralleled a part of the Great Central Trail of the Iroquois Indians that crossed the state from the Hudson River to the Niagara Frontier.

Near the Indian village of Tonawanda, along Tonawanda Creek, the Great Central Trail forked. One branch, "the main route to Canada," went to the Tuscarora village on Lewiston Heights and to Fort Niagara. The other branch trended southwestward across Ransom Creek at Clarence Hollow and continued "nearly on the line of the present Main Street (Route 5)" and wended its way to the Indian village at Buffalo Creek.

There were numerous other trails and branches, some of which became the basis for later roads. The Indian trails were also used by "French missionaries and traders,

by the Dutch and by the English in their association with the Indians during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century."

Douglas J. Perrelli, director of the Archaeological Survey at UB, said, "Many of these routes date back certainly hundreds of years, if not thousands, it's hard to demonstrate. But Main Street, Route 5, was an Indian trail and the Niagara Street-Busti Avenue route in downtown Buffalo was laid right over Indian trails. Certainly, I would be willing to push some of those main thoroughfares back to at least 1,000 AD or 900 AD and possibly hundreds and hundreds of years earlier."

The Indian paths extended between Indian villages, to favorite hunting and fishing grounds, navigable rivers and lakes and to "burial grounds and sacred places, such as Niagara Falls," according to Koszuta. Many of the paths had "complex windings and misleading forks" that served as "a protection for the main route which was concealed for purposes of war or trade."

During the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the main village of the Seneca Nation, the western member of the Iroquois Confederacy, was on the Genesee River south of what is now Rochester, and the Niagara Frontier was used

mainly as a trapping ground for beaver, “with conflicts arising over territorial rights between the Seneca from the Genesee River Valley and the Indians across the Niagara River in Canada.” The resident Erie Indians had been destroyed or absorbed by the Seneca in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Only small hunting villages existed in this region in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, according to Koszuta.

“But because the Seneca sided with the British during the American Revolution, the Patriots sent Gen. Sullivan, in 1779, to burn down their main village. The Indians fled for protection to Fort Niagara which was still under British command.... Many built permanent settlements on the Niagara Frontier, mainly in three places (1) along Tonawanda Creek, (2) along Cattaraugus Creek and (3) along the Buffalo Creek. These later became the sites of the Indian reservations.”

Nathan Montague, a UB historian, observed that an eight-mile Indian trail along the Niagara River, between present day Niagara Falls and Lewiston, became critically important to the early French and British traders as a connection with waterways that penetrated the heart of the continent. It became known as the Portage Trail.

But Ellicott’s initial focus was upon links between Buffalo and Batavia, site of the Holland Land Company’s office. In 1798, Ellicott had the Great Central Trail widened through the forests on the Holland lands to provide a route by which wagons could take supplies to his surveying parties. And in 1801 he arranged with “an

Indian called White Chief to mark out with a hatchet a new road on the same line,” which was “corrected by a survey that ‘confined it to the straightest and most practical direction the ground would admit.’” It was “estimated to reduce the distance between Batavia and Buffalo by at least five miles.”



*A 1914 view of Erie County toll gate on Genesee Street.. Photo is courtesy of Western New York Heritage Press.*

This “new route,” Koszuta noted, “became known as the Buffalo Road (State Route 5)” and “it was laid out so as to interfere as little as possible with the Tonawanda Indian Reservation.” A north-south branch, Ransom Road, begun in 1805, was designed to make it easier for settlers to grind their corn at Ransom Mill on Buffalo road. Another north-south route, Transit Road evolved out of a base line that Ellicott’s surveyors established to help in laying out the boundaries of ranges and townships.

The Buffalo Road was principally designed, according to the Koszuta thesis, “to facilitate the passage of the New Englanders to the west and to attract many of them to the New York lands who, otherwise passing through Pennsylvania, would never see them.”

According to Ryan F. Austin, a UB historical archaeologist, the majority of early settlers to the Holland Land Purchase were from New England, eastern parts of

New York State and the mid-Atlantic states. He said many arrived in Western New York via the Genesee Road in Central New York and routes associated with the Mohawk River, Susquehanna River valley and the Finger Lakes.

“Between 1800 and 1803, almost one third of all new settlers relocated from Pennsylvania (Wyckoff 1988),” Austin noted.

Another of the earliest routes was Military Road, which was constructed on orders from President Thomas Jefferson in 1801 to improve communication with military facilities along the Niagara River. The early stages were built by soldiers, although construction was interrupted when fever broke out among them, according to the Koszuta thesis.

A Middle Road, parallel and south of the Buffalo Road, was constructed under Ellicott from the Big Tree Reservation, now Genesee, to Lake Erie south of the Buffalo Creek Reservation. Most of it is now U.S. Route 20A and parts of it are still called Big Tree Road, Koszuta notes. “Branching from this road were two rutted wagon tracks, one bearing southeast (U.S. Route 219) and the other bearing south (State Route 240), which opened up the southern sector of Erie County.”

The Batavia Road started along what is presently Broadway (State Route 130) from Buffalo and later followed what are presently Walden Avenue and Genesee Street (State Route 33) to Batavia.

“An important factor in settlement” of what is Niagara County was the Ridge Road (U.S. Route 104) constructed about 1804 along

the old Ontario Trail. It followed the Lake Ridge, "identified as the ancient shore of Lake Ontario," to the site of Lewiston and was opened to wheel carriages in 1809. "It was well traveled by the early settlers ... who went into Canada for most of their provisions, although the Tuscarora Indians in the area generally had corn to sell," according to Koszuta.

The Lewiston Road (State Route 77), which partly followed an old Indian Trail, was established by Ellicott as the first mail route between Lewiston and Batavia. A branch trail, following in part the route of the present State Route 93, went toward Fort Niagara and was used by the military during the War of 1812, the Koszuta thesis reports. Lake Road opened in 1807 along Lake Ontario from the Niagara River to Quottenhonyaiga Creek (Eighteen-Mile Creek) "to accommodate the settlers near the mouth of the creek."

And along Lake Erie, work on the Erie Road, presently known as the Lake Shore Road (State Route 5 South), was begun in 1804 as a link between Buffalo and Erie, Pa. Other roads were eventually constructed southward toward the present sites of Olean and Springville.

During the burning of the Village of Buffalo by the British in the War of 1812, many of the settlers fled along Main Street to Williamsville and Batavia, or along a route, now Seneca Street (State Route 16), which Ellicott had marked out toward the Indian village on Buffalo Creek and extended to intersect with the Middle Road.

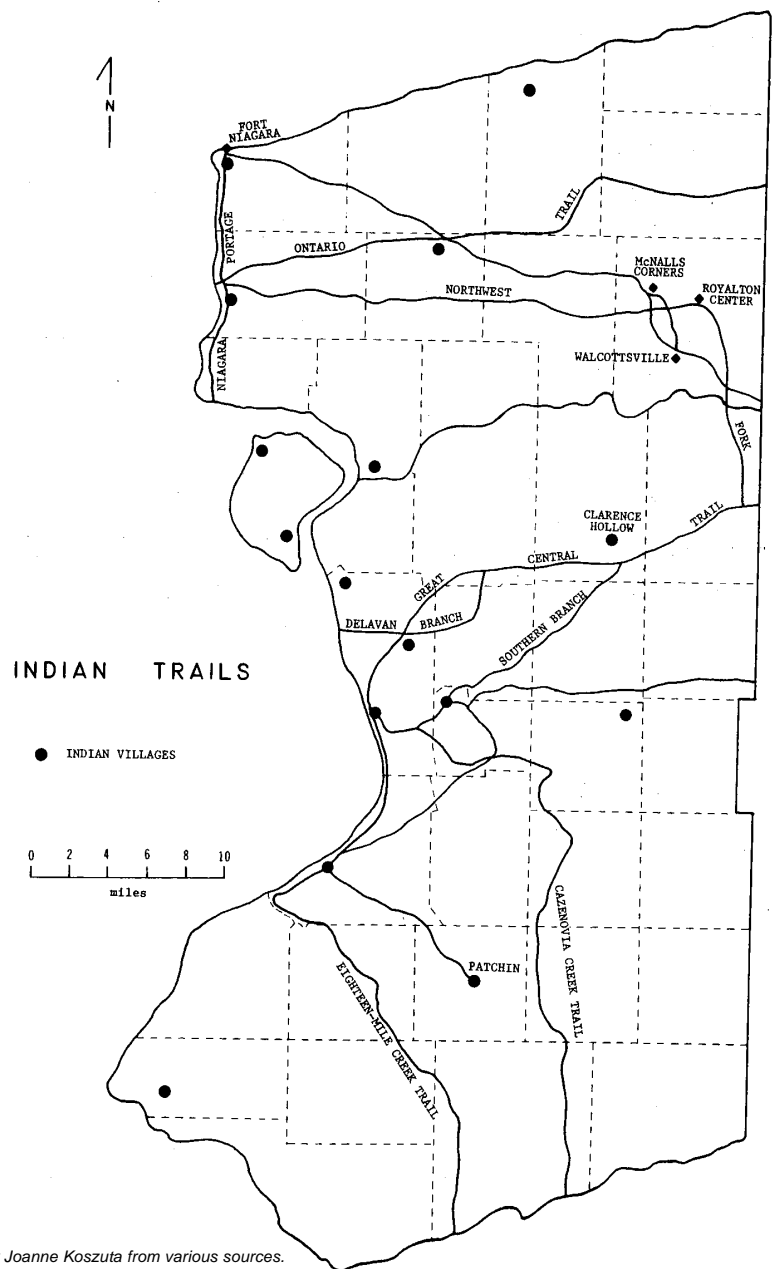
After the war, "Tonawanda Creek Road was planned to facilitate the sale of the lands contiguous to Tonawanda Creek" and followed "a circuitous route in order to avoid the swamps."

Austin said the dirt roads of the Holland Land Company were typically about 4 feet wide "with tree stumps, some cut to the ground and some not."

Bob Kostoff, author of a local history column in the Niagara

Falls Reporter, wrote that the roughness of the stumps and of the logs used in swampy sectors sometimes "about shook the teeth out of stagecoach passengers."

Travel was often easier in winter on sleighs over the snow. The settlers, who were dependent upon the roads to get their grain to market, eventually were able to enter into agreements to help maintain the roads in exchange for reduction in land debts.



Drawings prepared by Joanne Koszuta from various sources.

Also, the wood from trees cleared for roads was a potential source of income. "An easy way to ship the wood was to reduce it to potash, which was used in making gunpowder and other products," Austin noted. The nation's first patent had been for an improved method of producing potash that had been signed by President George Washington in 1790.

The reign of the Holland Land Company ended in 1837. In the following years, plank roads came

into style. They were "constructed by laying two stringers on either side of the road and covering them with flat sawn boards to provide a smooth running surface," Austin observed. "In 1857, a total of 352 plank roads were in operation in New York State and by 1861 five of these roads terminated in Buffalo."

Private toll roads also came into existence. "Vehicles, horse-back riders, and even people on foot, had to pay a fee, collected at

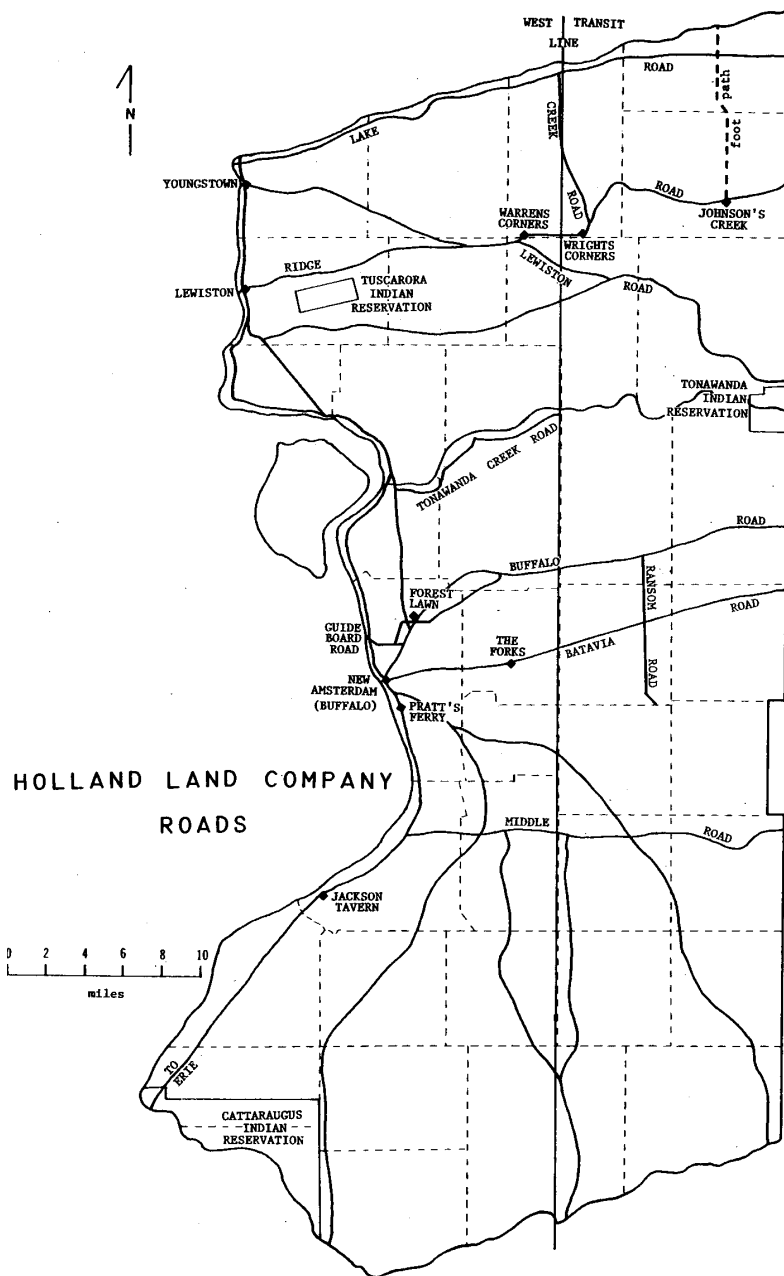
toll gates, to use such roads," according to the Koszuta thesis. "Incorporated companies that sold stock to investors were responsible for the improvement and maintenance of a certain road or section of road. By law, toll gates could not be located less than three miles apart.

"With the advent of railroads, the turnpikes were gradually discontinued. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century even the better roads had deteriorated. But with the coming of the bicycle, and even more with the advent and increase of the automobile, better highways became imperative."

Austin said, "Road transportation in Western New York remained difficult until the introduction of asphalt paving...." Montague noted that at a meeting of the City Council on Jan. 7, 1884, Mayor Jonathan Scoville was recorded in his inaugural address as saying:

"I desire to call your attention to the paving of streets with asphalt. It appears that there are now so paved 5.77 miles of streets. The paving of other streets in the same manner is projected and some portion of it is already begun."

Koszuta reported that in 1898 for the first time state and county funds were authorized for highways.





# An advanced system for monitoring safety

**T**he GBNRTC has taken advantage of a federal grant to design a sophisticated computer system for monitoring safety conditions on county and municipal arterials. It is expected to be in operation later this year.

The agency was among four Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the nation selected to develop innovative ways to incorporate safety improvements into long-range transportation planning. Other recipients were the MPOs in Boise, Idaho, Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, and Biloxi, Miss.

The program, sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), reflects in part a renewed emphasis on traffic safety in the current national transportation act. (SAFETEA-LU). The GBNRTC grant was for \$49,000.

According to Hector Boggio, who is managing the project for GBNRTC, it will provide a safety evaluation of county and municipal arterial segments and intersections to complement the system for state routes.

“There is a federal-aid local, non-state system that is not really evaluated on a comprehensive basis as is the state system,” said Boggio. “This will provide the mechanism to evaluate this second-tier system and then to implement a program to address concerns that are identified.”

Technological “enhancements,” he said, would use increased automation to “analyze crash data, produce accident severity indicators and efficiently update data for variable time periods.”

“It will allow us to do better tracking throughout time on the local system as a whole and at individual sectors and intersections.”

GIS (Geographic Information System) displays will be used to map analysis results and create “an expanded picture showing the relative safety performance and severity between locations.”

According to the AMPO, the projects are intended to develop tools that will use “an accident surveillance system enhancement that includes integration with transit, creating a uniform communication system for emergency responders in a metropolitan region, and developing post-event emergency planning for the operation of public transportation services after a major event or disaster.”

The FTA and AMPO will “highlight and promote all good practices” for sharing with other MPOs.

# Fuel costs are affecting driving habits

A federal study suggests that the rising price of gasoline since 2003 has fueled somewhat less driving and slightly slower speeds, along with a slight decline in the purchase of gasoline.

The study, by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), also forecasts that over time the effects could become much more profound.

“Through the third quarter of 2007, real consumer purchases of gasoline – which can be thought of as a measure of quantities consumed – had fallen slightly in eight of the preceding ten quarters, compared with purchases the year before,” according to the CBO.

“Such declines, although small, occurred despite continued population growth, changing patterns of residential development and job location and technological change, all of which have encouraged the increasing consumption of gasoline, particularly in recent decades.”

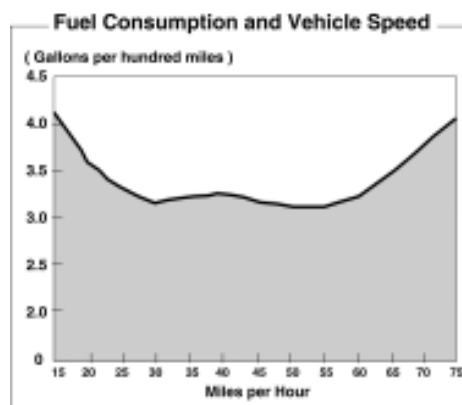
The report is based upon a study of traffic on California highways, which have “an extensive network of automatic data collection devices that have recorded large quantities of traffic data from many locations over long periods.”

“...Although they are based on California data, the findings of this study are more or less applicable to other, similar metropolitan areas in the United States.”

The study also analyzed national data on the sales of new and used vehicles over the same period and concluded:

“After increasing steadily for more than 20 years, the market share of light trucks (including sport utility vehicles and minivans), relative to new passenger vehicles, began to decline in 2004.

“Used-vehicle prices have shifted, reflecting changing demand, particularly with respect to fuel economy: The average price for larger, less fuel efficient models have declined over the past five years as average prices for the most fuel-efficient automobiles have risen.”



The research suggests that “a 10 percent increase in the retail price of gasoline would reduce consumption by about 0.6 percent in the short run” but that over the longer term (about 15 years) it would “reduce gasoline consumption by about 4 percent.”

Over that same time, “consumers also might adjust to higher gasoline prices by moving or by changing jobs to reduce their commutes — actions they might take if the savings in transportation costs were sufficiently compelling.

“... One way motorists can reduce transportation costs is to drive less, for example by using public transportation, alternative modes of transportation or car pool; by consolidating trips or by telecommuting to work.

“... Work commuters are more likely to switch to public transportation, especially to rail, which is usually less affected by traffic congestion – if

the available transit alternatives are convenient to workplaces and commuting routes.”

The California data indicates that for every increase of 50 cents per gallon in the price of gasoline since 2003 the median driving speeds on uncongested urban freeways have declined by about three-quarters of a mile per hour.

And the amount of weekday traffic on freeways next to commuter rail systems has declined about seven-tenths of a percent, a figure roughly commensurate with an increase in the number of light-rail passengers.

(The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority reported that rider-ship on the Metro bus and rail systems increased by 8.3 percent in 2007, the largest single-year increase in 25 years. The increase was particularly noticeable on reverse commute routes that take people from the city to jobs outside the city, as well as on limited-stop express routes.)

The study suggests that government policies that discourage gasoline consumption would serve to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions as well as to reduce traffic congestion, which has become a formidable financial challenge for transportation agencies.

Such policies would include the mandating of higher mileage standards for auto makers, a higher tax on gasoline and increased use of tolls. The latter have been recommended in various governmental reports for dealing with transportation financial challenges posed in part by traffic congestion

The study was prepared “at the request of the ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee.”

# Meeting Calendar

## Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC)

meetings begin at 9:30 A.M.

- May 7**      **Niagara Falls**  
Carnegie Building  
Niagara Falls, New York
- June 4**      **New York State Thruway Authority**  
Cayuga Street  
Cheektowaga, New York
- July 2**      **Niagara County**  
Public Safety Building  
Lockport, New York

## Policy Committee

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

**"Higher gas prices getting to you? Check out:"**



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Comments and requests to be added or deleted from the mailing list  
are welcome and should be sent to:

GBNRTC Editor, 438 Main Street, Suite 503, Buffalo, NY 14202

## Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council Policy Committee

County of Erie  
Niagara County Legislature  
City of Buffalo  
City of Niagara Falls  
New York State Department of Transportation  
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority  
New York State Thruway Authority

## Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council Planning and Coordinating Committee

Erie County Department of Public works  
Niagara County Department of Public Works  
City of Buffalo Department of Public Works  
City of Niagara Falls  
New York State Department of Transportation  
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority  
New York State Thruway Authority

## Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council

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