

GBNRTC

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

Preliminary reports on role of freight in regional outlook

The Buffalo-Niagara Region can potentially capitalize on its strengths as a trade and transportation gateway through “improved freight transportation efficiencies and an integrated strategic land-use development plan.”

That’s a conclusion in a draft “economic overview” submitted by WilburSmith Associates, a world-wide consultant, in the first of five technical reports on regional freight issues. The \$600,000 GBNRTC study, funded through the Federal Highway Administration, is expected to be completed early next year with a final report.

It’s being coordinated by Senior Transportation Analyst Richard Guarino, AICP, working with a Steering Committee that includes representatives of Erie and Niagara Counties, New York State Department of Transportation and Ontario’s Ministry of Transportation.

“The truth is that if done right, public freight investments will create jobs and spur economic development in the forms of new distribution centers, warehousing, light manufactur-

ing, etc.,” said Guarino. “The capacity issues being experienced at such gateways as Long Beach, in California, and at New York City and Toronto present Buffalo with a unique opportunity to re-emerge as an east-west and north-south transportation hub for distributing international goods.”

According to the analysis, the region could potentially add an additional 27,000 jobs, a 6.5 percent increase, over the next 10 years in the transportation and logistics sector and the wholesale, non-durable good industry, areas in which it is, “interestingly,” presently at a disadvantage.

“The ability of a region to compete in this global environment will hinge on its ability to efficiently accommodate these far-flung supply chains and to take advantage of changing trade lanes, the logistics revolution, and the shift toward a service based economy,” the WilburSmith report notes.

The analysis notes that “trucking constitutes the most significant transportation expenditure for all in-

dustries,” but also stresses the need to take full advantage of the region’s potential as a rail hub, and growing opportunities in water and air-cargo transportation.

Guarino added, “Our primary and secondary highways are reaching volume levels where their ability to meet freight demands is in question. We must therefore look to rail, water and air freight to meet these future demands.”

One of the opportunities was perceived in the “feeder port” that CSX Railroad is opening at the Seneca Yard in Lackawanna to handle overseas containers shipped by rail from the overwhelmed Port of New York and New Jersey. The containers will be loaded onto trucks and

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shipped to their ultimate destination here rather than at the Atlantic port.

The WilburSmith report notes a growing demand for air cargo as a result of a “shift from basic, resource-oriented industries such as basic manufacturing toward a more diverse industry mix including high value-added industries such as microelectronics and aerospace” and a consequent shift, especially in high-tech industries from “bulk movements” to “small, higher-value shipments.”

And waterborne freight and the Port of Buffalo offer opportunities for shippers to avoid the congestion at landside border crossings, according to the analysis, and could also benefit from expanding markets for agricultural produce. “China’s missteps in assuring safety of products ... may create an opening for Western New York growers.”

In terms of “transportation intensive and trade-based industries,” a “strong potential” for new growth in Erie County was identified in trucking and warehousing, water transportation, transportation equipment. Also, there was a “potential for building on recent growth” in wholesale, non-durable goods, transportation services, commodity brokers, and transportation by air.

For Niagara County, strong potential growth

was identified for trucking and warehousing, water and air transportation, commodity brokers, and transportation services.

Four areas of potential disadvantages were identified for Erie County: energy costs, taxes, worker base and skill level of workers. With the exception of worker base, the same elements were identified in Niagara County.

“Key findings include that for transportation related industries, energy costs appear to be a primary competitive disadvantage, while availability of skilled labor force is identified as a secondary disadvantage.”

However, the findings are qualified as being based on “quantitative analysis and are being further explored during stakeholder interviews to assess their validity.”

As of this writing, two of five technical memoranda have been submitted by WilburSmith. The first includes the “economic overview,” which lists a “skilled labor force” as one of the region’s advantages in this

summation:

“In general, the area’s strengths include a strategic location as a gateway to major economic markets in both Canada and the U.S., a skilled labor force, a system of multi-modal transportation assets... a relatively low-cost of living, and a growing tourism base ... combined with expanding opportunities arising from increasing global trade and changing trade lanes.”

The report also notes that the region “has witnessed a decline in total population during a period when both the state as a whole and the U.S. have continued to grow.” This trend “is troublesome as population growth is necessary for sustainable economic growth as the population represents both a labor supply market and a market for final goods.”



As a result, “the region’s pool of available workers is shrinking” and “compounding the problem is that the region’s workforce has a higher median age than both the State of New York and the U.S. as a whole.”

Because New York City “skews the statistics within the state,” the study compares the economic profile for the region with that of potential competing regions of Detroit and Virginia Beach-Norfolk. The Detroit region competes for Canadian and auto-manufacturing activity and the metro area in Virginia has “demonstrated success in leveraging its geographic position and multi-modal assets.”

Both Erie and Niagara Counties lag behind the comparative regions in measurements of income...

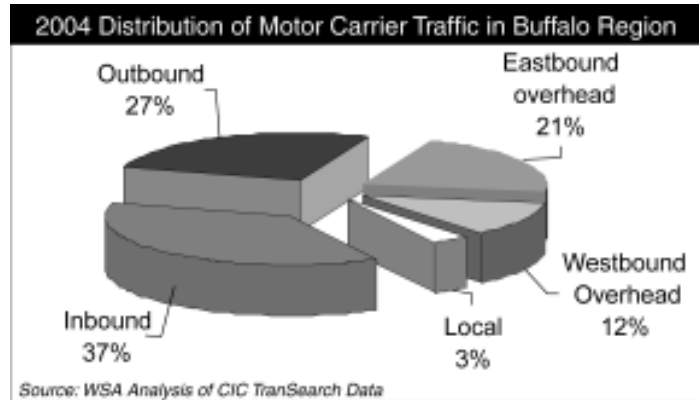
“Niagara County has a lower percentage of its population with at least a bachelor degree, which tends to support the hypothesis that the lower income is related to lower worker skill level. However, the level of educational attainment in Erie County is similar to that in comparative regions, indicating that there are other factors affecting wage rates and thus income levels....

“Interesting is the fact that construction related employment in both Erie and Niagara County represent a smaller share of total employment than in comparative regions. Again, this does not bode well for the economy as higher employment levels in the construction industry signals a growing economy and increases in capital investment.

“... From 2000 to 2005, the study region lost significant manufacturing jobs as well as wholesale and retail trade jobs. While the loss

in manufacturing jobs is following a national trend, the loss in the wholesale and retail jobs is counter to what is happening nationally.

“The retail sector is most likely a result of decreased population and economic distress. However, the loss in wholesale trade jobs is especially troublesome for the region given its geographic location, multi-modal assets and potential as a logistics



hub for Canadian-U.S. trade.

“Sectors that experienced increases include professional and scientific and tourism based sectors. This bodes well for the economy as it demonstrates a transition away from an economy that is overly dependent on manufacturing to one that is more service based.

“Notable is that the trucking and warehouse industry is identified as under performing in both Niagara and Erie County, while the transportation services and commodities brokers category is identified as performing above average in Erie County.”

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation there was an increase of 8.7 percent in ton-miles of domestic freight nationally from 1996 to 2005, with truck and rail by far the dominant carriers but air freight showing the biggest increase, reflecting in part a recovery from a

decline after Sept. 11, 2001.

One of the challenges facing the region is that of the inadequate “back-haul,” a reference to the fact that the volume of truck cargo shipped into the region is greater than the volume that is shipped out.

In 2004, the region experienced 668,000 local truck movements, nearly 13,000 a week and more than half (57 percent) were categorized as shipping containers, which are empty trailers or containers. That same year, 4.1 million motor carrier units moved from the region and nearly half, 46 percent, consisted of empty trailers or containers. “Empty shipping containers were primarily being delivered to Monroe County, where Rochester is located.”

Only 3.2 percent, or about 5 million, of the more than 166 million tons of freight moved by motor carriers in the region in 2004 was local, with origin and destination within the region. Another 37 percent, or 62 million tons, originated outside and terminated inside the region, while about 27 percent, about 44 million tons, originated inside for outside destinations. Another 33 percent, about 55 million tons, was trucked through the region, with the eastbound traffic nearly twice that of the westbound.

Overall, inbound freight was the most significant category of motor carrier freight activity, totaling 39 percent.

Nearly 50 percent of the inbound traffic originated in the state, especially the New York City area, with Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio accounting for another 20 percent.

About 75 percent of the region’s freight travel was by truck, compared with 70 percent for the nation. The

Buffalo-Niagara regional highway system provides for “fluid truck movements and good accessibility to the area’s economic centers,” according to the WilburSmith analysis.

Challenges are also reported, including the lack of “an identified truck route system” that assists carriers “in circumventing areas highly traveled by the motoring public.”

The report notes that the region has an extensive rail network, route capacities with North-South and East-West corridors, and Class 1 railroads, including CSX and Norfolk Southern, but is limited by “inadequate terminal capacity, congested bridges” and local-service “constraints” that cause delays and increased costs. “Many railroads, both U.S. and Canadian, do not have direct access to local customers in this region,” according to the analysis.

Potential benefits mentioned in connection with the CSX operation of a “feeder port” for the Port of New York and New Jersey in the Seneca Yard included the following:

“Reduced highway congestion, improved air quality, improved logistics reliability and drayage... warehousing opportunities, integration of distribution functions and improved services to local shippers.”

The report suggested the Seneca Yard facility could provide the basis for a “freight village,” or “logistics park” It noted that development around the inland port at Front Royal, in Virginia, began with the locating of industries servicing the container business and soon expanded to a “logistics hub with major retailers developing distribution centers in the area.”

The WilburSmith report finds that although congestion at the international bridges may act as a deterrent for truck and rail traffic, it could

bolster water-borne and truck-trailer-on-vessel service. “With the marine highway, congested land-border crossings” are avoided. The “short-sea-shipping program” adopted in Europe was cited as an example. And “increasing fuel costs are more detrimental to trucking than to water transportation.

The Port of Buffalo was described as handling a variety of commodities, both import and export, even though the volume is “relatively small,” with a multiplicity of trading partners, providing a diversity that gives it “an economic advantage over Great Lakes ports with a more limited commodity base.”

Marine shipping is also being encouraged by the federal government. The report noted a Corps of Engineers study had concluded that a freight ferry service on Lake Ontario would be feasible for Niagara County. It added that “AES Somerset is proposing to reconstruct the facility’s terminal on Lake Ontario” and “the rail links with Buffalo could make for bi-directional synergy.”

The report notes that most Great Lakes ports have a port authority. “Although not necessarily detrimental, Buffalo has no port authority. It, however also has no port promotion association.”

In its analysis of the region’s air freight, the report found that Buffalo-Niagara International Airport ranks 75th nationally for air cargo, and Niagara Falls International Airport is 113th. The only all-cargo air carrier in the region is Kitty Hawk, “a limited ad-hoc charter activity” at the Falls airport. The Buffalo airport, is “strategically situated with respect to the Interstate system” and the Falls airport “has no congestion problems.” But neither functions as a “hub” or as an international gateway,

despite the large volumes of Canadian origin and destination cargo that transits these airports.

At Buffalo airport, 93 percent of the air cargo is carried by “integrated express carriers,” such as FedEx and UPS. Only 7 percent of the air cargo at the Buffalo airport is hauled in the bellies of passenger carriers, compared with a national average of 15 to 20 percent.

However, even the available belly lift is “underutilized,” which could be attributed to the “lack of international destinations, coupled with limited non-stop service to markets beyond East Coast and Mid-West destinations.” Primarily, they serve the local air-cargo market.

“Most of the airport’s non-stop passenger carrier destinations ... are within overnight or one-day trucking distance of the Buffalo region. For any freight other than the most time-critical and sensitive cargo, one-day trucking options are considered as a competitive, or at least acceptable, alternative to air cargo delivery.”

But even nationally the percentage of air cargo carried by passenger planes has declined significantly “due to security measures and restrictions brought by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.”

“Preliminary opportunities” for the Buffalo and Niagara Falls airports were identified as an increased share of Canadian market through freight trucked across the border and “direct international all-cargo operations.”

“... Unlike a traditional air cargo gateway where international freight arrives via air and clears customs at the airport, Canadian traffic using Buffalo and Niagara Falls for air transit arrives by trucks and clears customs at one of the region’s commercial border crossings.”

Economic threat perceived in freight crisis

Growing constraints in the nation's freight transport system are "threatening competitiveness of the North American economies," according to a report by the RAND (Research and Development) Corp., a nonprofit think tank.

The report "synthesizes" discussions at a workshop earlier this year in Santa Monica, Calif., to discuss "the declining performance of the North American freight transportation system and determine strategies for increasing freight transport capacity."

It was attended by representatives of freight carriers, manufacturers, organized labor, and local, state, provincial and federal governments.

"Although consumers have yet to feel the effects, this 'brittle' freight transport system, coupled with continuing increases in demand, may lead to continent-wide economic damage," according to the RAND report.

"As North American manufacturing and retail's reliance on imports has increased, highway and rail infrastructure has been neither maintained nor expanded in critical places."

"Other factors, such as increased fuel prices, security requirements, border delays and a shortage of truck drivers, are eroding the freight transport system's performance. Consequently, shippers are stocking more parts and supplies, resorting to expensive backup transportation and revisiting facility location decisions to cope with disruptions."

The report noted that "cross-border

manufacturing" between the U.S. and Canada, in the auto industry, for example, is based upon an assumption that "the flow of raw materials and work-in-progress inventory across the border and throughout the country" is predictable in time and cost.

"Security programs and responses compound capacity constraints" at the border. For example, "the capacity of the Ambassador Bridge, which links Windsor, Ontario, with Detroit, Michigan, is so limited that there are reports of the operator 'waving through' hundreds of vehicles without any security check simply to clear backlogs."

On March 29, 2006, the Detroit Free Press quoted U.S. and Canadian inspectors as saying that they "routinely" received orders from owners of the bridge during times of truck congestion to "wave through" vehicles without scrutiny. Although the practice was most notable at the Ambassador Bridge, they alleged, it also occurred at other crossings run by private companies.

"They (the Ambassador Bridge owners) call and say, 'You're holding us up too much,' and they always win that argument," according to Charles Showalter, national president of a union representing U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers.

Robert Perez, port director at Detroit for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, an agency of the Department of Homeland Security, denied the allegation and said that inspectors might mistakenly interpret cooperation as caving in to commercial interests.

The Rand analysis also reported: "Freight rail capacity in the United States and Canada is limited and rail system performance is deteriorating. Performance has continued to decline despite significant investments in track, locomotives and facilities by U.S. Class I railroads; railroads claimed that the cost of capital to maintain and improve infrastructure exceeds return on investment by over 5 percent.

"Despite poor performance, fuel surcharges and increased freight demand have allowed U.S. Class I railroads to continue to raise prices.

"...Railroads have responded to the growth of trade by focusing on critical corridors, double-tracking routes from Los Angeles to Chicago, while abandoning other parts of their networks; U.S. railways service fewer markets with inter-modal ramps and operate fewer track miles than in 1960 or 1990."

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) reported 79 problems with CSX Corp. tracks across New York State during an investigation into a series of freight-trail derailments.

"CSX tracks generally are in compliance with federal track safety standards," according to Joseph Boardman, FRA administrator, "However, CSX must do a better job of inspecting their own tracks in areas where identified problems were concentrated." These included segments between Buffalo and Rochester and Buffalo and the Pennsylvania line.

Do ethanol, hydrogen hav

New York State has undertaken an initiative to create a network of up to 300 bio-fuel stations to “increase the use and availability of alternative fuels” that would “help move us away from imported petroleum.”

“Bio-fuel” means either E85, with a combination of gas and up to 85 percent ethanol, or bio-diesel, a blend of conventional diesel and modified vegetable or animal oils that can be used in conventional diesel engines.

The first two E85 fueling pumps, designed to handle up to 85 percent ethanol, were opened earlier this year at a Mobil station in Albany and a sister station in Warrensburg, “gateway to the Adirondacks.”

In the Erie-Niagara region, the first regional E85 fueling station has been established by the Thruway Authority on Walden Avenue near Exit 52. It is for use only by the authority’s Flex-Fuel (E85) ve-

hicles. Four other E85 facilities, limited to servicing of state Flex-Fuel vehicles, have been established in other parts of the state.

But Buffalo Division Director Thomas Pericak indicated that the authority plans eventually to make E85 pumps and other alternative fuels available to the public at Thruway travel plazas.

And NOCO Energy Corp. has applied for state grants to operate up to four E85 facilities serving the public in the Erie-Niagara region. These grants would also help NOCO develop the capability of handling ethanol in bulk quantities at its Tonawanda Terminal, according to a spokesman.

There are eight bio-diesel stations scattered across the state (none in the Erie-Niagara region), for use by heavy-duty state vehicles with diesel engines.

Though there are currently no retail stations, NOCO has been delivering biodiesel in bulk quantities across Western New York for more than five years, not only to state entities but for

“many customers in the recycling, disposal, farming and transportation industries.”

A Buffalo franchise for 1-800-Got Junk is reportedly one of 10 operators in the nation chosen by Isuzu trucks to take part in a test to determine the viability of a biodiesel blend.

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) provides incentives up to \$50,000 per site for retail E85 or bio-diesel pumps. The goal of the program is to “create a network of stations to ensure that drivers across New York have the opportunity to choose renewable fuels at their local service stations.”

State and federal tax credits are available for production of biofuels and the installation of alternative-fuel stations, according to NYSERDA, and “beginning this year state taxes on the sale of alternative fuels have been eliminated, which reduces the cost of the fuel to the consumer.”

According to



The potential to fuel change?

NYSERDA, there are almost 200,000 flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) registered in the state that could run on E85. Numerous models are available. General Motors alone claims to have more than 2 million “on the road” in the nation. FFVs are identical to gasoline-only vehicles except for “a few engine and fuel-system adaptations” and can run on gasoline only or any gasoline combination with up to 85 percent ethanol.

Other Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs) include: Bi-fuel Vehicles with two tanks for two separate fuels, usually gasoline paired with CNG or propane, with a switch to choose between the two fuels; Dual-fuel Vehicles, with two separate tanks but both fuels are used at the same time to produce power; Dedicated-fuel Vehicles, with one alternative fuel (such as CNG, electricity, propane) used full-time; Hybrid (HEVs), which operates on two or more energy sources, one of which is electricity.

New York State has been a leader in the promotion of AFVs, particularly in the acquiring of “clean-fueled vehicles for state use and testing and evaluating new technologies.”

A recent report by the state’s Clean Fueled Vehicles Council (comprising 18 agencies, authorities and the State University of New York) listed an inventory of the state-operated alternative-fueled vehicles (AFVs) by type and quantity as including the following:

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), 2,246; Electric, 101; Ethanol (E85), 2,938; Hybrid, 733; Propane, 128; Neighborhood Electric, 832; Hydrogen, 1.

The state’s initial focus has been on CNG “as the most feasible fuel at the time.” Its fueling network includes 59 CNG stations.

Six propane stations have been operated by the Department of Correctional Services but “future propane vehicles acquisitions and development of fueling stations will not

be pursued, as propane vehicles are no longer available from vehicle manufacturers,” according to the council.

A compelling factor in the establishment of the ATVs program was “the nationwide effort to reduce dependence on foreign sources of oil.” But AFVs are also credited, for the most part, with reducing air pollution and the emission of carbon dioxide, which has been associated with “climate change.”

The production and use of ethanol has been particularly dramatic. According to a research report by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADC), New York State used more than 300 million gallons of ethanol blended with gasoline in 2004, behind only California (900 million gallons) and Illinois (421 million gallons).

In 1996, 5 percent of corn grown in the nation was used for ethanol. “By 2006, that share grew to 17 percent and it may be up to 31 percent by 2016,” according to the NADC report.



Hydropower provides basis for clean production of hydrogen.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported an “incredible” 92.9 million acres of corn were planted in 2007... far exceeding the 90 million acres expected and up 19 percent from last year,” according to an Associated Press account.

The U.S. Department of Energy has reported, “One out of every eight gallons of gasoline sold contains ethanol, mostly as a blend of 10 percent ethanol and 90 percent gasoline, known as gasohol,” which does not require a modified engine. The department is “exploring ways to make ethanol from crop wastes like corn stover and switchgrass.”

The first “modern, state-of-the-art, dry mill ethanol plant” in New York State is planned in the Orleans County Town of Shelby. Congressman Thomas Reynolds said that the USDA would provide funding for road reconstruction around the plant. Another proposed ethanol plant, described as an “\$80 million project,” along the Buffalo River, has apparently been delayed because of environmental issues. Efficient access to rail and Interstate transportation is considered a critical factor in the location of ethanol plants.

The ethanol industry reportedly would like the government to allow sales of gas with up to 20 percent ethanol in non-modified engines, but the auto industry has resisted because of uncertainty about the effect on the engines.

Reservations have been expressed about ethanol, as well as other alternative fuels. Critics say that ethanol requires more energy to make than it produces and both production and combustion generate carbon-dioxide, although the emissions level from vehicles is lower than that for petroleum. Also “there may be a slight reduction” in miles per gallon with ethanol, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

A growing demand for corn has contributed to increased food prices, they add, and Audubon magazine published a report that blamed the agricultural shift to corn production for a

sharp decline in such field birds as the meadowlark and the bob white.

A Newsweek report asserted that the ethanol program “is mostly an income transfer from consumers to producers and ethanol refiners” and “Americans’ oil use and greenhouse gas output haven’t declined.”

The American Coalition for Ethanol declares that the price of fuel, not the corn market, is primarily responsible for more costly foods. It also



E 85 fueling site at Walden Thruway exit.

maintains that the carbon-dioxide byproduct of ethanol production is increasingly marketed for food processing and other purposes.

Ethanol advocates also argue that improving technology will significantly reduce the energy required for production. And they note that corn, the principal source of ethanol production in the United States, absorbs carbon dioxide as part of the process of photosynthesis that generates greenery.

The development of a technology for sequestering carbon dioxide, either for commercial uses or storage, is a major goal of the Bush administration’s research program on ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Praxair, Inc. technology center in Tonawanda has received a \$4.7 million grant through the U.S. Department of Energy’s clean-coal program. The

University at Buffalo is interested in creating an education and research center in carbon sequestration associated with regional projects.

Praxair, the “largest industrial gases company in North and South America,” and a leading supplier of hydrogen, has been a key regional player in what has been described as an emerging “hydrogen economy,” based upon a belief that hydrogen could offer an alternative to petroleum in the long term.

Praxair, which also has a plant in Niagara Falls, provided the hydrogen used for the Chevy “Sequel,” a hydrogen-fuel-celled vehicle developed at the General Motors Fuel Cell Activities Center at Honeoye Falls in Monroe County, near the Livingston County line. The center has also produced hydrogen-fuel-celled vehicles for the Army.

GM has described the “Sequel” as “the world’s most technologically advanced automobile.” It “became the first electrically-driven fuel cell vehicle to achieve 300 miles on one tank of hydrogen, in and out of traffic on public roads, while producing zero emissions.”

Bill Murphy, manager of energy business development at the Praxair technology center in Tonawanda, said the hydrogen from Niagara Falls was produced “with a minimum of carbon dioxide or none” through electrolysis and hydropower as a byproduct of chlorine production by the Olin and Occidental chemical plants. He said the liquid hydrogen from the Falls was shipped to a plant in Ashtabula, Ohio, where it was transformed into gaseous hydrogen and shipped to the GM center at Honeoye Falls for the Sequel.

A representative of Praxair was on the Steering Committee for development of a New York State “Hydrogen Roadmap” that envisioned Western New York as a possible hub for a future hydrogen economy.

Last year, the Pataki administration announced a \$21 million initiative in Western New York for hydrogen-fueled vehicles and two regional electrolysis

units for producing clean hydrogen.

An argument made against hydrogen is that its conventional production, from natural gas and other hydrocarbons, results in the release of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide. The regional accessibility of hydropower is perceived as an advantage toward developing a technologically advanced system of electrolysis to generate ultra-clean hydrogen from water.

Guy Sliker, program manager for the Research and Development Department of the New York Power Authority (NYPA), said that bids are being sought for construction of electrolysis facilities at Niagara Falls State Park and at the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's (NFTA) Frontier Bus Garage on Military Road in Kenmore. Sliker added that wind power is also a potential source of clean hydrogen.

A broad range of hydrogen vehicles and machines, including a hydrogen-fueled lawn mower, have been proposed as pilot projects for the park. And the NFTA, in a partnership with the NYPA, is expected to acquire two hydrogen buses under the National Fuel Cell Bus Program administered by the Federal Transit Administration. The buses were originally scheduled to go to the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, which apparently decided it was not ready to handle the project.

There is wide agreement that efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the production and fueling of hydrogen cell vehicles are major challenges before they become marketable.

New York State has leased a Honda FCX fuel-celled vehicle for use in the Albany area to test its ability to operate in cold weather.

Most experts don't see them becoming marketable before 2020. However, GM officials have said they expect regular drivers behind the wheel

in test areas within five or six years. Honda has set a 2010 goal for marketing of a fuel-celled car.

New York's "Hydrogen Roadmap" envisions a "Hydrogen Highway" across the state that appears to coincide with the Thruway. However, there are no plans for its implementation in the near future.

Murphy said that Praxair would be "ready in the long term to work through energy companies or other firms to pro-



GM's "Sequel" developed upstate.

vide hydrogen for fueling stations on a Hydrogen Highway."

"New York has great potential for a hydrogen highway," added David O'Connell, senior engineer at the GM Fuel Cell Activity Center in Honeoye Falls, which is 60 miles from Buffalo. "It is a long state with a Thruway that would be ideal." He said he wants his daughter Kelly's first car to be a fuel-cell vehicle.

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks has declared, "Fuel-cell development is one of the fastest growing emerging technologies in the world. As a hub for this activity, the Rochester region is well positioned to be a leader in the field."

Fuel cells take oxygen from the air and combine it with hydrogen to cause a chemical reaction that produces electricity and water. Many fuel cells stacked together are used to power a vehicle.

Raymond Kenard, president of American Wind Power & Hydrogen LLC (AWP&H), with headquarters in New York City, said that non-celled, hydrogen-fueled vehicles with conventional-type engines were more feasible

and economical in the shorter term. His firm is in a partnership with the University at Buffalo on a pilot project involving two hydrogen-fueled Toyota Prius hybrids.

Luke Rich, a regional business consultant, declared:

"Upstate New York, and particularly Western New York, is ideally suited to be a forerunner in the development of a hydrogen economy. The New York State Thruway provides over 500 miles of highway with strategically placed service stations that could be equipped for delivery of hydrogen to motor vehicles for use initially in internal combustion engines and eventually in fuel-cell equipped vehicles. It also boasts a source of some of the lowest cost hydrogen in North America.

"Hydrogen produced as a by-product of chlorine production in Niagara Falls is being processed for industrial use today. Because of the availability of low cost hydropower for this production the end cost of hydrogen production is low and the carbon footprint for its production is virtually non-existent. All that is needed to make this hydrogen highway a reality is forward thinking by government and industry."

However, Joseph Darling, who represented the New York State Department of Transportation on the Hydrogen Road Map Steering Committee, cautioned that continued government funding for hydrogen research was subject to the same political uncertainties as other programs.

Hydrogen is the most basic and primordial element. Most of the universe, and the stars and the sun, are made of hydrogen. In the sun, hydrogen atoms combine to generate a radiant energy that sustains life on earth. But because hydrogen gas is so light it is not drawn by the earth's magnetic field and occurs here only in combination with other elements.

Is 'aggressive driving' a cultural problem?

“Aggressive driving” is increasingly recognized as an enduring problem, perhaps with cultural roots, that poses a complex challenge for lawmakers and enforcement officers.

“Not only in America, but around the world,” legislators and law-enforcement agencies are struggling to control it, according to a report in the Transportation Review of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). It is a major cause of traffic fatalities and injuries.

The National Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines it as happening when “an individual commits a combination of moving traffic offenses so as to endanger other persons or property.”

These include: Tailgating, making obscene or rude gestures, changing lanes frequently and unnecessarily, passing other cars on the right or using the shoulder of the road to pass a stopped line of traffic, flashing headlights or honking horns to express displeasure, double parking, running through stop signs or red lights, speeding.

The NHTSA makes a distinction between aggressive driving and “road rage,” which typically involves “an assault with a motor vehicle or other dangerous weapon by the operator or passenger(s) of one vehicle on the operator or passenger(s) of another vehicle.” Road rage is a criminal offense.

The distinction is not always clear because the words are sometimes used interchangeably by the media and even by lawmakers. Some states have criminalized “aggressive driving.” And

sometimes “aggression” leads to “rage.”

An example was cited by the American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety: “Oscar winner Jack Nicholson believed that the driver of a Mercedes-Benz cut him off in traffic. The 57-year-old actor grabbed a golf club, stepped out of his car at a red light, and repeatedly struck the windshield and roof of the Mercedes.”

Another problem is that “behavior defined as aggressive by legislators is considered normal by everyday drivers,” according to the NCSL report. A 1999 survey of Los Angeles drivers “showed that 50 percent ... felt that speeding up for a yellow light was not aggressive behavior ... 53 percent felt blocking the passing lane was not aggressive and 36 percent did not consider tailgating aggressive.”

According to Sandra Ball-Rokeach of the Media and Injury Prevention Program at the University of Southern California, “Aggressive driving is now the most common way of driving. It’s not just a few crazies – it’s a subculture of driving.”

An NHTSA survey showed that more than 60 percent of drivers see unsafe driving by others as a major personal threat to themselves and their families but more than half admitted to driving aggressively themselves on occasion.

A 1988 AAA study found that “one in four Americans admits to driving aggressively, most commonly by speeding because they are running late.” Frustration with traffic congestion was frequently cited and 39 percent of the one

in four said they coped with it by “changing lanes excessively or running red lights and stop signs.”

A survey of Canadians showed 85 percent admitting to at least one act of aggressive driving during the past year. More than half of those surveyed admitted to running yellow lights turning red or speeding.

Diane Nahl, co-author with Leon James of, “Road Rage and Aggressive Driving: Steering Clear of Highway Warfare,” in a 2001 interview cited some of the cultural roots behind aggressive driving.

“Most drivers today were raised to have aggressive driving attitudes by parents and television, so these inculcated

behaviors are automatic and spontaneous. Few of us can claim to be free of hostile encounters when we drive. Mostly, the incidents don’t break out into the open or are ignored. We get used to them and consider them normal. But we run a risk each time....

“No one is going back to school to learn to be considerate, alert and safe on the road. Individuals can change the culture on the road by changing their own behavior. Changing from a competitive to a supportive driver requires persistent practice. ...

“The best way of protecting oneself from responding aggressively to provocative behavior is to be prepared in advance to avoid responding to presumed insults, negligence, discourtesy, disrespect or provocation. It’s critical to



remember the prime directive for drivers: Remain in control of the vehicle, the self and the situation.

“Men may fear that this strategy makes them appear weak. However, it is actually a position of strength because it does not increase risk to self and others on the road. Don’t try to make other drivers behave... This retaliatory behavior in seeking justice is even more dangerous because it increases risk for everyone.

“Furthermore, it is an ineffective strategy because inconsiderate or oblivious drivers do not improve their behavior as a result of someone trying to teach them a lesson.”

Nahl said that “perhaps at one time men did most of the aggressive driving but today this is no longer true.” She said that a web-based survey of 1,200 drivers of all ages from around the country and Canada found that men had a mean of 5.9 and women 5.4 on a driving aggressiveness scale of 1 to 10.

The NHTSA emphasizes that education and public awareness programs are “an important aspect of reducing aggressive driving,” along with programs for “keeping traffic moving.”

The New York State Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee, in a report several years ago, conceded: “Part of the problem may be the roads themselves. The roads are more crowded. The number of vehicle miles driven each year is up 35 percent in the past ten years and there are more vehicles on the roads. Yet the number of miles of roadway has increased by only 1 percent. Also, people are busier. Time is at a premium and road congestion causes frustration.”

The New York State Police have had an anti-aggressive driver program “without fanfare” since 1995, according to the report, and give these basic tips for dealing with an aggressive driver:

- Remain calm
- Keep your distance
- Do not pass unless you have to
- Change lanes once it is safe

(don’t jump lanes without looking)

- If you cannot change lanes and an aggressive driver is behind you, stay where you are, maintain the proper speed and do not “respond with hostile gestures”

- You may call 911 (or *911 from a cell phone) to report an aggressive driver or a driver you believe may be impaired

Motorists are cautioned to avoid behaviors that might turn aggression into rage. For example, “Data shows that aggressive drivers are particularly irritated by fender-benders with motorists who were talking on the phone.”

As of 2006, 11 states had adopted legislation related to aggressive driving. In Albany, several bills have been introduced but nothing has been adopted. They include a proposal for a “statewide

public-outreach campaign on the highway safety effects of aggressive driving” by the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee.

A memorandum in support of legislation declares: “According to New York State statistics, aggressive driving behaviors – unsafe lane changes, tailgating, failure to yield the right-of-way, disregard of traffic lights, etc. – are a contributing factor in 59 percent of all crashes and 60 percent of fatal crashes where a cause is attributed.”

Poem for Dad (from a daughter in Buffalo)

(This poem, written by a daughter concerned about her elderly father’s driving habits, was circulated at meeting of the Erie County Help Network, and is reprinted by permission of those involved. Names have been changed.)

There is a man named Stan
Who is a great family man.
A brother, a husband, a father
And grand pa
A great Uncle and friend as well.
55 White St. is his address
And Buffalo is his home.
He is a man who is handsome, smart and funny!
A man who listens to advice...even advice in
A silly poem! And advice from those who love
Him the most is the best advice of all!
So this advice comes from:
Brother Mark: “It’s time to let others, your children and me,
Drive you where ever you want!”
Ralph in Florida: “It’s time to let the car go!”
Son Jim in California: “It’s time to let family drive you
Around!”
Daughter Chris: “It’s time to let me drive you to town!”
Daughter Dani: “We love you lots, let us drive you!”
Daughter Ann: “We love you! Let me be your limo driver!
You can call on me!”
In other words!
We love you and will all drive you where ever you want to go! How lucky
you are to have children and family to take you around!
So Please say OK!
“I’ll let my family chauffer me to town!”
Bye Bye car payment-gas money-insurance money!
More money for me to have fun!!!”

All our love, Brother Mark, Ralph, Jim, Chris, Dani, and Ann

Struckle, original MPO staffer, has retired

Principal Transportation Analyst Douglas Struckle retired in late July from the GBNRTC after 33 years of service. He joined the staff in 1974, when it was known as the Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee. A year later Gov. Hugh Carey designated the NFTC as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Erie and Niagara Counties as mandated by Congress to bridge the growing gap between political jurisdictions and population and market expansions.



Douglas Struckle

Asked what he planned to do during retirement, Struckle replied:

“Enjoy time with friends and family for a while; hopefully do some traveling; possibly volunteer at the Humane Society or my veterinarian’s office. And wait for a snowstorm so I can enjoy not having to get up at 4 a.m. to shovel out the driveway and drive on snow-covered streets to get to work.”

Long Range Plan 2030 Project Clarification:

As a follow up to the LRP projects discussed in the Third Quarter Newsletter, it should be noted that relocation of the Williamsville Toll Barrier, and the proposed Youngs Road interchange are independent. The Toll Barrier is a currently active project; the interchange proposal is conceptual and subject to further study.

Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council

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GREATER BUFFALO-NIAGARA
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

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Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council

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Walter D. Zmuda - Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
Thomas E. Pericak - New York State Thruway Authority

Meeting Calendar

Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC)

meetings begin at 9:30 A.M.

November 7 Erie County

95 Franklin Street
Buffalo, New York

December 5 New York State Department of Transportation

100 Seneca Street
Buffalo, New York

January 2 Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority

181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, New York

Policy Committee

TBD

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

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