

**MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 1, 2007 MEETING OF THE
GREATER BUFFALO-NIAGARA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL
PLANNING AND COORDINATING COMMITTEE (PCC)**

A meeting of the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council Planning and Coordinating Committee was held on August 1, 2007 at the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, Buffalo, NY. The meeting began at approximately 9:35a.m.

The following GBNRTC-PCC Members or their representatives were present:

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| 1. Gary Gottlieb | NYSDOT |
| 2. Robert Gower | NFTA |
| 3. John Bidell | City of Buffalo |
| 4. Kevin O'Brien | County of Niagara |
| 5. Matthew Latko | NYSTA |
| 6. John Loffredo | County of Erie |
| 7. Robert Curtis | City of Niagara Falls |

Others present were:

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| 1. Hal Morse | GBNRTC |
| 2. Robert Wagner | GBNRTC |
| 3. Timothy Trabold | GBNRTC |
| 4. Ron Hayes | NYSDOT |
| 5. Gary Witulski | Buffalo OSP |
| 6. Charles Sickler | Erie County |
| 7. Richard Beers | FHWA |
| 8. Brian Moore | Bergmann Associates |
| 9. Kevin Miller | Bergmann Associates |
| 10. Jim Seymour | ESDC/USA Niagara |
| 11. Jonathan McNulty | Senator Mary Lou Rath |
| 12. Roy Schneggenburger | Citizen Lancaster/Bowmansville |
| 13. Thomas Frank | Village of Williamsville Committee |
| 14. Betty Cheteny | UB |
| 15. Bob Shibley | UB |
| 16. John G. Neidhart | AGC/FAIR |

I. PROCEEDINGS

A. Roll Call

Mr. O'Brien called the meeting to order at approximately 9:35 a.m. At the time of roll call, all members or their representatives were present.

B. Public Participation

Mr. Frank said that Williamsville was acting to coordinate its "heritage-corridor connections" plan with that of Amherst and the SUNY 2020 plan relative to the Niagara Greenway program and was "trying to mitigate some of the negative impact of the traffic on Main Street."

Mr. Schneggenburger, of Bowmansville, disputed the decision to focus on the southern part of town for the initial focus of a GBNRTC/Town of Lancaster analysis of traffic as related to development and land-use. He argued that the northern part of town, in Genesee Street and Transit Road areas, had more severe traffic issues. He asked that he and his associates be made aware of meetings held during the study.

C. Approval of Meeting Agenda (8/1/07)

Mr. Curtis moved to approve the meeting agenda, seconded by Mr. Loffredo, and all were in favor.

D. Approval of GBNRTC-PCC Meeting Minutes (6/6/07)

Mr. Gower moved to approve the meeting minutes of 6/6/07, seconded by Mr. Curtis, and all were in favor.

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. Disposition of Bicycle-Pedestrian Subcommittee

Mr. Trabold noted that the subcommittee's chairman, Greg Szewczyk of NYSDOT, had assembled a 'report card' analysis of the past year's subcommittee activities in comparison with mission objectives. Meeting accomplishments were also highlighted, as were areas in need of improvement. Suggestions were made to more actively engage the public by attending town board meetings, and visiting block and bike clubs. Members generally expressed satisfaction with the scope of meeting topics and had voted to recommend the subcommittee be reauthorized for another year in its current ad hoc status.

Mr. Gower expressed appreciation for the work done by Mr. Szewczyk, who had agreed to continue as chairman. Mr. Gottlieb suggested that it might be appropriate to rotate the chairman among the other members after this second year was complete.

Mr. Curtis moved to approve reauthorization of the Ad Hoc Bicycle-Pedestrian Subcommittee for another year, seconded by Mr. Gower and all were in favor.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Subcommittee Reports

Transportation Projects Subcommittee – Mr. Trabold reported that at the June 20th TPS meeting a discussion was held on the status of the eight projects being amended to the current TIP. He noted

that a public notification phase was on-going at the time and had since concluded with no public comments received. In addition, details of the 2008-2012 TIP were finalized and topics were covered relevant to preparation of the upcoming Policy Committee meeting. He added that the approved 2008-2012 TIP document was currently being printed and the next TPS meeting was scheduled for Aug. 15.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Subcommittee – Mr. Trabold stated that the last meeting was held on July 25, at which time there was a discussion of the annual report and an emergency walkout plan being proposed by NYSDOT’s Main Office. Mr. Trabold said they discussed the issues involved when “mobility by foot” was the best way to leave an area in a catastrophe. He added that the topic would likely be on the agenda again when the B-P Subcommittee meets next on Sept. 19th.

B. UB Master Plan – GBNRTC Interface

Mr. Morse introduced Robert Shibley and Elizabeth Cheteny to explain the University at Buffalo’s visionary plans for the future and the potential ties to GBNRTC in “transportation planning for a shared future.” Professor Shibley, senior adviser to UB President John Simpson for campus planning and design, and Ms. Cheteny, director of planning at the UB Urban Design Project, outlined a “comprehensive physical plan for UB to become a model ‘21st Century University” with 10,000 more students and 1,000 more faculty over the coming years, a growth of 40 percent. This growth would help to bring about the critical mass, they indicted, that would facilitate a level of government investment to enhance UB’s role as a center for academic excellence and research. “A greater university makes a greater community,” Professor Shibley declared.

A “guiding principle” would be to “promote a united and accessible university campus with three strong distinctive and seamlessly inter-connected centers (North Campus, South Campus, UB Downtown [‘BNMC and more’]) designed to facilitate social interaction.” Others would include establishing UB “as a leader in environmental stewardship and sustainable development” and to “reflect the university’s responsibility to the community by respecting and being shaped, in part, by public plans and policies.”

Ms. Cheteny noted that the North and South Campuses combined had a land area of 1,346 acres, 38 miles of road, 28 miles of walkway and 98 parking lots. She reported that the current UB population of 40,000 students, faculty and staff required 16,725 parking spaces, and that 70 percent of students were issued parking permits (with mainly one occupant per vehicle), 73 percent of them lived off campus, and there were 20,000 daily weekday boardings on UB buses when classes were in session. If a similar pattern persisted to 2020, Professor Shibley suggested, it would show that the university had failed to meet its transportation goals.

The speakers noted that the GBNRTC Long Range Plan included a reference to an “Amherst Corridor High Quality Transit Improvement” that would “connect the largest educational institution in the region with downtown Buffalo.” They asked the PCC to determine “what’s the best way for UB to participate in transportation planning?” Ms. Cheteny observed, “UB is a big part of the regional economy and regional employment.” Suggestions included membership in an existing or new committee, and a stakeholder or advisory role.

It was agreed that the GBNRTC’s Administrative Subcommittee would consider the issue and make a recommendation. There have also been on-going talks with the NFTA And Mr. Gottlieb indicated that NYSDOT would be holding talks with the UB representatives.

Mr. Curtis commented, “It’s wonderful that UB has come to us. I think they have some great assets that we can take advantage of. It would be another strong voice in Albany for this region and also I think at the national level. Let’s get them part of this group.”

Mr. Schneggenburger intervened to praise the UB presentation and asked how he could keep himself and his grandchildren informed of the university's progress. Professor Shibley advised him of the various sources of information.

C. Policy Committee Summary of June 22, 2007 Meeting

Mr. Morse noted that final approval had been given to the Long-Range Plan and the 2008-2012 TIP in accord with the July 1 deadline and other regulations in SAFETEA-LU. It was "an ambitious TIP with several hundred projects." Priority projects that had been started a couple years ago have been reviewed, he said, and "several are done or in the pipeline ... and so we'll take the plan and break that down and look for the next projects we want to get some focus on and might need some help with."

D. New TIP-LRP: Next Steps

The documents "themselves are in good shape," Mr. Morse explained, and "unlimited CDs are available." The conformity approval was received "just yesterday" and "that's very important, in terms of air quality, for both the plan and the TIP." He added, "We also reviewed the state's draft STIP ... to make sure it was consistent with projects in the TIP." A few "discontinuities" were found and "we resolved them." He said it was vital to keep projects under review to "make sure we'll have sufficient funds that are in the pipeline ... or alert Albany and determine what can we do about it or what we want to do with the project."

With respect to the LRP, "What we want to do is take the big projects identified in there and start to sequence them" ... and determine what has to happen, what studies might be needed, etc., for them to be realized, and start to stage the early projects for the next TIP cycle and then "pick new projects" to focus upon.

E. Freight Study Status and Early Deliverables

Mr. Morse reported that Wilbur Smith Associates, the consulting firm for the freight study, funded by \$600,000 in federal funding, administered through the state, had delivered the first two technical reports at a recent meeting of the Steering Committee. In the next few months, he said, "we'll be getting into analysis, capacity needs, recommendations, and things of that nature."

He said the consultants, in the initial reports, had done "a considerable amount of analysis in terms of competitive advantages and industry profiles, U.S. trade growth, how we stack up, why we are increasingly a trading nation, commodity movements by vector, the need for multi-modal transportation, etc."

Mr. Morse took note of an "EDGE Framework" analysis, which was in their contract, "to give us a good profile of advantages and disadvantages in competitive benchmarking and the impacts of connectivity." Some other regions, Detroit for instance, are also "benchmarked." He said the analysis looks "at our own employment mix, compared to others, where we were under performing, compared to some benchmarking industries, where we were above average in performance, where we were uneven in terms of performance, competitive advantages and disadvantages, and some factors limiting economic growth."

A "preliminary traffic" report, he said, provides "some good understanding of commodity movements, particularly truck."

On aviation, the analysis provides some early numbers, showing strengths and weaknesses that would be useful also for the NFTA Planning Committee and the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership.

The analysis of strengths and weaknesses on railroad facilities, he said, showed "some pretty good infrastructure and some emerging inter-modal opportunities."

There's "a pretty good workup," he said, in a preliminary report on highways traffic, "in terms of base conditions," but more would be forthcoming on deficiency analysis and network connectivity, for example. He said the next phases of the study would consider such issues as: Are we impacting economic growth by capacity constraints and what projects do we really need?

Also provided, is a "cross-border infrastructure workup" that included an analysis of institutional capacity by "individual mode."

Future steps would include access to NYSDOT data, forecasts that were critical to a needs analysis, establishment of a Freight Advisory Committee, identification of opportunities and strategic directions.

F. Regional Transportation Model Initiatives

Mr. Morse explained how the TransCAD model for highways analysis was being continuously improved with the incorporation of toll changes and other new data. He said also that State Planning and Research Funds are being made available to help in building operation simulation capabilities in major corridors for integration into the Regional Travel Model to "help us with traffic management."

He also noted that the FHWA had "offered us" and was implementing a separate initiative, TRANSIMS, in the region at no charge locally, "other than our support of it." It provides "another tool with different capabilities" in highlighting border and truck traffic. "It kind of plays into some of the things we've been doing" ... "we've been working with them, giving them all the data they need or at least that we have" and ... "we'll be able to retain it here and our guys will be able to run it then." The initial scoping study has been done, he said, and "they expect the full model development employment here."

Mr. Morse also reported on other places in the county that had been selected for TRANSIMS and ways in which it was being used so that "as we progress and have this available we can look at how we might use it." He reported on its use for traffic problems around the White House in Washington D.C., an evacuation scenario in Chicago, Louisiana State University for hurricane planning, and for transit issues in the Portland area.

G. Regional Ridesharing Program and Outreach

"Good Going" is "up and running, we have constant use, and it is working well" but "we're trying to get it more widespread." Outreach is being done, Mr. Morse said, with a lot of speaking engagements, collaboration with NFTA, contact with a lot of human resources managers in the larger companies, and "bit by bit we're trying to get out to them." He added, "We're considering a media campaign." Advertising, on radio or TV or through business outreach, was being done in other parts of the country," he observed.

H. MPO Planning Video

Mr. Morse concluded by showing a "quite interesting" 10-minute planning video that Mr. Mecca had brought back recently from an MPO planning meeting.

IV. STATUS REPORTS/INFORMATION

A. Member Agency Reports

Mr. Gower reported that NFTA had just taken delivery on 13 hybrid buses and that a public workshop would be held Aug. 22 in Niagara Falls "as we begin to restructure our service there" and was collaborating with the GBNRTC staff on transit planning.

Mr. Curtis announced that the City of Niagara Falls would be holding a ribbon-cutting ceremony the next day for the opening of Old Falls Street, where the “streetscape was recently completed.” He added, “The street looks great so if you get a chance please come up and take a look at it.”

Mr. Gottlieb reported that Schenectady would be hosting a land use and transportation conference in October.

Mr. O’Brien reported, “In Niagara County we’ve got all our projects that were scheduled for this year off and running and we’re very pleased. In these last few years, at least, it’s been my experience that once we get on the street these days it’s been a lot smoother than it was back when we started this whole thing...”

Mr. Loffredo and Mr. Latko had nothing to report. Mr. Bidell “had to leave early because big day for the City of Buffalo in getting the Main Street Phase Two projects bid opening,” according to Mr. O’Brien.

(Mr. Beers of the FHWA later reported that Mr. Robert Arnold would no longer be the New York Division Administrator. He has accepted the position of FHWA director of transportation operations. Ms Amy Jackson-Grove will be acting administrator of the New York Division starting Sept. 4, he said.)

B. Director’s Report

Mr. Morse said a meeting was held recently with Erie County’s IDAs to discuss concepts associated with the Framework for Growth initiative for trying to get everybody talking together and working together on land use and the transportation infrastructure, “so they could think about how they might work better together...”

“Voice Buffalo,” he said, had met with GBNRTC “to discuss how our TIP lines up with sprawl policies, etc.” and were “shown GIS overlays of all our projects and the Framework for Growth” and “they walked away saying we should continue to work together and make sure we’re on the same page.”

He said that he met recently with the Niagara County Legislature to explain the ridesharing program “and they appeared pretty interested.” The program might provide a transportation opportunity for employees of a planned bank expansion in a fairly rural area of the county, he indicated.

The GBNRTC is also participating in five walkable communities outreach initiatives in the last couple of weeks, he said.

Thirty thousand interviews were conducted as part of MTO’s recently completed survey at the four international bridge crossings in the region, Mr. Morse reported. “And we’re going to work with them on geo-coding some of the information, having that available for a lot of the planning focuses.”

On the Lancaster traffic study, “the town has been bringing us proposed developments and we’re off to help them analyze what’s going on in terms of traffic there.”

On other traffic studies, Mr. Morse reported: “We’ve completed recently a review of what we’d earlier done on Exit 49 and we’re going to meet with the Thruway staff to walk them through that. They’ve also asked for some projections on I-90 for a project there.... I mentioned last month that East Aurora had asked us to look at parking and traffic on a proposed ice rink. We did a quick analysis on that that we turned over. ... And subsequent to that Clarence has also asked if we could look at some small developments and impacts in the town ...”

He added that early next year, the GBNRTC would be approving a new budget and work program for the next two years and the members would be asked to consider what might be coming up in the overall planning needs of the MPO area.

Finally, he noted that “our last original MPO staffer,” Douglas Struckle, was retiring and “yesterday was his last day.” He added that he will be reviewing with the Executive Committee the GBNRTC’s financial status and staffing needs in terms of the work program.

He noted that NYSDOT had “generously offered” state planning and research funds for several initiatives, including the “regional simulation capability that we’re going to build up with our model.”

Mr. O’Brien noted that the next meeting is scheduled for September 5, 2007 at Buffalo City Hall.

Mr. Loffredo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 a.m., seconded by Mr. Gottlieb, and all were in favor.