

TRANSFORMING AMERICA'S EDGE CITIES

In October, RPA, along with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, held a two-day roundtable which focused on ways that America's "edge cities" can be transformed into mixed-use, pedestrian- and transit-oriented centers, with significant capacity for growth. The goal was to identify a set of desired outcomes for these places—including new mixes of activities. The roundtable focused on new urban design features required to create a stronger sense of place and new transportation systems needed to decrease traffic congestion and increase the potential for pedestrian circulation and transit use in edge cities.

Since America's interstate highway system was initiated almost half a century ago, most of the nation's employment services and retail activities have developed around the metropolitan arterials and beltways. In the early 1960s, major intersections on metropolitan beltways became the site of new shopping malls. Eventually, suburban office parks began to cluster around these new retail centers. In many cases, these were followed by even larger enclosed malls, multiplex cinemas and other entertainment venues interspersed with strip malls containing every imaginable service and retail function.

By the late 1980s, many of these places had taken on most of the attributes of traditional urban centers, although activities in these

places remained strictly segregated. Southfield, Michigan for example, surpassed nearby Detroit as the region's largest employment center. In regions across the country, employment and retail activities in edge cities exceeded those of nearby center cities. And in an area that became known as "Uptown Houston," the 40+ story Transco Tower and other office towers created a skyline that rivaled that of downtown—more than a dozen miles to the east.

In 1988, Washington Post journalist Joel Garreau introduced the term "edge city" to describe these places. Garreau asserted that these were in fact the next American cities—uniquely suited to the nation's late 20th century transportation, communications and economic systems. He went on to argue that although these places had a lot of rough edges, it was simply a product of their relative youth. In time, he said, these places would mature into centers with a unique sense of place and dynamic mix of activities and institutions.

Since then, edge cities across the country have become increasingly congested. Accessible only by automobiles, many of these places are reaching the carrying capacity limits of their roadway systems. For this reason, a growing number of edge cities have essentially "built out" despite having exceedingly low development densities.

In addition, many of these places have been bypassed by growth of "new economy" activities and its associated "24/7" lifestyle. The information technology and related industries are driven by young entrepreneurs and skilled workers. These groups are interested in living and working in more traditional urban centers, including downtown New York, Boston and San Francisco, with their opportunities for live-work settings, active entertainment, street life and other urban attributes.

Finally, frustrated by increasing congestion, many employers are seeking locations on greenfield sites ten or more miles farther out from the beltways, creating what Robert Lang at the Fannie May Foundation has called "edgeless cities." These places are developing at even lower densities and with even stronger separations between uses than the edge cities that developed a generation or two earlier.

In response to all these trends, RPA and Lincoln Institute have begun to investigate strategies that could be used to transform edge cities. RPA developed a master plan for New Jersey's Somerset Regional Center, which plans included new in-fill development connecting the existing concentrations of activity; strip highways turned into suburban boulevards; and an integrated system of greenways coursing through the neighborhoods. RPA has also developed a concept plan for transforming Long Island's Nassau Hub area by building a new light rail transit system and by creating mixed-use development areas around the stations on this system.

A national workshop will be held in Florida on this subject in the spring of 2001, utilizing the conclusions emerging from the Roundtable and later incorporated into a handbook for transforming edge cities. •

For more information contact RPA's Director of Design Programs, Rob Lane at 212-253-2727 x326, or send an email to lane@rpa.org.

RPA's proposal for Long Island's Nassau Hub.

Blueprint

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William S. Woodside, former Chairman of Sky Chefs, Inc., and former RPA Chair passed away in November. Among his achievements was his leadership in the efforts to revitalize the Downtown Brooklyn area. He chaired RPA's board from 1980 through 1989.

Charles A. Bauer, Office Managing Partner, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, LLP; **Richard W. Lloyd**, Regional Director, State Government Affairs, Johnson & Johnson, and **Richard T. Roberts**, President, Urban Investment Group, Goldman Sachs & Company, have been elected to **RPA's Board of Directors**.

After 21 years of dedicated service to RPA, **Marian Heiskell** has retired from the Board of Directors. Marian was a tireless and effective advocate for park, open space and conservation issues for more than 30 years. Utilizing her unparalleled network of contacts and providing crucial and timely financial support, Marian was a key catalyst in building the constituency to make Gateway National Park—one her most notable accomplishment and one of RPA's landmark successes—a reality in 1972. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Marian worked with Lady Bird Johnson and former Board Member Eleanor Todd on open space and beautification projects. In November, RPA hosted a dinner in honor of Mrs. Heiskell's commitment to RPA and the Region.

RPA Blueprint

The Newsletter of Regional Plan Association

Winter 2001

A TRANSPORTATION TALE OF THREE STATES

IN THIS ISSUE:

- RPA's New Director of Development
- Transforming America's Edge Cities

The November 2000 election season produced a mixed bag of winners and losers in the transportation sweepstakes. In New Jersey, voters passed the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund by an overwhelming margin. New York State voters, however, had a less favorable response to their transportation needs. The \$3.8 billion Transportation Bond Act was rejected by a narrow majority of 150,000 votes, or a 51-49 split. And in Connecticut, where no transportation item was on the ballot, a Governor's Transportation Summit appears to be leading somewhere positive.

After years of being one of the lowest priorities, transportation issues have increasingly begun to matter politically. This change can be traced in large measure to

widespread and near continuous highway congestion—a product of sprawl and affluence. Where drivers once owned the open road, they must now experience daily maddening slowdowns as volumes have doubled in a generation. Also, midday, evening or weekend travel is no longer immune to the road crush.

Meanwhile, the welcome growth in transit ridership has exposed the policy of the last generation of service contraction and neglect of needed system expansion. On the subways, mob-like groups overflow platforms as riders jockey for the open train door. City buses leave many standing, and commuter rail trains—once a haven of civility—leave many riders in the aisles or between cars.

New Jersey

In November, New Jersey voted by a 2-to-1 margin to extend the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund by four years. The Fund dedicates money from existing taxes for transportation purposes and limits the amounts obtained from borrowing. The extension is worth \$3.75 billion. Most welcome are the reforms embodied in the legislation that accompanied the referendum, which were fought for by the Tri-state Transportation Campaign, a consortium of transportation and environmental groups which includes RPA. These reforms include:

- a fix-it first policy for highway spending which will shift funding

A subway platform undergoing improvements.

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A Tale of Three States

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away from new highway capacity and towards repairs for aging roads and bridges;

- specific goals for bridge repairs to overcome a backlog of deficient maintenance;
- a prohibition on new or expanded highways, unless specifically approved by the State Legislature;
- a timetable for NJ TRANSIT's purchase of cleaner buses;
- the expansion of the bicycle path network;
- an annual requirement of a five-year capital investment strategy by both NJ TRANSIT and NJDOT to be reported to the State Legislature; and
- the establishment of a Congestion Buster Task Force that will recommend means of reducing congestion to 1999 levels through transit and demand management measures.

Taken together, these reforms hold the potential to dampen sprawl in New Jersey by redirecting transportation spending toward the needs of already developed parts of the state, and by encouraging investment in transit.

New York

Last March, Governor Pataki and the State Legislature proposed a \$34.2 billion five-year transportation investment agenda that would be evenly divided between the MTA and the NYSDOT highway system. The \$17.1 billion MTA Capital program would have provided for the continuation of the state-of-good-repair program that has been restoring the system over the last 20 years. It called for new signals, clean fuel buses and the first major expansion programs in three generations, including the full-length Second Avenue subway and the connection of the Long Island Rail Road to Grand Central Terminal. Critical was the issuance of \$1.6 billion in State general obligation bonds coming from the \$3.8 billion bond act that the state's voters were asked to approve on November 7th.

This ambitious investment

program was also to be supported by approximately \$5 billion in federal funds—\$530 million from New York City and \$700 million from miscellaneous sources. The remaining \$7.3 billion would have come from new MTA revenue bonds, and \$3 billion in new funds that would be realized from the refinancing of the MTA's pre-existing bonds.

Many had serious misgivings about this financing proposal, because the huge debt burden would be backed by the farebox. The refinancing would consume much of the MTA's capacity to issue new bonds for the next 20 years, and would leave the system vulnerable to a fiscal crisis if ridership dropped during a recession. This raised serious questions about whether the MTA would be able to meet its long term capital needs, which it estimates at \$57 billion over 20 years for state of good repair and normal replacement, plus at least \$20 billion for system expansion.

However, despite these misgivings, many organizations including RPA supported the bond issue that was to be such an integral part of the financing plan. The prospect of funds for so many worthy projects was decisive in RPA's thinking.

The votes made the misgivings about the financing plan moot—they rejected the Bond Act. The geographic variation in support of the Act was apparent. New York

City voters supported it by a 3-to-1 margin, its suburbs by 6-to-4, but upstate, it was rejected 3-to-2. A major reason it failed could be traced to the poor placement on the ballot in New York City and its prominence on ballots upstate. It also failed because of the lack of interest shown by the Governor or members of the State Legislature in campaigning for their own plan. Also, Mayor Giuliani initially gave tepid support, and near Election Day, pronounced that it did nothing for New York City.

The Bond Act's defeat automatically reopens both the MTA and NYSDOT programs, which must now be renegotiated. In the face of declarations by State Legislative leaders that new taxes are off the table, it would appear that the level of funding for transportation is not likely to reach that proposed in the original financing plan. The issue will be taken up early in 2001, as funding for both New York State highways and the MTA will soon be facing depletion. The Governor and the Legislature must look for a package of financing options that distributes an increased burden fairly among all of the beneficiaries of improved transportation service, while respecting the geographically differentiated wishes of the voters.

Connecticut

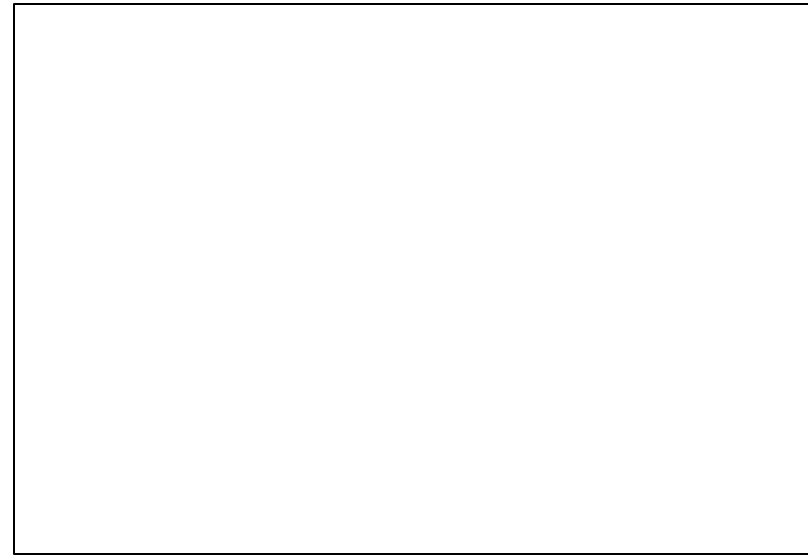
Stating that a seriously inadequate transportation system is "crippling the state,"

Connecticut's Governor John G. Rowland vowed, "We can fix this problem." The Governor was the keynote speaker at a statewide Transportation 2000 Summit, proposed and organized last fall by Connecticut House Speaker Moira Lyons of Stamford. The Governor challenged the state to make the necessary investments in a statewide system that improves the state's economy and enhances the quality of life for Connecticut residents.

The summit was organized around the presentations of three working groups, convened prior to the summit to set the agenda. The first committee, 'Sustainable Growth through Transportation' explored ways to improve the decision-making process to allow for more strategic choices regarding transportation improvements. The second group, 'Transportation, Freight and Commuter Movement' focused its attention on short-term improvements that should be put in place quickly. Lastly, the 'Strategic Collaborations in Transportation Decisions' committee sought measures to relieve the heavily congested sections of Interstate 95 in the southwestern part of the state.

RPA Senior Fellow for Transportation, Jeffrey Zupan, was retained as one of the consultants to the Summit. "Connecticut has finally realized its economic future is being choked by traffic. Relief will require a host of solutions—some can be done easily and cheaply, but most will require significant political will and capital investment. Time will tell if this Summit is a turning point or another false start," said Zupan.

The summit concluded with participants offering several solutions, including: a new fleet of commuter trains; expanded parking at stations and possibly new stations to relieve the parking crunch; better bus connections to waterborne freight along Long Island Sound to reduce truck traffic; more vigorous promotion of flextime; telecommuting and ridesharing; re-establishment of rail service from New Haven to Hartford and Springfield, Massachusetts; and high-speed commuter ferries. The



Clean-fuel buses are part of the proposed MTA Capital program.

magnitude of such solutions would be costly, but specifics on where the funds would come from was sidestepped.

Speaker Lyons was hopeful that residents would be willing to accept higher transportation fees knowing that Connecticut's severe congestion problems would be eased and that the health of the state's economy was at stake. The use of variable time-of-day pricing on roadways, a position RPA has long advocated, was introduced, but ruled out by Governor Rowland in comments made after the Summit.

Several participants observed that many of Connecticut's transportation concerns involve adjoining states, such as the movement of interstate freight and better passenger rail connections to Amtrak and the Tri-state area's rail systems. The Governor declared that he would place regional transportation issues as a top priority with the New England Governors' Council.

Within days of the Transportation 2000 Summit, Governor Rowland and Speaker Lyons announced the appointment of a 13-member public-private sector Transportation Strategy Board. It has been charged with developing recommendations for a new approach to state transportation governance, integrating the departments of transportation, planning and economic

development. Its recommendations will be forwarded to the Governor and the General Assembly by February 2001.

The Governor also announced that the state would institute a transit pass program for its employees and would step up traffic enforcement in I-95 during peak hours.

RPA will continue its efforts in all three states to meet the region's growing mobility needs. Specific goals in the coming year include: developing a financing strategy for unfunded elements of the MTA's capital program; steering the MTA planning program to consider later phases of MetroLink; expanding implementation of value pricing to the Tappan Zee Bridge and the MTA bridges and tunnels; and developing and promoting recommendations to address critical transit needs in three underserved markets—the Brooklyn waterfront, Long Island and Staten Island. •

For questions concerning RPA's current mobility efforts, contact Steve Weber at weber@rpa.org, or call 212-253-2727 x303.

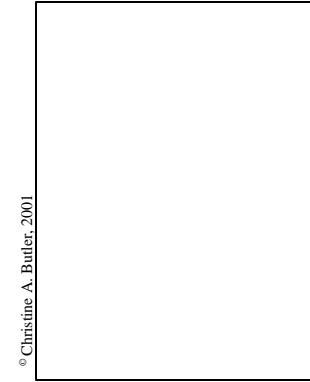
QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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WILLIAM S. MCCHESENEY, JR. JOINS RPA AS NEW DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT



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William S. McChesney, Jr., a former senior vice president at Chase Manhattan Bank who has been active in not-for-profit organizations, has joined RPA as Director of Development, where he will head RPA's fundraising efforts.

Bill served as Field Office Director for the New Jersey office of the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national land conservation organization, from 1996–1999. He focused on fundraising and market building, raising over \$3,000,000 from foundations, individuals and

businesses while protecting 2,500 acres of land in 21 separate projects. McChesney has also worked as a volunteer focusing on development and fundraising for several organizations including Historic Speedwell, the Harding Land Trust and Morris 2000.

"We are extremely fortunate at RPA to have a person with Bill's corporate and not-for-profit experience join us," said H. Claude Shostal, RPA President. "Bill contacted us because he shares our passion to improve the quality of life and economy in the Tri-state region. He has dedicated himself to bettering and serving the communities in which he's lived—a perfect fit for the RPA mission."

Bill has spent most of his life in the region. Born in New York City, he attended the Choate School in Connecticut, received a B.A. in history from Princeton University and an M.B.A. in marketing from the Columbia Graduate School of Business. •

You may contact Bill at 212.253.2727

RPA RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING GRANTS TO SUPPORT SPECIAL PROJECTS:
Sullivan & Cromwell, \$5,000 ... **Shearman & Sterling**, \$5,000 ... **Tri-State Transportation Campaign**, \$15,000 ... **The Scudder Charitable Trust**, \$5,000 ... **Peter W. Herman, Esq.**, \$5,000 ... **Steven Beckwith**, \$5,000 ... **Bell Atlantic**, \$5,000 ... **Smeal Trust**, \$35,000 ... **Rauch Foundation**, \$35,000 ... **The State of New Jersey**, \$10,000 ... **New York Times Foundation**, \$10,000 ... **New York City Partnership**, \$1,000 ... **The Philanthropic Foundation**, \$2,500 ... **The Joelson Foundation**, \$2,500 ... **The Sulzberger Foundation**, \$2,500.

THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES CONTINUED THEIR SUPPORT BY MAKING LEADERSHIP GRANTS:
KPMG, \$25,000 ... **New York Life Foundation**, \$27,500 ... **Keyspan Energy**, \$25,000 ... **Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation**, \$35,000 ... **Johnson & Johnson Corp.**, \$30,000 ... **Verizon**, \$25,000.

Thank you!

RE-ENGINEERING THE REGION'S CENTERS

**RPA's 11th
Regional Assembly**
April 27, 2001
the Grand Hyatt New York

**Keynote Speaker
RICHARD FLORIDA**

*H. John Heinz III Professor of
Regional Economic
Development*

Carnegie Mellon University
Heinz School of Public Policy
and Management

**Luncheon Speaker
BOB KERREY**

*President
New School University*

Across the Tri-state Region, large and small urban and suburban centers are reinventing themselves—creating new economic foundations and new relationships with the larger Tri-state economy. These centers are emerging as engines of the Region's fast growing "new economy" sectors and as the key assets in the effort to contain sprawl.

The Regional Assembly will bring together public and private sector leaders who have been working to transform the Region's centers. Workshops include: Midtown West; Long Island City; Community Planning and Regional Centers; Building Healthy Communities; Affordable Housing; Reinventing Downtowns; Infrastructure and Investment in the NY/NJ Harbor; and Transit-Friendly Communities.

Join us as we examine the success that a number of centers have already had, and ways that other places can learn from their experiences.

For more information, call 212-253-2727 x309 or visit our website at www.rpa.org/regionalassembly.

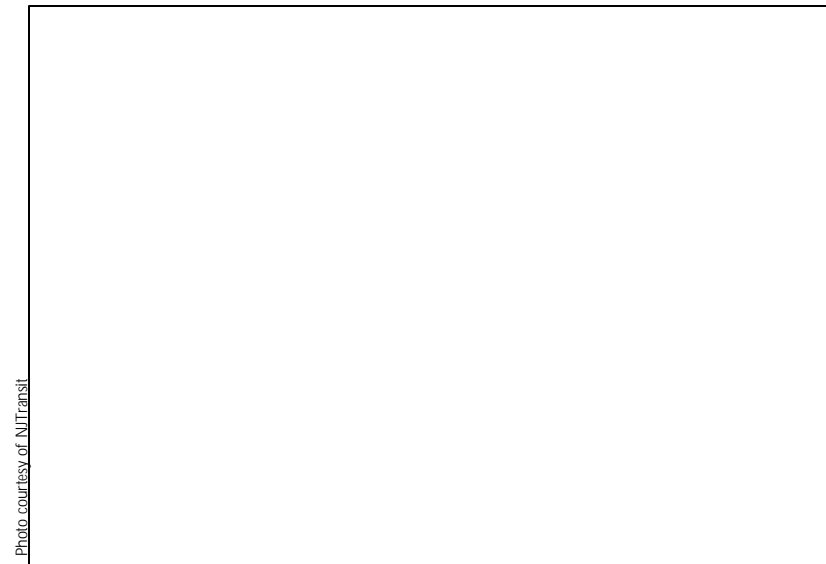


Photo courtesy of NJ Transit

A NJ Transit project: the renovation of the Hamilton Station along the Northeast Corridor.