One Region Forward
Transportation and Mobility
Working Team Notes
Meeting 2, May 9, 2013

Working Team Members in Attendance:
Eric Schmarder, City of Buffalo
Justin Booth, GO Bike Buffalo
Paul Tronolone, USA Niagara
Jordana Maisel, IDEA Center UB
Jack Ampuja, Supply Chain Optimizers, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Niagara University
Jenny Laughlin, NFTA-METRO
Matt Hartrich, Buffalo Niagara Partnership
Creighton Randall, Buffalo CarShare
James Bender, Hearts and Hands: Faith in Action
Mike Leydecker, WENDEL Companies
Darren Kempner, NFTA-METRO
Brian Kulpa, Village of Williamsville
Douglas J. Funke, Citizens for Regional Transit
Brenda O’Neill, Southtowns Rural Transit Corporation Inc.

Facilitators:
Kelly Dixon, GBNRTC
Paul Ray, UB Regional Institute

Note takers:
Teresa Bosch de Celis, UB Regional Institute
Daryl Ryan, UB Regional Institute

Presentation

Introduction:

K. Dixon:

Opens the Meeting; gives overview of the tasks for today; Reminds the working team of why we are meeting; Goes over the schedule of future meetings.

Recap of meeting #1: Review of key issues of our transportation infrastructure; Wrap up with the draft set of goals; Identification of Gaps and Data of Information; More demographics, financial outlook going forward, bi-national cross boarder passenger and freight movements.

Revised Draft Goals

Key points that came out of the discussion in meeting #1
Safety and affordability were key themes that were mentioned.

- **Goal #1** – incorporate health and affordability.
- **Goal #2** – specifically call out multi-modal transportation, VMT added.
- **Goal #3** – the need to maintain and invest in infrastructure to make biking and walking safe modes of transport was added to the goal – as related to “complete streets.”
- **Goal #4** Importance of freight and passenger rail service available added.
- **Goal #5** – Increase in collaboration and cooperation between governments and the need to incorporate life cycle costs into long term decision making was added.

**Reactions from the Group**

- When we talk about multi-modal and so forth, we need to have integration across modes, e.g. light rail to the airport, connections between different modal systems that can work together. (D. Funke)
- We need to make sure that we don’t start circumventing the communities in between the downtown and airport. Don’t bypass Eggertsville to get to North Campus. (B. Kulpa)
- There is a growing non-profit community that is playing the role of service provider. Collaboration should include them, too. (C. Randall)
- We don’t say anything about connecting transportation to economic development strategies. Also, we need to upgrade existing infrastructure before creating new infrastructure elsewhere. (P. Tronolone)
- We can’t forget about Niagara Falls. We need to get tourists from there to Buffalo. (D. Funke)
- Add economic development to Goal 1. (M. Leydecker)
- Promote Smart Growth. That’s pretty much the whole thing anyway. (Tronolone)

**Goal 2:**

- You could add intermodal connections and reduces VMT. (M. Leydecker)

**Goal 3:**

- It’s a matter of “getting out in front of it” on complete streets. We need to identify and target corridors of appropriate character to preserve – streets with transit service, pedestrian scale, and residential character. Look at places you want to preserve, and transit is part of that. We can’t have light rail running up every street in Buffalo, but we can have other elements that hit all the activity centers in between the airport and downtown. Decide where to support growth, get ahead of the movement and plan holistically. (M. Leydecker)
- We can do a lot with a little money on complete streets. But we need to educate elected officials and public works staff about the opportunities. (B. Kulpa)
- Buffalo Green Code did a good job and coming up with the types of corridors, but now we need to classify each type of corridor according to the code. E.g. Elmwood Ave. is a type B corridor. (Leydecker)

- Evaluate what’s already built and make decisions based on evidence of what works (J. Maisel)

- The City of Buffalo is trying to build connections that make sense. (E. Schmarder)

- Expand Goal #3 instead of just promoting complete streets. (M. Leydecker)

- We need Transit Oriented Development (D. Funke)

Goal 4:

- This is the all-encompassing goal. As a goal it is a very good decision making point. What is driving the transportation system, not what is driving everything else? (M. Leydecker)

- Who invests and who will maintain? That’s a key issue. (D. Funke)

- It’s not just the public sector, but the private as well. (J. Booth)

- We need to look at this from both sides, what does a business need to locate somewhere, and what do we need to build the infrastructure to accommodate all. (E. Schmarder)

- We need to have dedicated right of way for passenger rail. (C. Randall)

- Keep in mind two large events happening elsewhere: 1. Canadian investment in port facilities at Prince Rupert, which will see freight shipped by rail from Vancouver to Toronto and by truck from Toronto to Buffalo and (2) a third alley on the Panama Canal with less freight to the West Coast and more to Port of Ny/NJ and potentially on to Buffalo by rail for distribution. (J. Ampuja)

- We might want a goal that connects our infrastructure to North America and the world. (B. Kulpa)

- The Letchworth Bridge is a key investment – still to be funded. It’s inadequate now. Will be even more so with the growth in freight. (They get out of the train and walk it across?) The issue with double-decking (?) is resolved. But Buffalo to Toronto infrastructure remains inadequate. Current routing sends NY/NJ freight to Binghamton, to Selkirk, to Albany, to Montreal and THEN Toronto. (Ampuja)

- Unfortunately, we only have one freight bridge across the Niagara River. Whirlpool is now passenger traffic only. (M. Leydecker)

- We need to invest in our transit infrastructure as well as freight and passenger. (D. Funke)

- Don’t forget about air freight. (D. Kempner)

Goal 5:
We need to get not for profit and private sectors involved in the planning. (M. Leydecker)

Private sector financing is key. We need to clarify public private partnerships – who is allowed to do them. (Design build allowed only recently). Need innovative financing and alternative funding sources. Not sure the motor fuel tax goes to transport. What about a VMT tax? A carbon tax? (M. Leydecker)

Looking at goals in other areas, we should address the impact of infrastructure on water quality. (J. Booth)

**Brainstorming Session: Alternative Futures**

The working group considered the future of transportation and our region under three general populations scenarios – continued shrinkage, modest growth, or substantial growth.

**Shrinking**

- We know what we would like to see: transit expansion, light rail, better service, better integration, inter-city rail, etc. (Funke).

- We are in “nice shape” to experience significant growth in population. There’s drought in the west. Storms in NYC and LI. Austin is dry three years in a row. We should benefit. (Booth)

- Regardless of population change, the population will be older. As people drive less, we will need a stronger multi-modal system. (J. Maisel)

- Also this depends on where they live. Older people will want to age in place with a need for multi-modal system to expand into rural areas. (J. Bender)

- We’ll still have a strong college population with clusters of students around the schools (B. Kulpa)

- Single occupant vehicles will still be a primary mode of travel. It will be hard to invest in transit as the population shrinks. (M. Leydecker)

- It’s possible that single occupant vehicles will be primary, but they will be part of transit systems and the occupant may not be the driver. There will be a computer behind the wheel. (C. Randall)

- Going into the future, the brick and mortar component of goods distribution will continue to decline because goods will be ordered online and dropped off at your door. (M. Leydecker)

**Moderate Growth**

- Growth will occur in urban centers (J. Bender)

- In each scenario, urban areas are going to see growth. Younger generation’s preference for walkable, bikeable urban environments is now well-established. Even older people will go for it. (M. Hartrich)
There will be a draw of quality of life refugees from New York City. Also, there will be young people who will decide first where to live, then find a job there. (P. Tronolone)

There are locations of choice that will draw people (e.g. East Aurora as pastoral but urban). Harness these market forces. It’s hard to provide transit out to peripheral areas (e.g. demolitions to get ROW) but we can get smarter about SOV commuting. (B. Kulpa)

**Significant Growth**

- We are becoming a Toronto suburb and more are coming. Canadian medical tourism, etc. Significant growth will come from the north. (M. Leydecker)

- Toronto is now bigger than Chicago. State of the border is a key. If the border is sticky, Canadian firms want to have a foot in the US and that means Buffalo. But we also have lower costs (labor, benefits, depreciation) and are away from congestion so maybe we want to “clean up the border” to make it more efficient so firms can get goods INTO Canada. (Ampuja).

- Are you say that making the border seamless, could we become a pass through and we could lose all of the business. (J. Bender)

- Don’t go right into the mess, be on the outskirts, avoid congestion and high costs, but close enough that we take advantage. (J. Ampuja)

- The nice part of Buffalo is that industrial or distribution firms can still be in the city limits, not in the suburbs to still take advantage. (M. Leydecker)

- There will be a lot more vertical and higher density development. (M. Leydecker)

- We need transit investment to link centers like Hamburg and Williamsville with downtown and the rest of the region. (B. Kulpa)

- There will be more international residents (Maisel).

**Strategy Development**

- Bring services out closer to rural areas. Social services, health care services could be brought to satellite locations to serve older residents living in exurban ring. (J. Bender)

- We need to figure out how to service each corridor. We need to provide for multiple modes and to link them, understanding that some solutions that work in the city won’t work in the suburbs. (B. Kulpa)

- We need to set goals for modal share. It we want to improve environmental outcomes, we need to say how many people do we want walking, bicycling, and using public transit. (J. Booth)

- We need to connect land use planning and transport planning. People won’t bike 20 miles but they might bike a little ways if there are connections to transit, etc. We need concentrated mixed-use areas – pick the corridors and make the connections. (M. Leydecker)
It is and always will be driven by supply and demand. It all ties together in a complex bundle of what is going to be available and where – now for example in BNMC. (E. Schmarder)

The first step is the corridors and creating these hubs so that the people can be connected.

There’s a long history of planning for land use and transportation – except that in 1970 the expectation was that there would be huge growth in a Buffalo-Amherst-Lockport corridor. The NFTA Hub Link concept was a later attempt to do something similar. (Tronolone)

Williamsville was a farm depot – transportation routes were a simple outgrowth from needs. (Kulpa)

We are going to need “all hands on deck” to finance what we need. Lots of collaboration required and going after not-your-normal funding. (Randall)

There is Federal money to build transit but we don’t have the long-term operating money. It will be relatively inexpensive to build out our transit system but we need O+M money. Can we use a TIF? (Funke).

We need to rethink our use of the congestion level of service standard and its impact upon places. Let’s substitute standards for health or mobility. (Booth)

The problem with the TIF is the disconnect between not for profit agencies that collect TIF money and the school district. Busing is the big daily transportation event. School district representatives are needed in the process. But maybe school districts will be willing to trade TIF proceeds for help with their busing needs. (Kulpa)

There is an issue of liens on the bonds, one constitutional contradiction that will not allow us to do this in NY State. We need to push accurate TIF legislation. (M. Hartrich)

We need to create the new urban form or link transportation money to urban form goals. Ultimately we have to make choices. We should put transit on Transit – rather than widening it. Ultimately, we need to tighten up land use and spend less on infrastructure. (Tronolone).

If we are looking at other states, they are passing legislation to bring in new funds. We need to look for new revenue sources, too. (C. Randall)

Offer incentives to change land use. (M. Hartrich)

Fix perverse policy: the state will pay for buses when children need to travel to school through unsafe environments. Why not let them pay to help remediate the unsafe conditions? (Booth)

Fix perverse policy, part two: JARC will pay for workers to get bus passes. When they have been on the job a few months, it will also pay for them to get a car. (Tronolone).

How can NFP providers work more efficiently? We need alternatives to transit that can help people get to work, health care, daily necessities. (B. O’Neill)
By using volunteers to provide transportation, we are trying to promote is a time that has passed us by, neighbor helping neighbor. (J. Bender)

Our uses of buses is very inefficient. They ride in the morning and the afternoon. Drivers get paid in between. Why not coordinate better and make more efficient use of the resource. NYS Education department won’t allow double duty for school buses. We have three separate fleets (Kulpa).

That is looking at transportation in a different way – across the silos. (M. Leydecker)

What are these vehicles going to be fueled by in 2050? CNG, LNG, electricity. We need to create the facilities, and not just gas stations, to maintain these alternate modes of transportation. (M. Leydecker)

Every diesel maker is producing a CNG vehicle. Forty years from now there will be no gas or diesel vehicles. (Ampuja).

Simple things like real time information that would encourage people to use transportation could work in the short term. (J. Maisel)

UB buses and the NFTA could align them together instead of being separate, and eventually add light rail to the conversation. Also, the BNMC will have a lot of people working here soon. (D. Funke)

Teresa ends with tutorial on the website.