



Rail / Truck / Transit Planning

2002-2003 UPWP Summary Report



Report Prepared by:

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RAIL/TRUCK/ TRANSIT PLANNING 2002-2003 UPWP SUMMARY REPORT

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Unified Planning Work Program Task 3M

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INTRODUCTION

Rail/Truck/Transit Planning was a task under the Long Range Planning Activities in the 2002-2003 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The focus of this task was to provide technical assistance for all Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) transportation projects, in order that a multi-modal perspective be provided to any given SMTC project. As part of this task, staff conducted data collection including identification and assessing existing conditions and provided support for advisory committees and resources for multi-modal program development. Staff has provided support for a variety of initiatives both SMTC directed and in an advisory capacity to other agencies.

Few specific rail/truck/transit projects were initiated in this program year, however this task yields a fair amount of background activity in support of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) planning process and assistance to member agencies.

The purpose of this summary document is to provide detail on rail/truck/transit and intermodal activities during the 2002-2003 UPWP.

III. RAIL PLANNING



- **Girden Road Access to the CSX Transportation (CSXT) Intermodal Facility.** Access issues to this terminal have been raised since the 1992-1993 UPWP when the terminal was designed and opened. Concerns remain regarding truck access, preferred routing of trucks, and conflicts with commuter and school bus traffic. The SMTC staff has remained involved with this issue over the years.

The SMTC staff has met several times over the program year with CSXT and CSX Intermodal (CSXI). The primary subject of these meetings was the future growth at the intermodal facility and access via Girden Road as compared to current access routes utilizing Kirkville and Fremont Roads and North Central Avenue. Using the SMTC 1997 Conrail/CSX Intermodal Terminal Access Study recommendations as a basis for the discussion, CSXI executives reviewed the operations of the terminal. This facility is unique on the CSX system and, in fact, has strategic operational ramifications well beyond this region. There are only four or five such terminal operations on the CSX system. Several other intermodal terminals in the Northeast have reached capacity and cannot accommodate more traffic; however Syracuse intermodal traffic, even with the soft economy, is increasing. Currently the DeWitt facility is the largest intermodal yard in New York State, has 70,000 lifts/year (nearly 200 each day, 8 each hour), is showing a 6% annual growth, and is close to capacity.

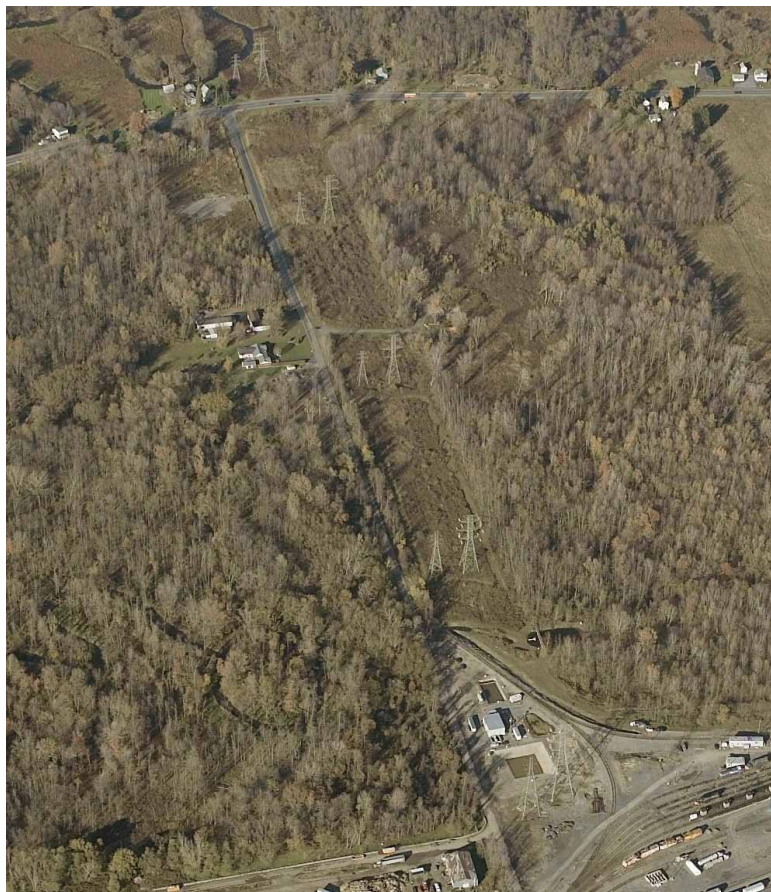
In the past CSXI has not been able to justify terminal improvement expense based on local traffic concerns. However, during the last program year, CSXI had terminal engineers from the main office in Jacksonville, Florida review the entire facility and a proposal was developed to improve the facility. A copy of this proposal is found in Appendix B.

The proposal focuses on moving the bulk of the terminal west of its current location and moving the check-in building onto the ramp facility from its current location. This would also involve relocating some trackage within the yard. Truck access would be via Girden Road to the ramp and check-in at a new building west of the current location. This project was proposed and accepted as part of the CSX Intermodal capital program for 2003. Although the project was proposed at \$5 million for the terminal improvements (minus the

roadwork on Girden), CSXI funded the project at \$3 million. The current proposal is for improvements, but with the existing access.

The Onondaga County Department of Transportation (OCDOT) has expressed interest in the project as potentially resolving many of the concerns of the Town of Manlius and has developed a rough estimate of approximately \$2.8 million for improvements to both Girden Road and Kirkville Road. The Metropolitan Development Association (MDA) is working with CSXI to identify additional funds for a public/private partnership to complete the entire project as originally envisioned, including the improvements to Girden and Kirkville Roads.

During the 2001-2002 Program year, the SMTTC also initiated the I-481 Industrial Corridor Study. The purpose of this study was to examine the transportation system in relation to existing and proposed industrial and office development. As part of the study an examination of access to other transportation systems such as the DeWitt rail yard was conducted. During the 2002-2003 Program year, information was provided to the consultant on access issues, plans and operations of the CSX Intermodal facility for inclusion in this study.



Aerial of Girden Road from the CSX Terminal to Kirkville Road.

- **Finger Lakes Railway Access**



The Finger Lakes Railway (FLR) has continued to substantially increase their rail freight business in the region and has proved to be an engine of economic growth and job development. During June 2002 staff met with the Finger Lakes Railway to discuss access issues in relation to the DestiNY project as well as the William F. Walsh Regional Transportation Center. The meeting included a review of track charts, aerial photographs, zone traffic maps and an on-the-ground survey of interlockings and sidings to ascertain a logical approach. Improved connections between the three railroad lines that converge in Solvay (CSXT, New York, Susquehanna & Western and FLR) were also discussed.

Proposals for implementation of that access will be developed by the affected railroads and discussions between those parties will be initiated by them in the near future. Several of the recommendations for enhancing both freight and passenger service in the area were provided to the consultants for the Syracuse Lakefront Transportation Planning Study and included as recommendations in that study.

- **Empire Corridor Rail Task Force**

A meeting of the Empire Corridor Rail Task Force occurred during July 2002 at the District Office of Assemblyman William E. Sanford. In attendance were representatives of Herkimer-Oneida County Transportation Study (HOCTS), Albany County Legislature, Onondaga County Legislature, New York State Senator DeFrancisco, United States Senator Clinton, Empire State Passengers Association, CSX Transportation, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the SMTC. The meeting focused on the status of the Task Force, achievements since it started in 1997, commitment of the elected officials and the future direction and composition of the Task Force. Several letters in support of the meeting were also noted from Assembly members who could not be in attendance.

Several key issues discussed included the status of a Request For Proposal (RFP) developed by the New York State Department of Transportation for an Empire West Study, the potential elimination of passenger rail service to upstate markets and the tax litigation

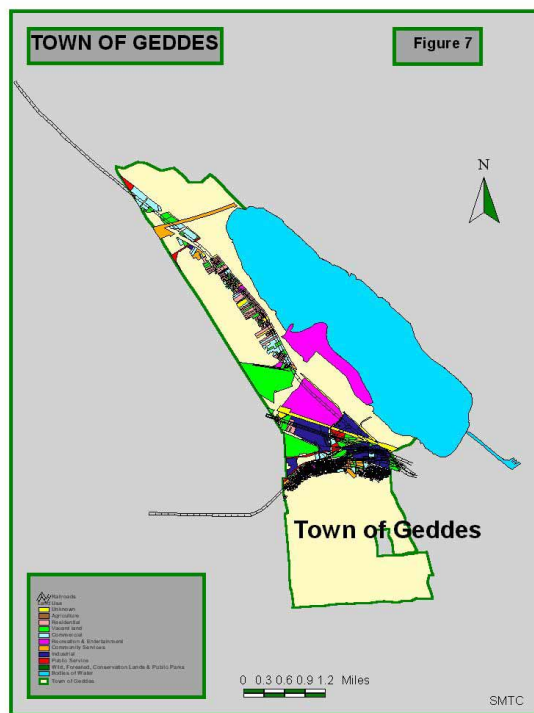
and legislation. The Empire West Study was proposed in 2000 by the NYSDOT to advance improvements in rail service to upstate markets. Metro North initiated an RFP for a Hudson Valley Study in 2002, but the Empire West Study has not been initiated as of April 2003. At the time of this meeting there was considerable concern that due to the proposed federal budget, rail service beyond Albany to western New York might be eliminated. There was substantial discussion of the concerns, however they have been resolved due to an increase in the final appropriations. The tax legislation was a successful endeavor because it reduced onerous property taxes imposed on the railroads while including a safety net for municipalities and school districts. The Governor signed this legislation in February 2003.

There was also discussion on developing an economic analysis study as part of the Empire West Study as well as potential rail marketing strategies related to the DestiNY project. Some of these issues were referred to the Governor's Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (PRAC).

The Task Force will continue its activities under the auspices of Onondaga County Legislative Chairman Dale Sweetland with the assistance of former Chairman Sanford and the Chairman of the Albany County Legislature, Charles Houghtaling. Future meetings are planned for the next program year.

- **Rail Corridor Land Use Data for Region 3 NYSDOT**

At the request of the Regional Director's office of NYSDOT Region 3, staff provided land use data and maps created several years ago as part of a review of the rail corridors. This information was requested to assist in locating industrial zoned property on a local rail line.

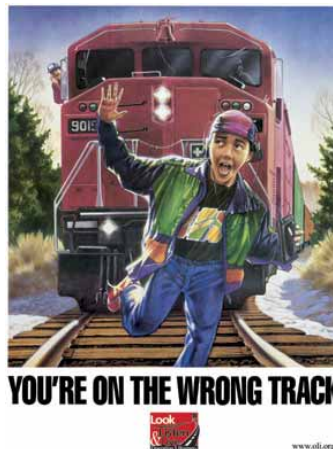


- **High Speed Rail/Metropolitan Development Association (MDA)**



The MDA has continued to show a strong interest in high-speed rail in the Empire Corridor as an economic development tool. Staff assisted the MDA in developing a contact within the State Assembly regarding high-speed rail development in New York State. The MDA anticipates a meeting with representatives from the New York State Assembly later this spring to discuss opportunities in the upstate markets.

- **Operation Lifesaver**



Operation Lifesaver (OLS) is a nationwide, non-profit public information program dedicated to eliminating collisions, injuries and fatalities at rail/highway grade crossings and on railroad rights-of-way. OLS in New York State is managed through two state coordinators. Activities include training public safety agencies in grade crossing and trespass accident investigation, training presenters to get the safety message out to the

public and other appropriate grass roots level outreach. OLS in this region is an activity that includes the participation of the NYSDOT Regional office as well as SMTC staff in various local presentations and in staffing the New York State Fair OLS exhibits.

In March 2003 staff attended a regional meeting at the DeWitt CSXT facilities. Issues covered at that meeting included partnerships with county traffic safety boards, school bus driver training, new materials for presenters and upcoming events. It was noted that the SMTC had developed an excellent and very useful grade crossing inventory. National Operation Lifesaver Day will be May 14, 2003.

A member of the SMTC staff is a certified presenter. This is an ongoing safety-related task that includes rail/highway grade crossing and pedestrian trespass issues and educational outreach in the MPO planning area. During the year a presentation was made a large group at the Annual Kids Day sponsored by the NYSDOT Region 3 offices in April 2002. Support for member agencies in this area is provided on an as-needed basis.



NYSDOT Region 3 Annual Kids Day Operation Lifesaver presentation, April 2002.

- **Lakefront Planning and Development**

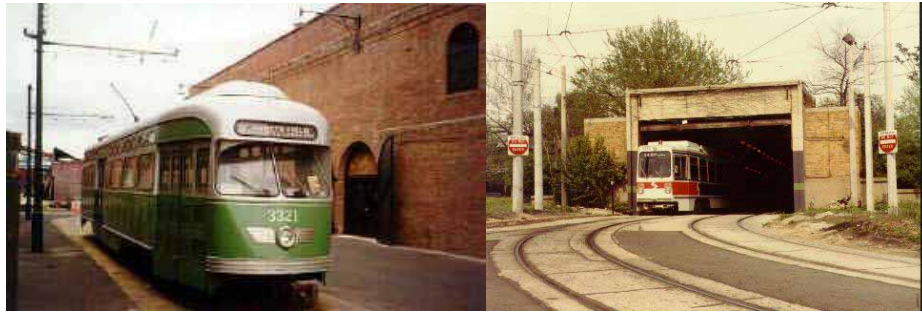
There were two initiatives completed under this category. In response to a request from the City of Syracuse, information was provided on abandoned railroad rights-of-way in a six county region. Information was derived from the NYSDOT Region 3 1974 Inventory of Abandoned Railroad Rights of Way.

In November 2002, staff met with two consultants for the City's Lakefront Area Transportation Planning Study project and discussed at length the purpose of the Freight

Facilities Inventory, reviewed the mailing list, and their schedule. Questions regarding the infrastructure of the rail system dating back 50 years were asked and answered. Operational questions and contacts for the rail companies were also discussed.

IV. TRANSIT PLANNING

- **Historic Trolley Data/Transit Data**



At the request of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA), staff provided data on the operation and financial performance of historic trolley lines in various parts of the United States. Data was derived from Federal Transit Administration (FTA) reports. CNYRTA requested assistance in finding copies of Transportation Research Board reports on light rail transit impacts of street running.

- **CNYRTA Capital Program Review Meeting with FTA**

On May 9, 2002, staff attended a meeting conducted by the FTA to review the capital program of the CNYRTA. This meeting was a precursor to the CNYRTA Triennial Review and covered many substantial issues including project quarterly updates, a review of outstanding projects, the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program and planning issues. Safety and security were also discussed at this meeting.

- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Update of Fixed Transit Routes**



In November of 2002, the CNYRTA revised its fixed transit (Centro) routes. These revisions involved some realignment of bus routing, as well as the adoption of a new route identification system. The SMTC, following the implementation of changes in the system, spearheaded an effort to create a GIS base layer reflecting the new Centro system. These files were forwarded to CNYRTA for verification of accuracy and are currently used by the SMTC, CNYRTA, and other agencies for transit-related planning activities.

V. MULTI-MODAL PLANNING

- **National Academy of Sciences (NAS), Transportation Research Board (TRB) activities.** SMTC staff participates as a member of the TRB's Intermodal Freight Committee (A1B05). The TRB Executive Director, on behalf of the Executive Committee, appoints committee members for a three-year period. Members are selected on the basis of their interest in and ability to contribute to the study of the subject or to the solution to the problem under consideration.

Intermodal Freight Committee

The scope of the Intermodal Freight Committee includes all aspects of research pertaining to intermodal freight transport. Attention is given initially to rail-water, rail-highway, highway-water, and highway-air modal combinations, but other combinations may be considered later. As used here, intermodal freight transport includes all shipments that employ more than one mode in a single through movement from origin to destination; local pick-up and delivery by truck for other modes is not included. Consideration of rates, routes, services, transfer facilities, containers, and other items that impact the movement of freight in intermodal transport are included.

As a member of the Committee, staff also participates as a member of the Internal TRB Liaison Subcommittee. The Internal TRB Liaison Subcommittee identifies strategies and practices for linking with other TRB committees. This includes attending business meetings of other committees, reporting A1B05 activities to other committees, reporting activities of other committees to A1B05 members, and identifying opportunities to coordinate sessions and speakers for annual meetings and other meetings. Primary

activities with the committee occur during the Annual Meeting in Washington, DC held every January.

National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP)

An additional aspect of the TRB membership is recent participation on a NCHRP synthesis panel for the integration of freight with intermodal facilities. This project is now titled "Freight As A Good Neighbor". These panels consist of select experts in the chosen areas who develop the project scope and work with the chosen consultant on synthesis development and approval. Membership is by nomination to the National Academy of Sciences. NCHRP projects are selected by the state departments of transportation and must have approval of two thirds of the state DOT's to be accepted.

Staff has met in Washington, DC with the consultant for this project and has provided a review of the draft document. In addition, examples were provided that relate to the smaller Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's). Publication of the document is expected in the spring of 2003. The NCHRP membership, correspondence and Final Scope can be found in Appendix C.

- **New York-Ontario Bi-Regional Transportation Strategy Working Group.** Staff attended a meeting of the Bi-Regional working group in Niagara Falls on November 25, 2002 representing the SMTC Director. The primary focus of this group is for developing a bi-national strategic transportation plan for the Niagara Region. Initiatives include improved border crossing and trade corridors as well as issues generated from enhanced security requirements. An agenda and summary notes from the meeting are included in Appendix D.

Although Rail/Truck/Transit and intermodal planning efforts involve numerous SMTTC projects or outreach, several specific agencies can be identified as being assisted under this task.

Member Agencies Assisted Under This Task:

- New York State Department of Transportation, Main Office
- New York State Department of Transportation, Region 3
- Metropolitan Development Association
- Central New York Regional Transportation Authority
- City of Syracuse
- Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board

Non-Member Organizations Assisted Under This Task:

- New York State Operation Lifesaver
- Empire Corridor Rail Task Force
- Transportation Research Board
- Finger Lakes Railway
- CSX Transportation
- Town of Manlius

APPENDIX A

THRUWAY AUTHORITY TANDEM LOT STUDY

Contact SMTC to view a hard copy.

APPENDIX B

Access to CSX Intermodal Terminal Via Girden Road

Project Description: Upgrade and Expand CSX Intermodal Terminal, also altering existing truck traffic routes, to provide for both terminal growth and expansion and improvements to the adjacent local transportation network – Towns of Manlius and Dewitt, Onondaga County, New York

CSX operates a terminal in Syracuse, New York where trailers and containers are transferred between trucks and trains. This facility, called an *Intermodal terminal*, is one of only three such terminals in New York State's vast rail and highway transportation network.

Syracuse, New York is uniquely situated in the center of upstate New York, at the junction of two interstate highways (I-81 and I-90 (the New York State Thruway) and two rail lines on the CSX system (the Chicago Line main line and the Montreal Secondary line.) CSX Intermodal trains carry trucks to and from Syracuse that would otherwise use these public highways for long distance travel. From Syracuse, trucks bring consumer goods throughout upstate New York through distribution centers such as Wal-Mart and SYSCO. Producers in the region also use Intermodal to reach nationwide markets, including Carrier and Canandaigua Wine.

Intermodal at Syracuse has been successful and is growing. The Intermodal terminal was extensively modernized in 1992. Over the five-year period ending in 2000, activity grew in excess of 6% compounded annually. In 2000 the Syracuse terminal performed nearly 70,000 lifts, or transfers. In addition to serving local markets, Syracuse serves as a hub point for the CSX Intermodal network. Large trains from Chicago and St. Louis enter the terminal and units are separated between trains destined for Northern New Jersey and New England. A similar operation occurs for westbound movements. In today's operation, twelve different Intermodal trains exchange traffic in Syracuse every day.

As business has grown, traffic levels on local roads leading to the facility have been scrutinized. The current truck route to the facility currently includes a short stretch of Fremont Road in the Town of Manlius, NY. The existing Intermodal terminal was designed for this route; interior roadways on CSX property and the sequencing of terminal operations are set up to receive and discharge truck traffic via Fremont Road.

Fremont Road is also the route taken by a number of school buses because a public school is located in the vicinity. The combination of these traffic factors led the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council to conduct a study and issue a report several years ago. The report recommended that the truck route to the Intermodal terminal be changed to substitute Girden Road for Fremont Road. Girden Road lies west of, and parallel to, Fremont Road, and has been designated as a portion of the National Highway System.

This change would significantly impact the traffic flow on CSX's property. It would introduce traffic in the middle of the current facility rather than at its end. Without modification of the terminal design, it would require tractor-trailer trucks to move east inside the terminal and then turn around and head west. This would be difficult and dangerous to do in a railroad yard environment.

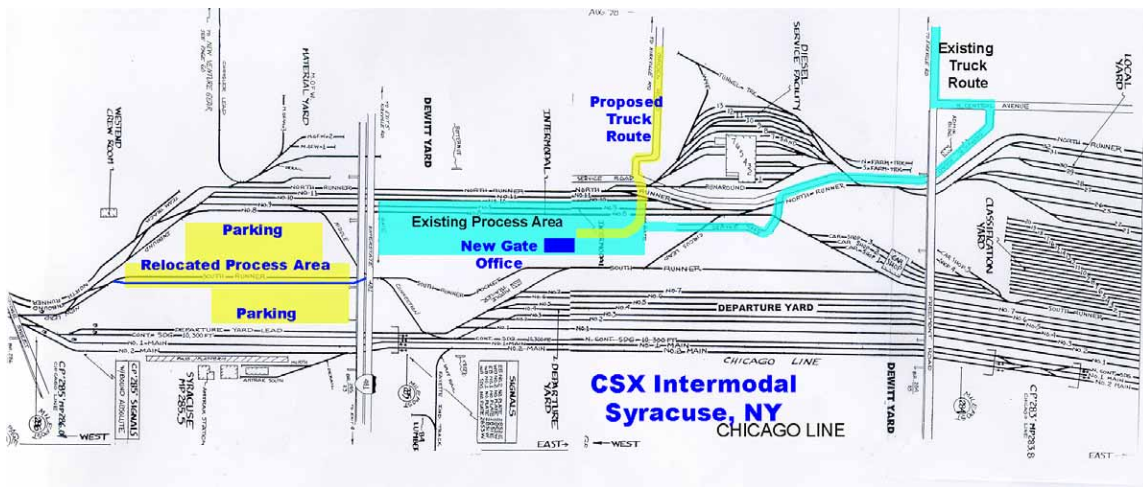
CSX, the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council, and various local constituencies including the Town of Manlius and the Central New York Regional Planning Board have examined traffic considerations attached to the growing Syracuse operation. A concept plan was developed and it includes these elements:

- Upgrade Girden Road and designate it as the truck route to the Intermodal terminal
- Improve the intersection of Girden and Kirkville Roads
- Relocate the gate building for CSX's Intermodal terminal to the west of Girden Road

- Establish a number of grade crossings on CSX's property to create a safe traffic flow from Girden Road to the relocated gate building
- Develop the "south runner" track (an existing track in CSX's yard) as an additional Intermodal loading /unloading track.
- Develop additional truck parking in the areas north and south of the south runner.

The last two items would replace and augment track and parking lost with the gate building relocation.

When complete, the Syracuse Intermodal terminal will move completely west of Girden Road, and will be larger to accommodate future growth. The terminal expansion will be accomplished by using vacant CSX real estate within the yard. There are no property acquisition or zoning issues associated with the terminal changes.



A detailed engineering analysis has not been undertaken, but a preliminary cost estimate for the changes on CSX's property is \$5 million. The cost of upgrading Girden Road and the Kirkville/Girden intersection is an estimated additional \$.5 million.

APPENDIX C

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD NATIONAL COOPERATIVE HIGHWAY RESEARCH PROGRAM

Contact SMTC to view a hard copy.

APPENDIX D

New York-Ontario Bi-Regional Transportation Strategy Working Group

Contact SMTC to view a hard copy.