



February 2, 2011

Attn: Master Plan Comments  
Nassau County Planning Department  
100 County Seat Drive  
Mineola, NY 11501

**Re: Tri-State Transportation Comments on 2010 Nassau County Master Plan**

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a more balanced, environmentally friendly and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Our mission is to effectively tie transportation policy to smart land use decisions and as such will focus our comments on the land use and transportation infrastructure sections of the Master Plan.

Land Use and Zoning:

Nassau County is to be commended for drafting a Master Plan that emphasizes smart growth and transit-oriented development and the need to link our land use policies to sustainable transportation options. Nassau County's plan to promote economic growth by targeting development in downtowns, next to transit, in key tract areas like the Nassau Hub and the Grumman Property, brownfield areas, and innovatively, in underutilized commercial corridors and strip malls should be applauded and is an important step towards ensuring that Nassau County is on a path to a sustainable future and able to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, recognizing that the County has limited influence on local zoning ordinances that are necessary to make certain this vision comes to fruition, the County must take a more active supportive role for municipalities interested in developing in this manner. While the Master Plan outlines how the County can provide more effective technical assistance, the Master Plan should recommend specifically the expansion of the County's "Visioning Program", a program that provides funds for local communities to engage in a participatory planning process to develop vision plans for their future. One way to expand and enhance this program is to team with the MTA to pool resources and target key municipalities along the LIRR. In areas that lack LIRR service, the County should similarly partner with the New York State Department of Transportation to target resources to key corridors and municipalities as a way to support smart growth development.

While the Master Plan speaks at length about the need for parking reform measures like shared parking, smart siting for parking and maximum parking requirements as opposed to minimum parking requirements, parking recommendations are absent from the "Implementation Matrix". We urge the final version of the Master Plan to include parking reform as part of the recommended implementation efforts.

### Transportation:

In order to support the aforementioned land use policies, Nassau County must support increased transportation choice. The Master Plan provides a good outline for how to achieve this, however, Tri-State believes the Plan can expand upon its recommendations to truly bolster transit, cycling and walking throughout the County.

#### *LIRR*

While the County can do little directly to increase service on the LIRR, it can support Transportation Improvement Districts (TID) around LIRR stations. TID's operate similarly to BIDs and can promote transit usage by creating a more transit-friendly environment through safer transit access and a more enjoyable transit experience. The Master Plan should include this tool in its recommended actions.

The County can also take a greater and more prominent role in supporting the LIRR's Main Line Corridor Expansion Project (Third Track). This project is integral to transit expansion in Nassau County, and more broadly, Long Island. The project will increase capacity for a feasible reverse commute, increase flexibility in the event of train breakdowns by providing 'passing tracks', foster intra-island commuting and allow the railroad and Long Island commuters to take full advantage of the Grand Central Terminal East Side Access project. Currently the Master Plan only identifies the Third Track as a 'passing lane'. Given the myriad benefits this project will bring to the Long Island region, the Master Plan should better describe this project and recommend the County take a greater leadership role in supporting the project.

#### *LI Bus*

Nassau County has historically underfunded the Long Island Bus system, a system facing decimation if no sustainable funding solution is found in the coming weeks and months. While a regional bus system is a laudable long-term goal and should be pursued, recommendations for more immediate action to support LI Bus should be included in the Master Plan. The County's current privatization proposal is proving infeasible and more realistic solutions must be explored and found. The Master Plan should recognize, with greater urgency, the threat facing the LI Bus system and the riders it serves.

Much like the discussion of a regional bus system, consideration of transit options for the Nassau Hub—while important for the long term viability of the Hub initiative—is premature given the current crisis facing LI Bus. The Master Plan could be strengthened by creating a priority list for support of surface transportation in the County. The plan could recommend that LI Bus first be put on sound financial footing through greater funding from the County and further negotiations with the MTA. Second, the County should pursue, with MTA and other regional support, a regional bus system. And finally, the Master Plan can make identifying a locally preferred alternative for the Hub project of lesser importance. This 'triage system' for the County surface transportation system can rightly focus the County's attention on its immediate, medium term and long term needs.

Similarly, ideas laid out in the draft Master Plan like Bus Rapid Transit can be studied when exploring the potential for a regional bus system. The Master Plan correctly identifies key aspects of successful BRT, but should also expand on other aspects of BRT that would also serve to support the County's goals of TOD and smart growth. Ideas like creating level boarding through the construction of permanent stations should also be included in the Master Plan document. These ideas in particular support the concept of transit permanence, a concept that has proven to be a good driver of TOD.<sup>1</sup>

### *Cycling and Walking*

The Plan correctly identifies the need to create safer walking and cycling environments in order to support TOD, Smart Growth and walkable communities. However, the Plan should go further than just focusing these efforts in downtowns. Some of the most dangerous roads for pedestrians in the region are arterial roads that are designed to move automobiles as fast as possible without regard to other users of the road. While these arterials often connect existing downtowns, they also see high levels of pedestrian activity. Promoting walkability in the Master Plan should not only focus on downtowns, but also along these arterial roads. Doing so will not only create a safer walking environment on all roads in Nassau County, but also encourage people to get to downtowns by walking, thereby reducing the demand and need to provide expensive parking.

One area that the Master Plan is lacking is in support for on street cycling initiatives. The County's suggestion that cyclists use sidewalks is a poor substitute for effective and safe cycling infrastructure as sidewalk cycling often increases the danger to both pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, many municipalities prohibit cycling on sidewalks. In lieu of this recommendation, the County should outline a plan to create an extensive network of on-street bike lanes.

Recommending for the inclusion of bicycle racks at County buildings, municipal buildings and railroad stations should be applauded. However, the County should also pursue bike racks at LI Bus stops and on buses. The Master Plan should also recommend a Countywide bike share program, a program that is becoming increasingly popular throughout the United States as well as the world, and is a program that is integral to expanding cycling opportunities.<sup>ii</sup>

The Master Plan, as a way to further encourage cycling and walking as viable transportation options, can also recommend that the Nassau County Legislature adopt a Complete Streets policy that supports the accommodation of all users of County roads. Complete Streets policies have been adopted by four towns on Long Island, including the Town of North Hempstead. However, neither Nassau nor Suffolk Counties have adopted policies. A Master Plan that includes this recommendation could help spur legislative action to foster safer walking and cycling environments and encourage smart growth and transit oriented development.

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<sup>i</sup> Case Studies: BRT and Land Use, William Vincent, Breakthrough Technologies Institute  
<http://www.crcog.org/publications/TransportationDocs/NBHBusway/2010/BRT-TOD-Presentation.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Capital Bike Share: <http://www.capitalbikeshare.com/>