

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



M o b i l i z i n g t h e R e g i o n

Testimony of Damien Newton, Tri-State Transportation Campaign on the Scoping Document for the New Meadowlands Stadium Project July 12, 2006

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am the New Jersey coordinator for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. The Campaign is the region's leading non-profit consortium of experts, planning organizations, activist and environmental groups concerned with transportation. Our mission is to achieve an environmentally sound, economically efficient and socially just transportation network and system in the 32 counties in and surrounding New York City.

Earlier this week the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission announced an ambitious plan to bring the Meadowlands District in compliance with the Kyoto Protocol. This will require a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the district to 7 percent below the 1990 levels by 2012. The Commission also released initial results of a three-year air quality study of the Meadowlands, which show to no one's surprise that pollution from traffic has the greatest impact on the district's air quality.

The Campaign commends the Meadowlands Commission for its commitment to improve the area's air quality, especially at a time when the area is being inundated with auto-dependent development in the form of the Xanadu complex and its more than 25,000 parking spaces, and a new stadium for the Giants and Jets. We ask the Commission to insist on a transportation plan that is consistent with the principles of its own *Meadowlands Mobility 2030* plan, which calls for an integrated transit and multi-modal transportation system.

You will note during the following testimony that there are repeated references to the hearing process for the Xanadu development. The transportation planning for Xanadu was so poor that it received criticism at every step and is a major cause of the pending lawsuit by the Sierra Club, New Jersey Environmental Federation, and New Jersey Public Interest Research Group. Transportation planning for the proposed West Side Stadium in Manhattan was similarly flawed, and led to a lawsuit from the Campaign that was only dismissed after the stadium plan was dismissed. We would prefer working with the Giants, Jets, Sports and Exposition Authority and Meadowlands Commission to see the stadium project and its transportation component be completed in a way that benefits all of New Jersey and especially the residents of the Meadowlands area municipalities.

First and foremost, the stadium cannot be considered in isolation. Despite the scoping document's assertion that the stadium is "an independent project" and its "permitting and construction" will be "separate and distinct from the other ongoing developments" in the Meadowlands, the cumulative traffic impact of the two developments will be enormous. An adequate traffic study

for the Xanadu development has yet to be completed, and the Campaign fears that the stadium project could further congest local roadways.

The Xanadu development calls for the creation of retail space, an indoor ski slope, and a minor league ball park. The scoping document for the new stadium mentions that it will be a year round attraction for major musical acts. To do an accurate transportation study, we need to understand how much congestion will be caused by a weeknight Bruce Springsteen concert that begins at 8:00, a minor league baseball game that occurs at 7:30, coinciding with operating hours for Xanadu's retail attractions and office space, combined with what is now normal evening rush hour traffic on Routes 3, 17, and 120.

According to the stadium scoping document, a Traffic Impact Study will be prepared for the Stadium Project "in accordance with current NJDOT regulations and criteria," which the scoping document identifies as the New Jersey State Highway Access Management Code (N.J.A.C. 16:47). If the standard requirements for a developer's traffic impact study for a DEIS and for the state transportation department's highway access permit were coterminous, that would suffice. However, the requirements are not coterminous. This is the fatal flaw of the Xanadu traffic study and we do not want to see it repeated here. Using this standard again will result in a study that is woefully insufficient to render a decision by the Meadowlands Commission—or anyone else—about whether the proposed capital improvements in any way satisfactorily negate or mitigate the traffic impacts of the project.

The Campaign was happy to read in the initial press reports that the number of parking spaces will be reduced; however there are no measures in place to prevent fans from parking in Xanadu's parking lots. During the hearing process for Xanadu the Campaign and other organizations repeatedly asked for a parking plan that wasn't submitted until after the Meadowlands Commission released its Hearing Officer's Report. We are again concerned that history is repeating itself in the form of a new stealth parking plan for a major development in the Meadowlands. The scoping document for the new stadium doesn't refer to the number of parking spaces, but the number of square feet that will be used for parking lots. The DEIS for the stadium must come clean about the number of parking spaces and not just address parking in terms of square feet.

Although construction of the rail line that will connect the sports complex with NJ Transit's Pascack Valley line is underway thanks to a \$150 million grant from the Port Authority, one project does not make a full transit plan. According to news reports, only about 8,000 to 10,000 fans per game (a figure presumably based on ridership numbers that haven't been made available to the public) are expected to use the line per game, but tens of thousands of fans could be brought to the game through other means that have never been studied.

A comprehensive transit plan is needed to minimize auto trips. Unhappy with the transportation plan proposed for Xanadu, the Borough of Wallington, the Township of Lyndhurst, the Borough of Carlstadt, the Town of Secaucus, The Hudson County Board of Freeholders and the Borough of East Rutherford all passed resolutions calling for a full and complete transportation plan that examines all of the regional impacts and opportunities offered by the new development in the Sports Complex. This includes bus, and bus rapid transit as well as the Pascack Valley Line extension, light rail and road improvements.

The Giants and Jets, as well as Xanadu's developer Mills/Mack Cali, should allocate a percentage of their profits for mass transit operating costs to the sites, and help the Port Authority pay for Lincoln Tunnel express bus lane expansion. Funding for these projects should not come from the

New Jersey taxpayer. If casinos can foot the bill for transit improvements that will ultimately make them money so can New Jersey's premiere sports franchises and largest retail center.

Lastly, we applaud the stated commitment to changing the parking areas from a sea of formless asphalt to a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly site plan and a permanent bus facility to service the complex. Buses and smaller shuttles will be needed as part of the permanent mix of transit access modes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am available for questions.