



## TOPICS

[Latest News](#)  
[Press Release Archive](#)  
[Special Reports](#)  
[Photo Downloads](#)  
[Schumer Around NY](#)

## Press Release



[Printer-friendly Version](#)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 16, 2004

### SCHUMER: "WE CAN DO IT ALL"

*Schumer gives major address about the Far West Side at the Regional Plan Association's 14th Annual Regional Assembly*

*Senator reserves judgment on Stadium proposal and pledges to devote energies instead to expanding #7 Subway line – if any element of the West Side plan proceeds without a strong commitment to extending the #7, he will not be able to support the plan overall.*

*Senator also opposes State plan to spend \$900 million of Federal funds to bury four blocks of West Street instead of using funds to link Downtown to Kennedy Airport – "Surely we can create an appropriate setting for a 9/11 memorial and re-knit Battery Park City and the World Financial Center for less than \$225 million per block"*

Regional Plan Association  
14th Annual Regional Assembly on the Far West Side  
Remarks by Senator Charles Schumer  
April 16, 2004

"New York's Transportation Needs: We Can Do It All!"

#### I. Introduction

Every 40 years or so New York sheds its skin with a burst of public and private investment in transportation infrastructure. At the turn of the last century, New York built much of its remarkable subway system, which helped make the City one of the world's greatest. In the 1940s, '50s and early '60s, Robert Moses was responsible for a massive expansion of New York's transportation infrastructure until New Yorkers finally rebelled against his refusal to address the human costs of his projects. Nevertheless, Moses helped further build the New York region into an economic powerhouse.

Now, as the 21st century dawns, New York must once again make major investments in its transportation system which will fuel the region's economic growth for the coming decades.

Between 1990 and 2000, New York City's population grew by about 800,000 people and the metropolitan area grew by over 1 million people - more growth than our region had seen in decades. And that growth is being fueled largely by two dynamic groups of people - new immigrants from all over the world and creative, well-educated, young people flocking to New York from all over the country. Both groups of newcomers have spurred a fantastic renaissance of so many of our City's neighborhoods - Harlem, Green Point, Williamsburg, DUMBO, Red Hook, Bedford-Stuyvesant and even the South Bronx.

To make sure these newcomers succeed, our City must grow and must create new jobs. And I believe that we cannot grow without significant new investments in transportation, without which we will literally and economically stand still. And in today's competitive economy, to stand still is to die.

I believe we have a rare moment here in New York - we have strong political consensus on a number of key projects needed for our region, including East Side Access, Second Avenue Subway, linking Lower Manhattan with Kennedy Airport, extending the No. 7 Line to the Far West Side, and the cross-harbor freight rail tunnel.

And now in a moment of great serendipity, there are a number of Federal pots of funding that we can access. We can fund these projects out of the reauthorization of TEA-21, which is making its way through Congress right now, through the annual Federal Transportation Appropriations process, our remaining September 11 funding, and bonding future revenues for the Far West Side. And I believe that, if we all work together, we can succeed in this unique moment in securing the funding needed to build all these important transportation projects, without tapping too deeply into City or State coffers.

Let me start by complementing Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff and their team for putting together an intelligent plan to develop the Far West Side of Manhattan. Later on, I will discuss their proposal in more detail, but I am pleased that they have put a comprehensive proposal forward and I thank Bob Yaro and the RPA for holding this very timely conference. I am looking forward to participating in the public debate about how we best ensure our region's future economic growth.

## II. Group of 35

As many of you here recall, several years ago I helped create a task force called the "Group of 35," which included chief executives and leaders in business, real estate, academia, labor and government. At that time, New York's real estate market was booming and the Group's mission was to identify areas within the City where we could build new office space to both attract and retain businesses. When the Group released its report in June of 2001, it projected the City would need 60 million square feet of new office space by 2020 to keep pace with projected job growth of almost 300,000 new office sector jobs.

The Group's main recommendation was the creation of three new and expanded "Central Business Districts" in Downtown Brooklyn, Long Island City and the Far West Side of Manhattan. For the Far West Side, the Group specifically proposed creating at least 20 million square feet of new office space within the area west of 9th Avenue between 28th and 42nd Streets, expanding the Javits Center, rezoning the area,

assembling development sites, creating open space and pedestrian-friendly corridors, creating an Urban Business Campus, and extending the No. 7 Line to connect with Grand Central, Penn Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal.

When the Group of 35 report, entitled "Preparing for the Future: A Commercial Development Strategy for New York City," was released in June of 2001, there was general agreement that many of the recommendations were urgently needed and both the public and private sectors should create a partnership to pursue them.

III. September 11, 2001

Three months later our City was attacked and the country's economy started to slow, with New York being especially hard hit. Naturally, the recovery and rebuilding of Lower Manhattan became the focus for so many of us. As we all know, New York is estimated to have lost approximately 250,000 jobs after 9/11 and I, and so many others, have made it our number one mission to help the City not only recover all the jobs lost after that horrible, tragic day, but to create even more jobs.

Two-and-a-half years later, my focus on job creation has only grown stronger, as I have seen too many New Yorkers still out of work. And those who need jobs the most, those who are often invisible in this City - the struggling families in the South Bronx, the new immigrants from Central America, Asia and Africa, older workers who have lost their jobs or could not find jobs after 9/11 - are still suffering and need our help.

It is easy to respond when there is an immediate demand from a well-organized group, but until we regain the same job momentum we had in the 1990s, we will not yet have a City that is fair to the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who are underpaid or unemployed yet never raise their voices. They are often left out of the debate, unable to picket or lobby for jobs that they may or may not get. I believe my job, and the job of all elected officials, is to represent these all-too-often voiceless people. Both Donald Trump and Norman Siegel can get attention when they want to build something, or stop something from being built - these people cannot.

In the 1990s we saw how job creation did more to turn this City around, make it safe, attractive and vibrant, than any government program could ever do. We lost 250,000 of those jobs after 9/11 and I will not rest until we regain those jobs and add more jobs. And I want to see those jobs created in Lower Manhattan and in other parts of the City where more development is possible, like the Far West Side.

With the \$20 billion in Federal funds we were able to obtain to speed New York's physical, emotional and economic recovery, we have embarked on an extraordinarily ambitious effort to rebuild and remake Lower Manhattan in the wake of that terrible day.

IV. Rebuilding and Expanding Lower Manhattan's Transportation Infrastructure

After September 11, one of my top priorities in my negotiations with the White House was to ensure that we could radically remake the transportation system of Lower Manhattan. As many of you know, there are strict rules about the use of Federal disaster funds for transportation projects. Those funds are to be used only to restore the affected transportation infrastructure to its pre-disaster condition.

And while that may make sense in the case of a hurricane destroying part of a road, it made no sense at all for Lower Manhattan, with its maze of disconnected and antiquated and sometimes-redundant subway lines, lack of a centralized concourse linking the subways and PATH, and its lack of a connection to Kennedy Airport. To just rebuild to a pre 9-11 state would be a wasted opportunity. So I am proud and grateful that I was able to help convince the Bush Administration and my colleagues in the Congress to change the rules for New York and provide us with an unprecedented total of \$4.55 billion to be spent on new transportation projects.

The permanent PATH station at the World Trade Center site, the Fulton Street Transit Center, and the South Ferry station rebuild are all on track for completion between 2006 and 2007. These projects, which will cost about \$2.85 billion, will significantly improve access and mobility in Lower Manhattan. And, we still have approximately \$1.7 billion left for other transportation projects. We also have approximately \$1.2 billion in unspent CDBG funds available that the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation has set aside for the JFK rail link.

Additionally, we are working hard in Congress to convince our colleagues to provide New York with additional transportation funds to make up for the portion of post-9/11 tax benefits that we did not fully utilize. I have lobbied Senators Grassley and Baucus of the Finance Committee and they have provided an additional \$200 million in an international tax bill currently under consideration in the Senate. I plan to fight for more funds in the coming months.

As we all know, Downtown Manhattan has not grown like Midtown, or even Downtown Brooklyn, in part because of its inadequate transportation infrastructure. Without easy connections to the major transportation hubs - Penn Station and Grand Central - or to the airports, Downtown has suffered seeing many of its businesses migrate to Midtown or out of the City. We must improve its transportation links to the rest of New York, with a connection to Kennedy Airport and the labor pool of Long Island, which is especially important to businesses considering staying or moving to Downtown. To thrive in today's global economy, businesses must be able to draw from a wide, highly-educated labor pool and Long Island represents an essential source of workers for Downtown's businesses.

I believe we have a once-in-a-generation chance to connect Downtown to Kennedy Airport and Long Island, which will spur new business development, create jobs in Downtown, and ensure the entire New York City region's economic growth for generations to come. I have talked to staff at the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and it appears the Governor intends to announce his proposal to provide a rail link from Kennedy Airport into Lower Manhattan by the end of the month.

The funding of their proposal is still under consideration, however. Governor Pataki supports using those remaining \$1.7 billion in 9/11 transportation funds to build a \$900 million tunnel under West Street and a bus facility and related infrastructure. I share the long-standing desire to knit together Downtown with Battery Park City and the World Financial Center. And I wholeheartedly agree that we must create a fitting site and design for the memorial for the fallen heroes and victims of 9/11, but I believe that dedicating \$900 million of our remaining Federal dollars to burying four blocks of West Street cannot be a higher priority than linking Downtown to Kennedy Airport. Surely we can create an appropriate setting for a 9/11 memorial and reknit Battery Park City and the World Financial Center for less than \$225 million per block.

I also recognize that there are many good arguments for using the CDBG money for affordable housing or other economic development activities, but enhanced transportation to Downtown will further those goals as well. In any case, I look forward to learning more of the details of what the Governor will propose and I stand ready to work with him, Mayor Bloomberg and the rest of the delegation to get as much help from Washington as we can.

So hopefully with a promising plan in place to finally provide Lower Manhattan with the transportation infrastructure it needs to recover from September 11 and grow, I think it is timely and correct that the City and State now focus their energies on the Far West Side, which I believe is vital to the continued growth of New York.

#### V. Long-Term Vision for the West Side

In recent months, the economic picture in New York has finally started to improve. And I believe that much of the Mayor's plan for the Far West Side will be immensely beneficial to the City and region.

Like so many of you here today, I have come to believe ever more strongly that transportation is the key to the economic growth of our City, our region, and our State. As Senator, I have seen not only how a project like East Side Access or a Downtown link to JFK could spur economic growth in our region, but I have seen, for example, what a dramatic effect JetBlue's low-cost flights from Kennedy Airport to Albany, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse have had on Upstate's economy or the exciting promise of the Rochester-to-Toronto fast ferry, which, in a reminder in how Upstate and the City are linked together, is currently undergoing repairs in our very own Brooklyn Navy Yard!

And ever since my work with the Group of 35, I have been convinced of the absolute importance of connecting the Far West Side of Manhattan with the City's subway system. It is the key to opening the area up to successful residential and commercial development. That is why I am a zealous and passionate advocate on extending the Number 7 Subway Line. It is my number one goal for the development of the Far West Side and, to me, the most important part of the Mayor's entire proposal.

Perhaps most indicative of the importance growing the No. 7 line westward is the experience of Canary Wharf. Canary Wharf, London's largest new office complex languished until the London government built a new underground subway line to it. After the tube connected Canary wharf to the rest of the city the complex took off, it is now one of London's most successful. This should be a stark lesson to all of us: build the 7 line west and the Far West Side will flourish; don't build it and very little else will happen. To me, the lesson of Canary Wharf teaches us that the building of the No. 7 is the most important part of Mayor Bloomberg's west side plan.

Yet, I fear it is the part of the proposal least likely to get built. The Mayor's Far West Side proposal relies upon approval by the City Council for the zoning changes needed for the new commercial and residential development and the extension of the No. 7 Line. Approval by the State Legislature is needed to expand the boundaries of the Javits Center and to levy the hotel tax needed to fund the expansion. And the Mayor, Governor and Comptroller must all approve the use the \$350 million in Battery Park City funds for the Javits Center expansion. In truth, and by design, the only part of the proposal that does not require additional approvals is the New York Sports and Convention Center.

There are many obstacles that could stand in the way of the 7, the rezoning proposal and even the expansion of the Javits Center. The City Council, which must approve any zoning changes, will no doubt have their own ideas about how much development they want on the Far West Side and may not want as much commercial real estate. They may decide to scale down the amount of space - commercial, residential or both - so that the revenue streams from the new taxes those buildings bring in are insufficient to pay the bonds that finance the No. 7. Or the economy could slow, reducing the revenues the City receives from the development. And certainly the legislators in Albany will want to put their own ideas into the proposal.

I want to be sure the No. 7 goes forward, even if other parts of the proposal change or falter. Even if it means the MTA has to reexamine their Capital Plan.

I also agree that the renovation and expansion of the Javits Center is long overdue and will have clear and immediate economic benefits to the entire region. New York City should certainly be the nation's premier convention destination and I want to insure that part of the plan goes forward with a workable financing plan, which can be adjusted to meet changing economic or political conditions.

I think that on residential and commercial development, the Mayor and his team have proposed a sensible mix, although I think those elements of the plan will benefit from further input from the business and residential communities. The Group of 35 grappled with the question of reaching the right mix of business and residential, a central issue in urban development, and opted for about one-third less commercial space than the City is proposing - 20 million square feet versus 28 million square feet.

New York desperately needs more housing, which provides the 24-hour activity that makes an area attractive, and I am pleased that the Mayor has proposed to add 12,000 new housing units, including a significant affordable housing component. Many have argued that housing can often drive commercial development, as in the case of Battery Park City spurring the World Financial Center, and I support encouraging as much residential development as is feasible. But I also recognize that, given its proximity to the Midtown Central Business District, the Far West Side is uniquely situated to attract commercial development and that this entire venture requires such development to self-finance.

I think the financing plan for the commercial and residential portions of the plan seems promising and I credit the City with looking at creative financing mechanisms. However, I do think the plan requires a thorough debate and testing of its economic and financial assumptions. If the level of real estate tax revenues fails to materialize, how will the City adjust its vision for the area? And how will plans for the No. 7 be affected?

I see such potential with extending the No. 7 to further connect the major transportation facilities - Grand Central Station, Penn Station, the new Farley Building Station and the Port Authority Bus Station. Unfortunately, the MTA and the City report that it appears operationally difficult and prohibitively expensive to extend the No. 7 from Times Square down Eighth Avenue to Penn Station and then over the Javits Center, although they have not provided detailed cost estimates.

But I would like to propose that we take another look at this element of the proposal. The benefits of connecting Grand Central and Penn Station, as well as perhaps our beautiful monument to the late Senator

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Farley project, and then on to the Far West Side strike me as very significant and potentially worth the higher price tag. And I feel we need a robust and detailed discussion of all the possible alignments for the No. 7 extension and how and where to put the stations, in conjunction with a detailed analysis of the project's financing requirements.

Finally, I am reserving judgment on the proposal to build a New York Sports and Convention Center. I stand ready to listen to the passionate public debate that will no doubt ensue on this most controversial element of the proposal. I will note that I believe it is important for the public interest that the MTA negotiate a fair deal with the Jets for the use of the air rights over its tracks. We all want the MTA to be able to maintain its system in a state of good repair as well as expand the system and to do so, they must maximize the value of their public assets, as they did in the case of the Columbus Circle air rights.

Given that the New York Sports and Convention Center appears ready to move ahead with any further public action, I intend to devote my energies to the No. 7 and the Javits Center. I want to make sure that those projects get adequate discussion and attention, because thus far all eyes have been far more focused on the much more controversial stadium.

And I want to make it clear here today that if any element of this plan proceeds without a strong commitment to extending the No. 7, I will not be able to support the plan overall.

## VI. Conclusions

In conclusion, we must think big. Rarely does a City have the chance to remake itself, to make fundamental and long-lasting changes. We can continue to use our funds to pursue small, but worthy projects, or we can do something grand keep our City competitive for the next generation.

We must focus even more on job creation. We must not only regain the jobs we lost after 9/11, but keep pace with national job growth in the coming years, instead of lagging behind as New York does now.

I believe we can and must make significant investments in New York's infrastructure in the next 20 years to create those jobs. Some of the projects we need are well underway. I expect that in the reauthorization of TEA-21, we will be able to secure significant funding for East Side Access and get a good start on the Second Avenue Subway. I will also join with my friend Congressman Jerry Nadler to ensure that the cross-harbor freight rail tunnel receives funding from the House's proposed \$6.6 billion pot of funds for "projects of national significance."

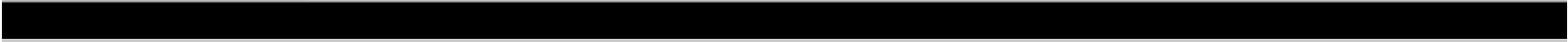
With the Federal funds we obtained after 9/11, we will be able to complete a one-seat ride from Lower Manhattan to the Kennedy Airport, as well as Fulton Street station, the new PATH station, and the South Ferry project. But to do so, I believe we will have to use the \$900 million in Federal funds now slated for West Street. While West Street is a worthwhile project, our funds are limited and I think the Kennedy Airport link must be a higher priority for our region.

On the West Side, we must extend the No. 7 Line, with a full consideration of the best possible alignments and station locations and we must not let the debate about the stadium crowd out our deliberations on this important project. I truly believe that nothing is more essential to the long-term growth of the Far West Side than improving subway access.



In conclusion, let me say that this is a crucial time to take stock of our post 9/11 recovery efforts and then look to New York's future. If we join together we can create jobs and build the necessary transportation infrastructure to ensure our City and region's long-term economic growth and competitiveness. We are potentially facing a once-in-a-lifetime chance to expand our City and create something of lasting value for generations of New Yorkers to come.

###



[about chuck](#) | [senate floor](#) | [press room](#) | [services](#) | [en español](#) | [kids' page](#) | [local government](#) | [contact](#) | [home](#)