



REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION, INC.

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

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NEWS RELEASE

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For Modern Railroads, But...

\$100 Million Tranquilizer Not the Answer

REGIONAL PLAN GROUP OPPOSES AMENDMENT FOR NEW COMMUTER CARS

Regional Plan Association, a persistent supporter of improved commuter rail transportation in the New York Metropolitan Region, opposes Amendment 3 to the New York State constitution.

The amendment, to be voted on November 7, would provide public funds for the Port of New York Authority to purchase new commuter rail cars for lease at low rates to the several private rail lines operating in the New York State sector of the Port District. The planning organization acted on the recommendation of a special committee headed by Paul Windels, former New York City Corporation Counsel.

In a statement released today, the Association praised Governor Rockefeller for quickly seeking a solution to commuter rail problems two years ago when the amendment was first proposed. But the situation is far different now, the Association pointed out.

"The governors of Connecticut, New Jersey and New York have just set up a Tri-State Transportation Committee which will recommend the kind of commuter service and other transportation facilities we need," the Association observed. "This action has committed the three states to joint planning of the Region's transportation."

"Why ask this Tri-State Committee to propose regional transportation policies and, before it has a chance to respond, freeze the pattern of rail service for a generation?" Walter D. Binger, a member of the special committee and chairman of the Association's

transportation committee, commented. "We should not set up machinery to buy \$100-million worth of railroad cars that will be used for the next 30 years before the Tri-State Committee has acted.

"The system the Tri-State Committee recommends could call for integration of some of the Region's many rail lines. But cars bought now are unlikely to be interchangeable with those of other lines," Binger added.

"Or the Tri-State Committee might demonstrate that a more automatic and high-speed rail network would be feasible and more efficient. But the cars purchased under the proposed amendment are not likely to be convertible to a modern system," he explained.

"Cars just ordered by the New York Central under a similar state-aid program are neither interchangeable with other rail lines nor convertible to more automated operation.

"Therefore it seems completely unreasonable to buy new rail cars now. If the Tri-State Committee recommends a modern system these cars can't fit, who will have the courage to tell the voters we are scrapping them, just after we have bought them?

"If we pass the bond proposal but don't buy the cars," Binger continued, "voters will be disappointed and hesitate to approve any further state investment in commuter railroad service if it is needed.

"It will be another Second Avenue subway case. New York voters still complain about voting for a new subway line which was never built.

"When we know what is needed to save and improve commuter railroad service, let us go to the voters with a feasible proposal. Then they will get what they expect," Binger said.

"Regional Plan Association has supported the new Tri-State Transportation Committee as the right approach to commuter problems and has praised Governor Rockefeller's leadership in establishing it," Binger noted. "For 10 years, the Association has recommended a study that will look at all kinds of transportation for the metropolitan

area as a whole, both for the immediate future and for the much greater population the Association anticipates in the next 25 years."

"The decision to oppose state credit for railroad cars was difficult for our board members to make," Binger reported. "Most of them are commuters with first-hand knowledge of the need for new equipment.

"But the board concluded that this is the wrong medicine for the ailing commuter railroads at this time. It is a \$100-million tranquilizer. The patient needs a major operation. That is exactly what the governors established the Tri-State Committee to perform."

Regional Plan Association is a nonprofit civic group working for the coordinated development of the metropolitan area surrounding the Port of New York. Binger, a consulting engineer and vice president of Regional Plan Association, was Manhattan Commissioner of Borough Works in the LaGuardia Administration.
