

**Subject: [Fwd: URGENT FOR TONIGHT'S AGENDA: Fwd: SkyTrain (now called Airtrain) in New York - costing \$190 million/km. to build!]**

**Date:** Mon, 01 Dec 2003 14:21:37 -0800

**From:** Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

**To:** Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

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**Subject: URGENT FOR TONIGHT'S AGENDA: Fwd: SkyTrain (now called Airtrain) in New York - costing \$190 million/km. to build!**

**Date:** Mon, 01 Dec 2003 21:16:28 +0000 (GMT)

**From:** Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

**To:** Mayor and Council <council@dnv.org>

**CC:** fonvca@fonvca.org

1 December 2003

Dear Mayor and Council:

At last week's policy meeting of Council, Crl. Walton said that I was one of the most consistent sources of information on the TransLink topic. I appreciated the comment. However, apart from the fact that, if the statement is true, everyone on Council should be very concerned, I cannot take all the credit due.

My thanks go to people like Phil LeGood of SFU, Malcolm Johnston of the Light Rail Committee, Ray Straatsma of B.E.S.T., Peter Boothroyd of UBC and many, many others who make all of their information freely available; without their generosity, the work I do would not be possible.

Members of Council may find it useful to add the latest piece of information, shown below, to their file on TransLink issues.

Sincerely,  
Liz James

*Donald Malcolm Johnston <dmjohnston@imag.net> wrote:*

Vaughn Palmer\Van."

Subject: SkyTrain (now called airtrain) in New York - cost \$190 million/km. to build

Date: Mon, 1 Dec 2003 07:19:36 -0800

Hi, Liz:

An interesting news article from New York, re: the Fifth SkyTrain system, now built. Problems, problems. No wonder the RAV Committee didn't mention the New York *AirTrain* in the past 2 years!

Highlights:

Only 4% of the public use public transport at airports.

*AirTrain* will run 24 hours a day. Driverless transit systems, like our SkyTrain, cannot run a 24-hour service because of essential maintenance needed on automated transit systems, to maintain service. This leads to.....

An *AirTrain* driver killed during training.

No mention of Bombardier Inc.!

A USD\$3 airport *departure fee* on top of a USD\$5 one-way ticket (\$40 monthly pass) to pay for the initial 12.9 (8 mile) USD \$1.9 billion or CAD \$2.46 billion (no tunnels) initial project.

Predicted ridership (remember this is New York city) a mere 34,000 a day!

**The *AirTrain* cost a massive CAD \$190 million/Km to build**

**Taxpayers hold on to your wallets!**

Malcolm Johnston  
Light Rail Committee

New York Times  
November 30, 2003

A Possible Holiday Bonus: The AirTrain to Kennedy Airport May Soon Be Running

By COREY KILGANNON

The much-anticipated AirTrain at Kennedy International Airport was set to open last year, but a crash during testing in September 2002 killed a train driver and dashed the hopes of airport officials.

Now, more than a year later, after an investigation into the crash and a smooth testing period so far, officials from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey say they hope the eight-mile light rail system will open by Christmas, connecting stops within the airport and connecting the airport itself to the city's mass transit system.

The opening will bring to fruition a notion that has been discussed since the 1960's: an efficient rail link from Manhattan to Kennedy Airport.

The train is to run 24 hours a day and leave every four minutes during peak travel periods. The two-track line runs outside seven of the airport's eight active terminals, and at Terminal 4, the main international terminal, it will stop at an indoor station on the mezzanine level. The train will serve as a free shuttle among the terminals as well as parking and car rental areas.

It will also run to the A-train at the Howard Beach subway station and to a new terminal in downtown Jamaica, adjacent to the Long Island Rail Road station, to stations for the E, J and Z subway lines and to connections to a dozen bus routes. The Howard Beach and Jamaica trips will cost \$5 each way, payable by MetroCard. A monthly pass for unlimited use of the rail line will be \$40.

The trip to Jamaica will be a three-mile ride on an elevated track along the median of the Van Wyck Expressway, the main artery serving Kennedy Airport and one chronically clogged with cars, trucks, taxis and buses.

Port Authority officials say that the AirTrain will improve travel within the airport complex and make it more accessible. Kennedy has long been infamous for its inaccessibility because of busy roadways and poor mass transit links. Direct rail links, a staple of European airports, are gaining ground in the United States. But studies have shown that only 4 percent of passengers arrive or leave an airport by mass transit.

The AirTrain will provide "a much more comfortable and convenient way to get to JFK," said Charles Gargano, vice-chairman of the Port Authority and chairman of the Empire State Development Corp. "It's fast, comfortable and predictable, and will save time for millions of passengers a year," he said. "It will tie together the separate terminals at JFK and tie the airport into one of the world's largest mass transit systems."

Mr. Gargano said that the opening would complete the first phase of a long-range plan to ultimately link Kennedy directly to Midtown Manhattan within a decade.

After years of planning and obtaining approvals, construction finally began in 1998 on the train, a \$1.9 billion project financed by Port Authority funds and a \$3 surcharge on departing passengers at Kennedy.

Work was largely completed last year, when the airport loop portion was scheduled to open. But then came the fatal test crash, and officials spent months exploring its cause. Authorities released a report calling it unrelated to the design and construction of the system and said the train would begin running by the end of 2003.

After the train is running, Port Authority officials estimate, it will attract 34,000 passengers a day to its sleek, shiny carpeted cars that glide quietly along tracks trestled by smooth gray concrete pillars. The AirTrain looks more like a Walt Disney World monorail than the elevated subway trains that clatter through other parts of Queens. Each car has luggage racks and can hold 26 passengers. Trains will be up to four cars long and reach speeds up to 50 miles per hour.

Port Authority officials take pleasure in describing how the train's passengers will whisk past the cars crawling on the Van Wyck

below. **They say they look forward to silencing the project's many opponents and critics who insisted the AirTrain would not serve enough riders to justify its construction cost. [Emphasis mine. EJ]**

Officials say that a trip from Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan via the Long Island Rail Road to Jamaica and then by AirTrain to Kennedy will take less than 45 minutes. A ride on the E train from Penn Station will take somewhat longer. In these cases, a passenger would pay the \$5 AirTrain fare on top of either the L.I.R.R. fare to Jamaica (\$4.75 off-peak and \$6.75 peak) or the \$2 subway fare.

The AirTrain seems certain to appeal to passengers who have to get to or from the airport during rush hour and those traveling to and from Midtown, but skeptics and transportation advocates wonder if passengers already spending hundreds of dollars on a trip will continue to take cabs.

George Haikalis, president of the Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, said that frugal passengers would be deterred by AirTrain's \$5 fare and impatient **ones by the need to change trains.** [NB: **One of Malcolm Johnston's most consistent themes has been that significant ridership is lost every time a passenger has to transfer.** EJ]

Business leaders in downtown Jamaica are hoping AirTrain users will help revitalize the area. There are plans for a hotel and conference center near the AirTrain terminal in downtown Jamaica. Currently, a spectacular modern building at Sutphin Boulevard and 94th Avenue is next to an unassuming strip club and around the corner from an adult video store, pawn shops and wig shops.

Airline industry officials also say that the affordable rail link will help draw more frugal travelers to the popular discount carrier JetBlue Airways, which is Kennedy's largest domestic carrier.

"It's going to take time for passengers to get accustomed to it," said Spencer Dickerson, senior executive vice president of the American Association of Airport Executives, in Alexandria, Va. "But with the proliferation of low-fare carriers like JetBlue at Kennedy, a rail link is crucial. If you want to serve the masses, you have to have a way to get them to the airport."

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