



[Die Skyway Muß Weg!](#)

John Norquist (President of the [Congress for New Urbanism](#)) and Scott Bernstein (President of the [Center for Neighborhood Technology](#)) came to town at the [invitation of the New Millennium Group](#) to call for the removal of the Skyway in downtown Buffalo - an issue that [Congressman Brian Higgins](#) has been talking about for many years.

In essence, removal of the skyway would reconnect the city to her waterfront, and would free up loads of inner harbor land for amazing development. Traffic would be redirected to surface boulevards and lift bridges to ensure that Southtowns commuters wouldn't be shortchanged. While there would be an initial outlay of money to remove the Skyway, the long-term savings would outweigh that. Specifically, the thing costs millions to maintain, and it needs to be rehabbed periodically. Get rid of it, and you get rid of a huge cost.

In New York, the elevated west side highway was replaced by a surface boulevard. In San Francisco, the Embarcadero was never rebuilt. In both cities, the waterfront became reconnected to the city, and traffic didn't suffer.

John Norquist refers to the skyway as "rural infrastructure in the city" that is improper, expensive, and harming Buffalo with each year of its existence.

Scott Bernstein noted that, 100 years ago, Buffalo's streetcar companies shared in the cost of street build-out with the city. All of the streetcars systems came downtown to the waterfront. 60 years ago, they were pretty much out of business. In their stead, the city connected itself with the state Thruway system.

Bernstein noted three specific benefits skyway removal would bring:

1. Long range cost savings;
2. Reconnection of the street grid adds value to properties in the area; and
3. Better transit connectivity = more accessibility, fewer cars.

There is more than enough street capacity in Buffalo to handle the traffic moving from the Skyway's traffic to the surface.

Higgins notes that the state DOT is the biggest impediment to change. We pay 6.5% of the state's gas taxes, but get back 1.5% of DOT investment. Opening up the waterfront under the skyway would bring development money and brand-new property tax revenue.

The Skyway's removal, based on this presentation, is a no-brainer. But to really reconnect downtown to the waterfront, we need to talk elevated I-190, too.

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