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THE INFRASTRUCTURE INFORMER
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**** August 2003 Issue ****

The Electronic Newsletter of the Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems (ICIS) at New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service
(<http://www.icisnyu.org/>)

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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SPECIAL FEATURE SECTION: BLACKOUT 2003
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"Power is Restored to Most, But Concerns Linger On"

"Air conditioners were humming Saturday and lights blazed again across most of the Northeast following the worst blackout in U.S. history, though getting electricity back didn't help those in Cleveland enjoy clean tap water, and some regions were still experiencing rolling blackouts... Still, the lingering affects of Thursday's dramatic power outage stretched into Saturday as millions struggled with both the mundane -- resetting VCR clocks -- to the life-threatening -- boiling tap to ensure potability." (NY Times)

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/national/AP-Blackout.html?hp>

Article by Rae Zimmerman
Director of the Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems
Wagner School of Public Service, New York University

"NYC Needs Systems to Blunt New Blackouts"

"The cause of the Blackout of 2003 may be unique, but blackouts will always happen. U.S. Department of Energy information on two dozen disturbances and occurrences in 2002 and the North American Electric Reliability Council's transmission-capacity measures point to the potential for recurrences. The general focus on blackouts has been on preventing system-wide cascading of single component failures, delicately balancing supply and demand, coordinating and centralizing management, and installing new transmission technologies. New York City will inevitably participate in the debates about prevention.

But equally important is the need to protect citizens from the consequences of power failures - and the city needs the resources to accomplish this." (Newsday)
Source: <http://www.newsday.com/mynews/ny-vpzim273429928aug27,0,420637.story>

"Experts Asking Why Problems Spread So Far"

"The power collapse that stilled a large swath of North America Thursday apparently began with a failure in the Midwest that cascaded into Canada, and from there into New York, power industry officials said yesterday. They said they were trying to determine why it spread so far. An enormous, instantaneous reversal of the power flow - huge amounts of electricity that had been moving east over the Great Lakes and was suddenly sucked back - overloaded one or more power lines, which quickly took themselves out of service." (NY Times)

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/16/nyregion/16BLAC.html?hp>

"Blackout Probe Eyes Failure Near Cleveland:
Officials pinpoint 'Erie loop'"

"US electric industry officials said last night they had strong indications that the massive power outage that shut down New York City and much of the Northeast began with the failure of a high-voltage line near Cleveland. That failure was the first in a 60-minute series of breakdowns that spread blackouts across eight states and Ontario, affecting about 50 million people. The North American Electric Reliability Council, a group originally formed to prevent a recurrence of the massive 1965 Northeastern blackout, said the crisis began at 3:06 p.m. Eastern time on Thursday on a line in the 'Lake Erie loop.'" (Boston Globe)

Source:

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/08/16/blackout_probe_eyes_failure_near_cleveland

"Incident Shines Light on Stalled Energy Upgrade"

"The massive power failure that struck the Northeast and parts of the Midwest this week also delivered a jolt to Congress, where energy legislation has been stalled amid deep regional differences over how best to upgrade the nation's aging electric power transmission system.

Administration officials and Republican lobbyists said yesterday they believed the power outage, experienced in a large part of the country and watched on television in the rest of the country, make it more likely that the energy bill logjam will be broken when Congress returns after Labor Day." (Washington Post)

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A891-2003Aug15.html>

"Outdated Power Grid's Failure Not a Surprise"

"The cascading power outages in the Northeast on Thursday underscore what energy experts have been warning about for years: The system can go down anywhere at any time. Years of neglected investment in the vast and antiquated network that moves electricity around the country - combined with steadily growing power needs - have left the nation's electricity grid vulnerable to disruptions, analysts say." (LA Times)

Source:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-fi-grid15aug15,1,2346926.story?coll=la-home-headlines>

"The Solution, Not the Problem"

"The blaming and finger pointing began almost as quickly as the lights went out. First it was the U.S. and Canada blaming each other for causing this particular blackout, but inevitably the blame conversation turned to larger issues of policy, and how something like this could happen in such a heavily regulated industry." (Tech Central Station)

Source: <http://techcentralstation.com/1051/techwrapper.jsp?PID=1051-250&CID=1051-081803F>

"Power Surges, Old Grids Fuel Concern, Question"

"Electric delivery to residential and commercial customers is accomplished through a complex process that involves a statewide or even a regional power system or grid. The term grid describes the interconnection of power lines across the United States and Canada. When power blackouts occur, a malfunction within the grid is usually the cause. Here is how an electric power supply grid system works and how a catastrophic domino effect can occur when there is a malfunction, like the one that occurred Thursday afternoon." (Newsday)

Source:

<http://www.newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-usqampal63415694aug16,0,2838810.story?coll=ny-homepage-right-area>

"Power Grid Not Congressional Priority"

"Amid headline-grabbing fights over Alaska oil drilling and gas-guzzling SUVs, the decidedly unsexy issue of power grid logjams has received little attention in Congress, even amid dire warnings that a massive outage like Thursday's was only a matter of time. For two years, Congress has failed to pass a comprehensive energy bill that would address the nation's antiquated transmission system - even though there is broad agreement among Democrats and Republicans, business groups and environmental advocates of the need for improvements." (Newsday)

Source:

<http://www.newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-usener163415696aug16,0,7108987.story?coll=ny-homepage-right-area>

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INFRASTRUCTURE NEWS
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ENERGY

"Bechtel Bows Out of Iraq Oil Repair Contract, Citing Scope Changes"

"A plan by the Army Corps of Engineers to complete significant work under two new Iraqi oil services contracts even before they are awarded has raised industry eyebrows and caused at least one bidder to drop out of the competition. Bechtel Group Inc. announced Aug. 7 that it would pull out of the competition for the two indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity contracts worth up to \$500 million each, one week before bids are due, claiming that most of the work in the plan will be completed before a replacement contractor could effectively get started." (McGraw-Hill Construction)

Source: <http://www.construction.com/NewsCenter/Headlines/ENR/20030811i.asp>

"Bremer Talks about Repowering Iraq"

"Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, the top civilian in Iraq and head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, knows it is going to take more than just dollars and time until power generation capacity in Baghdad is able to meet demand. In recent weeks Bremer has repeatedly said he expects the total amount of power available in the country to reach the pre-war level of 4,000 Mw. But that is still shy of total demand, which reached 6,000 Mw last year. 'We're going to continue to work our way up, and the next 60 days we'll get to 4,000,' Bremer said in a July 24 conference call with editorial writers from U.S. newspapers around the country. A transcript of the call was made available by the Dept. of Defense on Aug. 4."

Source: <http://www.construction.com/NewsCenter/Headlines/ENR/20030811g.asp>

TRANSPORTATION

"Traffic at a Crawl? Some Are Saying That's Good News"

"Some cutting-edge transportation experts have startling news: Traffic congestion isn't entirely a bad thing. In fact, it's a good sign. For what is congestion, these experts ask, but crowds lining up - whether shoulder to shoulder outside a movie theater or bumper to bumper on the road - to pursue activities with economic or social value? 'Congestion is a sign that a lot of good things are happening,' said Brian Taylor, director of UCLA's Institute of Transportation Studies." (LA Times)

Source:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-contrary31jul31,1,7248100.story?coll=la-home-leftrail>

"Bush Team Seeks Funding Changes at Amtrak"

"The Bush administration is proposing to scrap direct federal funding of Amtrak and turn over much of the responsibility for national passenger rail service to state governments, officials said yesterday. Transportation Department Secretary Norman Mineta plans today to unveil a proposal for legislation that would split Amtrak into operating and maintenance companies and open them to competition from outside contractors... Under the administration's proposal, the billions of dollars in federal subsidies that have kept Amtrak afloat for decades would be replaced by 50-50 matching grants to states. The plan calls for turning responsibility for Amtrak to the states gradually over a six-year period. Under the bill, states would forge regional coalitions to oversee train service and eventually would have the option of contracting service to private rail companies." (Boston Globe)

Source:

http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/210/nation/Bush_team_seeks_funding_changes_at_Amtrak+.shtml

"Transportation Security: More Federal Coordination Needed To Help Address Security Challenges"

"A U.S. General Accounting Office report recommends that the Departments of Homeland Security and Transportation use a mechanism, such as a memorandum of agreement, to clarify and delineate the Department of Transportation's and the Transportation Security Administration's roles and responsibilities in transportation security matters."
(Transportation Research Board)
Source: http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=1683

"New York City's High Line"

Hear a National Public Radio report on plans to transform New York City's abandoned High Line, a remnant of past rail infrastructure, into an elevated pedestrian park asset.
Listen: <http://www.npr.org/dmg/audioplayer.php?prgCode=ATC&showDate=05-Aug-2003&segNum=16>

"NY DOT Engineering Structural Health Workshop Proceedings"

"The Transportation Research and Development Bureau of the New York State Department of Transportation has published the proceedings of its May 16-17, 2002, workshop on Engineering Structural Health. The workshop focused on sensor allocation and measurements, structural identification, damage/deterioration detection, and decision making." (Transportation Research Board)
Source: http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=1719

"Real-Time Bus Arrival Information Systems"

"In the late 1980s and 1990s, the deployment of automatic vehicle location (AVL) systems to better monitor and control operations was becoming prevalent throughout the U.S. transit industry. The focus of most of these deployments was to increase operational efficiency, not to provide customer information. As these deployments matured, transit agencies recognized that data from an AVL system could be used to provide customers with real-time predictions of bus arrivals... As a result, transit agencies have discovered a growing interest in providing real-time bus arrival information to customers once they have deployed the AVL technology." (Transit Cooperative Research Program)
Source: http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_syn_48.pdf

"Experience LA: Cultural Treasures and Regional Transit"

"The Experience LA website (<http://www.experiencela.com/>) is a free public service providing cultural tourism information (itineraries, searchable directories and calendars, interactive maps, trip planning features and related public transit information to LA area visitors and residents alike. The site is a joint project of the LA County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the City of LA Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA), the City of LA, the County of LA, the LA Convention and Visitors Bureau, and numerous other public agencies including surrounding cities and area public transit agencies." (Experience LA)
Source: <http://www.experiencela.com/>

"Selling Part of a Car: Companies Create a New Transportation Industry"

"Penny Cherubino, a writer who lives in a condominium in Boston's Back Bay, likes to drive a car that is familiar to her... Two years ago, a newly formed company came to town and parked a car for hourly rent near her apartment. Ms. Cherubino promptly signed up to use the service, which has a new Ford Focus wagon parked in a commercial building a block and a half from her condominium and scores of other cars elsewhere in Boston and its environs... Cherubino's cost savings are an example of how two newly created companies are reshaping how city residents pay for mobility. The companies, Zipcar, based in Boston, and Flexcar, based in Seattle, currently provide a web-based service in nine American cities that is not exactly traditional car rental and not exactly car sharing."
(The Next American City)
Source: http://www.americancity.org/Archives/Issue2/donovan_issue2.html

GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE

"Developers And Architects See The Light"

"The U.S. real estate industry has never been a strong proponent of going green unless, of course, green refers to dollars. But there is a growing awareness among developers and architects of the inherent bottom-line benefits of sustainable design and conservation, which is reflected in the design of the next-generation office building. 'The challenge is to produce higher-value buildings at competitive costs in what has been a declining market,' says Ken Hubbard, executive vice president with Houston-based developer Hines. Given the difficult market conditions and competition for tenants, Hubbard believes that developers will be compelled to build high-performance buildings once the market begins to reward such buildings with higher valuations... That leaves a major hurdle: educating the real estate community on the benefits of high-performance green buildings, which include lower insurance premiums, lower energy costs and healthier and more productive tenants. 'We believe that these will translate to higher lease rates, better retention and, ultimately, lower cap rates,' Hubbard explains." (National Real Estate Investor)
Source: http://nreionline.com/ar/real_estate_developers_architects_light/index.htm

"Brooklyn Piers 6 - 12 in the Spotlight"

"Throw a stone in any direction from Brooklyn's Piers 6-12 and you'll hit some of the area's most glorious waterfront treasures... As is increasingly the case, scenic vistas like these lead to development pressure to move out maritime. This may be the recipe for Piers 6-12, Brooklyn's last active containerport. The surrounding neighborhood of Red Hook has seen a growth in both the residential and business communities, including the maritime sector, and growing pains are on the rise with piers 1 - 5 now slated for conversion to Brooklyn Bridge Park. It's little wonder then that all eyes are gazing upon Piers 6-12, as the New York City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Port Authority of NY and NJ (PANYNJ) have initiated a planning process which will determine their future." (Waterwire.net)
Source: <http://www.waterwire.net/News/fullstory.cfm?ContID=1417>

WATER

"Venice's 'Moses' Dam: Salvation or Curse?"

"The topic of conversation this summer in Venice, Italy, is the \$3 billion MoSE (Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico), a series of 78 hinged movable steel gates that officials hope will stop the flooding that is destroying the fabled city. The gates are comprised of linked water-filled steel containers that, when pumped with air, will rise to block seawater from entering the Venice Lagoon; eventually they will span across the lagoon's three inlets like giant rows of teeth. Construction on the project began in May and was commemorated in a ceremony attended by Italy's prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi. The historic moment had been long in the making: Italians have been debating the merits of MoSE (also Italian for "Moses") for the past 17 years." (Metropolis Magazine)
Source: http://www.metropolismag.com/html/urbanjournal_0803/venicesmosesdam.html

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UPCOMING EVENTS
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Thursday, September 4, 2003

"2003 Progress Report:"
ASCE Updates their 2001 Infrastructure Report Card

"In 2001 ASCE released a Report Card for America's Infrastructure, grading 12 infrastructure categories at a depressing D+ overall and estimating the need for a \$1.3 trillion investment to bring conditions to acceptable levels. On September 4, ASCE will release a Progress Report that examines the trends currently affecting the same 12 infrastructure categories and assesses their progress or decline since 2001. Details regarding category trends, and updated state and national information will be released at a press conference and on this site, September 4. Engineers will be available to discuss infrastructure conditions in your area... The news conference will be broadcast live on the Web at <http://www.house.gov/transportation/> at 11 a.m. ET, Thursday, Sept. 4." (American Society of Civil Engineers)

Time: 11 am
Web address: <http://www.house.gov/transportation/>
Note: To view the event, free Windows Media Player software must be installed on the viewing computer.
For more information: <http://www.asce.org/reportcard/>

Thursday, September 4, 2003

"A Roadmap to the Hydrogen Economy"
Dr. Amory Lovins, Co-founder and CEO, Rocky Mountain Institute

New York, NY

"The Environmental Science Forum of the New York Academy of Sciences is pleased to welcome physicist and renowned energy expert Amory B. Lovins, cofounder and CEO of Rocky Mountain Institute. Since the 1970s Dr. Lovins has been among the world's most prescient and influential thinkers on energy sources, technologies, policies, and the developmental paths of national energy systems. Dr. Lovins will speak on the topic of attaining a hydrogen economy and will attempt to demystify hydrogen energy, debunk related popular misconceptions, and propose a surprisingly easy self-financing path to the hydrogen economy. Recent public interest in hydrogen has elicited much conflicting and confusing commentary. His recent peer-reviewed white paper, 'Twenty Hydrogen Myths,' is a primer on basic hydrogen facts that weighs competing opinions and corrects widespread misconceptions. It explains why the rapidly growing engagement of business, civil society, and government in devising and achieving a transition to a hydrogen economy is warranted and could yield important national and global benefits" (NY Academy of Sciences)

Time: 5:45 pm
Location: New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd Street
Price: \$20 non-members, \$10 students (first event is free), free for members
Registration: EnviroSciences@nyas.org
Web: http://www.nyas.org/calendar/cal_details.cfm?ItemID=796

Thursday, September 11 through Sunday, September 14, 2003

"Building Livable Communities with Transit"

Atlanta, GA

Rail-Volution brings their conference on transit and livable communities to Atlanta, GA. "Attendees of this year's conference will see a strong emphasis on melding the broad and the focused - on addressing global problems that affect every community and then taking a hands-on approach to developing local, specific solutions. Participate in discussions about a range of diverse cities, such as: Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Memphis, Minneapolis, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, DC, to name a few. Our goal is to generate heated discussions and tangible solutions that will stoke the fires of your community's livability movement." (Rail-Volution) Topics include creating livable communities, using partnerships effectively, finding the money, TEA funding, and sprawl.

Information & registration: 1-800-788-7077 or convvene@aol.com
Web: www.railvolution.com

Wednesday, September 17 through Friday, September 19, 2003

"Tenth National Highway Utility Conference"

Orlando, FL

"The overall intent of the conference is to bring together all parties associated with construction, maintenance, accommodation and joint use of highway rights-of-way in one forum to educate the different entities on the latest technology, best practices, new standards, policies and procedures relating to highway/utility matters" (National Highway Utility Conference).

Web: <http://www.natlconference.com/>

Tuesday, September 30 through Sunday, October 5, 2003

"New Frontiers in Preservation"

Denver, CO

"The National Preservation Conference is the premier preservation conference in the United States, providing outstanding educational sessions, a unique exploration of a nationally important host community and region, and opportunities for community preservationists from throughout the nation to share preservation challenges and tactics... The theme for the 2003 Denver National Preservation Conference is New

Frontiers in Preservation, focusing on a number of key issues that will affect historic preservation for years to come, such as: downtown revitalization in the age of sprawl, preservation of post-war resources, diversifying the preservation movement, preservation, planning and new urbanism, use of new technologies in preservation practice, preservation of historic landscapes and heritage tourism" (National Trust for Historical Preservation).

Information & Registration: 1-800-944-NTHP or conference@nthp.org
Web: www.nthpconference.org

Saturday, August 30 through Thursday, October 19, 2003

"Vargas-Suarez Universal: American Virus"

Jersey City, NJ

In this exhibit, Vargas-Suarez's work explores architectural space and incorporates the designs of four major buildings around the world, including the infrastructure landmark of Kuala Lumpur's International Airport.

"Vargas-Suarez Universal (b. 1973, Mexico, lives in Brooklyn) creates room-sized installations based around his delicate yet powerful drawings in ballpoint pen and permanent marker as well as mural-sized wall drawings directly onto architectural spaces. This exhibition will feature three new drawings based on his American Virus series. While the actual drawings exist on paper, the artist will re-create these drawings directly on the walls of the Museum's Atrium Gallery. Having studied Biology instead of fine art, Vargas-Suarez Universal approaches his creative process with an empirical methodology of gathering facts about architectural spaces, history, physics, and the universe. His interest in science and the chaos theory have both influenced this body of work" (Jersey City Museum).

Location: Jersey City Museum, 350 Montgomery Street at Monmouth
For more information: 1-201-413-030
Web: www.jerseycitymuseum.org

The INFRASTRUCTURE INFORMER highlights innovative projects, practices, research and initiatives in the planning, financing, operation, and management of civil infrastructure systems. By focusing on innovation and collaboration among stakeholders, ICIS intends for the newsletter to both inform and connect various individuals and organizations from a range of disciplines and perspectives. It is also used to promote related infrastructure events and activities taking place around the country.

You are receiving this electronic newsletter because you have come into contact with ICIS in some way: virtually, through signing our web site guest book, or physically, through meeting someone connected to ICIS at a workshop or conference.

ICIS was established in January 1998 with funding from the National Science Foundation. Located at New York University, the ICIS consortium includes: NYU, Cornell University, Polytechnic University of New York, and the University of Southern California. We welcome comments or suggestions for future issues and encourage you to forward this newsletter on to colleagues and others who might be interested. If you have trouble accessing the full articles of this edition, please send your correspondence via email to icis@nyu.edu.

