



Spitzer On Energy, Environment, Transportation

Posted by [Glenn](#) on May 25, 2006 - 8:00am in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

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[Eliot Spitzer](#) is [way up in the polls](#) for the Democratic nomination for Governor - he now leads Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi by 63 percentage points. And with the Republicans divided between Weld and Faso, with Faso [now likely to run an insurgent Conservative Party run](#) if he doesn't get the GOP nod, Spitzer looks likely to win in a walk in November.

That means his stance on energy, environmental and transportation issues will be very important to all New Yorkers. The Governor controls many of the state authorities like the MTA, Tri-boro bridge authority, the NY half of the Port Authority and controls a massive \$100 Billion state budget. In some recent speeches, he has started to stake out his policy positions on some very important issues that TODers often talk about.

In late March, Spitzer made a [major policy address](#) talking about his committment to the environment and a 5 point plan on energy:

We need a new state energy plan. In 2000, I issued a report that called for that. Not much has happened in the intervening years, except for the fact that our problems have gotten worse. But it's not too late to start.

Our energy plan should be focused on increasing the supply of electrical generating capacity and expanding our transmission and distribution network while pursuing the following environmentally sound strategies:

1. Improving energy efficiency and energy conservation;
2. Re-powering existing coal and oil power plants to run on cleaner burning fuels;
3. Building a new generation of cleaner power plants;
4. Upgrading the state's transmission system; and
5. Prioritizing investment in promoting clean renewable energy sources, such as solar power, wind power, hydro and fuel cells so that we can meet our state's energy needs by significantly expanding renewables.

Here, he's talking about electricity generation, not all energy uses. That all sounds good, especially the renewable and conservation efforts until you read between the lines and realize that the "cleaner burning fuel" is natural gas, which is facing its own peak in North America this decade. But what about Nuclear? What's Spitzer's take on the nuclear, which represents more than 30% of NY's energy production. Well, he's against the controversial Indian Point Nuclear plant:

I cannot address energy without describing another environmental imperative - the need to close the Indian Point nuclear power plant.

Of course this can only happen when we are certain that there is adequate replacement power - - since we cannot simply take 2,000 megawatts out of the grid. That it is why it is essential for us to renew the Article X siting law that expedites environmental review of power plant proposals while also dramatically improving our energy efficiency and conservation performance.

The 40-year licenses for the two nuclear reactors at Indian Point expire in 2013 and 2015. It is imperative that the nuclear regulatory commission not renew these licenses, and I will work to ensure they do not.

This is all the more important given the recent revelation that radioactive contaminants are leaching into the Hudson River from the Indian Point site.

Hmmm...well he's set a tough challenge for himself. Decrease Coal, Oil AND Nuclear while growing the overall electric supply, while natural gas supply is set to plateau. But this is just usual campaign politics - set very high expectations that are probably unrealistic and see what you can really do once in office. I hope to hear a lot more about large scale conservation programs and ramping up renewables moving forward.

But I'm not as worried in the short term about electricity. Transportation is the big fossil fuel consumer that needs urgent action to prepare NY for peak oil.

Spitzer talked about a number of transportation mega projects in [a recent speech to the Regional Planning Association](#), specifically the Second Ave subway, Eastside Access, extending the number 7 subway westward, the Cross-Harbor Freight Rail Tunnel as well as some of the smaller, less expensive project that need political will more than big investments, like Bus Rapid Transit, ferry services, and other mass transit service improvements to encourage more use of mass transit over automobiles.

But my favorite part was his promotion of the "Smart Growth" ideas that are even important to making sure that we organize our towns and cities around transportation corridors in an efficient manner that also preserves open spaces for farming and recreation.

I've talked throughout New York State about the need for Smart Growth as an integral part of our transportation and economic development policies. A key to smart growth is building housing around existing public transportation infrastructure.

Thinking about transportation in the context of the environmentally sustainable development is a big part of what "smart growth" is all about. We should create incentives and provide technical support for counties and towns to ensure that land use and transportation planning are integrated. But we should also recognize smaller smart growth initiatives, encouraging walking, biking and other alternatives as part of our regional fabric. Smart growth involves starting a planning process with a vision of what we want our communities to look like in a few years' time, and then thinking comprehensively about the housing, commercial development, transportation and environmental infrastructure that's needed to make that vision a reality.

And I've heard good things from him about CAFE standards, protecting farmland for future generations, etc. So overall I think Spitzer has a lot of potential to be a good peak oil governor for NY, but it remains to be seen if he will follow the lead of other NY politicians and pander to the

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upstate motorists about the gas tax, congestion pricing, highway tolls and other subsidies for energy consumption.



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