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March 27, 2008

Mr. Michael P. Anderson, P.E., Project Director
Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Environmental Review
660 White Plains Road
Tarrytown, NY 10591

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I address you with comments on the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Environmental Review. I represent the Sierra Club, Lower Hudson Group (Westchester, Rockland and Putnam Counties). This letter has also been coordinated with the comments of the Sierra Club New York City Group (representing the five boroughs) and the Ramapo-Catskill Group (representing Orange and Sullivan Counties),

In your section of Structural Defects you list only seismic, safety, lane widths and absence of shoulders. Earlier reports and verbal comments referred to structural defects in the foundation at the western end. Has this been resolved and is the upgrade of the old bridge basically sound and what is the life expectancy of a rehabilitated bridge? These questions should be addressed.

Construction of a new bridge and removal or rehabilitation of the old bridge can seriously affect the fragile ecology including the aquatic life of the Hudson River. Please address what can be done to minimize the construction impact on the Hudson River.

There is no mention of parking in the document. While this might not be the responsibility of the authorities charged with building the bridge and installing modes of public transportation, it should be addressed and coordinated with affected counties and municipalities. A good deal of the success of the project depends on available parking near the entry points into the transportation system.

More study needs to be done on transit alternatives outside the 30 mile corridor and how it will affect final transit mode decisions (e.g. CRT from Suffern to Grand Central station via the Hudson line). Your study indicates that the traffic across the Tappan Zee Bridge into New York City represents 28% of vehicles, with 16% going into the Bronx, 7% into Manhattan, and 5% to other points.

There are other passenger rail lines going into Manhattan. There are other transit initiatives being prepared by the New Jersey Transit (such as access to the Region's Core ARC with service to the Westside of Manhattan via a new Hudson River tunnel to Penn Station). The question needs to be answered, whether the divided rider ship still justifies the enormous cost of a one-seat ride from Suffern to Grand Central Station

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Improving air quality through better public transportation modes should also be addressed. One of our main concerns is to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide into the air, thereby improving air quality and helping to reduce the effects of global warming. Public transportation must be made attractive and we recommend that rides via a public mode of transportation be no more expensive (if possible cheaper) than single passenger rides.

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We have studied the various alternatives and options for rehabilitation and/or replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge and the installation of transportation modes from Suffern to Grand Central Station and from Suffern to Port Chester. Our objective is to reduce the single occupancy vehicular traffic by the availability of convenient time saving public modes of transportation. We believe a one-seat CRT ride from Suffern to Grand Central, as well as a one-seat BRT ride from Suffern to Port Chester best serves these objectives. We like the idea that the CRT service connects to the Port Jervis line on one end and to the Hudson line on the other end. We also like the transfer possibilities of the BRT line to the Harlem and New Haven lines. In regard to the one-seat CRT ride from Suffern to Grand Central Station we believe that it is a good idea only if it can be justified after taking alternative means of transportation into account.

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CRT service is well known in Westchester; however BRT service needs to be introduced. It is less expensive to build than CRT or LRT. It is flexible and can adjust to future demands of traffic patterns. It can also go off the bus ways or bus lanes and make stops in business parks, malls and other areas of concentrated riders.

That brings us to the bridge rehabilitation and/or bridge replacement options. Our preference is for rehabilitation of the existing bridge and a new dual level parallel structure as shown in Rehabilitation 4. We like this approach because it avoids tearing down the old bridge and makes the building process less invasive for the Hudson River and the affected communities.

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We do however have a concern we addressed earlier. We would like to be sure that the life span of the rehabilitated bridge is comparable to the new bridge and that we are not faced with the problem of tearing down the bridge in the near future and the prospect of adding on to the new bridge or building a new parallel bridge. If this is a concern we would advocate replacement option 3, a new dual level bridge with 8 GP lanes, 2 HOV lanes, 2 Ped Cycle lanes and 2 CRT tracks.

Respectfully submitted,



Julius Shultz

Sierra Club, Lower Hudson Group