

TZB-125E

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I wish to express my disagreement with the claims by the Thruway Authority, and the State D.O.T. that a new, wider structure is needed to replace the current Tappan Zee Bridge.

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Furthermore, while there have been numerous meetings ostensibly to solicit public input, not much has changed. The state agencies listened but essentially did not hear our concerns. The bridge proposals that are getting the major thrust would increase the volume of cars and trucks through this overburdened and congested area. These proposals will only serve to facilitate sprawl, increase noise and air pollution and seriously degrade the beauty and historic significance of this area.

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It is becoming more and more apparent that the stakeholder and task force committees that have been assembled give the appearance, but not the reality, of public inclusion.

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I am seriously alarmed by the tainted, disingenuous process by which the Thruway and State DOT has interacted with the public, and I am opposed to any change to the existing structure that would increase the volume of cars and trucks through this overburdened and congested area.

Further, I am have concerns regarding sprawl, air pollution, noise, and the preservation of the beauty and historic significance of Rockland and Westchester Counties. I feel that the Thruway is pushing to build a ‘sprawl facilitator’ to suit an agenda that was set by developers within the previous administration. I feel that the committees or task forces that have been assembled give the appearance but not the reality, that we have been included in this process.

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I am deeply concerned about the costs and consequences of any plans to expand the existing structure, or to build a new structure. I feel that the public has been subjected to a relentless campaign of pro-build publicity and disinformation in order to promote the Thruway’s agenda. The public has been cynically misinformed on several issues: fear that the bridge was structurally unsound and falling down, and that it was designed to last only 50 years. Both of these contentions are now acknowledged to be false. We were told that marine borers were destroying the wood pilings, also irrefutably false, as these types of marine animals do not exist in the waters surrounding the Tappan Zee.

The cost of rebuilding the Tappan Zee Bridge was estimated, a few years back, to be 14.5 billion dollars. In current and future dollars this figure will be substantially higher. This estimate raises several questions:

1. Where will the money come from? It is not there now and it is questionable whether the Federal Government will be in a position to participate given our current economic state.
2. What is the cost of dismantling the current bridge?

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3. If commuter rail is the mass transport choice, what is the cost of building the tunnels in Rockland and Westchester needed to offset the irregular elevations not navigable by rail?
4. Why has the option of building a bridge North of Rockland County where future growth is projected to occur, not been considered?
5. Where is mention in the planning of the three rail lines that traverse Rockland County, Pascack Valley, Port Jervis and West Shore? All of which will have direct access to Penn Station.
6. Why has the impact of Stewart Airport, for which the Port Authority is committed to spending hundreds of millions of dollars, not included in the planning?
7. Where is the concept of regional planning that we hear so much about?

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These questions have been repeatedly asked but no answers have been forthcoming.

I have also been ignored on questions that I have repeatedly asked, namely; in the event that a new bridge is built, what will it cost to dismantle and remove the original structure? If, indeed, it is to be taken down. Where will the money to build come from? There is substantial popular opposition to a structure with an increase in lanes and widening of the highway. Insofar as commuter rail is concerned, the likelihood of it happening is remote because the cost could be prohibitive. According to the D.O.T.'s consulting engineers, tunnels would have to be dug both in Rockland and Westchester to compensate for the irregular terrain the train would have to traverse. There is no indication that this cost has been considered.

It seems that Bus Rapid Transit may be the only workable mass transit option in this corridor. Rail does not suit the density (or lack thereof) in this region. Rail is most effective when delivering people to employment hubs such as Manhattan, White Plains, Stamford and the Bronx. It does not address the commuting needs of the many individuals who work in the scattered corporate parks throughout this corridor and would not get them out of their cars.

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Further, I question the legality of segmenting this project, i.e. existing rail lines, Stewart Airport, and now, the separation of bridge construction and transportation.

There is also growing suspicion that the Tappan Zee Bridge is merely one piece of a larger redevelopment plan involving Stewart Airport, for which there has never been any public hearing or Environmental Review Process. This habit of segmenting the project into smaller, seemingly unrelated projects is another leftover from the previous administration, and may be illegal.

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I am alarmed by the price tag for this project, which does not take into consideration the fact that not one single transportation project has ever stayed within budget. I feel it would be fair to assume that the projected 25 billion dollar cost (in 2010 dollars) could be overrun by 200%. Again, where will this money come from? Both County Executives Vanderhoef, and Spano have the power to veto N.Y.M.T.C. funds if they do not feel the project is in our best interests. A public referendum would be required in order to bond for the money. We are currently being pummeled with property taxes and health care costs. How will the State

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fund your plans to deal with these pressing problems if such a questionable project gets approved?)

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I feel that this bridge project, as conceived by the Thruway Authority and others, is the result of entrenched special interests. I implore you to include these concerns and all our voices in this process. I have been in this fight since the beginning and feel that I have been manipulated and marginalized for the entire process.

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Thank You,
Elyse Knight
Honorary Secretary
Tappan Zee Preservation Coalition
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