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TZB-218E

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Here are my comments regarding the proposed Tappan Zee Bridge improvements.

Rail offers the best hope of luring drivers onto transit

Trains (either commuter rail or light rail) are more capable than buses of luring people out of their cars. In the past 25 years, Metro-North's ridership has nearly doubled while the Westchester County Bee-Line's bus ridership has been almost flat.

Only Alternatives 4A—4D can reduce the Tappan Zee Bridge's truck traffic

While all the proposals (except Alternatives 1 & 2) include a transit component intended to reduce trans-Hudson automobile traffic, automobiles are only part of traffic. What about trucks? Only Alternatives 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D offer any way to reduce trans-Hudson truck traffic.

Right now freight trains cannot cross the Hudson River anywhere south of metropolitan Albany. This "missing link" in our infrastructure forces nearly all freight bound for NYC or Long Island (and some bound to and from New England) onto trucks which in turn creates more highway congestion, especially on Hudson River Crossings.

If Alternative 4A, 4B, 4C, or 4D were chosen (*i.e.* if the project includes a heavy rail/commuter train line across the Hudson), the route could also be used for freight. If this were done, it could reduce the number of trucks crossing the Hudson River.

The Westchester Bee-Line should *not* operate any new BRT or LRT service

If BRT or LRT is built across Westchester, somebody *other* than the Bee-Line should be chosen to operate it. All too often, the Bee-Line does not act in its passengers' interests. The current situation at Ossining is illustrative.

Until September 2005, the Bee-Line ran no buses to the Ossining train station. Instead it had two bus routes terminate about 2,000 feet away, up a steep hill from the station. The Bee-Line extended those routes to the train (a tiny extension that takes just eight minutes round trip) only after NYS DOT coughed up \$176,000/year for that extension. [*I have attached an August 25, 2005 Westchester County press release describing this situation.*]

And even after this ransom-like payment (about \$225 for each hour of bus service actually added, service that should have been provided all along), the Bee-Line *still* refuses to extend those same bus routes to the Ossining station at nights and on weekends, even though their weeknight (and most Saturday) Ossining layover times could easily accommodate that extension.

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The new east-west transit service should not be limited to cross-Hudson trips
Regardless of what transit mode is selected, it should be available for trips totally within Westchester County, not just those crossing the Hudson. While this seems obvious, current regulations seem to prohibit this.

During the Bee-Line's 7-week strike in 2005, the TappanZee Express bus continued to run but refused to carry passengers directly between existing stops in White Plains and Tarrytown. According to a letter to the editor in the *Journal-News* (published March 11, 2005, copy attached), this was done at the Bee-Line's behest. During the strike, I was told by a Bee-Line official that while he wasn't sure if the rule was requested by the Bee-Line, he nonetheless saw no reason to suspend this rule even for the duration of the strike. Even now the problem continues. Six days/week, the Tappan Zee Express runs later into the evening than the corresponding Bee-Line bus service but cannot be used for intra-Westchester trips.

Notices for the February open houses arrived too late

You seem to have mailed the notices for the February Open Houses too late. I received mine on February 29 (the day *after* the last open house). I had heard about the meetings in the newspaper and attended even though my notice arrived late. Perhaps you should mail future notices earlier.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas W. Durkin



news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 25, 2005

BEE-LINE TO EXTEND SERVICE TO OSSINING RAILROAD STATION

Bee-Line buses will begin their fall schedule the day after Labor Day. The highlight of these changes is new bus service to the Ossining train station with the extension of two bus routes from downtown Ossining.

"With the addition of the Ossining Railroad Station as a new destination for Routes 13 and 19, Westchester County Bee-Line buses now serve 34 of the 43 railroad stations in Westchester County," said Westchester County Transportation Commissioner Lawrence Salley. "We have worked cooperatively with Metro-North staff to come up with a compatible schedule. Best of all, this is a new service that doesn't cost Westchester County taxpayers a thing."

The additional \$176,093 annual cost to extend the bus routes to the Ossining station will be funded by the New York State Department of Transportation.

"I am delighted with the added convenience of two Bee-Line Ossining routes for train connections," said County Legislator Richard Wishnie who represents Ossining. "This is an example of how the county, Metro-North, New York State DOT and the Village of Ossining have worked cooperatively to improve the delivery of services to the residents of Westchester."

Besides the bus service to Ossining train station, Playland bus service will either end for the summer season or be reduced to weekend service for the rest of September. Schedules of bus routes serving two schools will be adjusted.

The fall 2005 bus service changes to take effect on Tuesday, September 6 are:

- **Route 13** weekday trips extended to serve the Ossining Railroad Station with minor schedule changes.
- **Route 19** weekday trips also extended to serve the Ossining Railroad Station; Selected evening trips will end in Pleasantville or Briarcliff Manor rather than Mt. Kisco.

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County policy hurts commuters

By **Jordan Becker**
Sleepy Hollow
(Original Publication: March 11, 2005)

As Westchester residents are struggling to find a ride to work or school during the Bee-Line bus strike, the Westchester Department of Transportation seems to be doing its best to make these commuters' lives more miserable.

When the Westchester DOT granted Transport of Rockland the rights to run the Tappan Zee Express bus several years ago, the two departments agreed to abide by laws that would prohibit TOR drivers from picking up passengers looking to travel only within Westchester.

While the transit workers prepared to strike, one would assume that the DOT would attempt to work out an agreement with TOR to allow Tappan Zee Express drivers to pick up passengers from the Tarrytown train station who need to find a ride to White Plains during the strike.

Instead, the Westchester DOT contacted TOR and asked it to remind Tappan Zee Express drivers of the aforementioned laws and insist that they not pick up any Westchester passengers. This week, some desperate bus riders have been taking the Tappan Zee Express from Tarrytown to Rockland and then paying for another bus trip from Rockland to White Plains!

An agreement to allow Westchester bus riders this option would have benefited everybody involved. However, Liberty Lines and the Westchester government — whether it be Andy Spano's ridiculous press releases or the DOT's refusal to assist its riders — would rather treat its frustrated, working-class commuters as a bargaining ploy to turn public opinion against transit workers who are striking for the benefits that they deserve.
