

TZB-185E

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I am writing to you as the Town Historian of the Town of Clarkstown in Rockland County, NY, regarding the potential impact of the proposed I-287 project in Rockland and Westchester Counties, in connection with the also proposed reconstruction of the Tappan Zee Bridge.

The I-287 corridor runs directly through the Town of Clarkstown, specifically through three of our hamlets: Central Nyack, West Nyack and Nanuet, being the area between Nyack (Town of Orangetown) and Spring Valley and Suffern (Town of Ramapo).

In running through Clarkstown, I-287 (The New York State Thruway) runs immediately adjacent to one of our most historic cemeteries, in Central Nyack; and runs directly through the center of our official Historic District, in the hamlet of West Nyack.

I have attended the public input forums (Palisades Center Mall) and visited your Nyack office and spoken to many people at both locations regarding the potential impact of this project on those two locations. Your representatives, both staff and consultants, have been extremely courteous and helpful, and have assured me that neither historic location should be adversely affected by the proposed I-287 project.

Since the available maps at both locations were not specific enough to pinpoint the two exact locations of which I am fearful, I am taking this opportunity to communicate my concerns to you directly in writing, so that they are on the record. Hopefully, your staff and consultants can follow up and re-assure me once again that my fears are unfounded, and that neither area will be adversely affected.

The two areas of concern are:

1. Central Nyack. The Nyack Rural Cemetery, a large historic rural cemetery of over 50 acres, lies immediately south of the Thruway, between Ingalls Road and Broome Boulevard, abutting and on the north side of NYS Route 59 (AKA Old Nyack Turnpike). From the Thruway, it sits atop the huge rock cut on the south side, just west of the southbound exit II for "The Nyacks."

This cemetery was developed in the mid-19th century, and was abandoned in the early to mid-20th century, not having been active in the past 50-60 years. It contains hundreds of graves, both marked and unmarked, and was part of the national "Rural Cemetery" movement which gained enormous popularity in the mid 19th century.

When the New York State Thruway was first constructed in the early-mid 1950's, the northern-most part of the cemetery was apparently acquired by the state as part of the

required right-of-way. How much was paid, and to whom, is not known, nor is it known if there were any burials on that portion, and if so, whether they were relocated, and to where.

Any widening of the Thruway itself, or of its right-of-way, on the south side in Central Nyack would severely endanger what remains of the historic Nyack Rural Cemetery.

I would oppose any such widening or land-taking, and would appreciate hearing from your office as to whether or not such is proposed.

2. West Nyack. The Town of Clarkstown established the West Nyack Historic District in 1969 (Resolution 279, April 16, 1969), comprising an area 250 feet east and west of the center lines of Sickletown and Strawtown Roads and 250 feet north and south of the center line West Nyack Road in the hamlet center of West Nyack. The effect was a very large "X" stretching about two miles north and south and about one mile east and west.

The Thruway runs directly through the middle of that district, and has notable historic structures and sites on all four comers of the intersection of the Thruway and Strawtown Road. At the northwest corner is the historic Clarkstown Reformed Church and a circa 1770 home where the last Witchcraft trial in New York State was held, at the northeast is the original Manse for this church, now a plaqued historic home, along with an Indian campground from the 16th-18th centuries; to the south east is a historical circa 1840 mansion and community landmark now used as a church, and to the southwest is a portion of a hillside used as a campground by General George Washington's army during the Revolutionary war (this site also occupies the hillside on the northwest side, behind the Reformed Church and witchcraft trial site).

Any widening of the Thruway or its right-of-way in this area would be extremely deleterious to the historic sites immediately surrounding it on all four corners, and would effectively destroy the heart of the current West Nyack Historic District of which we in Clarkstown are justifiably proud.

Again, I would appreciate a response from your staff/consultants after they have had a chance to review my concern with the actual plans.