

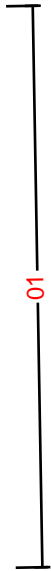
TZB-199E

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Having lived in Rockland County since 1962, and having commuted via car over the TZ Bridge to Westchester for some 32 years, I believe I have had sufficient experience to comment upon the current considerations for alleviating the now over capacity traffic the bridge is subjected to twice a day. When I first began commuting to White Plains in Westchester from my home in West Nyack, the garage to parking lot transit time was about 20 minutes. When I stopped making that commute, the transit time had increased on a normal day to about one hour; the time required if weather was inclement or there was an accident could be three to four hours. Over that entire period the only substantive changes made to the bridge that eased some of the traffic problems was the addition of the flexible lane scheme. More recently, the rebuilding of the entire exit complex to the Cross Westchester Expressway, and other parkways, helped considerably. Unfortunately, providing ever more roadway will not solve the commuting problem as it pertains to the bridge. An extra lane on the Thruway and another lane or two on a new bridge will only attract more automobile traffic. Certainly, the bridge's history over the past three decades is ample proof of that. To paraphrase, if you build a bigger bridge, they will come!

The commuting traffic burden on the TZ bridge can only be significantly reduced by providing a clean, rapid, cost effective alternative that will meet the needs of and be used by the vast majority of bridge commuters who are driving to jobs in Westchester, Connecticut and to New York City. That alternative needs to service a corridor from Suffern, NY to Stamford, CT. It needs to provide for a one-seat commute for Manhattan bound commuters via the Harlem Line or the Hudson Line, and it needs to provide local stops across Rockland and Westchester. A very large amount of Westchester office space is located within a half mile of the Cross Westchester Expressway. Local Westchester bus service could move commuters from the stations there to more distantly located concentrations of office complexes. In Stamford, virtually all the office towers are within easy walking distance of the train station there. Looking further ahead, despite the succession of false starts, ultimately Stewart will become the much needed fourth New York airport, so provision needs to be made now for one-seat rail service from Manhattan to it, with limited stops at stations in Westchester and Rockland.

It is abundantly clear that surface bus service will not be a permanent resolution of the current problem. Buses are a more efficient form of transit than individual automobiles, but they pale in comparison to the carrying capacity of rail. Bus stops are, inevitably, uncomfortable places for people to await buses, and are more than inhospitable in inclement weather, which this area gets a generous portion of for five to six months each year. While a bus system is cheaper in terms of initial capital cost, it will ultimately be more costly to operate for an inferior form of service over the long run. The inevitable creep of salary and operating costs inflation will be a constant pressure on fares, far more



so than for a rail option. The ratio of workers to passenger carrying capacity is vastly more favorable for rail. Fuel costs for a bus system will be largely determined by OPEC; rail can be electric powered from clean burning, pollution free sources which can become a reality for us over the next decade. A major obstacle to be considered in a rail alternative is parking. The relatively low density of development in suburban counties makes the concept of a system of surface bus transport to feed rail stations twice a day a non starter. There can never be enough feeder buses located sufficiently conveniently to commuters homes to make such a system physically, or fiscally, feasible. People will want to, and will, drive to the nearest serving rail station. In Rockland, that would likely be Suffern, Airmont, Spring Valley, Nanuet and West Nyack. Parking in sufficient quantity and at modest cost must be provided at each station site. Given the level of development that already exists, that parking will have to be in the form of large parking garage structures, save perhaps at West Nyack, if an accommodation can be worked out with the owners of the Palisades Mall. This necessity needs to be introduced into the options now being considered so that people favoring a rail option understand that provision for parking must be part of the plan.

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Much of the discussion of the several options to date has centered on the capital cost. This is inevitably the case when public, or quasi public, entities are considering major capital investment. The history of these projects almost inevitably demonstrates two verities: the first is that no matter how the capital cost estimate for each alternative is presented, it is a reliable bet that the actual built cost will be double the originally provided figure; the second is that, even at double the original cost estimate, by the time the project is up and operating years and years later, the then replacement cost to do the project will have escalated much, much more. So, no matter the option selected, from a cost stand point, upon fruition, it will have been a bargain!

The only valid basis for choosing among the options being considered is that of deciding upon a course of action that has the greatest chance to successfully resolve the commuting problems of today and tomorrow, and that recognizes the future needs for rail transit in the lower Hudson area. The right choice today will make possible the above referred to Stewart/Newburgh link and be capable of extension from the Suffern terminus north into Orange County on one end and from Stanford either east or north at the other, as future needs may dictate.