

RECEIVED
3/31/08

TZB-211E

March 31, 2008

Michael P. Anderson, Project Director, P.E., Coordinator
New York State Department of Transportation
Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Environmental Review
660 White Plains Road, #340
Tarrytown, NY 10591

RE: COMMENTS ON THE TZB/I-287 CORRIDOR STUDY

The original intent of the official state study on I-287 was to solve congestion on the corridor. However, when the six alternatives finally emerged the original intent of the study had clearly been bent around to serve those few commuters from Rockland heading for Grand Central Terminal. We were told that the ridership that these commuters added to the TZB rail proposal were crucial to its success. But success in these terms only meant running a commuter rail just to the Hudson River, not across Westchester with the capability to go all the way to Stamford on existing MetroNorth tracks.

Why do Westchester's public and business transit needs not register with the consultants in this study? Only one of the alternatives link the five north/south rail lines with a full-length commuter rail connection and that alternative is hobbled by the ubiquitous and completely unnecessary one-seat ride to Manhattan. Splitting the east/west rail line at the Hudson River seriously weakens the service that will be available to the 70% who are traveling through the Westchester corridor and into Connecticut.

Further negatives in the transit alternatives - several alternatives break the transit mode at the bridge, where riders have to change from one mode to another to continue across Westchester, completely ignoring the stated goal of the study to solve east/west congestion. Planners have always made clear that each mode change reduces the number of riders, a principle clearly ignored by the consultants.

Without the link, in order to change from one line to another it would be a simple matter of going up or down an elevator or an escalator right at the existing Hudson Line. By adding the Hudson Link the complexity and the cost of the project go up astronomically. For one thing, a rail going from the underside of a new TZB, more than one hundred feet above the water must

descend to a tunnel near the toll booths, swing around gradually to accommodate the limits of a commuter rail to turn as well as its limitations in changing grade, in order join the Hudson Line at water's edge. Though the engineers claim this is doable it does stretch one's credulity. Beyond the engineering complexity is the matter of splitting the service into two inadequate lines, therefore requiring twice as many rail cars, more staff to service the trains, this additional cost added to the cost of a tunnel of unknown length. It should be added that the FTA is already going to put money on the one-seat ride into Manhattan on the ARC project, giving west of Hudson commuters all the service they need.

03

Manhattan bound commuters are NOT increasing but the reverse commuters coming out of New York City into Westchester ARE increasing and they need rail connections to reach the many job centers on the I-287 corridor. Rockland commuters need quality rail service. After all, 70% of the riders from Rockland are headed for destinations on the I-287 corridor, only 5% are headed for Manhattan. 17% are headed to and from the Bronx, far better served by the Harlem line.

05

Meanwhile, the soaring price of gas has barely been noted in this project. Throughout the country cities and communities facing rising energy prices are opting for fixed rail to mitigate the economic damage. The metro region is blessed with an astonishing rail system but it reflects the movement of people from another age, when everyone went to NYC for employment. Now commuters have established a far more complex pattern of employment – the suburb to suburb pattern. The east/west rail, without the Hudson Link, would create a world class rail network able to meet the challenges of soaring gas prices. To be sure the cost is high but we are forgetting two significant cost issues. If we do not build a world class rail network the region's ability to create the tax revenue that the entire state depends on will be short circuited. Further, the cost of the commuter rail option is more than equaled every year by the cost of congestion on the highways and the death and destruction of a car-dependent society. These facts are well-established. Furthermore, the astronomical cost as stated by the study team is in no way verified by the cost of projects across the country – a fraction of the cost stated so far. Shouldn't the consultants and the agencies be studying other projects to factor in significant cost saving measures?

06

04

The full-length commuter rail connection is crucial to the economic viability of the metropolitan region. When the public cannot afford to get around the entire state will suffer.

#####

Note: Ten years ago then-Governor Pataki cancelled the HOV lane project for the I-287 corridor. It was deemed inappropriate for the corridor. The BRT is just another HOV project though more complicated and definitely more inappropriate for the corridor, particularly since it is unable to get through White Plains without serious disruption. This is our last chance to get it right, to build the missing link in our rail system.

Maureen Morgan
10 Ellis Place
Ossining, NY 10562
Columnist for the Business Journal
914-762-5512

06