

TZB-140E

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Mr. Michael Anderson
NYSDOT
TZB- I-287 Corridor Project Director
660 White Plains Road, Suite 340
Tarrytown, NY 10591

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I would like to make the following comments with regard to the proposed rehabilitation/replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge as those options have thus far been presented to the public.

Range of Alternatives

The range of alternatives is unfortunately narrow in scope, even at this stage. With the exception of option 1 and 2, the alternatives are enormous in their scale and price. It is unfortunate that the light rail options have been taken out of consideration as they may represent an optimal compromise among all competing factors and interests.

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Also, due to the size and scope of these options, they almost all will cause major permanent disruption to the communities most directly affected such as the Nyacks and Tarrytown. It is also very unfortunate that these communities that will bear the brunt of the impact of these large proposals are the ones that would derive the least added benefit. It is extremely inequitable that these beautiful and rare communities for the Hudson Valley will suffer for those who choose to commute too far.

I would also highlight that it is very likely, and extremely unfortunate that these large-scale proposals will adversely affect The Nyacks and Grandview as currently proposed. Worse, none of the currently devised mass transit options are of any real benefit to the river towns. There are no bus or train stops proposed East of the Palisades Center. Thus, any resident of the river towns wanting to make benefit of the transit will have to backtrack. This does not make sense. I would therefore request and propose that any mass transit option include

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stops East of the Palisades Center not only for common sense reasons, but also to restore values to the properties most adversely affected.

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Also, as a commuter who drives the Tappan Zee Bridge during the morning rush hours, I can tell you from experience that almost without exception, the congestion west of the span begins to break up just after the left-hand curve of the span over the water. This backup is caused generally by one or more trucks slowing down during the rush and the damage is done for better than an hour. The morning traffic actually has three causes: (1) the merge of entering cars from the exit 10 onramp; (2) sun glare; and (3) the left hand turn required of all cars. It is the sum of all the three that backs cars from the span to exit 14. I am afraid that unless these issues are addressed and considered in developing the new alternatives, they will not achieve their intended result.

With respect to the turn, the proposed new designs actually have a sharper curve which I fear will make matters worse, no matter the capacity. There is a solution, albeit perhaps difficult and unpopular. There are a few rental buildings to the North of the West tie in that if purchased would enable you to straighten the road. With a willing seller and a long notification period to renters, the DOT can greatly improve the prospects for success of this project.

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I would also suggest that lane management be utilized with regard to the onramp and that the DOT consider a way to cover the road at the Western tie in to avoid sun glare delays. Covering or enclosing the road could also serve to mitigate other environmental impacts such as noise, visual impacts, and emissions.

Purpose and Need

In 2008 it is finally becoming apparent in the United States that the era of cheap gas is over forever. As a result, the behaviors of drivers are already changing in terms of the amount they drive and the cars they drive. The continued expansion of America's suburbs has been based primarily on the use of the automobile as the primary mode of transportation. Now that behaviors are changing, this project should not proceed on the assumption that the distant suburbs will continue to grow as bedroom communities for New York City and should not assume that vehicular traffic will continue to increase as it did during the years when gas prices did not limit behavior.

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Second, it is just as clear that one cause of today's traffic congestion is not the number of vehicles, but the size of today's vehicles. Obviously, 100 people on the Thruway in large SUVs takes up a lot more linear space and causes a lot more congestion than 100 people in smaller, fuel-efficient vehicles. The current trend against large SUVs for daily use is one that is likely to continue, probably on a permanent basis. Quite simply, the days of the commuter in a Hummer or Escalade are numbered. It is just as likely that the mobility in the corridor will improve as drivers scale back the size and use of their cars and truckers realize that time spent in traffic is counterproductive and very expensive at \$4.00 per gallon of diesel and adjust their driving habits as well.

The reason I bring these points up is to suggest that the demands of the future are probably not what is currently forecast by NYMTC. The future will likely not have the large growth in driving commuters from Orange and Northern Rockland counties as projected. Further, the last 5-10 years have shown large population increases in those areas, especially among middle class commuters and blue collar New York City workers (police and firefighters high among them). Unfortunately, these people were essentially lured to these outlying suburbs by the promise of large houses and “easy” mortgages. Many of these houses are now in foreclosure and the dream of semi rural living while commuting to a blue-collar job in New York has given way to the reality. This includes the expense of the commute in terms of dollars spent at the pump and time spent away from the family. These recent booms in the outlying suburbs are not likely to continue and will likely reverse themselves as the baby boom generation retires and housing supply in the nearer suburbs outpaces demand.

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With respect to the purpose and need of this project, I would suggest that the DOT’s purpose not be to find ways to encourage and enable people to live upwards of 60 miles from their places of employment. This is not good for families. It is not good for spouses and children. It is not good for the environment. Encouraging the outlying suburbs to be bedroom communities will only lead to an ongoing cycle of destructive growth - the wrong kind of growth. The poor municipal planning as evidenced in places like Nassau County should not be encouraged and is unfortunately probable under many of the proposals currently under consideration.

Finally, the proposed span designs are extremely large and will be both extremely obtrusive and intrusive. As stated above, they may not only be unnecessary based on my comments on Purpose and Need; they may also not alleviate any of the mobility issues unless the three issues causing traffic are incorporated into any solution. I ask that serious consideration be given to these comments and to insuring that this project not disrupt the communities who stand to benefit the least from it.

Very truly yours,



Eric S. Strober

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