

TZB-141E

Jonathan Woolley
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Dear Sir,

I have a few comments regarding the February 2008 Scoping Update Packet of the Tappan Zee Bridge / I-287 Corridor Study, particularly regarding the range of alternatives.

For a number of years prior to the start of this study, I have long felt the I-287 Corridor in Westchester is an ideal environment in which to implement suburb-to-suburb passenger rail service, provided this service connects with the Harlem Line. Many of the corridor's employment centers are located within walking distance of the highway – or in White Plains itself – and so detrain passengers would not have to walk more than a few minutes to reach their workplace from the rail line, provided rail stations were conveniently located. Since, according to the diagram on page 43, more than one third of morning commuters on the Tappan Zee Bridge travel either to Central Westchester or to Connecticut, a rail service would seem to have the ability to tap a significant market. It could remove a number of automobiles both from the bridge itself and from the Thruway west of Elmsford (including in Rockland County) and from I-287 east of Elmsford. This would be particularly true if the service were to be continued into Connecticut, such as to Stamford or Norwalk, since it could not only tap those riders commuting over the bridge to both Central Westchester and Connecticut but could also tap those riders commuting from Connecticut to the White Plains / I-287 Corridor area. A commuter rail service would be the most appropriate alternative to implement this plan, since it would allow Metro-North to provide service from Rockland County (and elsewhere) across the bridge through the I-287 Corridor and White Plains directly onto existing Metro-North New Haven Line tracks. It would also allow direct service to Grand Central via the Hudson Line and open the possibility of providing residents and businesses of Rockland County, surrounding counties, and White Plains direct Amtrak service to Boston (thus providing additional mobility options to residents and businesses of these areas). For this reason, I recommend the study strongly address the possibility of potential ridership to / from east of Port Chester going forward in this study.

I also recommend the study consider more strongly the possibility of connecting services to Bergen County, New Jersey, going forward. With the opening of non-rush hour service on the Pascack Valley Line, frequent bus and rail connections to a proposed Bus Rapid Transit / Light Rail / Commuter Rail are now available from all regions of Northern Bergen County. Twelve percent of the morning commuters on the bridge come from Bergen

County. The possibility of easier travel between Bergen, Rockland, Westchester, Fairfield, and other counties is, therefore, likely to stimulate public transportation travel via the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement. Thus, I believe these factors should be considered in determining a transit mode choice for the bridge replacement.

While the study is aware of other concurrent regional studies, such as Access to the Region's Core, it has paid insufficient attention to the addition of Stewart Airport to the region's traffic and transit projections. The airport's usage has already increased dramatically over the past two years. Furthermore, the imposition of temporary - for now - flight caps at Newark, La Guardia, and Kennedy airports, along with the increasing number of people expected to live north and northwest of New York City, will provide airlines with an incentive to increase flights to and from Stewart. The increased flights will provide residents and businesses located south of the Tappan Zee Bridge to use the airport for passenger and freight purposes. Some of these people and goods will likely travel to the airport via the bridge and the Thruway in Rockland and Orange counties. This study needs to do a better job of refining its numbers to correctly predict the impact of Stewart Airport on traffic volumes. I should also request the study consider the ability of a trans-bridge Metro-North service connecting (either directly or via a transfer) with the Port Jervis Line to provide Westchester and Connecticut travelers with direct service to the airport, and project some cost and passenger information in this regard. The effect of other airport to Westchester or Connecticut bus service, such as via Orange-Westchester Link, Leprechaun Lines (as now goes to Beacon), should also be considered.

I strongly applaud the study's use of having outreach centers in Nyack and Westchester County, and I hope they continue to stay open. I only wish other studies, such as Access to the Region's Core, provided a similar service. However, during the past month I have been unable both to attend to attend one of the hearings or access one of the outreach centers, due to other commitments. In light of that, I found the description of what type of comments were being sought during this comment period to be somewhat unclear, based on my reading of both the information in the Scoping Packet and the information in the February 26, 27, 28 presentations posted on the study's website. This was particularly true since the Purpose and Need is printed at two places in the document, the main text and Appendix A.

Lastly, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on this study. I look forward to reading all of the comments you received and hope they will be published soon.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Woolley