

## **TZB-175E**

### **COMMENTS BY THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY ON THE REVISED NOTICE OF INTENT & SCOPING UPDATE FOR THE TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE/I-287 CORRIDOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW March 31, 2008**

As a Participating Agency in the above-referenced review, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) offers the following comments on the revised Notice of Intent and updated draft Scope of Work released on February 14, 2008. This statement reiterates and updates previous PANYNJ comments presented during the initial scoping period and subsequent milestones in the process.

The Port Authority is a bistate government agency responsible for a multi-modal portfolio of regional transportation facilities and services. These include the George Washington Bridge and other vehicular crossings between New York City and New Jersey, bistate transit facilities and services, and the region's major airports and marine container facilities. The agency operates within a Port District defined under a bistate charter that encompasses an area within an approximate 25-mile radius from the Statue of Liberty. In addition, beyond that boundary, the PANYNJ assumed responsibility in November, 2007 for the operation of Stewart International Airport (SWF).

The Port Authority works in partnership with the New York State and New Jersey departments of transportation, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, NJ Transit, and other governmental entities to support coordinated planning, investment, and operation of the transportation network serving the downstate New York and north-central New Jersey metropolitan area and linking it to continental and international markets for the movement of people and goods.

#### Improving the TZB/I-287 Corridor: A Local and Regional Priority

The Port Authority supports the comprehensive planning effort represented by the TZB Bridge/I-287 Corridor process and the revised environmental-review approach, which promises new momentum to address the deficiencies of the existing bridge and to expand intermodal transportation capacity for the Hudson Valley. Advancing an effective, multi-modal improvement on this vital local and regional travel corridor addresses several shared goals:

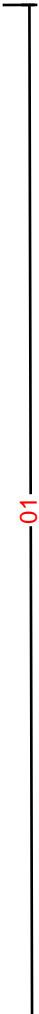
- Assuring safe, reliable, and efficient vehicular access as one of several east-west highway corridors that serve growing local and regional needs for passenger and freight movement. The Port Authority and partner agencies are working to sustain and improve the performance the George Washington Bridge/I-95 corridor. The TZB and GWB crossings and their respective highway corridors are complementary; the region depends on maintaining both routes to meet regional goals for transportation efficiency, environmental sustainability, and resiliency of the essential transportation network.

- Expanding transit service options to improve regional mobility, reduce auto dependence, and fulfill federal air-quality mandates. The Port Authority’s regional strategic plan views expansion of transit services in both urban and suburban corridors as an essential for accommodating projected growth in population and employment. Enhanced transit capability on the TZB corridor would address this need for the Mid-Hudson Valley. It also could take advantage of, and augment, initiatives regionwide to expand rail, bus/BRT, and ferry services and create new or improved intermodal connections among these services.
- Promoting economically competitive and environmentally sustainable development. The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) earlier this month included the TZB-I-287 Corridor as one of ten desirable growth areas, representing some of the most promising opportunities in the region to coordinate strategic investments by the major transportation agencies with planning by local governments to guide future land development for residential, commercial, and goods distribution needs. Improving the performance and modal flexibility of the TZB/I-287 corridor supports this “smart-growth” goal.

A Changing Regional Context

With this backdrop, the Port Authority agrees that the revised NOI and tiered environmental review can help expedite completion of the process for selecting the preferred alternative to improve the river crossing and the most effective transit mode, followed by the detailed corridor planning effort to develop the full transit element of this initiative. This timetable also recognizes changes since the initial scoping effort and allows for TZB/I-287 Corridor planning to carry through to completion in parallel with progress on several related regional transportation initiatives:

- Access to the Region’s Core (ARC): Public hearings are underway this week on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for this project, which will double the peak-hour capacity for West-of-Hudson service into Penn Station New York (PSNY), including the capability to provide one-seat service from the Northern Branch commuter-rail lines to and from PSNY via a loop track connection to the Northeast Corridor. The project is included in the long-term regional transportation plans for both NYMTC and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. The Port Authority is partnering with NJ Transit to finance and implement the project upon completion of the ongoing approval processes.
- West of Hudson Regional Transit Access Study/Stewart Access: The Port Authority’s Board of Commissioners earlier this month approved PANYNJ participation and shared funding for a formal planning study that will evaluate potential commuter-rail service improvements on the Port Jervis Line, including a potential extension to Stewart International Airport (SWF). The study scope will



examine the potential for interim or alternative transit service for SWF passengers and employees via bus service to Manhattan, local bus and shuttle connections in the Mid-Hudson Valley, and other options. The agencies intend to coordinate this one-year effort beginning later this spring with Port Authority planning for on-airport improvements.

- **Regional Freight Planning:** Several regional efforts are underway or planned to develop a broader, multi-modal array of freight transportation options to improve the region's economic competitiveness and promote more sustainable approaches for essential goods movement as cargo volumes grow. These efforts span a range of concepts, including expanded rail freight services, pricing and capacity-management strategies on the regional highway network, investigation of options for expanded waterborne freight transportation, and development of distribution facilities and intermodal transfer points to achieve greater efficiency and reduced environmental impact. Among other initiatives, the Port Authority has agreed to assume responsibility for the environmental-review process for the Cross Harbor Freight Movement Project, suspended in 2005, and to initiate a regional freight planning effort in cooperation with New York State and New Jersey transportation agencies. These initiatives point toward safer and more efficient truck operations. They also will help to ensure that investments to improve the performance of key vehicular corridors like I-287 are balanced with expansion of competitive modal alternatives to long-distance trucking.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Port Authority looks forward to working with the TZB/I-287 Corridor team to provide information as requested and to support coordination between this initiative and pertinent PANYNJ and regional plans and studies.

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