

**Position Paper of the Town of Clarkstown
Tappan Zee Bridge Task Force**

Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Clarkstown has been closely following the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor project for over a decade now. The project as set forth by the NYS DOT was of monumental scale, with the bridge replacement, Commuter Rail Transit (CRT), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), multi-modal stations and accompanying Thruway modifications. The Town formed its own Task Force two years ago to attend the numerous public informational meetings and tackle the myriad documents put forth by the NYS DOT. Throughout the process, one thing was clear: a new bridge is needed for the continued economic vitality of the region. Given the scale of public investment in the billions of dollars, this project would have to serve the needs of this area for years to come – a hundred years according to the documents.

The following is the collective work of over a dozen Clarkstown citizens organized into subcommittees to study four key aspects of the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor project: the proposed multi-modal stations, the BRT and CRT lines themselves, the Thruway right of way expansion and realignment, and the potential drainage impacts of the project. Although the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project has been superseded by the Hudson River Crossing Project, which only seeks to replace the Bridge, the concerns and recommendations of this report still have validity. The basic question still needs to be answered: What is the solution to this region's traffic congestion and long term growth? The Hudson River Crossing Project may have pushed off answering this question into the future, but sooner or later it still has to be answered. This document critically analyzes how the State attempted to answer this question via the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project and recommends how it should address this issue as a part of the Hudson River Crossing Project

II. MULTIMODAL STATIONS

Background

The Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Project Team, consisting of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT), the New York State Thruway Authority and Metropolitan Transportation Authority Metro-North Railroad, originally studied three proposed multi-modal stations in Rockland County: at Hillburn, the Thruway Exit 14/Garden State Parkway and the Palisades Center. For the purposes of this study, stations were only considered “multi-modal” if they are served by both buses and trains, irrespective of whether other transportation modes such as automobiles, biking or walking could be used to access the stations. More specifically, multi-modal stations were to serve both the proposed Bus Rapid Transit and Commuter Rail Transit lines along the Thruway. The Project Team recognized that the exact alignment of these transit lines would impact the development of the “integrated CRT/BRT multimodal facilities.” CRT in Rockland County was considered on the south side of I-287 or in the median, while BRT was considered in a Busway (travel way exclusively for buses) on the north side or south side of I-287 or in High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on both sides of I-287. Given the uncertainty regarding the exact alignment of the CRT lines or BRT lanes, the project lacked specific information regarding the precise location or exact design of the stations. The following are general descriptions summarized from the reports and handouts issued by the Project Team.

Proposed Station Locations

Two of the three proposed multi-modal stations were located in the Town of Clarkstown, namely Interchange 14/Garden State Parkway in Spring Valley/Nanuet and Palisades Center in West Nyack. The proposed Interchange 14/Garden State Parkway station could be “located between Pascack Road and Route 59, with the platform on the south side, near Old Nyack Turnpike.” The Project Team anticipated that the station would use the existing park-and-ride facilities on the south side of the Thruway at Pascack Road and Forman Drive, “which could be expanded as necessary.” A pedestrian bridge would be built over Route 59 to provide access from the parking lots to the station platforms. A previous proposal situated the station in the Home Depot shopping center on the north side of Route 59.

The proposed Interchange 14/Garden State Parkway station was situated between two existing stations along the Pascack Valley line: Spring Valley where Metro-North and NYS DOT recently “constructed a new bus intermodal area ... and rehabilitated the station building, platform and parking facilities” and Nanuet where there are three park-and-ride lots, one of which was recently constructed by Metro-North. Despite this, the Project did not propose connecting with the Pascack Line which merges with the Main/Bergen Line just north of the Secaucus Transfer Station providing trains to Penn Station, New York along with Newark, Trenton, Long Branch and Morristown. In fact,

the Project Team only studied “system connectivity” with the West Shore CSX freight line, Hudson Line and Harlem Line.

The station in West Nyack was proposed at an existing park-and-ride lot referred to as “Parking Lot J” adjacent to the Palisades Center, just east of the West Shore CSX freight line. The Project Team identified the potential to connect with the West Shore CSX freight line, even though there is admittedly “no passenger service ... anticipated on the line, either to the north or the south, as it is a heavily used single-track freight line.” In order to have sufficient clearance over the CSX line, the proposed CRT would travel on a viaduct and “require station platforms approximately 45 feet above the I-87/I-287 roadway and approximately 25 feet above the existing park-and-ride surface.” While in the vicinity of Route 303 and Route 59, Lot J can only be accessed via the Palisades Center “Ring Road,” a privately-owned quasi-circular road with posted speed-limits of 20 mph due to vertical and horizontal sight-distance deficiencies.

Station Design Concepts

As mentioned previously, actual design of the proposed multi-modal stations would be dependent on the actual alignment of the CRT and BRT lines. The Project Team only discussed conceptual designs for the stations. The platforms of CRT stations are typically high-level platforms that provide level boarding to trains. Station platforms would typically include canopies for weather protection, lighting, benches and signage. The ultimate appearance of the station could vary greatly, from modern to classical. The design of these structures should complement the architecture of the station and surrounding area.

A key station concept was pedestrian access. The Transit Mode Selection Report stated that “enhancing pedestrian access to stations is as important as providing good access for vehicles, since for every person walking to a station, the need to provide space to store a car is eliminated.” The report discussed the use of pedestrian underpasses, overpasses, cross-walks, stairs and elevators to access stations. While the Interchange 14 is an area with some sidewalks, park-and-ride facilities are still needed to accommodate passenger vehicles. Palisades Center has no sidewalks along its internal roadways and actually has signs prohibiting pedestrians. Lot J, along with the entire Center, is bordered by the CSX line, the Thruway, Route 59 and Route 303, all lacking pedestrian access with the exception of a short distance of Route 59. There is no sidewalk actually leading to the building entrances or Lot J from Route 59.

Another key consideration for stations was parking. Parking areas are needed to eliminate parking in surrounding roadways that may have little to no space designated for parking. Both of the stations proposed at Interchange 14 and Palisades Center were located adjacent to existing park-and-ride surface parking lots. There are close to 500 parking spaces in three lots located at Exit 14 with a utilization rate of 100% and 900 spaces at Lot J with a 26 % utilization rate. The Project report stated that “where space is limited and demand warrants the investment, parking structures may be needed.”

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Potential

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is development that complements and supports a transit facility. The Project report stated that “proposed transit mode alignments have the potential to induce TOD.” Typical TOD developments are “high-density, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented communities, usually within one-quarter mile of a transit station.” Again, given that station locations were not determined, only generalized TOD potential was discussed in proximity to possible station areas. Ultimately, alternatives were to be rated in terms of “minor, moderate, or major potential for generating TOD.” However, the report stated that stations serving CRT lines are usually associated with a greater potential than the other options. Alternatives with “more CRT stations are considered to have moderate to major TOD potential ...[while] those only with BRT ...have minor to moderate TOD potential.” Both of the proposed multi-modal stations incorporated CRT and BRT, and therefore were considered to have “moderate to major TOD potential.”

While multi-modal stations may theoretically have the potential to induce development, land use in the State of New York is still regulated by zoning enacted by the local municipality, which in this instance is the Town of Clarkstown. The Palisades Center is zoned Major Regional Shopping (MRS), which does not permit residential uses, nor are residential uses in close proximity or accessible by walking. As previously described, the Palisades Center is a veritable island where pedestrian activity along its roadways is dangerous and actively discouraged. The site is bordered by the CSX line and the Hackensack River and its associated wetlands to the west, Route 59 and the Town landfill to the south, Route 303 and the Palisades Ridge to the east and the Thruway and Tilcon quarry to the north.

The area of Exit 14 is zoned Manufacturing (M), with the immediate vicinity zoned Professional Office (PO) and Regional Shopping (RS), none of which allows residential development. In contrast with the Palisades site, some high-density residential areas are located in the general area of the proposed station. The largest area of multifamily complexes, with close to 3,000, units is farther than one-quarter mile from the proposed station and the sidewalks leading to them are discontinuous. Serving the Pascack Valley line, the Nanuet and Spring Valley stations are both within close proximity of the proposed station, and both have surrounding land uses with the potential to be redeveloped with complementary residential and commercial uses. The Project, however, did not contemplate a connection to this passenger line, nor did it consider improving either of these stations.

Identification of the Issues

The siting of a major transit center in the hamlets of West Nyack and Nanuet would have had a substantial impact on the community. An understanding of these effects is essential to ensuring that any future project will be positive. In its broadest sense, the original project addressed a core issue in the economy of Rockland County. Property values and economic activity varies remarkably in the suburban areas located at a 50 mile radius surrounding New York City. Compared to Westchester, Connecticut, Northern New

Jersey and Long Island, Rockland enjoys equivalent, if not superior, proximity to the city, natural beauty, good schools, parklands and other amenities of suburban life. However, its most significant deficit is the lack of desirable mass transit for commuters to New York. One has only to consider the density of high quality residential (and attending light commercial) development surrounding the commuter rail lines in Westchester, Fairfield County, the Long Island Railroad, and the extensive New Jersey Transit network in Essex, Union, Middlesex and Hudson Counties.

Transit Center at Lot J of the Palisades Mall in West Nyack

Focusing on the specifics of the Lot J site, the following aspects emerge:

1. Lot J is a logical site to serve a major segment of the eastern portion of the County.
2. It is adjacent to the Thruway, and the intersection of Routes 303 and 59 for traffic access
3. The area to the south of Lot J offers (subject to drainage concerns) area for expansion of parking facilities
4. It is astride the CSX West Shore Railroad line and if any future consideration is given to reestablishing passenger rail service on this line it will be ideally situated.
5. Early designs for the Palisades Center Mall included provision for future addition of transit facilities at Lot J.

The cautionary aspects must also be considered and attention given to broad impacts:

1. The adjacent area is subject to chronic flooding and consists of extensive wetlands of the Hackensack River basin. Broad-reaching flood control and wetland remediation must be contemplated prior to any expansion of parking or access roadway construction. This effort may reach as far south as the New Jersey border to the Newark Basin.
2. Increased traffic flow, and peak commutation surges will require extensive redesign of access points from the Thruway, Snake Hill Road and Route 59.
3. Additional commuter traffic will be added to local roads. Snake Hill Road is already a marginal access and will require substantial upgrading, particularly at the intersection of North Palisades Center Drive near the north flyover to the Mall.
4. There are existing plans underway to add heavy truck egress from the Tilcon quarry on to North Palisades Center Drive.

5. Obtrusive elevated structures for the rail line are being proposed particularly in the historic district at Strawtown Road and the Old Dutch Church.
6. The proposed location of the elevated rail line will cross the most sensitive areas for flooding in West Nyack. Flooding in this area has inundated the Thruway during several exceptional storms in recent years and must be remediated.
7. The design of the project should be coordinated with the current effort for the revitalization of the local hamlet of West Nyack. Traffic, drainage and aesthetic impacts must be thoroughly understood prior to finalization of either the Thruway or the revitalization designs.
8. While morning commuter volume will not coincide with heavy Mall traffic, the evening commute will add substantial congestion late in the day. This will become particularly critical during heavy holiday shopping periods which already overwhelm local access points.

Transit Center in Nanuet

Focusing on the specifics of the surrounding area of the Nanuet Mall and/or Home Depot parking area, there are the following issues:

1. Nanuet offers a close proximity to the center of Rockland, affording availability to many residents to have easy access to a direct route into New York City from the north, south, east and west.
2. It is adjacent to the New York State Thruway, and the intersection of Route 59 and Palisades Parkway for traffic access.
3. The Nanuet option is in very close proximity to the New Jersey Transit line that runs to the Secaucus Transfer Station and Hoboken. The train tracks and station are already in existence, therefore, making Nanuet a viable, less expensive option if chosen.
4. There is available parking by the New Jersey Transit station in Nanuet and much of the parking is still available on a daily basis. However, the station is being proposed to the west at Exit 14. While there are close to 500 parking spaces in three lots located in adjacent to Exit 14, they have a utilization rate of 100%.

The cautionary aspects must also be considered and attention given to broad impacts:

1. Population projections show the growth in this area of the New York region concentrated in western Rockland County and Orange County, yet stations are not proposed for these locations.

2. Increased traffic flow, and peak commutation surges will require extensive redesign of access points from the Thruway, Palisades Interstate Parkway and Route 59.
3. Additional commuter traffic will be added to local roads, especially Middletown Road from Pearl River to New City, which may need to be redesigned to handle more volume.
4. The design of the project should be coordinated with the current effort for the revitalization of Nanuet Hamlet Center and redevelopment of the Nanuet Mall. Traffic, drainage and aesthetic impacts must be thoroughly understood prior to finalization of either the Thruway or the revitalization and redevelopment designs.
5. Once again, while morning commuter volume will not coincide with heavy Mall traffic, the evening commute will add substantial congestion late in the day. This will become particularly critical during heavy holiday shopping periods which already overwhelm local access points.

Discussion of the Issues

The transit center and attendant improvement of the New York State Thruway and the Tappan Zee Bridge offers much potential for Rockland and Clarkstown residents. However it comes with potential risks which could ultimately degrade the quality of life in the area. The Thruway project must be prepared to consider, and support financially, the broadest view of the project and its impact on the community. This impact reaches far beyond the basic physical design and construction phases.

Positive Aspects

The positive aspects of having the multi-modal stations at Parking Lot J and at Exit 14 of the New York State Thruway are at best a number of assumptions, which are as follows:

1. The air quality might be better in the region because there will be fewer cars on the Thruway.
2. Commuters' commuting times will decrease when they start using mass transportation instead of driving.
3. Building the multi-modal stations in the Town of Clarkstown will spur economic development in the town in the areas surrounding the proposed stations. The hope is that mixed-use housing will be built and that people will move into the town as a result.

Negative Aspects

The negative aspects of having the multi-modal stations at Parking Lot J and at Exit 14 of the New York State Thruway are numerous and are as follows:

1. Traffic will increase in the surrounding areas during construction. As a result of the increased traffic on State Roads 59 and 303 and the New York State Thruway commuters will bring more traffic to the local roads.
2. Local traffic may not improve, and may worsen, even once the stations are built and the BRT/CRT system is up and running. This is because people will still need to drive to the proposed stations.
3. There are multiple concerns specifically about constructing a station at Lot J in West Nyack. The first is that the train would run on an elevated track through the Town's only historic area along Strawtown Road. The second concern is that the train would be running through a flood plain. The area has been inundated during several heavy rain storms. Most recently and notably, the area has sustained extensive damage from Tropical Storm Irene and is still in recovery.
4. While the CRT/BRT station may bring economic development using the mentality that "if you build it the people will come," the benefits of the CRT/BRT transportation system listed above will only be enjoyed to a point. Ideally, people will move to the Town once they learn that commuter times from Rockland are shorter. But once the number of commuters increases commuter times will once again increase. This cyclical problem will perpetually continue unless the number of commuters is decreased permanently. This can be done in the mid to long-term by bringing businesses to Rockland County so people would not have to commute to Westchester County and to New York City.

Findings and Recommendations

It appears that the Project Team built its arguments on assumptions that the plan was good and beneficial. Questions arise as to why it was good and for whom it was to be beneficial. Two of the three proposed multi-modal stations were sited in the Town of Clarkstown, but since the bulk of the traffic does not originate in Clarkstown, the question must be asked as to why they were located here, especially since they were not near the points of origination and were liable to generate more traffic on local roadways.

The project limited its busways and train routes to land owned by the NYS DOT, thereby restricting the proposed locations of the multi-modal stations. The State did not show that these proposed transit systems were the best in terms of logistics and design and were the least detrimental to the communities through which they travel. Saying that "the alignment had yet to be determined" led one to believe that the State was going to decide that it wanted more than its current right-of-way.

The Town of Clarkstown, through its zoning laws, has protected the quality of life of its citizens. This fact is quite evident by the Town's orderly development and controlled growth. In the data from the latest census our growth rate for the past decade was 0.8% while our neighbor to the northwest grew 20.9%, which is another indicator that traffic

emanates from the northwest and not from Clarkstown. The original proposal was neither good nor beneficial to the citizens of Clarkstown as this report indicates. As discussed in the BRT/CRT section, the State should site its multi-modal stations in locations other than Clarkstown.

III. BRT/CRT

Background

The Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Project Team originally planned a Bus Rapid Transit system and a Commuter Rail Transit system for the /Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor with the following features:

1. The proposed BRT would run the entire length of the I-287 corridor from Suffern in Rockland County to Port Chester in Westchester County. In Rockland County, the proposed BRT would run in special lanes along the New York State Thruway corridor east to the new Tappan Zee Bridge. The BRT stations in the Thruway corridor in Rockland were planned for the following locations:
 - a. Near Exit 14B off of Airmont Road in Airmont.
 - b. At the Exit 14 Park & Ride Lot in Nanuet.
 - c. At Parking Lot J at the Palisades Center in West Nyack.
 - d. Along Route 59 in place of the Old World Market in Central Nyack.

2. The proposed CRT would start in a new rail yard along the Metro-North right-of-way in Hillburn and proceed south toward Suffern. Just north of the existing Suffern passenger train station, the proposed CRT would head eastward, either over the existing Metro-North Suffern Industrial Track or along the southern side of the existing New York State Thruway right-of-way. At Airmont Road, the proposed CRT would be built along the southern side of the New York State Thruway right-of-way to West Nyack. Just east of Interchange 12 of the Thruway at Route 303, the proposed CRT would enter a new bored tunnel that would run under Central Nyack, Nyack, and South Nyack. At the edge of the Hudson River at South Nyack, the proposed CRT would emerge from the tunnel and cross the Hudson River on the new Tappan Zee Bridge that is planned to be built just north of the existing Tappan Zee Bridge. On the Tarrytown side of the Hudson River, the proposed CRT would enter a new bored tunnel that would end in Irvington to allow a connection with Metro-North's Hudson Line. The main purpose of this proposed CRT was to provide Rockland and Orange rail passengers with a one seat ride directly into Grand Central Terminal on the east side of Midtown Manhattan. Three (3) new passenger rail stations were planned for the proposed CRT in Rockland County at the following locations:
 - a. In the Village of Hillburn.
 - b. Next to the New Holland Village Condominiums at Exit 14 in Nanuet.
 - c. At Parking Lot J at the Palisades Center in West Nyack.

Identification of the Issues

The following issues were identified:

1. The lack of a passenger train station along the proposed CRT between Suffern and Exit 14 in Nanuet.
2. The deep cut planned for the proposed CRT along the Thruway in Monsey.
3. The location of the planned passenger train station for the proposed CRT next to the New Holland Condominiums at Exit 14 in Nanuet.
4. The lack of a connection between the proposed CRT and the Pascack Valley Line in Nanuet.
5. The planned viaduct for the proposed CRT across West Nyack.
6. The location of the planned station for the proposed BRT along Route 59 in Central Nyack.
7. The lack of stations for both the proposed BRT and CRT in South Nyack.
8. The lack of the ability of the proposed CRT to develop the recommended Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
9. The problems of operating locomotive hauled trains through the planned tunnel in Tarrytown and across the new Tappan Zee Bridge for the proposed CRT.
10. The ability of the Park Avenue Viaduct and Park Avenue Tunnels in Manhattan to be able to handle the additional trains in and out of Grand Central Terminal that will be required by the proposed CRT during the morning and evening weekday rush hours.
11. The lack of additional capacity in the Lexington Avenue Subway serving Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan.

Discussion of the Issues

1. The lack of a passenger station along the proposed CRT between Suffern and Exit 14 in Nanuet is a serious shortcoming of the plan. The population along the Ramapo portion of the proposed CRT exceeds the population along the Clarkstown portion of the proposed CRT. The fact that Clarkstown will have two (2) stations along the proposed CRT and Ramapo will have none will detract from its effectiveness. Simply put, it will be inconvenient for Ramapo residents to access the proposed CRT. Also, the lack of a station along the CRT in Ramapo

will cause increased traffic congestion at Exit 14 in Nanuet. The part of Route 59 at Exit 14 is already congested, so adding more traffic to this area is ill advised. In addition, not having a station along the proposed CRT in Ramapo will not encourage the necessary transit oriented development (TOD). There are many office buildings along the Thruway at Exit 14A in Airmont and not having a train station along the proposed CRT at this location will deny workers in these office buildings access to good passenger rail service. Having good passenger train service convenient to suburban office complexes has proven to be a good way to promote economic development. The suburban offices near the Stamford, Connecticut train station is a good example of effective TOD and have been a major factor in increasing ridership on Metro-North's New Haven Line.

2. The deep cut planned for the proposed CRT along where the Thruway goes under Route 59 in Monsey is going to have many problems that have been understated by the project team. The first problem will occur during the construction. The digging of a deep trench close to the private homes in this area will be an invasive project including the blasting of rock and the installation of pilings to stabilize the sides of the cut. Also, the operation of trains through the cut will have their own problems, especially during the winter when deep snow can fill the cut. The electric trains that Metro-North plans to operate through the planned cut will draw power from pick up shoes that ride under a power (third) rail. In the winter, the accumulated snow must be blown clear from the underside of the third rail to allow the electric trains to operate. There must be room for the snow to be blown clear from the tracks which will be difficult in the planned deep cut. The problems with operating subway trains through the open cuts on the lines in Brooklyn in the deep snow clearly demonstrates the nature of this problem.
3. The location of the planned passenger train station for the proposed CRT next to the New Holland Condominiums at Exit 14 in Nanuet is problematic for the following reasons:
 - a. The planned station will be very close to an existing condominium development that will bring a lot of additional traffic from the north, the south, and the west to this area. This will make living in these condominiums unbearable.
 - b. The construction of the planned station will require the removal of the existing on ramp to the eastbound Thruway from Old Nyack Turnpike just east of Pascack Road. This will cause the motorists heading north on Pascack Road to have to get onto Route 59 and enter the eastbound Thruway at the entrance at the intersection of Route 59 and Grandview Avenue. Since this maneuver will require a left turn off of Route 59 onto the eastbound Thruway ramp, it will add to the congestion in an area that is already excessive at many times throughout the day.

- c. The planned train station will be in an area that is already severely congested and where the existing parking facilities are already completely filled with bus commuters on weekdays. Therefore, in order to provide for the additional parking for the planned passenger train station, either a new parking garage will have to be built or land will have to be acquired for additional parking lots.
 - d. The location of this planned passenger train station at Exit 14 will not encourage much transit oriented development (TOD) in this area.
- 4. The lack of a connection between the proposed CRT and the Pascack Valley Line in Nanuet demonstrates a total lack of understanding on the part of the I-287/TZB Project Team of the need for a fully integrated passenger rail system in the region. Unfortunately, it goes along with a general policy of the MTA not to integrate the facilities of the commuter railroads, even during major construction projects, such as the East Side Access for the Long Island Rail Road. The project team has determined that a connection between the proposed CRT across Rockland County and the Pascack Valley Line is not worthwhile. The project team has determined that the only use of such a connection would be to have trains originate in Spring Valley for travel to Grand Central Terminal but there are not enough proposed riders to justify the cost of this connection. All of the planning of the proposed CRT by the project team is based upon the assumption that the sole purpose of the proposed CRT is to provide a one seat ride to Grand Central Terminal on the east side of Manhattan from Orange and Rockland Counties. The real value of the connection of the proposed CRT across Rockland and the Pascack Valley Line is to allow improved service on the Pascack Valley Line that will, not only serve Rockland train riders, but also Bergen County train riders as well. One of the factors that currently limits service on the Pascack Valley Line is the limited capacity to store trains in the Woodbine Engine Terminal in Spring Valley. The proposed rail yard in Hillburn could not only store trains for service to Grand Central Terminal over the new Tappan Zee Bridge, but also some trains for expanded service on the Pascack Valley Line to the Secaucus Transfer Station and Hoboken Terminal, if the proper connection between the proposed CRT across Rockland County and the Pascack Valley Line is built.
- 5. The planned viaduct along the Thruway right of way through West Nyack for the proposed CRT is a matter of concern. There is an historical area along the Thruway in West Nyack and building an elevated railroad line on a viaduct would seriously detract from this area. As an alternative to the proposed viaduct across West Nyack, the project team has proposed a rail tunnel option. Although the tunnel option for running the proposed CRT through West Nyack would be more costly, it should be the preferred option.
- 6. The location of the proposed BRT station in Central Nyack along Route 59 on the site of the Old World Market is undesirable. There is not enough room for adequate commuter parking and getting into and out of the parking lot onto Route

59 would require a new traffic signal. Also, this location would not be convenient for pedestrians.

7. The lack of stations for both the proposed BRT and CRT in South Nyack is a serious shortcoming. Currently, The Tappan Zee Bus to Tarrytown stops in front of the South Nyack Village Hall before getting on the Tappan Zee Bridge via Exit 10. This bus service is popular with local residents. Having Tappan Zee busses pick up passengers in South Nyack and then having the busses go back to Central Nyack to get on the Thruway to get to Tarrytown and White Plains represents a degradation, not an improvement, in service. Also, not having a station for the proposed CRT in South Nyack is a serious shortcoming. It is inefficient to require people who live in the Hudson River communities to have to travel west to the Palisades Center in West Nyack to catch the train east to Grand Central Terminal. There needs to be a BRT station and a CRT station in South Nyack to properly serve the Hudson River communities in Rockland.
8. The lack of ability of the proposed CRT to develop the recommended Transit Oriented Development (TOD) will be primarily due to the current planned locations for the proposed train stations in Rockland County. The location of the train station planned at Exit 14 will be in a location where there is no room for significant commercial development. Its location is away from the existing hamlet centers in Clarkstown where there is a potential for TOD. Likewise the train station planned at Lot J at the Palisades Center in West Nyack is in a location where there is no room for any viable development (commercial and/or residential).
9. The problems of operating locomotive hauled trains through the planned tunnel in Tarrytown for the proposed CRT and across the new Tappan Zee Bridge were not mentioned by the project team. The plans proposed for the CRT by the project included operating electric multiple unit (EMU) trains up the Hudson Line from Grand Central Terminal, across the new Tappan Zee Bridge, and along the Thruway corridor in Rockland County to Hillburn, where the electrified portion of the railroad would end. The trains that were planned to run past Hillburn to Port Jervis will have to be locomotive hauled. Dual mode locomotives, that can operate under electric power between Grand Central Terminal and Hillburn and diesel power between Hillburn and Port Jervis, would be required to power these trains. Unfortunately, the current General Electric Genesis dual mode locomotives used by Metro-North cannot reach full power when operated in the electric mode. These locomotives can only obtain full power when they operate under diesel power. There is concern that these dual mode locomotives would experience difficulties powering the trains up the grade in electric mode in the tunnel under Tarrytown that would bring the trains up from the Hudson Line at river level in Irvington to the level of the new Tappan Zee Bridge. Newer more powerful dual mode locomotives would be required for the Port Jervis bound trains on the proposed CRT. The new dual locomotives, however, would

probably have to be heavier and that would increase the loading on the new Tappan Zee Bridge.

10. The ability of the Park Avenue Viaduct and the Park Avenue Tunnels in Manhattan to handle the additional trains in and out Grand Central Terminal that will be required by the proposed CRT during the morning and evening weekday rush hours was not mentioned by the project team, but could present problems. There are only four (4) tracks on the viaduct and in the tunnel under Park Avenue into Grand Central Terminal, therefore, the capacity of these four (4) tracks could be a limitation on how many trains could run in and out of Grand Central Terminal to Rockland County during the morning and evening weekday rush hours. Metro-North needs to come up with an operating plan that considers the proposed service from Grand Central to Rockland in order to determine if there is the capacity on these four (4) tracks on the Park Avenue Viaduct and Park Avenue Tunnels.
11. The lack of additional capacity on the Lexington Avenue Subway serving Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan is a major transportation problem. Right now the Lexington Avenue Subway is overcrowded during the morning and evening weekday rush hours and there is no room to handle any additional passengers. Even if the Second Avenue Subway is ever built below East 59th Street in Manhattan, it will be two (2) long blocks away from Grand Central Terminal and not convenient. Most of the people will find that commuting to Grand Central Terminal will only be convenient, if they work within walking distance of the terminal. For other Manhattan commuters working in areas outside of walking distance of Grand Central Terminal, Penn Station is actually more convenient. The 7th and 8th Avenue Subways both provide direct service to Penn Station and the 6th Avenue and Broadway Subways are only a block away from Penn Station. All four of these subway lines have capacity to handle additional passengers travelling to and from Penn Station.

Findings and Recommendations

1. There should be a track connection between the proposed CRT and the Pascack Valley Line in Nanuet. The connection should allow trains to originate in the proposed rail yard in Hillburn, to operate along the proposed CRT to Nanuet and then to operate on the Pascack Valley Line through Bergen County, New Jersey, to the Secaucus Transfer Station, and to Hoboken Terminal.
2. There should be a station on the proposed CRT between the proposed rail yard and station in Hillburn and the proposed rail station at Interchange 14 in Nanuet. Most of the expanding population of Rockland County is west of Nanuet and a rail station is needed west of Nanuet to better serve this part of the population of Rockland County. Also, a rail station west of Nanuet would offer a better opportunity for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in that area of Rockland County.

3. The planned bus station in Central Nyack should be eliminated and replaced by a rail and bus station closer to the edge of the Hudson River. This will better serve the riverfront communities as well as eliminate the additional traffic caused by residents of the riverfront communities backtracking into Central Nyack and West Nyack. Also, having a bus and a train station closer to the edge of the Hudson River would offer a better possibility for TOD in that area of Rockland County.
4. The planned viaduct for the proposed CRT through West Nyack should be replaced with the alternative option that would put part of the proposed CRT underground through this area. Although this alternative is more expensive than the proposed viaduct through West Nyack and this proposal would also require Strawtown Road to be depressed up to 12 feet where it goes under the Thruway, its impact would be a lot less detrimental to the West Nyack Historic Area than the viaduct.
5. The proposed rail station at Interchange 14 should be relocated to a better location that provides better access to Route 59 and moves it away from the New Holland Condominiums, somewhere between Exit 14 and Hillburn, as described above.
6. More of the existing rail right of way between Spring Valley and Suffern should be considered for the proposed CRT. This unused railroad is owned by Metro-North and should be made available for the proposed CRT. This unused railroad could be activated at a lower cost than building a new railroad along the south side of the Thruway between Spring Valley and Suffern. Also, since this unused railroad goes through the some of the population centers west of Nanuet, it has a good potential for TOD and it would make it much easier to connect the proposed CRT with the Pascack Valley Line.

IV. THRUWAY ROAD REALIGNMENT

Background

The original project recognized that traffic has grown significantly over the years with only limited increases in roadway capacity and limited modal alternatives. This has resulted in increased travel time and delays. These problems are worst in the vicinity of the Tappan Zee Bridge itself during morning and evening peak periods. Backups are also experienced on summer weekends, particularly eastbound on Sunday evenings. This traffic spills onto parallel roads such as Route 59 in Rockland County. As the congestion increases, constraints on the roads become more severe. At Interchange 11 westbound the road goes from four lanes to three creating a backup. In addition, eastbound truck speeds are reduced more than 10 mph because of the steep incline from Interchange 12 to Interchange 11. The reduction in speed causes faster moving vehicles to maneuver

around the trucks causing backups as far as Interchange 13. To alleviate the congestion and improve safety, a climbing lane is proposed on this segment of the roadway.

The original Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project studied existing and future conditions at Interchange 11. Eastbound ramps meet Route 59 forming a five-leg intersection which creates delays of over three minutes on Route 59 and Mountain View Avenue. As such, projected traffic on the ramp spills back onto the Thruway and the intersection fails operationally. The Project Team found that the westbound ramp intersection at High Avenue functions adequately

It was noted in the SAWG (Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups) minutes of September 1, 2010 that it would be necessary to rebuild the Mountain View and Highland Avenue bridges if the highway were to be widened to accommodate climbing lanes and transit services. The existing Interchange 11 is a split interchange with unconnected eastbound and westbound ramps. Initially, moving interchange 11 to the west was proposed. To improve eastbound traffic flow, the Project Team recommended relocating the eastbound ramps 600 feet to West Broadway/Route 59 intersection. This would allow intersections to operate at acceptable levels, and traffic flow would improve on the ramps along Route 59 and Mountain View Avenue.

These improvements would require property acquisition and modifications to Route 59. The initial estimate was the acquisition of one commercial property and one residential property. Since Route 59 has a non-standard sight distance, it would need to be lowered, potentially impacting additional properties adjacent to Route 59.

Also considered was the reconfiguration of Interchange 10. The new bridge and the need to widen the Thruway would necessitate the reconstruction of Interchange 10. In addition to replacing the interchange's four structures and circular ramps, improvement would correct several deficiencies such as confusing circular ramps which provide poor connections to the Thruway and to adjacent roads as well as the lack of an eastbound exit ramp. The present configuration uses more land than necessary. This would create a possible space for the BRT station instead of relocating the Thruway maintenance facility and State police headquarters presently located in Tarrytown. The proposed redesign includes roundabouts which are considered safer than signalized ramp intersections. Roundabouts eliminate head on collisions and reduce operations and maintenance costs. The reconfigured interchange would give drivers direct access to the westbound Thruway. It would also give the communities on the north and south sides of the Thruway and Route 9W direct connections to Hillside Avenue.

Identification of the Issues

Issue identification has been challenged by not having the drawings depicting the proposed realignment of the Thruway that have been repeatedly requested of the NYS DOT. As such, concerns have been identified based on the conceptual proposals gleaned from documents and presentations held by the DOT. From the information gathered, it

would appear that the proposed relocation and reconstruction of the Exit 11 interchange, in particular, will have a lasting impact on the community of Central Nyack.

Discussion of the Issues

Moving the Exit 11 entrance 500-600 feet in a westerly direction down Route 59 to West Broadway will require the acquisition of existing business properties resulting in lost ratables to the Town of Clarkstown. Unlike residences, which pay taxes but receive sizable services from the Town such as schools, busing, and recreation, businesses contribute to the tax base while requiring fewer town services. Businesses including but not limited to Old World Market, J&L Tire, a Honda dealership, and Valero Roofing, would be lost from the tax rolls. Clarkstown will incur additional loss of ratables by the proposed widening of the Thruway near Exit 13. This will impact business on Route 304 under the Thruway overpass including the New City Diner, West Rock Tennis Club, and Camp Bow Wow.

In addition, the relocation of Exit 11 in a westerly direction will necessitate lowering the elevation on Route 59 by four feet. The existing grade of West Broadway is already steep; there is concern as to how much steeper it will become with the lowering of Route 59. Existing driveways abutting a lowered redesigned West Broadway will require regrading and reconstruction. It is questionable whether the NYS Thruway will pay for modifications to the residences of West Broadway and also the commercial driveways along Route 59, which will require redesign due to a lowered Route 59.

Presently, there are a high number of accidents at the intersections of County and State roads in the vicinity of the interchanges. Improvements to the interchange design will incur additional volume at these intersections. There is concern that the Level of Service (LOS) at these intersections will decrease to undesirable levels. The Town's 2009 Comprehensive Plan clearly states that Federal and State governments should bear the cost of necessary improvements to ensure that LOS is not degraded on local roadways. There is also concern that air quality will suffer due to the exhaust from additional cars.

Loss of business ratables and changing characteristics of the neighborhood by way of increased vehicular congestion and extension of the commercial zone will lower property values of the adjacent residential streets and neighborhoods. Residents of Central Nyack have expressed additional concerns regarding the blind curve on Route 59, heading east near the car dealership. The traffic signal proposed at this location may prove to be unsafe.

Ingalls Street intersects the westbound side of Route 59, across from West Broadway Street and Chestnut Street. The proposed reconfiguration of Exit 11 impacts six houses along Ingalls Street located alongside the Thruway. There is concern among Ingalls Street residents that the Thruway may take portions of their properties or would come increasingly close to their properties. Residents have suggested that locating the interchange closer to Kilby Street would necessitate less acquisition of residential properties. Real estate agents have already told residents of Ingalls street that if they are

looking to sell their properties now, they must disclose to prospective buyers that the Thruway may take portions of their property and/or may widen the Thruway so that it will be closer to their homes.

Findings and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, Exit 10 should be reconfigured into a full exit and realigned to give more directional exiting onto both south and north Route 9W. The existing right of way foot print would allow for this. Exit 11 should be left as eastbound exit and entrance only. A slight realignment and lengthening of the off and on ramps can be done within the Thruways right of way with a minimal impact to the surrounding commercial properties. This coupled with some LOS improvements to the Route 59/ Exit 11 intersection, could make a large scale full service exit project unnecessary in light of the proposed exit 10 and 12 improvements and the close proximity these exits have to exit 11. Exit 12 should be updated and realigned within the existing right of way to negate its decreasing radius off ramps that do not meet modern standards.

V. STORMWATER MITIGATION/WATER QUALITY

Background

The NYSDOT and the NYS Thruway Authority proposed various improvements to the NYS Thruway to be constructed subsequent to the replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge. These improvements included:

1. Widening of the roadway to increase the number of lanes from 3 to 4 for the entire length through Clarkstown.
2. Installation of climbing lanes, westbound from the TZ Bridge to the Spring Valley toll and eastbound from exit 12 to exit 11 in Clarkstown.
3. Possible widening and raising of the Thruway Bridge over the Hackensack River, and other road crossings.
4. Installation of CRT requiring foundations and structural supports and tunnels.
5. Reconfiguration of interchange 11.
6. Addition of Collector/Distributor lanes at interchange 13.
7. Creation of multi-modal stations.

The proposed improvements were all designed with the primary intent to improve traffic and transit capacity in the corridor. However, the plans had no indication of the

mitigation which was necessary to address the significant potential impacts these improvements would pose to the drainage facilities and stream networks within the Town of Clarkstown.

Identification of the Issues

The widening of the roadway through the Town of Clarkstown will add both travel lanes (one in each direction) and inside and outside shoulders on both the east and westbound sides. Climbing lanes will add an additional lane where installed. In effect, the additional lane and shoulder construction will transform the roadway from its current configuration of three lanes with an underwidth shoulder on the outside only to the configuration described above. This reconstruction will essentially widen the paved areas of the roadway from 3-1/2 lanes (existing shoulder being described as a half lane) to 6 lanes (2 full width shoulders) in each direction. Where the climbing lanes are installed the final configuration will be 7 lanes in each direction. This increases the paved impervious area of the roadway by 71% and 100% respectively. This will result in equivalent increases in stormwater run-off from the roadway, and pollutant loading in that run-off, including petroleum hydrocarbons and other exhaust products.

Raising and widening of the Thruway bridge crossing at the Hackensack River or any other river and stream crossings will provide for increased flow under that bridge. Installation of CRT foundations and structural supports will add to increases in impervious surfaces within the Thruway corridor, further increasing stormwater run-off. Similarly, the proposed reconfigurations of the interchange 11 and interchange 13 will create more lanes and more impervious surfaces. The expansion of the used area of the ROW may also expose rock surfaces similar to that now exposed at interchange 11, removing soil which provides some absorption of stormwater.

The plan proposes two multi-modal stations be located in the Town of Clarkstown, one at Interchange 14 and one at Lot J in the Palisades Center. The former will contribute additional stormwater run-off to the Pascack Brook watershed, and the latter will contribute to the Hackensack River. In addition, the proposed BRT station at the Old World Market site would contribute additional stormwater runoff to the Village of Nyack just over the Clarkstown town border.

Discussion of the Issues

The increase in impervious surface will increase stormwater run-off from the Thruway roadway by 71% generally and by 100% in those areas where climbing lanes are installed. The previous plans and presentations provided no conceptual design components to indicate how that increase will be mitigated. The project is subject to the requirements of the NYSDEC General Permit for Stormwater Discharge from Construction Activities, which requires that post development discharge be limited to pre-development rates. As the roadway already drains to area waterways known to have flooding issues in less than severe storms, this impact must be mitigated and even reduced from current levels. Both the Interchange 11 and Interchange 13

reconfigurations, which will add an as yet unquantified area of impervious surface, are both tributary to the Hackensack River watershed, immediately adjacent to the West Nyack area which already exhibits significant flooding in storm events.

Raising the Thruway Bridge over the Hackensack River will prevent the roadway from flooding in major storm events. However, that bridge crossing now serves as a restriction to the flow in the River, providing a flood mitigation benefit to the residents downstream. The FEMA FIRM for the area shows that the bridge causes a one foot backwater flood elevation increase upstream for the 100 year storm event. If this were to be eliminated, the impact on the downstream area will be a severe increase in flooding, as the next downstream obstruction, the CSX railroad bridge, will not be similarly improved.

Construction of the proposed multi-modal stations has not been detailed as to the coverage which might result therefrom. If the stations are assumed to be similar to a commercial development with building and associated parking, one can assume that the total ground coverage may approach 70 to 80% impervious. If the station is located within existing parking areas the increase in run-off would be lessened by the fact that these areas are currently gravel or paved surfaces. If the facility is located on other Thruway lands in the area which are grassed or wooded, the increase in run-of could be as high as 300%. One station would be tributary to the Pascack Brook which is already prone to flooding in higher intensity storms; the New Holland Village complex immediately downstream of the Thruway has experienced significant flooding of buildings in 1999, 2007, and twice in 2011.

Findings and Recommendations

The proposed improvements, as explained to date, have the potential for disastrous consequences on the residents of the Town of Clarkstown. The Thruway is directly tributary to several already overburdened streams and rivers which cannot absorb increases in run-off or highway pollutants. These same streams and rivers are part of the water supply system for residents in both the Town of Orangetown and Bergen County, New Jersey to the south. Failure to mitigate and even reduce the rate and total volume of run-off from the reconstructed roadway would be unacceptable.

In order to mitigate the potential impacts of the proposed improvements to the Thruway line, the following should be undertaken:

1. Hydraulic analysis of the project should be expanded to include not only the increased run-off from the project, but also the flows in the various streams which accept that run-off. The analysis of the Hackensack River basin should also include flows resultant from the self-actuating gates of the Lake DeForest reservoir.
2. The project sponsors should create sub-projects and partnerships which will mitigate impacts resulting from the proposed improvements, and which will also improve existing conditions. These could include:

- a. Improvements to drainage and flood prevention structures in the West Nyack area of the Hackensack River Basin.
 - b. Improvements to the Hackensack River between Old Mill Road and the Thruway to improve flows and prevent overtopping of the Thruway in extreme storms, in cooperation with the Town and the County.
 - c. Improvement to flood protection of the Klein Avenue area of West Nyack through raising and extending the Klein Ave levee so that similar large storms will not overtop that structure, in cooperation with the Town and the County.
 - d. Improvement to the flow capacity of the Hackensack River at the CSX Railroad crossing, either by improvements to the existing bridge crossing or addition of culverts through the railroad embankment, in cooperation with CSX.
 - e. Partnership with the County of Rockland to utilize County owned property north of the Thruway and east of NYS Route 303 to provide for upstream detention storage of stormwater flows.
 - f. Improvements to drainage and flood prevention structures in the Pascack Brook Basin, in cooperation with the County of Rockland.
3. Stormwater detention facilities can be constructed on property owned and controlled by the Thruway Authority in the area of Exit 14 and 14A, where significant area is available in the ramp gore areas.
 4. Improvements to drainage and flood prevention structures in the Nauraushan Brook Basin.
 - a. The project sponsor should look to partner with the County of Rockland to utilize County owned property north of the Thruway to provide for stream improvements and detention storage of stormwater flows.
 5. A Bi-State (New York and New Jersey) Stormwater Commission should be established to study and regulate activities that affect the Hackensack River watershed.

VI. CONCLUSION

While the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project is now the Hudson River Crossing Project, the Town's questions and concerns, so far, appear to be the same. The scoping information packet for the Hudson River Crossing Project has very little information

regarding the long-term solution to growth and congestion. The document does not have a “proposed action” as would be typical for a scoping report. It has only 2 alternatives: don’t build a bridge or build a bridge, which is no choice at all. All it says is that the bridge will be replaced with four lanes in each direction, with shoulders and bike and pedestrian ways and that the design will not “preclude future trans-Hudson transit services.” The same basic facts are still being ignored: Rockland already has rail and this Town already has a train station, the Nanuet train station. The State needs to invest in the Pascack Valley line and integrate it with whatever transit does come, if it comes, with the bridge. One thing is for certain, the region can not simply build more roads in answer to its congestion problems.

The State also must recognize that the expansive population growth that needs to be tackled is not here in Clarkstown, but west and north. Rockland should not be treated as a pass-through or the last stop, as it has in the past. It needs a Bridge *and* a long-term plan and solution worthy of its people. One would expect that logic would prevail and if the purpose is truly to keep traffic moving and not disturb local communities, then the State needs to do more than just replace the bridge. The goal of the day is to protect our quality of life and not destroy what our communities have created. To assume that creating some temporary construction jobs and shaving a few minutes off commuting time in the short-term is more beneficial to a community than its quality of life is neither logical nor acceptable.