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## 9 Public Involvement

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The *Public Involvement Plan for the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Environmental Review* was designed specifically to establish *ongoing, inclusive, and meaningful* two-way communication with the public. The objectives of the public involvement effort are to:

- Ensure that public input informs the technical analysis.
- Convey the project sponsors' commitment to the community outreach process.
- Create opportunities to communicate with the local communities and facilitate receipt of input.
- Keep the public apprised of the progress of the project and of new opportunities to participate in the project.
- Build upon alliances and generate a base of support for the project.
- Institute problem resolution procedures that will enable issues to be resolved quickly and fairly.

Throughout the AA process, the project team has worked consistently with involved parties and through a variety of mechanisms to achieve these objectives. The feedback received through this process has been instrumental in defining the alternatives that are being carried forward into the DEIS.

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### 9.1 Involved Parties

The project team reached out to a broad array of agencies, organizations, elected officials and individuals to gather input and build consensus around proposed solutions.

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#### 9.1.1 Inter-Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO)

IMPO was created to provide continuous and comprehensive input into the study. The IMPO committee, which is chaired by the New York State Department of Transportation, is comprised of the following agencies:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
- New York Metropolitan Transportation Council.
- New York State Department of Transportation.
- Orange County Planning Department.
- Orange County Transportation Council.
- Port Authority of New York & New Jersey.
- Putnam County Department of Planning.
- Rockland County Executive Office.
- Rockland County Planning Department.
- Westchester County Department of Public Works.
- Westchester County Department of Transportation.
- Westchester County Planning Board/Planning Department.

Meeting regularly since 2002, IMPO assists the FHWA, FTA, and the project sponsors, NYSTA and Metro-North, in identifying key regional issues and proposed solutions, and provides technical review of project materials.

### 9.1.2 Westchester Rockland Tappan Zee Futures Task Force

In 2005, the county executives of Westchester and Rockland Counties established an inter-county task force that has two major objectives in its mission statement:

- Raise the awareness of the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Environmental Review and an appreciation of the importance of its eventual outcome.
- Engage key groups and the public in the process.
- Provide guidance to the project team on presentation materials and outreach activities.

The Task Force is comprised of “key members of the public and private sectors representing land use, environmental, economic, business, and development interests who share a common concern about the future of Westchester and Rockland Counties and an appreciation of the importance of its eventual outcome.”

Since September 2005, the TZB project team has met regularly with the Task Force, provided them with information about the project status, and received input from members.

### 9.1.3 Stakeholders



In June 2002, the project team established a Stakeholder Committee comprised of representatives of organizations in the region such as businesses and business associations, environmental and planning groups, emergency response agencies, recreation/tourism organizations, hospitals, universities, and others to bring to the NYSTA and Metro-North input from as many points of view as possible during the course of the study. More than 190 people have been invited to attend meetings between the Stakeholder Committee and the TZB project team.

These meetings have occurred at key study milestones and on an as-needed basis between milestone activities. The information that has been transmitted to the stakeholders and to the TZB project team has been an invaluable asset throughout the AA process. Meetings have occurred on the following dates and locations:

- June 17, 2002, at the New York Power Authority, White Plains.
- January 9, 2003, at the Nyack Center, Nyack.
- March 26, 2003, at the New York Power Authority, White Plains.
- July 23, 2003, at the Best Western Nyack on Hudson, Nyack.
- October 7, 2003, at the New York Power Authority, White Plains.
- April 15, 2004, at the Best Western Nyack on Hudson, Nyack.
- December 6, 2005, at the Best Western Nyack on Hudson, Nyack.

## 9.1.4 Environmental and Regulatory Agencies

A central element in the outreach program has been communication with various federal, state, and local agencies that will be involved in the project's environmental review process. Meetings have been held at the offices of several of the involved agencies and all have been invited to attend the project's scoping and public meetings. Many of the agencies that have been contacted are permitting agencies that will be responsible for issuing permits for any new crossing of the Tappan Zee. Thus, obtaining the comments and technical input of these entities is critical to the success of the project's environmental review. It is expected that meetings and other communications will continue with these agencies throughout the course of the project. The principal regulatory and reviewing agencies that have been contacted to this point are as follows:

- United States Coast Guard.
- United States Army Corps of Engineers.
- National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration - Fisheries.
- United States Environmental Protection Agency.
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.
- New York State Historic Preservation Office.
- New York State Department of State.
- NY/NJ Harbor Pilots Association.
- Hudson River Pilots Association.
- New York Harbor Operations Committee.

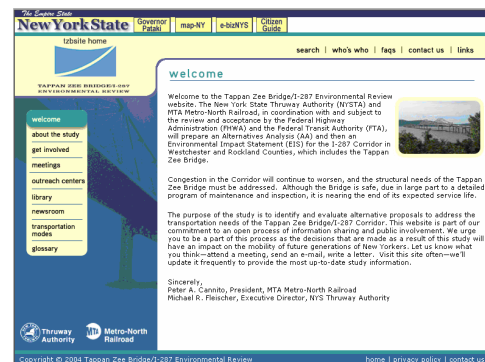
## 9.1.5 The Public

The team has developed a project mailing list with more than 3,000 names and addresses of members of the public who receive information about public meeting opportunities. This mailing list is updated continually.

## 9.2 Outreach Program

During the AA process, the study team held a series of public meetings that are described below. In addition, public outreach included a number of other techniques:

- A project web site ([www.tzbsite.com](http://www.tzbsite.com)) has been developed where the public can learn about the project. Visitors can sign up for the mailing list on the web site and submit comments via e-mail, which are directed to team members.
- Community outreach centers in Westchester and Rockland Counties were established in 2003 to serve as local meeting places and to provide opportunities for community groups and individuals to obtain study information and provide feedback. The sites are equipped with copies of handouts and materials and with high-speed Internet access to the project's



web site. Knowledgeable staff is on hand to answer questions. Community outreach centers are located at the following locations:

- 203 Main Street, Nyack, New York 10960  
Telephone: (845) 348-7714; Fax: (845) 348-7768  
Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Saturday 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- 333 South Broadway, Tarrytown, New York 10591-5612  
Telephone: (914) 524-0273; Fax: (914) 524-0288  
Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- Educational information was provided at local schools and at town fairs, including in Nyack and Sleepy Hollow in 2003. Study presentations have been made to numerous community and civic organizations, such as the Westchester Business Council and the Rockland Municipal Planning Association. Other meetings included the following:
  - February 26, 2002 – meeting with representatives of the Westchester County Association.
  - February 3, 2004 – meeting with Orange County Citizens' Foundation Transportation Committee
  - March 24, 2004 – meeting with representatives of the East West Rail Coalition in the Thruway's Tarrytown office.
  - Monday, April 12, 2004 – meeting with representatives of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Regional Plan Association, Environmental Defense, and Scenic Hudson.
  - Monday, November 28, 2005 – meeting with Orange County Department of Planning.
  - Wednesday, December 7, 2005 – meeting with Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Regional Plan Association, and Scenic Hudson.
  - Thursday, December 8, 2005 – meeting with the Rockland County Executive.
  - Friday, December 16, 2005 – presentation at the Westchester Business Expo.
  - Tuesday, December 20, 2005 – Joint meeting of Westchester County Planning and Transportation Boards.
- A fact sheet was published and distributed in the summer of 2003 and a newsletter was published and distributed in the fall of 2003 containing comprehensive project



information presented in a customer-friendly fashion. In December 2005, a second newsletter was published and distributed to stakeholders. The six alternatives to progress to the DEIS phase of the study were described in detail in the December 2005 newsletter.

- The TZB project team conducted tours for stakeholders and members of the media. These included a tour of the Tappan Zee Bridge in July 2003 and a separate tour of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system in Jersey City, New Jersey.
  - Briefings were held with federal, state, and local elected officials at key points in the AA process.
  - Briefings have also been held with various media representatives, including one in New York City in April 2003 and another in Tarrytown in May 2003.
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### 9.2.1 Pre-Scoping Meetings

In October, 2001, two public meetings were held to introduce the public to the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Environmental Review and to indicate ways in which they can get involved in the project. A total of 109 people attended both meetings and provided extensive input on what should be included in the Purpose and Need statement for the project and what types of evaluation criteria should be considered as the environmental review progresses. Following are the locations, dates, and times of these meetings:

- New York Power Authority  
White Plains, New York  
Tuesday October 23, 2001, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
  - Palisades Center  
West Nyack, New York  
Wednesday October 24, 2001, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
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### 9.2.2 Scoping Process

In mid-January 2003, three public scoping meetings were held, one each in Westchester, Rockland, and Orange Counties, to invite public comment on the scope of the study, including its purpose and need and goals and objectives. Some 282 persons attended the three scoping meetings. In addition, the public was asked to submit their suggestions for improvements to the corridor. By the close of the scoping period in March 2003, the TZB project team had received more than 150 ideas for improvements to the corridor as part of this process. Following are the locations, dates, and times these public scoping meetings were held:

- Sleepy Hollow High School  
Sleepy Hollow, New York  
Tuesday, January 4, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.





- Palisades Center  
West Nyack, New York  
Wednesday, January 15, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- Orange County Community College  
Middletown, New York  
Thursday, January 16, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The ideas were then compiled into the Long List of Alternatives Elements. The alternative elements were divided into four categories, as follows:

- Transportation Demand Management/System Management (TDM/TSM).
- Improvements to Existing Transit Services.
- River Crossing Improvements.
- Corridor-Wide Roadway and Transit Solutions.

A preliminary review of these alternative elements was performed to identify which among them met the study's goals. Those that remained following the preliminary screening were subjected to a more intensive screening to reduce the list further.

### 9.2.3 Public Outreach Workshops

Three workshops, known as Round 1 Workshops, were held in April 2003 to review the Long List of Alternatives Elements and the Level 1 screening criteria developed to reflect the study's goals and objectives. A total of 92 people attended these workshops, which were held as follows:

- Sleepy Hollow High School  
Sleepy Hollow, New York  
Tuesday, April 8, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Palisades Center  
West Nyack, New York  
Wednesday, April 9, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Orange County Government Center  
Goshen, New York  
Thursday, April 10, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.



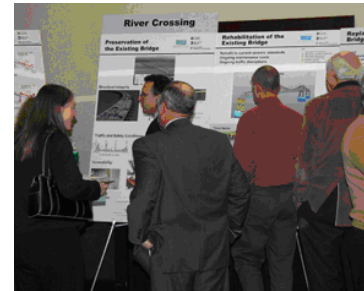
A second round of workshops was held in July 2003, where preliminary results of the Level 1 screening process were shared and discussed. Two meetings were held, one in Westchester County and one in Rockland County, where 188 people in total attended. The 15 corridor-wide scenarios, developed from the 72 alternative elements that passed the Level 1 screening, were presented, and the reasons why certain alternative elements were eliminated were reviewed. The draft evaluation criteria for the Level 2 screening process were also discussed. These meetings elicited a number of suggestions regarding the 15 scenarios and the Level 2 screening criteria. Following are the locations, dates, and times of these meetings:

- New York Power Authority  
White Plains, New York  
Tuesday, July 29, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Palisades Center  
West Nyack, New York  
Wednesday, July 30, 2003, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.



Informational workshops were held in December 2005 to present and discuss the six alternatives developed for the DEIS and to obtain feedback from the public. Meetings were held in Westchester and Rockland counties, where a total of 196 people attended. The workshops were held as follows:

- New York Power Authority  
White Plains, New York  
Monday, December 12, 2005, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Palisades Center  
West Nyack, New York  
Tuesday, December 13, 2005, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.



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## 9.2.4 Targeted Outreach

The team held meetings with municipal representatives throughout the corridor to gain understanding of local perspectives on issues such as potential transit station locations, rail alignments, and changes to the existing roadway. A meeting with representatives of municipalities in Rockland and Orange Counties was held in December 2003. In addition to representation from the Rockland County Executive's office and Rockland and Orange County Planning Departments, this meeting included representatives of Clarkstown, Orangetown, Spring Valley, and New Hempstead.

Additional meetings were held in December 2003 and January 2004 with the representatives of City of White Plains, the Town of Greenburgh, the Town of Ramapo, and the villages of Suffern, Montebello, and Sloatsburg. Meetings were also held with the Rockland and Westchester Planning Commissions.

The study team also met with individual organizational members of the Stakeholder Committee, including the East-West Rail Coalition, the Palisades Mall, Regional Plan Association, and Tri-State Transportation Campaign to engage in more detailed discussions of particular areas of interest.

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## 9.3 Public Outreach in the Level 1 Screening Outcome and the Level 2 Screening Process

### 9.3.1 Suggestions Related to the 15 Draft Level 2 Scenarios

A number of suggestions called for the need to include a dedicated busway across Rockland and Westchester Counties as a means of providing flexible, fast, and reliable service. As a result of these comments, BRT2 was redefined to include an exclusive busway in Westchester County (in addition to Rockland County) utilizing the I-287 right-of-way and Route 119 for access to Tarrytown and White Plains. Another suggestion resulted in the modification of BRT1 – which had included a two-lane bus rapid transit facility and a fourth general-purpose lane in each direction in Rockland County – to include only the two-lane bus rapid transit facility (buffer-separated) in Rockland County with the same number of general-purpose lanes that exist today.

Scenario M4 was modified to reflect alternative concepts developed by the Rockland County Executive's office. Scenario M4 includes a rehabilitated bridge for light rail that would extend between Suffern and Port Chester. A linear parkway with a bicycle/pedestrian promenade would be provided on the rehabilitated bridge along with an emergency vehicle lane/evacuation route and roadway capacity for local traffic. A tunnel crossing would be constructed for through traffic on I-287/I-87 and commuter rail between the Port Jervis and Hudson Lines, providing for a one-seat ride to Grand Central Terminal.



General comments were made about the number of scenarios that included roadway expansion in Rockland County and the number that contained rail connections to the Hudson Line for service to Manhattan, rather than east-west rail service. As a result, roadway improvements in Rockland County were eliminated in a number of the scenarios and circumferential (i.e., east-west) rail service was added; circumferential rail service also replaced the Hudson Line connection in M1. Scenario M5 was redefined to include a light rail alignment extending the full length of the corridor, rather than just between the Palisades Mall and White Plains, as was originally proposed.

Other stakeholders emphasized the importance of providing connections and/or transfers to the north-south rail lines under the scenarios with a rail or transit component. As a result, under Scenario M1, the feasibility of a commuter rail transfer station to the Tarrytown Station on Metro-North's Hudson Line was explored in addition to the connections to the Port Jervis and New Haven Lines and to the transfer facility at the Harlem Line that were previously proposed.

One suggestion was to provide a supplemental northern tunnel approximately 3 miles north of the existing bridge, connecting to Route 117. For the same reasons that the supplemental northern bridge crossing was eliminated from further consideration, the tunnel crossing in this location is not desirable. Route 117 and its connecting roadways would require significant expansion to accommodate the traffic volumes associated with a supplemental river crossing. The area on both sides of Route 117 is designated parkland, part of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve. This alternative could not be constructed without direct impacts to Section 4(f) resources.

Another suggestion was to operate two reversible lanes in the peak direction as a means of accommodating peak direction traffic without major capital expenditure. This option would result in five lanes in the peak direction and only two lanes in the off-peak direction. Today, the number of vehicles



traveling in the reverse peak direction on the bridge routinely exceeds the effective capacity of two general-purpose lanes. Historic traffic reveals that the peak period is extending and traffic volumes in the reverse peak direction (e.g., westbound in the morning) are approaching that of peak travel. By 2020, reverse peak traffic volumes on the bridge are expected to routinely exceed the effective capacity of three general-purpose lanes.

Also suggested was the conversion of the reversible lane to a HOT lane on the existing bridge. A HOT lane would permit HOVs and others who would pay a premium toll to travel in a designated lane. This alternative would reduce the capacity of the bridge to five lanes, due to width requirements for a safe and operationally effective HOT lane. Similar to the other alternative elements that would reduce capacity for general-purpose traffic, this option would not meet the study's goals and objectives.

### 9.3.2 Suggestions Related to the Level 2 Screening Criteria

In addition to receiving input on the definition of the Level 2 scenarios, feedback on the screening criteria proposed for use in the Level 2 screening process was obtained as a result of the Stakeholder Committee meetings and public workshops. Environmental criteria related to assessing the effects on parkland and historic resources were included, evaluating the potential for indirect or contextual effects, in addition to direct effects, for each of the 15 scenarios. For example, visual elements that would change under each scenario were considered, based on conceptual designs prepared for their alignments. The extent of these changes were rated for each scenario and an assessment of the potential for significant adverse impacts (i.e., direct and indirect) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act was made.

One stakeholder stressed the importance of considering weekend traffic conditions in the screening process due to the severe congestion currently experienced by weekend travelers. Transportation performance measures related to roadway congestion and reserve capacity were expanded to include use of weekend peak period traffic data in addition to weekday peak period data.



It was requested that consideration be given to how each scenario could shape or reshape land use and development decisions. As a result, the land use criterion was expanded to include the qualitative evaluation of the potential for each scenario to provide for “smart growth” opportunities.

Redundancy, defined as the duplication of critical components of a system with the intention of increasing reliability of the system, was also included as a screening criterion based on comments received. Each scenario was rated based on its ability to increase the reliability of the regional transportation system as a whole through either the provision of additional transit service and/or additional separate structures crossing the Hudson River.

The process of ranking the Level 2 scenarios was also addressed. It was suggested that weighted values be applied to each screening criterion to enable the calculation of a single number to represent each of the 15 scenarios. While this method would provide for a readily apparent hierarchy among the 15 scenarios, the resultant ranking would inevitably contain bias and mask a number of issues important to effective decision-making. The process of applying weighted values would be highly subjective and, as a result, this method of ranking the scenarios was not performed.

The criteria used to evaluate the Level 2 scenarios are presented in Chapter 3.

## 9.4 Public Outreach in the Level 2 Screening Outcome

Many questions were raised regarding the cost of each alternative and the overall funding for the project. Specifically, stakeholders questioned elements included in the cost of the new bridge, expected revenue to be generated by a new bridge and how funding will be obtained. One citizen commented that money should not be an issue, as long as the bridge is built correctly. Detailed financial analyses will be done in the DEIS phase of the project, which will determine the cost of alternatives as well as identify potential funding sources.



A number of residents, particularly those of the Salisbury Point Condominium expressed concerns about the proposed location of the new bridge and property takings. The residents implored the project team to consider and preserve their quality of life and property values. Explanations of the NYSDOT's acquisition process were requested and a suggestion was made to begin a mitigation plan and make public a proposed list of takings in the host communities of Nyack, South Nyack and Tarrytown. In addition, a request was made to commence a citizen's government committee that would serve as a liaison between the agencies and the host communities. Property takings are to be assessed in the DEIS, though one goal of this project is to minimize property takings and stay within the NYSTA right-of-way. Most of the new facility would be located north of the current bridge so that the existing bridge can remain in operation during construction. A new bridge would tie into I-287 on both sides of the river at or very near where the existing bridge now links to I-287.

The level of public participation and local coordination in the development of the alternatives were questioned. The public has been involved in the study since 2001, helping the project team with the identification of the study goals and objectives, the development of more than 150 improvement concepts and assisted in screening these concepts to six feasible alternatives. The project team will continue to solicit the public's input throughout the duration of the study. In addition, meetings have been conducted with the Westchester and Rockland Counties Task Force, as well as with municipalities. The team will work with municipalities and encourage them to examine the alternatives and assess their own future developments.

Inquiries were made regarding the lead agency on the project and who will make the final decision. The decision is a collaborative process among the three agencies – NYSDOT, NYSTA, and Metro-North. In addition, both Rockland and Westchester counties are involved in the decision-making process through their participation in IMPO, which must weigh in on the project decision as a requirement before any capital improvement can be added to the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The public's input is also crucial in the decision making process.



Requests were made to discuss the environmental, noise, social, economic, and land use impacts of the alternatives on the surrounding communities. Many expressed concern about air quality, particularly in Rockland County.



General questions were asked regarding the alternatives, including the duration for completion of each alternative; rail station locations and connections; and BRT station locations. Commendations were expressed regarding the inclusion of bicycle/pedestrian facilities in Alternatives 3 and 4A – 4C. Details of each alternative as well as station locations will be assessed in the DEIS phase of the study. Construction times will differ for each alternative, with construction of a new bridge likely to be completed by 2015.



Questions were raised regarding ridership and traffic forecasts. The Best Practice Model was used to forecast future ridership – vehicular and transit – with projections to year 2025 for different scenarios. In the DEIS phase, new projections will be done; 2005 will be the base year for existing conditions.

Stakeholders inquired about the new bridge design, suggesting that a bridge with high aesthetic appeal be built, perhaps similar to the cable suspension bridges in Boston, Virginia and Florida. In addition, one stakeholder questioned how the sun glare issue would be addressed.

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