
1 Introduction

The New York State Thruway Authority (NYSTA), Metro-North Railroad, a subsidiary of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (collectively, MTA/Metro-North) and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) are undertaking a comprehensive study of regional transportation needs and mobility within the I-287 Corridor between Suffern and Port Chester. Because of this project's regional significance and importance to the state's multimodal transportation system, the NYSDOT has assumed a coordinating role. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are joint lead agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), with NYSTA and MTA/Metro-North as study sponsors. The environmental review process to be completed will also satisfy the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), which follows the same basic process as NEPA.

This study has been performed in close coordination with the Inter-Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO) Committee, comprised (for this study) of the members of the Mid-Hudson South Transportation Coordinating Committee (MHSTCC) and the Orange County Transportation Council (OCTC). IMPO has advised the study team on a broad range of issues, identifying key concerns and proposed solutions. MHSTCC is one of three committees that are part of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC). MHSTCC and OCTC are two of the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) for the New York metropolitan area. Their role in this study is to respond to local needs in the Lower Hudson and Mid-Hudson Valleys and they are charged with recommending sub-regional transportation improvement priorities for inclusion on the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

To be consistent with NEPA and SEQRA requirements, the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will consider reasonable alternatives and conduct a thorough review of potential environmental impacts of the proposed alternatives. For this study, as is typically done for major transportation proposals, alternatives were identified and evaluated through an alternatives analysis (AA) process. The intent of the AA process is to advance the most promising alternatives for detailed evaluation in the EIS, and to screen out early those alternatives that have serious flaws or fail to meet any of the study's objectives.

This AA report documents the process that led to the selection of alternatives to be fully evaluated in the EIS. It serves as a detailed record that a comprehensive range of reasonable alternatives for the corridor was examined and presented to the public during the environmental review process.

1.1 Regional Overview

The New York metropolitan region covers a large geographic area and is considered a global center of finance, commerce, culture, and entertainment. In the 19th century, New York City emerged as a dominant force in foreign trade, wholesaling, and financial and related services. In the century following the Civil War, the region served as a powerful magnet for finance, manufacturing, and highly specialized services for the entire nation. Today, New York City is not only a center for finance and investment, but also for the arts and higher education, medical research and health care, fashion design and wholesaling, media and communications, and tourism. The construction of the Erie Canal connecting the Great Lakes to Albany and New York City was a powerful impetus for the development of New York City.

For most of its history, Rockland County was dependent on agriculture, with the Hudson River as the primary means of transportation to markets. While agriculture remained dominant in Rockland County well into the 20th century, various manufacturing industries developed in the 19th century, including stone-quarrying around Nyack, brick-making around Haverstraw, iron nails around Ramapo, and in 1897, the founding of the California Perfume Company (now Avon) in Suffern. The decade of the 1950s saw the completion of the Palisades Interstate Parkway and the New York State Thruway and the opening of the Tappan Zee Bridge (1955). This new accessibility transformed the county first into a “bedroom suburb” that has tripled its population since 1950, and more recently into a diverse economy with services, trade, government, and manufacturing as its leading industries. Pharmaceuticals is a major manufacturing sector, with firms such as Par, Wyeth-Ayerst, and Novartis located in the county.

A trend of locating corporate headquarters outside of New York City began in 1923 in Westchester (with Reader’s Digest) and continued after World War II, when major firms started to take advantage of improved transportation and communication infrastructures, lower taxes, and suburban lifestyles. Toward this end, Westchester County was found to be particularly attractive. General Foods and Nestle relocated to White Plains in the 1950s and IBM and Texaco built large headquarters in Armonk and Harrison, respectively, along with many others. Also in the 1950s, Westchester became a retail center, with construction of the Cross-County Shopping Center and commercial districts on heavily trafficked stretches of roads in White Plains (e.g., Mamaroneck and Westchester Avenues), New Rochelle, and Yonkers.

The transportation network in the New York Metropolitan Region has been an integral part of the region’s economic success. Home to about 18 million residents, the region has one of the most complex and extensive public transportation systems in the world. The MTA alone moves approximately 7.6 million people on an average weekday.

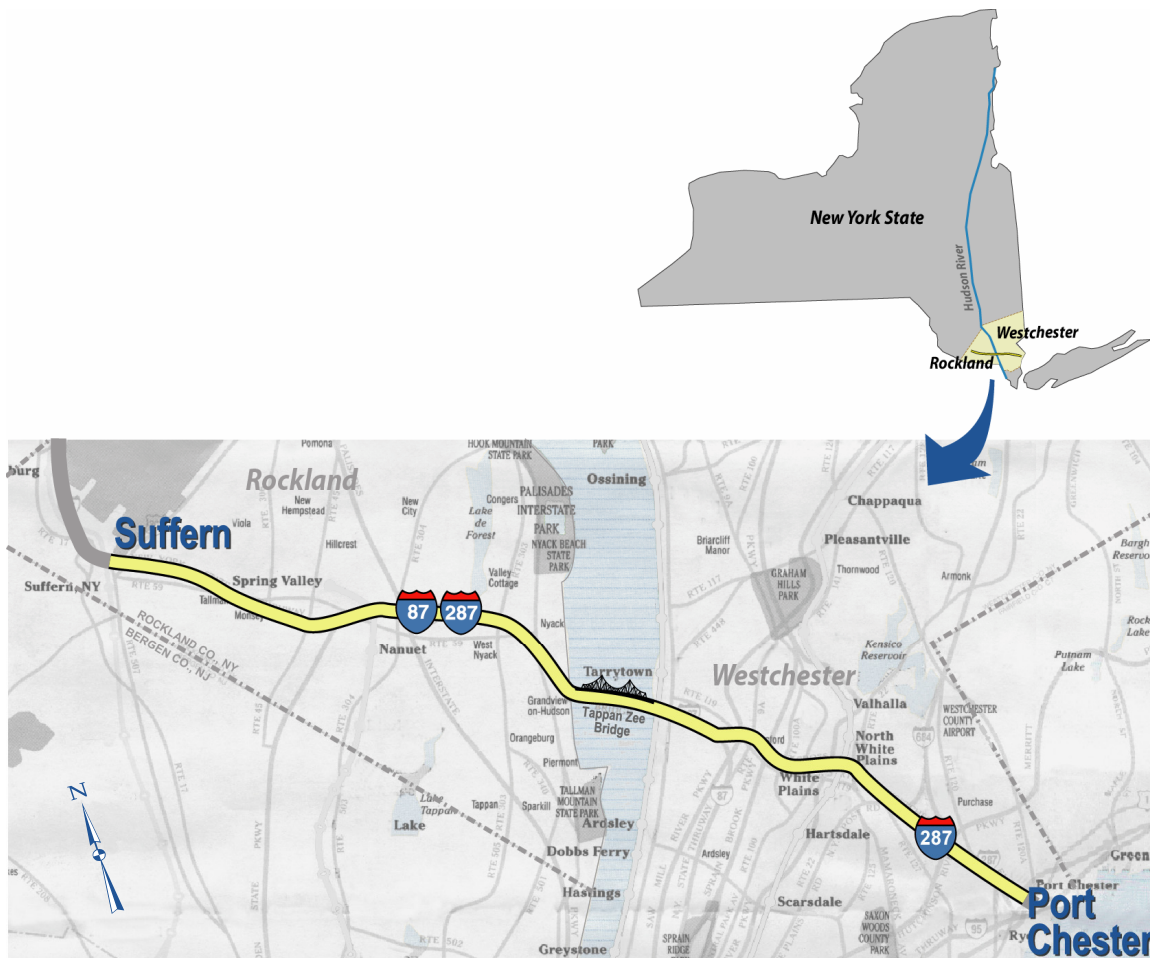
Continued population and employment growth in the region has created, and will continue to create, more travel demand, placing greater burdens on the existing transportation infrastructure. Given the limited opportunity to increase roadway capacity (particularly in the developed areas) to meet increasing demand without increasing air pollution, public transportation will be increasingly important to the region’s economic future and status in the global economy. Regional mobility has proven to be a critical factor in relocation decisions made by companies. The provision of safe, efficient, cost effective, and environmentally sound transportation will continue to attract and retain businesses by linking the skilled and highly educated labor force living in its suburbs with jobs in both the suburban centers and New York City.

1.2 The Corridor

The study corridor extends for approximately 30 miles through Rockland and Westchester Counties from the I-87/I-287 interchange in Suffern to the I-287/I-95 interchange in Port Chester (Figure 1-1). The corridor includes the 3.1-mile-long Tappan Zee Bridge crossing the Hudson River, and encompasses a critical section of the New York State Thruway (I-87) and the entire Cross Westchester Expressway (CWE, I-287). The CWE is owned by the NYSDOT, but is maintained and patrolled by NYSTA from Exit 1 to Exit 10. It provides a critical link in the federal interstate highway system.

The corridor contains portions of two interstate highways each serving distinct functions. I-87, the main route through the Hudson Valley, connects New York City and Canada extending between I-278/Triboro Bridge and Champlain, New York. I-287 serves as a circumferential route serving the New York and New

Jersey metropolitan area. It serves suburb-to-suburb trips in addition to long distance trips (i.e., from New Jersey and points west to New England) enabling vehicles to bypass New York City and its congestion.



Tappan Zee Bridge – I 287 Corridor

Figure 1-1

The Tappan Zee Bridge opened to traffic in 1955 and carried an average of 18,000 vehicles daily during its first year of operation. Today, approximately 135,000 vehicles cross the bridge on an average weekday, with volumes as high as 170,000 vehicles on some peak days. During the past 20 years, due to growth in population and jobs, and changing commute patterns, traffic volumes have grown significantly in the corridor: more than 50 percent in the I-287 Corridor and more than 70 percent on the Tappan Zee Bridge.

Five passenger rail facilities pass through the corridor (Figure 1-2). The commuter lines east of the Hudson River are the responsibility of Metro-North; these lines (the New Haven, Harlem, and Hudson), which terminate at Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan, log more than 250,000 customer trips each weekday and some 72 million trips per year. Amtrak also runs trains that provide intercity and commuter service from New York Penn Station north along the east side of the river to Albany on the Hudson Line and along the New Haven Line. The Port Jervis and Pascack Valley Lines, which are also commuter lines, are west of the river. New Jersey Transit (NJTransit) operates these lines, which terminate at Hoboken,

New Jersey, under contract to Metro-North. Access to Manhattan from the lines west of the river is provided by Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) train service from Hoboken, and service to Penn Station in Midtown Manhattan via a transfer to Northeast Corridor trains at the recently opened Secaucus Junction in New Jersey, which provides improved travel time to the west side of midtown Manhattan (Penn Station) over the prior trip to midtown via PATH/Hoboken.

There are numerous east-west and north-south bus services provided throughout the corridor. Long distance bus service is available between upstate New York and New York City, and many local and regional bus services are provided by a combination of local government and commercial providers. Many of these services are provided under the auspices of NYSDOT. In addition, passenger ferry service is provided between Haverstraw and Ossining, coordinated with Metro-North Hudson Line trains at the Ossining Station.

The corridor includes significant portions of both Westchester and Rockland Counties, including the communities of Port Chester, Rye, Harrison, White Plains, Greenburgh, Elmsford, Tarrytown, Nyack, West Nyack, Nanuet, Spring Valley, and Suffern. Development patterns in the corridor are predominantly suburban, with a mix of commercial areas, business centers, and residential neighborhoods.

The corridor passes through pockets of more dense urban development predominantly in the White Plains area. In addition to Westchester and Rockland Counties, the corridor provides the primary access between those portions of the New York City metropolitan area east of the Hudson River and the northern suburbs west of the Hudson, primarily Orange County. The corridor also serves as a major route for traffic traveling between New England and areas to the south and west.

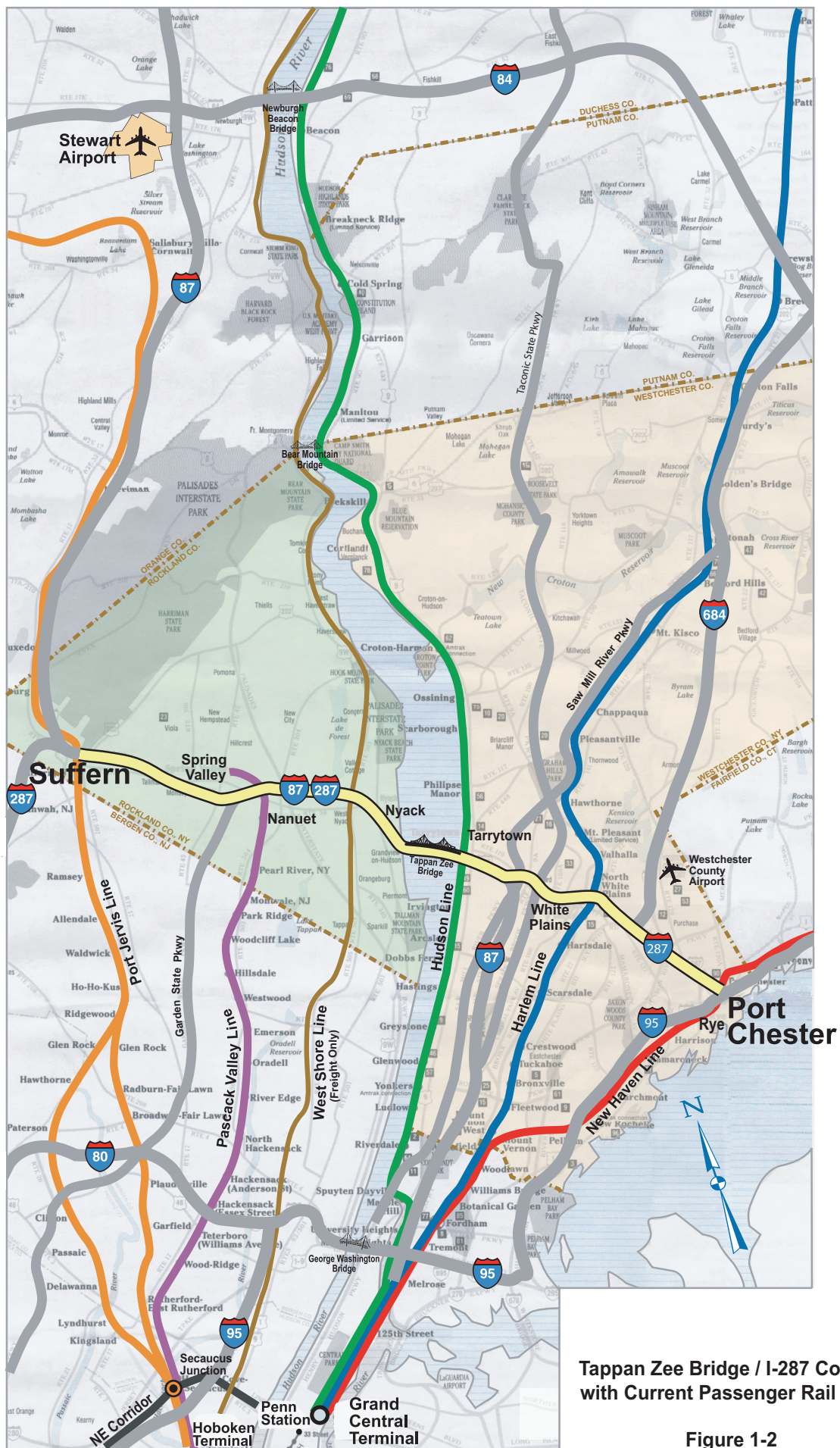
1.3 History of Project Planning and Prior Corridor Studies

Over the years, the corridor has been the subject of numerous studies, and many transportation improvements have been undertaken. Improvements that have been made to the Tappan Zee Bridge include the installation of a movable barrier that allows operation of a seven-lane cross section with four lanes in the peak direction, electronic toll collection, and variable pricing for commercial vehicles. Corridor highway improvements include a number of lane additions and other roadway improvements in Rockland County east of Interchange 11 and modifications to the Spring Valley toll barrier. In Westchester improvements include the reconstruction/reconfiguration of I-87/I-287 Interchange 8 and other safety and operational roadway improvements on I-287.

Transit improvements have also been undertaken in the corridor, including addition of express bus services on I-87/I-287, feeder bus service across the river to the Tarrytown train station (where passengers bound for Manhattan can transfer to Metro-North's Hudson Line), ferry service between the Ossining train station and Haverstraw, and the opening of park-and-ride lots in Rockland County.

Despite the many improvements that have been implemented, congestion in the corridor has grown steadily and the aging bridge structure has reached the point where major reconstruction is needed just to sustain this vital link in the transportation system.

The most recent study of the corridor was the *Long Term Needs Assessment and Alternatives Analysis* (April 2000), which was initiated by the Governor's I-287 Task Force. The Task Force report concluded that while there was no single preferred solution for addressing the transportation needs in the corridor, both a short-term aggressive Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program and longer-term capital improvements are needed. All of the long-term alternatives evaluated by the Task Force called for



replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge because it was concluded that rehabilitation of the existing structure would be highly disruptive, cost an estimated \$1.1 billion, and not result in mobility enhancements or meaningful congestion relief.

The Task Force further concluded that offering transit as a viable alternative travel option to the single occupant auto would enhance greatly the corridor's people-handling capacity. The final report concluded that of the three transit options that could serve the corridor, new east-west commuter rail was projected to yield slightly greater benefits than light rail or bus guideway. The study that the Task Force conducted did not undertake a detailed evaluation of the corridor alternatives or an environmental review of these alternatives to evaluate their potential impacts. Therefore, the Task Force found that a more detailed study of commuter rail and the other two east-west transit alternatives was required to fully evaluate alignments, service levels, benefits and costs, and impacts.

On November 28, 2000, NYSTA and MTA/Metro-North announced that an EIS would be undertaken to identify and evaluate alternatives to address the mobility needs of the I-287 Corridor as well as the structural needs of the Tappan Zee Bridge. The alternatives contained in the I-287 Task Force report, as well as those suggested by elected officials, transportation and environmental groups, community groups, and the public, are all being considered during the current environmental process.

1.4 Transportation Purpose And Need

The purpose of the study is to address the mobility needs in the corridor and the structural requirements identified for the Tappan Zee Bridge – the corridor's most important infrastructure element. The specific needs to be addressed by the study include:

- Growing traffic congestion and delay.
- Lack of modal alternatives.
- Lifeline structure.
- Safety and vulnerability to minor incidents.
- Support for local and regional economic well-being.
- Structural condition of the Tappan Zee Bridge.
- Seismic vulnerability.

1.4.1 Growing Traffic Congestion and Delay

The corridor experiences varying levels of traffic congestion throughout its 30-mile length. The steady increase in traffic demand over the years, together with only limited increases in roadway capacity and paucity of east-west modal alternatives, have resulted in a continual increase in travel time and delay. These problems are most acute in the vicinity of the Tappan Zee Bridge itself during the eastbound morning and westbound evening peak periods. Backups are also experienced on summer weekends, particularly eastbound on Sunday evenings.

Traffic crossing the Tappan Zee Bridge has grown from 100,000 daily trips to nearly 150,000 daily trips since 1990, spurred on by the opening of I-287 in New Jersey (Figure 1-3). This growth is projected to continue in the future, based on NYMTC projections of economic growth in Rockland and Orange Counties, in particular. The capacity increase resulting from creation of the reversible lane on the bridge is already being fully utilized in the peak hours, and the length of the peak period will increase as traffic grows.

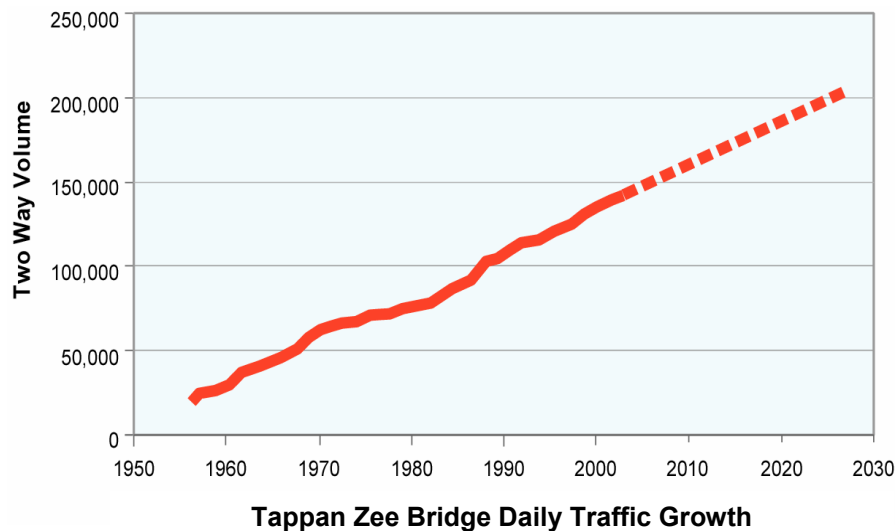


Figure 1-3

Traffic is also growing at other points in the corridor as urban activity grows. Congestion on I-287 is spilling onto parallel arterials (in particular, NY Route 59 in Rockland and NY Route 119 in Westchester), especially during peak periods. As congestion increases, the capacity constraints on the roadway become more severe. The drop from four to three lanes at Interchange 11 westbound in Rockland County creates a backup, as does the weaving at the Palisades Interstate Parkway and Garden State Parkway interchanges.

Travel times across the corridor are expected to grow by as much as 70 percent (for example, from 46 minutes to 80 minutes, from Suffern to White Plains in the morning peak). Congestion on weekends is caused by the combination of heavy traffic volumes and the queues at the toll plaza, which functions better on weekdays when a higher percentage of toll payers use E-ZPass.

1.4.2 Lack of Modal Alternatives

Other than bus services operated in mixed traffic, which suffer the same congestion as all other traffic, no other east-west modal alternatives exist in the corridor. The existing commuter rail lines provide only north and south service from Orange and Rockland Counties through New Jersey into Hoboken or Penn Station and from Westchester, Putnam, and Dutchess Counties and Connecticut to Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan. Metro-North's lines east of the Hudson River are oriented to the Manhattan commuter travel market, while the lines west of the river are underutilized since they require a transfer at either Secaucus or Hoboken and result in long travel times for trips in the primary travel markets. Currently there are other transit initiatives being studied by NJTransit (such as Access to the Region's Core ARC), whose name was recently changed to Trans Hudson Express [THE] tunnel), that could improve service to Manhattan for west of Hudson commuters.

The nearest exclusive transit crossings of the Hudson River are located to the south in New York City: the Lincoln Tunnel bus lane that serves the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the Northeast Corridor rail tunnel that connects to New York Penn Station. As a result, a number of potential transit markets are not served by a dedicated transit system. These transit markets include trips from origins west of the Hudson to Midtown Manhattan; travel wholly within the corridor among Rockland and Westchester origins and destinations; and travel through the corridor with either an origin or destination in Orange, Bergen, Putnam, Dutchess, or Fairfield County.

1.4.3 Lifeline Structure

The Tappan Zee Bridge provides the principal Hudson River crossing between the George Washington Bridge (I-95) and the Newburgh Beacon Bridge (I-84), a distance of 46 miles. (The Bear Mountain Bridge, between I-287 and I-84, carries significantly less traffic because of its location in a less urbanized area as well as its indirect east-west connections.) With interstate connections at both ends (I-287/I-87 at Suffern at the west end and I-287/I-95 at Port Chester at the east end), I-287 is a vital link in the regional and national transportation network. If the bridge were to become unserviceable the consequences would be devastating to both the regional and local transportation network and economies.

1.4.4 Safety and Vulnerability to Minor Incidents

The Tappan Zee Bridge has substandard lane widths (11 feet 8 inches) and no shoulders. Without shoulders, vehicle breakdowns and minor traffic accidents can cause severe congestion in both directions. In turn, this frequent congestion impacts emergency response times and minor incidents can become major problems in terms of safety and traffic flow.

1.4.5 Support for Local and Regional Economic Well-Being

The Tappan Zee Bridge and the entire corridor are vital to the economic vitality of the Hudson River Valley. Background growth and development in the area are projected to produce increases in travel demand of 30 percent over the next 20 years, and traffic impacts are expected to be significant without mobility improvements in the corridor. In turn, these traffic impacts could impede the region's economic health and adversely affect the quality of life in corridor communities.

1.4.6 Structural Condition of the Tappan Zee Bridge

The Tappan Zee Bridge has been in service since December of 1955. In addition to the usual problems from normal wear and tear to be expected on a 50-year-old bridge, parts of the structure are nearing or are at the end of their useful life. This state of deterioration is in part due to the location of the structure in a harsh environment. Also contributing to the deterioration of the bridge is the increase in vehicle and truck traffic over the years.

As the result of a robust and continuous program of heavy maintenance, the condition of the bridge does not pose any danger to the traveling public. However, the maintenance regimen will have to escalate with increasing age. To maintain the safe functioning of the bridge, major rehabilitation of the deck bearings, barriers, steelwork, and concrete are scheduled in the next few years.

1.4.7 Seismic Vulnerability

The Tappan Zee Bridge is located in a moderate seismically active zone, but has not been designed to withstand the possible seismic events to which the region is susceptible, as reflected in the current seismic code. The seismic vulnerability of the bridge is of vital concern.

1.5 Study Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives developed for this study were based on the transportation problems and mobility deficiencies identified in the corridor. Goals are broad statements that reflect expectations of travelers in relation to the problems identified in the corridor. Physical, operational, environmental, and safety objectives are identified for each goal to guide the development of potential transportation solutions. The purpose and need for the study and the goals and objectives were presented in the *Scoping Information Packet* (December 2002) and subjected to public and agency review at the scoping meetings held to initiate the NEPA process. The six primary goals, with associated objectives, to guide the development and evaluation of the alternatives in the AA process are described in the following text.

Goal 1: Improve the mobility and accessibility of people, goods, and services for the travel markets served by the Tappan Zee/I-287 Corridor.

- Reduce traffic congestion levels.
- Improve travel times for local trips.
- Improve travel times for regional trips.
- Provide modal travel alternative(s) not subject to roadway congestion.
- Increase the share of travel demand accommodated by transit and ridesharing.
- Provide a non-motorized means of travel, such as bicycle and pedestrian, across the Hudson River.

Goal 2: Maximize the flexibility and adaptability of new transportation infrastructure to accommodate changing long-term travel demand.

- Maximize ability to accommodate increases in travel demand.
- Minimize constraints to serving future travel patterns and markets.

Goal 3: Maintain and preserve vital elements of the transportation infrastructure.

- Assure that the corridor's transportation infrastructure meets applicable standards for structural design and integrity.
- Assure that the corridor's infrastructure meets applicable seismic design standards.

Goal 4: Improve the safety and security of the transportation system.

- Reduce motor vehicle accident severity and rates.
- Improve roadway geometrics to applicable standards.
- Improve the likelihood that the river crossing would survive a severe natural or manmade event.

Goal 5: Avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate any significant adverse environmental impacts caused by corridor improvements.

- Comply with state and federal standards and/or procedures such as those for air quality, noise, surface and ground water quality, stormwater management, ecosystems, environmental justice, energy consumption, hazardous materials, and river navigation.
- Minimize community disruption, displacements, and relocations; as well as adverse impacts to public parks, historic resources, and visual resources and aesthetics resulting from mobility improvements in the corridor.

Goal 6: Develop feasible, cost-effective solutions that can be implemented within a reasonable time horizon.

- Include improvements that to the extent practical can be implemented quickly to address existing problems, as well as long-term improvements.
- Foster capital and operating cost effectiveness.
- Minimize disruptions to the regional transportation system.
- Maximize use of the region's existing and committed transportation infrastructure.

1.6 Overview of the AA Process

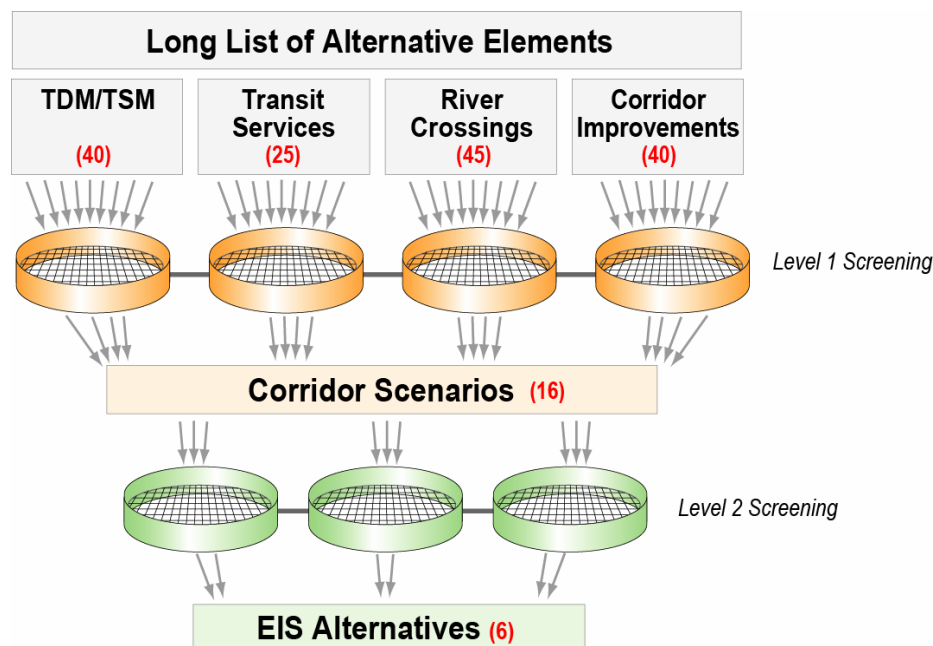
The AA process is the first of three stages for the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Study:

- **Stage 1 - Alternatives Analysis/Initial Environmental Review Process** – This stage identified and screened a large number of potential elements to produce a smaller number of feasible and reasonable alternatives that are to be studied in more detail in the EIS.
- **Stage 2 – Preparation of the Draft EIS** – This stage will involve the detailed environmental impact analysis of the feasible and reasonable alternatives developed in Stage 1. Public hearings pursuant to NEPA and SEQRA will be held on the Draft EIS.
- **Stage 3 – Preparation of the Final EIS** – This stage will involve response to agency and public comments on the Draft EIS. The process will culminate with the preparation of a Record of Decision (ROD) pursuant to NEPA and a Findings Statement pursuant to SEQRA. Corrections and/or revisions to the DEIS text will be incorporated into the Final EIS.

The AA process itself included two steps of screening (Level 1 and Level 2) to address existing and projected transportation conditions in the corridor (Figure 1-4). In the Level 1 screening process, more than 150 alternative elements in four broad categories were examined:

- Travel Demand Management/Travel System Management (TDM/TSM) measures (40 elements) such as congestion pricing, ramp metering, and car and vanpool priority lanes.
- Improvements to existing transit systems (25 elements), such as new or enhanced bus and rail service.
- Corridor-wide improvements (45 elements) related to different modes of travel such as commuter rail, light rail, bus rapid transit, and additional highway lanes.
- River crossing improvements (40 elements) such as bridge replacement, rehabilitation, preservation, and bored and immersed tube tunnels.

Each of the elements was developed to a concept level sufficient to allow screening based on very general criteria that were derived from the goals and objectives established for the study. At this level of analysis the alternatives were not sufficiently detailed to undertake the kinds of impact studies that are done to support preparation of an EIS. Instead, the Level 1 screening process was designed to eliminate those alternatives that clearly would not meet the study's goals.



Overall Alternatives Analysis Process

Figure 1-4

Thus, unlike an EIS analysis, the AA effort is not focused on disclosing and analyzing the impacts of alternatives, but rather on substantiating the reasons for eliminating alternatives. As a result of the Level 1 screening process, a number of alternative elements were eliminated, while the remaining ones

(approximately 70 elements) were used to create the build scenarios for the Level 2 screening process (Chapter 2).

To facilitate the next level of analysis, 15 corridor-wide scenarios were formed by combining the alternative elements that survived the first level of screening (a 16th scenario was added later). The scenarios presented a broad range of comprehensive solutions in which corridor-wide improvements were combined with river crossing options and augmented by improvements to the existing transit system and TDM/TSM measures (Chapter 3).

The scenarios were evaluated in greater detail in the Level 2 screening process. The evaluation was done utilizing a series of transportation, engineering, environmental, and cost screening criteria and resulted in decisions regarding highway and transit modes and alignments and the type of river crossing (Chapters 4 to 7). Throughout the process, refinements were made in alignments, headways, design speeds and other details. These refinements affect travel times and volume forecasts, and may cause differences between earlier and later analyses.

The Level 2 screening resulted in the short list of alternatives for detailed evaluation in the EIS. This allows the EIS to focus on the detailed impacts of only the most promising alternatives (Chapter 8).

A variety of technical studies were conducted during this process on topics such as the need for climbing lanes, high occupancy toll lanes, transit modal options and alignments, and river crossing options (Chapter 10). This AA report is a compendium of the findings of these studies.

1.7 Overview of the Public Involvement Process

An extensive outreach program was a critical component of the alternatives analysis process (Chapter 9). Key elements of the program were:

- **An Inter-Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO)** was created to provide continuous and comprehensive input into the study. The IMPO committee meets regularly, and is comprised of 13 agencies: FHWA; FTA; New York Metropolitan Transportation Council; NYSDOT; Orange County Planning Department; Orange County Transportation Council; Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ); Putnam County Department of Planning; Rockland County Executive Office; Rockland County Planning Department; Westchester County Department of Public Works; Westchester County Department of Transportation; and the Westchester County Planning Board/Planning Department. IMPO assists in identifying key regional issues, proposes solutions, and provides technical review of project materials.
- **The Stakeholder Committee** – In June 2002, a Stakeholder Committee was established comprised of representatives of organizations in the region such as businesses, environmental and planning groups, emergency personnel, recreation and tourism organizations, hospitals, and universities to bring the NYSTA and Metro-North input from as many points of view as possible during the course of the study. This committee met at study milestones and on an as-needed basis between milestone activities.
- **Inter-County Task Force** – In 2005, the county executives of Westchester and Rockland Counties established an inter-county task force to raise the awareness of the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Environmental Review and generate an appreciation of the importance of its

eventual outcome, and to engage key groups and the public in the process. 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.”

- **Elected Officials** – A concerted effort was made to reach out to federal, state, and local elected and appointed officials. This included meeting with key individuals or their staff as well as conducting general briefing updates at key milestones.
- **Community Outreach Centers** – In March 2003, NYSTA and Metro-North opened two community outreach centers in Westchester and Rockland Counties to serve as local meeting places and provide opportunities for community groups and individuals to obtain study information and provide feedback. The sites are equipped with high-speed Internet access to the study’s web site, www.tzbsite.com, as well as with copies of handouts and materials. Knowledgeable staff are on hand to answer questions.
- **Public Scoping Meetings** – In mid-January 2003, the study reached an important milestone. 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 the purpose and need and goals and objectives. In addition, the public was asked to submit their suggestions for improvements to the corridor. By the close of the scoping period in March, NYSTA and Metro-North had received more than 150 ideas from the public, participating agencies, and previous studies.
- **Round 1 Workshops** – Following the January 2003 scoping meetings, three workshops were held in April 2003, when NYSTA and Metro-North and the public worked together to begin the process of reducing the long list of alternative elements developed during the scoping process, and to come to a consensus on the criteria by which alternative elements would be eliminated or qualify for further study. This process is known as Level 1 screening, discussed in detail in Chapter 2. With input from the Stakeholder Committee and the public received during this round of meetings, the 72 elements that remained after Level 1 screening were compiled into 15 corridor-wide scenarios.
- **Round 2 Workshops** – At a second round of workshops in July 2003, preliminary results of the Level 1 screening process, including the 15 corridor-wide scenarios, were shared with the public and stakeholders for reaction and input. During these meetings, the draft screening criteria for Level 2 were discussed. The Level 2 screening process then took place based on public input.
- **Round 3 Workshops** – At the third round of workshops, which was held in December 2005, the public was informed of the results of the Level 2 screening process. This process resulted in the development of six alternatives to go forward for more detailed analysis in the DEIS.
- **Community and Interest Group Meetings** – Throughout the AA process the project team met with local communities in Rockland, Westchester, and Orange Counties and business and environmental interest groups in the region to explain key steps, milestones, and the analyses being conducted.