



TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE/I-287
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

**New York State Department of Transportation
Metropolitan Transportation Authority Metro-North Railroad
New York State Thruway Authority**

Meeting Minutes

***Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)
Environmental SAWG Meeting #7***

***Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor
Environmental Review***



April 10, 2008

Meeting Title: Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)
Environmental SAWG Meeting #7

Meeting Purpose: Exchange of Information

Location Date: Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plain, New York
April 10, 2008

Agenda:

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Attendees:

Name

Cohen, Renee
Moreinis, Josh
Ross, Irene
Schroeder, Joan
Shaw, Marion
Sullivan, Kathleen

And the representatives of the agencies and consultant team.

Agenda Item 1

Introduction and welcome to Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Group by Paul Plotczyk

Introductory Presentation

Mr. Paul Plotczyk provided opening remarks, and introduced Mr. Robert Laravie of New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to address “parking lot” issues from the previous SAWG. Mr. Laravie introduced himself, and then addressed the following remaining questions from the previous March 6th SAWG Meeting Minutes.

Question Will the project address Indian Point and its evacuation plan?

Answer A Qualitative Analysis will be developed. The facilities to be provided by the project would provide enhanced bridge facilities (i.e., additional lane[s] across the river, shoulders, etc.) and as such would be compatible with the evacuation plan.

Question Will alternative fuels be considered as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)?

Answer Alternative fuels will be considered in the DEIS as part of the assessment of energy requirements for the selected transit mode in the Tier 2 Transit EIS.

Question Is there baseline air quality data for the project area?

Answer Mr. Laravie contacted the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and was informed that NYSDEC had two temporary air monitoring stations for Particulate Matter 2.5 and ozone in place in Rockland County from June through October in 2005, 2006, and 2007. One station was located near the Palisades Center Mall, and the other located north of the project area at the Robert Yager Health Center. A permanent monitoring station will be installed near the mall in the short-term, once NYSDEC has finalized access agreements with the county.

Question Has baseline noise data been collected?

Answer Mr. Laravie and James Coyle of Earth Tech indicated that baseline noise data has been collected throughout the corridor. That baseline data will be used to calibrate a noise model, which will then be used to predict future noise levels at sensitive receptors.

Question A mega-mall has been proposed for the former Ford plant in Mahwah. Has this been factored in the traffic analyses for the I-287 project?

Answer Mr. Laravie indicated that the project team is using the NYMTC BPM model to establish baseline conditions for the analysis years, and that this model incorporates traffic growth due to known major projects as well as assumed general growth in demand.

Question It was noted that there has been an increase in noise from train traffic on the Piermont Right-of-Way (ROW).

Answer A member of the audience indicated that she believes the increase in freight traffic is for the delivery of building materials to several developments occurring north of the project area. Mr. Laravie indicated that he had contacted Metro-North, and they confirmed an increase in recent activity on the Piermont line.

Question Is the project addressing trucks on the highway?

Answer The Thruway Authority has had congestion pricing in place for trucks since 1997. Transportation demand management options will be included in the EIS for all traffic, including HOT lanes. The TDM scenarios might also revisit the current congestion pricing scheme for trucks and consider alterations.

Question A question was asked that requested some additional clarity on tiering.

Answer Mr. Laravie volunteered to speak with the project team to develop some additional explanatory materials regarding tiering, perhaps for inclusion in a future SAWG, as a supplement to information previously presented or presently available on the study Web site.

After all existing parking lot items and new items had been addressed, the SAWG presentation began. Mr. John Rollino of Earth Tech delivered the presentation, concentrating on the corridor ecology. Mr. James Coyle, Mr. John Szeligowski and Mr. Robert Forstner, all of Earth Tech, as well as members of the NYSDOT were also on hand to provide additional information as required.

Agenda Item 3
Questions and Comments

This section provides a list of questions and answers for material presented in the Corridor Ecology SAWG. Questions were asked regarding the following topics: Wetlands, Stormwater, Analysis of Storage and Rail Yards, and Habitat Mapping of stations.

WETLANDS

Question Did local officials have wetland maps, or were the federal & state maps the only resources available?

Answer Mr. Rollino responded, indicating that it was mostly federal & state mapping and criteria. However, when a local government had specific criteria for wetland mapping, it was considered in mapping wetlands in the field.

Question What happens if the field examinations don't meet federal or state criteria?

Answer An explanation of the difference between “mapping” and “delineation” was given. A wetland delineation, which is a much more field-intensive exercise requiring agency concurrence and licensed surveys, would not occur until a preferred alignment has been identified. Further explanation of the process was given, describing the procedure to be followed in the event of a predicted wetland impact; specifically, alternatives to avoid the wetland, minimize the impact, and mitigate or “compensate” the impact are considered, in that order.

Question Does a wetland need to meet the 12.4-acre threshold before the avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate procedure occurs?

Answer The 12.4-acre limit is not the relevant criteria for determining when a wetland is impacted, briefly described other regulatory program that protect wetland (primarily, the Corps). The limited range of wetlands that would not be subject to avoid/minimize/mitigate procedure was further described.

STORMWATER

Question Are we working with the counties on stormwater management, and are we aware of Westchester Counties Long Island Sound program?

Answer The study team has been in contact with the counties, both of which have a drainage agency, and has also been consulting with local town- and village-level officials regarding stormwater. The team is familiar with the LI Sound issue. TMDL was described as well as the reason the county had to develop a special plan for those discharges.

ANAYLSIS OF STORAGE/RAIL YARDS

Question What about analyzing yards (storage)?

Answer This question ties into an earlier tiering question. To specifically answer the current question, yards and station parking lots would be analyzed in detail in the Tier 2 Transit analysis.

HABITAT MAPPING - TIERING

Question Did the mapping cover one mile around the alignments?

Answer The study is one mile around the alignments, but habitat mapping was done only within the affected ROWs.

Question Were station locations mapped?

Answer Habitat mapping at stations would be done at a later date during the Tier 2 transit analysis.

Question Would station parking lots be in Tier 2 transit, then?

Answer Station parking lots would be mapped in the Tier 2 transit analysis, though planning-level assessments would be done in the Tier 1 transit analysis.

Question Have we finished the data collection?

Answer Data collection is not complete, but is about 75% complete on a field-hour basis. To date, I-287, the MNR Hudson Line, the Hackensack River area and the Hudson River shoreline have been investigated. The transit alignments remain to be reviewed, although they are expected to have limited habitat value. Completion of field work is expected by August or September.

Question What is the next step?

Answer The next step will be to complete the impacts analyses for the project alternatives.

The project is still in the scoping stage, and the next step on a project-wide basis is to incorporate comments from the scoping process prior to beginning impacts analysis.

Question When does the commenting period close?

Answer The commenting period closed on March 31st, however, the project has and will continue to value community input for the duration of the project.

After the question and answer period ended, the formal meeting was concluded, and the group was invited up to the screen to get a better look at the individual habitat mapping polygons, and their evolution into grouped polygons. During the group review of the habitat mapping, there was general discussion of how the impacts analyses would be done, how impacts would be quantified, and potential mitigation measures (such as “critter crossings”).

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:30.