



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)
Land Use SAWG Meeting #8***

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



December 11, 2008

Meeting Title: Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)
Land Use Group SAWG Meeting #8 – Focus on Local Land Use in Clarkstown and Harrison

Meeting Purpose: Exchange of Information

Location Date: Holiday Inn, Suffern, NY
December 11, 2008

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Attendees:

Name

Land Use SAWG Members:

Len Cardillo
Rose Cardillo
James Creighton
Barton Lee

Alternates and Additional Invitees/Attendees

None

Members from other SAWGS in Attendance:

Phil Bosco
Bob Dillon
Julius Levine

Study Team:

Representatives of the agencies and members of the consultant staff.

Agenda Item 1

Introduction

Russell Robbins of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) welcomed SAWG members and presented the meeting's agenda. He then introduced NYSDOT's plan to begin Transit Oriented Development (TOD) training in areas within the study corridor, which would be consistent with Smart Growth principles. He reviewed the recommendations that were made in September 2008, which indicated the agency's commitment to replacing the bridge and potentially adding transit options, including: BRT and CRT. He reminded the public of the website, www.tzbsite.com, and its public outreach function. He stated that the agencies are finishing the Scoping Summary Report, which will include public comments received through December 1, 2008 after the Project Team's recommendations, the Scoping Update meetings in February, 2008, and those received after the original Scoping meetings in 2003. Additionally, The Scoping Summary Report will summarize the results of the study thus far. He also stated that the team would host more public meetings as the study progressed.

The facilitator, Paul Plotczyk of Work Systems Affiliates International, Inc., introduced 'the parking lot' concept, and explained to participants that any issues not pertinent to the evening's agenda would be catalogued for future discussion and comments.

Mr. Plotczyk then introduced the evening's first presenter, Dr. Andrew Parker (Principal Urban Planner, Earth Tech) who presented an overview of local land use in the Town of Clarkstown and Town/Village of Harrison, New York. Following Dr. Parker's presentation, Mark Roche (Senior Engineer, ARUP) guided SAWG members through the various transit alignments being considered through the two municipalities. Both presenters were available for questions and answers.

Agenda Item 2: A. Parker – Local Land Use in the Town of Clarkstown and Town and Village of Harrison, New York
Technical Presentation

Dr. Parker presented a slide show on local land use in the Town of Clarkstown and Town and Village of Harrison, New York. His slides are attached in annotated form.

*Agenda Item 3: A. Parker - Local Land Use in Clarkstown and Harrison, New York
Questions and Comments*

- Comment In response to Dr. Parker’s presentation on the Town of Clarkstown, Bob Dillon noted that the owners of the Tilcon Quarry have an interest in the vacant property Dr. Parker pointed out north I-287 in the eastern portion of Clarkstown. Dr. Parker commented that the current zoning would potentially be problematic for quarry use. Mr. Dylan responded that mining law often operates outside of zoning.
- Question Mr. Robbins asked Mr. Creighton, Clarkstown Planner, if he could give the SAWG members a brief update on the Clarkstown Comprehensive Plan.
- Comment Mr. Creighton explained that the data collection phase is completed and currently Clarkstown is developing the new plan. The completed Clarkstown Comprehensive Plan is anticipated to be finished by the end of 2009.
- Question Mr. Robbins inquired about potential rezoning efforts at Routes 59 and 303. He specifically asked about the potential for high-density residential in these areas.
- Response Mr. Creighton responded that zoning to support higher density residential was not being considered.
- Question Mr. Dillon asked if office development was being encouraged by the new zoning.
- Comment Mr. Creighton answered that zoning for office development was being revised to promote more development.
- Comment Mr. Bosco noted that West and Central Nyack were already at a 95% build out. He added that potential development would result in problems, including those for power lines laid underground. He continued explaining that flooding problems related to the Hackensack River Valley had resulted in Route 59 flooding 33 times and the Thruway flooding twice.
- Comment Dr. Parker commented that the topography in this region was susceptible to flooding. In particular, Strawtown Road is located in a valley that presents a major feature for rail to cross. He explained for these reasons a viaduct and then tunnel would be necessary to accommodate a CRT.
- Comment Mr. Dillon commented that there is very little freeboard over the Hackensack River. The CSX rail line has a standing clearance of 22 feet. Dr. Parker noted the area’s sensitivity. Mr. Dillon referred to the 28 million dollar NYSDOT project to replace bridges, and suggested that if the CSX rail line is raised over the Hackensack River this would make the bridge replacement projects irrelevant. Mr. Bosco commented that the NYSDOT bridge project is proposed to occur next year. He also indicated that commuter parking lots in Clarkstown are problematic because they are in low-lying areas.

Agenda Item 4: Mark Roche - Overview of Project Alternatives in the Town of Clarkstown, New York
Technical Presentation

The next portion of the meeting gathered the group around a spread of large aerial photographs that focused on potential transit alignments through Clarkstown. This was an open exchange between the project team and SAWG members led by Mark Roche (Senior Engineer, ARUP).

Mr. Roche explained that there are two transit components included in the recommendations for Rockland County. Public comments pertaining to these recommendations were collected through December 1, 2008. There are two transit components: BRT (cross-corridor) and CRT. The current Thruway right of way (ROW) accommodates the additional 75-80 feet of additional width needed to accommodate the BRT and CRT in Clarkstown. The existing ROW is 250 feet, and the existing Thruway is less than 100 to 150 feet. There will be no impacts to the corridor on both sides. “Essentially we have 80 feet extra width in our ROW, and will have to shift the roadway in some places to accommodate the new transit features. However, potential stations will not fit.”

Tier I will include an examination of the general alignment, but will not include discussions for stations. Tier II will examine station opportunities and other details. Now is the time for discussion such as possible TOD ideas for Nanuet.

To begin studying possible station locations and needs the project team looked first at the Park and Ride at Route 59/Thruway. The team is considering the possibilities of this location being a transit hub, but it would probably be located outside the ROW. Considering this location allowed the team to do scoping for ridership figures.

A second consideration for a potential CRT station is located next to the Park and Ride lot adjacent to the Palisades Center Mall. This location may be out of the ROW, and it will be two – three years before a detailed discussion of this location will occur.

Agenda Item 5: Mark Roche - Overview of Project Alternatives in the Town of Clarkstown, New York
Questions and Comments

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| Comment | Mr. Roche pointed to the Hackensack River Valley and explained the engineering constraints involved in bringing rail from the bottom of the valley to the top. |
| Question | Mr. Dillon asked if the rail can handle a 1% grade. |
| Response | Mr. Roche answered that existing rail in the area can handle less than 1% grade. In regards to the project, there are newer engines being considered for the CRT that could travel at 2% for long grades. |
| Question | Mr. Dillon asked if freight in the area would be eliminated. |
| Answer | Mr. Roche answered that freight would not be eliminated, and potentially there would be more freight activity. |

- Comment Mr. Roche discussed the engineering difficulties present at the bottom of the valley and that rail is distorted by the vertical grade and topography.
- Comment Mr. Dillon explained that the Hackensack River Bridge is substandard and needs reconfiguring. The CSX rail line should be elevated. The flooding in the area causes a dam-like effect at the Bridge, and the trestle must come higher to alleviate these problems. The CSX rail line should be constructed above the CRT.
- Comment Mr. Roche stated that this area would have to be widened for the BRT option, which would necessitate a new bridge possibly answering some of the issues raised by Mr. Dillon.
- Comment Mr. Dillon suggested that the CSX freight line be converted to light rail to serve North Rockland County. Mr. Bosco noted that the CSX freight line is lucrative and runs close to capacity.
- Question Mr. Dillon asked if utilization of the Pascack Rail Line is being considered.
- Response Mr. Roche responded that the BRT and CRT are always in the Thruway corridor. Upon which he added that 160-170 potential alternatives were considered and a few alignments are still under consideration. The team is making sure that there are regional connections.
- Discussion Mr. Bosco asked about the ROW in West Nyack and noted the sensitivity of local properties such as the Dutch Reform church, historic sites and the Clarkstown High School, which has poor egress. In particular, he pointed out residences located on Louise Drive. Mr. Roche explained that the BRT and CRT present a major change and those considerations raised above will be attended to in the future. Mr. Dillon suggested that flooding in this area is so severe that perhaps accommodations might be necessary.
- Mr. Roche remarked that the Palisades area was a swamp and that future studies would look at water flowing off the Thruway, storage, water quality and flow.
- Mr. Dillon responded that the Hackensack River Watershed is 2/3 of the area, and a cut was created for the Thruway. To accommodate the Thruway a stream was diverted to West Nyack and utilizes a sleeved pipe, but carries only 42 inches diameter. This water floods into Route 59. To clarify, this flooding is not from the Hackensack River but instead from 9WA and tributaries. However, the TZB project will cause problems and solutions must be coordinated.
- Comment Barton Lee suggested a Park and Ride branch to the right or left at Pascack Road, west of Home Depot. Mr. Dillon objects to the location due to flooding from local watershed. Dr. Parker noted that expanded parking east of the Garden State Parkway is being considered. Mr. Roche mentioned the desire to use the existing ROW.
- Comment In regards to Mountain View Avenue, Mr. Roche commented on the geometric problem raised by Interchange 11. The BRT would require widening and bridge replacement. Route 9W presents difficulties at Interchange 11 for the arrangement of buses. Dr. Parker noted that there are jurisdictional questions for the two municipalities (Clarkstown and Nyack) for this area.

Agenda Item 6: Mark Roche - Overview of Project Alternatives in the Town and Village of Harrison, New York
Technical Presentation

In Westchester County the BRT would be potentially located on the south side with direct lanes or on Westchester Avenue with lanes on the east side. This option flows better and has greater connectivity.

Mr. Roche explained that stations are needed in the Platinum Mile area. Buses would deliver to the area as a destination, and serve travelers along the way. Another station will be located between Westchester Avenue and Corporate Park Drive.

Agenda Item 7: Mark Roche - Overview of Project Alternatives in the Town and Village of Harrison, New York
Questions and Comments

Comment Dr. Parker explained that only a BRT option was being considered in Harrison.

Question Mr. Lee asked where the rail would terminate in Westchester County.

Answer Mr. Roche explained the rail would terminate in Tarrytown, and that other stations had been considered. He noted that the BRT would have more stations such as in the Cross Westchester Expressway area and also at North Ridge Road. There is a potential gap in stations for the area east of the Platinum Mile. Dr. Parker noted that there are no stations proposed for Harrison.

Comment Dr. Parker added that getting people to the Platinum Mile area is difficult. The bus stops are a long walk, and shuttles would be needed. Mr. Roche explained that the reliability of the BRT system is crucial to its success. These buses are designed to operate rapidly, and should instill confidence in the public.

Question Len Cardillo asked if there is employer interest in the BRT system.

Answer Mr. Roche commented that there is good interest. He noted that Harrison's interest in potentially developing existing parking uses would make sense for the BRT idea.

Parking Lot List (Nothing new)

These questions have all been answered in the TMSR or in the scoping summary comments report and can be dropped.

- Is a cost/benefit, rider benefit analysis required by Federal regulations?
- What are the "key destinations" for BRT options?
- Who will operate/maintain a LRT system?
- All things being equal, does ridership change in the model based on mode of transport (bus vs. rail)?