



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)
Joint Land Use/Traffic & Transit SAWG Meeting #2***

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



May 5, 2009

Meeting Title: Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)
Joint Land Use/Traffic & Transit SAWG Meeting #2

Meeting Purpose: Exchange of information

Location Date: Palisades Center, Palisades Mall Meeting Room
1000 Palisades Center Drive
West Nyack, NY
May 5, 2009

Agenda: Item 1. Introduction (Page 3)
Item 2. Technical Presentation (Page 3)
Item 3: Discussion (Page 4)

Attendees:

SAWG Members

Suzanne Barclay
Charles Borgman
Phil Bosco
Patrick Bulla
Michelle Bulla
Joan Connors
James Creighton
Bob Dillon
Jody Fox
Patrick Gerdin
Orrin Getz
Richard Harrington
James Hartwick
Robert Hintersteiner
Jane Keller
Jon Marshall
Richard May
John Messina
Maureen Morgan
Catherine Nowicki
Jeffrey Zupan
Jon Marshall
Alexander Saunders
Ellyn Shannon (+ guest Jan Wells, PCAC)
Mary Jane Shimsky
John Tangredi
Janet Zagoria
Jeffrey Zupan

Project Team Members

Rita Campon, Parsons
Wai Cheung, NYSTA
Frank Grande, ET
Yvette Hinds, NYSDOT
Angel Medina, NYSTA
Andrew Parker, ET
Joe Pasanello, MNR/MTA
George Paschalis, HSH
Russell Robbins, NYSDOT
Mark Roche, Arup
Craig Teepell, NYSDOT

Agenda Item 1

Introduction

The meeting began with an introduction and welcome to SAWG participants from Craig Teepell (NYSDOT), who noted the evening would begin with a brief overview of the subject matter followed by a discussion around maps and working drawings. Andrew Parker (Earth Tech) provided a brief recap of the status of the DEIS process and evening's agenda. The agenda focused on: 1) the Transit Alignment Options Work Plan; 2) the BRT and CRT options in the corridor segment between Hillburn and Monsey; and 3) a working discussion.

Agenda Items 2

Technical Presentation

He presented a short slide show (attached) on the status of project's Transit Alignment Work Plan, the main focus of the evening's meeting. Several options are under consideration for a commuter rail transit (CRT and bus rapid transit (BRT) alignment throughout the Suffern area. Options for CRT would travel along two routes either within the Piermont Line right-of-way (ROW) or in the I-287 ROW. The latter would require ROW expansion and displacements at Wayne Avenue, in Suffern. This key area provides the connection to the Port Jervis Line and the terminus of the project's CRT service at a Proposed Hillburn Station. Dr. Parker also presented the evaluation criteria that will be applied in the screening process to select which option will be studied further in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). These include transportation criteria, engineering, environmental, and cost criteria. He concluded with a brief review of the land use context in the Hillburn-Suffern area, noting that the Ramapo Pass cuts through the Ramapo Mountains, creating a narrow "pinch point". The river, major rail, highway, and electric transmission lines share the narrow valley, creating severe constraints on alignment options for both CRT and BRT in this terminus area of the study corridor.

Frank Grande (Earth Tech) followed, using a map (see attached slide) to review in detail the principal features that guided the selection of the two CRT alignment options. He continued using working maps on the wall to compare the issues associated with the two CRT alignment options; of which seven configurations are derived. These seven configurations are:

- CRT on Wayne Avenue:
 - BRT in HOV lanes to General Purpose lanes to Interchange 15A to Hillburn.
 - BRT on Piermont Line from HOV lanes.
 - BRT on Piermont Line from Busway.

- CRT on Piermont Line:
 - BRT in HOV lanes to General Traffic to Interchange 15A to Hillburn.
 - BRT in Busway to General Traffic to Interchange 15A to Hillburn.
 - BRT in Busway to Wayne Avenue.

- TMSR – CRT & BRT on Piermont Line.

Issues associated with the various configurations include freight operations on the Piermont Line, the required ROW and displacements, the loss of full service BRT when in mixed traffic in the approach to the proposed Hillburn Station, impacts on local streets; and provision of an Airmont Road BRT station.

Agenda Item 3 Discussion

Discussions accompanied Mr. Grande's presentation and these continued with Mark Roche (Arup), who further examined the CRT engineering issues. CRT was the driving force in the development of the CRT and BRT alignments because it is the most constrained by gradients and curves, and BRT is more easily accommodated within the alignments. Large-scale engineering drawings, consisting of CRT alignment option plans and profiles of the Piermont Line ROW and the I-287 ROW in the Hillburn to Monsey area were viewed by participants on a table top, along with the grade profiles of both the CRT alignments options in this vicinity, Piermont ROW and southern I-287 ROW. Much discussion focused on the difficulties of providing a station between Suffern and Airmont Road, primarily because of limitations of locating a station on a curve or on a gradient of more than 1%. Few locations meet these criteria. Particular issues discussed were associated with: the CRT passing under Route 59, and thereafter rising to cross the Mahwah River; and whether to go under or over Airmont Road – if under is selected, this makes climbing the hill to Monsey more problematic.

Discussion, questions and comments continued through the review. Among these were the following.

- Concerns about parking and traffic for any proposed Hillburn/Suffern station.
- Concerns that there would be few users of a proposed Hillburn/Suffern station and it would not serve Suffern or western Rockland very well.
- One comment noted that not selecting Airmont Road for a station is only a “NIMBY” (not in my backyard) reaction and the decision should not be made on that basis.
- Can the Piermont Line freight operations be eliminated? The freight issue was discussed as an issue that had legal ramifications and we have to accommodate in our planning and engineering design, but that it presents operational, and ROW issues.
- The grades on both optional alignments present constraints for stations, although there is at least one straight segment of the Piermont in Eastern Suffern (near the quarry) where they are only 1%.
- One commenter noted that if it is necessary to significantly tweak either alignment in order to provide a station between Interchange 14 and Hillburn, then perhaps we should avoid a station and optimize the alignment in terms of costs, environment, etc.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm. The next joint Land Use and Traffic and Transit SAWG will address the CRT alignment in the remainder of Rockland County and particularly the options of being in the center of I-287 or on its south side.