



TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE/I-287  
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

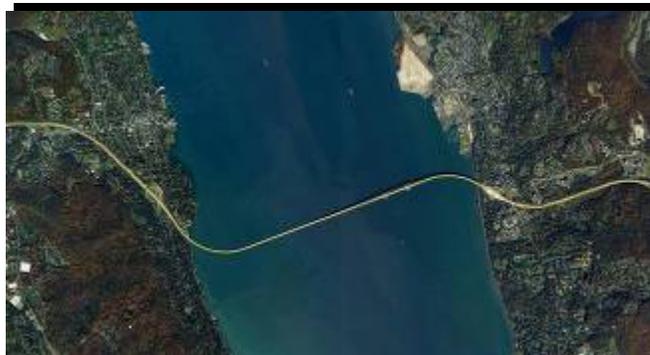
**New York State Department of Transportation  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority Metro-North Railroad  
New York State Thruway Authority**

**Meeting Minutes**

***Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)  
Joint Land Use/Traffic and Transit SAWG Meeting #5***

***Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project***

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August 27, 2009

Meeting Title:	Stakeholders' Advisory Working Group (SAWG) Joint Land Use/Traffic and Transit SAWG Meeting #5
Meeting Purpose:	Exchange of information
Location Date:	Jaguar Room, New York Power Authority White Plains, NY August 27, 2009 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Agenda:	Item 1. Introduction (Page 2) Item 2. Presentation (Page 2) Item 3: Discussion (Page 3)
Attendees:	<b><u>SAWG Members</u></b> Eric Fang Peter Feroe, NYMTC / Westchester County Department of Planning Jane Keller John Kirkpatrick Naomi Klein, Westchester County Department of Transportation Thomas Madden, Commissioner, Greenburgh Planning Department Maureen Morgan, Federated Conservationists of Westchester Irene Sandford Mary Jane Shimsky, Assemblyman Richard Brodsky's Office Cheryl Winter Lewy, Chair, Westchester County Planning Board  <b><u>Additional Members of the Public</u></b> Bill Brady, Associate Planner, Westchester County Department of Planning Susan Kirkpatrick, representing Bill Ryan, Chair, Westchester County Board of Legislators Tom Soyk, White Plains Traffic Commissioner  <b><u>Project Team Members</u></b> Robert Laravie, NYSDOT Russell Robbins, NYSDOT Craig Teepell, NYSDOT Peter Casper, NYSTA Elisa Van der Linde, MTA MNR James Coyle, AECOM/Earth Tech Frank Grande, AECOM/Earth Tech Caren Morgan, AECOM/Earth Tech Rita Campon, Parsons George Paschalis, HSH Cynthia Nikitin, Project for Public Spaces

Agenda Item 1

*Introduction*

Craig Teepell (NYSDOT) welcomed members of the Traffic and Transit and Land Use Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs) and introduced the evening's agenda, which focused on the bus rapid transit (BRT) alignment options through the City of White Plains. The meeting was the fifth in a series of joint Land Use/Traffic and Transit meetings concentrating on the various options of the Transit Alignment Options Work Plan (see Slide 4) and land use implications across the corridor. Mr. Teepell asked participants to introduce themselves and give their affiliation.

Agenda Item 2

*Presentation*

James Coyle (Earth Tech) recapped where the team is in the DEIS process and provided a brief overview of the Transit Alignment Options Work Plan. Mr. Coyle noted that the evening's discussion would center on White Plains and in particular alignment options between Greenburgh and the White Plains Transportation Center and from the White Plains Transportation Center to Westchester Avenue.

Mr. Coyle recommended reviewing the *Transit Mode Selection Report* and the *Alternatives Analysis for Rehabilitation and Replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge* report provided on [www.tzbsite.com](http://www.tzbsite.com) to assist in understanding the recommendations made for developing commuter rail transit (CRT) and BRT alternatives, including the alternatives for a BRT busway and/or bus lane through White Plains. (A *busway* is a dedicated lane, separated by a barrier from other traffic, that would be used to carry only BRT vehicles. A *bus lane* is a dedicated in-street lane, with some mixed traffic, but not separated by a barrier.) The goal for this year is to narrow the transit, bridge, and highway options in order to determine the alternatives for further study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Russell Robbins (NYSDOT) presented a brief overview of BRT systems, which can provide the quality of rail transit for a lower overall cost. Sixty-three communities in the United States currently have BRT systems in place. Among the principal elements of a BRT system are high-tech vehicles, included articulated ones; dedicated running ways such as busways and bus lanes; aesthetic and appealing stations at various scales and transit shelters; off-board fare collection systems; and complex service planning. Unique marketing and branding strategies also are used to make the BRT systems easily recognizable (see slides 8-14). BRT systems also incorporate Intelligent Transportation Systems such as signal priority, automatic vehicle location, system security, and customer information. BRT systems are economical, energy efficient, and environmentally friendly and can contribute to sustainable development.

*Agenda Item 3*

*Discussion*

Frank Grande (Earth Tech) briefly reviewed the BRT alignment alternatives across Westchester County, with a special focus on the options for the busway and bus lane alternatives in the central business district (CBD) of White Plains. Because White Plains is an important commercial and retail hub, the BRT trunk line, or main route across the corridor, would depart from the I-287 corridor to serve the White Plains CBD. Guidelines developed for BRT systems by the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) indicate that a well-designed BRT system on city streets will use the fastest streets available, operate free of delays, prohibit curb parking, maintain access to parking garages, promote a strong BRT identity, and provide effective enforcement of dedicated bus lanes to make sure other vehicles are not using them.

Building upon these guidelines, the project team developed bus lane and busway alternatives through the White Plains CBD. The objectives are for the BRT trunk line to 1) provide connectivity to the major destinations in the CBD by establishing three stations (one at the center and two at the end points of the CBD), 2) share routes with and provide transfers to the Bee-Line bus system, and 3) avoid or minimize potentially negative impacts to the city's traffic network and environmentally sensitive areas. To help assure reliable service through the city, the options were developed with performance measures in mind. These include reasonable run times, routes that would be no more than one block apart, elimination of sharp turns, and walkable distances between stops and key destinations.

Large-scale drawings of alignments and sections were rolled out to explain the BRT alignments and engineering issues that play a part in the designs. Particular attention was paid to access between Greenburgh and the White Plains Transportation Center, and from the Transportation Center across the CBD to Route 119 (Westchester Avenue).

The first set of options, which relate to both the bus lanes and busway alternatives, transitions from I-287 at Exit 5 and onto Route 119 along either the curb or median (further detail to be developed in the Tier II transit analysis). The Route 119 intersections would likely be enhanced to give the BRT vehicles traffic signal priority (meaning that a BRT vehicle would be able to communicate with an upcoming traffic signal to eliminate delays at an intersection) and "queue jumps" (the ability of the BRT vehicle to move ahead of waiting traffic by using a side lane and traffic signal phasing). The project intends to coordinate with the Central Avenue BRT project to create a transfer between the Central Avenue and TZB services at the proposed station at the Westchester County Center. The Main Street and Hamilton Avenue intersections with Route 119 have very high traffic volumes, and the elimination of a general purpose lane could have severe impacts to traffic in the AM and PM peak hours. The DEIS will identify potential traffic impacts and possible mitigation scenarios.

The second option would bring the bus lane and/or busway alignment from Route 119 to the Westchester County Center east over the Bronx River and across the Bronx River Parkway and into the County Center parking area. To reach the White Plains Transportation Center, this option would construct a tunnel beneath the Metro-North Harlem Line. Although it would provide a more direct route to the Transportation Center and not impact traffic movements at Hamilton Avenue and Main Street, this option would have significant environmental issues. This option also would allow the Central Avenue BRT to access the Transportation Center.

The next steps in the development process include coordination and meetings with local stakeholders including City and County officials and agencies. The options also will undergo traffic analyses using the Best Practice Model (BPM), which will provide a travel demand forecast, and a traffic simulation program (Paramics), allowing the BRT alignment options to be refined and screened according to their performance.

### **Questions and Comments**

Q: Would existing local bus lines use the dedicated BRT bus lanes?

A: Yes, the project intends to share its routes with the Bee-Line buses. BRT Implementation Guidelines (TCRP Report 90) suggest that up to 90 buses could be accommodated in a single dedicated bus curb lane in the peak hour without producing bus to bus congestion.

Q: How would bus frequencies be maintained?

C: Letting other buses use the routes would enhance the visibility of the BRT system and would articulate transit system uses and needs.

A: Once a decision is made on the alignment, discussion will begin with other transit service providers about service plans. The traffic simulation model takes into account the existing bus routes and service frequency.

Q: What would be the traffic impacts to the Bronx River Parkway?

A: These impacts would be analyzed once the alignment is better defined.

Q: Has a study been done, or is one under way, to consider impacts to development areas adjacent to potential BRT stations/stops?

A: More detail will be given to environmental impacts, including those to local development, at a later stage of analysis (during the Tier 2 environmental analysis). The Tier 2 transit analysis will allow greater refinement of station locations. In addition, NYSDOT is making available training in transit oriented development to municipalities along the corridor.

Q: Are the potential impacts of the BRT crossing the Bronx River being considered now?

A: Yes.

C: The City of White Plains has considered the Bronx River Parkway area at length. The tunnel to Water Street would have less impact to traffic, but the previously proposed Grove Street Extension project could provide easier access to the Transportation Center. [Grove Street is now known as Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.]

Q: Is the Grove Street Extension project active? Was it included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Westchester County?

A: The project is inactive and is not on the TIP. However, adding a transit component to the project could make it more viable.

C: The Grove Street Extension project was missing the positive attributes of a transit alignment. Now may be the time to reconsider the project.

C: The station at the Transportation Center could be located on Lexington Avenue.

Q: How far in the environmental process did the Grove Street Extension project get?

A: Drawings illustrating the alignment below the Harlem Line to where it meets Lexington Avenue were produced. An EIS was not completed.

C: The historic character of the Bronx River Parkway and the impact to the park complicated the project.

Q: Does the City of White Plains still own the right-of-way (ROW) that could be used to extend Grove Street to the Harlem Line?

A: The City owns the ROW, and the parking lot in the area is leased. The City would be interested in promoting access and transit.

Q: Who would be the point of contact for additional information on this concept?

A: Mr. Soyk suggested contacting the Commissioners of Planning and Public Works.

It was explained that the busway alternative was developed to provide minimal interference with non-BRT vehicles; for example, the busway connection to the Transportation Center would avoid impacts to traffic on Route 119. Metro-North Railroad has suggested the possibility of a third track along the Harlem Line. This option is an alternative to the Route 119 option, and its cost, service, and potential impacts will be analyzed in the DEIS.

Q: How high would the BRT viaduct from I-287 adjacent to the Harlem Line be?

A: The BRT would descend from I-287 down to grade at the parking area, but the exact details have yet to be developed.

Q: Would this alignment take longer to reach the Transportation Center?

A: No, it would be shorter.

Q: Does having three stops—as opposed to two stops—in the White Plains CBD compromise the efficiency and speed of the BRT system?

A: The TCRP guidelines for BRT in an urban area, which the project is following, suggest that stations in a CBD should generally be between a quarter and half mile apart. The guidelines suggest three stations, located at the center and at the beginning and end of the CBD, to provide adequate coverage.

Q: Do all alignment options connect with all three [proposed] stations?

A: Yes.

C: The BRT system would work more efficiently if it made fewer stops in the White Plains CBD.

A: There is a trade-off between ridership needs and accessibility needs. White Plains is a center in need of both cross-town and cross-corridor service. Some BRT buses could go express, and the system could be designed to allow flexibility.

C: The busway option in Westchester County would cost about four times as much as the bus lanes option (about \$2.2 billion versus about \$560 million). The ridership numbers for both options are almost the same. Further information on ridership and cost is provided in the *Transit Mode Selection Report*, available online. In terms of travel times, the busway option is about 4 to 5 minutes faster than the bus lane option from Spring Valley to White Plains. That relatively minor difference in travel time does little to promote increased ridership.

Q: Do the reports online provide a total comparison of the busway and bus lane options?

A: The alternatives use some common elements in Elmsford and Port Chester; therefore, there was not a total “bus lane” vs. “busway” comparison of the two alternative alignments. The final alignment may mix and match the better elements of both options. Ultimately, the travel way for the BRT through Westchester County may comprise a combination of busway and bus lanes.

Q: The Town of Greenburgh may have zoning issues with potential bus stops. Does the study focus on commuters or their destinations?

A: The current analysis does not assume transit oriented development (TOD) or zoning constraints. As a result, the current ridership estimates are probably lower than they would be if TOD and zoning changes were considered.

C: A link with the BRT on Central Avenue would link strategic nodes. It’s important to consider intra-county travel. Greenburgh is interested in TOD and submitted an application for the NYSDOT’s training initiative.

C: Methods to alleviate local traffic in White Plains should be considered.

### **Interactive Options Analysis in the White Plains CBD**

Mr. Grande placed a transparency over the alignment drawing of White Plains so that SAWG members could draw potential alignments and station locations. He drew potential stations in the vicinity of the White Plains Transportation Center and Westchester Mall, which are about a mile apart. The stations should be within easy access of important CBD locations, including the White Plains Mall, City Place, City Hall, institutional areas, Renaissance Square, and the Galleria. In developing the options, the team considered which streets would best accommodate the BRT system. Main Street appeared to be the most direct route for the eastbound BRT, while the westbound BRT could travel along Hamilton Avenue to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard or Bank Street. The Bee-Line buses, which could share the proposed BRT routes, travel east on Main Street and west on Martine Avenue. The use of Martine for the proposed BRT system would be difficult as the vehicles would have to navigate a 180-degree turn, use the narrow two-lane street between Broadway and Court Street, and cope with parking entrances.

### **Questions and Comments**

C: Martine Avenue could work as the westbound BRT route to the Transportation Center if parking were removed and a curbside bus lane was created. The Central Avenue BRT study removed a few parking spaces on Martine Avenue because use of the avenue is low and there is ample off-street parking. The BRT would reduce demand for parking.

Q: Who is parking on Martine Avenue? Residents?

A: Parking spaces are mostly used by visitors to the art center and the bank.

C: The removal of parking spaces along Martine Avenue would provide only minimal space. It would not free up enough space to accommodate a dedicated bus lane as well as two lanes of general traffic.

C: For a street to be considered as a dedicated bus lane, it should have two travel lanes. However, Martine Avenue may be worth analyzing because it has potential as a shared route with the Central Avenue BRT.

- C: One possibility to solve this issue is reconfiguration of the roads, for example, by switching their directions. By changing Hamilton Avenue's one-way configuration or Martine Avenue's width, as well as attempting other potential reconfigurations, it may be possible to create a better alignment
- A: The traffic simulation model will show how other roads would be used when the BRT is implemented and will give insight on possible reconfigurations.
- C: Hamilton Avenue could be used for both east- and westbound BRT alignments.
- C: A center median alignment also could be considered.
- C: Connections with Renaissance Square would be made through a Hamilton Avenue corridor.
- A: If the BRT used a Hamilton Avenue route, it would not provide route sharing with the Bee-Line, but transfer between the services could be provided where their alignments cross.
- Q: Is the free loop service proposed in White Plains still being considered?
- A: The City is considering a shuttle to the train station with a downtown circulation loop during midday. The project has some funding issues.
- Q: Is there a possibility that the business improvement district (BID) would provide funding, or that a transportation improvement district (TID) or tax increment financing (TIF) district could be developed?
- A: The constraining issues were centered on the cost and the limited number of players.
- C: The Hamilton Avenue route would assist in the redevelopment of the White Plains Mall.
- C: A center station at the White Plains Mall would be far from Westchester Mall.
- Q: How would offices on Broadway be best served under the various options? The slope and topography of northbound Broadway would make reaching a station there difficult. But a station farther east would serve the offices.
- C: Stations should serve office users.
- A: The Tier 2 analysis will consider this type of factor in analyzing potential station locations.
- C: A station could be located at the Crate and Barrel.
- C: A station could be located on Hamilton Avenue, centered towards Church Street. Such a station would be located close to the MNR service, as well as other significant land uses.
- C: If a station were to be located on Broadway, the City should consider adding a pedestrian bridge across Tibbets Park. The north side of the Westchester Mall could be a potential redevelopment area.
- C: This would have strength as a TOD location.
- C: There are many developable blocks near the White Plains Mall and the Galleria.
- A: If the Barker area were to be redeveloped, we could consider using Barker for eastbound BRT and Hamilton for westbound BRT; however, Barker would have to be widened as part of the redevelopment. Would there be major impacts from removing parking along Main Street if that street were to be used by eastbound BRT vehicles?
- C: Main Street at Conroy Drive would not present great difficulties.

- C: Curbside bus concentrations have a major impact on the pedestrian environment and impact development potential as well. The effect is a “wall of buses.”
- C: Martine Avenue should be left for the Bee-Line only. The Bee-Line and the BRT together would be too much for one roadway to bear.
- A: The traffic simulation model will show service interactions and route congestion problems.
- C: Some Bee-Line buses have been moved to Hamilton Avenue in the past but removed because of the lack of demand. The City has discussed other routes with the Bee-Line operators in the past.
- C: Locating a transit station within a quarter-mile distance is very walkable; it would take about five minutes to walk to the station. The quality of the walk, types of stations, existence of ground-floor retail, and visible crosswalks all add to an enjoyable pedestrian experience.
- C: The lack of these amenities is spurring the need for the shuttle because there is “nothing to walk by.”
- C: The Galleria cuts the space in half.
- C: There is no shade along the walk.
- Q: Is the study focused on ridership for employees or shoppers?
- A: The analysis will consider both groups.
- C: Weekend traffic conditions need to be considered.
- C: Access to the White Plain Library should be considered.
- C: Certain segments of the BRT alignment on Hamilton Avenue and Broadway could use queue jumps and may not require a dedicated lane.
- A: The analysis could consider this idea.
- Q: What is a queue jump?
- A: A separate traffic signal phase is built in to allow the bus to move ahead of other vehicles. This system usually requires an extra right-side lane at an intersection. Mr. Grande showed the members an illustration of a queue jump.
- Q: What about the Armory Place Triangle? Could the park be shifted to allow for two-way traffic? The turn is ridiculous for buses.
- C: The option could not go through the City’s park, and that if park space is taken it must be replaced.
- C: For a project to utilize park space there must be a proven public benefit.
- C: Maple Avenue is a possible option for consideration.
- C: Having more BRT stops will reduce the system’s efficiency; with fewer stops, the BRT system will have a more positive impact. Developers will be more interested in areas where there is a higher ridership at one station versus multiple stops.

Mr. Grande pointed out the options on a map:

- Hamilton Avenue and Main Street on Route 119,
- Hamilton Avenue and Main Street using tunnel, or
- Martine Avenue.

Q: What are the costs for a tunnel under Main Street?

A: We don't have the exact figure with us, but probably less than \$50 million.

C: There is a need to consider transporting people north of White Plains down to the CBD.

Mr. Grande thanked everyone for their input, which will be considered as the alignment options are evaluated. The eastbound and westbound Hamilton Avenue option also may be considered. Potential locations for transit stations locations will continue to be discussed during follow-up meetings.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.