



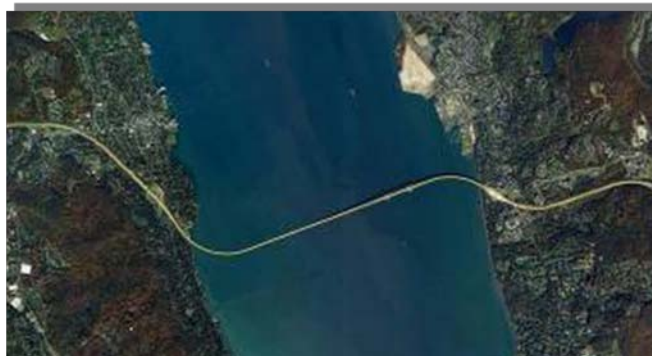
TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE/I-287
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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

Meeting Minutes

***Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)
Traffic and Transit SAWG Meeting #8***

Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Project



June 9, 2010

Meeting Title:	Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Group (SAWG) Traffic and Transit SAWG Meeting #8
Meeting Purpose:	Exchange of information
Location Date:	Nyack Library Nyack, NY June 9, 2010, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Agenda:	Item 1. Introduction (Page 2) Item 2. Presentation (Page 2) Item 3. Discussion (Page 3)
	Attendees:
	<u>SAWG Members</u> Charles Borgman Joan Connors – Airmont Citizens Liaison Committee for TZB Eric Simon – representing Legislator Harriet Cornell Patrick Gerdin – Rockland County Department of Planning Orrin Getz – Empire State Passengers Association / NJ Assoc. for Rail Passengers Randy Glucksman James Hartwick – Senator Thomas Morahan’s Office Jane Keller Julius Levine – Rockland County Conservation Association Marie Lorenzini – former Trustee of Village of Nyack Lawrence Lynn – Mayor, Village of Grandview-On-Hudson Richard May – Fellow, American Institute of Certified Planners John Tangredi
	<u>Project Team Members</u> Yvette Hinds, NYSDOT Craig Teepell, NYSDOT Wai Cheung, NYSTA Angel Medina, NYSTA Dan Evans, MNR Frank Grande, AECOM Caren R. Morgan, AECOM Jim Rashford, CHA Rita Campon, Parsons George Paschalis, HSH Sandy Pawelczyk, HSH

Agenda Item 1
Introduction

Craig Teepell (NYSDOT) welcomed members of the Traffic and Transit Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Group (SAWG) and introduced the evening’s agenda. The goal of this meeting was to present, discuss, and seek input on the results of the project team’s evaluation of bus rapid transit (BRT) alignment options in Rockland County. Recommendations and decisions regarding these results have yet to be made. Mr. Teepell asked participants to introduce themselves and encouraged participation in the discussion.

Frank Grande (AECOM) presented illustrations and engineering plans to aid in the discussion of BRT options. The BRT would operate across the project corridor, from Suffern to Port Chester. The BRT system would utilize new, distinctively designed low-emission vehicles with low floors and multiple doors to facilitate boarding. Stations and vehicles would be engineered to support Integrated Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies including vehicle prioritization using traffic signals, fast fare collection, and advanced information for passengers. The BRT would travel in dedicated running ways separated from general traffic to provide frequent and reliable service.

The BRT would operate in a busway, bus lane, or HOV/HOT (High Occupancy Vehicle/High Occupancy Toll) lane. A busway would be used exclusively by BRT vehicles and would be separated by a barrier from other traffic, while bus lanes would be dedicated, in-street lanes with minimal general traffic. The following transit alignment options in Rockland were reviewed at this meeting:

- BRT in a busway on the north side, south side, or the median of the Thruway
- BRT in the HOV/HOT lanes in the median of the Thruway

Agenda Item 2
Presentation

The proposed BRT service plan in Rockland, whether in a busway or in HOV/HOT lanes, includes six BRT stations within the 14-mile area of analysis (Interchange 15 to Interchange 10):

- Hillburn (Intermodal)
- Airmont (BRT only)
- Monsey (BRT only)
- Interchange 14A (Intermodal)
- Palisades Center Mall (Intermodal)
- Nyack (BRT only)

The major elements of the BRT infrastructure include a trunk line for rapid BRT service as well as transfers to feeder routes and local bus routes at every station location. This system would serve 21-22 stations along the trunk line between Hillburn and Port Chester. The BRT would reduce the average travel time of a current bus traveling across the corridor by half. Passengers in Rockland could connect to the commuter rail transit (CRT)

service at the intermodal stations, as well as feeder and other local bus routes including the Transport of Rockland (TOR), Clarkstown Mini-Trans, and others.

General Questions (Q), Answers (A), and Comments (C):

Q: Will parking be provided at transit stops, and will passengers be able to leave their cars there all day long? Are there existing plans for station locations?

A: Yes, parking needs at each potential station will be determined based on demand. This DEIS will analyze proposed station locations and approximate parking requirements. The Tier 2 transit analysis will develop and analyze the stations in more detail, including final locations, vehicular and pedestrian access, parking layouts, and impacts to local traffic movements.

C: A bus route system was created in the past for the Palisades Center area and it did not work.

A: The difference with this BRT service plan is that the trunk line is the focus of the system. The stations permit drop-offs, but the BRT continues across the corridor, providing access to other destinations.

Q: Are there traffic projections for these stations that consider impacts from feeder routes and other traffic?

A: A comprehensive traffic analysis, including ridership projections, will be included in the DEIS.

Q: Is there a possibility of using either side of the Thruway for busways? Could the busway be on the north and south sides simultaneously?

A: It is possible to have an eastbound busway along the south side of the Thruway and westbound on the north side; however, we would not consider it desirable for a number of reasons. If busways were provided on both sides of the Thruway, it would require stations on both sides as well, and passengers would have to cross over the Thruway if they needed to ride in the opposite direction. It would also require maintaining two distinct infrastructure segments separated by the Thruway. This type of arrangement offers low utility. The proposed busway would have eastbound and westbound running ways and stations on one side of the Thruway or the other.

BRT in a Busway: North or South Side of the Thruway in Rockland

The CRT options (discussed on April 27, 2010 at SAWG #7) in Rockland County would locate the CRT in the median or on the south side of the Thruway. When pairing the BRT busway alignments with these options there are six possible combinations:

- CRT in the median with BRT in the median, north, or south side of the Thruway
- CRT on the south, with BRT in the median, north, or south side of the Thruway

BRT performance measures that include ease of connection to the CRT system, ease of accessibility to stations, future design flexibility, potential for transit-oriented development, and potential impact on the Thruway were used to compare the initial six combinations. The median busway rated unfavorably in comparison to a side busway in all measures and was not evaluated in more detail. The four remaining options were analyzed according to several engineering, transportation, environmental, and cost evaluation criteria.

Summary of Evaluation Results

A summary of the key evaluation results follows.

Between Interchanges 15 and Interchange 11, the Thruway operates 6 lanes within a 250-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW). There currently is a 60-70 foot buffer between the edge of pavement and neighboring land uses.

The 250-foot-wide ROW is generally wide enough to fit the busway, CRT, and climbing lanes, but would need to be enlarged in some areas to accommodate proposed stations. Both busway options would remain generally at grade with the Thruway except at overpasses and interchanges where the busway alignment would deviate to avoid an alignment conflict. Retained fill and retained cuts would be utilized in some locations to allow the busway to meet the Thruway grade.

Hillburn to Airmont – From the Hillburn Station, Busway North would begin traveling east on an elevated viaduct over Route 59 to the north side of the Thruway, enter a retained cut at Harriman State Park, and utilize a bridge over the Mahwah River. The busway would then travel on retained fill around Lake Antrim and at grade at Hemion Road before entering a cut as it proceeds to Airmont Road. Busway North would have impacts to the floodplain at the Mahwah River, which would be identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). While the BRT design indicates that a 46-foot-wide running way meets the design standard, the width could be reduced in some areas to minimize impacts.

Busway South would travel on Route 59 to Wayne Avenue (in mixed traffic) and join the south side of the Thruway by accessing a ramp from Washington Avenue. This mixed traffic segment would be necessary because bringing the busway beneath Interchange 15 would conflict with the CRT alignment. Furthermore, a busway on the south side of the Thruway, adjacent to Wayne Avenue, would negatively impact many properties on Wayne Avenue. There is an estimated two-minute travel time difference, and the bus would have signal priority.

Airmont Road – The Busway North would run parallel to the Thruway and travel under Airmont Road in a cut to access a north side BRT station. The BRT service plan does not include feeder buses at the Airmont station location, but all trunk-line BRT vehicles would stop at this location.

The Busway South would travel beneath Airmont Road in a cut while the CRT would travel over Airmont Road. The potential station would be located at the Millennium Paper Facility on the south side of the Thruway. An optional CRT route, under Airmont Road, is also under consideration.

Airmont to Interchange 14 – The Busway North would follow the Thruway grade and connect to the proposed Monsey Station just east of Route 59 overpass. East of the station the busway would circle around and utilize a portion of the Spring Valley truck toll plaza in this segment. Overpasses would be lengthened, causing impacts to local roads. The busway would travel under the ramps of the Garden State Parkway and over Pascack Road to the Park and Ride, the proposed Interchange 14 Station location.

East of Airmont, the Busway South option would require shifting the Thruway northward to accommodate the south side busway and CRT alignments. The busway would be located next to the Thruway and travel at grade, while the CRT would be on the outside. The Monsey Station would be located in a limited area west of the Route 59 overpass. At Chestnut Ridge Road the Busway South would climb up over the CRT and transition to the outside before the Interchange 14 Station. With CRT now adjacent to the Thruway and BRT

on the outside at the station, it would be easier for passengers to access buses and for feeder buses to join the trunk line.

Interchange 14 to Palisades Mall – The Busway North option would travel at grade with the Thruway and under the West Shore Line. To access the proposed Palisades Mall Station at Parking Lot J the busway would utilize a “Texas T,” or T-shaped access ramp, directly east of the West Shore Line, to cross over the Thruway and under the elevated CRT and into the station. A BRT station on the north side was considered but judged not to be preferable due to the lack of a suitable area and minimal connectivity to the CRT station and adjacent roads.

The Busway South option would also travel at grade with the Thruway. The CRT would be mostly on the long viaduct over the Hackensack Valley. The Busway South would have direct access to the Palisades Mall Station and connectivity to the CRT.

Interchange 11 to Tappan Zee Bridge – In Nyack, the CRT would be in a tunnel for both busway options. The Busway North option would cross under the Thruway to access a proposed station just east of the Interchange 11 eastbound access ramp. The Busway South option would have direct access to the station location. From the BRT station both busway options would climb over Route 59 and would travel along the south side of the Thruway to Interchange 10. Interchange 10 would be reconstructed to improve traffic operations and currently is being analyzed with round-a-bouts at the ramp terminals.

General Summary

The Busway North option would provide better locations for stations in Airmont, Monsey, and at Interchange 14. This option would also connect to the south-side stations at Palisades Mall and Nyack. Those busway options with CRT in the median (compared to the south side) would be the most expensive because the Thruway would need to be relocated to the north. The Busway South with CRT South would also require a Thruway shift, leaving the Busway North paired with CRT on the south side as the only option that does not require the Thruway to be relocated. It therefore is the least costly. In addition, the Busway North option would have fewer total displacements (43) than would the Busway South option (67).

Questions (Q), answers (A), and comments (C) regarding the Busway North and Busway South options:

Q: Has the evaluation already occurred?

A: Yes, the *Transit Alignment Options Report* (TAOR) will contain the results of the evaluation and will be uploaded to the project website (www.tzbsite.com) once it is finalized.

Q: How do the HOV/HOT lanes differ from the busway options?

A: The differences, which will be evaluated in the DEIS, include:

- HOV lanes would end and start east of Lake Antrim, and the BRT would continue in mixed traffic to Interchange 15A and use local roads to the Hillburn Station. The Busway North would connect directly to the Hillburn Station.
- Travel time differences: the busway option would be approximately two minutes faster.

Q: Would the BRT in mixed traffic cause traffic congestion between Interchanges 14B and 15?

A: Traffic conditions will be modeled and the results will be included in the DEIS.

Q: Has the evaluation considered the differences between CRT options and BRT options as they apply to land use? The CRT in this area would attract people, increasing the population in the area.

A: The report addresses land use changes and many other considerations while analyzing the various options.

Q: How would people access the BRT station at Airmont?

A: Access for drivers, bikers, and pedestrians would be provided through driveways and sidewalks. There would be a traffic signal in place at this location.

C: The land may not be available in the potential station locations by the time the study is finished.

A: Approval on the alignments and options is necessary before real estate decisions are made.

C: A parking lot serving the south side station at Airmont would be next to the apartment complexes in that area and would be a nightmare.

C: In Rockland County, population density is greater north of the Thruway.

C: The Park and Ride lot at Pascack Road and Interchange 14A is maxed out.

A: Parking could be reconfigured in this location. Because the adjacent unused lot is restricted by the tandem truck location, the solution would most likely lead to a vertical parking structure.

Q: Would the Park and Ride lot at Pascack Road be used for the construction phase?

A: Possibly, and the parking would be staged.

C: The highways are already congested where they feed into Route 59, around Interchange 14A. Route 59 narrows to only two lanes in this area.

A: The DEIS will closely examine traffic in this area and will suggest mitigation to modify interchanges if necessary. First, the alternative transit alignments will be designed. The design will be modeled against different variables and will be modified accordingly.

C: There will be traffic operational problems at Route 59 near Interchange 14A.

Q: Is the CRT elevated as it passes the Palisades Center Mall? What is the elevation of the Busway North BRT in this area?

A: Yes, the CRT would be elevated on a viaduct in this area and would cross over the CSX freight line and over the Palisades Center Drive. The Busway North alignment heading east would be at Thruway grade under the CSX line, then rise to cross over the Thruway on a bus only bridge and stay beneath the higher CRT viaduct to access the Palisades Mall Station. East of the access bridge the Busway alignment would return to the Thruway grade. The elevation would range from at grade with the Thruway to approximately 20 feet above the Thruway as it crosses under the CRT viaduct.

C: Traffic is a problem around the Palisades Center. The traffic signals are inadequate at Route 59 in this area.

A: The ring road serving Parking Lot J and the mall may be reconfigured.

Q: How would noise be addressed in the environmental studies?

A: Vehicular noise impacts, including noise from the proposed BRT, will be evaluated by comparing predicted future noise levels for the project design year (2047) along the I-287 ROW with the noise abatement criteria, existing noise conditions, and future No Build conditions. The rail transit noise component will be

predicted using FTA's assessment guidance. The predicted highway noise will then be combined with the transit noise to enable development of highway traffic and transit combined noise contours for each alternative. Feasible and reasonable abatement measures, including noise barriers, will be identified to reduce traffic-noise levels where impacts are projected to occur. Within those areas where a transit improvement is not aligned with any highway traffic, the mitigation measures established by FTA will be evaluated as necessary. Potential transit noise abatement measures include rail lubrication, engine compartment treatment, sound barrier, building insulation, etc.

Q: Will an elevated train cause greater noise impacts?

A: It would depend on distance from the tracks. Impacts will be modeled and identified in the DEIS.

Q: What type of trains will travel through Rockland County?

A: Electric multiple units, or EMUs, would operate along a third rail system. During peak periods eastbound service would be provided every 15 minutes from Hillburn. Diesel trains from the Port Jervis Line also would travel across the corridor.

Q: Why is the alignment not using the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) Tunnel?

A: That is a separate project. The Tappan Zee service would connect to the Hudson Line and provide access to the east side of Manhattan for which there is sufficient demand.

C: There is no need for the third track in the Hackensack Valley in the south side CRT option.

A: The third track would extend only 1,000 feet. This is the only location in Rockland County where a third track would be effectively utilized. There also is a storage area in this location for train engines.

C: Interchange 11 is a bad location for a station.

A: This location is accessible from Route 59, allowing feeder bus accessibility and TOD potential. Admittedly, this location is tight, but modifications to improve accessibility will be explored.

C: A garage is needed for an Interchange 11 station on the south side.

A: Yes, a garage or other parking facility would be provided at this location if the demand warranted it.

Q: Will all buses on the trunk line stop at the Interchange 11 station?

A: Yes, all BRT vehicles would stop at this station.

C: A station in Nyack is a challenge. Once an alignment is determined it will be modeled for different variables and then modified for improvements.

C: Interchange 10 in South Nyack is an area ripe for reclamation. A station could be created if you decked over Interchange 10 west to Mountainview Avenue. A parking lot could be put above the station, and the commercial area in South Nyack decimated by the Thruway in the 1950s could be reclaimed. The structure could be enclosed by a canopy and exhaust could be released at the top.

A: The Interchange 10 area has a lower density than Interchange 11. Pedestrians, local buses, and feeder buses could not easily access a station in this location.

C: The traffic at Interchange 10 emanates from the south. South Nyack is 2,600 people, so New Jersey is a contributing traffic population at this Interchange.

A discussion follows:

C: There are a lot of pedestrians around Interchange 10 where Depew, Cedar Hill, and Clinton Avenues are located. There also are a lot of existing buses in the area. There are more people who want to travel south and not so many people who want to travel east and west. The potential Palisades and Nyack stations are too close to one another. Mountainview Avenue also would constrain a station at Interchange 11. Interchange 10 presents great potential for TOD, there is an accessible rail trail, and there is property available here.

A station at Interchange 11, south of the Thruway, would result in loss of property taxes and income for the Village. The Village of Nyack is awaiting the final designs before a decision is made, and is looking for alignment that serves the Village. Inter-municipal agreements will require additional work in the future, so there is a lot of work ahead. The station seems to fit nicely at Interchange 10, but we are still listening and will wait to make our decision.

A: Interchange 10 is very close to the bridge. There is a large elevation change on the south side and access from Hillside Avenue is very difficult. The elevation is different on the north side and these elevation differences present difficult engineering challenges for building a station on top of Interchange 10. A station at Interchange 11 could use round-a-bouts and the Thruway bridge would be redesigned. A station at Interchange 11 would allow Nyack the opportunity to improve its gateway area.

The introduction of the BRT and the CRT at Interchange 10 would cause a lot of additional traffic congestion. At Interchange 11 there is available area for an improved intersection to relieve traffic congestion for the BRT-only station. A new eastbound exit ramp would be provided at Interchange 10 that could relieve traffic at Interchange 11, improving both intersections. Traveling south on Route 9W would be improved by this type of modification as well.

The Tier 1 transit analysis will determine the alignments and possible station locations. The future Tier 2 study will look at these locations in detail. The station in the general Nyack area is also dependent on the bridge configuration that is chosen. There are currently 6 bridge configuration options under analysis, which all have to work around tunnel, maintenance, and ventilation issues. Once these options are reduced, further studies could take place and the advantages of various locations will become clearer.

C: South Nyack residents will not mind having to travel a few miles west to reach the CRT at the Palisades Mall to then travel on a one-seat ride to Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan.

Q: What is the topography at Interchanges 10 and 11?

A: Rock.

Q: Where is the Thruway property maintenance facility?

A: The maintenance facility is currently located at Interchange 9, but would be moved to Interchange 10 to allow for the BRT Broadway Station in Tarrytown. It cannot be moved farther west as it must be kept close to the bridge for operational ease.

C: Senator Thomas Morahan's Office is receiving a lot of responses about the placement of a station at Interchange 10 or 11.

C: Peoples' perception of bus service will require that this service plan is express.

A: The BRT would allow feeder bus connections and would service the CRT.

Q: Would people traveling from Upper Nyack and Nyack be able to connect with the CRT from feeder buses traveling on Broadway?

A: Yes, the feeder buses travel between South Nyack to the Palisades Center intermodal station.

Q: Are there HOV lanes at Interchange 10? How will the BRT travel in this area?

A: Yes, HOV lanes would continue through Interchange 10 and onto the new bridge. Slip ramps would allow general traffic to enter the HOV lanes. A slip ramp is currently proposed for access from Interchange 11, but not from Interchange 10.

C: Interchange 11 is a nightmare. Businesses turn over all the time in this area. They are not accessible now due to traffic congestion, which is why they end up closing down. A potential station here could provide TOD potential, improving the tax base.

Q: What is the construction time for this project?

A: After the Record of Decision (ROD) for the EIS, the bridge and highway improvements would take an estimated five to six years to complete. Highway improvements would include transit accommodations.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.