



COUNTY OF ROCKLAND  
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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C. SCOTT VANDERHOEF  
County Executive  
September 4, 2012

Mr. Michael P. Anderson  
Project Director  
Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Project  
New York State Dept. of Transportation  
4 Burnett Boulevard  
Poughkeepsie, New York 12603

**RE: TAPPAN ZEE HUDSON RIVER CROSSING PROJECT**

Dear Mr. Anderson,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) document. Many of Rockland County's concerns have been addressed subsequent to the issuance of the FEIS with the six points in the inter-municipal agreement established by Governor Cuomo, Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino, Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef and Putnam County Executive Mary Ellen Odell.

Those points are as follows:

- 1) Dedicated bus lanes will be incorporated on the bridge from the start.

Point #1 acknowledges using the emergency access lanes on the new bridge during peak hours, and recognizes the need to accommodate Rockland County's existing TZx bus service.

- 2) The bridge will be constructed with mass transit capacity compatible with a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system and Commuter Rail Transit.
- 3) A Regional Transit Task Force will be created to study costs and options for regional transit, including commuter rail and a BRT system on the bridge and key portions of the Westchester-Rockland corridor.

Rockland County looks forward to participating on the Task Force outlined in Point #3, along with MTA, NYS Thruway Authority, NYS DOT, Westchester County, other local agencies and residents.

- 4) The Task Force will issue recommendations in one year, with a plan for short-term steps that can be considered for immediate commencement, as well as long-term plans for transit solutions.

Point #4 addresses many of our comments, including, in the short-term, bus-on-shoulder and a slip ramp at Tarrytown.

- 5) Incentives will be created for contractors that could be used to reinvest in regional mass transit or to moderate impact on toll-payers.
- 6) Establish a working group of Thruway, State, Federal and local officials to examine ways to keep toll increases to the minimum necessary, including maximizing federal support, expanding discount programs for regional residents, and financing mechanisms that lower the cost of credit and borrowing.

Point #6 will address many of Rockland County's funding and toll concerns, and we again look forward to participating within this working group.

Rockland County requests that the six formally-agreed upon points be reflected in the Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Project Record of Decision.

In addition, we have the following closing comments:

- The Governor has discussed forming a Blue-Ribbon Panel with some of its tasks being to assist in reviewing the RFPs, obtaining and providing community input for construction and staging impacts, and to have meaningful input to the visual design selection. As one of two impacted host communities, we look forward to participating in this panel.
- The County is still requesting a requirement that the project support a full-time Rockland County project manager and a full-time Rockland County construction inspector, appointed by the County and paid for by the project, as well as having the project reimburse any staff time expended during construction.
- Under separate cover we have asked for the development and funding of a Construction Mitigation Transit Plan, and supplemental funding for the Tappan Zee Express operations during construction so that we may increase ridership and remove single occupancy vehicles from the bridge.

On behalf of Rockland County, I would appreciate inclusion of these and the attached comments in the Record of Decision. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
C. Scott Vanderhoef  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Attachment

cc: Tom Vanderbeek, Commissioner

**Rockland County Comments**  
**Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Project FEIS**

**CHAPTER 4 : Transportation**

1. Rockland County continues to request that the project require toll-exemption for all County-owned public transit buses (including the TAPPAN ZEEExpress) at Tarrytown and Spring Valley.
2. Rockland County is pleased that the State has committed to establishing a working group of Thruway, State, Federal and local officials to examine ways to keep toll increases to the minimum necessary, including maximizing federal support, expanding discount programs for regional residents, and financing mechanisms that lower the cost of credit and borrowing. To that end, Rockland looks forward to participating in the working group.
3. Rockland County calls for the Thruway Authority to fund this project by utilizing system-wide (Thruway & Canal System) and/or other resources, just as the Tappan Zee tolls have been utilized throughout history to fund other system-wide needs.
4. Rockland County continues to call for a significantly discounted bridge toll rate for all Rockland County resident E-ZPass® tag holders, similar to other such programs in the region, such as on the Thruway Grand Island Bridges, in Staten Island on the MTA Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, and in Rockaway/Broad Channel for the MTA Marine Parkway and Cross Bay Bridges.
5. Rockland County continues to call for a set aside of 2% from all tolls collected on the Tappan Zee Bridge to be dedicated to transit service in the corridor.
6. The new bridge will have dedicated Bus Lanes for Rockland County's TAPPAN ZEEExpress bus service from day one to improve transit reliability and remove the constraints of traveling in the general traffic lanes. This should be reflected in the FEIS. Having TAPPAN ZEEExpress buses use the emergency lanes on the new bridge is making more efficient use of the highway capacity the new bridge will provide – a concept that FHWA itself promotes in its Freeway Management Program (publication number: FHWA-HOP-10-023).
7. The Thruway should also provide a bus-on-shoulder lane from the Palisades Center to the new bridge during peak travel times. This early action will improve mobility during and after construction until the full-corridor transit can be funded and built. The bus-on-shoulder lane will improve mobility to the bridge approach, where the congestion is the heaviest. This will be used during peak AM & PM and connect with the TZB lane that will be dedicated for transit during peak AM & PM travel times.
8. We understand the new bridge will not preclude future transit. Rockland County is pleased that a Regional Transit Task Force is being created to study costs and options for regional transit, including commuter rail and a BRT system on the bridge and key portions of the Westchester-Rockland corridor. This Task Force creation should be reflected in the FEIS. Rockland County looks forward to participating on the Task Force, along with MTA, NYS Thruway Authority,

NYS DOT, Westchester County, other local agencies and residents, and to having the study team get the environmental review process underway to provide BRT in the corridor.

9. The access ramp to the Westchester Bridge Staging Area should be constructed to allow temporary bus access for the TAPPAN ZEEExpress bus service during construction, and to eventually become a permanent route for a bus-only slip ramp/connector from the Tarrytown Toll Plaza area to the Tarrytown railroad station.
10. Rockland County is again requesting that NYSDOT, Thruway Authority & MTA begin the study now for the permanent transit slip ramp/connector. This will prepare the agencies for future federal funding.

#### **CHAPTER 5: Community Character**

1. NYMTC's Regional Transportation Plan (2010-2035) includes the Village of South Nyack's feasibility study for a project to construct a deck over Interstate 287 as it bisects the Village of South Nyack. The deck, combined with land recovered from the reduction of the Exit 10 interchange, would be used to create a unique environmental, recreational and light commercial asset. This will promote economic revitalization for the river villages region through the conversion of unutilized space above a major urban freeway in an ecologically sensitive manner to promote local sustainable community and economic development. Accommodation of this plan should be reflected in the project planning.

#### **CHAPTER 7: Parklands and Recreational Resources**

1. We are pleased that the FEIS has committed to not precluding the South Nyack deck project at interchange 10 - a feasibility study for a project to construct a deck over Interstate 287 as it bisects the Village of South Nyack.

#### **CHAPTER 9: Visual and Aesthetic Resources**

1. Rockland County is pleased that the state will commission a Blue-Ribbon Design Panel to evaluate the general design criteria for the new bridge, including assisting in reviewing the RFPs, obtaining and providing community input for construction and staging impacts, and to have meaningful input to the visual design selection. Rockland County looks forward to participating on this panel as one of two impacted host communities.

#### **CHAPTER 11: Air Quality**

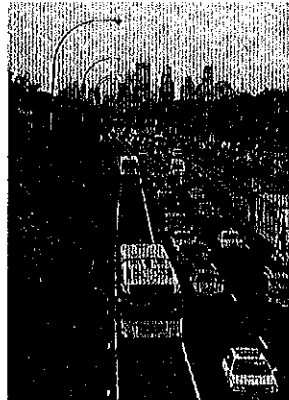
1. The State's commitment to create a dedicated bus lane on the bridge will help to reduce mobile source emissions. The provision of a dedicated bus lane should be reflected in the FEIS.

#### **CHAPTER 18: Construction Impacts**

1. Rockland County has requested that a Construction Mitigation Transit Plan be funded by the State and formulated in partnership with the County.
2. Rockland County has requested FHWA/NYS DOT funding to expand the TAPPAN ZEEExpress (TZx) bus service during construction as part of a Construction Mitigation Transit Plan. This will reduce the number of Single Occupant Vehicles (SOV) traveling in the construction zone.
3. The access ramp to the Westchester Bridge Staging Area should be constructed to allow temporary bus access for the TAPPAN ZEEExpress bus service during construction, and to

eventually become a permanent structure for a bus-only slip ramp/connector from the Tarrytown Toll to the Tarrytown Rail Station.

4. TAPPAN ZEEExpress buses should be allowed use of the Thruway shoulders or temporary construction access roads during construction. The shoulders should later become a dedicated Bus Lane. The project should create a bus-only slip ramp/connector from Exit 10 westbound directly to S. Franklin Street for buses only to access Nyack and bypass the Interchange 10 circle in the PM peak.
5. Another component of the Construction Mitigation Transit Plan should include expansion of the Haverstraw/Ossining Ferry. Rockland County requests that NYSDOT work with Metro-North to expand the operating hours of the service to further reduce the number of SOVs crossing the Hudson during construction and providing more transit options during construction.
6. Exit 10 will be used as a temporary staging area. After completion of the new bridge, all temporary staging areas must be removed. The project should make efforts to coordinate with the Village of South Nyack in creating an appropriate re-use plan for the interchange.
7. The Westchester Inland Staging Area (WISA) currently contains a westbound on-ramp from southbound Route 9 that would be removed during construction staging. Highway access to WISA is available directly to the westbound I-287 shoulder, eastbound from I-287 by a short restricted-use ramp leading south of the Toll Plaza to the administrative area, and from South Broadway via Interchange 9. In order to access the Westchester Bridge Staging Area (WBSA), vehicles would travel along the north-south access road under the Tappan Zee Bridge. From there, they would pass onto a temporary haul road that will be constructed in order to bring trucks over the Metro-North Railroad (MNR) Hudson Line to the WBSA. Rockland wants to see the project plan for this ramp construction to be used in the future for BRT/bus access to Tarrytown Rail Station.
8. Bus on Shoulder from the bridge landing in Rockland to Exit 12 should be provided, including signage. NYSDOT/Thruway Authority must work together with Rockland County to enhance shoulders at minor cost for buses during construction and after construction until the full corridor BRT is built (Suffern to White Plains).



9. As one of the two impacted host communities, the County looks forward to participating on the Blue-Ribbon Design Selection Panel. The County is also still requesting the right to specifically be a part of the RFP selection committee, and that a design-build oversight team be created and include Rockland County representatives.
10. The County is still requesting a requirement that the project support a full-time Rockland County project manager and a full-time Rockland County construction inspector, appointed by the County and paid for by the project, as well as having the project reimburse any staff time expended during construction.