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Westchester County Executive Robert Astorino
Greenburgh Town Supervisor Paul Feiner
Village of Nyack Mayor Jen Laird White
Village of Tarrytown Mayor Drew Fixell
Bike Walk Alliance of Westchester & Putnam
Empire State Future
Environmental Advocates of NY
Environmental Defense Fund
Good Jobs New York
Hastings-on-Hudson Conservation Commission
MTA Labor Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
New York League of Conservation Voters
NYPIRG/Straphangers Campaign
Riverkeeper
Southern Westchester Energy Action Consortium
Transportation Alternatives
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

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Environmental Impact Statement on Tappan Zee Raises More Questions than Answers

*Groups Call on the State to Fully Address Project Financing, Transit, Environmental and
Land Use Impacts*

The state is rushing into one of the largest infrastructure projects in the nation with no clear plan of how to pay for it and no clear sense of the short- and long-term environmental impacts of the project.

On the day of the first public hearing for the Tappan Zee Bridge project's draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), a coalition of organizations and elected officials are asking the state to do better.

Local elected officials are calling on the state to take the time needed to ensure that the Tappan Zee project makes the best use of the state's and taxpayers' limited resources and plans for the future. Government watchdog groups believe the DEIS is flawed and incomplete. Specifically, the DEIS does not study a range of alternatives, provides no financial plan, and includes questionable assumptions about the costs of bus rapid transit.

“Speaking for myself and my constituents, I believe that we must incorporate rapid bus transit into the new Tappan Zee Bridge from the very start. The Tappan Zee Bridge is the major link between upstate communities, New England and the entire southern tier of New York and Connecticut – making this project one of the most important undertakings in the Northeast region. The advantages of including bus rapid transit from the beginning will far outweigh the costs, inconveniences and remediation that will be required later on if it is not included,” stated **Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, 88th district.**

“The rebuilding of the Tappan Zee Bridge is one of the largest infrastructure projects of our time and it's critical to ensure that public dollars are being spent wisely to accommodate our needs,” said **Westchester County Executive Robert Astorino.** “Congestion and environmental concerns coupled with the probability of major toll increases, makes a bus rapid transit option a smart investment that strengthens the economic viability of the entire region. As the state is examining potential funding sources, I urge them to look at ways to incorporate some form of bus rapid transit at the outset.”

“While the state continues to fast-track the construction process for a new Tappan Zee Bridge, the planners are strongly encouraged to ensure that the new infrastructure is designed in a way that will enable it to support bus rapid transit services and commuter rail on this vital transportation corridor for the Hudson Valley,” said **Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef.**

“The state is missing a huge opportunity by pushing this project through without mass transportation – if there's no commitment made now, there's little chance we'll see it for many years to come if ever,” said **Village of Tarrytown Mayor Drew Fixell.**

“With some toll projections on the "new bridge" going as high as thirty dollars and no alternative public transportation option yet in place, residents of Rockland and Orange Counties would struggle financially to cross the bridge,” said **Village of Nyack Mayor Jen Laird White.** “Ironically, a bridge being built to create jobs would limit the ability of millions of hard-working New Yorkers to reach their places of employment or to seek work elsewhere.”

“Public transportation on the new bridge is essential. It makes no sense to build a bridge that is outdated on day one. I am very pleased that the Governor is receptive to the idea of turning the old Tappan Zee bridge into a park. If we add public transportation to the bridge, preserve the old bridge as a park and consider putting solar/wind technologies on the bridge – we can make this bridge a model for the rest of the nation and the world. Do it right. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. There are thousands of bridges around the country. Let's make this bridge the best,” said **Greenburgh Town Supervisor Paul Feiner.**

Paul Gallay, President and Hudson Riverkeeper, said “Governor Cuomo's rush to build an on-the-cheap bridge is a lose-lose situation for New Yorkers, because it undercuts public participation and pushes a replacement without mass transit, a proposal that is obsolete from day one. We will be living with this bridge for generations to come. We deserve better from the state. We deserve the time and planning necessary to build the right project for our region's future.”

“Given the growth projections for the Hudson Valley, any new bridge should have transit on day one to help reduce congestion, foster smart growth, and improve both our economy and the environment throughout the region. A new bridge without transit would soon become a bridge to nowhere--because everybody would be stuck in traffic,” said **Rich Kassel, Senior Attorney and Director, Clean Fuels and Vehicles Project, Natural Resources Defense Council**.

“With the benefit of hindsight, we see now that many of the region's transportation and livability challenges can be traced back to omission of accommodation for the movement of people by means other than automobiles. Fixing these after the fact is more costly, and sometimes nearly impossible. We should not make such mistakes with the Tappan Zee while staring this history in the face,” said **Herb Oringel, Chairman, Northern Westchester Energy Action Coalition (NWEAC)**, a collaboration of 14 municipalities in Westchester County, New York including Bedford, Cortlandt, Lewisboro, New Castle, North Castle, North Salem, Ossining, Pound Ridge, Somers, Yorktown, City of Peekskill, Village of Croton-on-Hudson, and the Village of Mt. Kisco.

“Westchester is working hard to create a sustainable community that makes smart choices about energy, the environment, and our future. We need to have the option of leaving our cars at home. Without public transit on this bridge, our only option will be to sit stuck in traffic,” said **Nina Orville, Executive Director, Southern Westchester Energy Action Consortium (SWEAC)**, a collaboration of municipally-appointed citizen committees addressing energy and other sustainability concerns in Southern Westchester.

“Transit is important to rivertown communities on both sides of the Tappan Zee. If we move forward with no transit, as proposed in the DEIS, we'll be ignoring ten years of public process. In the long run, it'll cost us more money. We hope it's not too late for the Governor to change his mind, or our federal representatives to step in and help us figure out a way to get transit back into this project,” said **Andrew Ratzkin, a member of the Board of the New York League of Conservation Voters, Westchester Chapter**.

“The state's proposing to spend \$5.2 billion to build a bridge without transit. That's simply not the wisest public investment,” said **Gene Russianoff, Staff Attorney, NYPIRG/Straphangers Campaign**. “Hudson Valley residents deserve a decent transit alternative, one that allows for sustainable future growth in the region. The Governor and our federal representatives should get creative about finding a way to fund transit improvements and ensure they are part of this project from the start.”

“Governor Cuomo needs to consider more creative ways to improve transit service for Hudson Valley residents,” said **Kate Slevin, Executive Director, Tri-State Transportation Campaign**. “So far, the New York State Department of Transportation has only overinflated costs of bus

rapid transit and kept the public in the dark about true financial, economic, and environmental impacts of this project.”

“The new Tappan Zee Bridge would need to include public transit capacity coupled with time-of-use pricing to be as efficient as possible,” said **Jim Tripp, Senior Counsel, Environmental Defense Fund**.

The state’s Tappan Zee DEIS ignores ten years of public input and millions of dollars of state study, all of which recommended including transit as a critical way to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, prevent future sprawl and encourage smart growth. The DEIS also fails to address several other crucial environmental, land use, and social justice issues.

Among its numerous shortcomings, the DEIS:

- Does not adequately address how the new bridge will position the region for the future. Bus rapid transit, bus service improvements and or traffic demand management, all of which would reduce traffic on the bridge, could save significant amounts of money and reduce the environmental impacts of the project, both during construction and long term as more people shift to transit and leave their cars at home.
- Does not fully consider the economic impacts of this project. If the project is indeed paid for with toll hikes, as the Governor has begun to suggest, there are serious implications for area residents who will be priced out of driving and left with no viable transit alternative.
- Is not transparent about the project’s financing. The State has recently indicated that it has applied for federal loans to help finance the project, but it is still unclear how it plans to raise the balance of the money and how it will go about re-paying the loans.
- Provides scant information about other environmental concerns including the project’s impacts on the Hudson River ecology, as well as the region’s land use patterns and sprawl. The DEIS proposes to build a bridge that is twice as wide as the current one, and then makes the dubious claim that this will not generate new traffic or alter traffic patterns significantly. It fails to consider options that would reduce the ecological impacts, minimize sprawl and increase transportation choices.

The state is accepting public input on the DEIS at two public hearings this week: (Today, February 28th, at the Palisades Center Mall and Thursday, March 1st at the Westchester Marriott; both from 4-9 pm). Comments can be e-mailed to tzbsite@dot.state.ny.us by March 15th. More details about the meetings and the Tappan Zee project can be found at www.brtonthebridge.org.