

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



My name is Veronica Vanterpool and I am the associate director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit organization that advocates for sustainable transportation choices and policies throughout NY, NJ, and CT. Tri-State has long supported the replacement of the Tappan Zee project but the current plan, without transit, is shortchanging Westchester, Rockland, and New York.

Without transit on the Tappan Zee, our region gets more of the same—another costly transportation project that encourages our dependence on oil, invites traffic congestion, contributes to air and water pollution, encourages sprawl, and isolates communities.

The irony of the situation is that NYSDOT felt the same—before October 2011 when Governor Cuomo reversed course and decided to build a bridge not to preclude transit instead of building a bridge that includes transit.

Yesterday, NYS Thruway Authority issued a MYTH vs. FACT press release. Tri-State wishes to address these and other myths that have been pervasively misinforming the public.

#1: There are NO PLANS at this time to build public transit as part of this project although the State says in yesterday's release that "The new bridge will have immediate, dedicated express bus service." Why isn't this explicitly stated and explained in the DEIS? Or is this just a clever reference to the maintenance of the existing Tappan Zee Express bus service currently on the bridge? Furthermore, design inconsistencies in the DEIS raise issues about future transit. The state has no idea if the space between the two bridges – which varies between 0 and 70 feet – can actually support a third "transit-only" span in the future.

#2: In yesterday's press statement, the state indicated that Westchester and Rockland Counties would be solely responsible for implementing transit, when for 10 years, the state was involved. No big transportation project in our region gets done without state support.

#3: Bus rapid transit systems are generally cheaper than rail systems, despite what the state says. It has grossly inflated the costs of transit, pricing a new bus system at \$5.3 billion. That ends up being \$166 million per mile. According to the Government Accountability Office, \$13.5 million is the average cost per mile of building bus rapid transit. According to ITDP, the best bus rapid transit systems in the world cost around \$20 million per mile. At \$5.3 B, the State must be planning to use platinum to build a BRT system reaching Westchester's Platinum Mile.

#4: The state incites anger in residents by suggesting the Counties will have to resort to tax increases and toll hikes to pay for a bus system. But, the state doesn't have any money for the bridge and will

likely have to resort to tolls that could be as high as \$30 per vehicle to finance the loans on the bridge. Today, Deputy Commissioner for Transportation Karen Rae said tolls on the bridge would be consistent with other Hudson Valley crossings. Today, cars pay \$12 to cross the GWB.

#5: Just because President Obama selected the TPZ as a project of national significance does not mean there is federal money committed to this project. There is not one dollar of federal money identified for this project. The state has only applied for a federal loan via TIFIA, which has to be paid back.

#6: Like the construction trades, we support the bridge replacement because it will create jobs. We support construction jobs. But, we also support transit manufacturing and operation jobs, which are permanent and go beyond construction. This project could create more jobs, and provide access to more jobs, than is currently planned.

#7: The fast tracking of this DEIS isn't exactly saving time. According to the state's original study documents, the previous DEIS study transit that was underway could have been finished at the same time this expedited DEIS would be finished **without transit**—if the Governor made this a priority on his first day in office.

Overall, there is tremendous support for transit on the bridge. Op-eds, letters to the editors, press quotes, editorials, blog posts, press releases (endorsed across regional and party lines), and press rallies have called broadly and loudly for transit to be incorporated into the bridge in the new design. But, towns in the Tappan Zee footprint are going a step further, passing resolutions in support of transit on the bridge and sending these resolutions to state and federal officials. In Westchester, Hastings-on-Hudson was the first to start this effort and it is taking strong hold. Croton-on-Hudson followed. Then, Dobbs Ferry, Greenburgh, Yonkers. NWEAC, the Northern Westchester Environmental Action Consortium, passed a resolution shortly after Hastings. NWEAC's action speaks collectively for: Bedford, Cortlandt, Lewisboro, New Castle, North Castle, North Salem, Ossining, Pound Ridge, Somers, Yorktown, City of Peekskill, Croton-on-Hudson, and Village of Mt. Kisco. Rockland County towns are passing resolutions also.

Building a bridge without any mass transit ignores these voices. It ignores public comments, facts and findings from a 10 year planning process. It contradicts the state's own data and does not plan for the future.

Let's replace the bridge, but let's do it right. Thank you.