

Comments of Tarrytown Mayor Drew Fixell, as spoken at the March 1, 2012 hearing

Thank you.

First, I'd like say that I am appreciative of the Governors and the Presidents efforts to move this project forward. Ultimately, however, I come to this hearing with a profound sense of disappointment. As so many others officials and citizens have testified before and will no doubt do so after me, that disappointment stems from the absence in this project of a meaningful commitment to mass transit, specifically Bus Rapid Transit. Though all of us acknowledge that making and delivering on that commitment would be neither easy nor inexpensive, failing to do so is, at bottom, a choice. And if you make that choice now, everything we know from the history of public finance, mass transportation and government policy tells us that the opportunity is not likely to come again for many years if ever. And if it does take somewhat more time to put such a plan together, that's a small price to pay to get a project that truly delivers the long-term economic and environmental benefits that had always been promised and are much needed and deserved by our residents. While delay and paralysis serves no positive purpose, there similarly is neither a need nor an apparent justification for rushing forward, as was done in 1952, with a project whose impacts we will live with for the next 100 years or more.

Now, I truly wish that my only misgivings concerned mass transit, but unfortunately I do have several additional issues that need to be raised.

First: The 45-day review period for the DEIS is unacceptably short, particularly for a project of this unprecedented size, scope and complexity. If a private developer came to any community or to the state, for that matter, with a project a fraction of this size, there is simply no way the review would be limited to only a month and a half. Aside from being unreasonable, this sets a terrible precedent, and an extension of 60-90 days needs to be considered.

Second: The absence in the DEIS of a financial plan and an analysis of the impact on both our local economy and on our residents, especially middle and lower income commuters, of what will almost certainly be significantly higher tolls, undermines the review process. Moreover, as the project does not include mass transit, which could provide some relief from the negative impacts of the higher tolls, it is even more critical that the financial plan and measures to mitigate negative economic impacts be part of the review from the start.

Third: We believe it is imperative that serious consideration be given to real mitigation measures to offset the negative environmental impacts on neighboring properties, in particular the Quay condominiums. Such mitigation ought to include some means to counter the substantial loss of property values that will inevitably result from such a massive project being placed on the edge of this property. These impacts are real and the DEIS does not adequately address them. Moreover, if the response to this issue is that state law has no provision for compensating neighboring property owners for the extraordinary negative impacts of major projects, then perhaps consideration should be given to modifying the law as was done with the design-build legislation.

And finally: As we have pointed out many times before, the EIS ought to give a hard look at an alternative configuration that would allow for the creation of a new TZB/Metro-North transfer station built as part of the toll plaza, that would allow bus passengers and nearby residents to quickly and easily access the Hudson Line trains without clogging our roads. If such a facility is not considered within the planning process, and the capacity for such a facility is not provided for in the actual plans, it likely will be virtually impossible to add it at a later date.

Thank you.