

**Westchester County Executive Robert P. Astorino Remarks
Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Scoping Session
October 25, 2011
Tarrytown, NY**

I am pleased to be here tonight to have the opportunity to address the public at the first scoping session for the Tappan Zee Hudson River Crossing Project.

I want to thank the Federal Highway Association, New York State Department of Transportation and the Thruway Authority for arranging this briefing.

I have long advocated for the state to make the Tappan Zee Bridge's replacement a top priority and was encouraged when federal and state officials announced earlier this month they were going to move the project forward.

The Tappan Zee Bridge is not simply a connector between Rockland and Westchester counties. It is a major transportation artery and economic lifeline for the state, region and country.

Up to 170,000 vehicles travel over the bridge daily—roughly the same as the Lincoln and Holland tunnels combined.

If the bridge were to close for any reason, it would have devastating consequences for commerce and traffic patterns.

The state has spent over \$1 billion on repairs and studies over the past decade and it's time to move into the construction phase.

In addition to the transportation benefits of a new bridge, this project will be a job creator—bringing an estimated 30,000 jobs to the region for every billion spent on construction.

However, before shovels go in the ground, it is critical that the public fully understand the proposal before us and the impact it will have on our pocketbooks, environment and communities.

This project requires a major investment, and if we are going to commit to rebuilding the bridge, our efforts must produce practical solutions, not only to the problems of today, but to the challenges we will face in the future.

Specifically, I am troubled by the proposed design's absence of a mass transit component that would help alleviate congestion.

While I appreciate the need to keep costs under control, I strongly warn against building a bridge that is penny-wise and pound-foolish.

The reality is, a new bridge—without a mass transit component—would already be at capacity on the day of its opening.

Back to the future—or more accurately forward to the past—will not be a winning strategy for the Tappan Zee.

Practicality should be our guide and installation of Bus Rapid Transit would provide a great benefit at a reasonable cost.

I urge the federal and state agencies responsible for the project to reconsider the design to accommodate Bus Rapid Transit at the outset of the bridge's replacement.

I am also concerned about how this project will be paid for.

There have been a number of proposed funding sources suggested by the state, and it is incumbent on the involved agencies to look at the best fit for the taxpayers.

And as I have said in the past, we must include a public-private partnership as a potential option, particularly if it allows us greater flexibility in building a better bridge.

Toll revenues have also been suggested as a funding resource, which leads to questions about possible toll increases.

The state must do everything it can to keep tolls as low as possible for already-overburdened taxpayers.

As funding is being determined and design options are being weighed, it is critical for the state and federal government to keep the lines of communication open with the local governments and communities that are directly affected by this project.

When it was first announced that the bridge's replacement was being put on the fast-track for approval, there were many questions and few answers.

This public scoping session is a good first step and for this project to be successful, an open dialogue must continue.

Westchester County will be formally submitting scoping questions to address some of its concerns in detail.

I encourage members of the public to get involved in the process and to contact my office with your questions and concerns.

I want to again thank Governor Cuomo and the state for understanding the importance of this project and I look forward to working with my partners in government to build a safe bridge that will secure our economic viability for the long-term.

Thank you.