

THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

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Public Scoping Meeting :  
Re: :  
Environmental Impact Statement for the :  
Proposed Goethals Bridge Replacement :  
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The Staten Island  
Hotel  
Harbor Room and  
Ballroom  
1415 Richmond Avenue  
Staten Island, New York

October 5, 2004  
2:30 p.m.

B e f o r e:

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For Parsons Brinckerhoff:

Judy Versenyi

For Port Authority of New York and New Jersey:

Jim Blackmore

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S P E A K E R S

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Page</u>
THE HON. MATTHEW MIRONES New York State Assembly 60th Assembly District.....	29
TERESA TORO The Tri-State Transportation Campaign....	34
RALPH BARONE Community Board #2.....	39
JANE VREDENBURGH Community Board #1.....	40
JOHN TANCREDI Staten Island Resident.....	43

S P E A K E R S

<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Page</u>
ROBERT CASSARA Gowanus Community Stakeholder Group Chair, Traffic and Transportation Committee.....	44
MICHAEL ARVANITES Representing Councilman Michael McMahan.....	50
TIMOTHY DESIDERIO Staten Island Economic Development Corporation.....	53
JIM DEVINE President/CEO, New York Container Terminal.....	54
LINDA BARAN President/CEO, Staten Island Chamber of Commerce.....	56
FRED LeMOINE Business Agent, The Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Ironworkers Union of New York, Local 46.....	61
JONATHAN PETERS Assistant Professor of Finance, College of Staten Island.....	64
DOM TOMASINO Concerned Citizen.....	68
LEAH GEBHARDT Staten Island Resident.....	69
MEAGAN DEVEREAUX Representing Staten Island Borough President Molinaro.....	74
DEE VANDERBURG President Staten Island Taxpayers Association.....	79

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. FITZPATRICK: Okay,  
everybody. I hope everyone is in from the Open  
House area.

Good afternoon.

On behalf of The United States  
Coast Guard I want to welcome you all to this  
Public Scoping Meeting for the Proposed Goethals  
Bridge Replacement Project.

My name is Maura Fitzpatrick and  
I'll be facilitating today's meeting.

We are going to have a short  
presentation and then we are going to follow with  
a public comment period. It's important that if  
you want to speak, that you fill out one of these  
blue cards up at the front registration desk. And  
I'll remind you about this again. But we need one  
of these cards in order to have you speak.

I'll come back when the  
presentation is done and take you through all the  
groundrules. It's not very complicated.

If you need to use the restroom, if  
you just go out by where you signed in and

make a right, the ladies' room and men's room are right there. And obviously the exit to the building is right in front of you.

And I think that's everything for this moment. So we are really glad so many of you are here and I want to introduce Gary Kassof who is the Bridge Program Manager for The United States Coast Guard.

MR. KASSOF: Thanks, Maura.

And I too want to welcome everyone here to this important scoping meeting for this important project.

For the record, this meeting is part of the environmental review process for the Proposed Goethals Bridge Replacement Project. This review is being conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, otherwise known as NEPA, and the applicable regulations implementing NEPA as set forth in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1500.

This is one of two public scoping meetings that are being held in communities nearest to the bridge for this environmental review process. The other meeting

will be held tomorrow, October 6th, at Elizabeth City Hall in Elizabeth, New Jersey, with sessions from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Let me first introduce the participants to you.

I along with Ernie Feemster, who is sitting up front to my right, represent The United States Coast Guard which is now an agency within the Department of Homeland Security. The Coast Guard is responsible for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, in accordance with the laws and regulations I cited before.

The Coast Guard is directing a team of consultants working on the preparation of this EIS and you have met or will meet many of them this afternoon.

There are numerous federal, state and local agencies with expertise or jurisdiction in the environmental review process that will ensure that the studies and evaluations for the EIS are in conformance with existing laws and regulations.

The Port Authority of New York

and New Jersey is the project sponsor. The Port Authority submitted a Preliminary Bridge Permit Application to The Coast Guard in June of this year pursuant to the General Bridge Act of 1946. In a few moments Ken Hess, the Project Manager for The Coast Guard's consultant team, will be providing you more information on the bridge project itself and some of the Port Authority's reasons for making this application.

You, the public, are an essential part of this process and we are here today to hear your comments, perspectives and recommendations.

As you have seen, we have informational boards and project staff available in the Open House area to the rear to listen to your questions and provide you answers whenever possible, along with background information. We also have materials about the project at the sign-in area for you to review and to take home with you. And here in this area of the meeting we will be taking your comments for the formal record following this presentation.

For those of you who have not

been to a scoping meeting previously, the purpose of the scoping meeting is to gather information to help establish the scope of our environmental review. As such, we will not respond to your statements here but will do so in the ensuing scoping and EIS documentation. In other words, we are here to listen to you

These are the laws and regulations that govern this environmental review. Because the waterway crossed by the bridge, the Arthur Kill, is a navigable waterway of the United States, The Coast Guard is responsible for consideration of issuance of a bridge permit and for preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Now I would like to introduce Ken Hess of the consultant team to make further presentation.

MR. HESS: Thank you, Gary.

Please bear with me. I'm fighting a cold right now so if I happen to cough or lose my voice, that's why.

I'm going to briefly go over these topics that are shown here as part of my

presentation.

I'll begin with a background history of the Goethals Bridge and then talk a bit about the EIS process that we will be going through. Then I'll talk about the purpose and need for the Goethals Bridge improvements and the related project goals.

Then we'll talk about the types of preliminary alternatives that we will be analyzing and the methodology that we are going through to analyze those alternatives.

Also then preliminary study areas for the various technical studies that we will be looking at, potential environmental issues, the schedule of upcoming events, and finally we'll talk a bit about the public participation program elements.

The construction of the Goethals Bridge was completed in 1928 making it one of the early capital projects undertaken by The Port Authority which was created in 1921.

The design of the bridge has remained virtually unchanged since its initial construction, and by the 1990s The Port Authority

determined it to be functionally obsolete.

As a result, The Port Authority proposed construction of a second bridge on the south side of the existing bridge. Under this proposal the existing bridge would have carried New Jersey-bound traffic and the new structure would have carried Staten Island-bound vehicles.

A third lane for buses and ridesharing vehicles would have been provided each way, as well as emergency shoulders, a bicycle/pedestrian lane and the potential to accommodate future transit.

The Coast Guard, as Federal lead agency, then published a Draft EIS in 1995 and a Final EIS in 1997. The FEIS documented serious deterioration of service during peak hours in the No-Action Alternative.

However, the project was ultimately not funded and no bridge permit was issued.

In the years following completion of the FEIS The Port Authority reassessed its needs at the Goethals Bridge taking into account a variety of recent changes

in conditions. As a result, The Port Authority proposed a Goethals Bridge Modernization Program in September of 2003.

Now, as Gary mentioned, The Port Authority then submitted a Preliminary Bridge Permit Application to The Coast Guard for a new replacement bridge on June 3rd of this year. This action officially triggered the need to comply with NEPA, with The Coast Guard to serve as the Federal lead agency once again.

The Coast Guard has made a determination that a full Environmental Impact Statement was required for this project.

The Notice of Intent to prepare a Draft EIS was published in The Federal Register on August 10th of this year. As a result of that Notice of Intent, or NOI, we are all here today attending this public scoping meeting.

Now, this chart shows the progression of steps that will be undertaken throughout the EIS process until the final decision is made on this proposal. You can take a closer look at this on a board in the Open House area.

We are currently in the interagency public scoping step, which is this step right here (indicating), which will help us to better understand the issues and concerns of the regulatory and review agencies and the general public. The understanding gained during scoping will then help us to formulate the alternatives to be studied and the methods to be used in performing the environmental impact evaluations.

Now, as most of you here probably know, the effort is taking place in a time when Staten Island continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in New York State with many traffic and development issues.

The City of Elizabeth and Union County in New Jersey are attracting new developments and economic activity, in addition to the area's role as transportation hub for the region.

It is in this context that The Port Authority's stated purpose and need for proposing improvements to the Goethals Bridge addresses deficiencies in the existing bridge.

The first issue with the bridge is that its lanes are narrow as shown in all of the photos on this slide. You'll see it in all of these photos (indicating). The travel lanes on the bridge and its approaches are ten feet wide which is below the standard lane width of twelve feet.

There is also a pronounced bend in the alignment of the New Jersey approach to the bridge which tends to cause drivers of wider trucks and buses traveling in the right lane to encroach on the left lane, similar to the situation shown on the second photo on this slide (indicating).

Now, the next issue is that the lane width hasn't changed since its original construction when vehicular sizes and traffic volumes were much smaller in comparison to today's conditions.

The bridge has seen a marked increase in traffic over the years and an increase in truck and bus size as well.

Also there are no emergency shoulders as you can see in all of these photos

on the slide as well. You can see there's nothing on either side (indicating).

This condition often results in significant delays as stalled vehicles and those involved in minor accidents have no ability to pull off to the side to allow traffic to continue unimpeded over the bridge.

Safety concerns have also mounted as accident rates on the Goethals Bridge are the highest of the three Port Authority Staten Island bridges and are higher than the rates for comparable facilities in both New York State and New Jersey.

The design of the bridge is also deficient from seismic protection and security perspectives. Given that earthquake activity is a possibility in the region and that there is a need for enhanced measures in light of recent heightened security levels, these concerns have taken on increased importance in recent years.

Also, pedestrian access across the bridge has been unavailable for nearly a decade due to deterioration of the sidewalk and there is a desire to reintroduce pedestrian and

bicycle access across the bridge.

There are also extended and continuing service disruptions for essential, periodic rehabilitation, as shown in the photos on this slide (indicating). This periodic rehabilitation results in increasing costs, which have already averaged \$6.7 million annually since 1987. Repair costs are expected to continue to increase in future years.

The existing bridge configuration also precludes any type of priority transit lanes which could help alleviate growing traffic pressure.

And, finally, because of the conditions that I've described, the bridge operates below the threshold of acceptable conditions.

The Port Authority anticipates that without improvements to the bridge traffic conditions will continue to deteriorate in the future. This also impacts the entire regional transportation system. Any type of an incident or closure on the Goethals Bridge has a ripple effect on all of the Staten Island bridges as

well.

This was illustrated earlier this year when a five-vehicle accident on the Goethals Bridge necessitated closure of the bridge for hours causing traffic to reroute until a second five-vehicle accident on the Outerbridge Crossing further contributed to a massive traffic backup and hours of delay throughout the region.

Now, in response to the various elements of purpose and need that I've just listed, a number of specific goals have been established by The Port Authority. The goals include:

To eliminate design deficiencies and functional obsolescence of the bridge and its approaches;

To avoid the disruptive and costly rehabilitation required to maintain structural integrity;

To reduce roadway congestion and delays on the bridge and to enhance its operational flexibility;

To address local and regional goods movement needs, especially in light of the

revitalization of the Howland Hook area;

To create the capability to accommodate a High Occupancy Vehicle or HOV lane and transit capability should such options become feasible;

To restore and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle access for the bridge;

To improve structural security of the bridge and regional redundancy within the State Island transportation system;

And, finally, to minimize any environmental, economic and social consequences of the improvement that is ultimately undertaken.

So what happens from here?

Today and through November 5, 2004 we are looking for your feedback on the draft purpose and need and goals for the project, as well as suggestions for potential alternatives that can meet the purpose and need and fulfill the goals. Once this is done, the process of evaluating alternatives involves three separate levels of analysis.

At the first level (indicating), we look at all potential alternatives, including

the No-Action Alternative, and screen them to determine each one's feasibility and ability to satisfy the purpose and need.

Those alternatives that are clearly infeasible due to major flaws or do not have the potential to minimally satisfy most project goals will be eliminated from further consideration.

Those that remain are developed in terms of alignment, system components, operations and other factors, and in some cases individual alternatives may be combined to create multimodal alternatives. These then go through a comparative screening process, which is the second level shown here (indicating), to allow us to identify advantages and shortcomings of each alternative and highlight key differences in terms of their performance.

At the conclusion of the comparative screening process, alternatives that best satisfy the project purpose and need and meet the project goals will be advanced for detailed evaluation in the Draft EIS.

Now, we are identifying

preliminary alternatives for the initial screening process through a variety of sources including:

Comments received from agencies and the general public during the scoping process;

Previous Port Authority engineering and planning studies for this bridge as well as other Staten Island bridges and transportation facilities;

The Final EIS prepared for the previously proposed Staten Island Bridge Program EIS that I described earlier, which provided a very broad set of alternatives within the region;

Also regional transportation plans and studies;

And analysis of existing and future transportation demand in the study area, as well as transportation system gaps or deficiencies.

Now, the alternatives that are currently being identified and which will soon be evaluated via the initial screening process are intended to be broad and inclusive of a variety

of modal, structural and non-structural solutions.

These include:

The No-Action Alternative, as required by NEPA, will evaluate potential impacts of future conditions in the study area if no action is taken to replace or improve the Goethals Bridge other than regular maintenance. This alternative also includes other transportation projects and improvements that are programmed and committed in the region.

Another option is a bridge rehabilitation for significant extension of the existing bridge's lifespan.

Another alternative is The Port Authority's proposal to construct a replacement bridge south of the existing bridge and to remove the existing structure.

Other structural replacement or improvement alternatives will also be considered. These may include:

A replacement bridge north of the existing bridge;

A new parallel bridge with

continued operation of the existing bridge;

New twin replacement bridges, one either north or south of the existing bridge and one in the existing bridge's right-of-way;

New crossing with fixed- guideway transit or roadway-based transit options;

Or a new crossing with supplemental ferry service.

Finally, a variety of non-structural alternatives will be considered including:

Enhanced traffic demand management programs;

Use of congestion pricing techniques;

Traffic system management programs;  
And the use of transit service options that do not require new infrastructure.

Now, this map shows the proposed study area levels that will be used in the various environmental studies.

The primary study area, which is

this smaller area shown in the solid line (indicating), is proposed to cover approximately four hundred to five hundred feet both north and south of the existing bridge right-of-way for assessing direct impacts to environmental resources such as wetlands and ecological resources, contaminated properties and cultural resources. The end points of this study area are located approximately at the interchange with the New Jersey Turnpike on the west and the interchange with the West Shore Expressway on the east (indicating).

And the secondary study area, which is this larger area of the dotted line (indicating), is proposed to cover approximately a half mile in all directions from the bridge and its approaches in order to ensure that indirect and socioeconomic impacts are adequately assessed. This area generally extends from a point on Bay Way approximately halfway between the New Jersey Turnpike and Route 1/9 - that would be on the west - and on the east right along South Avenue.

Now, specifically for the

analysis of the transportation, there are two broader study areas. The Primary Traffic Study Area, which is the area shown on this slide, includes the immediate counties where traffic and transportation impacts may occur. The Regional Traffic Study Area, which is the broadest study area, encompasses all or portions of twenty-eight total counties in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut that are included in the transportation demand model that is to be used.

The graphic that you see here is also available for closer inspection in the Open House area.

Now, the key environmental issues that will be examined in the EIS are shown on this list. For each, direct and indirect impacts will be considered as will cumulative impacts as appropriate.

Now, I will not further discuss these issues in this presentation, but you can learn more about these issues from the consultant staff in the Open House area.

Our anticipated schedule for the EIS process is shown on this slide.

The first key date was an agency scoping meeting which was already held on this past September 14th.

Our two public scoping meetings, including this session, are being held this week.

Another important date is the close of the scoping comment period on November 5th. Therefore, we request that you submit any official comments related to this EIS process by that date. All the comments that we receive will assist us in defining the scope of the EIS.

The next major date is the public release and distribution of the Draft EIS which is targeted for sometime in early 2006. At that time we will hold public hearings similar to this meeting today and have a comment period to hear your feedback before finalizing the document.

And there is an ongoing role for the public to play as we carry out this Draft EIS process and related studies. I hope some of you have had a chance to look at the project website at [www.goethalseis.com](http://www.goethalseis.com). It will be updated frequently and we welcome your feedback on it.

Further information about the website is available in the Open House area.

Those of you on our mailing list have received our first newsletter and meeting announcement flyer. We will keep you apprised of project developments on the website and in future newsletters. Those of you who are here today who were not on our mailing list will be added for future mailings.

We will be holding public information sessions between now and the completion of the Draft EIS to receive public input on our alternatives evaluation process.

We will be establishing a Stakeholder Committee for organizational representatives. This Committee will meet periodically to provide input and to help us disseminate information about the project to a broader audience.

And, lastly, as I mentioned earlier, we will hold hearings to receive feedback on the Draft EIS once it is completed.

We hope you will continue to participate and that you encourage your friends,

neighbors and colleagues to do the same.

Now Gary will return and let you know the various ways you can submit your comments.

MR. KASSOF: Thanks, Ken.

Along with providing your oral comments this afternoon, there are a variety of ways you can provide feedback during the comment period.

At the registration area you were given a comment sheet. I have a sheet here to show you (indicating). You were given a comment sheet. You can fill that out and leave it with the staff this afternoon or mail it or fax it as indicated on the sheet.

You can also mail or e-mail your comments to the address listed above or on the screen.

All ways to contact us are available on this comment sheet as well.

The comment period -- as mentioned, the comment period ends at the close of business November 5, 2004. So please bear that in mind. We really do hope to hear from you.

That concludes our formal presentation. So without further delay, Maura will get started with the public comment segment of the meeting.

I along with The Coast Guard consultant and his staff will be here to listen to all of your comments.

I thank you in advance for your participation.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Okay.

If we could have that off, that would be great. Okay.

Does this work? Can you hear me? There we are.

Okay.

Thank you, Gary. I'm going to be calling the names of the people who signed up to register on these blue cards at the registration table. I'm going to be calling you in the order that you signed up. If at any time during the presentation you are interested in speaking, you can always go and fill out a blue sheet and we will take your information at that point.

If you could, when you are asked

to speak, if you could come to this microphone and clearly state your name and your organizational affiliation, if you have one. If you have problems getting up to this microphone, by all means just let us know and we will bring a microphone to you. There's no problem with that.

You will be making your statements. The stenographer is over here.

And since the purpose of this part of the meeting is to gather information from you, we are not going to be responding to your questions and comments here. But in the informal Open House area you can speak with the staff there. But I just want to remind everyone that the comments that are made in the Open House area are not for the record. The ways that you can give comments for the record are to speak here this afternoon and to write in in the ways that Gary indicated.

I'm going to ask you to limit your comments to five minutes and I'll give you a signal if you are running over your time.

If you have additional comments, by all means you can submit them in writing or if

we've gone through all of our speakers and we still have some time, you can come back if time permits and speak again.

And let's see. If you have a written copy of your statement, you can hand it to the stenographer and that would be very helpful.

And you are welcome to step out of the room at any time. We will call your name in the Open House area as well.

And -- Ken is about to pass me some critical note. Okay. Great.

So with that, I'm going to call the first speaker and Ken is going to hand me the name.

Is Assemblyman Mirones here?  
Assemblyman, I would like to ask you to come up to speak. And please use the microphone which I'm going to make sure is on.

ASSEMBLYMAN MATTHEW MIRONES: Thank you very much and good afternoon.

I just entered the room and I missed the wonderful presentation. But I believe there's going to be a five o'clock --

MS. FITZPATRICK: Yes. We're going to repeat it --

ASSEMBLYMAN MATTHEW MIRONES: -- a second showing.

MS. FITZPATRICK: -- at 6:00 p.m.

ASSEMBLYMAN MATTHEW MIRONES: A second showing, right. There's a great demand obviously.

And there is a great demand in our community and I'm very proud to be here representing the 60th Assembly District, which encompasses the east shore of Staten Island and a section of Bayridge, Brooklyn, two very proud and distinct communities that make New York City the great City that it is.

Indeed, we have a wonderful infrastructure in New York City that has helped us attain greatness throughout the world community. But, unfortunately, I think that many of our infrastructure systems are aging and many, in fact, are antiquated. And I think this is a perfect example of an antiquated piece of infrastructure that we have to contend with in

our modern society.

Now, the Goethals Bridge was, I believe, built in 1928. And according to historical records, in those days the standard lane width would be a ten-foot wide functional lane width. And obviously in this day and age with the dependency we have on heavy tractor trailers, obviously it's quite obvious to those of us in this community that use that structure on a daily basis that it is quite inferior and downright unsafe for our citizens to be forced, I may say, to use that structure because we don't have many options for mass transit here on Staten Island and the average citizen is compelled to use that bridge span.

So certainly the ten-foot span creates a very narrow, I would think uneasiness to the average daily driver when confronted with tractor trailers in a narrow environment.

In addition to that, the safety factor that is presented. In this day and age when we're confronted with constant fear of terror attacks - and I know that the Office of Emergency Management has addressed that issue -

but we are concerned about ingress and egress off the Island in case of an emergency situation. And I think that structure again is insufficient to handle an emergency situation for emergency vehicles.

So I am here to forcefully support the consideration and the, I would say, the expedition of a new facility there, a new bridge.

However, as I said, I represent -- I have the distinct privilege of representing two communities in New York City. And I think that it would be shortsighted if we proceed to build a new wonderful, world-class structure without considering what happens on the, I should say, the intake side into New York City.

And as we know, the Gowanus -- I think the BQE, the Gowanus Section, elevated section of the BQE, is also a section of highway that is sorely in need of repair and refurbishment.

And for those of us who travel that corridor on a daily basis we know how

frustrating it is to deal with a patchwork approach to repairing and maintaining that road in some safe condition. And it's going on for a decade now and with no end in sight.

So I think it's quite shortsighted to facilitate further intake into New York City, and we are talking mainly about heavy truck traffic as a point of ingress into New York City - 14,000,000 vehicles in total, 80,000 trucks a day - and then as we enter the great City of New York and we cross over the wonderful span that we know as the Verrazano Bridge and we enter the Bayridge community, we see a structure that is in a dilapidated state.

So I implore you, as we proceed and hopefully see a new structure supporting our community here on Staten Island, I would hope that you would consider and coordinate a simultaneous approach and a comprehensive approach so that the Gowanus corridor would be a consideration and it would also meet the new construct of the Goethals Bridge.

So as I said, I am here to support this effort, but I would like it to be

approached in a comprehensive effort.

So I thank you for your time. Thank you for being here. And I hope to see your second showing.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Well, that's terrific. Thank you, Assemblyman.

(Applause.)

MS. FITZPATRICK: Next, Teresa Toro, please, and then followed by Ralph Barone.

And, Teresa, if you would please just state your name and organization, please.

MS. TERESA TORO: Thank you.

Good afternoon. I'm Teresa Toro, representing The Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

The Campaign is a non-profit policy watchdog organization that advocates for the development of a more developed regional transportation system.

We were strong critics of the Goethals Bridge "twin" proposal during the '90s, but we believe that the emphasis the Port Authority and Coast Guard have placed on fixing

the Goethals' functional problems with a replacement bridge in this new proceeding, as opposed to creating a major increase in roadway capacity, creates significant room for common ground.

We also applaud The Port Authority's implementation of congestion-mitigating, peak-period toll premiums and significant progress toward reopening the rail freight corridor across the Arthur Kill in the interim, and its pending plans for high-speed E-ZPass applications at its Staten Island bridges.

We think a replacement span along I-278 over the Arthur Kill ought to match the lane capacity of the highways that lead to and from it. Any more than three general use lanes in each direction across the Arthur Kill will only cause bottlenecks as drivers try to get to the Staten Island Expressway.

As we argued a decade ago, building more general purpose lanes across the Kill and across the Island would generally represent a welcome mat for the booming numbers of trucks plying the region's highways.

The New York State DOT is currently extending its bus-only lane along the Staten Island Expressway but current plans terminate that lane about mid-way across the Island. We think three modern-width general lanes in each direction is the way to go for the Goethals Bridge of the future.

We also wonder whether the study area is large enough. Currently, the Primary Study Area is one square mile in Staten Island and two in New Jersey. The Secondary Area is a half-mile surrounding the bridge corridor.

But as many Staten Islanders know, the Goethals is part of an extended corridor and conditions on the Goethals can affect traffic patterns from Rahway to Queens or farther. While The Port Authority and Coast Guard have limited ability to affect other parts of the corridor, the EIS could outline and develop scenarios showing the traffic effects on and around the Goethals that actions made by its partners in the I-278 corridor could potentially have.

We applaud The Coast Guard's and

Port Authority's interest in adding transit capacity to the bridge. We hope that feasibility estimates are carried out in a more expansive fashion than in the Goethals Twin Study.

Among other problems in estimating transit ridership, the previous study did not take into account rational transportation behavior. In other words, it assumed that people would continue to drive cars over the bridge even if it took them longer than a competing transit service.

As you know, the Hudson River crossings prove this untrue. Many prefer to use the convenient transit service rather than drive alone in terribly congested conditions.

This, in turn, hurt the previous study's transit ridership estimates and all transit options were subsequently thrown out. A new transit study should account for behavior changes occasioned by mounting traffic congestion and other transportation system conditions.

We also support the agencies' interest in improving bicycle and pedestrian access over a new crossing. Even when it was

open, the Goethals bike and walkway was severely substandard, unattractive and consequently little used. A new, fully-ramped facility will encourage foot and especially cycling traffic.

Finally, we urge that the study consider a variety of regional rail freight scenarios in its traffic model. It should certainly take account of soon-to-operate projects like the Staten Island Railroad link to New Jersey and pending improvements in the New Jersey rail network.

We also urge that the study develop scenarios that assume construction of the single and double rail tunnel under the harbor as proposed by the New York City Economic Development Corporation which in some respects will be a parallel route complementing the I-278 corridor.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,  
Ms. Toro.

And if you want to leave a copy -

THE REPORTER: She did.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thanks so much.

Okay.

Ralph Barone, please, followed by  
Jane Vredenburg.

MR. RALPH BARONE: Hi! I'm  
Ralph Barone and I'm a Member of Community Board  
#2. But I come and am talking about Staten  
Island. We work with the --

MS. FITZPATRICK: Mr. Barone,  
I'm sorry. Could I ask you to speak a little bit  
closer to the microphone.

MR. RALPH BARONE: Yes. A bit  
closer.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you  
very much.

MR. RALPH BARONE: We work with  
the same structure. And, of course, you know it's  
a corridor for many, many thousands of trucks and  
vehicles coming through Staten Island.

What is for us in there? We need  
transportation very badly. We have no way to go.  
And people have to go to work. Not only do we  
have to move merchandise, but the people who go

to bring the bread home.

We need a rail there, something that unites us with the other part of the world of the City, of the State.

Another thing, since that's our only way to go out of the City, I hope some incentive is given to us like some discounts better than what we have today.

We have seniors, we have handicapped, and DOT give us some kind of discount. We have the plastic card that we pass the subway. Why not be recognized with the E-ZPass? I hope that you will consider that and give a break to those people who need it, to those people who suffer, because of the fuel a lot of people can't breathe. Give them a break.

I thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you very much, Mr. Barone.

And I'd like to bring up Jane Vredenburgh please, and followed by John Tancredi.

MS. JANE VREDENBURGH: Jane Vredenburgh, Community Board #1, Transportation

Chair.

The Staten Island Community Board #1 agrees that the Goethals Bridge needs to be improved and/or rebuilt to 21st century standards. The board has been on record that any improvement or rebuilding of the bridge must be made only after the issues, planning and funding is made to improve and expand the Staten Island Expressway, the West Shore Expressway, and our local roads leading onto the expressways and bridges and develop the north shore passenger rail line.

It's clear that recent accidents on both the Goethals and Outerbridge were responsible in shutting down Staten Island and that there is a strong need to address these issues now, to both handle short-term traffic problems and long-term solutions. Over the next few years truck traffic, local traffic and commuter traffic will increase from five percent or more.

It is absolutely necessary that nearly 500,000 Staten Islanders and thousands of commuters from other boroughs, New Jersey and

Long Island should not wait any longer for this issue to be addressed.

CB #1 thanks The Coast Guard for conducting the EIS public hearing and hopes that the board's concerns about the need to address the issues that our already overly congested expressways and local roads need to be able to handle any additional traffic before any Goethals rebuilding plans are finalized.

Thank you.

One comment for myself is that there needs to be at least six lanes, three in each direction, or maybe an extra seventh lane in the middle for emergencies when there are breakdowns. The more lanes the better because from any statistics that I've been looking at, they will be putting a Band Aid on just building this one bridge. And the traffic, the five percent is probably even going to be much, much higher in fifteen or twenty years.

So let's not be stingy when we're building this bridge.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,

Ms. Vredenburgh.

And now I would like to call up John Tancredi please, and followed by Robert Cassara.

MR. JOHN TANCREDI: My name is John Tancredi. I'm sixty years old and a life-long resident of Staten Island.

I'm in favor of constructing a new bridge for the obvious reasons that have been stated: structural problems, traffic flow and of the safety issues as far as coming to Staten Island and egressing off, especially in case of any kind of emergency.

I would like to add also that I am against tying in any studies, impact studies or any other type of studies, with this bridge to any other requirements for other boroughs. I think it's important that we build this structure and build it as soon as possible.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Mr. Tancredi.

Robert Cassara, please, followed by Michael Arvanites.

MR. ROBERT CASSARA: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of The Coast Guard and The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

My name is Robert Cassara, representing the Gowanus Community Stakeholder Group. I am the Chair of the Traffic and Transportation Committee. And I thank both agencies for giving me the opportunity to comment on the proposed replacement of the Goethals Bridge.

In your project overview newsletter you put forth a number of arguments or reasons behind the rationale for the Goethals Bridge replacement. They include:

- Inadequate design features;
- No emergency shoulders;
- Continuing, frequent and costly maintenance repairs;
- Increased traffic volumes, including truck traffic;
- E-ZPass limitations;
- Deficiencies in layout precluding future transit service and other

priority lanes on the bridge.

These may be valid reasons to do something about this bridge. However, they fail in a most fundamental way.

At present the vehicular capacity of the Goethals Bridge and the Outerbridge acts as a brake on the ever-increasing number of trucks and cars entering Staten Island and Brooklyn. By opening the spigot at the New York/New Jersey borders you would unleash an onslaught of trucks and cars in Staten Island and Brooklyn with all the attendant pollution and congestion.

The draft scoping document refers indirectly to a high occupancy vehicle lane being included on the new bridge but is otherwise silent on how many lanes a new bridge would have.

Any capacity increase at this crossing would only dump more traffic onto the Staten Island Expressway portion of I-278.

While The Port Authority is planning a replacement for the Goethals Bridge, the New York State Department of Transportation

is working on an HOV lane for the Staten Island Expressway and in conjunction with the MTA on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. An HOV lane is desirable but it also represents a capacity increase.

Alarmingly, New York State DOT continues to ignore capacity issues on the Gowanus Expressway in Brooklyn, the funnel for all the increased traffic from the Staten Island Expressway and a new Goethals crossing.

The existing Gowanus Expressway is outmoded and unsafe and cannot accommodate more traffic. The New York State DOT will not even consider additional capacity in a tunnel alternative to the existing roadway.

Obviously, The Port Authority has to upgrade its facilities, but in the process it needs to take a much broader view of the I-278 corridor. Much of I-278 from the Long Island Expressway west to the New Jersey Turnpike is functionally obsolete and must be overhauled or replaced.

It has to be viewed as a whole, in regional terms, to satisfy environmental and

transportation concerns. New York State DOT will not do that by constantly applying Band Aids to a worsening situation.

You are committing the same error as the New York State DOT by only looking at replacing this bridge without looking at the whole corridor.

The Port Authority is presently conducting the Comprehensive Port Improvement Project. There will be a large increase in the amount of goods coming into the area once the goals of the plan are realized. The CPIP states that the truck traffic increases will be localized mainly around the port of entry in New Jersey.

Realistically, truck traffic will increase overall and in much larger numbers than what is stated. In fact, in one of the CPIP's newsletters it is claimed that the I-278 corridor is at capacity. This is incorrect. It is actually over capacity. Any additional traffic with these poorly thought-out projects on I-278 will be a killer for Brooklyn and Staten Island.

In your newsletter about the

Goethals Bridge replacement project you indicated that the environmental impacts will be within two miles of this bridge when, in fact, it is much greater as I have already pointed out. Therefore, the EIS scoping must take into account the environmental impacts for the entire 278 corridor as already described, that is, from the New Jersey Turnpike to the Long Island Expressway, the Gowanus Expressway and the Brooklyn Queens Expressway.

It is not enough to say that the other parts of the corridor are being handled effectively in other studies or projects. They are not, especially when The Port Authority is pushing to increase capacity on the Goethals and the New York State DOT says it cannot increase capacity on the Gowanus because of being out of attainment with EPA regulations.

There is something seriously wrong -- excuse me -- there is something seriously out of sync here, and the impact on Brooklyn and Staten Island will be nothing short of catastrophic.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Sir, excuse

me. I am going to ask you to wrap up your comments.

MR. ROBERT CASSARA: I have two more paragraphs.

If you really want to get serious about solving a problem related to traffic in this corridor, an easy first step would be to reinstate the two-way tolls on the Verrazano Bridge. The MTA is losing millions of dollars each year while the impacts to the environment and infrastructure, including the Goethals Bridge, are greatly increased.

I recognize that this is a political hot potato but it needs to be part of the study as well.

In closing, if The Port Authority is not ready to take a holistic approach to the entire I-278 corridor and what the consequences of increased capacity will mean in terms of further exacerbating an already difficult situation in Brooklyn and Staten Island, the approval for the Goethals Bridge replacement should be and must be denied.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,  
Mr. Cassara.

And next, Michael Arvanites -  
sorry if I garbled that - followed by Timothy  
Desiderio.

MR. MICHAEL ARVANITES: You got  
it right the first time.

My name is Michael Arvanites. I am  
representing Councilman Michael McMahan who has  
the privilege of representing the north shore of  
Staten Island.

I just have a brief statement here  
and I have amended some of this so that I don't  
rehash some of the issues that were stated  
beforehand with one exception. The two-way tolls  
in no way, shape or form are going to be  
reinstated as part of Federal and State law and  
the people --

(Applause.)

MR. MICHAEL ARVANITES: -- of  
Staten Island have spoken pretty uniformly in my  
experience to crush that particular item.

Recent accidents have highlighted  
the need to correct significant

problems associated with the antiquated Goethals Bridge that was constructed in 1928 and is now obsolete.

But before the people of Staten Island can begin to hear The Port Authority's need to address -- The Port Authority needs to address the overburdened Staten Island road network.

Simply building a new bridge to carry more traffic to our bottlenecked road network is a non-starter.

I am certainly intrigued by the assertion stated during the presentation and remind the panel that this bridge in any incarnation must have -- excuse me:

A ramp for trucks exiting and entering the New York Container Port;

A bus HOV lane for X31, X21, X22 et cetera, the New Jersey-bound through buses from Staten Island to Manhattan;

The shoulders, emergency and breakdown lanes;

Pedestrian/bike access.

And due to the 80,000 vehicles a

day that traverse the Goethals Bridge, and protect with wide lanes.

In order to end the rehabilitation delays, The Port Authority has to begin to address the root issues of the bridge's overuse by refurbishing.

I want to thank you for refurbishing the Arthur Kill lift bridge. That will remove 50,000 trucks a year from our roadways, as well as the purchase of the North Shore Rail Line right-of-way.

Unfortunately, as the MTA indicated at a hearing that took place here yesterday, the MTA has no interest in providing viable off-Island mass transportation alternatives.

You, The Port Authority, are our only hope. Light rail connections, at the very least the Hudson/Bergen Light Rail and other New Jersey transit rail alternatives to New York City and Newark Airport, Jersey City business centers, et cetera, are something that are significantly needed on Staten Island.

The bridge, as a transportation

vehicle, can't just be taken in the context alone. You have to look at the entire road network of Staten Island that you are affecting.

And I would like to just end there.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Mr. Arvanites. It's a pretty neat phone you've got there.

Timothy Desiderio, please, followed by Jim Devine.

MR. TIMOTHY DESIDERIO: Hello!

My name is Timothy Desiderio. I am representing the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation and I am here on behalf of Executive Director Cesar Claro.

SIEDC supports the modernization of the Goethals Bridge. It is vital to the economic development of the Borough to provide ample access to Staten Island for those coming from New Jersey.

Businesses interested in relocating to Staten Island have a great interest in getting goods and people on and off the

Island. This modernization will represent a great advantage to Staten Island when marketing the Borough and its properties to businesses and will prevent the loss of businesses to other areas in the region.

The modernization will provide greater access for motorists on the bridge without being stuck behind trucks.

The creation of an additional emergency lane will be essential to keeping the bridge open after an accident and will dramatically increase the safety and reliability of travel over the bridge.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Mr. Desiderio.

Next I would like to bring up Jim Devine, please, followed by Linda Baran.

MR. JIM DEVINE: Good afternoon. Jim Devine, President and CEO of New York Container Terminal, formerly referred to as Howland Hook Container Terminal.

I'm here in two capacities.

One, as a private citizen and a

daily computer on the bridge, I can attest to everything that has been said about its inferior travel lanes and the close proximity to trucks.

As the present CEO of Howland Hook or New York Container Terminal, I bear some responsibility for the trucks that are coming to and from. I am very pleased to recognize the comments that were made earlier that with the revitalization of the Staten Island Rail Road anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five percent of the truck traffic that currently comes to and from the terminal will be removed and will be moving rail.

I come also to invite the study to become deeply involved in the future growth plans of New York Container Terminal so that they can properly scope what the truck traffic will be in the near and distant future.

Our plans include doubling its current size. And I think it's vitally important that increased truck traffic be factored into the travel. Even though, as I said before, fifteen to twenty-five percent of that truck traffic will move rail, still with growth plans it's important

that it be properly sized.

Thank you very much.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Mr. Devine.

And next I would like to bring up Linda Baran, please, and then followed by Fred LeMoine.

MS. LINDA BARAN: Good afternoon.

My name is Linda Baran. I'm the President and CEO of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce. And I have a written statement here.

The Staten Island Chamber of Commerce applauds the attention to the compelling need to improving the ability for vehicles to cross the Arthur Kill. The present structure inadequately serves the public.

The old structure poses risks, borders on obsolescence, and no longer meets traffic engineering standards.

The Chamber, which represents almost one thousand separate businesses as members, welcomes plans to develop a new crossing that meets current and future needs. At the same

time our members note a project that may not show progress until the next decades and offers no relief now.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey must take advantage of the EIS and related planning and design processes to identify measures to provide much needed interim relief. Thus, the Chamber looks forward to the Draft EIS Statement providing information that may also afford relief sooner rather than much later when we can look forward to some replacement of the existing Goethals Bridge.

We urge a multi-prong strategy through the EIS process. The drivers, the truckers, the shippers, the businesses, the consumers, the commuters and the public at large need an intelligent study that does more than the traditional review of environmental, social and economic impacts.

The study alternatives likely include actions and insights on interim relief measures that The Port Authority could implement now.

The current inadequate lane

configuration - ten feet wide instead of modern twelve feet or more - fails to accommodate the 8.5 width of a typical truck trailer and full-size passenger buses.

Likewise, we need a determination on any adjustments necessary to the interstate and the other roads that feed into the Goethals Bridge. This means ensuring both the resources and will to make any further and necessary adjustments and improvements, including to the Staten Island Expressway.

Staten Islanders understand that some two-thirds of freight and recreational trips across the Goethals Bridge continue across the Staten Island Expressway to the Verrazano Bridge to points in Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island. Anything that eases crossing the Goethals Bridge could likely induce more trips and shift impacts currently experienced approaching the bridge to points on Staten Island.

This impact cannot be left to the regional study component of the EIS as the study currently is organized. The current scope of the Secondary Impact Study must extend to

include crossing Staten Island to reach to the Verrazano Bridge.

The Chamber notes the draft scoping document anticipates a need to expand this secondary impact review. It states: "These proposed study area limits will be further refined and expanded, if necessary, following identification of project alternatives for detailed evaluation in the DEIS."

Similarly, The Port Authority must seize the unique opportunity posed by the EIS process to identify and implement interim relief measures to smooth the flow of traffic and reduce the stress involved in currently crossing the Goethals Bridge.

The EIS review includes looks at congestion pricing that might alleviate traffic tie-ups. These traffic jams not only currently plague the crossing, but often make the Staten Island Expressway a parking lot and causes traffic spillover to local streets. Fixes cannot await a new crossing.

The concurrent proposal for a rail freight tunnel that bypasses Staten Island

running directly from New Jersey to Brooklyn may also provide an opportunity to identify diverted freight trips as economic growth will not allow a reduction in freight movements. The only thing that could change is the movement mode.

Short-term relief measures on the Goethals Bridge could make it safer to cross and allow swifter bridge crossings. In addition to the relief that congestion pricing may afford, alternative lane schemes, similar to that used on the former Interborough Parkway connecting Brooklyn, might facilitate crossing while a better crossing gets developed.

The Staten Island Chamber concludes by applauding The Coast Guard and The Port Authority for not only meeting the outreach standards this EIS process requires, but making a clear commitment to work with affected and interested groups, our public officials and residents, and the public at large in developing a working replacement for the current bridge.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Ms. Baran.

Fred LeMoine, please, followed by Jonathan Peters.

MR. FRED LeMOINE: Good afternoon.

My name is Fred LeMoine. I'm a Business Agent for The Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Ironworkers Union of New York, Local 46. We are an affiliate of the New York District Council of Ironworkers which represents over twelve thousand ironworkers in the New York Metropolitan area.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for holding this public hearing. It is important that all voices be heard whenever a project of this scale is being considered.

Whenever a project of this magnitude is undertaken, there are definitely inconveniences that will have to be endured. Anyone who is concerned with how this project may affect their lives deserves to have their concerns addressed, and hopefully this hearing will help to minimize the amount of discomfort that residents of the affected areas will have to

endure.

I know that we need to replace this bridge. It is seventy-six years old with only two ten-foot wide lanes in each direction. And that may have been okay in 1928, but it does not meet today's standards. There are no shoulders for emergencies and the costs of repairing and maintaining the bridge are continuously mounting.

I know how much traffic this bridge causes since I am a Staten Islander and I've been stuck in traffic many times on both sides of the bridge. Many motorists are simply afraid to maintain the speed limit because of the narrow lanes. For some trying to pass another vehicle has been compared to riding on an amusement park ride.

If there is an accident, the bridge gets shut down until the cars can be towed away. Only a few weeks ago there was a shutdown due to crates of live chickens that came off a delivery truck. And I wonder if that would have happened if the lanes were wider to the standard today of twelve foot.

A new bridge will allow for an easier flow of traffic and will relieve congestion. This will allow for less idling of engines which will improve our air quality. And we will also be able to use less of our natural resource of oil.

A new, modern technologically superior bridge will make traveling in this area much more desirable which will attract new businesses such as hotels, retail outlets and restaurants to name just a few.

This project will bring hundreds of new jobs and tax revenues to Staten Island during the construction of the bridge and it will bring more jobs to future generations of Staten Islanders after its completion.

I do not know if there were as many public hearings years ago when many major public projects were constructed, projects such as the New York City Subway System, the Battery Tunnel, the Holland, the Lincoln, the Queens Midtown Tunnel, and too many bridges to begin to try to name here.

Even under Silver Lake Park

there are two water storage tanks that were built that hold the drinking water of all Staten Islanders. These tanks are the two largest of their kind in the world. I wonder what life would be like without many of these structures that we all take for granted.

Our forefathers had the foresight and courage to make the necessary sacrifices that would enhance the quality of life for themselves as well as future generations. We are indeed fortunate.

I hope that we can muster the same character in making decisions that will affect our lives as well as those that will come long after we are gone.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,  
Mr. LeMoine.

Next is Jonathan Peters, please,  
followed by Dan Tomasino.

MR. JONATHAN PETERS: Good  
afternoon.

My name is Dr. Jonathan Peters. I'm  
Assistant Professor of Finance at the College of  
Staten Island.

I just have a few comments. I will be submitting a formal writing to you on this issue.

But, again, I think you should really remember that this is really going to be a hundred-year span in this community. We shouldn't be planning just for the next five or ten years. The facility we currently have at the end of the day will probably be close to a hundred years old when it's finally retired or replaced by a new facility.

In 1928, we were ahead of the curve. We had facilities that met the needs of the people and were able to adapt for the next thirty, forty, fifty years.

I would point out to you that the newest population data that's just been released by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, the committed to population projections for Staten Island are now going to be 630,000 people by the year 2030, which means that there's roughly a fifty percent increase in the population on Staten Island within the span of this facility's life.

Therefore, I don't think we should underplan this facility. We should really be seriously considering what are the needs for the next hundred years.

In addition, I think that a key component of this project has to be mass transit, pedestrian/bike facilities, which are sorely deficient in this region.

And in addition, I think that we have to really seriously consider that as part of the process. Part of the problem with the Goethals Bridge is the heavy reliance on single passenger automobile travel. And unless we can provide better facilities for mass transit on Staten Island, we are probably going to have a very difficult time getting the people out of automobile travel.

In addition, I would caution you to think ahead also about the Outerbridge because the Outerbridge actually has a higher capacity in terms of travel at this point in time and yet we are still not even planning a replacement of that. I would think that that has to be part of the process also and look ahead to what are going

to be the needs in the next fifty years.

Unfortunately, the Goethals Bridge when designed in 1928 did not have the same design features that were built into the Verrazano Bridge and the George Washington Bridge, both designed by Othmar Ammann, which had facility capacity expansion potential built into the design. I would think that that might be something to think about.

Finally, I've heard discussion about congestion pricing. And I would point out that, unfortunately, because of the lack of mass transit facilities and, in fact, the Staten Island/New Jersey corridors being virtually unserved by any mass transit facilities, that congestion pricing is difficult to implement in terms of equity for the people of Staten Island and also in the actual application.

It's difficult to get people out of their private automobile if there are no mass transit alternatives.

So I think that's an important part of the decision.

And, finally, I think we should

be thinking about this fact that Staten Island has one of the worst mass transit and also overall transit traffic times in terms of the average travel time to work on Staten Island is about 43.8 minutes, which is one of the worst in the nation.

And I think part of this process should be an attempt to address that.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,  
Dr. Peters.

Dan Tomasino, please, followed  
by Leah Gebhardt.

MR. DOM TOMASINO: My name is  
Dominic Tomasino and I'm just a concerned  
citizen.

Having worked on the bridge, I can  
tell you that that bridge needs to be redone  
quickly. It's in very, very poor shape as much as  
they try to maintain it. The lanes are very  
narrow, much more narrow than you could imagine  
from being on the, you know, looking at it and  
watching a study. When you're up there working,  
you can actually see how dangerous it is.

I also would like to object to people trying to tie the Gowanus and everything else into this project because, of course, we could go from the Gowanus, then we could go to the Westside Highway, we could go all the way up to Westchester and we will never get it done.

We need it, we got to look at it and we got to do it because it's very needed for this, you know, just for people safety and transportation.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,  
Mr. Tomasino.

Leah Gebhardt, please.

MS. LEAH GEBHARDT: Thank you  
very much for your attention.

I agree with a lot of what has been spoken since I arrived at this meeting. I think great points have been brought out.

I have a few to address myself as I've ridden over the Goethals Bridge numerous times over the past four years from my job in New Jersey.

In doing so, four things I felt

should really be brought to mind and to attention at this meeting.

The first is that in constructing the new bridge, an emergency shoulder should accompany three lanes on each side of the bridge. As brought up before, the idea that every time there is an accident on the bridge, the whole bridge has to close down. And I've been a victim of sitting in Jersey for hours on end waiting to get home. I've opted to take the Bayonne or the Outerbridge on several occasions, but sometimes we've had simultaneous accidents on both bridges and it has caused quite a nightmare.

The second concern was that each lane should be twice the current width now due to truck traffic and the auto drivers intimidated to pass them.

I've again from experience sat on the bridge riding at probably fifteen to ten miles an hour because people are intimidated to pass the truck drivers in the other lanes since the width of the lanes right now are very narrow and make people afraid to go across, you know, or

even pass a truck in this situation. And they'll refuse to go to the right lane and follow the truck but they'll block up both lanes of traffic due to their fear of passing the trucks.

It's very dangerous and I think a lot of accidents were caused by the narrow road on these bridges.

The third idea is that it would be great to have four lanes instead of three so that you won't have slow traffic idling with additional fumes accumulating and dissipating over the water. This would be great to help maintain or at least improve the water quality in the area around Staten Island and New Jersey.

Finally, one other thing is to improve the merger from the New Jersey side. It's probably one of the sources of many accidents that have occurred on the bridge.

I've come in from the local streets in New Jersey to the Goethals Bridge, and that merger that comes from the Turnpike is not always clearly defined and it becomes a whole sort of who's going to go where and whatever.

And I've seen a lot of things

happen. That has bottlenecked traffic quite a bit.

Finally, the additional lanes will improve traffic flow and promote cleaner air over the water. It's also a factor in safety if the Island ever had to be evacuated. I've lived a long time and I do recall one instance when I was in grade school that due to a chemical plant fire in New Jersey, the Island was under a possible evacuation threat.

It would be great to have a bridge that would have additional capacity for this reason. Right now the Bayonne only has two lanes in each direction and the Outerbridge the same thing.

It would be great if we actually expanded the Outerbridge too. But I know we've just improved it. It would be nice if we had additional lanes for that to accommodate the beach traffic on the weekends from May all the way through October.

And thank you for your time and attention.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you

very much, Ms. Gebhardt.

MS. LEAH GEBHARDT: You're welcome.

MS. FITZPATRICK: That is currently everybody we have signed up.

So there are a couple of things we can do.

We are going to stay here until 5:00 when this session is over. So if you change your mind, fill out one of the blue cards at the registration table and we will be here and our stenographer will stay here.

Then we are going to start all over again at 5:30 with more open house and another presentation and more comments.

So please take advantage of the project staff in the Open House room. They are the ones with these little name tags on.

Please fill out comment cards if we didn't hear your statements before.

Have a cookie, enjoy yourselves and we are very glad that you were all here this afternoon.

Thank you.

(At 3:40 o'clock p.m. there was a recess in the proceedings.)

(At 4:25 o'clock p.m. the proceedings were resumed.)

MS. FITZPATRICK: You can go to the microphone now.

MS. MEAGAN DEVEREAUX: Hi!

My name is Meagan Devereaux. I'm from the Borough President's Office. Unfortunately, a prior commitment has left Mr. Molinaro in Manhattan. So he couldn't attend although he was planning to.

But he has sent me to read the following statement on his behalf.

"Representatives of the United States Coast Guard and my fellow Staten Islanders:

"I am pleased to have this opportunity to reassert my strong position of support for replacing the Goethals Bridge with a new bridge with wider lanes that can better handle Staten Island's traffic needs.

"When the Goethals Bridge was built in 1928, the standard width of lanes was

only ten feet. In today's world, these lanes are too narrow to accommodate the large truck and heavy traffic that uses the Bridge.

"Many Staten Islanders feel apprehensive of traveling on the Goethals' ten-foot narrow lanes. The usually simple act of passing a truck can be a frightening experience. In many circumstances, commuters are too afraid to even attempt to pass a truck, and traffic backs up as drivers crawl slowly across the Bridge. And we're talking about 80,000 vehicles per day according to The Port Authority's latest volume counts.

"A new Goethals Bridge would feature twelve-foot lanes and full shoulders to make driving safer and more comfortable for Staten Island motorists. It would improve the flow of traffic and improve access for emergency vehicles on and off Staten Island.

"Frequently vehicles become disabled on the Bridge. With shoulders, the vehicles can be moved to the side and minimize the negative impacts on traffic.

"The accident rates on the

Goethals Bridge are higher than the Outerbridge Crossing and the Bayonne Bridge. They are even higher than the average statewide rates for four-lane highways in New York and New Jersey. It's easy to see why -- the conditions on the Bridge undoubtedly contribute to this high rate of accidents.

"To improve traffic conditions for our motorists, we need a new Goethals Bridge with wider lanes.

"I would also request that The Port Authority include in its study process the feasibility of a ramp which would separate truck traffic bound to and from the New York Container Terminal.

"A ramp into the Container Terminal would allow for safe separation of thousands of trucks per year from the regular vehicle traffic. This offers a safer alternative to allowing the trucks to intermingle with the regular traffic using the Bridge.

"In addition to improving the safety of the Bridge itself, we cannot underestimate the value of a new Bridge with more

versatility to open and close lanes for emergency vehicles.

"We all remember September 11, 2001 and the bridge closures and ensuing traffic nightmare. In this post 9/11 world, we should not scrimp or handicap our ability to better handle traffic in the event of an emergency. A new Goethals Bridge will be specifically equipped to accommodate emergency vehicles and traffic response. It will have modern design and safety features.

"To improve safety for our traffic-weary motorists we need a new Goethals Bridge with wider lanes.

"In the last ten years traffic on the Goethals Bridge has increased from 11.9 million vehicles per year to 14.2 million vehicles per year, an increase of one to two percent each year. Studies indicate that the rate of traffic will continue to increase for the foreseeable future.

"Some people harbor the false belief that an improved new bridge should not be built because they feel it will attract more

traffic.

"We have to be realistic. Traffic has increased and will increase no matter what. Better to have traffic efficiently managed on a modern bridge than to let our motorists suffer worsening conditions and worsening delays. We can't sacrifice safety because of false fears.

"And the further reality is the existing 76-year old Bridge is obsolete. It's costing \$80 million just to rehabilitate it to a level where it can survive another ten years until a new bridge is built. We must not delay or ignore the inevitable.

"To improve the safety and traffic conditions for motorists using the Goethals Bridge, and the quality of life of thousands of our residents, we need a new Goethals Bridge with wider lanes.

"Time is running short, and I urge The Coast Guard and The Port Authority to make the new Goethals Bridge a top priority and find a way to expedite its planning, approval and construction.

"Thank you for your

consideration of these remarks."

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,  
Ms. Devereaux.

Now, Dee Vandenburg, please.

MS. DEE VANDERBURG: Good  
afternoon.

My name is Dee Vandenburg. I'm the  
President of the Staten Island Taxpayers  
Association, and welcome to Staten Island. And I  
hope you don't get stuck in traffic because it's  
a rough ride out of here.

We are hoping that this job can get  
done yesterday. And when you're done, you can go  
over to the Outerbridge and start on that one.

The bottomline is the traffic is  
not going to go away no matter what we do. And I  
was on that bridge when that accident with the  
truck a couple of months ago happened and it's  
very, very scary.

And, unfortunately, we can't, you  
know, close down Staten Island and forbid  
everybody to come in. So we need things fixed.

If we could stop the builders from  
building, but that's too late. It's done

already.

So we are working all over this Island to get our infrastructure up to speed.

And we wish you the best of luck and any help we can give you because we need something done. Staten Island is in a crisis mode right now. And you'll find that out if you try to get out of here later.

Thank you very much.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

Hopefully at 9:00 it will be lighter than that.

Okay.

So right now those are the only people that we have currently signed up to speak.

Again, Roy and Gary and Ernie and I will stay here until 5:00 and then we will take a break until 5:30 and start all over again.

So make yourselves at home.

(At 4:30 o'clock p.m. there was a recess in the proceedings)

(At 5:00 o'clock p.m. the proceedings were resumed.)

MS. FITZPATRICK: This

officially closes this afternoon portion of our public scoping meeting and we will start again with a presentation at 6:00 p.m.)

(At 5:00 o'clock p.m. the afternoon portion of the meeting was concluded.)

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STATE OF NEW YORK    )  
                                   )    SS.  
 COUNTY OF NEW YORK    )

I, ROY A. SELENSKE, a Certified Shorthand  
 (Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public  
 within and for the State of New York, do  
 hereby certify that the foregoing pages 1  
 through 81 taken at the time and place  
 aforesaid, is a true and correct  
 transcription of my shorthand notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
 my name this 12th day of October, 2004.

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ROY A. SELENSKE, C.S.R.

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