

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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City of Elizabeth
City Hall
Council Chambers
50 Winfield Scott Plaza
Elizabeth, New Jersey

October 6, 2004
2:30 p.m.

B e f o r e:

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For Port Authority of New York and New Jersey:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. FITZPATRICK: Good
afternoon.

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

I assume you can hear me because
I sound very loud to myself. Is this fine in the
back row? Okay.

We are going to begin with a
short presentation.

But first of all, let me
introduce myself. I'm Maura Fitzpatrick and I
will be facilitating this meeting.

As I said, there will be a short
presentation and then we are going to follow that
with the public comment portion of this scoping
meeting. And if you're interested in making
comments, you need to fill out one of these blue
cards at the registration desk where you signed
in and we will take the speakers in the order
that they came.

I will give you more groundrules after the presentation, but there are a couple of things I wanted to mention first.

One is that we can't have any food or drinks in this room, but please help yourself to a cookie and stuff that are in the Open House area.

If you need to use the restrooms, when you go out this door, the ladies room is on the right and the men's room is on the left.

And I think that's everything I was going to say. So without further ado, I'd like to introduce Gary Kassof, who is the Bridge Program Manager for The United States Coast Guard.

MR. KASSOF: Thanks, Maura.

I also welcome you all to this scoping meeting for the Goethals Bridge 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 of 1969,

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 the communities nearest the bridge for this environmental review process. The other meeting was held yesterday, October 5th and The Staten Island Hotel, Staten Island, New York, 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 seated behind me, 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 mentioned earlier.

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 with 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, your 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 wherever 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 scoping meetings before, the purpose of this scoping meeting is to gather information to help establish the scope of an environmental review. As such, we will not be responding 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 remarks.

MR. HESS: Thank you, Gary.

Let me start by saying please let me know if you can't hear me. I am struggling with a cold and trying not to lose my voice.

I'm going to briefly go over these topics that are shown up here on the screen as part of my presentation.

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

Then I'll talk about some of the types of preliminary alternatives that we will be analyzing and the methodologies that we will be using to analyze them.

Then we'll talk about some of the preliminary study areas that will need evaluating, as well as some of the potential environmental issues.

I'll give a brief introduction

to the schedule of upcoming events, and also talk about some of the elements of our public participation program.

Now I want to reiterate that we have more information for all of you out in the Open House area and I hope you will take advantage of the staff that's working back there more and more. Members of The Coast Guard consulting team are the ones wearing name tags just as I'm wearing.

Now, 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.

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 is required for this project.

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 NOI, we are all here today attending this public scoping meeting.

Now, the chart that you see up on the slide 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 the 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, this 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 development 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 (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).

The next issue is that the lane width hasn't changed since its original construction when vehicular sizes and traffic volumes were much slower or 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 the photos on the slide on either side of the bridge (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.

Now, 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 just 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 the other 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 discussed, a number of specific goals have been established by The Port Authority. The goals are:

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 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 shown right 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, which is shown in this last slide (indicating).

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 and 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.

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 to 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 bridge.

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;

A 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 the 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 (indicating) and

the interchange with the West Shore Expressway on the east (indicating).

The secondary study area, which is the larger area in the dash lines (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 halfway between the New Jersey Turnpike and Route 1 and 9 on the west (indicating) to South Avenue on the east (indicating).

Now, specifically for the analysis of 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 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 up here is 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 on this slide. For each, direct and indirect impacts will be considered as will cumulative impacts as appropriate.

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 the agency scoping meeting 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 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.

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. 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 such as this (indicating). You can fill that out now and leave it with the staff this afternoon or mail or fax it as indicated on the sheet.

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

All ways to contact us are available on the comment sheet.

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

At this time I would recognize Mayor Bollwage who has joined us this afternoon. I'd like to welcome you and thank you on behalf of The Coast Guard for use of this fine chambers for this hearing.

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

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

Again, welcome to all attending this meeting and I thank you in advance for your participation.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Okay.

Thank you, Gary.

I'm now going to be calling the names of the people who have registered to speak. Again, if you are interested in speaking, you just need to fill out one of these blue cards at the registration table.

I'll be calling people in the order of their signing up.

And when it's your turn to speak, I ask that you come up to this microphone here by the stenographer and you address us and that way the stenographer will be able to take down your comments.

If you have any problem coming up to the microphone, please just let us know and we will bring a cordless microphone to you. That is fine.

Since the purpose of this meeting is to hear your feedback and your information, in this area of the meeting we will

not be responding to your comments.

However, in the informal Open House area where you signed in the staff there will be happy to talk to you and answer any questions and it will be more conversational out there.

And I just want to remind you that the comments made in the Open House area will not be for the record. Only the comments in here will be on the formal record or those submitted in the manner that Gary described earlier.

I ask that you keep your comments to about five minutes and I'll indicate if you're getting to the close of your time.

And once we have heard from all the speakers, if you have more to say and time permits, we would be happy to have you sign up and speak again.

If you have a written copy of your statement, please provide it to the stenographer.

And this portion of the meeting lasts until 5:00 p.m. So we'll be here. So if you

change your mind, you can sign up at any time during that period. And then we're going to start again for the evening session.

And you are welcome to step out of the room and visit the Open House area. We will call your name out there as well.

And I think that's everything I need to tell you about. And without further ado, let me call the first speaker. Mr. Mayor Bollwage is here and would like to address the group.

MAYOR J. CHRISTIAN BOLLWAGE:

Thank you very much.

I want to thank The Coast Guard and I want to thank the Port Authority for having the meeting here in the City of Elizabeth.

We will be sending in a formal detailed response between now and November 5th for the record.

But I would like to say in 1998 when I spoke before the EIS, I said that as the plans now stand for the twinning of the Goethals Bridge, it adversely impacts the City of Elizabeth and we could not support the existing plans as presented to us.

I see no change in that between 1998 and 2004 and I hope we will see some change between 2004 and the final draft of the EIS in 2006.

And let me say that I know the labor unions are all going to be calling me because this is about jobs, about constructing the Goethals Bridge. But Joe Six Pack who lives in the City of Elizabeth cannot tolerate a twinning of the Goethals Bridge without major repairs of the infrastructure on our side of the bridge.

We talked about this in 1998 and we dealt with traffic. And I know the first speaker said that he was not going to get into the issues of traffic, you can address the website. But Bayway Avenue and the city streets that lead to Routes 1 and 9 are already congested.

I don't know if anybody who is going to write this EIS ever travels in that area in the afternoon, in the early morning, but I ask that you go look at it yourself.

The Port Authority and the New

Jersey Department of Transportation -- I'm calling for a summit between now and the completion of the DEIS between The Port Authority, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, The City of Linden, The City Elizabeth, Staten Island representatives as well as the County of Union to address the transportation issues.

It is not good enough to just put the money in to build the Goethals Bridge and leave the interchange with the Turnpike Authority - and they should be part of the summit as well - and create a worse traffic nightmare than we have.

The City Council passed a resolution in 1997 asking The Port Authority to build a connection to Route 1 and 9 north, which has not been done.

The interconnection between 13 of the Turnpike, Bayway Avenue and the city streets, the Goethals Bridge, has been in need of significant improvements for years and it's not going to get better by toll plaza widening that the New Jersey Turnpike did or it's not going to

get better by just plopping another bridge south of the existing bridge.

Of equal importance to the city is the fact that across from the bridge relocated Bayway Avenue, an important industrial corridor to the City of Elizabeth, has significantly not been improved and it needs to be improved to assure the smooth operation of the business related to traffic.

Krakov Street people live there. It's a neighborhood that stands to lose everything. The Port Authority needs to discuss what, if anything, they are going to do to address their concerns.

Construction of a new bridge over their homes with no chance of these residents moving, they should have a meeting with these residents to discuss if buying their property out or enhancing their living opportunities is something that should be discussed at fair market value.

There is nothing in these reports so far that talks about this urgent issue, but we are talking about where people

live, and The Port Authority cannot run roughshod over the rights of the residents, of our citizens.

The air rights of the Goethals Bridge and the proposed expansion would have a structure located in a public street, Krakow Street. At some point you're going to need our cooperation in putting pilings in and everything else. We are hopeful that this can be worked out and these things are thought of.

Like I said, I first delivered some of these remarks in 1998. So I don't expect any of you to move quickly. I just hope that you expect to be moved by our thoughts and our comments.

There are two schools, School 17 and School 22, that must be properly protected from the traffic and the noise and the air pollution emanating from any expansion. This is not addressed in any EIS. School 22 is directly across from the Goethals Bridge as it presently stands.

The residents in the vicinity of the interchange at the base of the bridge,

Bellmore Avenue, are already subject to unacceptable noise and air pollution impacts. This bridge could only make it worse.

I am hopeful that in the next two years that you go above and beyond the current process of sitting here and listening and convene a summit of The New Jersey Turnpike Authority, The Port Authority, the City of Linden, the City of Elizabeth, the County of Union, Staten Island, to make sure that the infrastructure concerns are addressed.

Thank you for your time.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. FITZPATRICK: The next speaker is Kamal Saleh.

MR. KAMAL SALEH: My name is Kamal Saleh.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Move closer to the microphone.

MR. KAMAL SALEH: Okay.

My name is Kamal Saleh. I work for Union County, Division of Economic Development.

And I just had a couple of quick things that I would like to make sure are addressed.

There are a few things that I would like to have addressed. You did mention some of them in the presentation.

We do encourage the transit relationship to the Goethals Bridge as well as encourage cooperation with the freight transportation around that area.

Also we would like to discuss or have some sort of interrelation with I-278, especially with relation to the missing connection. Okay?

And as well as the interrelation with The New Jersey Turnpike interchange.

And the other, the last thing is maybe just a comment, specifically about the transportation model. I heard that there was going to be some of that, but we would like to also see if there is any relationship or there's going to be a model that is going to look at the different alternatives in the EIS.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,

Mr. Saleh.

Okay.

The next speaker is Damien Newton, and Mr. Newton is followed by John Surmay.

MR. DAMIEN NEWTON: Good afternoon.

I'm Damien Newton representing the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. The Campaign is a non-profit policy watchdog organization that advocates for the development of a more balanced regional transportation system.

We were strong critics of the Goethals Bridge "twin" proposal during the 1990s. But we believe that the emphasis The Port Authority and Coast Guard have placed on fixing the Goethals Bridge's 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 towards 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 three modern-width general lanes in each direction is the way to go for the Goethals Bridge of the future. Having more lanes on the bridge than the local highway network in New Jersey has would produce gridlock on the Turnpike and I-278.

If these roads were widened in response to a many-laned Goethals Bridge being built, it would be a welcome mat for more trucks and more new truck routes.

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 Elizabeth residents know, the Goethals Bridge is part of an extended corridor and conditions on the Goethals can affect traffic patterns from Rahway to Queens or

even farther.

While The Port Authority and the 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 on I-278 and the Turnpike corridors 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 will continue to drive cars over the bridge even if it took them longer than a competing transit service.

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

This is certainly true when I travel into the City.

This, in turn, hurt the previous study's transit ridership estimates and all transit options were subsequently thrown out.

A new 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 modeling. It should certainly take into account the 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 aspects would be a parallel route complementing the I-278 corridor.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Mr. Newton.

Next is John Surmay.

MR. JOHN SURMAY: My name is John Surmay. I'm the health officer for the City of Elizabeth.

I've been involved with the City of Elizabeth's Health Division since 1969 as either a department or division head. I enjoy a historical perspective of the waterfront of the City since my first Army Corps of Engineers' boat ride in 1972 in the removal of debris and driftwood committee in cooperation with the City of New York and the states of New York and New Jersey.

In 1991 and 1992 I worked on the

Governments' Technical and Trustees Committee for the Arthur Kill Waterway.

Working with me was Marc Matsil, then Director of the Natural Resources Group of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Matsil is the current Assistant Commissioner of Natural and Historic Resources for the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

On the New York side there is the Goethals Bridge Pond, which is hydrologically connected to the waters of the Kill van Kull by way of culverts and a stream channel. This pond is an important feeding area for colonial water birds. Over ninety species of birds have been identified in and around the pond. Of these, twenty-two species breed at the pond. The species include cattle egret, green heron to the great blue heron. This pond's ecosystem is in excess of a hundred acres.

There are also three islands within the Arthur Kill and Kill van Kull - Shooter's Island of fifty acres, Prall's Island of eighty acres, and the Isle of Meadows, a

hundred acres, which also provide breeding sites since the 1970s. Here water birds, such as glossy ibis, herring gull and double-crested cormorants breed and feed.

Pursuant to the sections of the Arthur Kill Spill Civil Consent Order, we, as trustees, agreed to preserve, protect and enhance these wildlife resources.

In 1991 and 1992, The Port Authority completed a study entitled "Interstate Goods Movement Study 1992." In 1992, we looked at construction alternatives at the Goethals Bridge site. Both sides have sensitive ecosystems in the acreage under the approaches to the bridge.

There is a great need for modernization of the existing bridge, including but not limited to the construction of an entirely new span or spans.

My concern as a trustee, health director, health officer at that time, and continues today is that the ecosystem disruption be at a minimum, and if some sensitive areas are disturbed, then an equal pristine area be established elsewhere that will enhance or

sustain the life of colonial water birds and migratory birds.

My concern as a health officer, city official and resident today as the modernization/replacement appears on the drawing board is the same concern as our City's Mayor J. Christian Bollwage.

These are the issues of:

Traffic congestion on the city streets which wasn't suppose to happen when Entrance/Exit 13 was relocated to its present location next to the Goethals Bridge.

Route 278 was supposed to direct traffic north and south, but today only connects to Routes 1 and 9 to the south.

Route 439, the city street of Bayway Avenue, was to be improved to handle northbound traffic to Routes 1 and 9, but only some slight cosmetic improvements occurred.

Permanent and effective remedies must be instituted before any replacement of the bridge proceeds.

Noise and air pollution impacted adversely on Public Schools 17 and 22, and up to

several years ago St. Hedwig's Catholic Church. These two public schools continue to operate today, as well as a large low-income public housing complex, Mravlag Manor facing busy Route 439 (Bayway Avenue).

As former president of the Noise Control Association for the country and as a current member of the New Jersey Noise Control Council, I am conversant with most of the traffic noise issues and there are enough for concern at this area.

These need to be addressed in any replacement of the bridge.

I was a member and presenter of the Air and Waste Management Association. I was a winner of a \$.5 million technical air pollution demonstration grant award from the Environmental Protection Agency, and as a local health department agency participated in the federal CHES (Community Health Environmental Surveillance Study). Again, this experience qualifies me to assess and make judgments regarding the danger of uncontrolled air pollution at this heavily-traveled site.

Special consideration must be given to the residential properties in and around any area that may be impacted by any construction or replacement of the bridge before it goes forward, most especially the people who live on Krakow Street. If the properties on this street are needed for any construction or access, then compensation, relocation or purchase of these properties must be a priority.

Since my time is limited to afford others to make statements or address this hearing, I will conclude with the urgent phraseology that the City of Elizabeth is a very progressive municipality and well managed. Do not take this cooperative spirit as permission to do what you want.

Be considerate and include our City's, our businesses', our residents', our students' and our visitors' wants into your plans.

If this is done, then we will all be proud of the collaboration and cooperation for the betterment of the users, the operators of the bridge, and most especially the community of

Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Thank you very much.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,
Mr. Surmay.

Next, Elizabeth Brody, followed
by Eric Larkin.

MS. ELIZABETH BRODY: I'm
Elizabeth Brody. I am the Chair of the New Jersey
Committee for the East Coast Greenway.

The East Coast Greenway is a
vision to provide a safe greenway from Maine to
Florida going right through Union County.

I have been involved in a study
on behalf of the New Jersey Committee to find a
route from the Raritan River up to Jersey City so
that users can get there through the northern
part of New Jersey into Manhattan by ferry.

We do, however, recognize the
importance of a network of greenways providing
access, safe access, to people of the local area
to a green stretch, which would include Staten
Island, going over the bridge to Bayonne, taking
the ferry up to Battery Park.

Our path goes in Elizabeth, in

Hillside and crosses the Elizabeth River Greenway and that greenway would provide a perfect route down to the Goethals Bridge.

So I applaud the prospect of restoration of bicycle and pedestrian access onto the Goethals Bridge.

As you know, there is at present not a single crossing, single way for a bicyclist or a pedestrian to cross the Arthur Kill.

The advantages of the Greenway serve not only those who like to ride for recreational purposes, but as well serves people who must bicycle to work or walk to work and do not have an inexpensive alternative at convenient times. So a bike/ped path on the bridge is valuable.

I would urge you to consider having a bike/ped lane on both sides of the bridge unless you have a way of safely permitting a user to cross to the opposite side. And that's possible perhaps if there is a suitable access point beneath the base of the bridge. But otherwise, as you can imagine, trying to cross a bridge with a stream of truck and car traffic

cannot be horrendous.

I thank you very much.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you so much, Ms. Brody.

Next is Eric Larkin, followed by Denny Newbery.

Mr. Larkin, you may have to raise the mike.

MR. ERIC LARKIN: Yes.

Good afternoon.

My name is Eric Larkin and I represent the Utility and Transportation Contractors Association of New Jersey.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Try and get closer to the microphone.

MR. ERIC LARKIN: A little closer.

Once again, my name is Eric Larkin. I represent the Utility and Transportation Contractors Association of New Jersey.

The UTCA currently numbers approximately 1,100 member firms involved in all phases of heavy, highway, utility and

environmental remediation construction throughout our state. Many of our Association members complete projects in surrounding states and all the boroughs of New York City.

Our Association is in total support of the rebuilding and/or total reconstruction of the Goethals Bridge.

There is no doubt that the current Goethals Bridge, with ten-foot wide lanes and no emergency shoulders, is not only behind the times, but an extremely dangerous structure to all of the patrons in the over twenty-eight million vehicles per year that cross the bridge.

As the volume and speed of traffic continues to increase, it is obvious that the current Goethals Bridge will become more dangerous in the future.

Seventy-six years ago, engineers were not as concerned with terrorist attacks when building large structures. Times have changed. The current Goethals Bridge cannot be adequately protected from seismic or terrorist activity. This is yet another considerable safety hazard the current bridge poses to all who use the

structure.

UTCA would also like to call attention to the transportation infrastructure surrounding the Goethals Bridge. Granted, a new or reconstructed bridge will allow traffic to move across the Arthur Kill in a much safer and efficient manner. However, the highways that serve as ingresses and egresses to the bridge must be able to handle the increased flow of traffic over the structure.

For this reason the UTCA feels the highways and roads should be reconstructed to handle the more efficient flow of traffic.

The cost of maintenance and repair of the current Goethals Bridge is escalating every year. The current layout of the structure is becoming increasingly dangerous and inefficient to massive amounts of people who use the bridge.

A new Goethals Bridge and surrounding transportation infrastructure will greatly benefit the safety and lives of the public.

Thank you for your time.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,
Mr. Larkin.

Could you just leave your
statement with the stenographer.

MR. ERIC LARKIN: Sure.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Denny
Newbery.

MR. DENNY NEWBERY: Hello!

My name is Denny Newbery. I'm a
resident underneath the Goethals Bridge.

I am one for progress. I also
must add though that progress -- also we have a
lot of concerns with global warming. And I see
there's a new rail line going in for truck
traffic. I think we ought to promote some more
trucks using the rail line.

I definitely would like to see
some kind of thing where we need to use the ferry
more. Elizabeth has been spending a lot of time
through the last few years, has made the pier a
lot more attractive. The whole area down along
the waterfront is becoming much more attractive.

Where I live, the house has been
in the family for generations. We do have some

plans and future plans down there. And now we are very concerned that, you know, it's going to -- it may not work.

Property values have increased everywhere and, you know, we just really -- we do not want to lose out on this.

That area down there has come a long way and it's going to come a lot further. There is some history down there. There's a movie currently going to be shot down there about dockworkers and whatnot.

And there is just, you know - the Goethals Bridge is a beautiful bridge and nobody here can tell me that the engineers of our country could not rehab that bridge efficiently and safely and economically to keep it right where it is.

Have you ever seen the sun set or rise through those piers in the morning? The area has a lot of potential and is already heading in that direction.

Thank you.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you,
Mr. Newbery.

That is everybody who has registered to speak.

Please, if you are interested in making a comment, fill out one of the blue forms at our registration desk.

Gary, Ernie and I will stay here until 5:00. So please visit the Open House area, talk to the folks with the name tags. They can answer a lot of your questions. And if you want to write, fill out one of our comment cards.

And thanks everybody for coming.

(At 3:20 o'clock p.m. there was a recess in the proceedings.)

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

MS. FITZPATRICK: Our next speaker is Jeff Zupan.

MR. JEFFREY ZUPAN: Hi! I'm Jeff Zupan. Thank you for accommodating me. I'm glad to be here today.

And I'll give you a copy.

My name is Jeffrey Zupan. I am Senior Fellow for Transportation for Regional Plan Association who I am representing here

today. We are an eighty-year old, not-for-profit research, planning and advocacy organization dedicated to the economic and environmental well-being of the tri-state New York-New Jersey-Connecticut area.

The Goethals Bridge is one link on a chain of transportation facilities serving the critical southern corridor to and through New York City. This corridor is critical to the economy of the tri-state region as only one of two highway corridors providing access for trucks into and through New York City from the west.

The Goethals Bridge alone carries thirty million vehicles a year including 2.4 million trucks.

The corridor stretches from I-78 in New Jersey, the New Jersey Turnpike, the Goethals Bridge, the Staten Island Expressway on Staten Island, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, the Gowanus Expressway and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway in Brooklyn, the Kosciuszko Bridge -- which I'm totally mispronouncing -- and the Long Island Expressway.

No less than six transportation

agencies are responsible for one or more of these facilities, including the two states' DOTs, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and, indirectly, the New York City DOT.

And no less than six projects are in some state of decisionmaking in this corridor: this Goethals Bridge DEIS, the Staten Island Expressway DEIS, the MTA's plans to revamp the toll plazas at the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, the New York State DOT project to replace the aging elevated Gowanus Expressway and their plans for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and the Kosciuszko Bridge.

Despite what should be obvious to all and despite protestations to the contrary, there is no sign that these agencies are working on these projects as if any but their own existed. This cannot be allowed to continue.

This corridor is too important to be left with no one in charge. It is one of only two that carries vehicles around the core of the region, connecting New York City and Long Island with points west of the Hudson. And the

Goethals Bridge in particular is critical to the economy of Union County in New Jersey and to Staten Island.

It is imperative that rational policies relating to tolls and to preferential treatments for buses and high speed vehicles in the corridor be established. Today, three agencies collect tolls in the corridor - the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, The Port Authority and the MTA.

Two of the three have policies to charge more in the peak than they do in the off-peak. The third does not.

Two agencies have a policy of installing high-speed toll lanes. The third does not.

One agency charges a toll in both directions, the second in one direction, and the third in the other direction.

While there are historic reasons for each of these situations and each agency is proceeding with good intentions, they create the appearance of random incoherence.

Similarly, policies related to

preferential treatments in the corridor have not been thought through. Today, the New Jersey Turnpike provides preferences for buses and high occupancy vehicles in both directions in the peak period. The Goethals Bridge has no such policies. It doesn't have the space today.

On the Staten Island Expressway, the New York State DOT is proposing to add a bus lane but may not allow high occupancy vehicles. Yet in Brooklyn on the Gowanus Expressway they have created a lane for buses and high occupancy automobiles, but only in the inbound direction.

Through the rest of the corridor no preferential treatments are offered.

The Goethals EIS can be a springboard for rationalization of both toll and preferential treatment policies in the I-278 corridor from New Jersey all the way to Queens. The agencies should immediately convene an interagency group that meets regularly and informs the public in a timely fashion about their deliberations - in other words, transparent deliberations - all the while seeking input from users of the facilities, including bus operators,

transit users, drivers, truckers, labor representatives, and the general public.

While we recognize that it is difficult to line up all agencies behind one uniform policy, this difficulty should not prevent the attempt.

We suggest you begin with the objectives of:

(A) establishing variable time of day tolls to ease peak congestion;

(B) moving towards totally cashless, booth-less toll collection by creating high speed toll lanes and establishing a system of privacy protecting toll protection;

(B) creating policies that do not direct excess traffic to any one part of the region; and

(D) Policies that establish a uniform policy of preferential treatment in the corridor.

As for the bridge itself, the question of what capacity on the bridge is needed and what its configuration should be cannot be rationally addressed until the approach above has

been taken.

Finally, designs for the bridge should consider how to avoid damaging the wetlands of the adjoining Harbor Herons complex.

RPA intends to closely monitor this EIS and we stand ready to offer our considerable knowledge and expertise in these matters to the relevant agencies.

Thank you very much.

MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you, Mr. Zupan.

(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 closes the afternoon portion of this public scoping meeting and we will return at six o'clock for our presentation.

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

ROY A. SELENSKE, C.S.R.

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