



March 7, 2012

Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos
NYS Senate
Legislative Office Building, 909
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Senate Majority Leader Skelos,

We agree that the Tappan Zee Bridge needs to be replaced. However, the Cuomo Administration's elimination of public transit from the proposed project poses significant environmental, government accountability and economic problems. Respectfully, we request that the Senate ensure, through the budget process, that bus rapid transit be included on the Tappan Zee Bridge, from day one. Given the state's current budget restraints, we recommend an approach that will bring immediate benefits to Hudson Valley residents, and also enable a more robust transit system to be built out over the long term.

A dedicated lane on the Tappan Zee Bridge for bus rapid transit, a direct connector to the Tarrytown train station from I-287 for buses, and improvements to the existing bus system will go a long way towards giving Hudson Valley residents the option to get out of their cars, and assuring that the state is maximizing the financial and social benefits of this project.

The community has spoken loudly and consistently on this subject. Leaders and residents on both sides of the river agree that some form of public transit is necessary to alleviate the transportation woes affecting this region. Numerous state documents have shown that public transit is necessary to reduce congestion and pollution and provide a backbone for future economic growth. These studies were part of a 10-year planning process—including 280 public meetings—leading to the consensus that public transit must be part of the bridge replacement. During the recent public hearings on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), this same message was reiterated, almost unanimously, from a broad-base of supporters and organizations who have joined the effort to reinstate transit into the state's plans.

Bus rapid transit (BRT) systems are generally cheaper than rail systems. Unfortunately, the State Department of Transportation has grossly inflated the costs of transit, making it seem prohibitively expensive. Without substantiating its numbers, it has increased the cost of a 30-

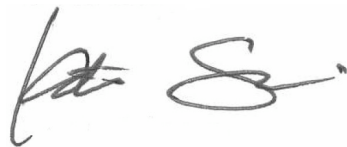
mile BRT system from less than a billion to over \$5 billion. This inflated price-tag ends up being \$221 million per mile in Rockland and \$84 million per mile in Westchester. According to the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, the best BRT systems in the world cost around \$20 million per mile. At \$5.3 billion, the State must be planning to use platinum to build a BRT system reaching Westchester's Platinum Mile. Transit improvements can be made for a fraction of this price.

Meanwhile, the DEIS has failed to look at near-term, affordable improvements to the bridge and the region's bus system that could serve as a base for a future, fully built-out BRT system in the 30-mile corridor. The State has also failed to explain how this project will be funded, transit or no transit. Considering that cost has been stated to be the main factor behind not including transit, a more thorough explanation of how this bridge will be financed, and a cost-benefit analysis of including transit, needs to be made available to the public, and the Legislature, before any funds or bonding authority are authorized.

Checks and balances are needed. The Governor's proposed NY Works Fund states that \$5 billion dollars will go to the Tappan Zee Bridge. There needs to be more accountability to the people who use the bridge and have been involved in a 10-year planning process about its future.

If the Tappan Zee is funded with financial gimmickry and additional debt, current and future taxpayers will be left footing the bill. We urgently need the Legislature to step in and assure a financially responsible bridge will be designed and built—one that meets the needs of the 21st century.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Slevin', written in a cursive style.

Kate Slevin
Executive Director

CC. NYS Senate Members & Staff