

Rockland County

Tappan Zee Corridor

Transit-Oriented Development Study

Regional
Plan
Association
NY • NJ • CT

Workshop Report - February 2007

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Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>TZ Corridor Aerials</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Workshop Sites</u>	
<u>Suffern</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Airmont•Montebello</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Nanuet</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Palisades Mall</u>	<u>24</u>

Introduction



Purpose of this Initiative

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is in the final stages of selecting the design of the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement. This study includes transportation alternatives for the I-287 corridor extending across Westchester and Rockland Counties. At this point, a right-of-way and potential station locations for new a transit service – either Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – have been identified. However, there has been no comprehensive planning for the land uses around the future stations.

The purpose of this initiative is to envision how the land uses around the transit stations proposed along Interstate 287 (New York State Thruways) as part of the Tappan Zee Bridge replacement or rehabilitation could change to increase ridership and benefit local communities: in particular, to envision how new transit stops can stimulate investment in underutilized properties, create new connections and promote pedestrian-friendly, community-supporting places with a distinct identity, so called Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). An all-day community design workshop was used to answer this question.

This project is being convened and organized by Regional Plan Association (RPA)

in partnership with the Rockland Economic Development Corporation (REDC). It is being guided by a Steering Committee consisting of representatives of REDC, Rockland County Planning, the office of the County Executive, and representatives of the several municipalities along the corridor.

The Purposes and Uses of this Report

This report is first and foremost a summary of the outcomes of the workshop day. It builds on a set of preliminary findings that were reviewed with the project's Steering Committee in the months after the workshop. There are many significant and worthwhile findings that came out of this initiative and they are described below. This effort is also unavoidably incomplete. This was a single event, and despite the efforts of the Steering Committee, just part of the stakeholders got engaged. Ultimately, a more robust public process needs to be launched.

However, despite its shortcomings, this initiative has real value as a demonstration project of how a public process can engage citizen stakeholders in a creative, problem-solving discussion that can build both understanding and support for these kinds of initiatives. DOT and its consultants, as well as the other interested

State, County and Municipal entities should partner to mount a more complete process for the entire corridor modeled on this initiative.

The Workshop

The centerpiece of this initiative was an all-day working session during which teams of local stakeholders and invited professionals sketched out a set of design and planning studies for each station area.

On May 18, 2007, over one hundred people gathered in the auditorium of the Orange & Rockland facility for the all-day design workshop. The attendees were invited from lists developed by the Steering Committee specifically for this initiative. The attendees represented a diverse group including, among others, local elected officials, citizen activists, county and municipal planners, and representatives of the DOT consultant team.

The day began with a briefing presentation to the entire group, and a bus tour of the four study areas. The attendees were then organized into working groups for each of the four potential station locations (two groups were assigned to Nanuet to study each of two potential locations). Each working group was assigned a facilitator and a designer to help illustrate the future station area plans. At the end of the

day, each group gave a brief presentation of its work, followed by an open discussion among all attendees.

About Implementation

The design and land-use findings for each of the study areas can be dealt with in large measure through zoning – either changes in the underlying zoning or with new overlay zoning districts to promote mixed-use and transit-oriented development. It is important to note, however, that zoning is a limited and blunt tool and that each of the case study areas is very complex. A comprehensive vision for each of these places requires, for example, a wide array of public and private investments and cooperation among multiple land owners. Therefore, while a variety of conventional zoning actions are suggested below, a better solution would be to identify and map TOD redevelopment areas. This would give the municipalities additional capabilities including the ability to write a comprehensive set of development and land use controls.

In addition, each of the case studies, and in particular Nanuet and Airmont Road, are beset by typical strip developments along Route 59 and some of the intersecting streets (Airmont Road), and with that comes a familiar bundle of issues: safety and congestion problems associated with redundant and uncoordinated curb cuts, unsightly appearance, pedestrian-unfriendly environments, inefficient use of land. There is a well established body of planning and design literature on how to re-make the typical strip through a series of short term access and pedestrian improvements and, in the longer term, redevelopment that creates rational rela-



tions between the buildings and the buildings and the street, and results in a corridor that has a pleasing distinct identity and sense of place.

Other Considerations:

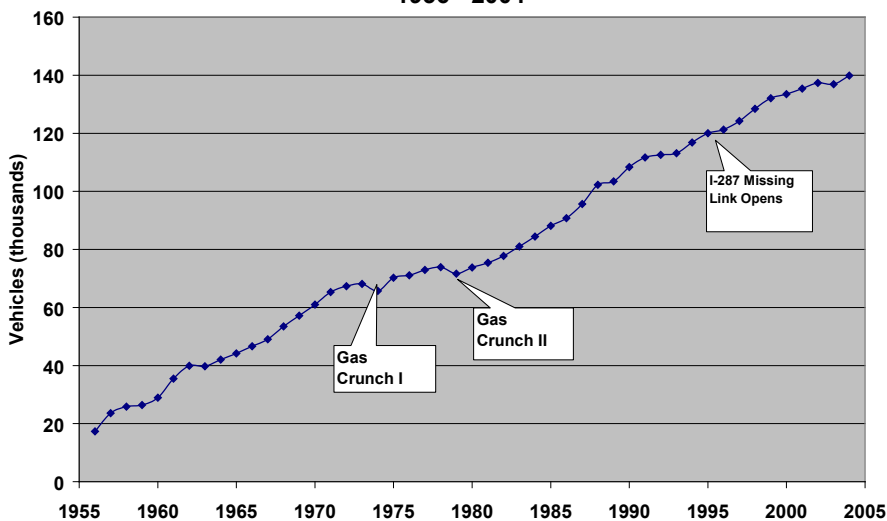
While this report is primarily a record of the discussions that took place during the workshop, it is also an opportunity to record several of the observations and concerns of the Steering Committee during the planning of the workshop and in the weeks that followed. For the purposes of this workshop exercise, the underlying assumptions of the current DOT

studies were not challenged.

For example, DOT has settled on two alternatives – BRT and CRT. The light rail option, which some felt was still worth investigating, was not considered here. More importantly, with the exception of speculation about a future station in Suffern, the station locations proposed by the DOT were accepted as “givens” for this exercise. Several members of the Steering Committee however, wondered if there were better locations. The lack of service in Nyack, in particular, was cited as a concern. (Brief preliminary discussion with the DOT consultants before the workshop, revealed their technical concerns about the Nyack station option and so this was not explored at the workshop.)

An even broader and more fundamental concern was raised in the Steering Committee meetings: What is the relationship of the Tappan Zee corridor to the overall land-use pattern, development and mobility for all of Rockland County? This is, in fact, a legitimate and fundamental question that was far beyond the scope of this workshop initiative but which should be addressed. The County Master Plan effort which is about to be launched is an opportunity to revisit some of these key questions.

**Tappan Zee Bridge
Annual Average Daily Traffic
1956 - 2004**

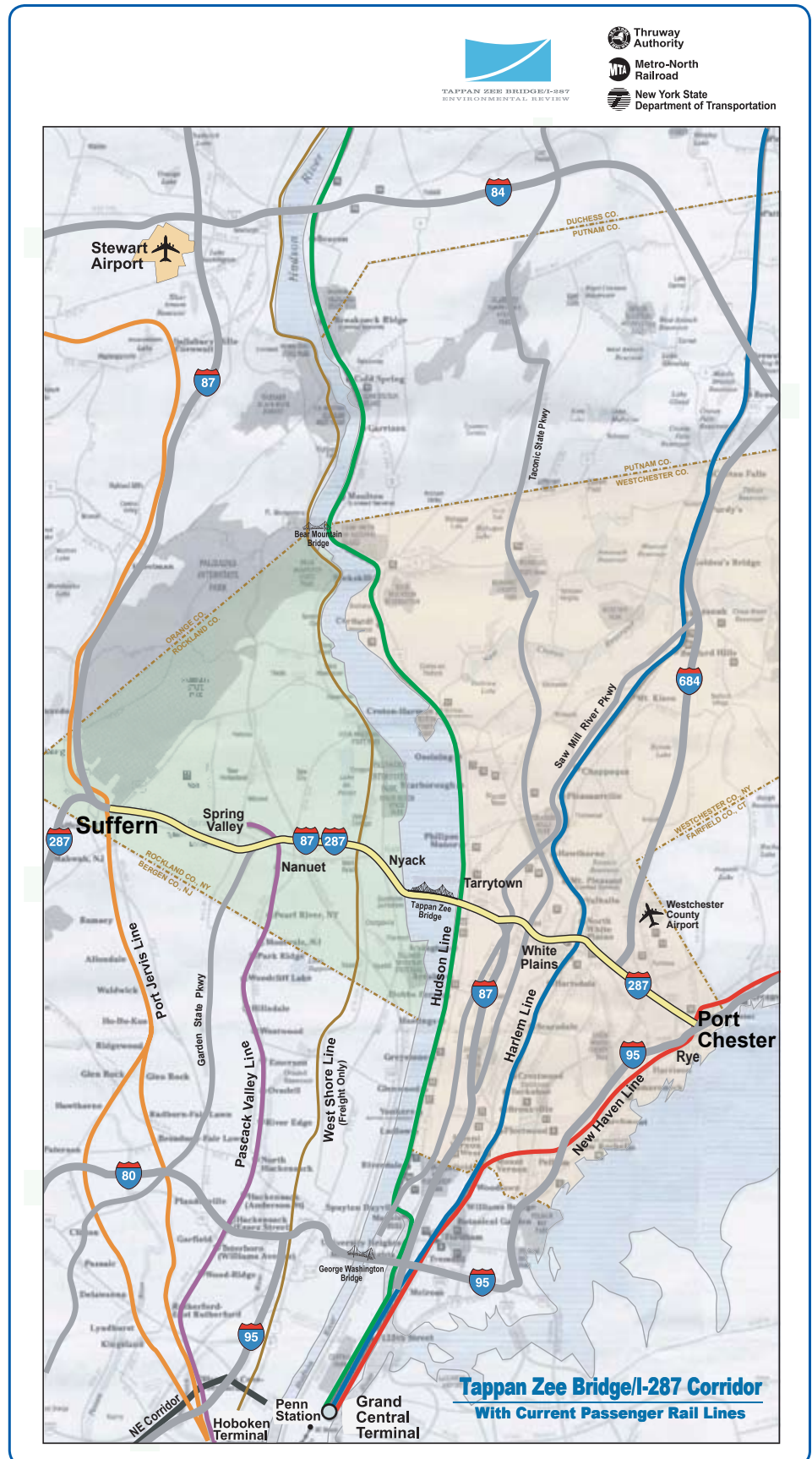


Background

In 1955 the New York State Thruway Authority built both the 3 ½ -mile long Tappan Zee Bridge and the New York State Thruway through Rockland County to connect upstate New York to Westchester and New York City. At that time, Rockland County was a semi-rural area and in its first year, the Tappan Zee Bridge served only 18,000 vehicles a day. Today, over 140,000 vehicles cross it daily resulting in daily traffic congestion, exacerbated by the lack of other Hudson River crossing options, and by the absence of shoulders on the Bridge which results in monumental jams when a breakdown or accident occurs on the Bridge.

Because the Tappan Zee Bridge was not built for this kind of use, the bridge now requires constant and expensive repairs. And it is not earthquake proof. As a result, about eight years ago the New York State Thruway Authority and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority jointly launched a series of studies in the I-287 corridor from the western edge of Rockland at Suffern to the eastern edge of Westchester to determine whether the Bridge should be replaced (or simply rehabilitated) and whether transit should be included. After pursuing over one hundred alternatives for both bridge and transit the State has concluded that the most viable transit options are either Bus Rapid Transit from Suffern to Port Chester or Commuter Rail Transit across Rockland County with various options for connections in Westchester to either Bus Rapid Transit and/or one of the three Metro North commuter lines.

The commuter rail line in Rockland would be built mostly along the existing Thruway right-of-way with four stations suggested: in Hillburn, at Airmont Road, in Nanuet, and in West Nyack at the auxiliary park-and-ride lot at the western edge of the 1.8 million-square-foot Palisades Mall. In all cases, the stations are conceived as park-and-rides only with little or no consideration of direct access on foot to or from local homes or businesses. The public documents indicate that the State does not control land uses, allowing it only “to coordinate” its work with local officials. Hopefully this effort will launch a more complete discussion between DOT and the communities.

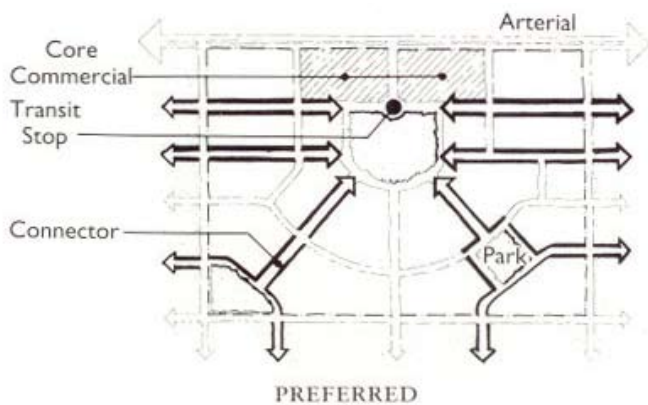


What is Transit Oriented Development?

A mix of housing, shops, restaurants, offices, civic buildings and open space in a compact, pedestrian-friendly environment within walking distance of a train station, and that supports both community character and transit ridership.

Characteristics:

- Connects the surrounding area to the transit facility by creating an environment that accommodates the automobile but favors pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Favors uses that support compact, mixed-use environments as opposed to auto-dependent uses.
- Orients buildings towards streets and public spaces and solves the parking problem creatively.
- Encourages building architecture that is scaled to pedestrian activity.



Corridor West Aerial View



TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE/I-287
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW



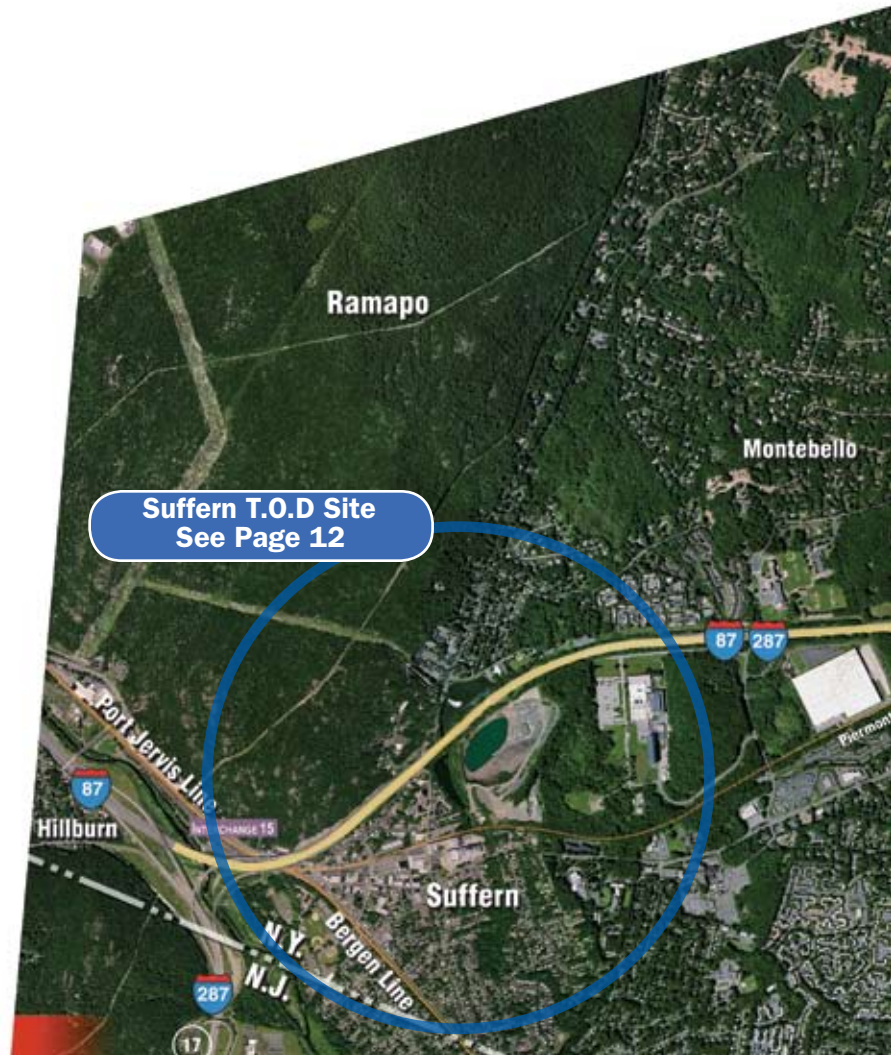
Thruway
Authority

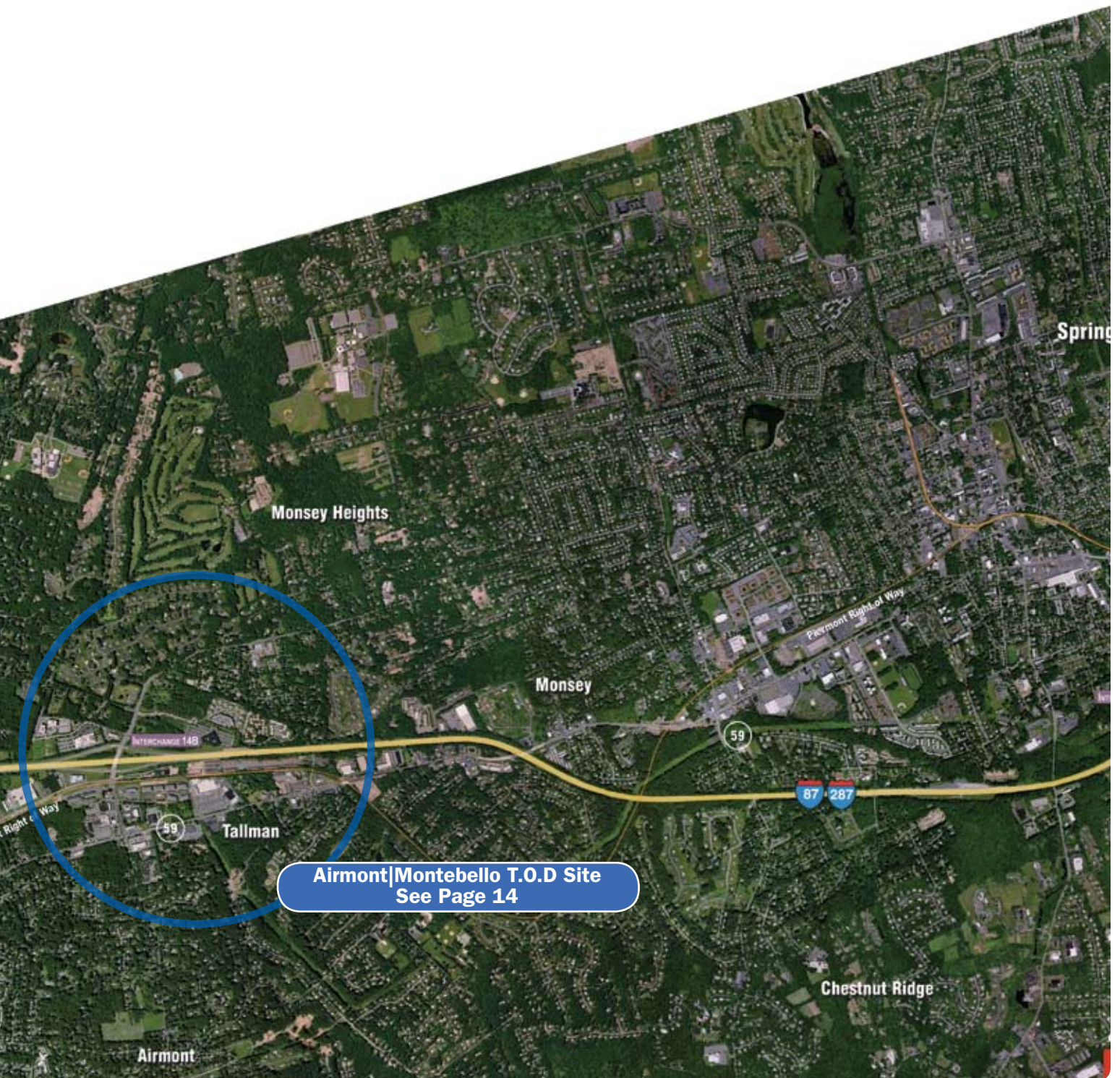


Metro-North
Railroad

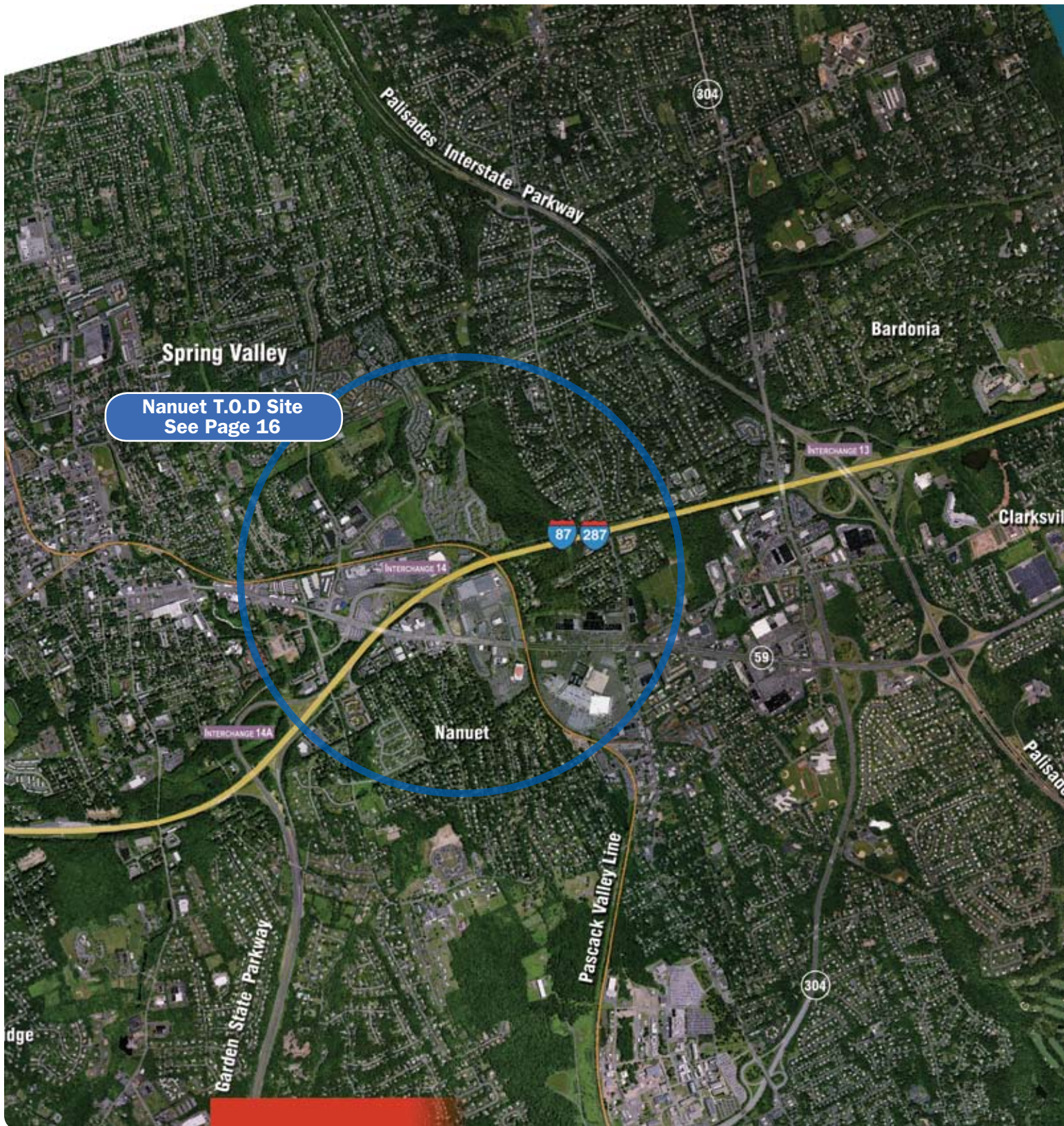


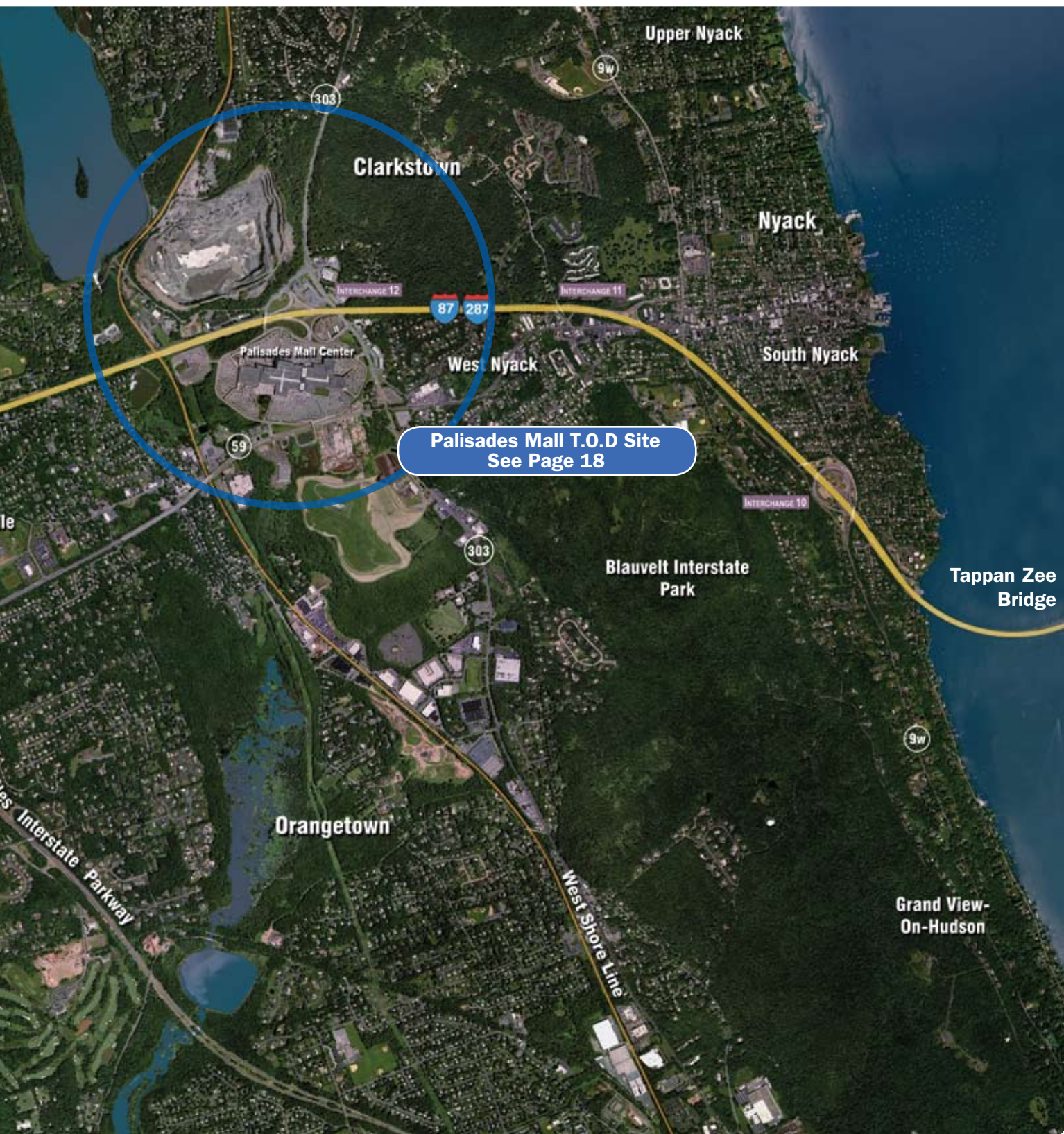
New York State
Department of Transportation





Corridor East Aerial View





Suffern Site



Overview

More than any place else along the proposed transit corridor, Suffern is a “downtown” in the traditional sense, with a pedestrian-oriented “main-street” defined by older three- and four-story buildings. The downtown is surrounded by compact single-family neighborhoods. It has struggled with the same problems that have plagued other older downtowns: disinvestment, overcrowding of marginal rental properties by immigrant families, and a weak retail base with the exception of a few higher-end restaurants. Also, like many older centers, parking is a problem that hinders redevelopment.

There are also several large features in the landscape including the modern headquarters of Avon along Route 59, the approximately 130-acre Novartis office and research campus, and the so-called Tilcon site, a now-closed quarry, approximately 62 acres, just west of Novartis. The Town of Ramapo has taken ownership of this property.

Currently, there is no new rail station proposed for Suffern. In order to avoid having to take residential properties adjacent to the Thruway alignment, the State is leaning toward using the Piermont Branch right-of-way owned by the MTA, which would be depressed in a cut as it passes through the downtown.

The downtown, like most traditional downtown, is very walkable and there would be excellent walk-on access to any station in the core. There is also the potential to link future development at the quarry site to the downtown by maintaining connections along the Piermont Branch right-of-way.

Meandering east of the village center and west of the Tilcon site is the Mahwah River which floods periodically. The Army Corps of Engineers is studying mitigation, including the creation of a spillway into the abandoned quarry for detention during storms.

Development within the Village center

could be of three kinds: incremental contextual infill development within the core; redevelopment in several larger areas; and addressing the marginal overcrowded houses along Wayne Road, in the shadow of the Thruway.

Just outside the village center is the quarry site. Portions are very steep and wet but there is an area of high flat land along its south side closer to a future entry from Route 59 and the Piermont Branch.

Charge to this team:

This team was asked the following strategic questions about TODs at this site:

- How can context-sensitive transit-oriented infill development complete the revitalization of the downtown core?
- How can the Tilcon site be redeveloped in a way that would take advantage of access to a new station?
- Where should a new commuter rail station be located and how should it be configured?
- How can the two redevelopment areas be designed to take advantage of access to both the existing station and a new Bus Rapid Transit or commuter rail station in or near the core?

Workshop Findings

This group explored three potential locations for a future CRT or BRT station:

To the far-west, create a new station at the intersection with the Port Jervis line to serve both lines: This location puts the station at the edge of, but still near the heart of, the existing downtown. The idea would be to create a new intermodal station between the two train lines and bus service. This is an interesting idea that needs to be tested against the origin and destination patterns of future riders to see if a significant number of riders would use the transfer between the two lines. Also, there are fewer redevelopment opportunities in this location.

In the middle of the Village, create a new station along the Piermont Branch right-of-way: This location would be the most convenient to the existing population of Suffern. In addition, there are several underutilized properties around this station location that would be ideal for a new compact, mixed-use development completing the historic pattern of downtown Suffern. The redevelopment of the center of Suffern would be organized around a clear

network of well-landscaped streets and new open spaces. The new station plaza would be integrated into the larger open space network of the Village which could be reinforced with new street trees and other aesthetic improvements. In the current planning, the rail line in this area is proposed to be in a cut-and-cover tunnel. This group suggested that if a new station is developed here it should remain an open-air station even if the tracks and platforms are below grade. The new station building itself could be a featured building above and well integrated into the new development around the station. The Pleasantville Station on the Metro North Harlem Line in Westchester County was cited as an excellent example.

Create a station just east of the Mahwah River near the Tilcon site. This alternative received the most attention. The design studies show that there is ample room for new mixed-use and residential blocks on the southwest corner of the site, near access from Route 59 and with excellent views. Mixed-use and residential development would be on the high, level portion of the quarry enjoying beautiful views from this location.

The important thing would be to link this area to downtown Suffern. The railroad right-of-way should be maintained at a width that can allow for a pedestrian connection from the Tilcon site across the Mahwah River to downtown Suffern without having to rely on a busy Route 59. This will also serve as an important connection between the Suffern neighborhoods and any future park and greenway that is created on the balance of the Tilcon property.

The design studies for the connecting corridor between the Tilcon Site and downtown Suffern included new mixed-use development on the surface parking lots owned by Avon Corporation on the north side of the railroad right-of-way. In subsequent discussions with Avon representatives, it was made clear that this was not viable because it interferes with Avon's expansion and parking master plans.

Implementation Items:

- **DOT:** Develop concept design for this alternative alignment
- **DOT, Village:** Develop concept level design studies for each possible station location.



Suffern Site West:

- 1 Create an open-air station.
- 2 Promote mixed-use redevelopment of underutilized land around the new station.
- 3 Investigate station that links the existing Suffern station on the Port Jervis Line to the proposed service.



Suffern Site East:

- 4 Promote new mixed-use redevelopment at a new station at the south-west corner of the Tilcon site.
- 5 Create pedestrian connections from the new mixed-use area to downtown Suffern.
- 6 Preserve the rest of the Tilcon site as an open space amenity including the ability to help mitigate flooding of the Mahwah River.

Airmont•Montebello Site



Overview:

Since the opening of the Airmont Road interchange many auto-oriented land uses have been added to those already in place along the four-lane Airmont Road in the early 1990's with a significant increase in development over the last five years. Airmont Road to the south of the Thruway as well as Route 59 in this area is characterized by a series of free-standing land uses and strip malls. North of the Thruway is within the jurisdiction of the Village of Montebello. The land uses include office parks, mostly large lot single family housing, some limited multi-family housing, and some still vacant parcels.

A park-and-ride rail or bus station has been proposed for an area just east of Airmont Road and just south of the Thruway. The line would make use of the Piermont Branch rail line but would be elevated so that it can avoid crossing Airmont Road at grade.

While the distances between various destination is not great – to shopping, the recently build housing development, the Town Hall – the redundant curd cuts, confusing turning movements, lack of sidewalks, all make this area hostile to pedestrians. The State also is committed to adding lanes to the exit and entrance ramps to and from the east and is considering a totally rebuilt interchange with possible flyovers that might be constructed together with the station.

The small number of developable locations in the immediate vicinity of the proposed station limits the possible scope of a TOD-type development. Still, over the medium term there are redesign opportunities for the retail that might be phased in in conformance with a master plan for the area, especially given the long lead time before a transit line is realized.

Charge to this team:

This team was asked the following strategic questions about TODs at this site:

- What future land uses should be considered in the area?
- How can the future station area be made more accessible on foot through the redesign of the land uses along Airmont Road?
- How might new streets be created to reduce the traffic impact in the area?
- How might the station be designed to minimize local impacts and become more acceptable to the two communities?

Workshop Findings:

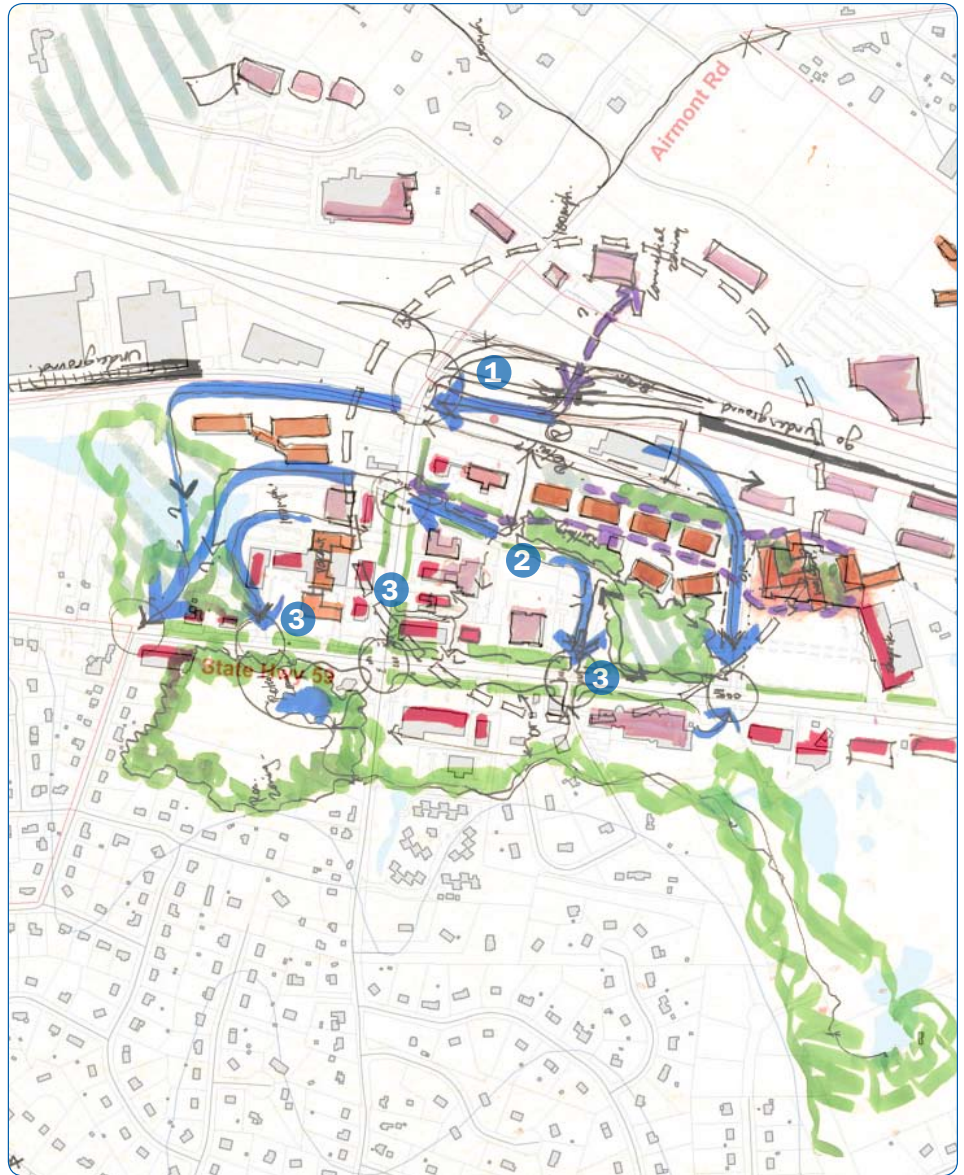
Traffic and Intensification: Participants in this group were clear that they did not approve of a new rail service in this location. Bus rapid transit might be acceptable pending further study. This area is already one of the worse traffic spots in the County and there was concern that future mixed-use development would make it worse. Therefore direct access from the highway to a park-and-ride location is essential. Finally, any redevelopment that takes place here should be leveraged to create open space as well.

Aesthetic Issues: There was also a concern about the scale of the elevated rail structure, particularly for the Montebello residents. For this reason, it was suggested that the rail line should stay at the lower elevation of the Thruway in order to pass below the Airmont Road overpass.

Circulation Strategies: To the extent that planning for the train station can be leveraged to consider the circulation issues in the larger study area, this group speculated about several possible new roadway connections. In particular, the group suggested that additional roads could relieve the bottleneck at Route 59 and Airmont Road. This could be accomplished by developing a new loop road between Route 59 and the Thruway that links back to Route 59 east and west of the troubled intersection. This could be feasible because this new loop road would pass through what are currently underutilized or vacant properties. While a concept similar to this already exists in the master plan, residents, in particular those in the adult community, are concerned that this should not become a high-speed cut-through. Instead, a slow meandering “parkway” concept was sketched up.

Implementation Items:

- Village: Develop concept design for the new loop road/“parkway”.
- DOT: Develop concept for alternative right-of-way along Thruway and below Airmont Road overpass
- Village/Town: Map right-of-way for new “parkway” and acquire right-of-way where possible.
- Village/Town: Develop commercial corridor design guidelines that deal creatively with access management, parking and redevelopment.



Airmont Road Site

- 1 Investigate new at-grade alignment along the edge of the highway to eliminate above grade structure.
- 2 Create a slow-speed meandering parkway to relieve bottleneck at Airmont Road/Route 59 intersection.
- 3 Promote better access management and parking design strategies to make this area pedestrian-friendly.

Nanuet Site



Overview:

In the Nanuet study area, a wide range of suburban development types are represented: from a traditional “main street” in downtown Nanuet to the typical commercial strip along Route 59; from a first generation suburban shopping mall – the Nanuet Mall – to the classic “edge city” collection of big box retail and hotels in a sea of parking; from higher density single family neighborhoods to new attached multifamily developments. In terms of environmental issues, there are several wetlands south of Route 59 and north of the New York State Thruway that follow, more or less, the possible rail or bus corridor.

There are two alternative locations for a future commuter rail stop in this area. One is east of the Route 59/Thruway overpass, which puts the station closer to the concentration of higher density housing on the north side of the Thruway or a possible transfer to the Pascack Valley Line, but is hard to see and is cut off from its context by arterial roadways and pedestrian-hostile parking lots for the big boxes. The other potential station area is just south of the Route 59 / Thruway overpass on the south side of the thruway. This alternative has the advantage of being close to the higher density residential areas south of the Thruway.

Collectively, the range and density of uses could create the foundation for a mixed-use transit-oriented district. The problem is that the roadways (Route 59 and the Thruway) and the Pascack Valley Line cut the area up into disconnected pieces. The assemblage of big box retail stores is largely un-walkable and there are no pedestrian crossings at the Thruway. Neither are there pedestrian connections from the surrounding neighborhoods to the commercial uses or the future transit stations.

The existing dense residential areas to the west and north can support transit if connections can be made. Redevelopment of the

Nanuet Mall as a mixed-use area could support transit if, again, linkages can be made to the future stations’ sites. As is the case with the Palisades Center Mall, it is possible to speculate about selective redevelopment of the retail districts to create a more pedestrian friendly environment and begin to infuse more transit-supportive land uses.

Charge to this team:

This team was asked the following strategic questions about TODs at this site:

- What land-use changes should be considered for the Nanuet Mall site?
- How can the safety and pedestrian access issues along Route 59 be addressed in the area of the future station?
- What pedestrian connections can be created to the existing residential areas to the southwest and north of the proposed line?
- What adjustments to the proposed station locations might be made to further these objectives?

Workshop Findings:

Two groups considered different potential locations for a future station in this area.

Station to the East: The east location puts the station closest to the loose agglomeration of retail activity. Although the proposed east station location puts the station behind a big box retailer where it has poor visibility, this location is proximate to a variety of resources: the surrounding neighborhoods, including some higher density housing; a future greenway along the river; new retail developments, and the troubled Nanuet Mall. The design studies show how to knit these resources together and link them to a future station area.

The single best opportunity is the flagging Nanuet Mall. As the mall can no longer compete with the current generation of “Big Box” shopping centers, it was suggested that it reinvent itself as a “lifestyle center”: surface parking lots would be redeveloped around new pedestrian “main street” corridors enlivened by new intermediate-scale destination retail. The displaced parking would be located in new structures behind the proposed Main Street. This would give the Nanuet Mall a new identity for a different kind of shopping experience.

Station to the West:

The west location puts the station closest to the existing park-and-ride and to several neighborhoods on the south side of the Thruway. This group explored the possibility of moving the station somewhat east where it would still be within easy walking distance of the neighborhoods but closer to some of the commercial establishments on Route 59. As at the Palisades Mall site and the Nanuet Mall, the plan anticipates the selective redevelopment of the vast amounts of parking here. Shared and structured parking can make land available for more valuable, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development. This plan also illustrates an alternative approach to parking. Rather than trying to build a single large structure, parking would be built incrementally as the area redevelops. Each project would be required to provide some shared and commuter parking thus promoting a walkable environment throughout the area and avoiding the traffic bottlenecks caused by a single large facility with only one or two access points.

Re-Making the Route 59 Strip:

A related strategy is to re-configure Route 59. The idea would be to make Route 59 into less of a typical “commercial strip” and more of a suburban boulevard that is well landscaped, walkable, and where the buildings are located close enough to the road that they define the space of the boulevard. On the south side of Route 59, this is accomplished as part of the Nanuet Mall reconfiguration described above. On the north side, special design guidelines will enable the progressive redevelopment of the strip. Guidelines would include uniform setback lines, location of parking to the sides and behind buildings, pedestrian and streetscape improvements.

Implementation Items:

- **Village/Town:** Create a new mixed-use overlay district: principal features include flexible use regulations; shared parking and other creative parking design strategies; design guidelines to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment with a strong identity.
- **Village/Town:** Engage land owners in a new round of design studies.
- **Village/Town:** Develop commercial corridor design guidelines that deal creatively with access management and parking.

- **County/Town** Target / prioritize parcels for acquisition and/or map easement for greenway.
- **DOT** Develop concept designs for alternative locations.
- **Town / County** Commission a comprehensive parking strategy plan.



Nanuet Site West

- 1 Move station to the east where it is closer to the nearby neighborhoods.
- 2 Promote progressive mixed-use redevelopment of the surface parking lots.
- 3 Encourage shared parking between uses and with commuters and distribute throughout the larger station area.
- 4 Remake the Route 59 “strip”. (see above)



Nanuet Site East

- 5 Anticipate the possible redevelopment of the Nanuet Mall as a mixed use “lifestyle center” with new development between the Mall and Route 59.
- 6 Re-make the Route 59 “strip” by promoting progressive redevelopment to pedestrian-friendly and street friendly uses and buildings.
- 7 Create a pedestrian network throughout, including linkages to greenways that connect to the multi-family communities north of the Thruway to the proposed station and downtown Nanuet

Palisades Mall Site



Overview

This part of the corridor is distinguished by several adjacent major features, including the Tilcon Quarry, Lake DeForest, and the Palisades Center Mall, a 1.8 million square foot mall surrounded by 8,000-plus parking spaces located on the south side of the Thruway. The Mall is bounded on the east by the four-lane Route 303 and on the south by Route 59 which has many of the small and intermediate scale commercial strip businesses that are characteristic of much of the rest of this corridor. The western boundary of the mall is the West Shore freight line, which is a principal rail freight line for CSX. Over the years there has been discussion of restoring passenger service along this line although there are no plans to implement it in the foreseeable future. To the west of the West Shore line is an established single-family neighborhood. East of Route 303, the residential neighborhoods are also difficult to reach on foot from the mall. The site has significant environmental constraints - a large swath of wetlands and constant flooding in the low-lying portions of Route 59 south of the Mall. Because the site is cut off from its surroundings, its primary value in the transportation corridor may be in a greatly expanded park-and-ride function.

The new station would be at the existing bus park-and-ride, a 6-acre, 800 space lot at the west end of the mall. Access to the site is constrained in several ways. In terms of pedestrian access, the West Shore Line and wetlands cut the site off from the significant residential population to the west. It is also difficult to walk from the future transit stop to the mall, because there are no sidewalks and because there are several large big-box retail uses anchoring the west end of the mall which offers only limited access to the public circulation system.

In the current alternatives this is the eastern-most transit stop in the Rockland County

portion of the transit corridor. Automobile access to the site is constrained by the Mall “ring road” which may not be designed to handle the additional volume of vehicles that would use it to get to both a larger park-and-ride or new commercial uses.

Charge to this team:

This team was asked the following strategic questions about TODs at this site:

- What future land-uses should be considered for this site?
- How can the future station area be connected to the residential neighborhoods to the west and south?
- What pedestrian connections can be developed for the station area to the Mall?
- How might the park and ride aspects of the site be maximized for the inevitable high usage, given its critical location as the easternmost station before the Hudson River?

Workshop Findings:

Access from the East: Constituents from the communities farther east were concerned that this station would be their only opportunity to board the new service. Therefore they would need easy access from the east to the station area. Congestion on the mall ring road was cited as an issue.

Two design suggestions were made in response: First, move the BRT or CRT stop farther east. This will reduce the amount of friction between the commuters and the shoppers, both of whom will have to use the Mall “ring road” which was not designed for this purpose. A station farther east would also put the stop closer to the “center of gravity” of the mall area.

In terms of car access, this group sketched up an alternative ramp configuration to enable more direct connection to the proposed station area from the east. This could be a new ramp along the north edge of the Thruway or could use the existing road along the edge of the quarry. Either road would lead to a new fly-over ramp to the proposed station area.

Pedestrian Access to the Mall: Pedestrian access to the mall from the proposed station area at the existing park-and-ride will be difficult. New pedestrian routes will need to be identified and designed. However, even if this is done, the public circulation areas within the

mall are not accessible through the stacked “big box” retailers at the western end of the mall, closest to the future station area. This makes the pedestrian link even lengthier and more difficult. One suggestion, which is complementary to the idea of moving the station further east as described above, is to build an elevated walkway from a future elevated station directly into the second story of the center section of the mall. This would put the pedestrian connections above the parking lots.

Opportunities for New Mixed-Use Development: If the station is built in the proposed location at the park-and-ride, office development can be considered there. One model would be to stack the new buildings on top of structured parking decks. The decks could serve both the offices and commuters. Because the station is elevated, the entry floor to the offices, raised above grade by the parking decks, could be at the same elevation as the train platforms.

Another long-term and much more speculative redevelopment opportunity is to anticipate that portions of the mall may be redeveloped with new mixed-use construction, organized around a conventional street-and-block pattern, replacing the large expanses of surface parking lots. There are now a number of precedents for this kind of “mall makeover.” The design study shown here anticipates redevelopment of the parking lots on the south side of the mall with new mixed-use development oriented towards Route 59.

Environmental Objectives: Storm water management is a significant challenge here. In part because of the larger expanses of impervious surface, the lower lying areas along the Route 59 corridor often flood. There are also significant wetlands areas. The strategy here should be to link all open space resources, wetlands and undeveloped parcels to create a large zone for best-practice storm water management. In the Route 59/303 flood plain area, map an area prohibiting future development with an eye towards creating a restored wetlands park that could act as a “sponge” during storm water events.

Implementation Items:

- **DOT:** Develop concept design for a new easterly station location.
- **DOT:** Develop concept design for this new access strategy.
- **Town, DOT:** Create a new TOD overlay district for the proposed and alternative station areas. Principal features include flexible use regulations; shared parking and other creative parking design strategies; design guidelines to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment with a strong identity.
- **Town / County:** Commission a storm water management and environmental resources study for this area.
- **Town, Mall Owners:** Enter into concept discussions with Mall ownership over these and other long-term prospects for the Mall property. Work with the mall to develop a mixed-use overlay district for portions of the mall.



Palisades Mall Site

- 1 Move station farther east to minimize interference with mall “ring road” traffic.
- 2 Provide car access from the east by using road along edge of quarry and new bridge across to the proposed station area.
- 3 Provide a direct pedestrian link across the parking lots from an easterly station location to the upper level of the mall. Create pedestrian routes between the park-and-ride site and the mall.
- 4 Promote mixed use development at the proposed station location. Anticipate possible mixed-use development on surface parking lots around the mall. Consolidate surface parking into lots to enable future mixed-use development around the mall.
- 5 Reestablish wetlands along Route 59 to mitigate flooding from impermeable surfaces.

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Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county, New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing. For more information about Regional Plan Association, please visit our website, www.rpa.org.

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