



Regional Plan Association

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

1040 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS (39th Street) • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10018 • (212) 398-1140

NEWS RELEASE

No. 1443
July 8, 1982

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FOR RELEASE: a.m.'s Monday
July 12, 1982

REGIONAL PLAN OPPOSES WIDENING HUTCHINSON PARKWAY; CALLS FOR PLANNING OFFICE LOCATIONS WITH TRANSPORTATION, NOT AWAITING CRISES

Regional Plan Association today opposed widening the Hutchinson River Parkway in a statement filed with the New York State Transportation Department.

The Association, a nonprofit citizen research organization, said that unless office locations were planned along with transportation, the widened Parkway would quickly become congested and the important aesthetic and historic values of the present design would be lost with little gained. The Association suggested that offices be located in the County's downtowns. This would stimulate increased use of public transportation during peak periods as jobs increase. Siting offices around the Westchester Airport and Cross-Westchester Expressway on their own campuses surrounded by parking would preclude adequate bus service.

Regional Plan reiterated its call of May 23, 1982 for a County task force, named by the County Executive and Board of Legislators, to review the County Planning Board's land-use plan and, when agreement on a plan is reached, work for its implementation.

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The full statement is attached.

/dr



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Mr. A.E. Dickson
Regional Director
New York State Department of Transportation
4 Burnett Boulevard
Poughkeepsie, New York 12603

RE: PROPOSALS TO RECONSTRUCT THE HUTCHINSON
RIVER PARKWAY

Dear Mr. Dickson:

Regional Plan Association proposes that reconstruction of the Hutchinson River Parkway be limited to the substantial rebuilding of the interchanges with local streets and provision of stabilized grass shoulders on the outside with mountable curbs. This is a modification of what is known as the "safety improvement" under consideration. Our proposal differs from the "safety improvement" in two ways: we call for no shoulders on the inside and grass shoulders instead of pavement on the outside.

Since two-thirds of the accidents are at the interchanges, rebuilding them should greatly lower the accident rate.

Any of the alternatives proposed would destroy the basic image of the Parkway. Here is the observation of Regional Plan Association's Vice President for Research and Planning, Boris Pushkarev, who won the National Book Award for Man-Made America, in which he contributed a pioneering chapter on highway design: "Built in 1928 in the footsteps of the pioneering Bronx River Parkway--the precursor of limited-access highways worldwide--the Hutchinson Parkway is distinguished by a continuous curvilinear alignment (with extensive use of spiral transitions and a few tangent sections), by very close adherence to the natural topography, and an interesting progression of dense planting, open spaces and views. Its design and relationship to the landscape are literally unique, and after the reconstruction of most of the Bronx River Parkway and the Cross-County there simply are no other authentic parkway designs of the 1920s left. The Saw Mill, the Taconic and the northern section of the Hutchinson date from a later period."

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But are the Parkway's unusual beauty and unique historic place--that go unmentioned in the Environmental Impact Statement--more valuable than speeding congested traffic on its way? Regional Plan concludes they are more valuable because:

1. The traffic relief will be temporary as long as office development around the airport and along the Cross-Westchester continues as proposed and as long as substantial excess highway capacity exists both north and south of the section proposed for widening. Ten highway lanes feed this section from the south and eight from the north. A six-lane Hutchinson Parkway would provide access for an additional 3,000 office jobs (about a million square feet of new office space) if all came via the Hutchinson River Parkway. Around the airport alone, there are expected to be about 25,000 more office workers. Along the Cross-Westchester near the Hutchinson Parkway another large addition of office development is expected. So unless there is still further capacity built somewhere, the Hutchinson will shortly be congested even if widened.
2. Scattered sites in the airport area are not the right location for offices; downtowns are. When offices are in downtowns--such as White Plains, New Rochelle, Port Chester, Mount Kisco, Mount Vernon, Yonkers--increased travel to the center can be--and historically is--siphoned off onto public transportation during peak periods. With offices scattered on separate campuses and surrounded by parking, good public transit is impossible. There are many other social, economic and environmental benefits to building offices in downtowns instead of scattering them through the countryside. But limiting our argument here to transportation: only strong downtowns support good public transportation and so provide an alternative to the Hutchinson Parkway dilemma, i.e., either add highway capacity or stop increasing office jobs.

Some may recommend that the Hutchinson Parkway be widened now, since it is already congested, and that future congestion should be prevented by prohibiting further scattered office locations that would reconstitute it. The problem is that developers and the municipalities that zone for them are not likely to believe that this is the last added capacity because states always have scrambled to meet the congestion demands when they appeared. Widening the Hutchinson is an example. It was built for recreation driving. Aesthetics was an integral part of its design and intent. Builders clearly assumed that all this would be thrown out when they created the necessity of passing

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more cars through that corridor than the original design could handle. Especially in this time of stringent capital budgets and a monstrous backlog of capital needs, land-use and transportation must be planned together.

Immediately, widening the Hutch must be measured alongside rehabilitation and repair needs of other public infrastructure as well as against the tremendous loss in historic and aesthetic values. Perhaps even more, it must be measured against the signals it gives to developers and municipalities that they can go their own ways in land use, and government will continue to rush to solve the transportation problems they create.

Regional Plan concludes that the costs are too high: the Hutch should not be widened.

Further, we reiterate our public statement of May 23, 1982 that a Task Force of Westchester leaders be selected to re-evaluate the County's land-use plan so that there is agreement on where the County's development is going before highway crises are created by land-use decisions made without that conception.

Sincerely yours,

John Keith
John P. Keith
President

JPK/dr