

The Western New York Environmental Alliance



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March 14, 2013

Darrell F. Kaminski
Regional Director
New York State Department of Transportation
100 Seneca Street
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NYS Route 198 (Scajaquada Expressway) Corridor – PIN 5470.22

Dear Mr. Kaminski,

The Western New York Environmental Alliance (WNYEA) Transportation Working Group has reviewed the most recent plans for the Scajaquada Corridor Expressway and we, in concert with many other stakeholders, have determined that this project, specifically, the most recent design alternative as proposed, has fallen well short of the stated goals and vision defined through the public participation process.

The Purpose and Needs Statement generated at the beginning of the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) process states that the purpose of this action is to:

- Bring this transportation facility “more into harmony with the community character and natural environment,” and
- Improve the “visual and functional connectivity between the various features and resources in the adjacent area for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.”

The Expanded Project Proposal (EPP), completed by the City of Buffalo in 2006, recommends alternatives that provide a significant reduction in traffic speed and alterations of roadway character that include “all modes of travel.”

There has been long standing community consensus around the goals of the Scajaquada Corridor “downgrade” throughout the EPP process and, to this day, even after being presented with traffic modeling results that suggest that the community supported design is infeasible, we are determined to see that our vision for this significant cultural and ecological corridor is implemented. In fact, given the time afforded us by the project delays, our coalition has grown and our mission has gained momentum, and we take this opportunity to emphasize unequivocally that the goals and vision originally expressed by the community have not only stayed the same, but have now evolved into an

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expectation that this project should serve as mitigation for the severe damage done to our most critical cultural and environmental resources. Our community deserves no less.

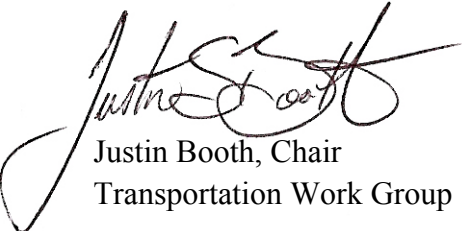
The Scajaquada Expressway today is a dangerous and obsolete vehicular shortcut that cuts haphazardly across North Buffalo on the banks of a channelized Scajaquada Creek, skirts along the northern edge of three (Buffalo State, Medaille, and Canisius) college campuses, travels through our Museum District (that includes the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) and bisects the crown jewel of the Olmsted Park System at Delaware Park in a travesty that obliterated the intent of the original park plan. Access to, use and enjoyment of all these community assets has long been compromised and the only reasonable restitution for this error of progress is the systematic replacement with a fully multi-modal, much slower, and much greener parkway-like complete street. The long-term sustainability of our community depends upon our ability to implement projects that will ensure and enhance our quality of life.

The WNYEA is a forum for collaboration amongst various environmental organizations in our region. The transportation working group is focused on promoting a culture of sustainability with regard to the future of transportation in Western New York. Through our collective voice we are respectfully requesting the NYSDOT to further downgrade this corridor and to redefine this project so that the goal is no longer just to maintain this as a “feasible and prudent principle urban arterial” with no net loss of “the existing level of service” but to transform this project into one that goes well beyond “matching the driver expectation of this corridor with its design and function” to one that restores community character, promotes walkability, ensures ecological enhancement and provides renewed access to our most significant resources.

We look forward to a vigorous dialogue about the next steps we need to embark upon in order to achieve meaningful and significant progress toward the redefinition of the Scajaquada Corridor.

Please feel free to contact me with any comments or concerns regarding the content of this letter.

Sincerely,



Justin Booth, Chair
Transportation Work Group

Cc: Byron W. Brown, Mayor, City of Buffalo
Mark Grisanti, New York State Senator, 60th District
Timothy Kennedy, New York State Senator, 63rd District
Sean Ryan, New York State Assembly Member, 149th District
Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, New York State Assembly Member, 141st District

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Steven J. Stepniak, Commissioner, City of Buffalo Department of Public Works
Brendan R. Mehaffy, Executive Director, City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning
Hal Morse, Executive Director, Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council
Michael LoCurto, Delaware District Council Member, City of Buffalo
Joseph Golombek, North District Council Member, City of Buffalo
Maria Whyte, Commissioner, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
Western New York Environmental Alliance/ Transportation Working Group