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Thinking Beyond a New Tappan Zee

By [DAVID KOCIENIEWSKI](#)

When the news broke last year that the aging Tappan Zee Bridge, which spans the Hudson River linking Westchester and Rockland Counties, was so badly decayed that 80 percent of the structure needed \$6.4 billion in repairs, transportation officials decided to think big.

Rather than replace the Tappan Zee, they hope to use the project to reconfigure transportation in the Hudson Valley, unveiling proposals to build a new bridge that would accommodate extensive express bus service as well as a new Metro-North rail line between Westchester and Rockland Counties.

But big plans have big price tags and complex bureaucratic challenges. With the cost now expected to top \$16 billion, a study is underway so that state and local officials can seek federal financing for the project. Planners are also trying to gather political support in Rockland County, where some residents fear mass transit will bring development and crime.

The Tappan Zee certainly needs attention. Its pilings and foundation are weakening, and its roadway is perforated with hoses where pavement has disappeared. The state is close to the end of a three-year deck replacement program to try to make the bridge functional for a few more years.

"The Tappan Zee has become the quintessential 21st-century planning dilemma," said Robert E. Paaswell, a civil engineering professor at [City University of New York](#). "It's a 50-year-old bridge beyond its design life. And the community around it has grown so developed and complex that there are real questions about whether people can agree on how to replace it." DAVID KOCIENIEWSKI

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