



George Latimer
County Executive

September 16, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Westchester Route 9 Project

Dear Governor Hochul,

Westchester County strongly supports the proposed shared use path and other safety and pedestrian improvements along Route 9 as envisioned by the Route 9 Active Transportation Conceptual Design Plan. This project would connect the Route 9 corridor and four communities along it—Hastings, Dobbs Ferry, Irvington and Tarrytown—to the newly opened bike/pedestrian pathway on the Mario M. Cuomo bridge, as well as to each other.

This project is the product of years of sustained collaboration among these villages--who have each twice enacted supporting resolutions, and whose mayors recently issued a letter underlining their support for this important, forward-looking project. The project has benefited from the involvement of hundreds of local residents who discussed and had input into the plan through multiple workshops and open houses, which I personally attended, as well as a community survey.

Route 9 is not just a highway--it effectively functions as the main street of these communities. 23 schools are situated along or very nearby Route 9 in this corridor, making safety concerns paramount. Many families fear to send their children to school walking or by bike, and defensively drive them to school, in turn further increasing congestion and danger, creating a vicious cycle. This project seeks to reverse that cycle by creating a safe and inviting environment for nonmotorized travel that can in turn ease traffic and safety concerns for others.

The Route 9 active transportation project would have multiple, self-reinforcing benefits for the community and beyond it:

- Safety--protecting pedestrians and cyclists
- Health--encouraging exercise and reducing emissions as vehicle trips are displaced by walking and cycling for short trips
- Economic Development--riders and pedestrians are more likely to patronize local stores and businesses; and connecting these communities to the MMC Bridge Shared Use Path will put the area on the map as a tourism and day-trip destination.
- Mass Transit--the plan includes improving the accessibility of Westchester's BeeLine Bus service along the corridor
- Climate goals--helping people into alternative modes of transportation is entirely consistent with and supportive of New York's leading role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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This project received \$150,000 in initial funding in the form of a New New York Bridge grant from the NYS Thruway Authority. That funding produced a comprehensive conceptual design for the project performed by the top-flight transportation and mobility planning firm Nelson Nygaard that showed the feasibility of the plan for this route.

Since then, the Intermunicipal Stakeholder Committee has held a briefing with NYSDOT Region 8, and has been engaged in collaborative discussions ever since.

We know this project is not only possible, but would be a game changer for the region, leading to all the beneficial developments cited above. This will be a nationally visible project that will put New York in a favorable spotlight and demonstrate its climate and sustainability leadership. With new sources of funding likely to become available for projects of this type through anticipated Transportation and Infrastructure legislation and other programs, now is the time to give the project your high-level support.

I hope you will join me in enthusiastically supporting this project, and specifically that you use your authority to assist the villages in obtaining high-level backing from NYSDOT, including naming a liaison to the villages charged with helping to ready the project through all the steps ultimately leading to implementation. Of utmost importance, however, is naming the Department as a sponsoring agency to ensure that the project is eligible for TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) and other funding opportunities that may become available through pending infrastructure legislation and otherwise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Latimer". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive