

# The Westway Project Acquisition Progress Report

by Joseph A. Fogarty

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New York's controversial Westway project is a prime example of a new era of urban highway planning and design. The wide range and sophistication of community interests which have had to be dealt with, and the need to comply with exacting Federal standards for environmental quality significantly altered the traditional approaches to highway building.


Since the 1950's, it has been apparent that the elevated Miller Highway along the western edge of Manhattan needed replacement or major rehabilitation. The existing structure had been built for passenger cars only in the '30's and '40's, and the heavy usage (approximately 110,000 cars per day) and corrosive saltwater air were causing significant and rapid deterioration.

This problem was recognized by several government agencies and the unusual magnitude of the problem was recognized by the Tri State Regional Planning Commission in 1966 which concluded "that the needed highway renewal coupled with new land uses provides an unparalleled opportunity for civic improvements." During the 1960's, New York State assumed responsibility for the unprecedented undertaking and worked out a financial "trade-in" arrangement with the Federal Highway Administration.

Through the agreement, monies which were initially allocated for several New York City Interstate Routes, determined to be both costly and disruptive, were reallocated for this essential

*The Westway Project is a major highway replacement project being built for New York City. Joseph A. Fogarty is Associate Right-of-Way agent for the Property Services Bureau of the New York State Department of Transportation. This article first appeared in the April 1982 IRWA News and Views, Empire State Chapter 18 Newsletter, of which Fogarty is editor. Research and the map were provided by AASHTO Quarterly, January 1982.*

improvement. As part of the "trade-in" agreement, interstate designation and funding was ultimately obtained for a 4.2 mile corridor extending from the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel (at



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Manhattan's southern tip) to the Lincoln Tunnel-42nd Street vicinity.

During the early 1970's, State and City officials reached preliminary accord and established an organizational and policy framework for the proposed project. These agencies identified and agreed upon a number of criteria to create an improvement that would satisfy the greatest number of needs. From its very inception, the project was immersed in controversy, and much planning and discussion was required to develop the five following alternate design proposals:

1. **MAINTENANCE** - repair and maintain existing six lane facility.
2. **RECONSTRUCTION** - a major rebuilding of existing facility, salvaging as much as possible of the elevated structure, and constructing new roadway decks in accordance with present safety standards and designs.
3. **ARTERIAL** - tear down the elevated structure and construct a six-lane atgrade arterial with two-lane service roads along each side, and a subway transit-way under the street.
4. **INBOARD** - a new six-lane, partially depressed highway close to the present location including a

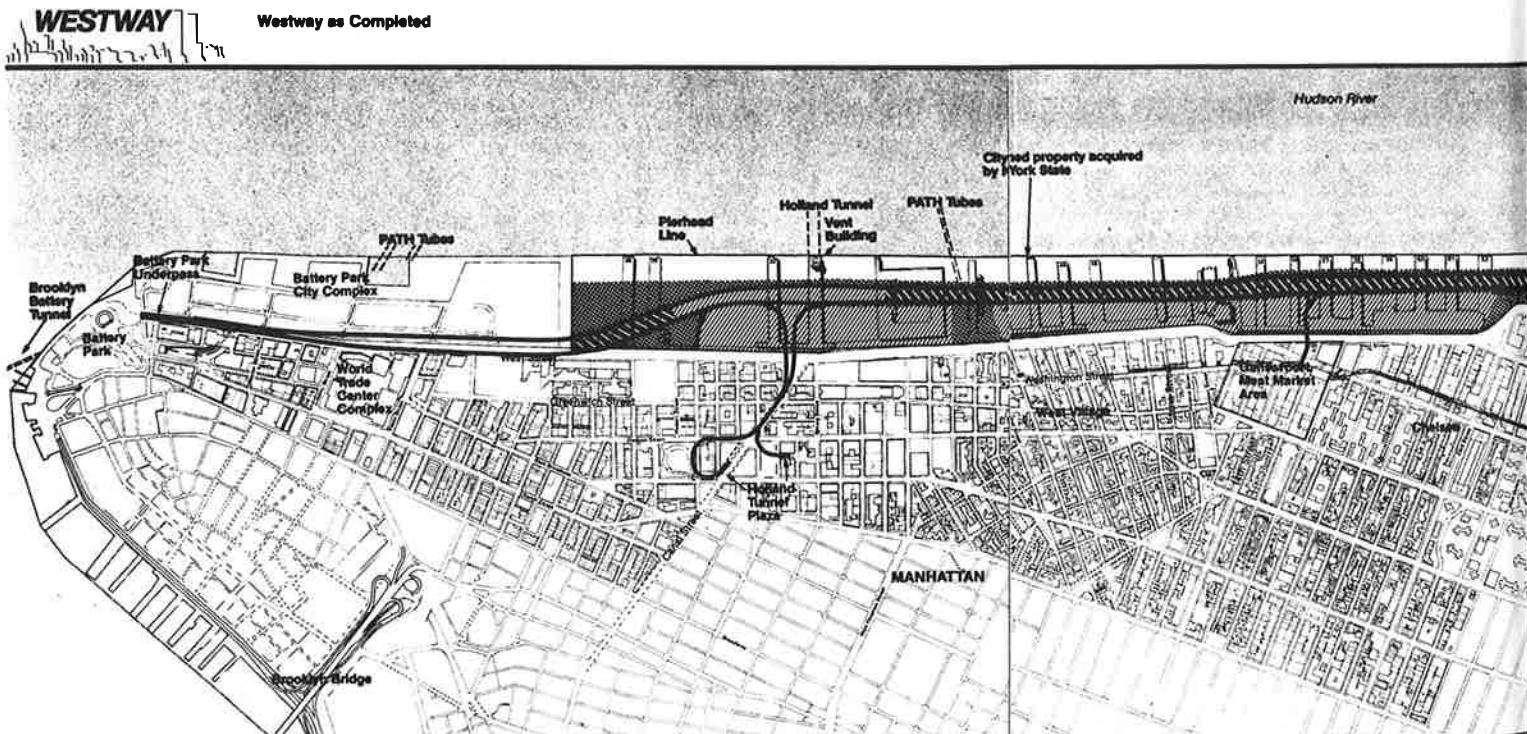
separated two-lane transit-way for express buses, and a reconstruction of the surface street under the Westside Highway viaduct.

5. **OUTBOARD** - a new six lane, partially depressed highway near the present pierhead line with design elements comparable to the Inboard Alternate.

During the early part of 1974, a series of public hearings were conducted, and twenty-five city, state and federal agencies provided detailed comments concerning the proposed improvement. The wide variety of opinions made unanimous agreement impossible to achieve. However, with the collapse of a section of the existing highway in December '73, the Maintenance and Reconstruction Alternates became much less viable. After the structure's collapse, the elevated highway south of 46th St. was closed, and this served to further underscore the need for rapid action. Through the review process, the surface arterial was criticized as creating a physical barrier between the City's westside residential communities and the Hudson River, and the Federal Highway Administration indicated that neither an elevated highway, nor a surface arterial

would meet federal noise and air quality standards.

On March 7, 1975, a decision favoring Westway was made by Governor Carey and former Mayor Beame. Through this action, the State and City of New York jointly endorsed the project and firmly rejected the alternate option of transferring the interstate fund allocation to mass transit. The project's planning was continued and a design alternate was selected. The Westway's final alignment (north of Battery Park Complex) will be mid-way between the pierhead line and the present highway, and will ultimately connect the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel and the existing Miller Highway at 46th Street. The new highway will be depressed for just over half of its 4.2 mile length, and will have four connections (or interchanges) with existing city streets: The first will be located at the project's southern tip and provide access to the Battery Park Underpass and West Street; the second will be located in the mid-southern zone, and will connect the traffic corridor with Canal Street and the Holland Tunnel; the third will be in the central zone and will allow access to and from the City's major meatmarket district and the



15th Street area; and the fourth will be toward the project's northern end, and connect the mainline and the Interstate Route designation to the Lincoln Tunnel-it will also allow access to 30th Street.

In addition to providing an ultra modern highway, the project's plans provide for a 97 acre State park, and will create an additional 110 acres of new lands for development. Preliminary plans call for the new lands to be developed for residential, commercial, industrial and institutional usage. This will obviously have a positive impact on the entire westside as the unused and deteriorated piers and headhouses that presently serve as a haven for disreputable activities will be replaced with an open park and a newly developed, carefully planned community. The effects of this development should promote investment and growth along the project's entire corridor.

From an acquisition standpoint, the project's being divided into four separate components: The Mainline Corridor, the Canal Street/Holland Tunnel Interchange, the 15th Street Interchange, and the 30th Street/Lincoln Tunnel Interchange. This acquisition plan is patterned on the construction schedule and

allows for the properties to be acquired on a timely and "as needed" basis. Initial acquisition activities are being directed to the project's corridor and appraisals for the City-owned piers were completed in mid '81. This action combined with the resolution of some other legal restraints allowed acquisitions to begin.

Due to the importance of Westway, a ceremony was arranged on Labor Day and President Reagan presented a symbolic payment of \$85 million to Mayor Koch; the payment represented the federal share of the appraised value of the City's waterfront property. Shortly thereafter, the City-owned piers between the Battery Park and 34th Street were acquired as a single taking on September 11, 1981. This initial acquisition included 327 acres of land (some of which is underwater) and will allow major construction activities to commence. While the acquisition was singular in nature, the property includes a variety of occupants and the State's

Department of Transportation operating at the Westway Management Group is overseeing all acquisition, property management and relocation assistance activities. The taking requires the displacement of ten New York City agencies, three other public agencies, and 39 private businesses. Relocation assistance activities will range from the on-going relocation of small parking lots, several of which have been moved on an interim basis to make way for demolition of the elevated structure, to the "functional replacement" of a sizeable bus garage and refuse processing plant.

The relocation of these larger agencies is being carefully planned and closely coordinated with City officials and several years will be needed in bringing these plans to full fruition. Plans to re-establish both the bus garage and refuse processing are being advanced and a replacement site for the bus facilities has been selected at the proposed 30th Street Interchange. A portion of the new structure will



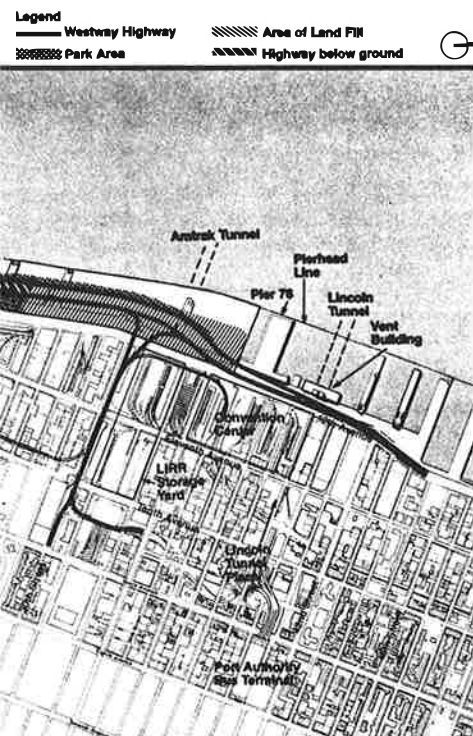
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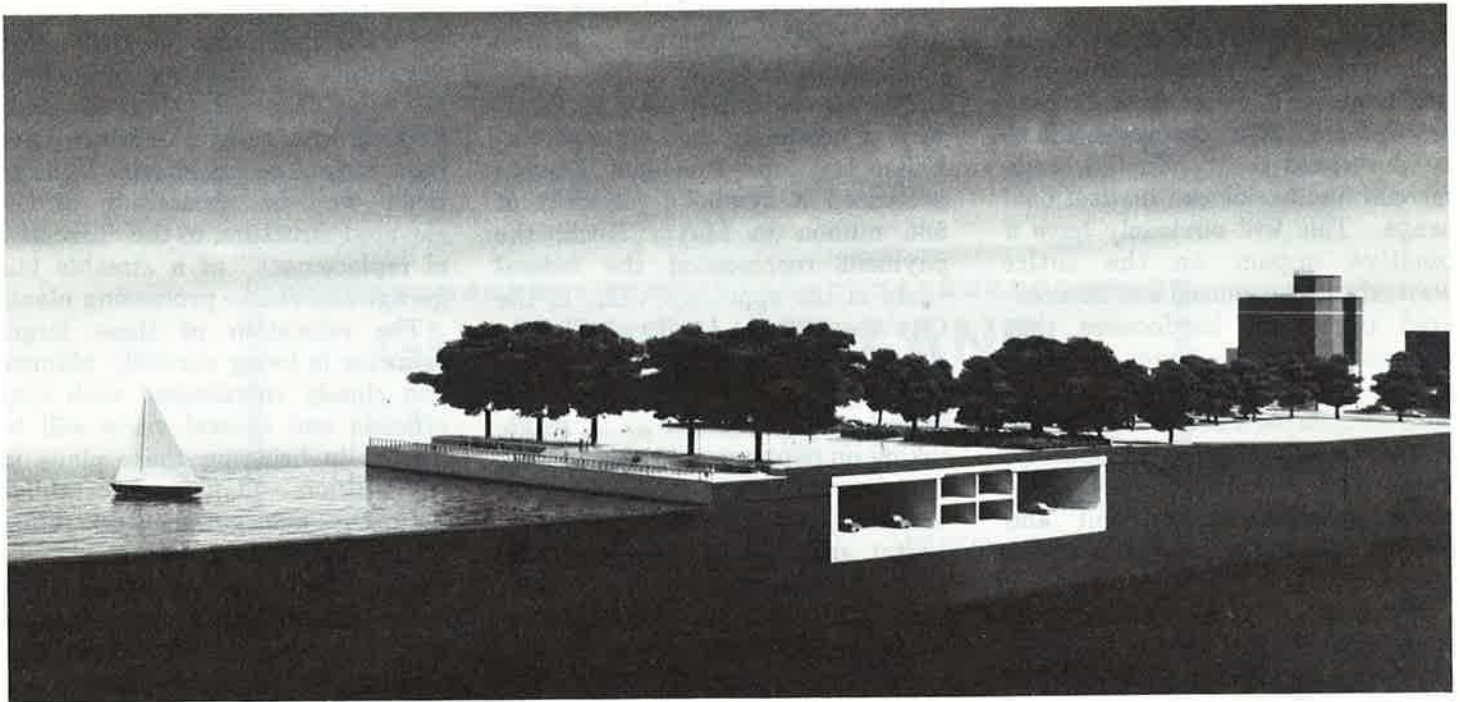
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*Construction of Westway requires acquisition of three small park areas in the Chelsea and Greenwich Village communities. Under the terms of Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966, it was necessary for the Westway plan to minimize harm resulting from this acquisition in order to win Federal approval. This requirement, coupled with strong public support for the reclamation of the Hudson River waterfront for public access and recreation, resulted in the provision of replacement, to be built largely on top of the highway tunnel, as an integral part of the Westway project.*



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be built beneath the access ramps and acquisitions for the new site are scheduled to be made later this year with construction to be completed in mid '86. The new garage will house approximately 250 buses and have ample repair capabilities for the fleet. Payment for this new facility (to provide comparable service space) will be reimbursed with project acquisition monies under the seldom used functional replacement legislative authority. The same concept will be used for the refuse processing plant, but studies are just getting under way to select a site for this complex. Studies determining the acquired plant's capacity have already been completed, and participating agencies have basically agreed to the functional replacement concept.

As for the public agencies, most will be relocated to other sites within the City and the various moving dates will be coordinated with the specific construction needs of project.

Opponents of Westway scored a partial victory last April when Federal Judge Thomas Griesa restricted further work beneath the water pending further study by the Army Corps of Engineers to determine the project's impact on striped bass in the lower Hudson River.

In effect, this ruling has restricted the State from letting several prototype fill and pier demolition contracts, but activities should resume pending the Court's review of the matter. The Corps of Engineers is presently finalizing an independent Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS).

In late June, Judge Griesa underscored his decision to restrict further construction activities when he criticized the testimony of several of the project's witnesses.

Last fall, the New York State Department of Transportation recently received a favorable ruling from the State's Appellate Division which will allow the State to obtain

federal reimbursement for the initial acquisitions.

This ruling represents a small, but significant breakthrough in the legal restraints which have been plaguing the project for the last 8 months. In effect, it will allow the State to compensate the City of New York for some 327 acres of waterfront property which was acquired in September '81. It may also open the door for other pre-construction activities, as the State is now seeking the Court's approval to proceed with the planned demolition of Piers 25, 32, 45 & 46.

Meanwhile, the State is also proceeding with the pre-acquisition activities for the lands needed for the relocation of the MABSTOA Public Transportation Facility. Four parcels, to be used jointly for the project and a proposed bus garage, are to be acquired in the near future. This property is located near the project's proposed interchange with the Lincoln Tunnel between 10th and 11th Avenues in the vicinity of 30th and 31st Streets.