

April 27, 2011

Mr. John Poorman
CDTC
One Park Place
Albany, NY 12205-2676

Re: TIP-A437
PIN 1757.38 – Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail over the Mohawk River,
Bridge Rehabilitation Project, BIN 7708990, City of Cohoes

Dear John:

The City of Cohoes respectfully requests that the Capital District Transportation Council (CDTC) favorably consider lifting the funding cap on the STP-Flex obligated for this project and amending the STIP to include the additional funds necessary to accomplish the project objectives originally set forth. This project was originally funded for unencumbered rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the abandoned Cohoes/Green Island D&H Railroad Bridge (locally referred to as the Black Bridge), however, prior to the actual start of design, additional requirements and conditions needing to be met were brought to the process, requiring the changes discussed and additional funding requested herein.

The Delaware Avenue corridor has been the most studied parcel of land in the City of Cohoes over the last 15 years. The studies have included Parks & Trails New York, the New York Department of State, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Places, Housing and Urban Development Corporation and the New York State Greenway. There was one common thread though all of these studies; the need for a waterfront trail project. Although the bike and walking trail along Delaware Avenue being built in the spring of 2011 will be a valuable project to the community and transportation network, without the completion of the abandoned Cohoes/Green Island D&H Rail Bridge (Black Bridge), the waterfront trail remains just a local project, not the major regional trail enhancement that it was intended to be.

There are two State-wide Bike Trails that traverse the Cohoes/Waterford area. The Mohawk Hudson Bike trail is over 380 miles long and extends from Western New York into Albany. The Champlain Canal Bike Trail starts in Waterford and runs over 65 miles

north to Whitehall. It has always been a desire to find a safer connecting route to link these two major trails and the reconstruction of the Black Bridge will provide for that safer connecting route. By completing this bridge project, pedestrians and cyclists can exit the Mohawk-Hudson Trail at Delaware Avenue in Green Island, travel across the Black Bridge, continue north on the Delaware Avenue Trail through Cohoes (currently under construction) and enter Peebles Island State Park and the National Park Services Visitor Center. Pedestrians and cyclists will then be able to continue over the 2nd street Bridge to the Lock 2 Visitor Center at the entrance to the Barge Canal in Waterford. From this park, trail users can access the Champlain Canal trail and continue to destinations to the north. The attached Figure 1 illustrates the Black Bridge project location along with the adjacent trail segments and connections as discussed.

The Black Bridge rehabilitation project (PIN 1757.38) was approved in 2003 and was placed on the TIP at the same time as the City's Bridge Avenue Bridge reconstruction project. In 2005, it was determined by the City and NYSDOT that we should shift the start of PIN 1757.38 until after the Bridge Avenue bridge project was completed. In 2009, with the Bridge Avenue bridge project nearing completion, the City selected Barton & Loguidice, P.C., through a qualifications based selection process, as our consulting engineering firm for the Black Bridge project.

At our initial project scoping meeting with NYSDOT Region 1's Osvaldo Priotti, it was determined that two important elements were either not known or not considered in the development of the project and funding prior to this to this detailed project scoping. Originally, the project objectives were based on the assumptions that record plans and documentation along with inspection records for the abandoned railroad bridge existing and would be available for use in the project design, both of which are reasonable assumptions. Prior to initiating the agreement with the Consultant and through several months of active research by the former railroad owners, NYSDOT and the City, it was definitively determined that record bridge plans for this structure were destroyed in a fire and would not be available to form the basis for inspections needed, plan and repair details, and biennial bridge inspections and record documentation when the bridge is ultimately opened to the public. Further, NYSDOT indicated that to re-open this bridge to public use, record information for the bridge files would need to be recreated. As a result, the scope of work migrated to a more rigorous 100% hands-on and detailed member inspection (including acquiring member dimensions), also adding the need for rigging and access equipment. In addition, the need arose for a full and underwater dive inspection to allow the Consultant to gain direct access to every member and component of the bridge.

To keep the project alive, it was discussed and agreed to between the City, NYSDOT and CDTC to leave open the option of lifting the fiscal cap and to infuse additional money into the project to allow the preliminary and final engineering, and when conditions are better known, to construct the necessary repairs to open the bridge as the missing link in this trail network. To allow the inspection and design to proceed, it was decided in 2009 to shift funds from the Construction to the design phase of the project. Our consultant is currently under agreement through the milestone of "Design Approval", needing the

remainder of the funds for final design to be supplemented into their agreement.

Based on the design it was determined that the current funding for the construction phase of the project is not adequate to complete the rehabilitation of the Black Bridge as proposed. The current construction cost estimate is based on the results of the detailed bridge inspection and current construction pricing for the work items proposed. As illustrated in the attached Figure 2b, the scope of the proposed bridge rehabilitation includes structural repairs, a new continuous timber deck and new steel pedestrian railings, which is consistent with the original project funding application submitted in 2003. A summary of the requested funding increases for the design and construction phases is show in the attached Project Funding Summary Table.

While the scope and cost of the project has changed since 2003, these changes are the result of keeping the project objectives in focus and maintained. What has not changed, however, is the significance of this Bridge as an important trail project with regional significance and impacts. In recognition of the importance of this critical link in the trail network, the City of Cohoes is committed to funding and completing the Black Bridge and the adjacent trail projects as discussed. The City has worked to secure funding for the remainder of the trail along Delaware Ave. thru State and Federal Grants and a mix of pubic and private funding. Two ongoing waterfront development pursuits have partnered with the City, providing over \$300,000 that will be used to construct the segment of trail along Delaware Avenue from the Black Bridge to Peebles Island. The City has also bonded funds for our match of the Black Bridge project costs. It is also noted that the project was only possible due to the fact that the Open Spaces Institute purchased the land and the Bridge from D&H to allow this project to move forward. Upon the completion of the trail and rehabilitation of the Black Bridge, the land and the Bridge will be deeded over to the City of Cohoes to remain open space forever.

The City of Cohoes sincerely appreciates the opportunity to come back to the Planning Board to discuss this important regional project with the goal of finding additional funding to complete the design and then construction of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John T. McDonald III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John T. McDonald III
Mayor

ATTACHMENT A

TIP Amendment Request

1. TIP # A437 (PIN 1757.38): Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail: Bridge Rehabilitation of former Delaware Ave. R.R. Bridge

The cost of this project has increased due to two factors. First, no record data was available for the abandoned railroad bridge and thus a more rigorous 100% hands on inspection of all bridge components (including acquiring member dimensions) was required to reopen the bridge for public use. Funding had previously been shifted from the construction and final design phases to the preliminary design phase to fund the additional inspection/preliminary engineering efforts. Second, the construction funding increase is due to increased scope of the repair work and increased material costs since the original construction cost estimate was completed. The current construction cost estimate is based on the results of the detailed bridge inspection and current construction pricing for the work items proposed. The total increase is \$0.400M and assumes the same Federal/Local breakdown as the original funding (80% Federal, 20% Local).

<u>TIP Project</u>	<u>Current TIP Data</u>				<u>Proposed TIP Data</u>			
	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Phase</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Phase</u>	<u>Year</u>
TIP #A437: Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail: Bridge Rehab (former Delaware Ave. R.R. Bridge)	\$0.390M	STP-Flex	C	11-12	\$0.060M	STP-Flex	D	10-11
					\$0.730M	STP-Flex	C	11-12

Construction funding for this project includes inspection (supervision):
 X yes ___ no ___ NA (please check one).