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Two-barrier proposal a winner for Thruway

The changes being considered in the Thruway Authority's Albany Corridor Study may cause the most significant changes for commuters in the Capital Region since I-90 in Rensselaer County was built. The study presents two different solutions to traffic tie-ups at Thruway toll plazas or exits in the Capital Region.

One is to construct high-speed E-ZPass lanes. But more than a few drivers do not use E-ZPass.

The other — termed the two-barrier concept — eliminates all tollbooths at the most congested toll plaza, Exit 24. Instead, roundtrip tolls would be collected at Exit 23 and Exit 25. At Exit 23, the toll would be for a round trip from Exit 24 to 23, even if you traveled from Exit 25. The toll at Exit 25 would also be priced as if you came from Exit 24. No toll ticket would be involved, and three of the four stops that commuters normally make to collect tickets and pay tolls would no longer be necessary. E-ZPass users would continue to pay tolls electronically at Exit 23 and Exit 25.

The McKownville Improvement Association, in the neighborhood near Exit 24, concluded that the two-barrier concept, with some modifications, presents the most advantages to the most people. It provides significant savings — to commuters (in time of travel), to the Thruway Authority (in budget outlays) and to those of us living near Exit 24 (in noise). By lessening the "weaving" through Exit 24, it provides other benefits as well. It might eliminate the necessity for taking land from the Pine Bush, for example.

We in McKownville continue to oppose a Western Avenue "flyover," a bridge over Western Avenue that would cause significant added noise in Woodscape and our other neighborhoods. The McKownville Association has collected several hundred signatures on a petition in opposition to a flyover. The petition has been endorsed by all of our locally elected officials.

The Thruway Authority has come up with a winning idea with the two-barrier concept and, with some modifications, it can be made better.

The Albany Corridor Study is available at libraries and at <http://www.thruway.state.ny.us/studies/pac.html>.

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