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# Thruway Authority releases study

*Association disappointed about flyover plans*

By MARY LANNON

Plans for the Western Avenue flyover are alive. So is the possibility of fewer tolls for commuters. Both proposals are in a long-delayed report from the Thruway Authority.

Last week, after two years of study and the passing of several promised release dates, the authority released a report on plans for exits 21A to 25A.

Despite repeated and loud protests against the flyover (overpass) from the McKownville Neighborhood Improvement Association, three of the four feasible concepts for reconstructing Exit 24 include a flyover.

The overpass would connect EZPass lanes from the Thruway to the Northway and go over Western Avenue. Projected costs of the project range from \$67 M to \$97M.

The most expensive option is the one that does not include the Western Avenue flyover.

"I was disappointed," said Don Reeb, president of the association, of the flyover's inclusion.

Also in the report are two concepts for collecting tolls via high-speed EZPass lanes. These concepts are misleadingly named mainline barriers though in fact the "barriers" are the structures that read the EZPass on cars.

Such lanes would mean that toll plazas at the exits would only be for those paying cash. In at least one of what the study called "feasible concepts," tolls would only be collected south of the

current Exit 23 and west of the current Exit 25 and not in between.

Commuters may not want to get too excited too soon, because the other feasible concept for high speed EZ-Pass has commuters paying not just at two locations but at four, similar to the system currently in place.

In addition to including the flyover, Reeb said, the report is disappointing because it does not really offer much additional information than what was known before.

"It doesn't seem to say anything," he said. "They don't in any way indicate any proponents or opposition to any of the proposals."

The authority's report eliminates some of the proposals put forward to the public at a series of meetings, but it puts forward other proposals with little modification.

The report, Reeb said, also doesn't mention the wide opposition to the flyover; rather, it merely says there was a question about the flyover, making it sound like one person questioned it rather than many.

Still, Reeb said that he's hopeful that the flyover will not ultimately be constructed. He's been in touch with state Assemblyman John McEneny, D-Albany, state Sen. Neil Breslin, D-Delmar and Supervisor Ken Runion about stopping the flyover. They are all, he said, keeping an eye on the authority's plans.

"It does appear that the barrier concept should be the preferred concept," Reeb said.

Mainline barriers are not

actually barriers to the highway but structures bridging the highway that read high-speed EZ Pass. According to the report, the flyover would be built to accommodate high-speed EZ pass lanes that connect the Thruway to the Northway.

Reeb said he thinks the mainline barriers without the flyover should be the preferred solution.

"The flyover doesn't need to be over Western Avenue ... If they do decide to have it, they can move it," he added.

The report also lists five feasible concepts for Exit 25, ranging in price from \$25 to \$37 million.

Four of the concepts would split the current toll plaza into two separate toll plazas.

Those plans also include different ways to change the Curry Road exit, among them creating a partial diamond interchange or partial cloverleaf at Curry Road.

Other concepts propose relocating I-890 ramps or the Carman Road ramp to the toll plaza.

The fifth concept would not split the toll plaza but merely extend it; this concept would also relocate the Curry Road ramps with a partial clover leaf to maintain the existing access between I-890 and Curry Road.