

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

John K. Mladinov  
Commissioner

Donald N. Geoffroy  
Region I Director

COMBINED CORRIDOR-DESIGN  
PUBLIC HEARING

**THRUWAY EXIT 24**  
**INTERSTATE ROUTES 87 & 90**  
**ALBANY COUNTY**

P. I. N. 1528.30

RAMADA INN OF ALBANY  
1228 WESTERN AVENUE  
ALBANY, NEW YORK  
MARCH 15, 1983 - 7:30 PM



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

**PURPOSE OF THE HEARING**

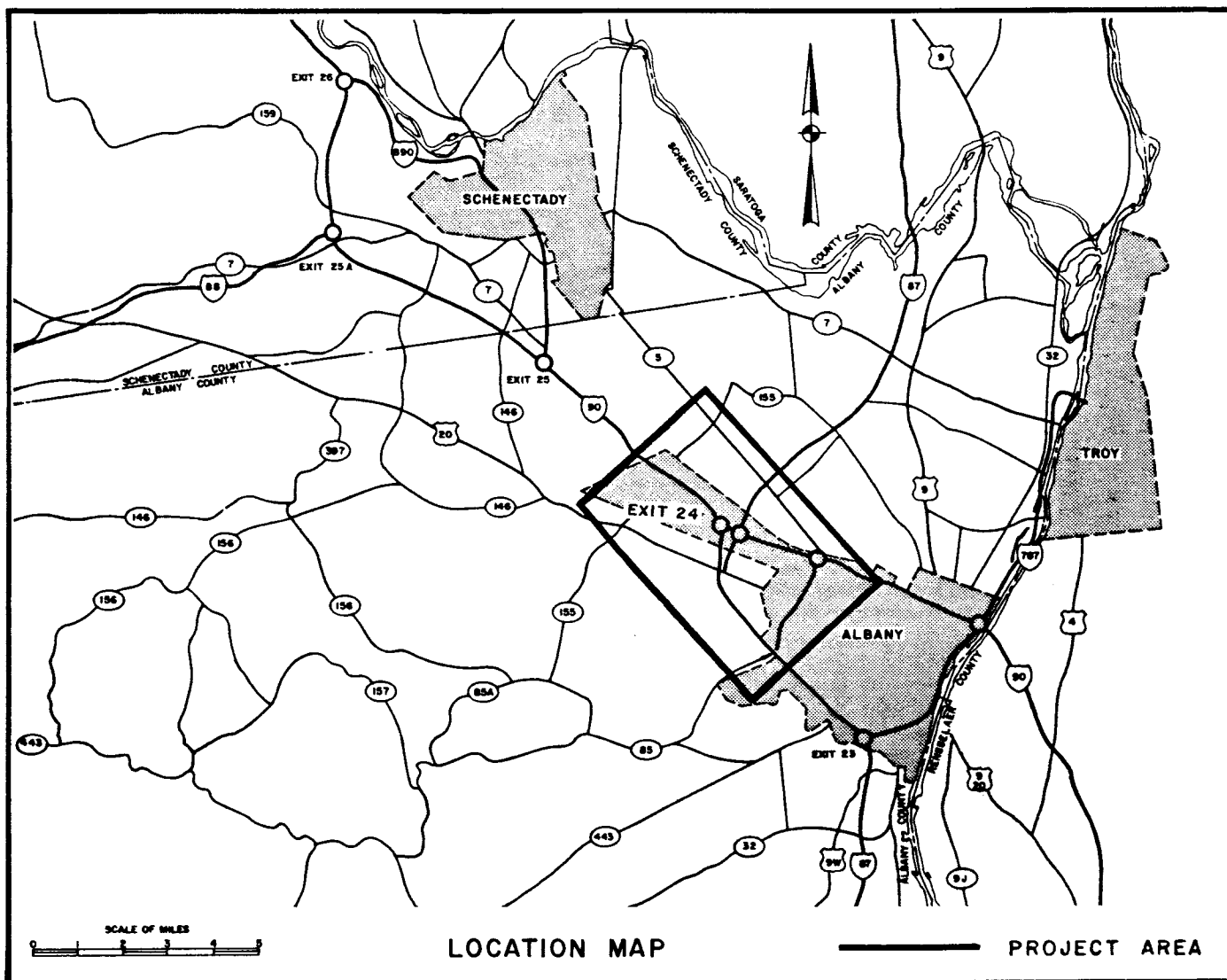
The purpose of this hearing is to provide an opportunity for interested individuals to become acquainted with and express comments on the NYSDOT proposal to reconstruct the Thruway Exit 24/I-87/I-90 Interchange Complex.

All comments and recommendations made at this public hearing will receive consideration and will be used to develop the Department's recommendation on design. Written statements may be introduced for the record at the hearing or they may be filed by March 29, 1983 with:

Mr. Donald N. Geoffroy  
Region I Director  
NYS Department of Transportation  
84 Holland Avenue  
Albany, New York 12208

**HEARING AGENDA**

- Opening Comments
- Purpose of the Hearing and Legal Notice
- Project Background
- Presentation of Alternatives
- Environmental Considerations
- Real Estate Procedures
- Oral Statements and Written Comments
- Summary



## PROJECT LOCATION AND IDENTIFICATION

The proposed project is located at the interchange of Thruway Exit 24 with Interstate Routes 87 and 90 in Albany County. This interchange complex is centrally located with respect to the cities of Albany, Schenectady and Troy within the Capital District, and serves as the major junction of interregional travel between Canada on the north, New York City on the south, Buffalo and points further west and Boston to the east.

Specifically, the project area is bounded by New York Route 5 (Central Avenue) on the north, I-90 Exit 5 on the east, the Thruway south of U.S. Route 20 (Western Avenue) on the south and New York Route 155 (Karner Road) on the west. These

boundaries represent highway facilities that generally enclose the Thruway Exit 24/I-87/I-90 interchange area. The geographical area included within these boundaries lies within the City of Albany, the Town of Colonie, portions of the Town of Guilderland and the Village of Colonie.

Major area features located in close proximity to the Interstate or other major arterial elements include the State University of New York at Albany campus, the New York State Office Building Campus, Rensselaer Lake, Northway Mall, Stuyvesant Plaza, Executive Park and the proposed Crossgates site.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Thruway Exit 24/I-87/I-90 interchange complex has long been identified as a major transportation problem area. Exit 24 ramp capacity deficiencies during both the weekday and weekend peak hour periods; weekend toll plaza capacity deficiencies and resultant travel time delay; a high accident rating for the toll plaza; and a substandard toll plaza length and interchange configuration all contribute to the existing transportation problems at this location.

Major problems identified within the I-87/I-90 Exit 1 interchange include high levels of congestion during the weekday A.M. peak hour for the I-87 southbound to I-90 eastbound movement, and during the P.M. peak hour for the I-90 westbound to I-87 northbound movement, both with attendant overall travel time delay; a high incidence of accidents for portions of both of these travel movements on a daily basis; and substandard I-90 mainline curvature.

All of these findings are undesirable for traffic movements interchanging within a major junction of two Interstate highways. The connection of Interstate Route 88 to the NYS Thruway at Exit 25A in May 1982 compounded this situation by placing an additional traffic burden on the Thruway section extending from Exit 25A to Exit 24, as well as on the Exit 24/I-87/I-90 interchange complex. Thus the already present level of congestion will be further aggravated during peak periods.

The existing transportation problems and the future increase in travel and resultant problems anticipated on these facilities have been thoroughly documented in a number of studies and investigations dating back to 1975.

The I-88 connection to the Thruway at Exit 25A was thoroughly studied by the Department in 1975-76. The results of these investigations indicated the need for additional lanes on the Thruway and improvements at Thruway Exit 24.

Transportation deficiencies along I-90 between the I-87/I-90 Exit 1 and I-90 Exit 4 interchanges have also been the

subject of Department studies, particularly after the deletion of the proposed Interstate Route 687/Route 85 Extension project from the Capital District Regional Transportation Plan in 1973. The result of these investigations was the recommendation of an additional travel lane in both the eastbound and westbound directions on I-90 in 1974.

It was recognized during the development of alternatives for the additional lanes on I-90 that those improvements would need to be coordinated with other improvements to be developed for the I-87/I-90 Exit 1 interchange area. Accordingly, it was recommended to provide an additional travel lane in the westbound direction only at that time (1976). This lane was subsequently approved and constructed during 1977-78. It was decided to defer construction in the eastbound direction, since its probable configuration and location would likely be an important later consideration for those alternatives to be developed and progressed for the I-87/I-90 Exit 1 interchange.

Further study of the specific problems with traffic operations at the junction of I-87 and I-90 took place in 1978, after a series of truck accidents on the ramp from I-90 westbound to I-87 northbound. The Department's decision at that time was that safety improvements to the ramp at issue would suffice. This was based partially upon the Federal recommendation to conduct a planning study to determine the needed ramp improvements which would be compatible with the overall interchange reconstruction. This same philosophy was used when the decision was made to delay the construction of the previously discussed additional I-90 eastbound lane. Major improvements would then wait until Federal Funds for the study and reconstruction could be made available. That decision has been proven sound by the restrained fiscal climate since that time, the subsequent reduced accident experience on the ramp, and the approval of Federal legislation in November 1978 which provided funding for the planning study and the project.

Subsequent to funding availability, the

Thruway Access Study was initiated in March 1980. An early outgrowth of the study was the preparation of contract plans, specifications and estimates for constructing an additional travel lane in both the eastbound and westbound directions on the Thruway between Exits 25A and 24 during the summer of 1981. This contract was subsequently advertised, bid and awarded, with construction completed in the Fall of 1982.

An assessment of the additional transportation needs at the Thruway Exit 24/I-87/I-90 interchange area was included in the Project Development Report prepared for the Thruway Access Study and issued by the NYSDOT Region One Planning and Development group in 1982. The Report detailed an incremental approach in the development of alternative transportation solutions.

Specifically the development of alternative solutions for this project began with an assessment of a continuation of existing conditions at the Thruway/I-87/I-90 interchange complex, the no-build alternative. Measures to reduce vehicular demand; such as express bus service, park and ride service, high occupancy vehicle lanes and staggered work hours were evaluated next. This was then followed, in order, by examination of alter-

native improvements that would change the capacity of specific elements of the existing interchange complex, evaluation of making improvements at other locations, and finally, by the development of major new construction alternatives to the existing interchange complex.

This development process resulted in the finding that more than implementation of measures to reduce vehicular demand, capacity improvements to specific interchange elements and/or improvements at other locations such as Thruway Exit 23 will be required. Therefore, a series of four major new construction alternatives were recommended in the Project Development Report for more detailed development in preliminary design.

The four design alternatives resulting from this process were detailed and evaluated in terms of their alignment, traffic service provided, costs and other engineering considerations. Also, each alternative was assessed with respect to potential social, economic and environmental impacts. The results of these activities were presented in the Design Report/Environmental Assessment and Draft 4(f) Evaluation issued by the Department in February 1983. The four alternatives under consideration, designated as Alternatives 1, 2, 3 and 4, will be presented at this hearing.

## DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

### The No-Build Alternative

The "no-build" alternative is included to evaluate and compare each respective construction alternative against. Although this alternative does not solve the identified transportation needs within the Thruway Exit 24/I-87/I-90 interchange complex, it will be used to compare the magnitude and degree of benefits/impacts to be derived by construction of any one of the "build" alternatives. The recommended design alternative should provide measurable benefits that significantly outweigh any potential social, economic or environmental impacts.

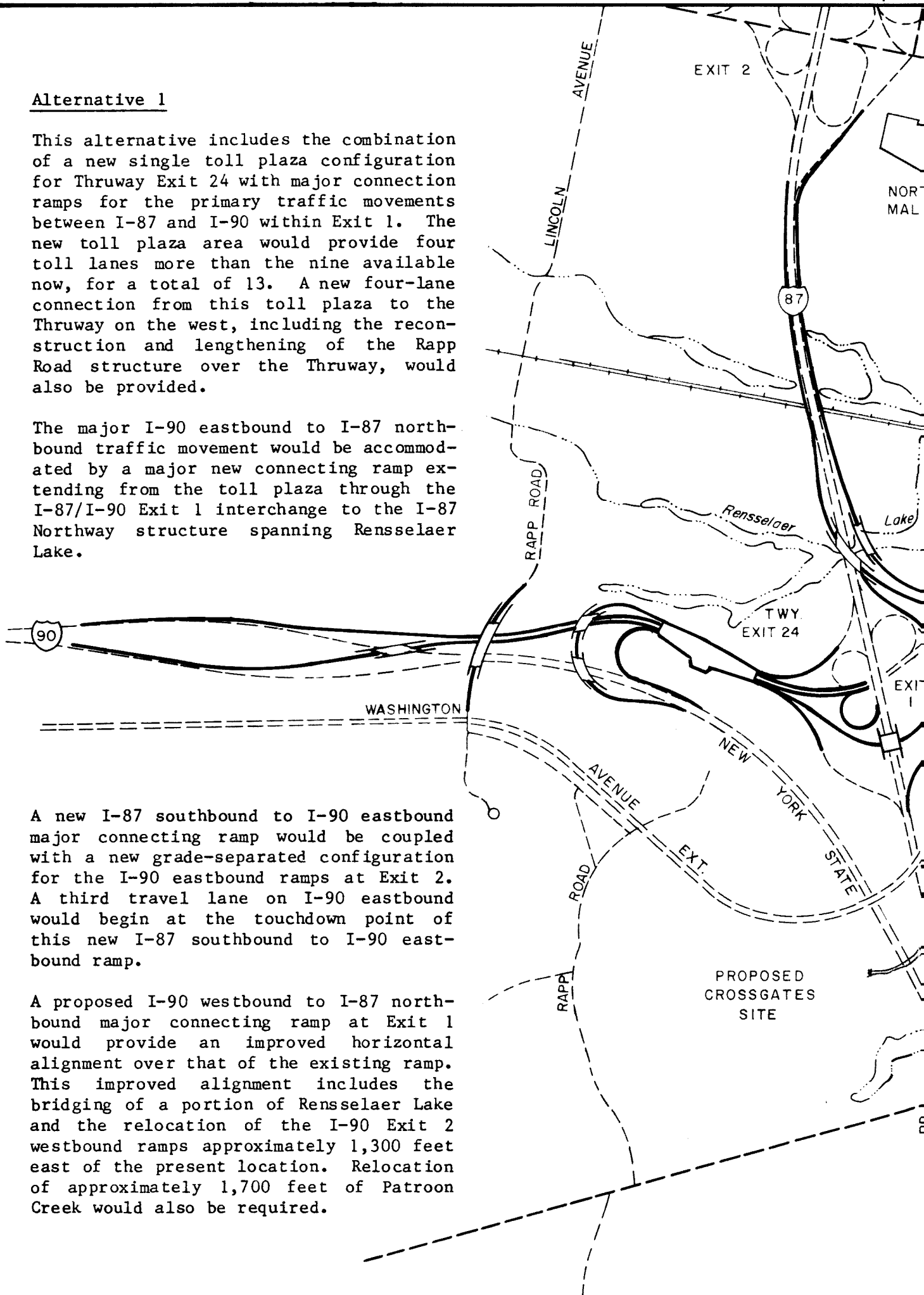
### Alternative 1

This alternative includes the combination of a new single toll plaza configuration for Thruway Exit 24 with major connection ramps for the primary traffic movements between I-87 and I-90 within Exit 1. The new toll plaza area would provide four toll lanes more than the nine available now, for a total of 13. A new four-lane connection from this toll plaza to the Thruway on the west, including the reconstruction and lengthening of the Rapp Road structure over the Thruway, would also be provided.

The major I-90 eastbound to I-87 northbound traffic movement would be accommodated by a major new connecting ramp extending from the toll plaza through the I-87/I-90 Exit 1 interchange to the I-87 Northway structure spanning Rensselaer Lake.

A new I-87 southbound to I-90 eastbound major connecting ramp would be coupled with a new grade-separated configuration for the I-90 eastbound ramps at Exit 2. A third travel lane on I-90 eastbound would begin at the touchdown point of this new I-87 southbound to I-90 eastbound ramp.

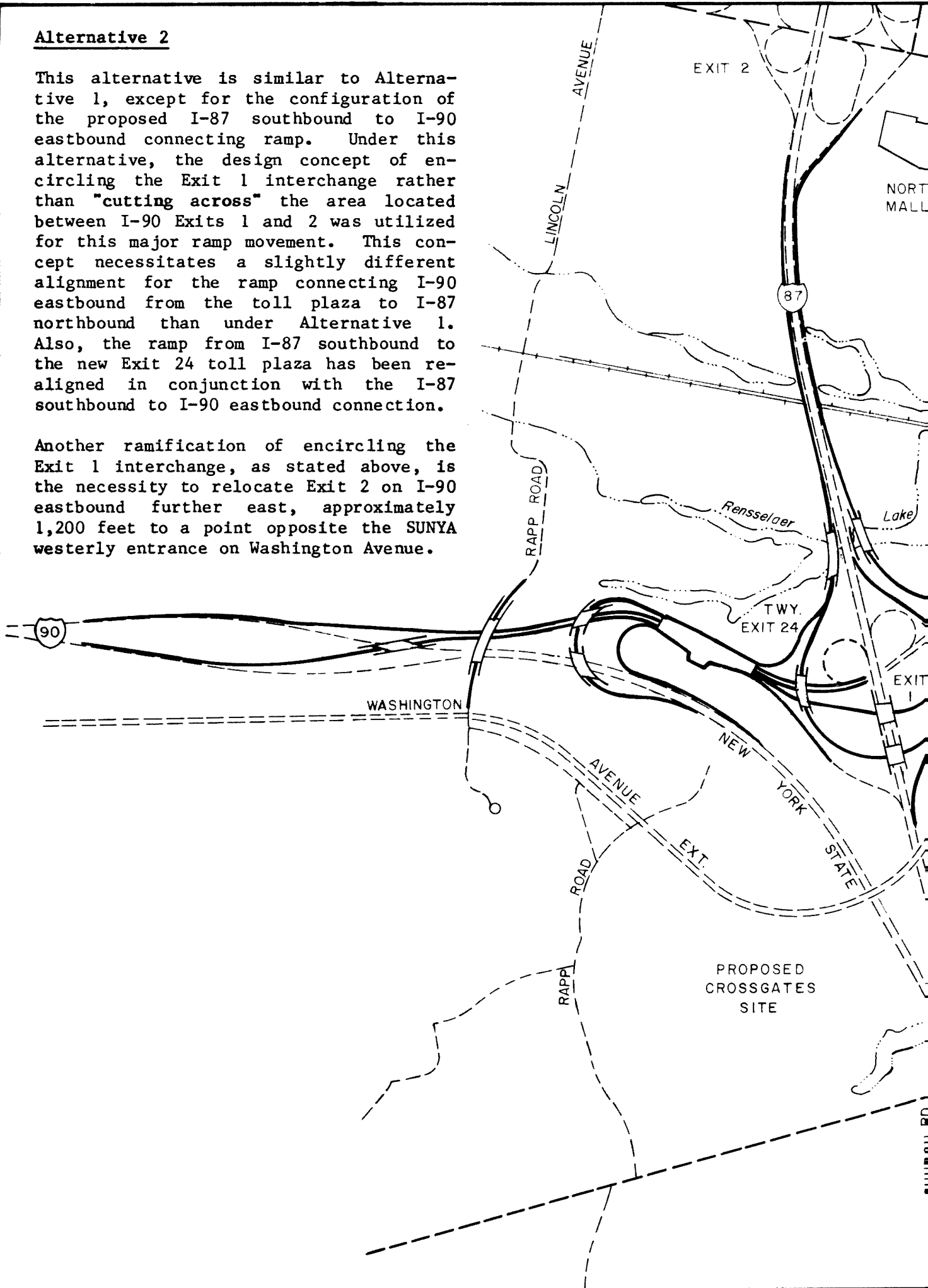
A proposed I-90 westbound to I-87 northbound major connecting ramp at Exit 1 would provide an improved horizontal alignment over that of the existing ramp. This improved alignment includes the bridging of a portion of Rensselaer Lake and the relocation of the I-90 Exit 2 westbound ramps approximately 1,300 feet east of the present location. Relocation of approximately 1,700 feet of Patroon Creek would also be required.



## Alternative 2

This alternative is similar to Alternative 1, except for the configuration of the proposed I-87 southbound to I-90 eastbound connecting ramp. Under this alternative, the design concept of encircling the Exit 1 interchange rather than "cutting across" the area located between I-90 Exits 1 and 2 was utilized for this major ramp movement. This concept necessitates a slightly different alignment for the ramp connecting I-90 eastbound from the toll plaza to I-87 northbound than under Alternative 1. Also, the ramp from I-87 southbound to the new Exit 24 toll plaza has been realigned in conjunction with the I-87 southbound to I-90 eastbound connection.

Another ramification of encircling the Exit 1 interchange, as stated above, is the necessity to relocate Exit 2 on I-90 eastbound further east, approximately 1,200 feet to a point opposite the SUNYA westerly entrance on Washington Avenue.



### Alternative 3

This alternative is the first of the two "split interchange" alternatives, under which separate east/west and north/south toll plazas are provided in place of the present Exit 24 toll plaza. Both of these new toll plazas would consist of eight toll lanes with the east/west plaza located in generally the same area as the single plaza included in Alternatives 1 and 2, and the north/south plaza located on the Fuller Road Alternate, north of Western Avenue. The present Fuller Road Alternate would be reconstructed as north and southbound frontage roads around this north/south plaza, tying-in to the I-87 mainline south of the Washington Avenue Extension overpass.

Within the I-87/I-90 Exit 1 interchange, the existing loop ramp from I-90 eastbound to I-87 northbound would be retained, but the loop ramp handling the I-90 westbound to Fuller Road Alternate southbound traffic would be reconstructed to a radius of 250 feet to bring this connection above minimum design standards.

Improvements to the remainder of this interchange, to I-87 between Exit 1 and Exit 2, and to I-90 between Exit 1 and Exit 5, are essentially the same as those included in Alternative 1.

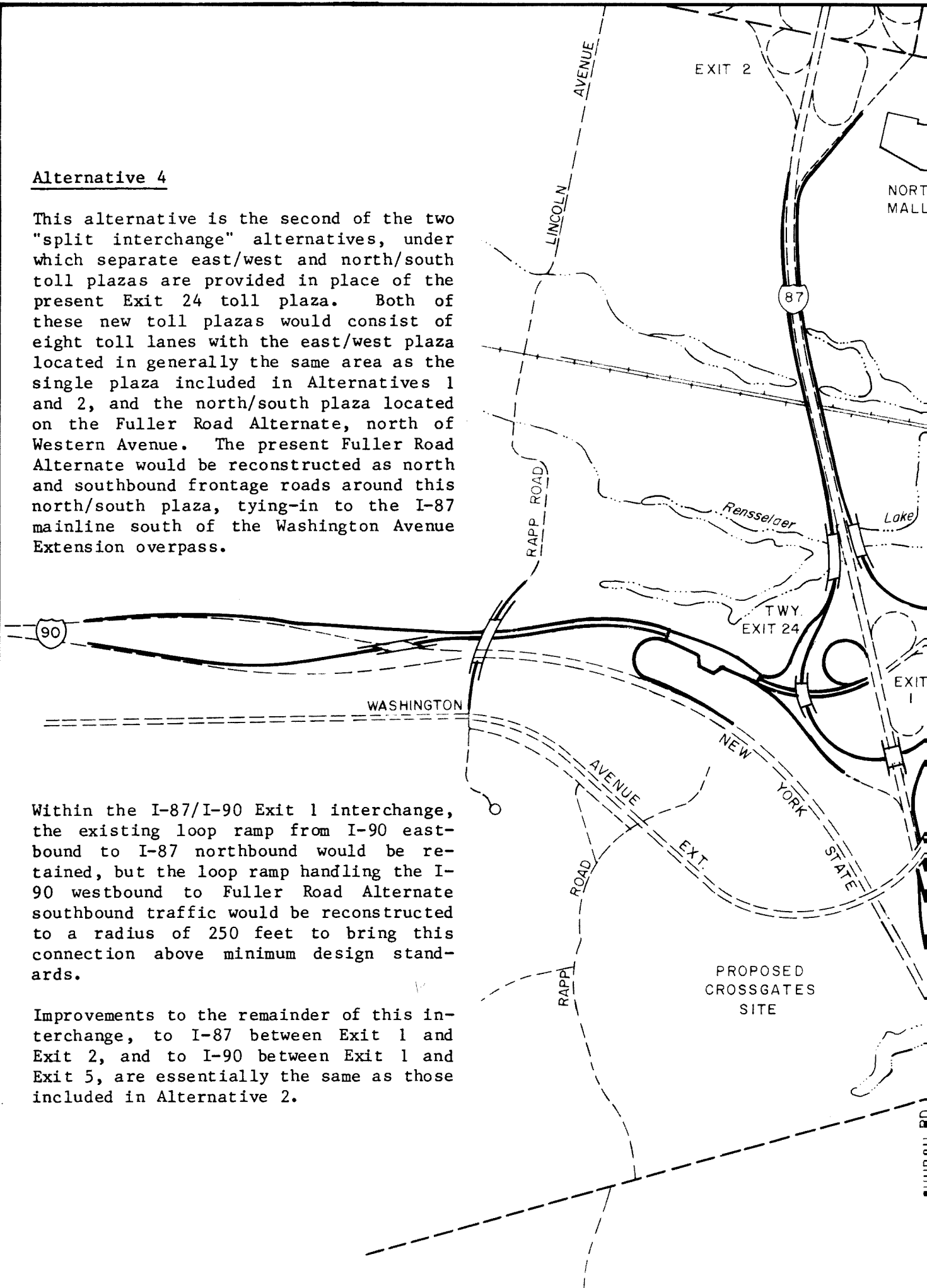


#### Alternative 4

This alternative is the second of the two "split interchange" alternatives, under which separate east/west and north/south toll plazas are provided in place of the present Exit 24 toll plaza. Both of these new toll plazas would consist of eight toll lanes with the east/west plaza located in generally the same area as the single plaza included in Alternatives 1 and 2, and the north/south plaza located on the Fuller Road Alternate, north of Western Avenue. The present Fuller Road Alternate would be reconstructed as north and southbound frontage roads around this north/south plaza, tying-in to the I-87 mainline south of the Washington Avenue Extension overpass.

Within the I-87/I-90 Exit 1 interchange, the existing loop ramp from I-90 eastbound to I-87 northbound would be retained, but the loop ramp handling the I-90 westbound to Fuller Road Alternate southbound traffic would be reconstructed to a radius of 250 feet to bring this connection above minimum design standards.

Improvements to the remainder of this interchange, to I-87 between Exit 1 and Exit 2, and to I-90 between Exit 1 and Exit 5, are essentially the same as those included in Alternative 2.





# COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

ENGINEERING CONSIDERATIONS	ALTERNATIVES					
	No-Build	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	
Improved Geometrics of Major Movement Ramps	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Substandard Curvature	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Improved Toll Plaza Configuration	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Improved Traffic Flow and Safety	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acceptable Level of Service	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stream Relocations	0	1	1	1	1	1
Total Additional Yearly Maintenance Costs	-	\$199,000.	\$147,000.	\$172,000.	\$121,000.	
Toll Plaza Yearly Operating Costs	\$620,000.	\$743,000.	\$743,000.	\$993,000.	\$993,000.	
Right-of-Way Required (Acres)	0	78	65	77	59	
Construction Cost (1981 Dollars)	0	\$46.4 Million	\$37.7 Million	\$49.7 Million	\$41.4 Million	

## SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Consistency w/Regional Transportation Plan	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Influence on Community Cohesion	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change	No Change
Displacement of People and Businesses	0	1	1	1	1	1
Estimated Loss in Tax Revenue	0	\$1,116.	\$1,156.	\$2,543.	\$2,583.	
Impact on Air Quality	None*	None*	None*	None*	None*	
Impact on Noise Levels	None	None	None	None	None	
Impact on Water Quality	No Change	None*	None*	None*	None*	
Chloride Levels	No Change	Slight Incr.*	Slight Incr.*	Slight Incr.*	Slight Incr.*	Slight Incr.*
Energy Consumption (1)	751	675	680	666	675	
Impact on Wetlands (Acres)	0	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	
Impact on Fish and Wildlife	No Change	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	
Impact on Rens. Lake Rec. Area (Acres) (2)	0	32.3	31.5	33.1	24.6	
Impact on Cultural Resources	None	None	None	None	None	
Vehicle Miles per Day (3)	289,900	228,400	232,800	216,500	220,800	
User Costs (@ \$0.22/Vehicle Mile/Year)	\$23.3 Million	\$18.3 Million	\$18.7 Million	\$17.4 Million	\$17.7 Million	

\* Within Standards.

- (1) In equivalent barrels of crude oil per day.
- (2) Total acreage of Rensselaer Lake is 188.2 acres.
- (3) Vehicle miles on a total alternative basis.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

Statements contained in the Hearing Record will be analyzed and evaluated and a summary submitted to the Federal Highway Administration. Based on all studies and inputs during the project life, NYSDOT will select and recommend to the Federal Highway Administration one of the Design Alternatives for their concurrence and further development. The Federal Highway Administration's approval will signal the start of the detailed design activities for the preparation of construction plans, specifications, and estimates. It is estimated that Design Approval will occur in the summer of 1983 and that construction could begin as early as the spring of 1984.

## THE STATE-FEDERAL RELATIONSHIP IN THE FEDERAL-AID PROGRAM

The United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration is the principal highway agency of the federal government and administers the Federal-Aid Highway Program.

The improvements to Interstate and other federal-aid highways are financed from the proceeds of federal motor fuel, road user and other excise taxes deposited in the Federal Highway Trust Fund. Allotments for Interstate routes are based on the relative estimated costs to complete the system. Other routes are funded through allotments made to each state in accordance with formulae that give weight to population, area, and postal route mileage.

In the use of federal-aid for highway construction, the states determine the system to be improved and the projects to be built. The states are responsible for the planning, design, and construction of the facilities. When completed, the highways remain under the administrative control of the states, which are then responsible for their operation and maintenance. At appropriate stages, the states consult with regional and local agencies and officials.

Similarly, at specified steps the states must consult with and obtain the approval of the Federal Highway Administration. Federal-aid procedures provide for public hearing opportunities.

In New York State the Department of

Transportation is responsible for highway development in accordance with State legislation. Funds utilized in highway development come from two sources: the State and Federal governments. In most cases, for projects located on the Federal-Aid Highway System joint funds are provided by the State and Federal governments. Some projects are financed entirely by State funds, especially when the State's transportation development program is significantly larger than that supported by available federal-aid funds.

Not only is the Department concerned with meeting Federal and State regulations, but it also carries out a program of continuing coordination with County, Town, and Village officials as well as with interested Federal agencies, State resources, recreation and planning agencies, local public advisory and civic groups, and interested citizens. Federal regulations require that all projects involving the use of Federal funds must be formally reviewed by State and Areawide Clearinghouses - the former being the New York State Planning and Development Clearing House and the latter the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, the officially designated regional planning agency. The purpose of this review is to ensure that all viewpoints - national, state, regional, and local - are, to the maximum extent possible, taken into account in planning projects and that the project itself is consistent with and furthers the objectives of comprehensive state, regional and local planning.