AIM FOR THE SKY: Competition to Re-Imagine the Skyway Corridor
Buffalo Waterfront, Buffalo, New York

Questions/Responses Submitted through June 4, 2019

Q: Over the years I have heard that the Skyway was raised to its current height over the Buffalo River, so ships could pass under on trips upstream on the river. But I also have heard that it is higher than necessary for today's needs. If we were to propose a river crossing, would it be possible to use some of the vertical space beneath the spans over the river? If so how much of a height reduction would be acceptable?

A: The shipping channel of the Buffalo River is controlled under federal regulations and requires a clearance of 100 feet to the underside of any portion of a fixed bridge passing over that channel. A similar federal clearance requirement is in place at the Black Rock channel, where it passes under the Peace Bridge (where the Parker Truss is located). At one time, a similar federal requirement was also in place over the Union Ship Canal (which provided industrial shipping access to the Donner Hanna Coke plant), requiring the former high-level Father Baker Bridge that once spanned that canal. After the closure of Donner Hanna Coke, when the Father Baker Bridge was in need of reconstruction, local officials sought to remove that Union Ship Canal from federal controls, given at the time it was unlikely that a similar use requiring shipping clearance would be located along that canal. This "delisting" required a formal Act of the U.S. Congress.

Although the annual level of industrial-scale shipping activity along the Buffalo River has lessened, the 100-foot clearance requirement for fixed bridges is still in place and continues to serve the albeit limited number of vessels that do indeed enter the Inner Harbor. Thus, it is not a question of what would be acceptable, but rather the fact of the placement of a fixed span with less than 100-foot clearance would require a two-to-three-year process to achieve an Act of Congress and would likely involve other implications.

Nevertheless, a movable bridge (e.g., lift, bascule, etc.) with a lower clearance might be achievable, and such a span might be able to use some of the vertical space under the Skyway. In fact, some of the previously-considered alternatives for a movable "Buffalo Harbor Bridge" to connect downtown Buffalo to the Outer Harbor were designed to pass under the Skyway. But this too would have other implications with regard to shipping and traffic access.

Q: Can responses consider solutions that are outside the "project area" as defined in the Request for Submissions?

A: Yes, provided they ultimately relate to the re-visioning of the Corridor. As merely an untested example, a team could suggest that Skyway traffic capacity could be accommodated through a broad intelligent transportation systems (ITS) approach that might attempt to maximize capacity along all city streets leading to the downtown area (e.g., say, through real-time traffic signal timing adjustments).

Q: Is there base map information available for the project area?

A: ESD-provided base mapping of the corridor is not available, however potential respondents may elect to access online base map resources available in .DXF (Drawing Exchange) format (which may be imported into AutoCAD, Rhinoceros, SketchUp or Adobe Illustrator graphic programs), at websites such as at www.cadmapper.com. Please note that ESD does not guarantee the accuracy of such online base mapping resources.

Q: Are there section or structural drawings available for the Buffalo Skyway?

A: Unfortunately, as a result of the events of September 11, 2001, the NYS Department of Transportation does not make such drawings available for general distribution.

Q: Is the Competition open only to for American-based entities?

A: The Competition is open to entities outside the United States, but the submittals must be in English.

Q: Will having team members, on the transportation end, who currently do work with or for the NYS Department of Transportation present any potential conflicts?

A: Respondents to the Request for Submissions would in no way be disqualified by having any current or past work with the NYS Department of Transportation.

Q: Going through the shapefile meta data related to the Greater Buffalo Niagara Transportation Council (GBNRTC) regional traffic model runs that were made available via email and have a question about the fields. What are the "AB_ and BA_" fields refer to?

A: GBNRTC's TransCAD model assigns traffic volumes to each link in the network as an "AB" or "BA" volume. The AB and BA refer to the direction of that volume (eastbound, westbound, etc.). To understand which direction the AB and BA fields represent, as it differs by link, the shapefiles provided should be viewed in a GIS software such as ESRI's ArcMap. For your convenience, these directional peak period volumes have also been provided in Acrobat (.pdf) format (see the Skyway Competition Website under "Project Resources," and listed as "Skyway Scenarios Transportation Demand Model Output").

For further clarification, all of the fields in the shapefile represent the following:

Field Name	**Description**
ID	Link ID in GBNRTC's model
Length	The length of the link (in miles)
Dir	Expressed as 0 or 1, where 0 is two-way and 1 is one-way
ST_NAME	Name of the street
AB_AM_Demand	Modeled AM Peak Period Traffic Volume in the "AB" direction

Field Name	Description
BA_AM_Demand	Modeled AM Peak Period Traffic Volume in the "BA" direction
AB_PM_Demand	Modeled PM Peak Period Traffic Volume in the "AB" direction
BA_PM_Demand	Modeled PM Peak Period Traffic Volume in the "BA" direction
AB_Daily_Demand	Modeled Daily Traffic Volume in the "AB" direction
BA_Daily_Demand	Modeled Daily Traffic Volume in the "BA" direction
AB_AM_Pcnt_Diff	The percent change in AM Peak Period volume between the base condition and the scenario, in the "AB" direction
BA_AM_Pcnt_Diff	The percent change in AM Peak Period volume between the base condition and the scenario, in the "BA" direction
AB_PM_Pcnt_Diff	The percent change in PM Peak Period volume between the base condition and the scenario, in the "AB" direction
BA_PM_Pcnt_Diff	The percent change in PM Peak Period volume between the base condition and the scenario, in the "BA" direction
AB_Daily_Pcnt_Diff	The percent change in daily volume between the base condition and the scenario, in the "AB" direction
BA_Daily_Pcnt_Diff	The percent change in daily volume between the base condition and the scenario, in the "BA" direction