



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

REGION 2

290 BROADWAY

NEW YORK, NY 10007-1866

FEB 17 2008

Robert H. Curtis, P.E.  
Regional Design Engineer  
NYS Department of Transportation, Region 7  
317 Washington Street  
Watertown, NY 13601

Re: P.I.N. 7804.26 Fort Drum Connector Route (I-81 to Fort Drum North Gate)  
Towns of Pamela and Le Ray, Jefferson County, New York

Dear Mr. Curtis:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the final Design Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DR/EIS) (CEQ # 20090003) for the Fort Drum Connector Route (I-81 to Fort Drum North Gate) in the Towns of Pamela and Le Ray, Jefferson County, New York pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The Purpose and Need for the Fort Drum Connector Route Project is threefold: to enhance the strategic viability of Fort Drum; to address increased and anticipated traffic volumes; and to address safety concerns. The Federal Highway Administration and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), in addition to a No-Build or "Null" Alternative, considered three feasible alternatives: the Northern Alternative (NC4): a 4.3 mile four-lane, interstate style, divided highway on new alignment; the Middle Alternative (MC9): a 4.9 mile four-lane divided highway with a combination of state type facilities and interstate type facilities; and the Southern Alternative (SC6): a 5.8 mile four-lane, interstate style, divided highway on new alignment. The Northern Alternative (NC4) is the alternative being recommended.

In our July 2, 2007 comment letter on the draft EIS, EPA indicated environmental concerns and insufficient information. The draft EIS had not sufficiently identified, in accordance with Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines of the Clean Water Act, why the Southern Alternative, which had the least amount of wetland impact, was not being selected. The final EIS is responsive to our concerns and adequately presents a case explaining the preference of the Northern Alternative (NC4) over the other alternatives identified.

EPA would like to take this opportunity to encourage NYSDOT to undertake voluntary initiatives to use clean diesel and other measures to effectively reduce air pollution emissions during construction and operation of its facilities. In addition, the use of coal combustion products and recycled industrial materials in lieu of new materials, such as Portland cement, provides benefits by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, solid waste



disposal needs and energy use. Additional information on industrial material recycling can be found at [www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/imr](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/imr).

If you have any questions, please contact Charles Harewood, of our Environmental review section, at 212-637-3753 or at [harewood.charles@epa.gov](mailto:harewood.charles@epa.gov).

Sincerely yours,

John Filippelli, Chief  
Strategic Planning and Multi-Media Programs Branch

cc: L. Gosselin (NYSDOT)  
E. Reape (NYSDOT)  
R. Griffith (FHWA)