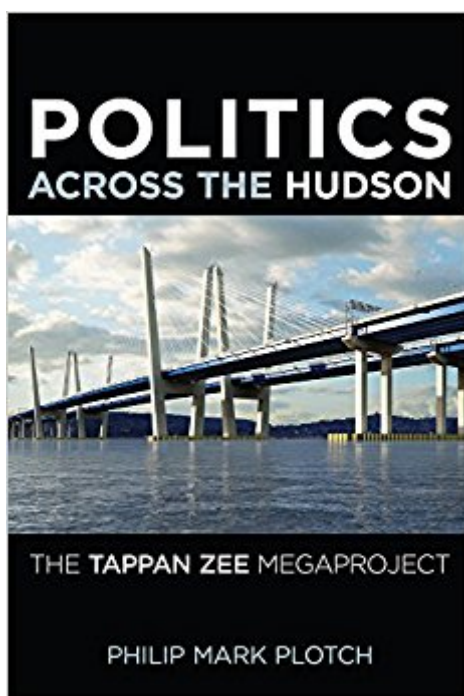


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Politics Across The Hudson: The Tappan Zee Megaproject (Rivergate Regionals Collection)



Synopsis

The State of New York is now building one of the world's longest, widest, and most expensive bridges—the new Tappan Zee Bridge—stretching more than three miles across the Hudson River, approximately thirteen miles north of New York City. In *Politics Across the Hudson*, urban planner Philip Plotch offers a behind-the-scenes look at three decades of contentious planning and politics centered around this bridge, recently renamed for Governor Mario M. Cuomo, the state's governor from 1983 to 1994. He reveals valuable lessons for those trying to tackle complex public policies while also confirming our worst fears about government dysfunction. Drawing on his extensive experience planning megaprojects, interviews with more than a hundred key figures—including governors, agency heads, engineers, civic advocates, and business leaders—and extraordinary access to internal government records, Plotch tells a compelling story of high-stakes battles between powerful players in the public, private, and civic sectors. He reveals how state officials abandoned viable options, squandered hundreds of millions of dollars, forfeited more than three billion dollars in federal funds, and missed out on important opportunities. Faced with the public's unrealistic expectations, no one could identify a practical solution to a vexing problem, a dilemma that led three governors to study various alternatives rather than disappoint key constituencies. *Politics Across the Hudson* continues where Robert Caro's *The Power Broker* left off and illuminates the power struggles involved in building New York's first major new bridge since the Robert Moses era. Plotch describes how one governor, Andrew Cuomo, shrewdly overcame the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of onerous environmental regulations, vehement community opposition, insufficient funding, interagency battles, and overly optimistic expectations.

Book Information

Series: Rivergate Regionals Collection

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (August 3, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0813572495

ISBN-13: 978-0813572499

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 0.9 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #425,798 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Bridges #72 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Regional Planning #114 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > United States > Local

Customer Reviews

"We spend years in traffic yet know little of the brew of politics, bureaucracy, interests, and ideals keeping us there. Planner and political scientist Plotch examines this principle through one transportation planning debacle: the three-decade struggle to refurbish or replace the Tappan Zee Bridge across the Hudson River north of New York City ... Anyone concerned about the place of large infrastructure projects in the modern U.S. should consider this sobering case study."

(Publisher's Weekly)"Philip Plotch's political history about the replacement of New York's Tappan Zee Bridge should be on the bookshelf of planners and other practitioners, elected officials, community members, and students engaged in or entering megaproject and urban politics debates ... Plotch skillfully tells the painful story of this bridge's evolution through a three-decade saga of conflict between elected officials, engineers, planners, environmentalists, and others who held divergent views about addressing traffic congestion in the corridor." (Journal of the American Planning Association)"Philip Plotch combines a terrific story with a relentless search for evidence and doses of humor to give us a first-rate portrayal of the political process at work. He recounts the efforts over several decades to replace the aging Tappan Zee Bridge. Through three decades of struggle and failed plans, three governors—George Pataki, Eliot Spitzer, and David Paterson—kept the project alive though often on a 'death watch.' Plotch reveals how Governor Andrew Cuomo picked up the torch, manipulated the facts where he thought it necessary, and overcame many obstacles to begin construction." (Jameson W. Doig author of Empire on the Hudson)"Plotch has tremendous insight into the challenges of building extraordinarily complex projects in difficult political and fiscal climates. His professional experience and probing questions have enabled him to help explain Planet Albany—a place where thought defies gravity." (David A. Paterson Governor of New York, 2008-2010)"The Tappan Zee Bridge has been a symbol of infrastructure inaction in the U.S. over the last several decades until now! New York State's Governor Cuomo has found the way to overcome the bickering among the many stakeholders and actually get to construction of the much needed replacement for this obsolescent and heavily used structure. How he did it, and how decades of issues stood in the way, are well told by Dr. Philip Plotch. This is a treatise for policy makers, planners, engineers,

community leaders. Plotch has brought to light the genius in how to get big things done. It should go on your shelf next to your copy of *Caro* (Robert E. Paaswell Distinguished Professor of Civil Engineering (City College of New York) and Director Emeritus) "Even with my lifelong interest in traffic congestion, I had much to learn from *Politics Across the Hudson*. What resonated most with me is the extremely lengthy process of conflicting viewpoints among the many agencies involved in our transportation systems. Nothing gets done fast." (Anthony Downs author of *Stuck in Traffic*) "Plotch's analytical skills are top-notch and his writing is incisive and succinct. He writes with a historian's attention to detail, a political scientist's interest in theory, and a public policy scholar's fascination with how the sausage is actually made." (Jeffrey Smith assistant professor of Politics and Advocacy, The New School, New York) Philip Plotch gives a brief history and sums up the future of the Tappan Zee Bridge project in this short video (<http://youtu.be/PltWbA1aBhI>) (for WNYC)

PHILIP MARK PLOTCH is an assistant professor of political science and director of the Masters in Public Administration program at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City. He is the former director of World Trade Center Redevelopment and Special Projects for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, and the former manager of planning for New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Interesting and well written story of the Tappan Zee saga. The author paints a realistic picture of moving a mega project forward in the face of many conflicting interests. The question of creating a project that serves the public good despite opposition and compromising on the original project goals to get it built is raised but not answered. It is a inside look at the modern world of public works project development. It is recommended to anyone who is interested in public policy and public works.

I wish it got more promotion. A required reading for students (of all ages) and more importantly - voters - everywhere.

Insightful analysis, reads like a mystery, with villains and heroes and red herrings. A good read for anyone who wants insight into how decisions are made about how our tax dollars are spent

Well-written and compelling account of the events leading up to the actual construction.

Politics Across the Hudson is an essential case study of why we can't seem to build infrastructure in the United States anymore. In following the story of the Tappan Zee bridge, now being replaced by fiat, after a decades-long planning process that failed to achieve minimal consensus on something better, Plotch turns a story of extraordinary complexity into a clear and richly-sourced account of planning and environmental politics in our time. The book is valuable as a clear exposition of how the arcane planning and environmental process actually happens: at the same time, it is a human tale of ego and deceit, as strong-willed individuals battle on behalf of the conflicting interests of their agencies and their own personal agendas. Plotch is clearly a talented interviewer, drawing forth the emotional as well as the public character of the key players. He is equally adept at drawing out the essential meaning of the best academic thinking, and concludes with some compelling and cautionary thoughts on what went wrong, and what it means for the future.

Excellent historical account of the decades-long study and re-study of different ways to improve transportation in the Tappan Zee/Cross Westchester Expressway corridor that led to the final decision to replace a 60-year-old, 3-mile-long bridge carrying the New York State Thruway across the Hudson River between Rockland and Westchester counties with two new spans at a cost of billions of dollars. Explore the politics behind the required technical work from the governor's office in Albany to county executives in the lower Hudson Valley. Understand how personality traits of some key players influenced decisions. Learn about complicated relationships among different federal and state government agencies, advocacy groups, the public, and elected officials. You may be surprised, but certainly you will come away with a better understanding of what it takes to undertake a complex public works project.

Politics Across the Hudson offers insight into the fascinating distinction between planning and politics, using the most concrete of examples. Phil Plotch provides a frank assessment of 30 years of starts and stops, disparate objectives, and limited leadership and draws the conclusions about what actually could have been done differently in the past and how to learn from it in the future. Part history, part text book, the book is accessible to all, regardless of background or point of view.

Philip Mark Plotch has written a magnificent treatise on the political intricacies surrounding a mega project. Because of his interest and desire for transit in the 287 corridor, Gov. Pataki married the Thruway, who needed a new bridge in the short term to stop the hemorrhaging of rehabilitation and

repair costs, with Metro North, who wanted a one seat ride on heavy rail from Midtown Manhattan to Stewart Airport anytime in the next 30 years. Three Governors later, Gov. Andrew Cuomo pulled the transit component out of the project (rightfully or not) and got the project moving to construction. This should be required reading for all public planners and engineers.

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