U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

May 26, 2017

Livingston Avenue Bridge Coalition
564 Myrtle Ave
Albany, NY 12208

**Re: Invitation to be a Section 106 Consulting Party
Livingston Avenue Bridge Replacement Project
Cities of Albany & Rensselaer, New York**

Dear Coalition Members,

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is writing to invite your organization to participate in consultation pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106) for the Livingston Avenue Bridge Replacement Project (Project) in the cities of Albany and Rensselaer, New York. A project location map and photos of the bridge are enclosed. The Project is proposed by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) in coordination with the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak).

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and FRA's NEPA procedures, FRA and NYSDOT are currently preparing an Environmental Assessment to evaluate the potential impacts of the Project on the human environment. FRA is coordinating the NEPA process with consultation pursuant to the Section 106 regulations (36 CFR Part 800). FRA is providing grant funding for preliminary engineering (PE) and environmental analyses; currently no funding has been identified to advance the Project through final design or construction.

The Project is located at Milepost QC 143.1 of the Empire Corridor and includes the Livingston Avenue Bridge that spans the Hudson River from the City of Albany to the City of Rensselaer. The Project boundary roughly extends 900 feet west of the west bridge abutment and 800 feet east of the east bridge abutment.

The Livingston Avenue Bridge was recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in 1999. The bridge was additionally recommended as eligible again in a June 2011 Cultural Resources Reconnaissance Survey performed by the New York State Museum. The bridge is a riveted steel, Baltimore (Swing) Truss measuring 1,272 feet long and 27.8 feet wide and is set on 18 cut limestone piers. It carries two sets of tracks, and consists of a 260-foot continuous truss swing span and four trusses that span the navigable portion of the river, and four plate girder spans that connect the bridge to the City of Rensselaer. The bridge was built by the American Bridge Company (Elmira, NY) for the New York Central Railroad in 1901-03. It is the third successive freight bridge at Livingston Avenue, preceded by an iron truss bridge erected in 1872-75, and the original wooden truss bridge erected in 1864-66.

As a result of the aforementioned Cultural Resources Reconnaissance Survey that identified both the archeology and architectural resources in and adjacent to the project area, the only historic property

expected to be directly affected by the proposed Project is the Livingston Avenue Bridge. The Project is expected to have no effect on archeology, and a no adverse effect on the Albany Railroad Viaduct.

The superstructure of the existing bridge is 112 years old and the substructure is approximately 147 years old, and the bridge is nearing the end of its serviceable life. The swing span frequently malfunctions, resulting in delays to passenger trains, freight trains, and maritime traffic. Because the existing bridge's live load capacity rating is less than half of the value that would be required to meet modern design standards, passenger and freight trains operating over the bridge are subject to loading and speed restrictions. Due to this reduced load rating, the two-track bridge can be used only by one train at a time and the maximum authorized speed is 15 miles per hour (mph), which is substantially slower than the 40 mph maximum authorized speed on adjacent rail segments. The bridge essentially acts as a single-track bridge, dramatically restricting capacity. The vertical clearance for trains traveling across the bridge is nonstandard (18 feet 2 inches, compared to the 23-foot vertical clearance standard established by the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA)).

Recent inspections have confirmed that the bridge has significant deterioration. The superstructure and substructure are in fair to poor condition. Several piers are in critical condition. The mechanical portions of the swing span are significantly worn. While all of the components remain operational, they require near constant maintenance to keep the bridge in a state of acceptable operation. The electrical portions of the bridge are outdated and obsolete. Substantial maintenance effort is required to keep the electrical components operable. Long-term reliability of the mechanical and electrical systems is a serious concern. The metalwork of the truss spans is in fair condition, with noted section losses and corrosion holes in the floor system. Heavy section losses were identified in the truss bottom chord lacing bars, batten plates, and lateral bracing connection plates. The metalwork of the swing span is in fair condition, with continued corrosion and section loss when compared to past inspections. The girder spans (which govern the bridge load rating) are in fair to poor condition. The exposed portions of the substructure units are in fair condition. Pier settlement has caused an elevation differential, and displaced stones have been noted. An underwater inspection revealed that the three swing-span piers are in critical condition, with significant undermining of the timber foundations and heavy rot of timber piles. The timber fender system is in very poor condition. Finally, the exposed surfaces of the unreinforced concrete abutments exhibit extensive spalling, map cracking, and efflorescence.

The proposed Project includes improving passenger rail operations, service reliability, and operational flexibility. It is intended to improve the load capacity of the corridor and address existing structural operational limitations, reduce delays, and minimize conflicts with navigational traffic. These goals will be achieved through improvements to the bridge to support simultaneous two-track operation, identifying and correcting track deficiencies to meet current standards, improving freight and passenger movement across the bridge, and providing a river crossing that meets or exceeds existing horizontal navigational clearances while providing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between Albany and Rensselaer.

FRA and NYSDOT have initiated consultation with SHPO, as required by the Section 106 regulations at 36 CFR 800.3(c), and are identifying additional consulting parties to participate in the Section 106 process. The Section 106 process involves identifying historic properties, assessing potential effects to those properties, and identifying possible ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects.

By way of this letter, FRA is inviting your agency or organization to be a consulting party in the Section 106 process pursuant to 36 CFR 800.3(f). As a consulting party you will be given an opportunity to share your views regarding project alternatives and the potential effects of those alternatives on historic properties; to receive, review, and comment on Section 106-related documents; and to offer and consider

possible solutions to resolve any adverse effects together with the FRA, NYSDOT, SHPO, and other consulting parties.

If your agency or organization accepts this invitation to be a consulting party, FRA requests that you provide the name and contact information of your designated representative. To accept this invitation, please reply in writing with the aforementioned information within 30 calendar days of your receipt of this letter as follows:

Mailing Address: Brandon Bratcher
Environmental Protection Specialist
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration
Office of Railroad Policy and Development
Environmental & Corridor Planning Division (RPD-13)
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE (MS-20)
Washington, DC 20590

Or

Email: brandon.bratcher@dot.gov
*(Note: due to delays in receiving mail via the postal service, FRA encourages you to reply via email if possible)*

If you do not respond to this invitation, you may request consulting party status in the future; however, the Project will advance and you may not have an opportunity to comment on previous steps in the Section 106 process.

FRA appreciates your interest in the Livingston Avenue Bridge Project. If you have questions about the Project or would like to discuss the Section 106 process, please contact Brandon Bratcher, FRA Environmental Protection Specialist, at (202) 493-0844 or brandon.bratcher@dot.gov, or Mark Jakubiak, NYSDOT Project Manager, at (518) 485-9331 or mark.jakubiak@dot.ny.gov.

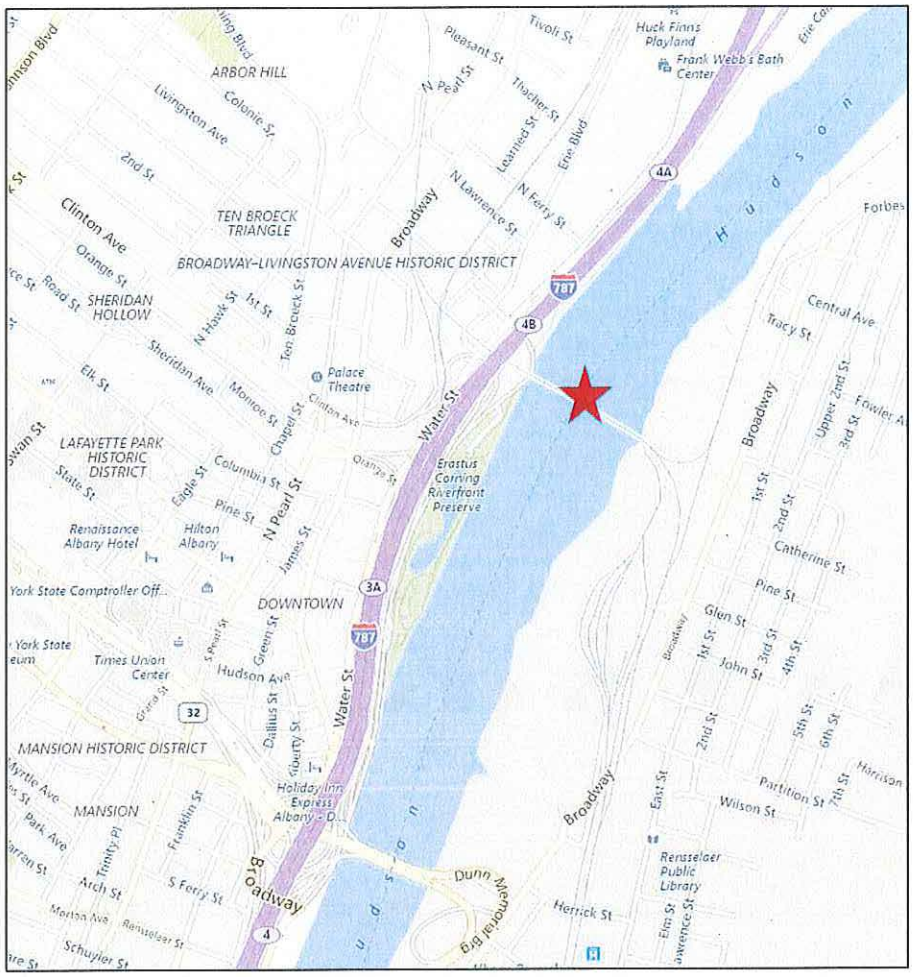
Sincerely,

Laura A. Shick

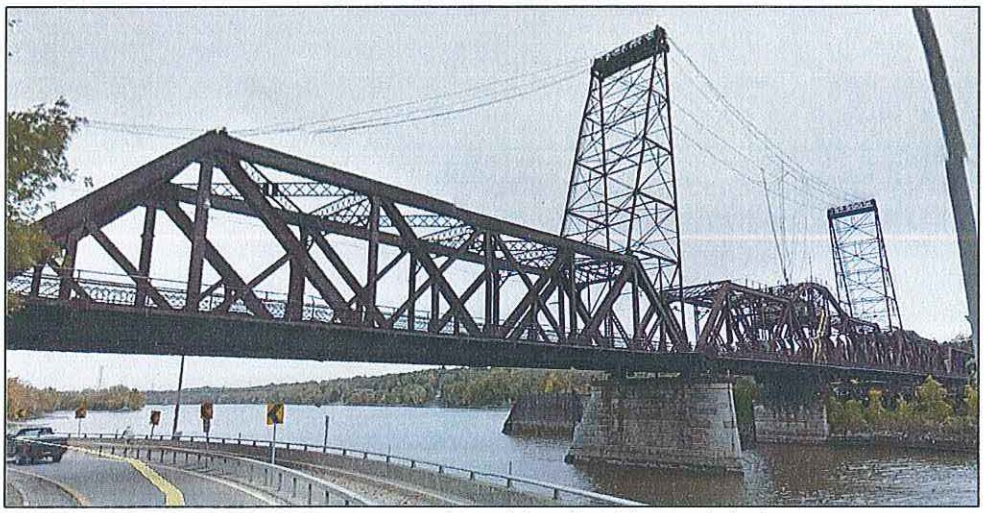
Laura Shick
Federal Preservation Officer
Environmental & Corridor Planning Division
Office of Railroad Policy and Development

cc: Brandon Bratcher, FRA
Susan Andrews, NYSDOT
Andrea Becker, NYSDOT
Mark Jakubiak, NYSDOT
Michael Lynch, NYS OPRHP (SHPO)

Project Location Map



Overhead view of the Livingston Avenue Bridge (Albany on the left)



Livingston Avenue Bridge (looking north)