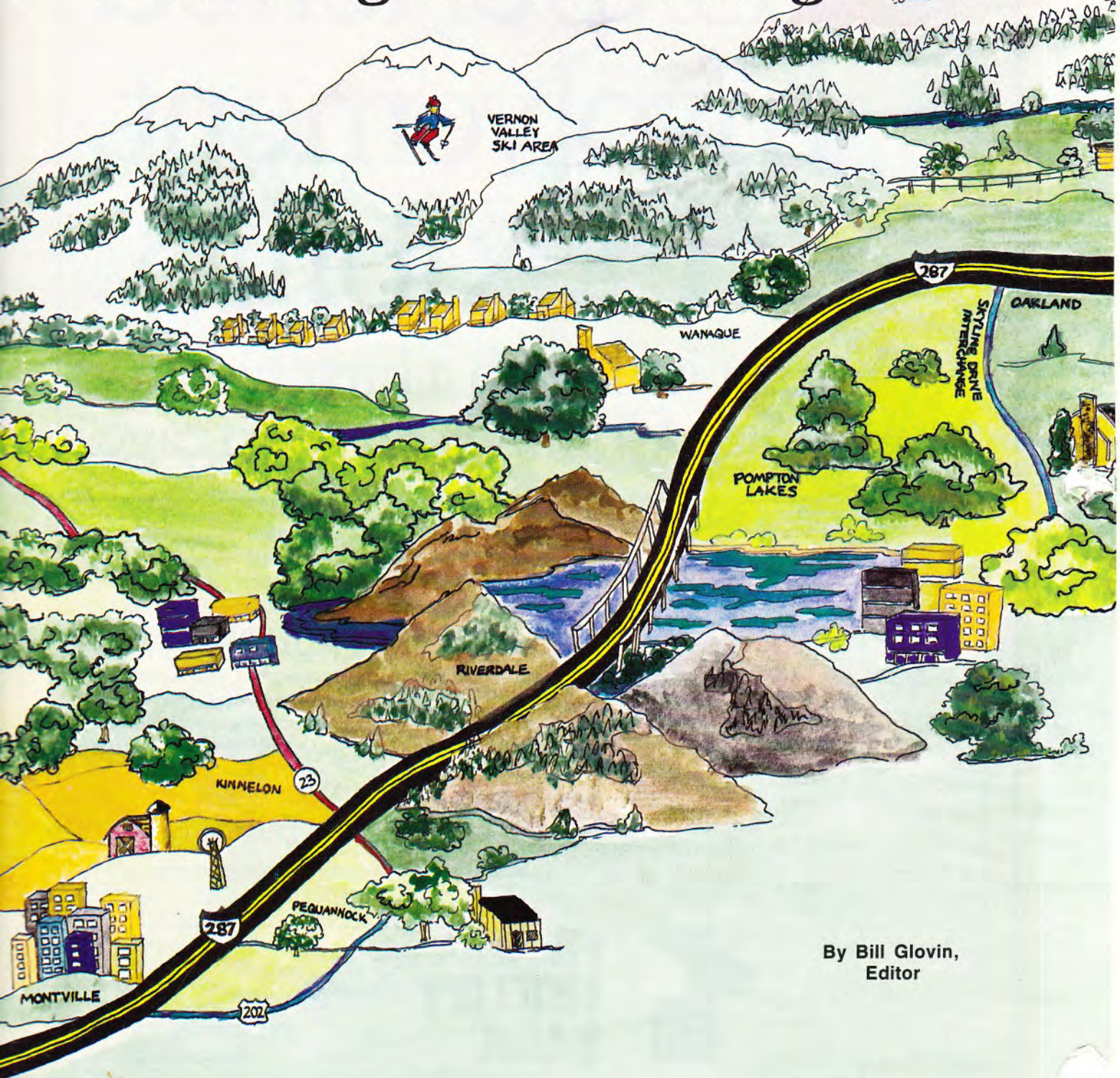
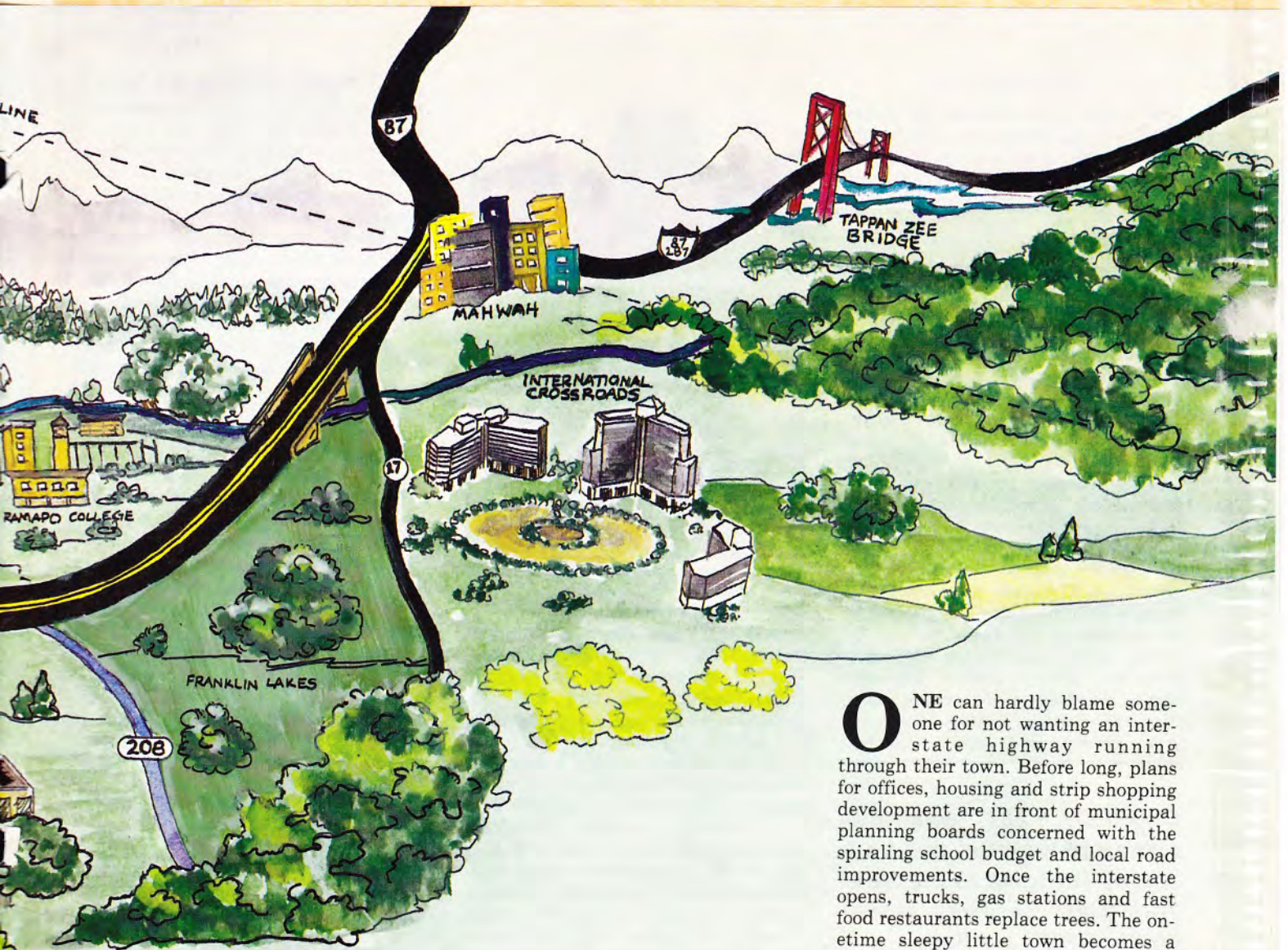


The I-287 Extension: The Long and Winding Road



By Bill Glovin,
Editor



CIRCA 1992: John and Mary Smith and their two children are traveling by car to grandma's house in Nyack, New York.

The Smiths are singing along to the Grateful Dead song, "Goin Down the Road" on their new deluxe digital tape player when 12-year-old Todd suddenly interrupts.

"This isn't the way to grandma's house," he says. "We used to take different roads. How come we're going this way?"

"Because last month they finally completed the very same highway we used to begin our trip with," says Mrs. Smith. "In the past, we had to get off and go around. Now we can get to grandma's house faster."

"This is sure prettier than the way we used to go; look at all these big hills," 10-year-old Audrey chimes in.

"We're driving through the Ramapo Mountains and that's the Ramapo River," says Mr. Smith, pointing to the water below. "Before they built this highway, there were woods here, some houses and even businesses. Not only did they all have to go somewhere else, but everyone argued about it for a very long time."

ONE can hardly blame someone for not wanting an interstate highway running through their town. Before long, plans for offices, housing and strip shopping development are in front of municipal planning boards concerned with the spiraling school budget and local road improvements. Once the interstate opens, trucks, gas stations and fast food restaurants replace trees. The onetime sleepy little town becomes a place where a crosstown trip to the supermarket can turn into a half-hour sojourn.

That's part of the reason the decision to complete I-287 was one of the most controversial development decisions in the state's history. An army of people, politicians, federal, state and municipal officials, engineering and environmental consultants, the Army Corps of Engineers, lobbyists, coalition representatives, student activists, lawyers, judges, newspaper editorial board members and many of the residents themselves were, at one time or another, involved in the process.

The difficulty experienced by explosive technicians who try to gouge the rock so that I-287 can be carved on the face of the Ramapo Mountains pales in comparison with the controversy attached to the decision to complete the project and select a path. Even now, with all the environmental permits and funding approvals secure, contracts in place, and with pavement about to be laid, the debate rages on.

A 30-YEAR SAGA

When 287 is completed in the winter of 1992, it will signify the end of a 30-year struggle filled with political intrigue, bitter public hearings, a federal law suit and 1,200 condemned parcels of land.

In Mahwah, at the point where Route 17 and 287 will meet and become one from there to the New York State border, is the 25-story, \$300-million International Crossroads, a monument to the highway's anticipated presence. At the other end in Montville, 600 acres owned by David Mandelbaum, a West Orange investor, sits mostly vacant, testimony to the highway's potential.

Other enormous projects, such as a \$200-million, mixed-use joint venture by Cali Associates/Dubnoff & Koch on a 480-acre site in Wanaque and a similar complex proposed by Spages Development, Riverdale, represent just a fraction of the development that has so far anticipated the interstate.

New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT) section engineer Wayne Rumsey of Montague, who lives on the Sussex County/New York State border, and who, ironically,

Originally, 287 was designed to connect the New Jersey Turnpike to the New York State Thruway. It will do that with a hitch.

moved his family from Vernon because of development, is faced with the unenviable task of troubleshooter. He sees the project as one huge trade-off. "It's certainly going to be easier to get to my mother-in-law's house in New Milford, but I can certainly empathize with many of the residents," he says. "You don't put an interstate through an area and not expect it to change. As a result, this job has certainly had more than its share of difficult days."

Route 287 is a fragment of what is technically classified as a national defense and federal interstate highway system. It was, in part, conceived so troops and tanks could circumvent the nation's cities in the event of an attack. In the metropolitan area, it would be the belt that would serve this purpose.

Originally, 287 was designed to connect the New Jersey Turnpike to the New York State Thruway. It will do that with a hitch. Plans—still depicted on most maps—show an interstate connector between I-295 and the Turnpike, which parallels a portion of Camden County. I-295 empties into a new piece of 95 beginning in Lawrenceville,



DOT section engineer Wayne Rumsey: "You don't put an interstate through an area and not expect it to change."

travels north and meets up with 287 between Metuchen and Piscataway. The 95 extension plan—a story in itself—was scrapped, and the Turnpike, already in place, was proposed as the interstate connector.

Today, 287 begins at the Turnpike in Woodbridge. Without the 95 extension plan, observers contend that it adds 15 to 20 miles on to a trip to New York State and New England and will probably be too inconvenient to attract significant truck traffic and travelers looking to make time off the George Washington Bridge. Still, officials at the Federal Highway Administration, an arm of the U.S. Department of Transportation, were convinced of its usefulness, arguing that trucks heading east from Route 80 and heading to New York State had little choice but to use the George Washington Bridge or Route 17, which is considered inadequate by interstate standards.

Route 287 would have been completed with little fuss if it weren't for the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969, which required complex

environmental impact policy statements and brought most highway construction to a halt. The last piece of 287—completed in 1974—linked Morristown to Montville, where it ends abruptly at Route 202, a mostly single-lane road some six miles north of I-80. To complete the 19 miles to the New York State border, new, time-consuming environmental impact statements and approvals had to be secured.

By 1978 the first set of impact statements were ready. Initially, the choice for the route ran through Lincoln Park and the middle of rapidly developing Wayne, along the Hamburg Turnpike and into Bergen County. The area was relatively flat and the township already served as a junction for I-80 and Routes 46 and 23. "If the Environmental Policy Act didn't come along, 287 would have been completed much sooner and it would surely have been through Wayne," claims Bruce Brumfield, the DOT design engineer who has been in charge of the project since 1982.

"The people in Wayne were outraged at the affect 287 would have on their community," says Michael Dedio, 15-year mayor of Riverdale, the

"If the Environmental Policy Act didn't come along, 287 would have been completed much sooner and it would surely have been through Wayne."

small Passaic County town most affected by the interstate's current path. "Congressman (Robert) Roe had 50,000 constituents in Wayne to consider and the next thing we knew it was out of Wayne and they were looking at other alternatives."

The issue was such a political hot potato that in 1978, Alan Sagner, then DOT commissioner and former Port Authority chairman, suggested the state dump the project and trade in the anticipated federal subsidies for mass transit and other transportation improvements. Knowing the kind of public and private opposition the highway was facing in rapidly developing North Jersey, the DOT was provided with an added incentive to complete the road. The federal government offered to pay 100 per cent of the anticipated \$500 million cost, instead of the originally agreed upon 80 per cent. Sagner's proposal to dump was rejected by former Governor Byrne.

"It was actually a very courageous admission on Sagner's part," says David Epstein, project coordinator for the Passaic River Coalition and former



member of the Ralph Nader-sponsored organization, PIRG (the Public Interest Research Group) at Ramapo College. "It made much more sense to either expand and improve Route 17 or expand and open up the Garden State Parkway to commercial traffic. A lot of people still wonder why they didn't follow that course."

With federal guarantees, the DOT was left with the task of selecting another path. Brumfield says 22 alternatives were considered. Most of the routes involved three themes, all of which included plans to spill out near the New York Thruway Interchange in Suffern, New York.

Meanwhile, in the 1970's—knowing it would be reimbursed by the federal government—the state purchased additional acres when it bought the land for Ramapo College from Mary Patrick, a Birch estate heir. The other half of the estate's land was sold to George Lethbridge, who master-planned the 350 acres for office and residential use. Plans for 287 divided the two properties. The Department of Higher Education agreed to maintain the extra acreage behind the school until the fate of 287 was determined.

Ironically, Ramapo College, which was planned with the highway in mind, spurred an extremely popular and outspoken environmental studies program.

The huge land deal locked the DOT into determining Bergen County's part in the design plans. Ironically, the new college spurred an extremely popular environmental studies program and its students were among the interstate's most inspired opponents.

A state legislative mandate ordered the DOT to examine a Ramapo River route that ran slightly west of the Ramapo Mountains close to the Kinnelon/Butler border and through Pompton Plains, Bloomingdale, Wanaque and Ringwood. The coalition of towns hired a lawyer/lobbyist who was a former Secretary of the Interior and the route was again shifted.

Brumfield offers a different explanation. "Everything up there on the mountain is parkland," he says, "and federal regulations say you can't take parkland if you can show there is another alternate route. When we looked at it, the Department of the Interior said they'd never approve it."

"The plan to have the highway west of the Ramapos, a much less developed area, makes more sense," says Mayor William J. Vichiconti of Franklin



DOT section engineer Richard Sporer anticipates that the first two sections will be ready by 1990.

Lakes. "Ringwood and West Milford are booming areas that desperately need to move traffic off Skyline Drive, which heads towards North Jersey and is already a nightmare. Commuters won't be able to get off Skyline Drive and onto 287 until Oakland, and that seems like terrible planning."

A DOT committee, says Brumfield, made the final determination to route the extension between the first two proposed plans. "The route simply happened to be the best one in view of doing the least damage and what it accomplished," he says. "I don't think politics was very much a factor; the politics came more into the financing and timing. In the final analysis, it was pretty much an environmental and engineering decision."

In December 1984, Governor Thomas Kean signed the final environmental impact statement. Vichiconti contends that Kean could still have squashed the project. "In any government, a committee may make a recommendation, but the guy who puts his name on it can always say, 'no, I don't think it's a good idea,'"

GETTING ON AND OFF

HERE are the eight interchanges—all going in both directions—that have so far been incorporated into the plans:

- at 202 in Montville.
- at Route 23 in Riverdale.
- at Paterson/Hamburg Turnpike in Riverdale.
- at either Ringwood Avenue or the Highland Avenue Extension in Wanaque.
- at Skyline Drive and West Oakland Avenue in Oakland.
- at Route 208 and Route 202 in Oakland.
- at Colonial Road in Franklin Lakes, near Oakland's border.
- two half-mile ramps adjacent to International Crossroads in Mahwah.

says the mayor. "Friends who talked to the chairman of the transportation committee in congress were told that 'if the governor says no, that's fine with us, and if he says change it, that's fine too.' In the end, the governor had the clout and the authority to do it and didn't."

THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

The 287 extension will wind its way through Montville, Kinnelon and Pequannock in Morris County; Riverdale, Wanaque and Pompton Lakes in Passaic County and Oakland, Franklin Lakes and Mahwah in Bergen County.

To help with the design, two engineering consulting firms were hired by the state: Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendorf of Fairfield helped design the highway from Bergen County to the New York State border; Good, Kind & O'Dea of Paramus had a hand in planning Montville to Bergen County.

Eight interchanges (see box)—all going in both directions—are so far incorporated into the plans and will result in improvements that planners hope will alleviate congestion on local roads. The stop sign between Skyline

"Whether or not it alleviates traffic or creates even worse congestion remains to be seen."

Drive and West Oakland Avenue, for example, which has been a congested intersection for years, will be eliminated.

The Army Corps of Engineers is allowing the DOT to fill in 69.6 acres of freshwater wetlands and open water areas to create dry land to build the six-lane, two-shouldered road. In return, DOT must construct 70 acres of new wetlands split between two sites to compensate for the destroyed wetlands. Meanwhile, some 200 families and 73 separate businesses have been relocated. A spokesperson for the State Attorney General's Office says of the 1,200 acquired parcels, 30 to 40 per cent were contested and 60 to 70 per cent were settled before the hearing process. *The Record*, the dominant newspaper in Bergen and Passaic counties, has published several stories in recent years documenting questionable settlements.

Many residents who were initially against the highway are now resigned to it. "Rationally, I see how the demand for my services is increasing and how the area has grown in popularity,"

says Geri Wilson, office manager of Schlott Realty in the Smoke Rise section of Kinnelon and a lifelong area resident. "But emotionally, I'd love things to stay quiet. Change is difficult to accept, but when it comes, you might as well make the best of it."

"It's going to be significantly easier to get to Bergen County and New England," says Michael Bohon, a lifetime resident of Boonton. "Whether or not it alleviates traffic or creates even worse congestion remains to be seen. But I think the fact that they're finally finishing the project is great."

TALE OF TWO CITIES

Although only 10 miles separate Riverdale and Franklin Lakes, when it comes to their outlook concerning 287, they may as well be in different countries.

Mayor Vichiconti of Franklin Lakes is as opposed to the highway today as he was when he first moved to town 20 years ago. Four years ago his town spearheaded a federal law suit challenging the environmental impact

"The most important thing was unification. When Riverdale pulled out of the suit, others followed and we definitely sensed that it hurt our cause."

statement. The suit was lost when a federal district court judge upheld a lower court's ruling. One of the reasons they lost, says the mayor, was that Riverdale jumped ship.

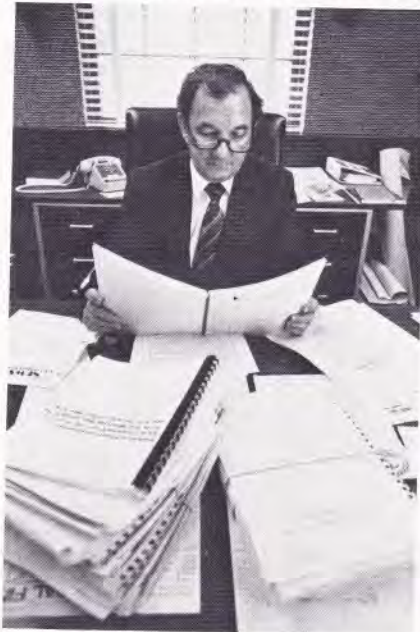
"The most important thing was unification," says Vichiconti, a CPA who has spent 15 years in the town's municipal government, including nine as mayor and six as councilman. "When Riverdale pulled out of the suit, others followed and we definitely sensed that it hurt our cause," he says.

Mayor Dedio, who already had experience banging heads with the DOT over the widening of Route 23, which split Riverdale in two, argues that his town simply listened to their attorneys, who advised that they would never win a decision based on engineering and that their only chance was to stall the project another few years.

"I saw Mayor Vichiconti at a convention last year and he said, 'You know, you were the one who broke the camel's back by backing out of the suit'. But each town looked at it from its own perspective. Franklin Lakes

was trying to preserve homes valued at \$500,000 and had 25 residents willing to chip in \$10,000 apiece for legal fees. We're a blue collar town and I wasn't about to lose \$50,000 for a highway that we were going to get anyway. We felt we might as well get the show on the road."

"Montville came to us and paid \$12,000 for two years and told us they



When it came to battling the plan for the interstate, Mayor William J. Vichiconti (above) of Franklin Lakes and Mayor Michael Dedio of Riverdale had different sets of priorities.



couldn't afford it anymore," retorts Vichiconti. "We told them not to worry about it, stay in the law suit and we'll pay the bill. I told the mayor of Riverdale the same thing. It's been in our budget for years."

"If we could have left Riverdale the way it was 10 years ago, believe me, we would have kept it just that way," says Dedio. "We could have continued to fight them tooth and nail as Franklin Lakes has, and ended up with nothing."

One point the suit addressed was the fact that public hearings concerned

only portions of the highway, which is unlawful. The impact of the entire project must be considered at each hearing, argued the highway's opponents.

"There were hearings going on all over the place and they always concerned how the highway would affect that particular community," says John Migliaccio, another member of Ramapo College's PIRG who now works in the recycling field and dabbles in municipal politics in his native Fort Lee. "Their strategy was to divide and conquer. If they didn't do it that way, they might have had 15,000 people creating a media event in Trenton and things might be different today."

Because Riverdale cooperated with the DOT, it was able to win concessions, such as more noise barriers, positive drainage, large retention basins and more. The mayor says he doubts that other towns along 287's path will be able to do as well.

Meanwhile, the Passaic County

"Franklin Lakes was trying to preserve homes valued at \$500,000 and had 25 residents willing to chip in \$10,000 apiece for legal fees."

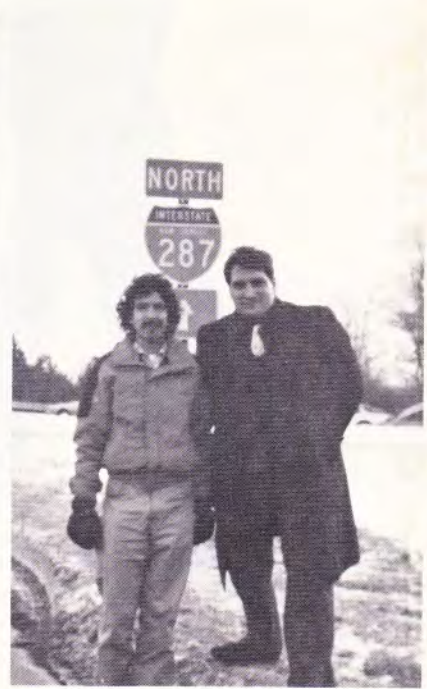
community has hired a planning consultant to create a master plan that will attempt to preserve its character and take advantage of the opportunity to become a hub. Mayor Dedio says the key to avoiding overdevelopment is "to keep away from cluster building."

The circumstances are vastly different in Franklin Lakes, says Mayor Vichiconti. Becton Dickinson's recently opened headquarters now occupies the town's last significant tract of land. "They keep telling us the highway will help us develop, but there is really no land to develop," he muses. "It's kind of ironic that the project that was killed as a result of the highway was the plan to build a senior citizen's housing development near the river."

A CORRIDOR RISES

In the remains of exploded mountains, construction workers often find iron pyrite, otherwise known as "Fool's Gold." Those left with property after the right-of-way smoke had cleared may as well have found real gold.


The 2,100 pieces of right-of-way



Former Ramapo College activists David Epstein (left) and John Migliaccio fought the highway tooth and nail. Today, Epstein is project coordinator for the Passaic River Coalition and Migliaccio founded IMM, a company that markets recycled paper.

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property over the 19.01 miles taken by the state cost the federal government more than \$100 million. At the same time, because the municipalities involved lost ratables to the highway, many are anxious to make up for it with new development elsewhere. Most of the planning boards in the corridor have been flooded with applications for subdivisions on major tracts.

Many investors, such as the Mandelbaum family in Montville and McBride Enterprises in Mahwah, gambled that the highway would be built. They weren't alone. Still others gobbled up an assortment of parcels along Route 23 and in adjoining communities like Wayne, Pequannock, Butler and Lincoln Park and in communities in Rockland and Orange counties, New York.

Because the decision to select the route took so many years, some won and others lost. In the Mandelbaum case, the family bought 600 acres back in the 1950s and 1960s for \$20 to \$30 an acre and expects to sit back and wait for the year 2000, when David Mandelbaum anticipates the installation of municipal water and sewers in rural northern Montville, where the family owns much of their land.

In McBride's case, it bought huge tracts in Mahwah, Oakland and Wayne, anticipating the highway. According to Peter Default, a vice president at McBride Enterprises, original plans had the highway adjacent to its

Oakland Industrial Park and Wayne/McBride Office Park in Wayne. Despite the altered plans, both parks have turned into successful investments, he claims.

The 350 master-planned acres in Mahwah were purchased by McBride when George Lethbridge became ill.

On the 200 acres is the Ramapo Ridge-McBride Office and Research Center, which already includes headquarters for Paulist Press, Meldisco and Dial America. Jaguar Cars and Russ Berrie recently announced plans to establish new corporate headquarters there as well. Nearby on McArthur Road,

which was created by the master plan, on separate tracts sold by McBride, are headquarters for Laura Ashley, Pulsar and Officescape, a speculative building by Paul Hartman/David Hirschman. Plans to extend McArthur Road and open up still more tracts are cur-

(continued on page 59)

Notes From the Road

THE only aspect of the 287 extension everyone seems to agree upon is the fact that it is the most ambitious highway building project in state history.

"We're probably moving more earth and rock in this one job than we've ever moved before," says Bruce Brumfield of the DOT. "It's probably the biggest project the state will ever be involved in."

The difficulty lies in the terrain rather than the length. Most of the extension is being built directly on the easterly face of the Ramapo Mountains.

"People really didn't realize the scope of the project until the bulldozers arrived," says Joe Phalon, a reporter for *Trends*, a newspaper that covers the Butler, Pequannock and the Riverdale area. "Parts of the mountain now look like mini-Grand Canyons."

★ ★ ★

In the middle of a 200-foot-high rock cut, one of the workers has somehow managed to sarcastically draw a happy face, using two drill holes for eyes. Residents along the route have vehemently complained about blasting, noise coming from equipment, the stoppage of traffic along Route 23 at peak driving times and night construction.

In September, a blast at the Riverdale site damaged a 70-ton dump truck, leveled part of an overpass under construction and fired rocks—some bigger than basketballs—on and beyond Route 23.

The flying rocks injured three workers, damaged about 15 vehicles and struck four homes about a quarter-mile away. One boulder landed in the easy chair of Charles Pakosinski, area resident, who was at the kitchen table having breakfast.

"I'm not minimizing the danger or the hazard, but we have two million tons of rock that has to be removed, and that means almost two million tons of explosives are involved," says Peter Sheldon, a supervising state engineer. "Often, it's a difficult thing to gauge because you don't know the condition of the rock you're blowing up."

★ ★ ★

No one seems to know whether it's a coincidence or not, but Wayne Rumsey, who has been with the DOT for 26 years, graduated from Riverdale High School with Michael Dedio, Riverdale's part-time mayor and a right-of-way engineer for New Jersey Bell.

Rumsey's instructions are to build his segment of 287 on schedule and to keep close to his \$38-\$40 million budget. Even he has had trouble explaining to homeowners along the right-of-way who have come out of their homes and found a slope gone, an embankment staring them in the face or familiar trees missing.

"Right-of-way people concerned with buying or not buying property—not people who understand construction—made the determination," says Rumsey. "Oftentimes it's a close call and even questionable, but something I have to deal with."

"Wayne's a good man," says the mayor. "He's just following instructions."

★ ★ ★

When David Epstein and John Migliaccio weren't helping lead the Ramapo College fight against the highway at public hearings or by canvassing the community for support, they spent considerable time at the Alternate Energy Center, a facility that worked on solar and wind power, irrigation techniques and more.

Although the highway is being built despite their efforts, they were particularly outraged at a DOT plan to put an interchange at the site, now known as the Ramapo Environmental Center.

"We would have liked to have put an interchange there but public opposition was just too strong," says Brumfield. "We're still examining alternatives."

"Actually, we hope to move the center anyway," explains William Makofske, professor of physics at the school. "The highway was just one of many factors to consider. Because the center is so far away from existing buildings on campus, we felt it was underused. High school kids also made it a target of their vandalism."

"The future of a new center, which would be moved closer to the classrooms, now depends on the approval of a \$90,000 funding proposal."

★ ★ ★

The interstate, which involves the blasting of rock cuts as high as 200 feet and creating hills on 90 feet of rock fill, is being built in sections. Brumfield explains that's mostly because the Army Corps of Engineers conducted hearings and granted approvals in sections.

As a result, the state has accepted and continues to accept, bids from contractors on various sections. So far most of the general contracting work has been performed by Green Construction Company of Irving, Texas and most of the blasting has been carried out by Explo-Tech, a Pennsylvania-based company. Numerous other companies—several of which are also in Pennsylvania—are involved in supplying cement, sand and other materials.

★ ★ ★

The first two sections to be completed will be from Route 23 to the Hamburg Turnpike in Riverdale and from the Hamburg Turnpike to Skyline Drive in Oakland. The 350 people working the heavy construction machinery, building the 15 foot high sound barriers, and positioning pipes from highway drains into retention basins, all come from local unions. A supervisor for Green Construction estimates that it costs the company \$2,000 an hour in payroll and equipment.

Other challenging parts of the job will be the construction of one of the longest bridges in the state: a 200-foot long and a 100-foot high bridge over the Wanaque River at Lake Inez; the temporary relocation of a portion of Route 23 and a \$3 million wetlands contract to build a nine-acre swamp behind High Slaters Mill in Riverdale.

While Richard Sporer, the DOT section engineer on the portion, anticipates that the first two sections will be ready by 1990, Brumfield says the DOT will open all the sections to traffic at the same time, sometime in late 1992.

I-287

(continued from page 38)

rently under review.

To the north, adjacent to J.D. Construction's International Crossroads, is Sharp Electronics. With the 22-story International Crossroads is a 10-story 228-room Sheraton Crossroads Hotel opened by Prime Motor Inns of Fairfield. Opening soon to the south on Route 17 will be a Marriott Courtyard Hotel. At the other end of the corridor in Parsippany, The Flatley Company of Braintree, Massachusetts last year opened the 391-room, medieval Sheraton Tara Hotel near the intersection of 287 and 80 in Parsippany.



Views From the Road:

A platoon of over-sized dump trucks (above) sitting idle next to a DOT automobile is a small sampling of the equipment and the machinery needed to move some 200 million tons of rock. Meanwhile, complaints about blasting didn't make much of an impression on one worker, who, using drill holes, somehow managed to sarcastically draw a happy face (left) in the middle of a 200-foot high rock cut.

"We did more planning and environmental work on this highway than any other in the state's history, but I'm not going to tell you that a toxic spill in the river or a truck accident involving nuclear cargo won't have serious consequences. There's simply no guarantee against disaster."

Various townhouse communities are also sprouting in Mahwah, including Ramapo Ridge (634 units) by Esko Koskinen, Society Hill II at Kilmore Woods (1,304 units) by K. Hovnanian and Ridge Gardens (540-unit) by Baker Firestone Inc. In western Passaic County, communities that were still fairly rural 10 years ago, 400 condominiums by Spages Associates in Riverdale, and a 200-townhouse project in northern Jefferson are just a fraction of what's underway.

"In terms of residential property in the Route 23 area, we are getting Bergen County prices without an argument," says Wilson of Schlott. "In other parts of the state, home sales may be off, but here, people feel that with the highway coming, they can still get a house that will continue to appreciate."

EPILOGUE

Ultimately, 287 is a highway of trade-offs and compromises. Development versus environment. One route for another. The DOT appraiser against the homeowner. Only time will tell if open space will be left, or the impact of lost wetlands, as well as the affects of congestion on the three rivers involved, the Ramapo, Wanaque and

Pompton rivers. Also at stake is one of the last natural aquifers in the state, the Towaco Wellfields in Montville.

Much of the responsibility falls directly on the shoulders of municipal planning boards, some of which have hired planning consultants, having witnessed the trials and tribulations faced by municipalities who were in similar situations before and who are sorry today.

Predicting the future with this or any other highway is an inexact science; definitive answers shouldn't be expected. "We did more planning and environmental work on this highway than any other in the state's history," says Brumfield, "but I'm not going to tell you that a toxic spill in the river or a truck accident involving nuclear cargo won't have serious consequences. There's simply no guarantee against disaster," he admits.

Years from now, after new maps have long been devised and 287 is practically an afterthought, those looking for an appropriate symbol need not look beyond the highway's own divider. Pro or con, or somewhere in between, the 30-year crawl to complete 287 is finally headed down the stretch. Its destination—like it or not—is New Jersey's future. ■

Along Route 23, where a major interchange is planned, only a few retailers and car dealerships dotted the road as little as five years ago. Today, the road is considered a retail hub, and an acre can command as much as \$375,000. When 287 opens, one realty executive estimates that land value will triple.

For years, 120 acres of land in Riverdale's industrial area stood vacant and sold for \$13,000 an acre just three years ago. Leases and new construction are now abundant, and the land has soared to \$275,000 an acre.

Residential development has also boomed. Thomas Kane, township manager in Pequannock, says highway or not, the same number of housing starts would be proposed in increasingly congested North Jersey. In his town, one townhouse project, Mountainside, (1,255 units) is planned. On a nearby tract across the town line a smaller project, Timber Ridge (600 units) in Riverdale is under construction.