

I've lived in Sullivan County, and now Orange County, for most of my 47 years. As far back as I can remember, traffic has existed on Route 17 on summer weekends. When I was six years old, I fell out of a moving car on Route 17 heading east on a Friday afternoon. I got banged up but was okay. Our lanes were empty. Had I been heading west, I probably wouldn't be around today – those lanes were packed.

We dealt with the traffic because the people in those cars fueled our economy for most of the year with their tourism-related dollars. My father's law firm bustled with real estate closings; my grandfather's kosher fish market was packed with women buying ingredients to cook gefilte fish before Shabbos, and wholesale hotel orders helped keep fresh fish in the store all year.

Forty-one years later, we're still talking about traffic along Route 17. This time, traffic concerns threaten the construction of Legoland-NY.

After visiting Legoland-Florida, listening to residents and local businesses, and conducting a discussion on the merits and challenges this project poses, the Orange County Citizens Foundation passed a resolution supporting the Legoland-NY project, subject to a thorough SEQRA process.

Traffic will increase to some degree along the 17 corridor if the project proceeds, but that's not a reason to stop responsible tourism development. Rather, it is another reason to improve our transportation infrastructure to manage growth. This has been a goal of the Citizens Foundation for four decades. We've advocated for improvements along Route 17, on the TZ Bridge, along the Port Jervis train line and more. We believe that Legoland-NY will provide another impetus for New York State to improve Route 17. In contrast, if this project goes someplace else, funding for better transportation infrastructure will also go someplace else and we'll be sitting in traffic for another 40 years.

While our economy has improved since the last recession, we aren't in a position to turn away good projects. And this is a good project.

First, this is new business – jobs created will be created, rather than being taken from someone else's community.

The sales tax generated by Legoland-NY will benefit all our municipalities, helping us deal with the NYS tax cap in a positive way – instead of cutting services, our governments might add some.

Legoland's audience of 2- to 12-year-olds and their parents is a demographic that we need. Like others, they might visit Orange County and fall in love. In a county where our population of 25-45 year olds is dropping, this would be a welcome outcome.

Legoland has committed to using local food; noise will be minimal; lighting can be controlled so it is minimally visible outside the park; bus service will be available to/from local hotels. There are no toxins or idling trucks, like many industrial projects.

The downtown community and other commercial areas have benefited from Legoland-Florida. An economic impact study conducted by the University of Central Florida shows significant improvement in the **local** economy.

Rather than turn this project away for traffic impacts, we encourage the Goshen community to support it to benefit all of our region's residents and work together to improve and manage our transportation infrastructure to grow our economy responsibly, rather than allow it to fall stagnant or deteriorate.