

March 7, 2003

Mr. Paul M. Rich  
Chief Operating Officer  
Neptune Regional Electrical Transmission System  
One Hunnewell Square  
P.O. Box 1000  
Pittsfield, Maine 04967

**Re: Proposed Converter Station on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Streets**

Dear Mr. Rich:

Thank you for your presentation at the January 15, 2003 joint meeting of this Board's Clinton Land Use and Zoning Committee and Waterfront and Parks Committee of the proposed converter station to be constructed on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Streets, adjacent to ConEd's 49<sup>th</sup> Street substation.

We understand that NeptuneRTS's proposal involves installation of under water HVDC cable from New Jersey, which would enter Manhattan under the bulkhead between Piers 90 and 92. The cable would be laid 60 feet below the riverbed and under 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and would reach the surface only within the converter station. As you explained it to us, the HVDC (high-voltage direct-current) system you are proposing has the important environmental advantage of avoiding the fluctuating electromagnetic fields (EMFs) that are associated with AC (alternating current) transmission systems. The converter station would be linked to the 49<sup>th</sup> Street substation by AC cable under 50<sup>th</sup> Street.

The proposed converter station involves some architectural and zoning issues you have asked us to consider. The site is in an M2-3 zoning district, which imposes a maximum streetwall height of 60 feet. Because of the required configuration of the equipment, the proposed converter station would have streetwalls of 108 feet on 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Streets. Neptune's application to the Public Service Commission includes a request for an override of the height and setback requirements of Section 43-43 of the Zoning Resolution.

The Board's committees found the conceptual designs of the converter station quite exciting. The planted roofs, the planted 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue wall, the varied colors and textures of the building facades and the storyboards proposed at street level along 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Streets are admirable creative suggestions for turning what could be an imposing blank box of a building into a distinctive and attractive piece of architecture. The height and setback waiver would face considerable community opposition without such attention to the building's design and its relation to its surroundings.

The committees were also pleased to learn that the proposed HVDC cable has the capability of delivering significant amounts of electricity to Manhattan without disturbing Hudson River Park or exposing passersby to potentially hazardous EMF levels.

We have the following concerns about the project, which we trust can be satisfactorily addressed as your planning continues:

1. We would like to be sure that the building as built is consistent with the conceptual design, or otherwise takes into account the community's concerns about its impact on its surroundings. We request, therefore, that you consult from time to time with the Board's Clinton Land Use and Zoning Committee as the design evolves, and that you confirm to us in writing that you will do so.
2. Regular maintenance of the building's facades will be essential; if the plantings wither or the colored panels fade and crack, the building will be transformed from an attraction to an eyesore. There must be a permanent and enforceable commitment to maintain the building. We request a restrictive declaration be made a part of the grant of the zoning override to enforce the maintenance of the high design standard proposed.
3. Though the AC cable carrying electricity from the converter station to the 49<sup>th</sup> Street substation will have a short distance to travel and will be underground in an area with little pedestrian traffic and no residents, we would like assurances that those who work in or travel through the area will not be exposed to dangerous levels of EMFs.

Thank you for taking the time to present your plans to us, and for incorporating our anticipated concerns into your proposal. We look forward to continuing discussions as the project moves forward.

Sincerely,



Simone Sindin  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board No. 4

Anna Hayes Levin  
Chair  
Clinton Land Use & Zoning Committee

John Doswell  
Co-Chair  
Waterfront & Parks Committee

Pamela Frederick  
Co-Chair  
Waterfront & Parks Committee

This letter was passed at Manhattan Community Board No. 4's March 5, 2003 full board meeting.

Cc: Elected Officials  
Rick Muller, Office of the Manhattan Borough President  
Jeff Mulligan, NYC Department of City Planning  
Kevin Lang, Assistant Counsel, Public Service Commission  
David Gmach, Con Edison  
Hudson River Park Trust