

Preserve the Hojack span as bridge to exciting future for city



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The Democrat and Chronicle's most recent article on Rochester's historical Hojack bridge ("Hojack span nears demise," Feb. 17) brought to

the fore a number of issues facing our community and Rochester's waterfront.

Apparently there are some who say the Hojack bridge has outlived its usefulness and that it merely serves as an unsightly obstacle to traffic in the Genesee River. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As a recreational boater, I find that the Hojack bridge provides an important river divider that establishes traffic flows.

For people who launch their boats from the city's boat launch in Charlotte, the Hojack bridge provides a comforting buffer against river traffic.

To those who allege that the Hojack bridge obstructs navigation, I would say that the bridge is akin to the grassy, tree-lined malls that divide traffic flow on streets in Rochester's well-regarded Park-East Avenue area. Imagine the public outcry over any plans to remove those "obstructions"!

As a community supporter and proponent of a renewed Charlotte Harbor, I believe the Hojack bridge can and should serve a significant role. Credible artist's renderings have already been

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presented to local officials depicting Hojack as an art-deco retail island of sorts, providing a restaurant, entertainment and tourist destination. Imagine the splendor of waterfront dining literally in the middle of our storied Genesee River!

From a tourism and recreational revenue standpoint, we can dismiss the suggestion that Hojack is obsolete. We have many exciting options available for integrating Hojack into the new Charlotte waterfront.

Regarding transportation, Hojack

has years of life left. Consider the plans for light rail transit in greater Rochester. How better to transport tourists and visitors across the river in a scenic trolley than by using a historically significant swing bridge, one that comes complete with rail-bed access and rights-of-way? Alternatively, we could use Hojack for vehicular traffic or even pedestrian access across the river.

From a historical perspective, Hojack's value cannot be overestimated. As one of only two King swing bridges left standing, it is a national gem. Hojack is truly irreplaceable, and at 98 years old, has been a part of Rochester for longer than most residents.

Whenever my travels have taken me through the Genesee, Hojack was a familiar and impressive structure that stood tall and proud. I truly hope that when I have children, I'll be able to revel in this turn-of-the-century engineering marvel with them. I cringe at the thought of the destruction of such an important Rochester landmark.

Please join us in our efforts to save Hojack and put it to a use befitting its history and significance to Rochester. Help us secure the time needed to fully explore all the Wonderful ways we can make the Hojack bridge part of the new Rochester waterfront, and please offer your suggestions on how best to celebrate this historical icon. You can learn more at www.TheBridgeProject.com and www.RochesterYoungProfessionals.org/savehojack.o

Burns is a co founder of Rochester Young Professionals.

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