



Dan Garodnick
President and CEO Riverside Park Conservancy
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November 11, 2019

Re: Riverside Park Detour

Dear Mr. Garodnick,

We have been observing the Riverside Park detour since its installation this past summer. While we appreciate that NYC Parks and the Riverside Park Conservancy responded to unsafe conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists along the Greenway near the 79th Street Boat Basin, we are deeply concerned that the current solution creates more danger than the previous situation. We have sent a letter to John Herrold and cc'ed our elected officials and other Riverside Park parties, including you. We understand that other groups, such as StreetsPAC, Transportation Alternatives, and Bike New York have also sent a letter, as has State Senator Robert Jackson. This letter is a follow-up to these previous attempts to start a conversation and to find a solution that works for all park users.

As bicyclists and pedestrians alike have said, while the detour removes potential encounters between bicyclists and pedestrians along the waterfront path for ten blocks, it creates new points of conflict that are even more dangerous. Given the undulating and steep grades, bicyclists gather speed rapidly while descending due not only to gravity but also to gain momentum to climb the steep uphill. There are occasionally pedestrians on this shared use path. The confluence of these two things is a recipe for crashes, like the one that occurred on October 12 when a pedestrian was hit by a bicyclist, breaking the pedestrian's collarbone. The bicyclist braked so hard that he flew over his handlebars. The pedestrian declared at the scene that she had no idea that this was a shared path. Furthermore, the signage on the path is small, inadequate and only at eye level. There are no pavement markings indicating that this is a shared path, contributing to the surprise that pedestrians feel when encountering bicyclists trying to manage the hilly detour.

Besides confusing and inadequate signage and markings, there is insufficient lighting, especially in these darker winter months. This is a particular problem for northbound bicyclists approaching the Rotunda, where the grade is steep, the sight lines are poor and the pavement is rough. Routinely, parks vehicles have been reported using the path, which presents yet another danger to bicyclists, especially given the limitations in sight lines due to hills and greenery along the path. And a Riverside Park dumpster creeps its way back onto the path from time to time. There have been several reports of both pedestrian and bicyclist injuries since the detour became mandatory and there will certainly be more if we don't fix these known dangers.

In addition to the above-listed dangers, the inclines along this path are an accessibility issue for many bicyclists, including people who are not regular riders and those who are older or younger or who have other physical limitations. Even regular, strong riders find the path incredibly challenging to ride using CitiBike or other heavy bikes without more than three gears. We are particularly concerned that in winter, bicyclists attempting to climb the steep grades will slip on frozen precipitation or collide with each other trying to navigate the precipitation,

especially at the the steepest grade climbing north to the Rotunda where there is no light. We want our city to encourage healthy forms of transportation, not create conditions proven to cause injury with normal use.

We implore you to consider alternatives to the mandatory detour, especially in these winter months with lower bicycling volumes, lower pedestrian volumes, and cold/dark/wet conditions. We propose, as one possible solution worth trying, signage allowing bicyclists to choose the esplanade with speeds capped at 8-10mph and directing higher-speed bicyclists to the detour. As proponents of active transportation, we would be happy to work with you to create flyers, conduct outreach, brainstorm better signage or otherwise engage with the public. We would also welcome the opportunity to bike this stretch with you and to walk it, in an effort to point out all of the dangers that this letter lists. At the very least, we need better signage/pavement markings and lights immediately, as this stretch is bound to see more crashes with the current level of service. We trust that NYC Parks and the Riverside Park Conservancy will do everything in their power to find solutions that will allow all Greenway users to enjoy the park and to interact safely.

Sincerely,

Lisa Orman

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In case you missed:

<https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2019/07/15/eyes-on-the-street-fresh-hazards-for-riverside-park-bike-bypass/>

<https://www.westsiderag.com/2019/10/15/collision-between-cyclist-and-pedestrian-in-riverside-park-shows-dangers-of-new-bypass-witness-says>

cc: City Council Member Helen Rosenthal
State Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal
State Senator Robert Jackson
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
Mark Diller, Chair Community Board 7
Bike New York
StreetsPAC
Transportation Alternatives