

Hudson River Valley Greenway Link Study

Technical Advisory Committee Review of the Draft Final Report

Comments and Responses

TAC Meeting of May 28, 2013

- 1. On Palisade Avenue south of West of 232 Street, specify the number of feet that the road would need to be widened and in which direction to include a sidewalk?** RESPONSE: the roadway would need to be widened by eight feet to accommodate a sidewalk on the west side of Palisade Avenue. Needs to be clear that the sidewalk might go on the east or west side of the road.
- 2. Could Substation 11 be relocated and the electrical lines buried?** RESPONSE: MTA Metro-North Railroad (MNR) indicates that relocating Substation 11 is not a possibility. The current location is a result of community desires to locate the substation on the waterfront side of the tracks. Burial of the electrical power lines will need to be considered in the design process for relevant route segments and, if feasible, included in the cost of these route segments. Of course, relocating Substation 11 is possible. It might be too expensive to do, or it might cause operating problems for Metro-North, or the community might oppose moving the Substation from the west the east side of the tracks, but that does not make it "impossible". We agree that the electric lines need to be buried and should be included in the costs. We think they should be buried on the east side of the tracks and connected to a hardened (to climate change) and improved Substation (perhaps built into the foundation of the new bridge over the tracks at 232nd Street with vehicle access to Palisade Avenue. We believe that relocating the Substation will eliminate the need for the use of the "utility road", freeing up land for the GREENWAY LINK. In defining the next steps for the project, the final report should include an assessment of the costs and benefits of relocating the Substation and overhead electric wires.
- 3. There is a strong preference to build the Greenway as a whole, rather than in a piecemeal fashion which could result in a loss of momentum.** RESPONSE: due to funding uncertainty and the design process, a staged plan has been developed. The staged plan does not preclude pursuing the project as a whole should financial conditions warrant. We want to build a commitment by Government to complete the Greenway Link. We do not think the staging plan will interfere with our advocacy for the plan.

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4. **The report should include a price for building a ramp north from the West 254 Street Bridge over the railroad right-of-way.** RESPONSE: The cost of this ramp is included in the final draft.
5. **Was routing the Greenway on the internal access road of the Westchester County Sewage Treatment Plant considered?** RESPONSE: this routing was considered and discussed with Westchester County, but the industrial nature of the site and use of the road to transport chemicals raises both safety and security concerns. The County has affirmed that – for these reasons – use of the internal access road is not appropriate.
6. **In some cases, the land owners (agency or otherwise) may be unwilling to compromise on certain points, leading to escalating estimated costs. Could the report show the comparative costs of alternatives in order to demonstrate the additional public funding required instead of further compromise on the part of the land owners?** RESPONSE; the study has considered alternatives that are plausible from planning, design and policy perspectives. Phase I of the study identified and reviewed a myriad of alternatives in the study area that were then evaluated in the context of physical feasibility, the study’s goals and objectives, community and landowner desires and concerns, and the programs and policies of agencies which have jurisdiction over rights-of-way and facilities. “Fatal flaws” to the feasibility of alternatives were identified in this fashion. Once an alternative was fatally flawed, it was no longer considered in the study. Using the concept of “Fatal flaws” is very flawed. All of the alternatives that have been considered are physically possible. All problems can be solved with the right level of investment, but that level of investment could be too high, i.e., it is too expensive. But before we get to that conclusion, a cost/benefit analysis must be completed. Putting a label such as “Fatal flaws” on an alternative should not be an excuse of not providing a fact-based assessment.
7. **Rather than routing the Greenway east to Hawthorne Avenue and continuing on Ludlow Street, was having the route turn north onto Bridge Street and then east on Knowles Street considered?** RESPONSE: this change has been made. Bridge Street and Knowles Street are now identified as the preferred route, rather than the Hawthorne Avenue and Ludlow Street alternative.
8. **Are there plans for waterfront access when the area along Alexander Street is developed?** RESPONSE: according to the City of Yonkers, a 30’-50’ waterfront promenade will be part of any Alexander street development. What is a promenade? Does that include a bike path?
9. **The steep incline in Inwood Hill Park necessitates a new path that could follow the more gradual incline of the Henry Hudson Parkway. Why is this not being considered in the plan?** RESPONSE: Due the sensitive and unique historic forest conditions in Inwood Hill Park, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation has given that area “forever wild status.” In considering any plans for construction in a forever wild area we must consider the proposed scope’s impact to the flora and fauna,

as well as the site's geological and hydrological conditions. Creating a new path in Inwood would adversely impact the old-growth trees. Building a pathway along the edge of the Henry Hudson, in addition to impacting trees, would likely create drainage patterns that might negatively impact the remaining trees. Therefore, this route segment will not be considered in the plan. It is unfortunate that the Report as currently written does not address the major obstacle created by the very steep path in Inwood Park, as the bike rider is required to ascend 143 feet over a very short distance. This is certainly not ADA accessible. We propose that the Greenway route not go through the Park, but rather that it go on the Henry Hudson Parkway right-of-way (ROW) on the west side of the southbound lane. The report should provide more information on that ROW.

Written Comments

- 1. The report does not adequately define the preferred alternative as separate from the planned staging of the implementation of the preferred alternative. We recommend the need for one map that more clearly defines the preferred alternative and a separate map for each of the three implementation stages.**

RESPONSE: the report will include these maps.
- 2. Your existing definition of the preferred alternative does not address the major barrier created by the railroad tracks and the steep hills in Inwood Hill Park. We recommend that the definition of the preferred alternative include improvements at Dyckman Street that would eliminate the need to carry bikes over the railroad bridge and up a very steep incline. The final report should add a link that defines a new bike route that will connect Dyckman Street with the lower level of the Henry Hudson Bridge between the railroad and the western edge of the southbound lane (of the parkway). As an interim measure, the report should consider modifying the trail as it goes up the very steep incline, changing it to a switchback trail.**

RESPONSE: Inwood Hill Park is considered "forever wild" from a policy perspective. This designation covers areas of the Henry Hudson Parkway which are not currently used for the roadway. Additionally, the NYC department of Parks is currently improving trails in Inwood Hill Park and will soon be adding a tire rail to the pedestrian bridge over the railroad right-of-way. Please see response to Comment #9 above from the TAC meeting of May 28, 2013 for additional details about this project segment. We refer to our comments on Comment #9 above. We agree that a few trees might have to be removed to accomplish our proposal, but the exact number needs to be documented. Our proposal will have little negative impact on the Park, and may have a much greater positive impact by removing the bike traffic from the park land and the forever wild forest area, thus providing more and better protection for the "forever wild" area.
- 3. The Greenway Link Plan should provide for the protection and improvement of park land and open space immediately contiguous to the Greenway Link.**

RESPONSE: the protection and improvement of parkland and open space contiguous to any of the identified links in the staging plan is beyond the scope of the study. We

believe that the area immediately contiguous to the GREENWAY LINK is well within the scope of the study. Indeed, we have spent a large amount of resources during the study documenting the natural resources of the area. How can you develop a regional plan for the GREENWAY LINK if the planners cannot consider the land immediately adjacent to GREENWAY?

- 4. In order to remove ambiguity, we recommend that NYMTC drop the Independence Avenue alternative and limit the plan to the Kappock Street alternative.**

RESPONSE: the Independence Avenue alternative has been removed from consideration.

- 5. Without explanation or rationale, the report does not recommend any improvement of the Henry Hudson Bridge until after ten years, meaning that there will be no continuous Greenway Link for at least ten years. We see no reason why the proposed cantilever addition cannot be accomplished within five years if MTA Bridges & Tunnels initiates the project promptly. The plan should be modified to give this earlier completion date a high priority.**

RESPONSE: the cantilever addition project is not in the MTA's current five year capital program, which determines the scheduling of capital projects on the MTA system. Will the final report identify the need to be in the MTA's capital plan as a "next step"?

- 6. In addition, we find that there is overwhelming evidence that the bridge can be improved in the short-term to provide for an interim solution. Two lanes in, three lanes out, four lanes on the bridge, no need for toll booths – (these characteristics) should allow MTA to increase space for a bike lane.**

RESPONSE: MTA Bridges & Tunnels has reaffirmed that the current configuration of the lower level of the Henry Hudson Bridge must be maintained for the safe operation and maintenance of the bridge. We will urge the MTA to recognize its obligation to use the bridge for the benefit of bike riders and pedestrians, as well as cars. We note that the toll booths are currently being removed from the Bridge, and that the Bridge has surplus capacity even during rush hours. We urge that this surplus capacity be used for the benefit of the bike riders until the cantilever can be constructed.

- 7. Could more detail be provided to show proposed dimensions for route segments even if there is a rendering or plan enlargement?**

RESPONSE: Dimensions will be incorporated as appropriate in the final report. However, for the two waterfront links, the variable dimensions of the area between the MNR ROW (and service road in the southern link) make it impossible to provide a typical cross section. There should be a cross section based on the averages or several cross section in the report of the showing the changing situation in the report. The fact that the "average" is not every point is obvious. NYMTC has gathered this information and should make it available in the Report.

8. **We support the proposal to direct the route along Palisades Avenue and then through the park at Spaulding Lane, exiting the park at West 254th Street, but we would like to see more definition of the trail finish in the park and the standard for surface finishes. We recommend that the budget for this link be increased to \$5 million. The plan should include the funding for burying the telephone and electrical lines along Palisade Avenue for the entire length of the Greenway. Further, the improvements on Palisade Avenue north of West 254th Street should be limited to signage and traffic calming measures, but should not involve the physical changing of the street. The budget for this link should be reduced from \$5,450,000 to \$1,450,000 to cover the cost of the signage, but primarily to fund the improvements in the (existing) walking and biking trail on Palisade Avenue north of the northern entrance to the Hebrew Home and along West 261st Street.**

RESPONSE: the report will provide these additional details. Except in cases where they directly relate to the design of route segments, changes to utilities are beyond the scope of this study. The telephone poles along Palisade Avenue are directly in the path of the walking/biking trail. North of West 254th Street, signage and traffic calming only would not provide a continuous pedestrian facility, as one does not currently exist. The report would fail to achieve the goal of a multi-use trail without pedestrian improvements, which requires physical changes to the street. We agree with this assessment, but we oppose the creation of a sidewalk between 254th Street and the north gate of the Hebrew Home. We agree that the area on Palisade, north of the north gate of the Hebrew Home, and the north side of 261st Street should be improved by building a walking/biking trail.

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9. **The plan for the transition from the Riverdale Yacht Club Bridge to the railroad ROW needs to be defined more fully as a new ramp connecting the west end of the bridge to the railroad ROW to the north and the plan should include the purchase of a small piece of land from the Yacht Club at its northwest corner to provide the foundation for the ramp to the ROW.** RESPONSE: the ramp will be shown with more definition. Land ownership issues will need to be addressed in the design process for the ramp.
10. **The plan should include recommendations to strengthen the edge of the river along the Greenway and absorb the impact of rising sea levels in an ecologically smart way.** RESPONSE: shoreline stabilization is a recommendation of the study. Additional descriptive text will be added as appropriate.
11. **For the connection between the Palisade Avenue link at West 232nd Street and the South Riverdale Waterfront, the plan should show the alternative connection at the DEP pump station.** RESPONSE: The alternative connection at the DEP pump station will be shown in the report. Due the sensitive and unique historic forest conditions in Riverdale Park, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation has given that area "forever wild status". In considering any plans for construction in a forever wild area, we must consider the proposed scope's impact to the flora and fauna, as well as the site's geological and hydrological conditions. Sensitively designed bike paths may be constructed in Forever Wild areas, paved or unpaved, however the Natural Resources

Group would have to be consulted to find route that would cause the least impact. Beyond simple tree mitigation required in all City projects NRG approval would be required for any design, because the addition of paths may result in an increase runoff or a decrease in habitat value. We believe the best location for the Greenway between Palisade and the waterfront is on the 232nd Street ROW, which we believe extends all the way to the Metro-North ROW.

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12. **The report should address Track 6. It is a major feature of the waterfront area that is considered for the Greenway route. We understand that MNR does not want to abandon Track 6, but it significantly affects the design and cost of the waterfront part of the Greenway route. The report should assess the impact of removing all or part of Track 6 on the cost of the plan.** RESPONSE: Track 6 cannot be abandoned and must remain in operation. The non-electrified track is not used except for occasional short-term storage of work cars that could be parked elsewhere. It is 5 miles long and must be realigned to accommodate the Greenway Link. The report should assess the impact of removing part or all of Track 6 on the cost of the plan? We believe this information is already available to NYMTC and we estimate that the elimination of Track 6 could save tens of millions of dollars.

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13. **Friends of the Hudson River Greenway Link recommends that the Construction and Land Acquisition Budget be presented in three stages.** RESPONSE: the final report will organize the phasing plan into a staging plan for project implementation. The report does not have a budget, and the scope of work for the consultant requires a budget and an implementation plan.

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14. **It is impossible to know what is being proposed (for the cost) of each link without an adequate explanation of the basis for the cost estimate.** RESPONSE: to the extent possible, cost estimates will indicate the various elements that make up the total estimate. We look forward to seeing the detail.

15. **Friends of the Hudson River Greenway Link recommends that the construction budget for the Greenway Link should be increased by \$29 million from \$109 million to a level of \$138 million with the following (itemized list provided).** RESPONSE: as described in earlier responses, many of the proposed additions are either infeasible or beyond the scope of this study. Also, cost estimates provided in the report are illustrative and based on conceptual designs for the various route segments. Costs estimates will be further refined through the design process for the segments that are moved forward to implementation. We refer you to item #3 above. We do not agree with NYMTC declaration that the plan should not include the preservation of open space immediately adjacent to the GREENWAY. We believe that the budget for the improvements along Palisade Avenue and in Riverdale Park is inadequate and should be increased. We believe that plan should address the very significant obstacle created by the very steep path from Inwood Park to the Henry Hudson Bridge and the cost of that needs to be added to the budget. The Budget should also include the funds needed to progress the project, approximately \$5 million over the next three years to complete

[the pre-construction work for Stages 2 and 3 – for example the Environmental Assessment for the GREENWAY LINK waterfront segment north of Riverdale Station.](#)

- 16. The report should propose a funding plan for the Greenway link.** RESPONSE: general information about programs that can fund projects of these types will be included in the report.
- 17. The report should be expanded (to) document important locations and institutions that exist along the proposed Greenway Link. Further, the report should include additional information on the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail, its history, its beauty and its extensive reach up the Hudson River.** RESPONSE: the report overview contains some of this information, which is more appropriate for a trail guide than for a concept design report. The development and inclusion of more extensive information of this type is beyond the scope of this study.