

FHRG Review of New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) draft plan for the Hudson River Greenway Link

The Board of the Friends of the Hudson River Greenway in the Bronx (FHRG) has reviewed the draft report on the Greenway Link released by NYMTC and offers the following comments.

Several critical Links, which have been studied and considered during the study, are not included in the report. Even if NYMTC does not view these additional Links as desirable to include in the ultimate Plan for the Greenway Link, they are all important alternatives that should be documented in this draft plan.

Changes in the definition of the Preferred Alternative

The draft 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 three implementation stages. The definition of the Preferred Route should be modified in three ways:

Inwood Park Link – 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 the 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, following the contour of the southbound lane. This alternative route eliminates the the conflict in Inwood Park between the bikers and other users of the Park. Further, it is likely that this Greenway Link can be built within the Highway right of way. 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. We provide detail below and have included this change on our recommended version of the Preferred Alternative map to be included in the final report.



Preservation of Contiguous Open Space -The Greenway Link Plan should provide for the protection and improvement of park land and open space immediately contiguous to the Greenway Link. The plan should:



- a) Provide for a recreational easement on College Point so that it can be used to create a new public park next to the Greenway;
- b) Preserve the open space on the last two underdeveloped large tracks of land contiguous to the Greenway: Hebrew Home (formerly owned by the Passionate Fathers) and College of Mound Saint Vincent/Sisters of Charity through the sale of easements to reduce development rights and preserve open space; and
- c) Include resources to mitigate Park intrusions and to provide for Park improvement such as invasive species removal, ADA accessibility, and protections for archeology sites. The Greenway Link route goes on the East and West of Riverdale Park and through it for the section between Spaulding Lane and 254th Street. The Plan should not ignore the Park itself. The budget for the Greenway Link should include the resources necessary to provide for these

improvements in the Park. We estimated this cost as \$2.5 million.

Independence Avenue Alternative - In order to remove ambiguity, we recommend that NYMTC drop the Independence Avenue alternative and limit the plan to the Kappock Street alternative. This will save time and resources.

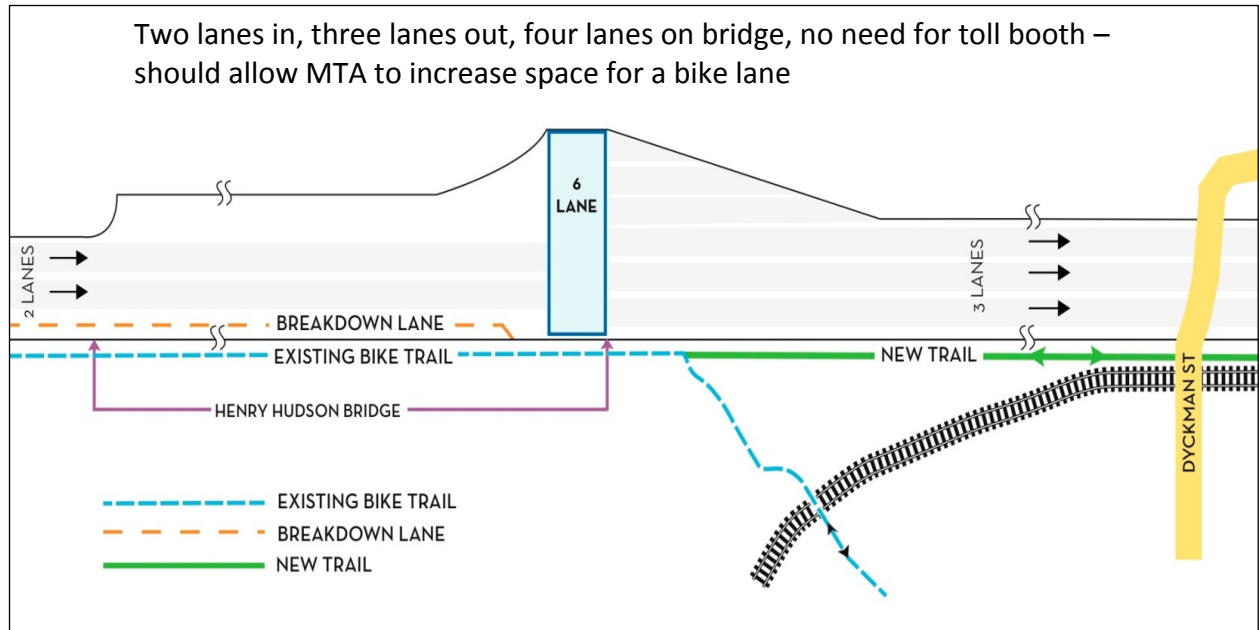
THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



Henry Hudson Bridge

The most basic mandate of the Greenway Link study effort is to define the Preferred Alternative for a continuous walking, running and biking trail along the Hudson River. Until the Henry Hudson Bridge is improved and modified to accommodate bikes, there will be no continuous Greenway Link. Without explanation or rationale, the report does not recommend any improvement of the Henry Hudson Bridge until after ten years, meaning there will be no continuous Greenway Link for at least ten years. We see no reason why the proposed cantilever addition to the Bridge cannot be accomplished within five years if the MTA Bridges and Tunnels organization initiates the project promptly. The plan should be modified to give this earlier completion date a high priority.

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. The need for an interim solution on the Bridge was specifically referenced in the CB 8, The Bronx, resolution on the Greenway: CB 8 “supports the plan to improve the Henry Hudson Bridge crossing for bikers and walkers for the period prior to the construction of the cantilever by eliminating the breakdown lane on the west side of the lower level of the bridge and enlarging the walking and biking route across the bridge”. This interest expressed by the Community Board and expressed by the local community throughout the study and should be included in the staging of the implementation plan.



Need for more detail on certain Links

When the report is discussing Kappock Avenue, it provides details in the form of section drawings with measurements. For example,



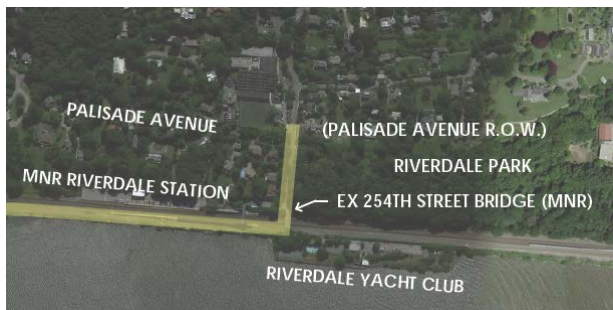
This type of detail is provided for a number of the Street Links. However, it is missing for Palisade Avenue (both north and south of 254th Street), 261st Street and Riverdale Avenue. Even more

importantly, it is missing for the off-street parts of the trail. We recommend that cross sections with measurements be developed and presented for the following Links: through Riverdale Park between Spaulding Lane and 254th Street, through the park at the connection between Palisade Avenue and the waterfront at 232nd Street, Riverdale Park Waterfront Link and the North Riverdale Waterfront Link. The two waterfront Links should show the area from Track 4 to the water.

Four area of the Preferred Alternative need more definition beyond the cross sections:

Palisade Avenue - We support the proposal to direct the route along Palisade Avenue and then through the park at Spaulding Lane, exiting the Park at 254th Street, but we would like to see more definition on 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 electric lines along Palisade Avenue for the entire length of the Greenway. Further, the improvements on Palisade Avenue north of 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 walking and biking trail on Palisade Avenue north of the northern entrance to the Hebrew Home and along 261st Street.

Yacht Club – The use of the Riverdale Yacht Club Bridge is a critical issue for the local community. 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.



Ecological Edge for the Hudson River – For the Waterfront Links, the plan should recommend a way to strengthen the edge of the River along the Greenway and design the edge to absorb the impact of the rising sea in an ecologically smart way.

Connection between Palisade Avenue at 232nd Street and South Riverdale Waterfront – the plan should show the alternative connection at the sewage pump station.



Consideration of Track 6

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 Metro-North does not want to abandon Track 6, but it significantly affects the design and cost of the waterfront part of the Greenway route. The non-

electrified track is not used except to occasional park 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.



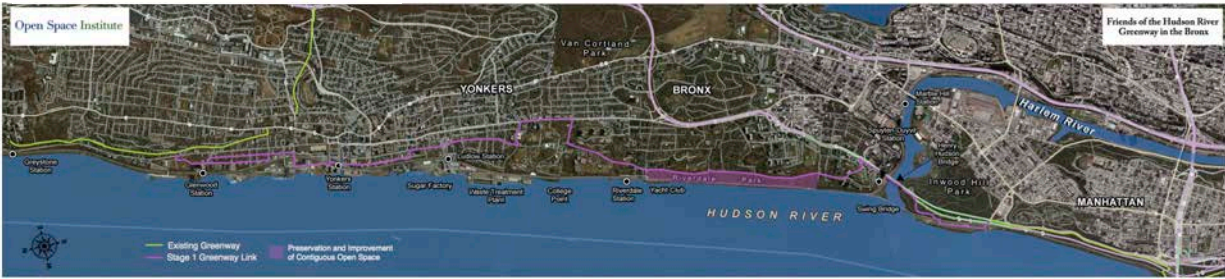
Greenway Link Staging Plan

FHRG recommends that the Construction and Land Acquisition Budget be presented in three Stages.

- Stage 1 – This Stage should create a continuous walking, running and biking trail that parallels the Hudson River and that connects Manhattan and Yonkers Greenway trails. The Stage 1 recommended by the FHRG Board provides the continuous trail but does not connect directly with the Hudson River and does not provide any access to the waterfront. \$25 million is budgeted for the implementation of this interim plan. The links the FHRG recommends for Stage 1 of the Greenway include:
 - Railroad crossover at Inwood Park
 - Interim plan on HHB – use of breakdown lane
 - Final improvements of Kappock and Palisade Ave (south of 254th Street),
 - Only signage on Palisade Avenue north of 254th Street to Hebrew Home northern entrance. Improve Palisade Avenue from Hebrew Home northern entrance to 261st Street and improve 261st Street as a joint walking, running and bike trail;
 - Final improvements on Palisade Avenue, 232nd Street to 254th Street, rebuild the east side of Riverdale Park providing for a new park fence, a generous running, walking biking trail and a new road edge on the west side of Palisade Avenue, through the Riverdale Park (Spaulding Lane to 254 Street), providing protections and grading on the path through Riverdale Park
 - Riverdale Park, Improve Riverdale Park (as mitigation) by providing invasive species removal, ADA accessibility, and protections for archeology sites.
 - Riverdale Avenue – Reconstruct the Avenue as a boulevard with a Class 1 separated bike path and provide the recommended improvements for the Yonkers streets.
 - Engineering, Legal and regulatory work required for Stage 2.

We request that Stage 1 work begin promptly after the Greenway Link plan is approved and we estimate that the work can be completed in three years if the responsible agencies are diligent in their work.

Stage 1 Implementation



- Stage 2 – This Stage will provide an improved connection with the Henry Hudson Bridge, the permanent improvement on the Bridge, access to the waterfront and protection of the open space between the Riverdale Station and the Yonkers streets:
 - Inwood Park Alternative – new trail west of the highway and east of the railroad tracks, that hugs the southbound lane of the Henry Hudson Highway following the grade of the highway up to the HHB
 - Cantilever off the west side of lower level of bridge
 - Build the 254th Street transition from the Yacht Club Bridge to the railroad ROW (requires a new ramp and purchasing a small piece of land from the Yacht Club)
 - Build the Greenway on the railroad ROW between Riverdale Station and Fernbrook Street
 - Purchase easements from the College of Mount Saint Vincent/Sisters of Charity and the Hebrew Home

We request that the engineering, legal and regulatory work begin promptly after the Greenway Link plan is approved. We estimate that the pre-construction work can be completed in three years and that the construction can be completed in two years – a total of five years.

Stage 2 Implementation

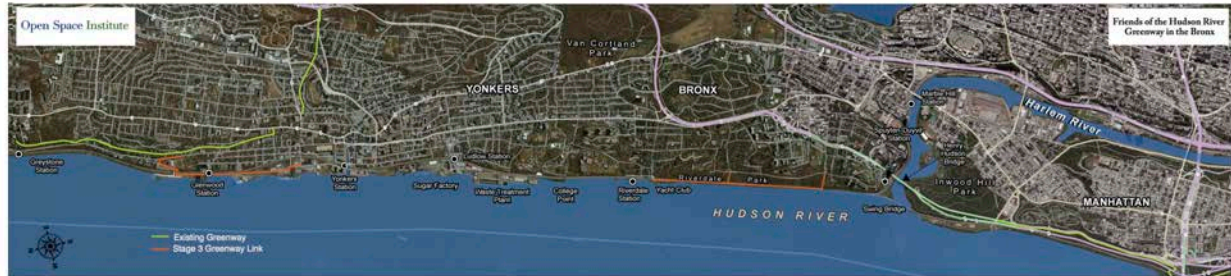


- Stage 3 – This stage will provide for an additional 1.5 miles of the Greenway Link on the waterfront and public access to the waterfront south of the Riverdale Station – and the completion of the development at Alexander Street in Yonkers.
 - Build connection between 232nd and waterfront including a bridge over the railroad tracks
 - Build a Greenway between 232nd Street and Riverdale Station.
 - Complete Alexander Street

Friends of the Hudson River Greenway in the Bronx

We assume that the engineering, legal and regulatory work on the Bronx waterfront section south of Riverdale Station will not begin before the completion of the section north of the Station, and the pre-construction and construction work will take five years. We assume that the Alexander Street development will proceed on its own schedule and the waterfront Greenway Link will be part of that construction.

Stage 3 Implementation



NYMTC Budget for the Greenway Link

The information provided as the basis for the cost estimates is inadequate. There is almost no definition of the improvements that are included in the cost estimates. During the course of the study, the cost of the cantilever off of the Henry Hudson Bridge was stated to be \$16 million. Without explanation, this draft estimates the cost as \$30 million. During the course of the study, the cost of the Greenway construction between the Riverdale Station and Fernbrook Street was estimated by Metro-North as \$15 million. Again, without explanation, the draft estimates the cost as \$20 million. It is impossible to know what is being proposed for each link without an adequate explanation of the basis for the cost estimate. This should be provided for each Link. For example, we do not know what is included in the \$3.5 million for the Palisade Avenue improvement and the Riverdale Park improvements, and we do not think it is adequate, but we need a more detail explanation of the work to judge the if the budget is adequate. Perhaps this detail should be an appendix to the report.

The Budget for the Greenway Link (as defined in the Preferred Alternative) adds up to \$110 million. We believe several important elements that should be part of the plan are left out to the budget.

The FHRG 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 additions (and one reduction):

FHRG proposed additions to Budget (\$ millions)	
Inwood Park Alternative	5.0
Henry Hudson Bridge Interim Use	3.0
Palisade Avenue and Park Trail	1.5
Riverdale Park Improvement	2.5
Purchase open space easements from the Hebrew Home and the College of Mount Saint Vincent	20.0
Engineering, legal and regulatory work required for Stage 2	1.0
Total	33.0
Reduction - Palisade north of 254th Street	-4.0
Net Increase	29.0

The Construction Budget below shows the NYMTC Budget, the FHRG additions and the resulting Staged Budget using the FHRG definition of the stages. In addition to providing funding for the Links that are missing from the report, reducing the amount budgeted for Palisade Avenue north of 254th Street, and increasing the budget for the route on Palisade Avenue south of 254th Street and in the Riverdale Park, this proposed budget also provides \$1 million for two years of additional engineering and legal work necessary for Stage 2.

Hudson River Greenway Link Budget (\$)							
Link	Section	Total NYMTC	Add	New Total	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
1	rail bridge in Inwood Park	500,000		500,000	500,000		
	Inwood Park alternative	0	5,000,000	5,000,000		5,000,000	
2	Henry Hudson Bridge Cantilever	32,500,000		32,500,000		32,500,000	
	Henry Hudson Bridge interim use (breakdown lane)	0	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000		
3	Kappock to 232nd	1,700,000		1,700,000	1,700,000		
4	232nd Street and Palisade to Waterfront and South to Riverdale Station	30,000,000		30,000,000			30,000,000
5	Palisade Ave 232nd and 254th	3,500,000	1,500,000	5,000,000	5,000,000		
	Riverdale Park Improvements		2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000		
6	Riverdale Station to Westchester WTP	22,000,000		22,000,000		22,000,000	
	Purchase easement on the College and Hebrew Home Properties	0	20,000,000	20,000,000		20,000,000	
7	Palisade Ave 254th to 261 to Riverdale Ave	5,450,000	-4,000,000	1,450,000	1,450,000		
8	Valentine	25,000		25,000	25,000		
9	Yonkers connection via Fernbrook St and Ludlow St.	2,000,000		2,000,000	2,000,000		
10	Riverdale Ave with Class 1 separated trail Valentine to Main St.	5,000,000		5,000,000	5,000,000		
11	Buena Vista- Ludlow to Wells	1,500,000		1,500,000	1,500,000		
12	Ashburton to Trevor Park Connection	40,000		40,000	40,000		
13	Alexander Street Development	5,000,000		5,000,000		5,000,000	
14	JFK Memorial Drive connection	130,000		130,000		130,000	
	Engineering, Environmental and Legal work on Stage 2	0	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000		
	Total	109,345,000	28,000,000	138,345,000	23,715,000	84,630,000	30,000,000

Funding the Greenway Link

The report should propose a funding plan for the Greenway Link. FHRG proposes the source of funding for each Link of the Greenway based on the following formula: Federal Transportation Funds – 50%, State Funds – 25%, and local Government funds – 25%. If the Link is located in NYC, then the local government funding is assumed to be a mix of the City Hall budget and Borough President’s budget. If the Link is located in Yonkers, then the local funding is assumed to be a mix of the Yonkers City Budget and the Westchester County Budget.

Sources of Funding for the Hudson River Greenway Link (\$)				
Sources	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Total
Federal Transportation Funding	11,857,500	42,315,000	15,000,000	69,172,500
State Funding	5,928,750	21,157,500	7,500,000	34,586,250
NYC Funding	3,537,500	19,875,000	7,500,000	30,912,500
Westchester/Yonkers	2,391,250	1,282,500	0	3,673,750
Total	23,715,000	84,630,000	30,000,000	138,345,000

Need to Document the Positive

Appropriately, the primary focus of the draft report is the obstacles to creating the Greenway route. The report should be expanded document important locations and institutions that exist along the proposed Greenway Link such as: Wave Hill, Riverdale Country Day School, the Passionist Fathers property, the College of Mount Saint Vincent, the Westchester Waste Treatment Plant, the Sugar Factory, the Yonkers Waterfront Development, the Daylighting of the Saw Mill River, the Phillips Manor, Untermyer Park and Westchester Waste Treatment Plant. 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.