

Statement of the Riverdale Nature Preservancy and the Friend of the Hudson River
Greenway in the Bronx (October 1, 2009)

Our Boards met jointly and separately to consider the draft product of Task 4. We jointly thank you for a good product. We think it will provide an excellent basis for the local community to consider and discuss the alternative routes that will be studied in detail.

We request that the consultant respond to our statement on each of the following issues regarding the Waterfront route, as well as any additional access to the waterfront from other routes:

- 1) Connecting the Henry Hudson Bridge (HHB) to the waterfront corridor – The HHB and the Broadway Bridge should be considered as alternative ways to cross the Harlem River and to connect to the Waterfront Corridor. Although we think the Broadway Bridge crossover is the least attractive, particularly as a connection to the waterfront, to the extent that you consider it a connection to the Palisade Corridor, it can also be connected to the waterfront. In particular, we think the Henry Hudson Bridge is a very viable and attractive connection to the waterfront, just as it is to the Palisade Corridor. While there are several options for bringing bike riders from the HHB to the waterfront, we think the best two options will be to bring the riders to Palisade on Kappock (as with the Palisade Corridor) and to:
 - a) bridge over the railroad tracks at either 231st Street (the historic location of bridge), or to
 - b) bridge over the railroad tracks at 232nd Street, the south end of Riverdale Park. A new trail could be built in the Park, along the south border, from Palisades Avenue to the west border of the Park and a new bridge could then provide access to the waterfront.

Because 231st Street is adjacent to private houses, we are inclined to think that 232nd Street is the better choice. On the other hand, the existing topography and abutments at 231st might make the construction of a bridge cheaper.

On page 32, the document discusses the Henry Hudson Bridge and says: “Scoping and preliminary design is currently under way for a nine foot-six inch bicycle path.” We request that the consultant provide more detail on the location of the path and provide to the TAC any existing documents related to the path study.

East-West connections to the waterfront - Task 4 should more clearly define (including a map that identifies what will be studied) the connections that will be studied in more detail. We request that access between the River and the community through (across) Riverdale Park be studied for impacts on this sensitive habitat. Riverdale Park is designated Forever Wild by the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation. Forever Wild designation aims “to protect and preserve the most ecologically valuable lands within the five boroughs” (NYC DPR website). We request that the study consider the effectiveness of the various possible methods of keeping bicycles on the designated pathways, and the

consequences to this sensitive environment of these bicycle routes. Additionally, the bicycle trails in the Park should not be paved with any type of impermeable surface.

Specifically we request the study of the following east-west access across the tracks:

- c) 232nd Street – through Riverdale Park (see above discussion)
- d) 231st Street – existing remnants
- e) Dodge dock – existing remnants
- f) North end of Riverdale Station parking lot
- g) Mount Saint Vincent – existing ~~historic~~ bridge and a landing
- h) Ludlow – existing bridge
- i) Sugar Factory – bridge over Track 6

- 2) Track 6 - We think that much more thorough research of the future need for Track 6 is required. The outcome of the consideration of Track 6 will materially shape the Waterfront Corridor Alternative. If it is possible to remove part of Track 6, it will provide much more generous space for the Waterfront Corridor Alternative. We believe that the switch at the Yonkers' border is sufficient to serve the Sugar Factory and Film Factory in Yonkers. Although we have never seen a long freight train or any other train on Track 6, it may be used for parking disabled trains for the temporary storage of work equipment. The research should address anticipated concerns of the Railroad Agencies that removal of Track 6 might affect operating procedures in case of a train breakdown, and that removal of Track 6 might affect the ability of the railroad to maintain and improve tracks and the Riverdale Stations. The evaluation should also take into consideration the long-term objectives of the State to increase freight use of the Hudson line. The research should document existing use of Track 6 and evaluate the alternatives for addressing the maintenance and storage problems, including identifying all of the railroad spurs south of Croton Harmon that can be used to temporarily store stalled trains, and the ability of the railroads to use the four main tracks to address the potential problem.
- 3) Ludlow Station – The description of the Ludlow station seems to dismiss the possibility of using the Track 6 ROW to provide access. We are not sure what this means for the next phase of the study. We request an opportunity to walk the site with the consultant so that we can understand their concerns.
- 4) Connection to Yonkers Waterfront - In Figures 5 and 6 there seems to be no unbroken route that would connect the Broadway Corridor with the Yonkers' waterfront. We would like to understand what route the consultant will study to make this connection.
- 5) Access to the water over the railroad - With respect to the bridges over the railroad, the Task 4 document describes the bridges as in the “control” of different parties. We think it is important for the consultant to study the existing rights and responsibilities with respect to the bridges (both existing and historic bridges) including the responsibilities specified by Federal law on the railroads. For example, we believe that the railroad is responsible for maintaining all access points that existed at the

time the original ROW was granted to the railroad.

- 6) Sugar Factory - As indicated in our earlier written comments, we consider the Sugar Factory an historic site, important industrial architecture. The detailed study work going forward should evaluate the possibility of providing visual access to the plant as an historic structure. We request a “preservation study” of the sugar factory that will describe the preservation values of the factory and assess its eligibility for designation under the City of Yonkers, State or Federal laws.
- 7) Power substation - The Task 4 document discusses the power substation at 0.6 miles north of the Spuyten Duyvil bridge, and suggests that the detailed evaluation will consider “either a raised structure or fill on a narrow strip of rocks...” We request that the detailed study also include an assessment of moving the power substation to the east side of the railroad tracks, including the cost.
- 8) Existing fishing on the waterfront - On page 22, the existing “trip attractors” should include the substantial amount of fishing that currently takes place on the waterfront. We believe that the environmental assessment of Hudson River access should make note of the continuing health advisory issued by the NYS Dept. of Health concerning consumption of fish caught in this section of the Hudson River. We request that if fishing is encouraged or supported by increased access to the waterfront, NYS DOH signage detailing the most current fish consumption advisories, in English, Spanish, and possibly other languages, be posted in a visible location at each access point.
- 9) Amtrak Operations - In providing information on the use of the railroad in the study area, the document says that 13 northbound and 13 southbound Amtrak trains travel through the study area. Some of these use the Empire Connection and the Spuyten Duyvil Bridge – some do not. What is the alternative route that Amtrak uses and what is their rationale for using one route or the other?
- 10) Access to the Spuyten Duyvil triangle must address protection of the salt marsh and related sensitive habitats.

We submit the following comments regarding East-West connectivity within the local and greater community:

Additional Maps - We request that the very useful information in the Appendix, “Other Planned or Existing Greenway Routes” be supplemented with a map of an area larger than the study area that shows these routes and how they relate to the corridors planned for further study. We believe the Westchester and NYC plans are particularly important.

Additions to Figure 7 (Map of Inland Trip Attractors) - We request that you add or highlight the employment centers listed under Inland Trip Attractors on page 45 of the Report, specifically:

Johnson Avenue

Riverdale Avenue
Broadway and 231st Street
Skyview Shopping center

Additions to all maps – We request that you add Phyllis Post Goodman Park, the Bell Tower, Hackett Park, as well as the seven overpasses along the Henry Hudson Parkway – one of the signature features of Riverdale and vital pedestrian connectors for the neighborhood – to all maps.

We request that further research document connectivity between trip attractors, parks, transit stations, bus routes, and parking lots.

Palisade Avenue corridor:

We believe that the proposed section of the Palisade Avenue corridor following Spalding Lane, Independence Avenue, and West 254th Street around Wave Hill is too dangerous for bicyclists. We request that the section of Riverdale Park directly to the west of Wave Hill be studied to determine the efficacy of potential methods that aim to constrain bicycles on a single path through the park. The study should consider the two existing paths in the park – the westernmost one should be considered for pedestrians only, and the easternmost one should be considered for bicycles only. As noted above under E-W connections to the Hudson River, Riverdale Park is designated by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation as Forever Wild. Every effort must be made to keep bicycles on the greenway trail and out of any other area of the park. Additionally, the bicycle and pedestrian trails in the Park should not be paved with any type of impermeable surface.

Additional points to be addressed:

The description of the freight use on the railroad is very useful, but we think it would be substantially improved if it was supplemented with a map or maps.

The property ownership along the routes in Yonkers is discussed, but no similar discussion is provided for the waterfront corridor or the inland routes in the Bronx. We request that this be provided. Also, we think that land ownership is one of the important elements of the detailed studies of the alternative corridors and that all land ownership should be well documented.

Connection with RiverWalk - We disagree with the conclusion of the HRVGL project team that “the “promenade portions of the RiverWalk are not suitable for designation as a greenway route. We request a site visit with the consultant.

Henry Hudson Parkway - We request that the study recognize the role of the Henry Hudson Parkway/Rt. 9A in the Hudson River Valley Greenway corridor in New York City. In the Bronx, we support a greenway trail close to the river, with the parkway, as the spine of Riverdale, logically serving to guide users to it.

Independence Avenue - On Figure 1, Independence Avenue does not exist between 247th Street and Spaulding Lane.

Fieldston Road - We request clarification on Fieldston Road segments: Text of report says segment 10b was removed from consideration, but Figure 8 shows segments 10 and 10b as eliminated, and Figure 5 shows segments 10, 10a, and 10b as eliminated.

Leighton Avenue - Section 24 shows Leighton Avenue in south Yonkers. Most of that is a one way street. Therefore, we recommend that we not send people biking north to south against the traffic.

We congratulate the Project Team for this helpful and useful product. However, we think it is a mistake to proceed without some effort to build support for the definition of these three routes for detailed study. We request that this plan-of-study be presented at a joint meeting of the RNP and the FHRG to share this material with the local residents. Further, we request a meeting of the TAC in Yonkers that would focus entirely on the Yonkers parts of the routes and would include a walking and car tour of the routes. We note that there has been very little participation by Yonkers officials or residents.