

Hudson River Park Advisory Council

November 9, 2022

HRP AC Chair Jeffrey LeFrancois opened the November meeting apologizing for the delay regarding the circulation of October 2021 minutes, a delay caused by Vice Chair Dan Miller's late submission.

First topic of discussion centered on 9A and the HRP Greenway, with representatives of SDOT and CDOT invited to provide insight on initiatives, projected and concurrent. Those members included:

Craig Ruyle -SDOT Region 11
Adam Levine - Traffic Engineer
Jennifer St. Ines - Manhattan Borough Office DOT

The AC heard a review of a CDOT bike count study in Midtown that covered 40 years of stats. Over that time, cycle use increased more than 7 fold from 5k rides a day to over 37k. The Greenway is the busiest cycle thoroughfare in the US.

The AC asked if there were counts for motorized cycles. The study does not separate motorized cycles from human powered cycles.

AC members reminded DOT panelists that some of these bikes travel over 30mph and carry heavy loads of cargo, and should have their own safe passage.

Pedestrian safety crossing 9A is also a concern. It was explained that lights are timed, city maintains the signals in close coordination with state. The signals are timed for 30mph.

Question regarding time to cross the West Street. Curb to curb is how things are timed. CDOT uses 2.7 feet per second as barometer for slow crossing pedestrians. The average slow pedestrian crossing, according to CDOT is 3.5 feet average.

AC Member asked if there were stats assembled to track crashes along the Greenway. As exhibited in the link below, the Greenway is not part of the ongoing study:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/bicyclists/bike-counts.shtml>

A question was raised regarding enforcement on bikeway, who has technical enforcement of that law. Enforcement falls under jurisdiction of NYPD, and State relies on NYPD for any enforcement. State handles enforcement around bridges and tunnels.

CDOT recognizes changes in commuter habits and relies on NYPD as it relates to enforcement. However, safety outreach teams are provided by CDOT.

Panel accepted statistic that more people are coming to the park. With increased visits, often via bike or walking, traffic is added to the Greenway with many cargo bike deliveries using the north/south bike passage. The Trust does not monitor all areas but Pier 40 is a safety area the Trusts monitors.

AC Member commented that there are areas crossing West Street, such as Little Island, where there is not enough space to cross. DOT open to areas that should be considered based on AC input. AC to provide areas to study to expand pedestrian waiting area to cross West Street.

Comment that the Greenway has speeding cycles that often do not pause to yield right of way to pedestrians. Request for more bike signals will be installed.

One area in need of a traffic study is the Heliport. An AC member described it as a hazard. A light signal could help mitigate the traffic intersection. The area is in need of signage for vehicles to yield. DOT is open to reviewing conflict areas. Comment that volume of use is high at the helicopter pad now. Too many conflicts result. Request to compare the data from a couple of years ago.

Motorized vehicle use on the Greenway is expanding exponentially. These high powered vehicles are illegal in the park yet there is no enforcement. Vehicles include mopeds, 4 wheelers, many carrying cargo for delivery services. Request to find safe passage for these more powerful type bikes; how can we best advocate for adding bike space?

Cycling count as presented to the AC from the DOT was met with skepticism: 7264 total rides per month comes out to roughly 30 rides per hour. State has plans to take quarterly counts. Members of the AC questioned the accuracy of the counters used for the study.

9A/West Street has morphed since 1998. Traffic use 25 years ago is different from today's traffic patterns. New construction such as Little Island, Gansevoort and heavy use at Pier 40 has upended traffic patterns. HRP AC requests a

Charette to present alternative uses and design of the boulevard. Need to install traffic calming measures so the increase of pedestrian, cycle and vehicle use is redesigned to allow for increase of new uses. Request to get DOT to commit to detailed analysis of the roadway/boulevard, both West Street and the Greenway.

Craig Ruyle responded that different aspects of 9A have been studied. The request from CBs and HRP AC for more intersections is something SDOT should look into and is a reasonable ask.

Use of the far west side has changed dramatically. What was once an abandoned waterfront is now a major residential and commercial area, with the most popular bikeway in the US.

Comment that fast moving, heavy cargo bikes are a hazard to human powered, slower moving bicycles and pedestrians. Request to install a sign at 59th Street to declare electric bikes are illegal.

NYPD does not enforce the rules on 9A because there are other more pressing priorities. As a result, there are issues with enforcement.

SDOT has an agreement with Hudson River Park Trust in the form of a maintenance agreement. The maintenance extends to the eastern boundary of the bikeway. The northern border is in need of coordinated maintenance including more signals, striping, etc.

When visiting the use of the Greenway, BPC Resilience project should be brought into the discussion.

Also explore speed control mechanisms for cyclists. Rumble strips are not comfortable and bike comfort is an important part of the Greenway, used for commuting and leisure activities. The bollards serve as a calming device.

HRPT reviewed the schedule to install permanent bollards. HRPT is charged with handling the construction contracts.

Bollards are specifically there for safety and security measures including traffic calming. Other opportunities are needed; what can be used to calm traffic besides bollards?

Once again, members of the AC requested a Charette be used to review options from users of the park. Recommendation to come up with a design to make the park visit safer.

Craig and Noreen met in the last month with an agenda to clean up the median area. Plan is to beautify median, potentially with roses. HRPK has experimented with plants at the buffer; maintaining roses is difficult. Need a trash collector. The horticulture team works on the median and that includes irrigation.

Question whether there is another city bikeway that is comparable to the HRP Greenway. A parallel can be found with the Belt Bikeway. Recommendation to compare for safety recommendations. Central Park Greenway is maintained by the Central Park Conservancy.

One of the most pressing safety issues is insufficient crossing times to cross West into the park. Need more time to cross. Request that DOT take another look at signal timing at directed locations. AC should create a list of places to look at.

Other topics of conversation included safety in signaling, median areas, new commercial traffic from development projects like Google, sidewalk widening on eastern side of West Street by Google, and more accurate accounting of cycling and pedestrian counts.

EIS triggers change; the study isolates problems but does not address them.

More vehicles are likely to flood West Street as a direct impact due to congestion pricing. Need an EIS. The congestion pricing plan is 2 years behind schedule. Congestion pricing provides a unique opportunity to focus on 9A and how uses have changed over the years since 1998 and how it will change with traffic directed to West Street to avoid fees.

Question: did Brooklyn bridge bikeway have an EIS?

We need accurate data. Jennifer Leung will follow up to confirm accuracy in numbers.

Mary reported on Safety (but kept it short because safety was the main issue with the Greenway discussion).

Michael on diversity and inclusion. Also short summary that rests in hands of EC.

Tammy provided an update on Membership committee due to meet in December and will meet through March when new groups can apply and old groups may not be renewed for AC membership;.

Tom reviewed the AC's newly formed History Working Group. Next steps include setting up a zoom call with HRPT for next steps. There are AC and expert advisors who have joined. The group's focus started with Gansevoort and the history on the West Side.

Deley requested names on the membership committee.

Meeting wrapped up with report on the success of Smashing Pumpkin's program, a program that is fun and educational. Combines physical pumpkin smash with composting methods. HRP received innovation award from Cantina, an interactive design award, also known as a user friendly design award.

Motion to adjourn - 7:52p.