



**BIKE NEW YORK**

Janno Lieber  
Chair and CEO  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
2 Broadway  
New York NY 10004

June 2, 2022

**re: MTA bike access policy, near term improvements on MTA bridges**

Dear Chairperson Lieber:

Bike New York appreciates the MTA's pro-active response to recent state legislation requiring the agency to create a strategic plan for bike access to bridges and transit stations. We've had productive conversations with your office, note your progress in assembling a staff and consultant team for the effort and took heart from your statement in February that "We're going to be putting bike parking everywhere we can."

We look forward to the public phase of the MTA bike plan's creation.

That said, we write today to urge you to undertake early actions to underscore the MTA's institutional and planning commitments. Many improvements for bike transportation and bike/transit links can be achieved relatively quickly and cost-effectively. They need not wait for New York's lengthy public construction timelines to play out.

With regard to bike parking at stations, there are many, many opportunities for quick implementation, especially working in concert with NYC DOT. We communicated to your office and to Commissioner Rodriguez early this year that connecting bicycling to MTA transit systems would require a long term commitment and that, within New York City it will be best served by a permanent joint MTA-DOT program along the lines of Select Bus. We once again urge you to formalize with DOT such a Bike Parking at Transit program, encompassing subway, Staten Island Railway, Metro-North and LIRR stations within the Five Boroughs.

On bridges we believe there are also opportunities for near-term improvements:

- \* The MTA should open the Cross-Bay Veterans Memorial Bridge to legal cycling immediately. The roughly 12' pathway on the bridge is wide enough now for safe mixed use by bicycling and the slight pedestrian volume the bridge sees. We are well aware that MTA Bridges and Tunnels has long fallen back on mixed use path design guidance in order to prohibit bikes. We urge you to consult on this issue with NYC DOT, which has taken more pragmatic steps of allowing cycling in less-than-ideal circumstances such as the Brooklyn Bridge promenade, the Queensboro Bridge south outer roadway and at many other older facilities across the five boroughs to help encourage the growth of cycling. To our knowledge, the MTA has never documented any safety problems stemming from bike-pedestrian conflicts on its bridges. Taking down the huge array of "no cycling" signs at the Veterans Memorial bridge entrances

would be a great manifestation of the pro-cycling messages we are beginning to hear from the MTA.

\* In the same vein, we also urge you to end the prohibition on cycling over the RFK/Triborough Bridge this summer. The open Manhattan-Randall’s Island path is relatively wide across most of the span. The Queens-Randall’s Island path is narrower, but the volume of pedestrians on it is very low. In 2017 Bike New York asked that you pilot and review the allowance of bike riding on the RFK/Triborough. Again, we are unaware of any data the MTA has collected to demonstrate an actual safety problem with bike riding on the RFK/Triborough Queens-Randall’s span.

We also urge you to install higher fencing along the RFK/Triborough Randall’s-Queens pathway, as we, Queens elected officials and Transportation Alternatives urged in 2019. The railing today is remarkably low for a pedestrian path on a high bridge.

In a great act of pragmatism, NYC Transit Authority President Alan Kiepper allowed legal access for bicycles to NYC subway trains in 1993, subject only to the condition that a bicycle’s presence not create a hazard for passengers. One the key factors in Kiepper’s decision was that bicycles were already being taken onto subways in relatively large numbers, and a policy acknowledging that fact was more honest and useful to the public than pretending otherwise. Bicycles are being ridden today across the RFK/Triborough and Cross-Bay Veterans Memorial Bridges today in relatively large numbers, and we urge that your cycling plans and practices reflect these facts. Signs on the Queens-Randall’s path that say “Cyclists slow down: stairway ahead” would be far more in the public interest than the current “bicycle riding prohibited signage.

More broadly in terms of bridges, we urge you to have your bridge managers closely discuss NYC DOT’s experience with bridge lane conversions on the Pulaski and Brooklyn Bridges with Commissioner Rodriguez and his traffic planning staff. It’s likely that you could create

Annual average daily traffic, selected NYC bridges 2016

	AADT 2016	AADT relative to Brooklyn Bridge	Total vehicle lanes	AADT/lane	Volume/lane relative to Brooklyn Bridge
<b>Brooklyn Bridge</b>	105,679	1	6	<b>17,613</b>	1
<b>Pulaski Bridge</b>	40,722	38.5%	5	8,144	46.2%
<b>Henry Hudson Bridge</b>	62,648	59.3%	7	8,950	50.8%
<b>CrossBay Veterans Memorial Bridge</b>	23,393	22.1%	6	3,899	22.1%
<b>Marine Parkway</b>	22,626	21.4%	4	5,657	32.1%
<b>Throgs Neck</b>	116,658	110.4%	6	19,443	110.4%
<b>Whitestone</b>	109,862	104.0%	6	18,310	104.0%
<b>Verrazzano Narrows</b>	198,123	187.5%	13	15,240	86.5%
<b>RFK/Triborough Qns/Randalls</b>	84,220	79.7%	8	10,528	59.8%
<b>RFK/Triborough Manhattan</b>	95,552	90.4%	6	15,925	90.4%

source: <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/nyc-bridge-traffic-report-2016.pdf>

significant new high ridership cycling corridors with low traffic impacts at a fraction of the cost of bridge capital projects. We think the Henry Hudson Bridge is especially ripe for this treatment, but considering the Brooklyn Bridge example, it is likely applicable across a range of MTA bridges.

In 2016, the last year for which NYC DOT has compiled overall NYC bridge traffic counts, the Brooklyn Bridge saw significantly more daily vehicle traffic than all but three MTA spans, with volumes comparable to the Throgs Neck and Whitestone. Per lane, the Brooklyn Bridge prior to its bike lane conversion saw vehicle volumes greater than those on all MTA spans, except the Throgs Neck and Whitestone, which were comparable to the Brooklyn. Vehicle volume per lane on the Henry Hudson was closer to that on the Pulaski Bridge, one year *after* the city converted a motor vehicle lane on the Pulaski to a dedicated bikeway.

A final point on bridges: we urge you to add bike-carrying racks to Q35 buses that cross the Marine Parkway Bridge along Flatbush Avenue, while you develop a longer term plan for bike access to the span.

We look to your leadership as MTA Chair and CEO to take the Metropolitan Transportation Authority forward to a sustainable future where MTA bridges support and connect a citywide bikeway/greenway system and New Yorkers can reach subway and train stations by bike as an easy and routine choice.

Sincerely  


Jon Orcutt  
Advocacy Director

cc. NYC Transportation Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez  
State Senator Alessandra Biaggi  
State Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas