

Letter Head

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader of the New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker of the New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 11247

March 3, 2022

Dear President Pro Tempore Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

I am writing as I am writing on behalf of Complete George—a statewide bike advocacy. We request that you include in your one house budget funding for measures that encourage cycling across New York.

The first request is for funding to underwrite municipalities’ cost to implement bicycle master plans, pursuant to A8936/S3897—far beyond the Governor’s proposed \$5 million.

We note the widespread need—as evidenced by the complete streets bills in the 2023 pipeline. We also cite the size of resources devoted to bike infrastructure elsewhere. In 2018, the City of London spent \$270 million on bike infrastructure, or \$30.68 for each of its 8.8 million residents.

The second request is for \$60 million to connect the George Washington Bridge (“GWB”) to the Empire State Trail by widening its South Path into a modern bikeway.

The GWB is the sole bike-able Hudson crossing out of New York City. But its 1931-era, 7 foot wide walkway is badly overcrowded. During a six-month study in 2015, NYCDOT recorded peak use regularly exceeding 500 users per hour—making it NYC’s third busiest bike crossing and well beyond the use threshold to merit a 14’ wide path.

As part of a \$1.9 billion program to “Restore the George”, the Port Authority of NY&NJ (the “PA”) is ripping-out-and-replacing the mile-long walkways, but will only restore them to 7 foot. This will put pedestrians and cyclists in continued conflict and expose the PA to endless litigation. As the PA conceded in its 2017 Bicycle Master Plan, “39 cyclist-related accidents [sic] were reported on, or in the vicinity of the GWB, between 2010 and 2016.”

Widening the GWB paths will cause a sharp ride in tourism. A 2015 report, similar to on the one which secured \$39 million to fund Walkway Over the Hudson, found that a linear park across the

GWB would attract \$42 million per year in new tourist spending and support over 700 jobs. We note that NYMTC is undertaking a feasibility study for a bike connector between the GWB and the Mario M. Cuomo Bridge—underscoring its importance to the downstate cycling community.

As an indication of widespread awareness and support, two hundred organizations and communities have called on the PA to widen the GWB paths. This includes County Executives of Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Dutchess, the Mayor of Yonkers, Community Boards 4, 7, 9, 12 in Manhattan and 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 in the Bronx.

The campaign is to secure \$60 million (or \$6 million per year for ten years) in a) the Executive Budget to grow jobs and tourism; or b) as part of the Environmental Bond Act to extend resident access to green space; or c) in tandem with the NJ Governor, to prevail upon the PA to self-fund the project as a means to rebalance their portfolio of greenhouse-gas-intensive air terminals, automotive crossings and seaports.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,