



Century Road Club Association

## **Rescind the 15 MPH Limit for Bikes in Central Park. Fix the Real Problem.**

In the final days of his term, former Mayor Eric Adams [announced](#) that New York City would reduce the cycling speed limit on Central Park Drive from 20 mph to 15 mph. Mayor Mamdani should reverse this decision immediately.

### **Why this Matters**

Safety in Central Park matters deeply — to pedestrians, runners, families, tourists and cyclists alike. But this policy does nothing to improve user safety, rather it functionally disenfranchises the cohort of cyclists who've safely [trained in the Park for decades](#).

And not only is the new rule misguided, it deflects from the real problem the City needs to solve. It is not reckless cyclists. It is scarcity.

### **The Wrong Solution to the Wrong Problem**

- The 15-mph rule is framed as a safety measure under Sammy's Law. Yet that law was intended to reduce deaths and serious injuries caused by *motor vehicles on public roads*. Applying it to cyclists on a shared use path stretches its purpose beyond recognition.
- NYCDOT has put forth no evidence that lowering the speed limit for *bicycles* will meaningfully reduce injuries. The 2024 [Central Park Drives Safety and Circulation Study](#) commissioned by the CP Conservancy, and written in part by new DOT Commissioner Mike Flynn, does not recommend reducing cycling speeds.
- New York State Law already sanctions individuals who [fail to yield pedestrian right-of-way](#) or [maintain speed reckless and imprudent](#). These laws let police address genuinely dangerous behavior, as opposed to a blanket limit that penalizes responsible cyclists.
- Central Park Drive has served as a safe, car-free training venue [for decades](#). Generations of cyclists — including Olympic gold medalist Kristen Faulkner — began their careers on this loop. Also for [wheelchair racers](#) and hand cyclists.
- Local cycling clubs voluntarily [train during early morning hours](#) when the Drive is least crowded, honoring Frederick Law Olmsted's vision of minimizing conflict among park users. A blanket speed cap disregards that tradition of shared stewardship.
- More broadly, the policy risks discouraging recreational cycling at a time when public health and active transportation should be city priorities. New York is home to some

800,000 adult cyclists — yet offers very few continuous, car-free recreational facilities. If Central Park can be restricted without evidence or consultation, so can other bikeways.

## The Real Issue: Scarcity

Conflict on the Drive is not caused by “reckless cyclists.” It is the predictable result of too many users sharing one finite space. New York has chronically underinvested in cycling infrastructure compared to its global peers.

London, with a comparable population and geographic footprint, invested roughly [\\$100 million in cycling infrastructure in 2025 alone](#). This continues a multi-year commitment to building out the network of cycleways connecting to its central business district.

Noble aspirations notwithstanding, we are still rationing space instead of building it. New York City has consistently fallen short of [its own goals](#) for building out protected bike lanes. If we want fewer conflicts within Central Park, we must reduce pressure on the Drive by creating alternatives.

## In and Around Central Park

The [Central Park Drives Study](#) offers a blueprint for managing user conflict on the drive — one that remains largely unimplemented. Its recommendations include:

- Building bikeways along CP’s transverses and adjoining roads to draw down use on the Drive in addition to improving east-west mobility for cyclists of all abilities.
- Encourage pedestrian use of the many arches spanning the Drive. The Greyshot Arch in particular provides an alternative to the congested crossing at West 61st Street.

## Beyond Central Park: Create Alternatives

If the goal is to reduce cyclist volume in Central Park, the city must give cyclists somewhere else to go. These investments would distribute cycling volume, reduce conflict naturally, and expand access to neighborhoods underserved by green space.

Designate alternate cyclist venues throughout the City. Candidates include Randall’s Island, Jamaica Bay, Rockaway and Freshkills. Industrial zones in Red Hook and Hunts Point that are largely empty on weekends should also be considered.

- The city must commit to [upgrading the arterial connectors](#) long sought by the NYC Greenways Coalition.
- Transportation and Parks should designate a weekend recreational cycling network linking parks via low-traffic residential streets. The so-called [Grayways](#) proposal would use legislation and GPS wayfinding to designate a citywide bike network at little cost.
- [Increase bike capacity on NYC Ferry](#) on early morning trips from Manhattan to the robust network of bikeways spanning [Bay Ridge](#) and [Rockaway](#).

**Resources:** [Memo to Mamdani: Rescind Central Park’s New 15-MPH Bike Speed Limit](#), [The Real Problem in Central Park Isn’t Speed — It’s Scarcity](#), [Central Park Drives Safety and Circulation Study](#), [Proposal to expand bike capacity on NYC Ferry](#), [Grayways](#)

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