

## Rescind the 15 MPH Limit for Bikes in Central Park

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 and the City Council should reverse this decision immediately.

In announcing the move, Adams cited his authority to regulate speed limits granted to the city under the so-called [Sammy's Law](#), and framed the change as a safety measure for all park users. The park's governing non-profit, the Central Park Conservancy, [eagerly endorsed](#) the decision.

### 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, misapplies state law, disenfranchises cyclists who've [trained safely in the Park for decades](#), and sets a [dangerous precedent for recreational cycling across New York City](#). Sammy's Law was designed to apply to *motor vehicles on public roads*, not bicyclists on shared use paths.

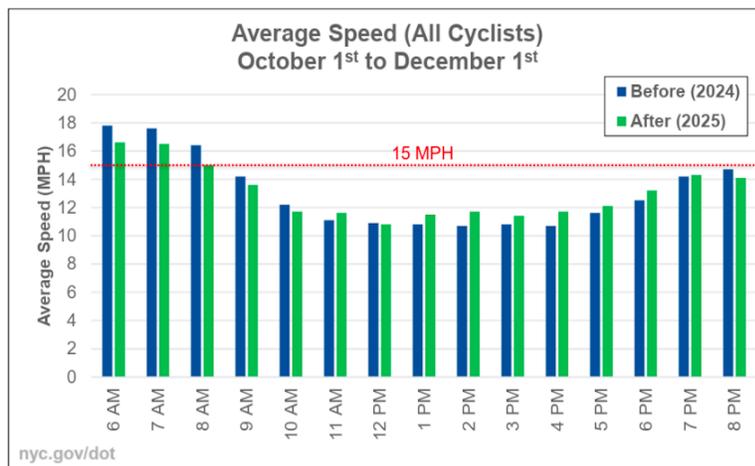
Moreover, the , it deflects from the real problem the City needs to solve. It is not reckless cyclists. It is scarcity.

### DOT's own data contradicts the rationale for a 15 mph speed limit

- Moreover, NYCDOT has offered 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.
- In January, DOT reported that some [20 pedestrians are injured on the Drive each year](#). Twenty divided by 40 million annual Park visitors equals 0.000005. Which raises the question of how much incremental safety the lower speed limit is expected to achieve.

- The Federal Highways Administration tool to evaluate [shared use path's "level of service,"](#) holds that *user volume* (not cyclist speed) is a key input used to predict conflict.

We can therefore infer that most injuries on the Drive occur between the 10AM-4PM period of peak use—when cyclist speed is less than 12 mph.



This is compared to 18 mph between 6-8AM, a period when, as DOT concedes, “fewer people are around.” It would appear that the clubs’ limiting group training to off-peak periods draws down cyclist volume as well as speed during periods of peak use.

- The CP Study further states that CP visitors arrive by bike and on foot in roughly equal numbers—48%. (Of those, 13% are so-called “fast” cyclists) Yet pedestrians get full access to all 58 miles of Park trails, while cyclists get *shared* access to the 6.1 mile Drive—the imbalance most keenly felt during peak use.

- The CP Drive includes [downhills](#) steep enough to propel even casual cyclists past 15 mph. Which means that the new rule effectively criminalizes *all* 20 million cyclists.
- This sets the dangerous precedent that Sammy’s Law, which was created to protect cyclists from harm, is being used to exclude them from facilities they need to bike safely.

### Real Solutions - In and Around Central Park

- Enforcement: New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law 1151(a) already sanctions individuals who [fail to yield pedestrian right-of-way](#). And VTL 1180(a) targets those who [maintain speed not reasonable and prudent](#). These laws are far better suited to address dangerous behavior than a blanket speed limit that penalizes responsible cyclists.
- Education: Since 2012, racing and recreational cycling clubs have counseled members to limit group [training to off-peak periods](#), honoring Frederick Law Olmsted’s vision of minimizing conflict among park users. Yet the Conservancy has never formally acknowledged their contribution to Park user safety. That recognition is long overdue.
- Engineering: The [Central Park Drives Safety and Circulation Study](#) offers a (largely unimplemented) blueprint for managing conflict. It’s recommendations include:
  - Build bikeways along CP’s transverses and adjoining roads to draw down use on the Drive while improving east-west mobility for cyclists of all abilities.
  - Encourage pedestrian use of arches spanning the Drive. The [Greyshtot Arch](#) provides an alternative to the congested crossing at West 61st Street.
  - In addition, to reduce peak demand and unequal allocation, afford cyclists’ access to the six-mile [Bridle Path](#)—which was created to enable equestrians to ride at speed.
  - Issue a request for proposals to grade-separate the signaled crossing by the [Delacorte Theater](#), one of the most chaotic conflict points on the Drive.

### Real Solutions - Away from the Park

Conflict on the Drive is not caused by “reckless cyclists.” It is the predictable result of the City’ chronic underinvestment in cycling infrastructure needed to serve its 800,000 active adult cyclists. By comparison, Transport for London invested [\\$100 million in its network of cycleways](#) in 2025 alone. Ideas to address this disparity include:



- [Implement the arterial cycling connectors](#) long sought by the NYC Greenways Coalition.
- Designate a weekend network of recreational bikeways to connecting park deserts to green space across the five boroughs to give tourists other places to go. The so-called [Grayways](#) proposal would employ legislation and GPS wayfinding to jump-start the project at little cost.
- [Increase bike capacity on NYC Ferry](#) on 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](#), [Cycle Club Sues City Calling CP Bike Speed Limit A ‘Real Threat’ To Active Transportation](#), [Article 78 filing](#)

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