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WEST HARLEM ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

December 21, 2007

Honorable Janette Sadik-Khan
Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Re: Access to Harlem River Park

Dear Commissioner Sadik-Khan:

We write to you on behalf of the Harlem River Park Task Force, a community-based alliance of 31 advocacy groups and seven elected officials seeking to create an environmentally sensitive state of the art park along the Harlem River, from 125th to 159th streets in Manhattan. Since 2002, one of our most pressing concerns has been the lack of quality pedestrian and bicycle access from the adjacent neighborhoods to the park.

About six years ago, your agency let the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation carve out small walkways along the edges of two vehicular ramps over the Harlem River Drive at 135th and 139th Streets. These walkways are about three feet wide and do not appear ADA compliant. In addition, they meet confusing and at times dangerous intersections at Madison and Fifth avenues, respectively. [The Riverton Tenants Association and Community Board 11 have been requesting that the 135th Street and Madison Avenue intersection be redesigned for the past 25 years.] There is also access to Harlem River Park from a pedestrian bridge over the Harlem River Drive at 142nd Street that also meets Fifth Avenue in a confusing and dangerous manner.

From 125th to 135th streets, the waterfront is completely inaccessible to pedestrians and bicycles because it is designated as a construction staging area for the rebuilding of the Harlem River bridges and the Drive. It is underutilized, and prevents Harlem River Park, which begins north of 135th Street, from being connected to the East River Esplanade south of 125th Street. This and the narrow walkways on the ramps over the Drive have significantly affected the usability of the park.

Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan

December 21, 2007

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We have several ideas for improving these situations, including redesigning the above mentioned intersections, and would greatly appreciate a meeting with you and/or your designated staff. As background information, please see the attached letters written by the Task Force and former Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields highlighting some of what's mentioned above, along with information provided by Transportation Alternatives and maps from the Harlem Community Development Corporation.

We will be contacting your office shortly to schedule the meeting. If you have any questions, please contact us at (212) 961-4140. Thank you and we look forward to working with you and your agency to address these important issues.

Sincerely,



Thomas G. Lunke
Co-Chair



Robin Chappelle
Co-Chair

Attachments