



HUTCHINSON RIVER PARKWAY TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR STUDY

New York City Department of City Planning
Transportation Division
May 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) has conducted a transportation study of the Hutchinson River Parkway Corridor between Pelham Parkway and Ferry Point Park. The purpose of this study, which was a joint effort between DCP's Bronx Borough Office and Transportation Division, was to evaluate the transportation needs along and surrounding the Hutchinson River Parkway corridor with the goal of improving existing conditions and developing longer-term recommendations for improvements as the area continues to grow.

Current and planned developments in the study area, which include portions of Community Districts 10 and 11, include more than one million square feet of office space; more than 700,000 square feet of planned regional retail development; and a proposed commuter rail station. While the economic development is beneficial for this area, the additional auto-based trips have created traffic circulation and wayfinding problems in the street network, much of which includes lower density residential neighborhoods. As a result of increased traffic congestion, some locations have safety issues, and access to and from the Hutchinson River Parkway is also becoming more difficult. In order to address these issues, the study had the following objectives:

To examine and assess existing traffic conditions and street network within the corridor study area;

- To identify opportunities to accommodate new and existing uses;
 - To improve connectivity and traffic circulation along selected corridors surrounding the Hutchinson River Parkway;
 - To improve access and connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists, including to the greenway;
 - To support connections to transit;
 - To enhance transportation safety within the study area for roadway users.
-

Summary of Identified Issues

As part of this study, NYCDOP met with many community stakeholders resulting in an inventory of key issues and opportunities. Depending on the groups present at individual meetings, the area of focus was either north or south of East Tremont Avenue (see last page for a listing of stakeholders).

Issues North of East Tremont Avenue

The focus north of East Tremont Avenue was on the following specific areas: Hutch Metro Center, West of the Hutch Metro Center, Proposed Metro North Station and Westchester Square.

A-Traffic Issues and Concerns

- *Access to the Hutchinson Metro Center is possible only through one entry point:* The intersection of Marconi Street and Waters Place. Another option besides this intersection is necessary. The other major issue for the Hutchinson Metro Center is the lack of internal streets connecting to the facilities inside the center.
- *Extension of Bassett Avenue (West of the Hutch Metro Center):* At times traffic backs-up on Stillwell Avenue causing congestion. Community Board 11 would like to make Bassett Avenue (west of the rail lines) a through street, making it an alternate north-south connection to Pelham Parkway besides Stillwell Avenue.
- *Exit ramp at the end of Stillwell Avenue (West of the Hutch Metro Center):* According to Community Board 11, the exit ramp at the end of Stillwell Avenue (end of East Gun Hill Rd) was supposed to be temporary and negatively affects the traffic in the neighborhood. Its removal would be preferred by the community.
- *Pedestrian Crossings on Pelham Parkway (West of the Hutch Metro Center) and in the Westchester Square Area:* Illegal pedestrian mid-block crossings observed at both locations.

B-Public Transit Issues and Concerns

- *Bus Services (Hutchinson Metro Center):* Access to the Hutchinson Metro Center by public transportation is not easy since there is no direct access by public transit into the center. Currently a shuttle bus service is provided to/from the Westchester Square subway station,

but it is not sufficient.

- *Proposed Metro-North Morris Park Station and Local Bus Services (West of the Hutch Metro Center):* It is anticipated by the community that additional commuter traffic into this area will be generated by the proposed Morris Park Metro-North Station when it gets built. The stakeholders would also like for the MTA to consider providing an east-west connection for pedestrians over the rail tracks to connect the neighborhoods.

C-Parking Issues and Concerns

According to some of the stakeholders, there is insufficient on-street parking in this area to meet the needs of the local residents.

Issues South of East Tremont Avenue

The focus south of East Tremont Avenue was on the following specific areas: Bruckner Interchange and Brush Avenue.

A-Traffic Issues and Concerns

- *Access to Bruckner Interchange/ Bruckner Boulevard and Trucks:* Traffic often backs-up at the interchange approach and many trucks end up on the local streets. Additionally, Brush Avenue will become the main access road to/from a growing number of new developments in this area.
- *Brush Avenue Traffic Circulation:* Traffic generally backs up on Brush Avenue as vehicles head north to the Bruckner Interchange. Truck turns are sometimes a problem at the end of Brush Avenue. There is a safety issue for cyclists using the Brush Avenue bicycle lanes, which often experience heavy truck traffic. Additionally Brush Avenue has no sidewalks from Wenner Place to the Pepsi Distribution facility to accommodate residents wanting to walk to Ferry Point Park.
- *Lafayette Avenue Traffic Circulation:* Consider improving traffic circulation and the capacity of this roadway as an important east-west corridor keeping in mind the anticipated future increases in vehicular traffic in this area.
- *Bridges (Brush Avenue Area):* the concern was raised to have mitigation measures in place during the reconstruction of Unionport Bridge

period in order to not aggravate existing traffic conditions.

B-Public Transit Issues and Concerns

- *Bus Services and Proposed Developments (South of East Tremont Avenue):* The growing number of new developments planned for the area will generate additional vehicular trips on the roadways. Access by public transit or additional services to these sites should be considered to alleviate future traffic conditions.

C-Greenway Path and Open Spaces Issues and Concerns

- *Under the Bruckner Interchange:* the triangular space under the Bruckner Interchange is dark and unused.
- *Waterfront Path along Westchester Creek (Brush Avenue Area):* The Friends of Ferry Point Park would like to have a greenway path along the Westchester Creek waterfront (east side of Westchester Creek).
- *Access to Ferry Point Park:* Access to Ferry Point Park from the east side of the park to the west is an issue. Stakeholders asked the city to consider a waterfront promenade for this park similar to what has been proposed in the NYC Greenway path. Additionally Ferry Point Park is often left in poor condition with trash and garbage by users of the sports fields.

Summary of Recommendations

Roadway Network and Corridor Improvements

Access to the Hutchinson Metro Center: This study recommends creating new entry points into the Hutch Metro Center by providing two additional access points along the southern border of the center. This recommendation is to be combined with a proposal to link private internal roads to another and convert them into public roads. A formal arrangement would need to be discussed with the developers of the Hutch Metro Center.

Alternate access to the northern part of the study area (to Pelham Parkway): A long term recommendation is to explore in the northern part of the study area other options for vehicular traffic from the Hutch Metro Center office complex to access Pelham Parkway. At least consider having another option put in place in order to be used during an emergency, when necessary. As designed all vehicles enter and exit the center through Marconi St at Waters Place.

Proposed East-West Connection: This study recommends for the MTA to consider providing an east-west connection for pedestrians to the proposed Morris Park Metro-North station by allowing an overpass over the rail tracks at the end of Morris Park Avenue that extends into the adjacent neighborhoods. Without this overpass pedestrians to the west of the rail lines are isolated and do not have easy access to the Hutchinson Metro Center and vice versa.

Extension of Bassett Avenue (West of the Hutch Metro Center): Extend Bassett Avenue further north to Pelham Parkway (Bassett Avenue west of the rail lines and have it become another option besides Stillwell Avenue for northbound traffic heading towards Pelham Parkway.

Exit ramp at the end of Stillwell Avenue at East Gun Hill Road (West of the Hutch Metro Center):

Community District 11 would like this ramp to be removed. NYCDOT recommends that the community district board reach out to the relevant state government agency to discuss the outcome of the traffic study that was done for this area in order to resolve this issue.

Access to the Bruckner Interchange/Bruckner Boulevard and Trucks - Short-Term Recommendations:

- Increase enforcement and police presence in this area. Encourage community boards (10 and 11) to meet, coordinate with local precincts

(NYPD) and to look into specific problematic locations.

- Consider improving signage to facilitate traffic circulation for trucks that need to utilize the local streets.

Access to the Bruckner Interchange/ Bruckner Boulevard and Trucks - Long-Term Recommendations:

- Freight by ferry was considered and researched for the southern part of the Bronx, but currently this mode of transportation is not feasible due to costs. However passenger ferry service could be considered in the long term in some capacity to alleviate vehicular traffic in the area.
- A proposal was made to explore other access points over Westchester Creek to alleviate congestion at the Bruckner Interchange.
- A proposal supported by Community Board 10 for a slipway at St Joseph's Place to I-95 interstate highway in order to provide a direct link to the Bruckner Expressway. Currently vehicles have to travel on the local road (Bruckner Boulevard) for more than 20 blocks in order to access the Bruckner Expressway. This is not feasible under existing conditions. Further study and analysis would be necessary, if it is to be considered in the future.

Brush Avenue Traffic Circulation - Alleviate Traffic Congestion:

- *Improve Intersection Operation:* NYCDOT as part of the Unionport Bridge reconstruction is looking into the following recommendations, which include expanding the northbound approach to add a third traffic lane on Brush Avenue, making signal timing adjustments, and relocating a bus stop on Brush Avenue.
- *Relocate Bus Stop:* Based on a site visit it is recommended move the Q44 and Q50 bus stop on Brush Avenue at Bruckner Boulevard (south-east corner) to a midblock location south of this intersection. This recommendation would require the assessment and approval of the NYCT.
- *Alternate Route for Trucks of Pepsi Facility:* This study recommends a feasibility analysis of creating a new access point for trucks into the Pepsi Distribution site from the Hutchinson River Parkway Service Road. This would divert the facility's truck traffic from Brush Avenue which is a local street. The new access point could be created by swapping the current location of the exit ramp with the current entrance

ramp, allowing trucks to exit earlier onto the parkway's service road and easier access to the Pepsi facility. Approval and assessment by NYSDOT would be required for this alternative route.

Brush Avenue Traffic Circulation - Alleviate Traffic Congestion:

The "Ring Road" provides a critical roadway link in this area. It is currently accessible by all traffic and is used as such. As it operates today access and crossing points for pedestrians are not determined along this loop as they travel to and from developed recreational areas within Ferry Point Park raising pedestrian safety concerns for this area. This road is used as well by all types of vehicles and has the potential to attract more users with plans underway for significant new developments in the immediate area. These developments as new traffic generators can affect traffic operations along the Hutchinson River Parkway and eventually the use of the Ring Road.

As it operates today the Ring Road does not have the facilities necessary to support the current level of traffic and more so with future projected growth in the area. Therefore vehicular/pedestrians conflicts along the "Ring Road" would require the installation of traffic control devices and other safety treatments. These could include new roadway design such as buffers zones, speed reducers, fences, light poles, traffic and pedestrian signals, signs, etc. In addition under future conditions, widening of the "Ring Road" to increase capacity, or use of traffic calming and enforcement measures to discourage through traffic may be necessary. DCP is willing to coordinate with the Department of Parks, the Department of Transportation and potentially other stakeholders to resolve all outstanding issues with the operation and maintenance of the "Ring Road", leading to overall better traffic operations for this area of the Bronx.

Brush Avenue Traffic Circulation – Bicyclist Alternate Route:

Have an alternate bicycle route on the Hutchinson River Parkway Southbound service road besides Brush Avenue, which would also connect to Ferry Point Park. This bicycle route would be physically separated from vehicular traffic. This proposal requires approval from NYCDOT.

Wayfinding Signage from the Whitestone Bridge and Toll Plaza Area

This study recommends installing wayfinding signage to provide dedicated travel lanes and signage at the toll plaza/bridge area leading drivers to/from the Target Center and other sites of large developments.

Intersection Traffic Analysis and Operation Improvements

An evaluation of the traffic operations at “key” locations was performed for the above thirteen intersections to identify the level of service (LOS) and the level of traffic congestion in the study area during the peak periods of the day.

The LOS analysis identified certain deficiencies due to significant delays and congestion at five analyzed intersections under existing and near future traffic conditions. The five intersections are: Morris Park Avenue and Eastchester Road, Waters Place and Eastchester Road, Waters Place and Marconi Street, Westchester Avenue/Ericson Place and Middletown Road, and Brush Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard.

Below are the recommendations and potential roadway improvements proposed for these intersections:

Morris Park Avenue and Eastchester Road;

Waters Place and Eastchester Road;

Westchester Avenue, Ericson Place and Middletown Road

To accommodate future demand, signal timing modifications are recommended. These three key intersections can also benefit by having traffic agents during peak periods and continuous monitoring of traffic conditions that could lead to faster traffic adjustments and further improve congestion.

Waters Place and Marconi Street

There would be a need for the following re-configuration and signal timing changes to accommodate the future traffic at this intersection: on-street parking would be eliminated along Waters Place to create space for the additional lanes at the Marconi Street entrance, proper channelization of these newly created lanes would be required, and the creation of a new 3-phase traffic signal timing.

Brush Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard

The transportation consultant of the Target development is currently working with NYCDOT to expand the northbound approach to add a third northbound traffic lane on Brush Avenue. This improvement, with signal timing adjustments, would be necessary to avoid long vehicular spillbacks and delays along Brush Avenue.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety and Environment Improvements

The ten locations within the study area are analyzed in detail for safety improvements. They are:

- Eastchester Road and Waters Place (*Hutch Metro Center*)
- Eastchester Road/ Silver Street and Williamsbridge Road (*Hutch Metro Center*)
- Eastchester Road and Morris Park Avenue (*West of Hutch Metro Center*)
- Westchester Avenue and East Tremont Avenue (*Westchester Square Area*)
- Brush Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard (*Brush Avenue Area*)
- Westchester Avenue between Middletown Road and Waters Place (*Hutch Metro Center*) – 2 locations
- Hutchinson River Greenway and Pelham Parkway at Stillwell Avenue (*West of Hutch Metro Center*)
- Westchester Avenue and Ferris Place (*Westchester Square Area*)
- East Tremont Avenue between Fink, Ponton and Lane Avenues (*Westchester Square Area*)

General issues with these locations:

- Turning vehicles do not always yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk
- Several pedestrians have been observed crossing midblock (jaywalking)
- Due to the presence of columns supporting an elevated rail line on Westchester Avenue, pedestrians are not always visible to drivers
- Conflicts between motorists and cyclists were observed under the elevated rail line on Westchester Avenue as cyclists connect to the greenway path

Below are the recommendations and safety improvements proposed for these locations in terms of pedestrians and cyclists:

- Install “Turning Vehicles Yield to Pedestrians” signs which can help reduce pedestrian crashes and conflicts at particular intersections
- Install pedestrian countdown signals which can help reduce conflicts with vehicular traffic
- Install “Wait for Walk Signal to Cross” signs to discourage pedestrian crossings during motorists’ protected left or right turn signal phase
- Install “No Pedestrian Crossing” signs at locations of illegal midblock crossings
- Install new crosswalks to provide a designated location for pedestrians to cross safely
- Slow down vehicles (traffic calming method) by widening and raising the marked traffic island where possible
- Have a red flashing traffic light asking drivers on Westchester Avenue, at an unsignalized location, to stop at pedestrian crossing and proceed with caution when clear
- Add signage on Westchester Avenue under the elevated tracks informing motorists of the presence of an on-street greenway connector to minimize conflicts between motorists and cyclists
- Have informational signs to guide bicyclists from Waters Place on Westchester Avenue as they make a connection to the Hutchinson River Greenway path.

Public Transit and Service improvements

Based on issues and concerns related to transit service that have been raised by the stakeholders and both community districts, the following recommendations have been developed:

- Consider additional bus services to accommodate the projected increase in commuters coming to areas of planned and proposed new developments.
- Consider the reroute of bus routes to serve the proposed Morris Park Metro-North Station (when built) in order to help reduce vehicular traffic in the area

New York City Transit (NYCT) needs to evaluate all areas of concern, the existing bus routes, and ridership levels before they can restructure any segment of a bus route.

Additionally, this study recommends that when the proposed Morris Park Station is built that it includes an east-west connection for pedestrians that would link both neighborhoods located on either side of the tracks.

Open Space Access Improvements and Streetscape Amenities

- *Under the Bruckner Interchange (where Brush Avenue intersects with Bruckner Boulevard):* the triangular space is dark and unused. This study recommends adding amenities including better lighting to enliven this space.
- *New Sidewalks (Brush Avenue Area):* This study recommends the installation of new sidewalks on Brush Avenue where sidewalks are missing to accommodate local residents wanting to walk to Ferry Point Park.
- *Access to the west side of Ferry Point Park:* Access to the west side of Ferry Point Park, where the ball fields are located, is difficult from the east side of park. The city should look into the option of installing a connection or path between Ferry Point Park East and Ferry Point Park West along the waterfront as shown on the NYC Greenway Plan. NYCDPR is currently looking into developing the waterfront path; however funding is critical to make it happen.

Stakeholders and Outreach Process

A total of twelve meetings with community groups, institutions, and developers took place from May through August 2013. The purpose of these meetings was to identify key elements of the Hutchinson River Parkway Corridor that would be studied within the scope of the project including:

- Identification of issues, concerns and constraints within the area of study
- Identification of key corridors and intersections to analyze
- Identification of strengths in the study area and of opportunities for improvements.

The stakeholders included:

- Community Board 10

- Community Board 11
- Bronx Borough President's Office
- City Councilman James Vacca
- New York State Senator Jeffrey D. Klein
- NYCEDC (NYC Economic Development Corporation)
- NYCDOT (NYC Department of Transportation) Bronx Borough Commissioner; Freight Division; and Traffic Planning
- NYSDOT (NY State Department of Transportation)
- NYCDPR (NYC Department of Parks and Recreation)
- MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority – Metro-North and NYC Transit Operations)
- NYCDOT(Bronx Borough Commissioner and Traffic Planning)
- SOBRO (South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation)
- Westchester Square BID, Bronx Chamber of Commerce
- Northeast Bronx Association
- Morris Park Medical/Educational Institutions – Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Calvary Hospital; Jacobi Medical Center, Bronx Psychiatric Center, Montefiore
- Hutchinson Metro Center, Simone Development
- Pelham Bay Taxpayers
- Friends of Ferry Point Park
- Country Club Civic Association