

Op-ed for the RIVERDALE PRESS by Paul J. Elston, President of the Friends of the Hudson River Greenway in the Bronx

The Friends of the Hudson River Greenway in the Bronx has worked to promote a waterfront Hudson River Greenway Link for over fifteen years. We began with, and have consistently advocated for, a Greenway route that is immediately adjacent to the River and that would provide physical access to the River for the local residents of the Bronx, as well as a walking and biking trail for our local residents and our neighbors to the north and the south. The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) plan for the Greenway Link accomplishes that goal and to that extent the Friends supports the plan.

However, the NYMTC plan also proposes an inland route for the Greenway Link along Palisade Avenue and Riverdale Avenue. We have major reservations about the inland part of the NYMYC plan and have consistently expressed those reservations in the numerous meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee meetings during the planning process.

Throughout the planning process the Friends have advocated a waterfront route that starts on the south end by crossing the Harlem River on the Spuyten Duyvil swing bridge (a picture of which you presented on your front page last week with your Greenway Link article). After a few years of pushing for that route, we acquiesced to the very loud pushback that we heard from Amtrak, the State Department of Transportation (DOT), Metro-North and NYMTC, and accepted that the route would go over the Henry Hudson Bridge.

The rationale offered by the transportation agencies was that Metro-North has plans to use the Bridge in the next few years when it begins providing service directly to Penn Station from Riverdale Station, and the new service would require a second track to be added to the bridge, leaving no room for the Greenway. Further, State DOT and Amtrak have plans for high speed rail that will utilize the Bridge. In light of this the Friends accepted the Henry Hudson Bridge as the route for the Greenway, but requested that any future substantial investment in the swing bridge recognize that this route is the optimal route for the Greenway and that a Greenway be included in any redesign of the bridge. It is our understanding that State DOT has agreed to include the Greenway in any future design effort, but we do not expect this to take place during the next 25-50 years. We accepted the route across the Henry Hudson Bridge because we do not want to wait that long for the Greenway and for access to the waterfront.

The Friends of the Hudson River Greenway will continue to pursue its priority for a waterfront route for the Greenway Link. This is the route that was supported in the November, 2012 resolution of Community Board 8, The Bronx, and this is the route supported by Bob Bender, Chairman of the CB8 Parks and Recreation Committee, and Gary Klingsberg in your front page article on the Greenway last week. With almost no objections from local residents – rather, with enthusiastic support from local residents throughout the planning process - this is the route that is universally supported in Riverdale. This is the Preferred Route.