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Polly Trottenberg
Commissioner
NYC Dept of Transportation
55 Water Street 9th floor
New York, NY 10041

March 8, 2019

Re: Separate walking and bicycling lanes on the Queensboro Bridge

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg:

Bike New York writes in support of the proposal to improve cycling and walking conditions on the Queensboro Bridge by converting the South Outer Roadway into a pedestrian-only path, while retaining and upgrading the bicycle facilities on the North Outer Roadway.

We understand that the possibility of permanently opening the South Outer Roadway to pedestrians and dedicating the entire North Outer Roadway to two-way bicycle traffic may be delayed by pending construction work on the bridge. But we urge the City to make the policy decision and justification now to dedicate separate bike and pedestrian lanes. That will ensure that the change becomes a legacy of Mayor de Blasio's commitments to safety, sustainability and quality of life, and allow advocacy resources to be focused on supporting other NYCDOT initiatives.

The city should dedicate the South Outer Roadway exclusively to foot traffic because the North Outer roadway alone is too narrow for shared two-way bike traffic and people walking. Increasing volumes of cyclists and pedestrians will lead to additional crashes going forward. Guidelines published by the National Association of City Transportation Officials state that a desirable width for a two-way bikeway is 12 feet, the approximate width of the North Outer Roadway.

The South Outer Roadway, which is currently used by Queens-bound vehicles, is often underutilized and only deemed safe from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Total daily vehicle traffic on the Queensboro Bridge is down by 8.5 percent or 15,833 vehicles from 2006-2016 according to NYCDOT bridge traffic counts. Queens-bound volumes

(the direction used by the South Outer Roadway) are typically lower than Manhattan-bound volumes. 2016 daily average Queens-bound vehicle counts were at their lowest level since 1996. This trend is likely to accelerate if the Cuomo/de Blasio congestion pricing plan is included in the state budget and subsequently implemented.

In contrast, bicycle ridership on the Queensboro Bridge increased by 35 percent from 2012 to 2017, according to DOT's *Cycling in the City* report. More than 5,000 cyclists cross the Queensboro Bridge on an average weekday. We expect this trend to continue due to growing interest in cycling, population growth, residential development, and the recent expansion of Queens' bicycle network, including installation of protected bike lanes on Skillman and 43rd Avenue and on Queens Boulevard. The planned shift of the CitiBike fleet to electric-assist bikes will also significantly increase bike share crossings of all of the East River Bridges, and will increase bike speeds on the uphill portions of the ride. And where some Brooklyn bike commuters may have a choice of bridge pathways to use, the Queensboro Bridge remains the only route for cycling and walking between Queens and the Manhattan central business district.

When the bridge opened in 1909, it boasted two pedestrian promenades on the upper level, which were heavily utilized in the bridge's early years. A safe and dignified walking facility would entice residents, commuters, tourists, joggers, and all kinds of New Yorkers to use and enjoy an iconic New York City landmark and its phenomenal views of the skylines and the East River. The demand for a wider dedicated bikeway is also clear. It would accelerate the recent trend of greater bike use in Queens and make cycling a more integral component of the city's transportation matrix.

Sincerely,

Jon Orcutt
Communications Director

cc. City Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer
City Council Member Ben Kallos