

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
188 State Street,
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Liz Krueger
Finance Committee Chair, New York State Senate
172 State Street
Capitol Building, Room 416 CAP
Albany, NY 12247

March 4, 2022

Re 2022-2023 budget request: Capital allocation for downstate Greenway development

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Chair Krueger:

Our organizations write in support of the February 17 request by 39 Legislators of a \$180 million capital budget allocation and \$20 million in aid to localities for planning for a special program to accelerate greenway and trail development in the downstate metropolitan region.

That amount would match the investment made by NY State in the Empire State Trail program in the 2017 budget. While we strongly support and applaud the Empire State Trail, we note that the \$200 million invested in its creation was overwhelmingly devoted to rural areas outside the downstate NY Metropolitan region.

\$200 million for planning and implementing urban and suburban greenway projects would leverage far more trail and greenway development and resources thanks to local funding and the opportunity to use state dollars as matching funds for newly available federal funds. It will serve far more people and generate many more bike and walking trips than the 2017 Empire Trail investment.

The need and opportunity are both very strong. Greenways can create and extend healthy open spaces into every corner of the metropolitan region and aid with climate resilience. Greenway construction and upgrades will create jobs that can take advantage of new federal infrastructure funding, and they will safely support booming bike use, for many types for trips and for people of all ages and abilities.

The majority of the capital budget provision should be allocated as local aid to New York City and Nassau, Suffolk, Orange, Rockland and Westchester Counties to ensure that the funds are devoted to key rights of way and projects under these jurisdictions. New York City has significant unbuilt greenway segments in its anticipated network, and many older greenways are in need of repair and upgrade.

Detailed, popular plans have been developed for a Long Island greenway system, and the NY State Greenway Plan points to significant needs in the lower Hudson Valley.

This funding would mark a strong step toward an integrated regional network of safe, climate-friendly, job-creating cycling and walking infrastructure. Thank you for your attention. We look forward to working with you to advance this proposal.

Sincerely,

Jon Orcutt
Advocacy Director
Bike New York

Toby Weiner
President
Five Boro Bicycle Club

Brian Hedden
Co-Founder
Bike South Brooklyn

Jennifer Ratner
Board Chair
Friends of East River Esplanade

Daniel Convissor
Director
Bike Tarrytown

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Friends of the Hutchinson River Greenway

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Alex Zablocki
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