



Richard Filkins
Project Manager
NYSDOT Region 1
1328 State Street
Schenectady, NY 12305

November 19, 2010

Dear Richard:

Parks & Trails New York would like to express our support for the inclusion of pedestrian access to and across the Livingston Ave. Railroad Bridge between Albany and Rensselaer Counties.

Parks & Trails New York's mission to expand, protect, and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout the state for the use and enjoyment by all. For 25 years our focus has been on connecting New Yorkers at the local level to the outdoors through parks and trails because we believe so firmly in the benefits they offer for individual mental and physical health, stimulating tourism and civic engagement, conserving natural resources and open space, and for improving the economy and quality of life. The Livingston Avenue Bridge connection will improve access to one of the Capital region's most well-utilized multi-use trails, the Corning Preserve Bike-Hike Trail. It will also provide a connection to the proposed Mickey Maher trail that will be built along the Hudson Waterfront in the City of Rensselaer.

The Dunn Memorial Bridge is the only bridge connecting the City of Albany and the City of Rensselaer. The bridge's bike/pedestrian access ramps are extremely steep and the path features a dangerous dogleg section that intimidates pedestrians and cyclists. The grade of the ramps on and off the bridge is not consistent with ADA guidelines, thus making this crossing – the only pedestrian crossing between Hudson and Troy - unusable for persons with disabilities.

For many decades the walkway along the Livingston Avenue Bridge safely carried pedestrians from one side of the river to another. Unfortunately that walkway, like the bridge, has fallen into disrepair and is no longer usable. It's time to safely reconnect the cities of Albany and Rensselaer.

Re-establishing a safe bicycle/pedestrian walkway on the replacement bridge is a high priority for both the cities of Albany and Rensselaer. Albany released its first-ever Bicycle Master Plan and in the near future the City's comprehensive plan will be completed. The bicycle master plan identifies the Livingston Avenue Bridge as an important potential bicycle pedestrian connection. The construction of a bike/pedestrian infrastructure walkway the bridge would create a safe and easy to navigate link between both of these cities and their waterfronts. The Livingston Avenue Bridge would also serve as a much safer and convenient bike and pedestrian connection between the city of Albany and the Rensselaer Rail Station.

There are several examples around the United States of rail and multi-use trail coexisting safely and without the slightest hindrance to either mode of travel, , many examples right here in the State of New York.



The Burke-Gilman Trail, Seattle, WA



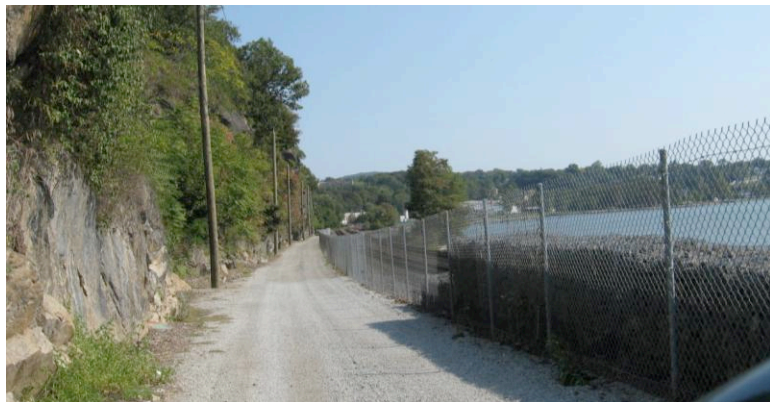
The Burke-Gilman trail, Seattle, WA



Minneapolis Loop Trail, Minneapolis, MN



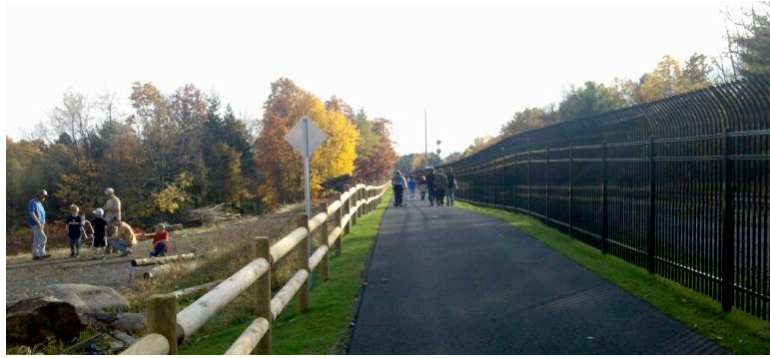
Minneapolis Loop Trail, Minneapolis, MN



Annsville Park, Peekskill, NY (this road is part of NYSDOT's Bike route 9)



The Harlem Valley Rail Trail, Dutchess and Columbia County, NY



The Zim Smith Trail, Clifton Park, NY

We request in the interests of the environment, economic development, and safety, NYSDOT not move forward on this bridge replacement without the addition of a walkway.

Sincerely,

Robin Dropkin
Executive Director