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State Senator José M. Serrano
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Council Member Inez E. Dickens
Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito
Manhattan Community Board 10
Manhattan Community Board 11
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The Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle
Creative Arts Workshops for Kids
East Harlem Business Capital Corporation
East Harlem Preservation
El Museo del Barrio
Esplanade Gardens, Inc.
Frederick Douglass Academy Urban Ecology Program
Genesis Community Development Corporation
Harlem Arts Alliance
Harlem Children's Zone
Harlem Community Development Corporation
Hope Community, Inc.
Lenox Terrace Association of Concerned Tenants
Abraham Lincoln Houses Tenants Association
Manhattan Waterfront Parks Coalition
Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
Museum of the City of New York
New Yorkers for Parks
New York League of Conservation Voters
New York Restoration Project
NYC Strategic Alliance for Health
NY/NJ High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
NYS Department of State Division of Coastal Resources
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Partnership for Parks
Riverbend Housing Company, Inc.
Riverkeeper
Riverton Tenants Association
The Urban Divers Estuary Conservancy
Transportation Alternatives
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Senator Robert F. Wagner Houses Resident Association
WE ACT for Environmental Justice

March 1, 2011

The Honorable Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 37th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

We write to you on behalf of the Harlem River Park Task Force (HRPTF), a group of 39 organizations and seven elected officials who have come together to advocate for the development of a culturally and environmentally sensitive waterfront park from 125th to 150th streets.

First, we'd like to thank you for your continued support and leadership in our efforts to create welcoming entrances to Harlem River Park at the intersections of 135th Street/Madison Avenue, 139th Street/Fifth Avenue and 142nd Street/Fifth Avenue. Your dedication to these efforts has been greatly appreciated.

We ask for your continued leadership with our efforts to create a temporary pedestrian/bike pathway adjacent to the Harlem River Drive, from 125th to 132nd streets, in order to connect the East River Esplanade south of 125th Street with the new 13-block long Harlem River Park north of 132nd Street. This connection will not only improve access and safety for both the park and esplanade, allowing more people to use the combined resource, it will provide a convenient and healthy transportation alternative to the Drive itself.

Also, with over 30% of adults and close to 40% of children in East and Central Harlem considered overweight or obese, and with these communities lacking summer youth programs that support physical activity, connecting Harlem River Park with the East River Esplanade will provide greater exercise opportunities for the entire family.

We understand that once the Willis Avenue Bridge is completed, your agency will move its attention to rebuilding the Harlem River Drive from 125th to 132nd streets. Although we haven't seen the latest design ideas for this stretch of highway, we believe that there may be an opportunity to share the waterfront space during this rebuilding. We may even have funds to pay for the design of this interim pedestrian/bike pathway from a local non-profit.

In the past, your agency has cited safety concerns for not allowing the interim pathway because bridges were being built over the area we sought to place the pedestrian/bike pathway in. Once the Willis Avenue Bridge is completed, however, we won't have these same concerns.

The Honorable Margaret Forgione

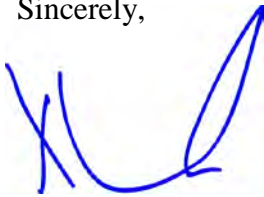
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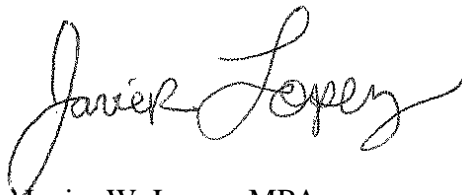
We also understand that once the Drive is rebuilt, the waterfront “Marginal Way” will be transferred to NYC Department of Parks and Recreation for the creation of a permanent pedestrian/bike pathway as a part of the expansion of Harlem River Park. However, due to the design and construction lag time, this will take years and prevent the community from gaining the myriad of health and safety benefits sooner.

We’re happy to have you as a partner in our efforts to beautify the East Harlem waterfront and make it safer and healthier for all; attracting further investment within this area. Please let us know how we can help make our interim access goals a reality.

Sincerely,



Thomas Lunke
Director
HRPTF



Javier W. Lopez, MPA
Director
NYC Strategic Alliance for Health



Julia De Martini Day
Director, Transportation & Health
Transportation Alternatives



Brenda Beener
Chair, Access Committee
HRPTF