

Transportation ALTERNATIVES

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Your Advocate for Bicycling, Walking and Sensible Transportation

New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
hearing on

Oversight on Status of the Possible Exclusive Use of the Athletic Fields on
Randall's Island by New York City Private Schools

City Hall, January 31, 2007

Testimony of
Noah S. Budnick, Deputy Director, Advocacy for Transportation Alternatives

Good morning, I am Noah Budnick, deputy director for advocacy of Transportation Alternatives, the City's advocates for safer and increased biking and walking.

Before moving forward with further planning for the major reconstruction Randall's Island's parks, the City needs take a serious look at how New Yorkers are going to get there and enjoy this soon-to-be much improved urban oasis floating in the East River. Right now, the lack of equitable transportation service makes Randall's Island inaccessible to people who live just a stones throw away in Harlem, the South Bronx and Astoria.

The Parks Department should convene a taskforce with the goal of making Randall's Island more accessible by foot, bike and public transit to more people, especially those who live closest to it.

The taskforce should be comprised of:

- Transportation, transit and development agencies;
- Local elected officials;
- Members of Manhattan Community Board 11;
- Members of Bronx Community Board 1;
- Members of Queens Community Board 1;
- Community leaders;
- Advocates; and,
- Developers

(Over please)

This taskforce should study:

- How people currently get to Randall's Island and where they come from;
- Existing travel demand to access Randall's Island and where that demand originates from;
- Specifically, how people who live in nearby neighborhoods in Harlem, the South Bronx and Astoria currently get to Randall's Island and often they visit;
- Existing barriers that prevent people in Harlem, the South Bronx and Astoria from visiting Randall's Island more often;
- How to make Randall's Island more accessible from the surrounding neighborhoods; and,
- How to meet future travel demand to access Randall's Island based on the planned development and where that demand will come from.

The study should produce short-, medium- and long-term solutions that will be implemented to make Randall's Island easily accessible to the thousands of people who live within just minutes walks and bike rides away.

Solutions to improve bicyclist and pedestrian access to Randall's Island that the study should consider include, but are not limited to:

- Building a connection to the planned South Bronx Greenway;
- Opening the 103rd Street footbridge year round and making Manhattan-side access to it safe and convenient;
- Accelerating rehabilitation of the Queens-span of the Triborough Bridge, assuring the new biking and walking path is ADA accessible and that Queens-side access to the new path is safe and convenient;
- Making Manhattan-side and Bronx-side access to the Triborough Bridge safe and convenient;
- Increasing bus local service to Randall's Island from the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens;
- Building another crossing to Manhattan (such as the plan developed by CIVITAS)

Community leaders from the surrounding neighborhoods lament the current poor access to the island and the barrier it creates between local residents and recreation, relaxation and fresh air there. Simply put: right now, because people cannot get to Randall's Island, they do not use Randall's Island and the parks there.

To assure equitable access to parks on the island, biking, walking and transit access from the neighborhoods surrounding Randall's Island must be substantially improved.

Thank you.