



Commissioner, Department of Transportation
55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10041

August 24, 2012

Dear Commissioner Sadik-Khan:

We are writing to ask for your attention and assistance to expedite planning and implementation of pedestrian improvements at the entrances to our park, the Williamsbridge Oval. While we have been impressed with the spectacular pedestrian improvements your agency has made in many other parts of the city, the street surrounding Norwood's main park still lacks the most basic features for pedestrian safety and convenience. Despite years of requests to the Department of Transportation, there are no crosswalks for our community to reach any of the five entrances into our 20-acre park, and some sections of the street surrounding the park are missing sidewalks on city-owned property.

We have been very patient since we first discussed a study with Commissioner Moran in 2009. Most recently, Commissioner Moran advised us on June 27th that we could expect an update on the long-awaited study in early August. We have yet to hear from her, despite our August 17th request to her for an update. This is cause for concern, we believe, given the very long continuing delays in addressing this location.

After our initial discussions with Commissioner Moran in 2009, we went to Bronx Community Board 7 at her direction to obtain a request for a study of Reservoir Oval at Holt Place. At its December 2009 meeting, the Community Board unanimously passed a "Motion to recommend to DOT to prepare a study in coordination with the Dept. of Parks to identify short and long term improvements to make the Holt Place entrance to the Williamsbridge Oval Park more safe and convenient, and to generally improve the quality of the streetscape along Reservoir Oval East." Moreover, the Community Board included a request to "Install Sidewalks and Crosswalks Along Reservoir Oval East Between Holt Place and the Eastern Opening of Williamsbridge Oval Park" in its Capital Budget Priorities and Requests for FY12. The City responded: "OMB supports the agency's position as follows: Further study by the agency of this new request is needed. Contact the agency," even though there was nothing new about the request.

The Friends of the Oval has routinely inquired about the study, yet a field visit was not set up until March 22, 2012. The field visit was attended by our Assemblymember's staff, the Inspector from the 52nd Precinct, the Community Board's District Manager, and members of our group, including some who took time off from work to provide input. Nevertheless, we still have not seen any evidence that a study is actually underway. We note, in particular, that automated traffic recorders (ATRs) have never been installed on Reservoir Oval or Holt Place.

We are eager to form a stronger working partnership with your department. This key street in our community desperately needs pedestrian improvements, and we recognize that the DOT has the creative professional staff and resources to design and implement the solutions. We were hopeful when DOT published its Street Design Manual, but we have been disappointed that your agency has not applied any of those principles in our community.

Although we originally requested a study of only the Holt Place entrance, we made the request with the explicit understanding that the study would be completed in a matter of months. We expected to focus on the highest priority location, and then subsequently address issues at the other entrances incrementally. We envisioned an ongoing partnership with DOT where we could build on success. At this point, given the lack of progress for some many years, we request that you direct a complete, comprehensive assessment of all the pedestrian issues on the entire loop of Reservoir Oval without further delay.

We also request to meet directly with the planning and engineering staff working on this study as soon as possible. We have found that other DOT efforts in our community, like the Gun Hill Road Congested Corridor Study, have been productive when community members have been able to talk directly with the planners and engineers working on the project. When all communication is conveyed indirectly between the professional staff and the community, important details may be lost in translation. Our point of contact for this effort will be Jay Shuffield; he can be reached at 347.398.5792 or jay_shuffield@hotmail.com.

Your agency has kept us waiting for a very long time, but we are hopeful that you will provide the leadership for a comprehensive effort focused on the goal of improving the pedestrian conditions around our wonderful park. We thank you in advance for your attention and your assistance.

Sincerely,
Friends of the Williamsbridge Oval

Cc:
Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz
Bronx Community Board 7
Councilmember Oliver Koppell
Senator Gustavo Rivera