



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

MARK W. THOMAS
Director

December 5, 2016

Town of Grand Island
2255 Baseline Rd.
Grand Island, NY 14072

Dear Supervisor McMurray and Grand Island Town Board Members:

In follow up to our meeting, we have evaluated Option 5 and conclude the following:

The Option 5 proposal discusses in detail assumed safety risks resulting from increased vehicle traffic on town roads due to the large volume of driveways, parked cars, mailboxes and school bus stops. Parks concurs that these obstacles exist, and are significant factors to support establishing a safe walking and biking area for local residents seven days a week. Creating a safe destination for residents to recreate and exercise would likely also reduce the noted hazardous conditions on town roads that currently exist. This is especially true during the summer months when children are out of school. Additionally, and with regard to use of the scenic parkway by the elderly and those with disabilities, when the parkway was constructed, mobility options for people in these groups were limited. Currently there are millions who enjoy outdoor recreational activities while utilizing one of the many types of mobility assistance devices available. Although these are not recommended for use on roadways without shoulders, they could be very safely and easily used on the West River path once completed, allowing many to experience the waterfront in ways not available to them now.

One of the primary objectives of the trail grant application was to create an improved Greenway corridor with connections to the north and south. Creating a park atmosphere between Beaver Island and Buckhorn to replace the existing highway atmosphere would accomplish this objective. If Option 5 were selected, the parkway would remain a vehicle use roadway and New York State Department of Transportation would retain maintenance responsibility. Residents have overwhelmingly expressed a desire for a more consistent and improved appearance that would resemble a park versus a highway. Option 3 is the only option reviewed that places maintenance responsibilities with state parks.

The highly competitive grant secured to facilitate this program was conditioned on providing a dedicated alternative transportation option. Option 5 would only meet that goal less than 29% of the time. As a result, New York State Parks continues to believe that total conversion of a highway system into an 8-mile riverfront park is the highest and best use of this property and consistent with the national trend toward connecting people with their waterfronts.

Again, we very much appreciate all the time and effort you have contributed to this project. We look forward to working with the Town as we advance our preferred alternative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Thomas", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Thomas
Director