

# The Hudson Independent

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## Let's Move Forward on Bike Lanes for Broadway

The Rivertowns are collaborating on the Route 9 Active Transportation study. This process has stimulated discussion in Tarrytown on how to make Broadway work for everybody, thereby bolstering our businesses and safety.

Tarrytown has been held back by Broadway being all about cars. Pedestrians crossing it worry they'll become one of the four people injured doing so each year. Most bikers are too scared to ride on it.

But now residents and merchants are clamoring for change. A recent survey found that 53% of respondents favor a "protected bike lane" on Broadway in Tarrytown. Only 5% said they want things to stay the same, and 15% suggested the Old Croton Aqueduct (OCA) would be a better bike route.

While the OCA is a fantastic recreational resource, it doesn't work for transportation. In downtown Tarrytown, it's up steep narrow streets from destinations; the trail gets muddy; it isn't plowed when it snows and is "closed" at night. Nor is there direct access to the Aqueduct from most of Sleepy Hollow. Similarly, Washington Street is hampered by hills and some busy stretches, and it's out of the way. Broadway is where people want to go. It's where the bike lane needs to be.

Broadway is also where most of the schools are. The vast majority of high school kids don't get bussed. A safe bike lane means kids can bike to school, taking cars off the road and freeing their chauffeurs... er, parents.

Providing a dedicated lane to bike in actually makes driving easier, by freeing up the remaining lanes and eliminating uncomfortable passing maneuvers. This will be important once the Tappan Zee Bridge bike path opens, bringing over some of the 5,000 people who ride bikes up Route 9W on nice Sundays. Without the bike lane, people driving will end up stuck behind people biking.

Parking in town can be challenging, to be sure. And yet in the central shopping district (Broadway from Elizabeth to Wildey Streets), some 200 off-street spaces sit empty during peak times. Yes, many of them are private, but deals are possible, like Jazz Forum Arts did for Chase Bank's lots. Plus technology can be used to indicate where open spaces are in real time.

Folks say how valuable parking is. If it's so valuable, why are we giving it away? Seriously, 75-cents an hour is nothing. And it's free overnight and Sundays. A thorough examination of parking management is long overdue. Refining the system will free up the 37 spots along Broadway's eastern curb in the commercial core, making space for the two-way bike lane on that side.

The arguments against this bike lane are the same ones raised against every bike lane proposal. Fortunately, when proposals get built, opponents become supporters. Tarrytown needs to move forward now with strategies proven around the world to increase mobility and improve economic, climate and health outcomes.

*by Daniel Convissor, Director of Bike Tarrytown. Their mission is improving the economy and health of Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown by fostering bike culture and infrastructure. <https://biketarrytown.org/>*

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## Let's Go Slow on Bike Lanes Before Acting

“The bikers are coming; the bikers are coming!” – a cry heard frequently throughout the rivertowns these days! The topic is greeted with equal parts enthusiasm, curiosity and trepidation depending on the forum and the stakeholders involved. Make no mistake, the bikers are coming, and we all have a vital interest in engaging in a broad-based dialogue to ensure solutions that benefit everyone, including cyclists, visitors, residents and local businesses.

The bike lobby is well-organized, passionate and pushing their cause on the web and in public forums. There are several studies in progress backed by funding from the New NY Bridge Agency and the State of New York, with a particular focus on bike lanes along Routes 9A and 119. Both are busy and vital transportation corridors in the area and both are contiguous to the new bridge and the “shared use” pedestrian/bikeway scheduled to open later this year. It is the belief of both the bridge’s designers and metro area, and bike aficionados that weekend cyclists will come up the Hudson from the city by the thousands, over the bridge and back down again on the other side, passing through our villages as they go.

So why the curiosity and the trepidation, which sometimes verges on outright hostility? Traffic safety, street space, pedestrian access and parking (for visitors and residents) are just a few of the concerns that have made this a “lightning rod” issue in our towns. Fortunately, several villages including Sleepy Hollow, Irvington and Tarrytown, are currently updating their Comprehensive Plans and looking at all kinds of initiatives to reduce congestion, create more accessible streetscapes and address parking needs. All of this is being done with the intention of enhancing the unique character of our towns and maintaining vibrant business communities supported by both residents and visitors alike.

In Tarrytown in particular, however, residents and business owners have voiced serious and legitimate concerns. Merchants, especially on Main Street, are particularly worried about a bike lane taking away valuable customer parking and impeding vital deliveries, as well as pick-ups. The Village of Tarrytown, Tarrytown Connected and the Sleepy Hollow Tarrytown Chamber of Commerce are all engaged in this dialogue.

No one is opposed to more and improved access for bikers, but all are agreed this should be accomplished without increasing over-crowding on our busiest streets, without reducing available parking and in a manner that supports the needs of local residents and businesses. We need to focus on solutions to parking and traffic flow, encourage more transit-oriented development, while embracing the health and wellness benefits of welcoming more biking to our growing communities.

Building a clear path toward solving these issues – parking in particular – before we commit to carving off a swath of an already-busy Broadway to accommodate cyclists, should allow us to create a “win” for all stakeholders and communities.

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