

## Bumpy ride on Cuomo Bridge bike path poses hazards for cyclists. What caused it.



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The bicycle and pedestrian path on the Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge has been plagued by hundreds of asphalt blisters since opening four years ago, a mystery defect that's giving cyclists a bumpy ride.

The blisters, some a quarter-inch high, have popped through the path's blue surfacing, often appearing in clusters.

"You've got to really hold onto the handlebars," said Will Silver, who regularly used the path when he lived in Nyack and bicycled across the bridge to Tarrytown. "It's not as pleasurable as it should be for a four- or five-year-old bridge."

Cycling groups like Bike Tarrytown have petitioned the state Thruway Authority to fix the problem, accompanying their pleas with photos of trouble areas. "The blisters continue to get worse," said Dan Convissor, a leader of the group.

Bruce Wells, the president of the Westchester Cycle Club, regularly hears complaints from some of the group's 900 members.

"It's dangerous to ride on," Wells said. "It really should be fixed. I can't believe they're having this problem. It's brand new basically."

### Thruway making fixes

The New York State Thruway Authority, which operates the bridge, says the defects are a cosmetic issue that don't pose a danger to the structural integrity of the seven-

year-old westbound span where the path is located.

The issue first arose in 2019, roughly a year before the path opened, according to a 2021 report commissioned by the Thruway Authority.

At the time, the asphalt surface along the roadway where the path would eventually go had raised mounds or blisters three to eight inches in diameter with an average height of a quarter inch, the report notes.

“We are in the process of scheduling work to take place to smooth out some of the blisters on the path,” Thruway spokeswoman Jennifer Givner said. “We previously milled the blisters on a section of the path and have been pleased with the overall results. The Authority is committed to ensuring the integrity of the path and the safety of our patrons. We will continue to monitor its condition.”

Last year, workers milled a small stretch of path on the Rockland side. When they checked a few months later, only one blister returned, Thruway officials say.

The path has been a popular addition, used by more than 700,000 visitors since it opened in June 2020, including 80,000 this year. It offers access to six glass-walled overlooks or belvederes that offer sweeping views of the Hudson River from the north side of the bridge.

**Lawsuit:** NYS Thruway Authority sues Cuomo Bridge builder, claiming key parts aren't durable

The 2021 report, obtained by Silver through a Freedom of Information request, offers several theories for why the blistering is occurring.

Among them is the possibility that portions of a tack coat layer used to bond asphalt beneath what would eventually become the path was stripped away by the tires of construction vehicles. Work reports and photos from the installation showed truck tires picking up tack coat on their wheels and tracks, the report notes.

Other possibilities include contamination of the tack coat by oil or other lubricant. Or the tack coat could have been applied at the wrong temperature.

**Builders:** Cuomo Bridge builders fire back, defend work and accuse Thruway of refusing to pay debt

## **Thruway sues its builders**

These are just the latest questions about the \$4 billion bridge's construction that have surfaced in recent weeks.

Last week, the Thruway Authority sued Tappan Zee Constructors (TZC), the four-company consortium hired to build the bridge, for breach of contract, claiming at least \$6 million in damages.

The Thruway said 61 of 192 anchor pipes on the bridge's main span will need to be retrofitted after determining they're not as durable as the contract with TZC promised they would be.

TZC defends its work and accused the Thruway of spending money on lawyers rather than covering its debts. TZC says it's owed \$960 million for its work on the bridge.

## **'It's bumpy the entire way'**

Cyclists, meanwhile, say the path has gotten so bad they prefer driving over the bridge.

**Appeal:** Cuomo Bridge contractors appeal to Gov. Hochul for help resolving \$1B contract dispute

Benjamin Ran used to cross the bridge for bike rides of 20 to 75 miles from his home in Ridgewood, New Jersey. He credits the Thruway with having the foresight to place water drains on the pedestrian side of the shared path, creating a smooth ride for bikes.

But, he said, that's been tempered by the clusters of bumps creeping through the blue surface.

“After seeing it like that I don't know if I would even go on it anymore,” Ran said. “It's bumpy the entire way. It's really disappointing considering what they had done in the beginning and how nice it was.”