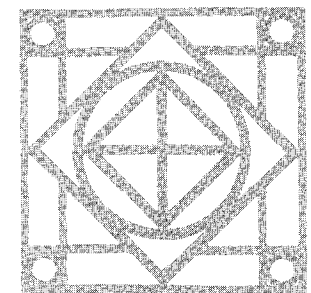
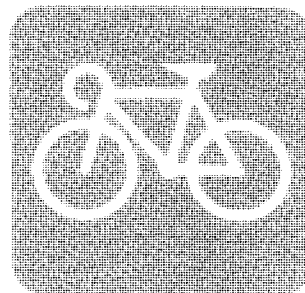
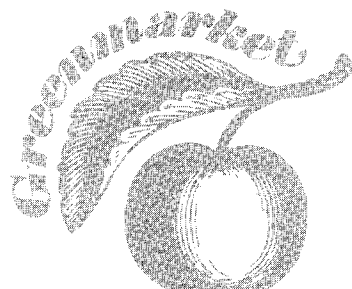
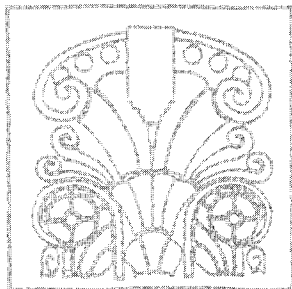


This is an excerpt from:

1991
Rudy Bruner Award
for Excellence in the Urban Environment

CONNECTIONS: CREATING URBAN EXCELLENCE

Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener



ISBN: 978-0963371300

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 92-72599

© 1992 by the Bruner Foundation

560 Broadway

New York, NY 10012

(212) 334-9844

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher.



BROOKLYN-QUEENS GREENWAY

New York City

INITIAL SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

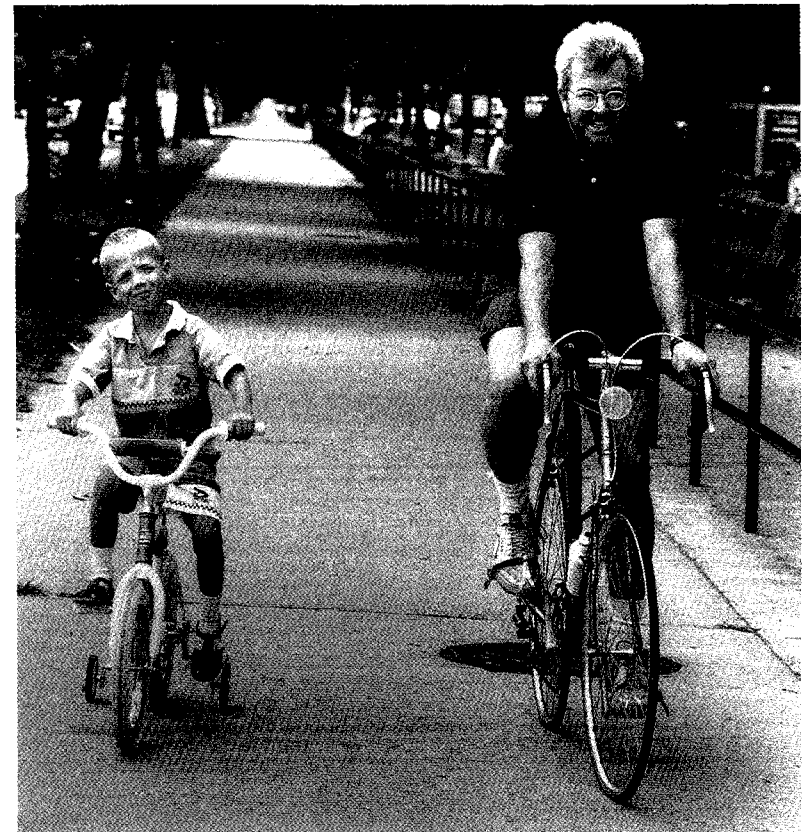
Initial Reasons For Including the Greenway as a Finalist

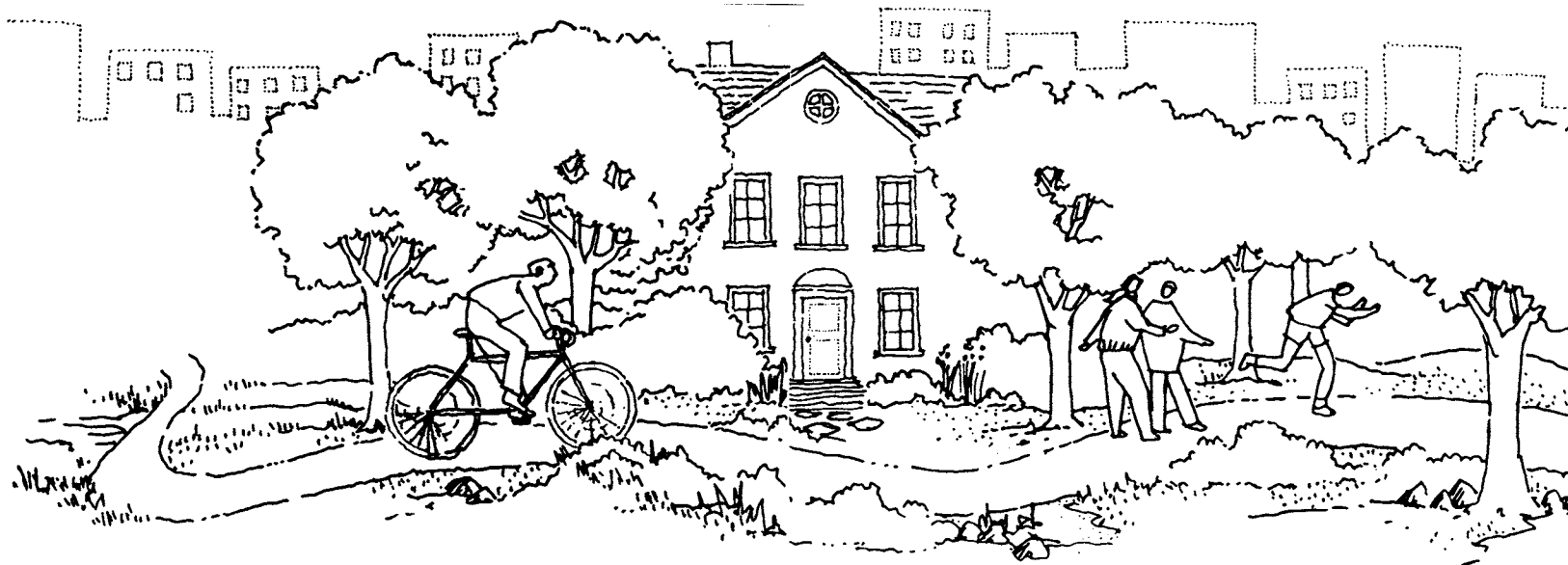
- Bikeways are a “coming thing;” a national trend.
- “If you can do it in NYC, you can do it anywhere”.
- Greenways in cities are a chance to move people out of neighborhoods and encounter other parts of the city and a bit of wilderness.
- They offer a way to feel connected to the larger place (the city)

Selection Committee Concerns and Questions

- Has it achieved critical mass?
- Is there enough to judge it on?
- Who is really in charge?
- Is it just a designation, or “did they do something?”

Facing Column: Tom Fox (and son) of NOSC on the Greenway.





- How is it perceived in minority neighborhoods (as “yuppie bike race”?). Are cyclists perceived as outsiders?
- Is there any neighborhood participation or utilization (in minority areas especially)?
- Is it just a path, or does it include picnic and play areas?
- What is the level of commitment from the city to expense and future construction?

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

What Is It

- A bicycle and pedestrian trail connecting cultural, recreational, environmental, educational and historical resources through 40 miles of Brooklyn and Queens.

Who Made Submission

- Neighborhood Open Space Coalition (NOSC)

Major Goals

- Enhance New York City’s quality of life.
- Increase access to and understanding of cultural, environmental and educational institutions.
- Provide needed recreational facilities to under-served parts of the city.
- Provide a resource to support alternative, environmentally friendly transportation.
- Serve as one link in a broader plan for a regional bikeway system.

- Enhance the neighborhoods through which it passes and contribute to community revitalization.
- Promote inter-cultural and inter-age interaction.

Accomplishments

- Development of conceptual plan for Greenway as part of broader regional system.
- Completion of feasibility and design studies for entire length of Greenway.
- Construction or marking of some bikeways.
- Completion of "Veloway" Engineering Study (raised bikeway along Interborough Expressway).
- Development of broad public/private coalition and acceptance of Greenway concept in principle by public agencies and political leaders.
- Design of Greenway logo (student contest); under review by city Arts Commission.
- Limited placement of bicycle signs along path (without Greenway name or logo).

Issues That Could Affect Selection As Winner

- There are significant stretches of Greenway where work is not completed or has not yet begun and Greenway faces delays in starting and completing projects due to the NYC and NYS budget crises.
- Most of the route has no or poor signage; there are no signs identifying paths as part of the Greenway.

- As yet, awareness of the Greenway as a concept or reality is low, even among the cycling community.

PROCESS

Planning/Implementation Process/Chronology

- The **pre-history** of the project is the work by Olmstead and Vaux in the creation of parkway and park systems in Brooklyn (including the first bikeway in 1895); and the mid-20th century creation by Robert Moses of the parkway and park system in Queens.
- 1985: NOSC **first publicly suggested** the concept of Greenway.
- 1987: NOSC released the Greenway **Feasibility Study**.
- 1988: NOSC completed the Greenway **Design Study**, detailing the state of the route and making recommendations for needed additions and upgrades.
- 1988: the Greenway **Advisory Committee** was formed, including members from a broad array of city and state organizations, parks, cultural centers and private organizations.
- Fall 1988: a public **exhibit** on the Greenway opened and the 10 mile stretch along Ocean Parkway was inaugurated by Mayor Koch.
- June 1990: a Greenway **logo** was chosen from entries in a public school contest.
- Summer 1990: the New York State Department of Transportation completed an **engineering study** for the proposed Veloway .

- **Future** planned projects include stenciling the logo along the route, producing a guidebook, and completing links and upgrades. The goal is complete work by 1995, the 100th anniversary of the first bikeway.
- NOSC describes a **three step plan** to achieve identity and awareness for the Greenway:
 1. Convince organizations along the route to join a coalition in support of the plan.
 2. Bring city planners and agencies on-board as supporters, planners, funders.
 3. Create public awareness, through the logo contest, videos, trips, a guidebook, and signs.

Steps 1 and 2 have been largely completed. Step 3 represents the next major effort of NOSC.

Key Participants

- Neighborhood Open Space Coalition (NOSC); Tom Fox and Anne McClellan (lead group).
- Government agencies:
 - NYC Departments of Transportation and Parks (give support in planning and implementation).
 - NY State Department of Transportation (prepared plan for the "veloway").
- NYC cultural institutions (such as Brooklyn Museum, Queens Hall of Science, various botanic gardens and environmental centers, which support the Greenway in spirit).
- Private advocacy groups (such as Transportation Alternatives who support and lobby for Greenway; they are the primary current user group).

- Regional Plan Association.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Historical and Organizational Context

Two quotable lines from Tom Fox best describe the concept of the Greenway:

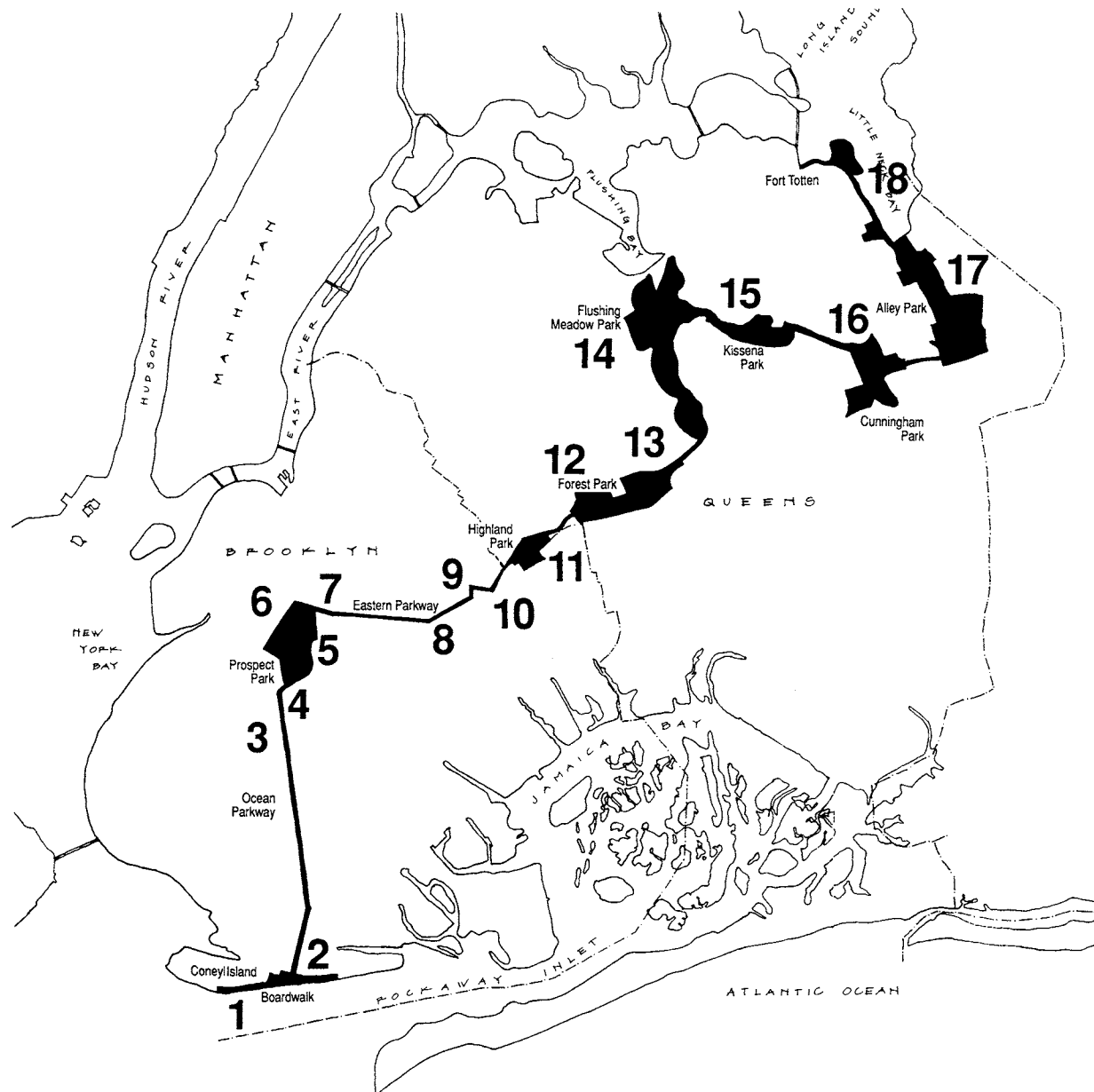
"Its a great idea, but not a new one".

"The Greenway represents the joining of the Olmstead and Moses park systems."

The route of the Greenway has, in fact, been largely in place for much of this century thanks to Olmstead and Vaux and Robert Moses.

The Greenway is one of those ideas that falls into place so logically and simply once it is pointed out that you wonder how you missed it before. Fox describes his own "Ah ha!" experience, looking at the New York City map and seeing a "ribbon of green" running through Brooklyn and Queens. Missing only some connections between parks and across expressways, the Greenway already existed. The need was to make those links, upgrade conditions along the pathways, and (most importantly) create a consciousness of the route.

NOSC predates the Greenway project. It was created by Tom Fox in 1980 as a coalition of organizations to help develop and support a comprehensive open space policy. Fox supplements NOSC organizing and lobbying with academic investigations. He has, for instance, written detailed monographs which explicate the benefits of open spaces to economics, energy/infrastructure, public health, and city image. They make the case that open space is not an amenity or frill but is essential to the health of cities and their inhabitants.



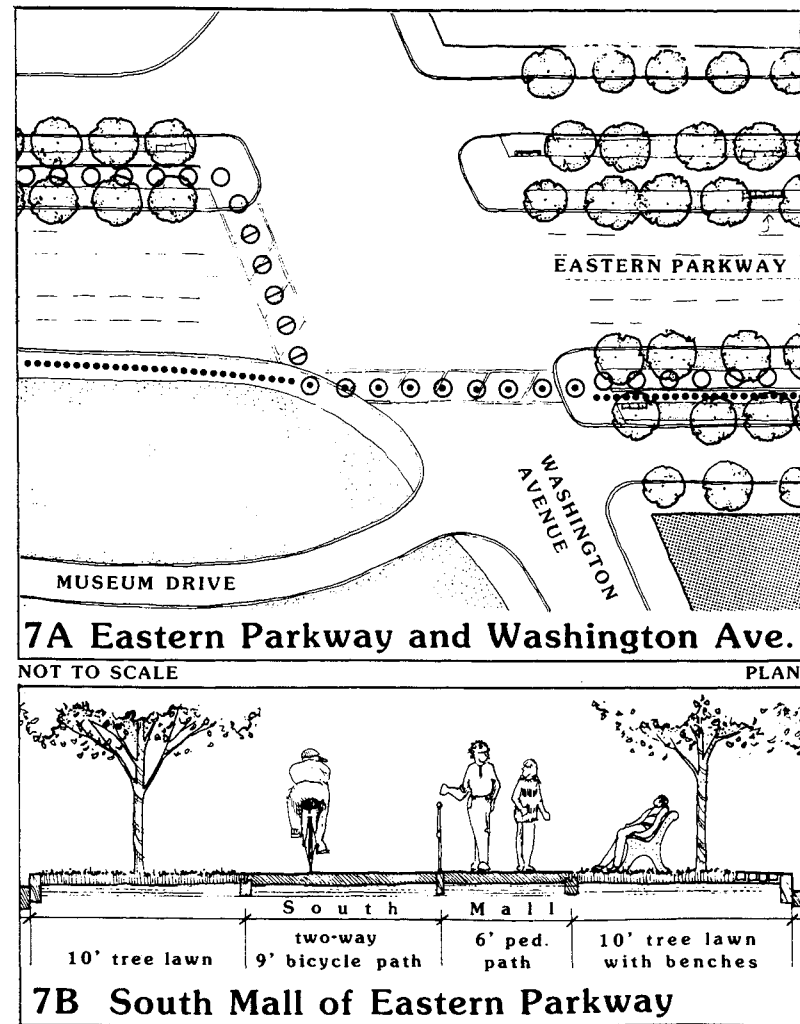
NOSC sees its primary job and skill as coalition building — bringing together a broad spectrum of groups with similar or overlapping interests to develop plans and push for a joint agenda. The composition of both the NOSC board and the Greenway Advisory group reflect these broad coalitions.

The land over which the Greenway runs is owned by the City of New York, under the administration of the Department of Transportation or the Parks Department. Perhaps the most important component to the ultimate success of the Greenway is the “buy-in” to the Greenway concept by these agencies. The NYC Parks Department for example, is strongly committed to the Greenway concept, which they say predates NOSC’s plan. In Queens in particular, the Parks Department says it has long been planning for bicycle and pedestrian linkages to supplement the 15 mile Robert Moses bike path system.

Within the Department of Transportation (DOT), there is a designated bicycle coordinator who serves as an internal lobbyist for (among other projects) the Greenway. The new commissioner seems especially committed to the concept of a Greenway. All reconstructions of roads along the route are supposed to take bicycle use into consideration. While practice occasionally falls short of this goal, there seems to be considerable awareness and acceptance on the part of planners of the reality and desirability of bicycles in New York City transportation planning. The DOT plan for the Greenway is to begin by establishing 40 miles of bicycle pathways of whatever quality can be obtained, and gradually work to improve all paths to “Class 1” status (see classes, below).

Physical Context and Status

Classes of Bikeways. **Class 1** bikeways are marked and physically separated paths with a barrier separating them from pedestrians and cars. **Class 2** bikeways are dedicated



Plans of the Eastern Parkway/South Mall.

lanes marked by signs and painted lines. **Class 3** bikeways are paths marked by signs but shared with pedestrians and cars.

Greenway Route (see map): The Greenway's southern terminus at the Atlantic Ocean is the Coney Island Boardwalk—in the shade of the Cyclone roller coaster. From there, it runs up Olmstead's Ocean Parkway to Prospect Park, and through the park to Eastern Parkway. For the rest of the route, the Greenway runs through or along the edge of cemeteries, along the Interborough Parkway (a small, limited access highway), through a series of both broad and linear parks, to its northern terminus at Fort Totten on Long Island Sound. Along the way, the route passes by dozens of important cultural institutions, including the Aquarium, major museums, several botanic gardens, and environmental centers.

There are large chunks of the route which already look very much like a bikeway. This is especially true along the length of Ocean Parkway, where the separated bike path on both flanking "malls" or islands were preexisting; and along large stretches of Eastern Parkway which is in the midst of construction which includes a separated bikeway along one of its malls; and through most of the larger parks on the route. There are, on the other hand, very few signs which give any evidence to riders that they are on a pathway which reaches beyond their immediate surroundings. In some areas there are signs with bicycle icons, the city's standard bike path sign. Nowhere yet is there a sign with the Greenway name or logo.

The Greenway as a Concept

Proponents tend to wax philosophical about the Greenway. It is described as a way of providing access to sadly lacking recreational facilities for urban dwellers, and improving access to important cultural centers. It is part of an agenda to increase people's ability to use bicycles as transportation. It is also viewed as a way of creating an improved sense of community by providing a rare link between neighborhoods, cultural and recreational centers in Brooklyn and Queens. (Although they share a long—and unguarded—border, these two communities remain distinct and, to some degree, aloof).



The Greenway at Eastern Parkway.

A key point made by a number of informants is the degree to which the Greenway is an idea as much as a physical entity. Since much of the route has long existed, an important aspect of the development of the Greenway is to create awareness by the public of this largely available bike route. Few expect others than avid cyclists to tour the full 40 mile length of the route. Rather, the assumption is that the existence of the Greenway will encourage people to "plug in at various spots". They hope that the concept of a continuous, longer system, with identifying and informational signs, will entice these users to explore a bit beyond their usual neighborhood.

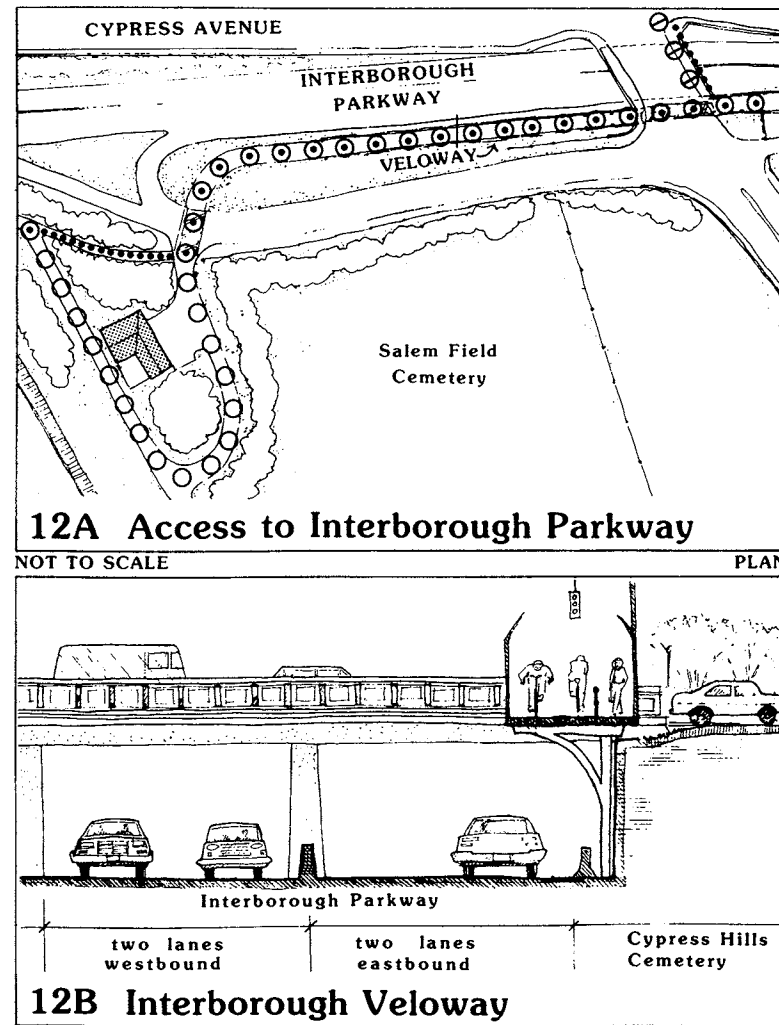
Financing The Greenway

NOSC identifies the total cost of the Greenway as from \$3 million to \$17 million (excluding related capital improvements to parks and cultural facilities). The figure is difficult to settle on, however, since few of the direct costs can

be separated from other capital and expense budgets. NOSC's own budget comes largely from foundation grants and is used to maintain the organization and fund studies, exhibitions, publications, etc.

The primary Greenway development and construction costs are borne by the city budget, through the Departments of Transportation and Parks. Most Greenway projects, however, are "piggy-backed" onto other construction projects or paid for out of expense budgets. The cost of adding bicycle lanes to the previously planned reconstruction of a bridge is relatively small. For that reason, the Greenway is developing incrementally, as streets and parks are improved. It is also for that reason that city budget cuts will delay Greenway completion. For example, placement of signs along the Greenway has been delayed for lack of DOT staff to survey sites for signs. One city official noted that the project won't die, even in the current budget crisis, because "it is such a natural, it strikes an immediate and responsive chord in almost everyone."

The sole major capital project involved in the Greenway is the proposed "Veloway" which is a raised bike path along the Interborough Parkway where it runs through a number of cemeteries. A \$75,000 engineering study was provided by the state DOT as settlement of a law suit brought by NOSC, with the express proviso that the state was not obligated to fund construction. The source of \$3 to 4 million in construction funds has not yet been identified, and several informants felt that the Veloway hinders the rest of the project by "sounding expensive" and drawing attention from other, easier to achieve aspects of the system. We observed portions of the Interborough Parkway near the Veloway which were being rebuilt without taking the Greenway into account.



Plans at the Interborough Veloway/Parkway.

Current Status (Spring, 1991)

Elements of the Greenway are heavily used, but only in local areas and largely by people who are unaware of the Greenway. Those who knowingly use the Greenway as such are largely from organized riding/exploring groups. Plans and construction of the Greenway have moved amazingly quickly since inception, given the usual pace of change in New York City. Construction is underway on Eastern Parkway and its bikeway (though it is mired in unrelated fiscal and legal problems). The inclusion of the bikeway and its design are among the Greenway's most concrete achievements. By several estimates, 75% to 80% of the system is complete, mostly because it was preexisting.

There have been some positive effects which were not originally intended. For example, plans are now underway to restore sections of Fort Totten and open them to the public for the first time. Also, NOSC and the Greenway are providing a rallying point for lobbying of pro-park groups in the face of proposed 90% cuts in the capital budget for the NYC Parks Department.

ASSESSING PROJECT SUCCESS...**...By Original Goals****Enhance New York City's quality of life.**

- The potential for enhancement exists, but the Greenway has not had much real effect yet except for a small number of cycle and hiking group members. Many others use the system, but in the same way and in same places they have used it for many years with no consciousness of the Greenway. (see "Critical Mass" below)

Increase access to and understanding of cultural, environmental and educational institutions.

- Several staff members from cultural organizations along the route, although enthusiastic supporters of the Greenway, admit that as of now there has been little if any impact on public access to their facilities.

Provide desperately needed recreational facilities.

- The Greenway will provide little new recreational space, but rather link existing ones, aid access from other areas, and increase the sense of connectedness among areas. There is no evidence to date of impact on the use of facilities, except for occasional bike tours.

Provide a resource to support alternative, environmentally friendly transportation.

- Greenway-inspired improvements on Eastern Parkway will encourage use of bicycles in that area and make longer bicycle trips easier. There are no data on actual use of the paths.

Provide a physical and psychological connection between Brooklyn and Queens.

- Given its low current visibility, there is little or no change in the perception of connections between these boroughs as a result of the Greenway.

Serve as one (initial) link in a broader plan for a regional bikeway system.

- There is evidence that some open space planners see the Greenway as the "jewel of the regional plan for a greenway system." It has progressed farther and faster than any of the other planned greenways.

Enhance the neighborhoods through which it passes and contribute to community revitalization.

- No perceptible impact yet.

Promote inter-cultural and inter-age interaction.

- No perceptible impact yet.

...By Selection Committee Concerns

Has it achieved critical mass? Is there enough done to judge it on?

- This is the critical question for the Greenway. NOSC themselves describe the Greenway as less a physical product (since most of it was preexisting) than an idea in the public consciousness. It has made impressive in-roads among city officials and planners as well as local advocacy groups. Creating public awareness of the Greenway, however, is a next major step. The public (cycling and otherwise) is largely unaware of the Greenway.

Who is really in charge?

- NOSC has done a good job of distributing credit, involvement and control. NOSC remains a principal planner and advocate, but major responsibility now lies with the city departments of Parks and Transportation. Several state departments and the Regional Plan Association are also involved.

Is it just a designation, or "did they do something"?

- The Greenway is more than just an idea or a designation. Designation of the route on paper is of some impact, while identification on the ground (with



The Greenway at Prospect Park.

good signs) is a very important step that is yet to be done. Other current physical improvements include construction on the Eastern Parkway, painting route markings on streets, and cleaning and clearing the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway in Queens. In the future, the Greenway proposes adding links between parks, upgrading paths, and building the veloway.

How is it perceived in minority neighborhoods (as a "yuppie bike race")? Are cyclists perceived as outsiders? Is there any neighborhood participation or utilization (in minority areas especially)?

- There is too little Greenway-generated traffic to know. There would be a fair amount of work needed before many (especially poor and minority) areas see this as an amenity. The site visit team (chickens that we are) felt that lone cyclists might not feel safe along parts of the Eastern Parkway extension; however,

riders from bicycle groups which conduct organized trips along the Parkway disagreed.

Is it just a path, or does it include picnic and play areas?

- The thread linking the Greenway is its bicycle path. Other than a few relatively short links, it runs through open space. Even the two linear parkways (Ocean and Eastern) include places to sit and watch other activities. The majority of the Greenway runs through parks (in Prospect Park in Brooklyn and a string of parks in Queens) which include many kinds of open space amenities. The Greenway coordinates with these other open spaces, but leaves it to the parks to provide the amenities.

What is the level of commitment from the city to future expense and construction costs?

- Commitment expressed by city agencies seems strong, based in large part on the elegance of the idea and relatively low cost of realizing most of it. The key advocate for the Greenway within the Department of Transportation does not appear to have a clear idea or plan for how to get it implemented. Like everything else, it will be hurt by city budget woes. Some projects will survive based on previous allocations. Others will have to wait until less difficult times.

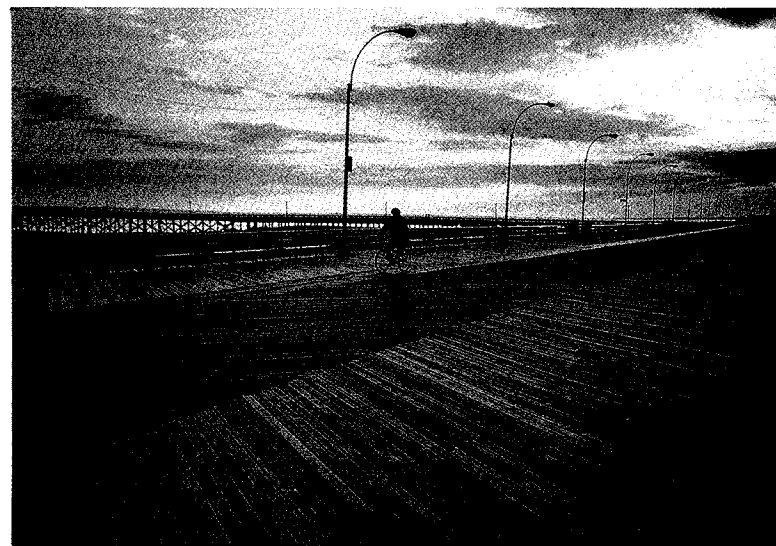
SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Selection Committee was impressed with the concept of the Greenway as a means of linking geographically and socioeconomically diverse parts of the city as well as otherwise distinct and isolated cultural resources (museums, parks, etc.). In this sense it fits with the broader theme of "connections" discussed earlier, especially with respect to the

goal of providing a chance to "encounter a bit of wilderness" within the urban setting.

The Selection Committee was concerned, however, that the Greenway remained largely a concept — more idea than reality. This is not to deny the significant efforts and successes of the Greenway's developers. Rather, the Selection Committee took note of the fact that, as its application itself stated, the Greenway is not an entirely new development. While there are some elements of new construction, it is largely an attempt to link and reconceptualize existing resources. In many ways, then, its existence depends on the degree to which people are aware of it, perceive the linkages, and take advantage of them. It is a project as much of public consciousness as of asphalt and concrete — and must be judged in this light.

By these criteria, the Selection Committee felt that the Greenway was not yet complete enough to have its intended



The Greenway at the Coney Island Boardwalk.

impact. Many pieces of it were not yet complete and signs identifying completed sections as part of the Greenway had not yet been posted. Few if any users were aware of the existence of the Greenway. During the site visits, it turned out that most people in the surrounding neighborhoods or on the path itself did not know that the Greenway exists. Instead, they saw themselves as walking or riding the paths of Prospect Park, Ocean Parkway, or Flushing Meadow Park, as others have for dozens of years.

The Selection Committee noted that there are two major phases to completing this project. The first is to get local public officials and decision makers to “develop a mental map” of the Greenway. It is no small accomplishment that this goal has largely been achieved and that the Greenway has received official recognition and endorsement. Some construction projects (e.g., the reconstruction of Eastern Parkway) were done with the Greenway design criteria in mind. The second goal, however, of achieving a similar “mental map” in the mind of the public, still lies ahead, as does the construction of additional linkages. For now, it is, simply, soon to judge the impact the Greenway will have when completed.

For More Information...

Tom Fox, Director or
Ann McClellan, Project Director
The Neighborhood Open Space Coalition
72 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007
Phone: (212) 513-7555