

July 2, 2007

Dear Editor:

Robert Moses divided close-knit neighborhoods, demolished viable housing, relocated the poorest New Yorkers to the city's edge and promoted flight to the suburbs. He rapidly transformed one section of the city into its poorest area. It became a dumping ground for the city's environmental burdens. The land is overrun with power plants, waste stations and toxic industry, and bisected by highways.

It's another Robert Moses road story. But, the Bronx locals are fighting back with a plan of their own: road removal in the name of urban revitalization. It's a "Community Plan" to reclaim and restore the highway for open space as part of the Bronx River Greenway, a bike/pedestrian pathway and park planned for the entire 23-mile length of the Bronx River.

Joan Byron, a South Bronx River Watershed Alliance member noted, "If the citizen advocated alternatives seem radical, it's because for 50 years, we have allowed highway engineers to be the primary shapers of huge parts of our cities, and allowed the movement of vehicles to trump all other considerations of urban design, public health and safety, and environmental quality."

Sound familiar?

The Bronx plan and the local initiative to remove all four lanes of the Robert Moses Parkway between Niagara Falls and Lewiston are part of a growing list of communities worldwide removing roads to reclaim riverfront open space and water front access. Planners globally are rectifying transportation mistakes. A partial list includes San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Toronto, and Seoul, Korea.

70 case studies from 11 countries and the opinions of over 200 transportation professionals world-wide disprove the statements that displaced traffic will divert to neighboring streets, clogging them, and leading to worse traffic problems. The studies found that "a well-designed and well-implemented scheme to reallocate road space improves conditions for pedestrians and cyclists without increasing congestion or other related problems. Ironically, one newspaper's predications of disaster may have prevented problems from actually occurring. Economic and quality of life benefits include air-quality improvements, reduced neighborhood severance, increased business investments, more attractive living and working conditions, improved retail vitality, plus traffic reduction, urban regeneration, and more efficient use of economic and scenic resources." (Roadspace Reallocations Schemes, Institution of Civil Engineers, London, England, 06/12/2001.)

Niagara Falls, if you want it all—creative-class, quality living plus a vibrant city and economic renewal—block the Parkway Preservation Committee and the current Power Coalition influence. Reclaim your natural landscape and your multi-cultural heritage. Vote for intelligence and ethical change. You deserve it.

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