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## Biking and Walking Advocates Hail George Washington Bridge Improvements Averting 5-year Closure of Cycling Access

*NJ Bike & Walk Coalition, TransAlt say separation of cyclists and pedestrians, removal of stairs and narrow ramp long overdue*

In late 2011, when the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced the “Restoring the George” project to replace the suspender ropes on the George Washington Bridge, bikers and walkers were faced with the prospect of 5 long years with limited or no access. But now, street safety advocates at the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition, Transportation Alternatives and the New York Cycle Club have won not only continuous access during the project, but also \$118 million worth of permanent bike and pedestrian improvements.

The organizations are hailing PANYNJ’s plans to improve cyclist and pedestrian access during the upcoming restoration of the span. As part of the project, all 171 steps, located at both entrances on the north path, and the narrow ramp on the New York entrance of the south path will be removed, in addition to complete rebuilds of these entrances and the fourth entrance, on the New Jersey south path.

When the renovation is completed in 2024, people on bikes and people walking will cross the bridge on separate paths. PANYNJ officials have also announced plans to make it easier for bicyclists to navigate the bridge towers by removing the sharp angles the path takes at these towers.

“Riders on both sides of the bridge faced an almost complete shutdown of the bridge paths, as they would have had to shoulder their bikes up and down numerous staircases on the north path to get across the bridge for the entire 5-year period while the south path was closed for cable replacement,” said **Cyndi Steiner, Executive Director of the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition**. “Only the hardest of riders, or those who have no other choice, would have done that. Commuters headed into Manhattan during the week, and recreational riders on the weekends all would have been affected. We are thankful to the Authority for responding to our request that they make these substantial improvements to the bridge path entrances so that access was not cut off. Further, making the towers safely navigable by bike will greatly improve the safety of the paths for both experienced and newer riders.”

**Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives**, said, “These long-overdue, common-sense improvements to the bridge are significant and will put an end to the dismal experience bikers and walkers have historically had when approaching and crossing the bridge. The separation of pedestrians and cyclists will greatly enhance the experience of all non-motorized users. These changes would not be happening were it not for our dogged member-supported advocacy over the past several years, particularly from our active volunteers, and the work of our partners, particularly Cyndi Steiner from NJ Bike & Walk Coalition and Shin-pei Tsay, now with Gehl Institute, for leading an early design workshop with the Port Authority several years ago.”

The changes will be included in the Port Authority’s “Restoring the George” project and in the 10-year Capital Plan.