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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Bridges and Tunnels to Connect the RFK Bridge to the Harlem River Drive

New Ramp Will Allow Motorists to Bypass City Streets for the First Time Since Bridge Was Completed in 1936

Ramp Will Reduce Traffic Congestion and Reduce Local Vehicle Emissions

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced the start of construction of a direct route from the RFK Bridge to the northbound Harlem River Drive, allowing motorists to bypass city streets for the first time in 83 years. By eliminating this longstanding detour, this new route will reduce particulate matter and greenhouse gas emissions in East Harlem, eliminating more than 2,500 tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions per year.

The average motorist using the bridge for a daily commute will save nearly nine hours per year of travel time, and in the aggregate the new route will save approximately 150,000 hours per year of travel time savings. The Harlem River Drive connects motorists from the RFK Bridge to the George Washington Bridge.

"We commend the MTA's plan to reconnect the RFK Bridge and Harlem River Drive, as it would remove a great deal of car and truck traffic from local East Harlem streets," said **Transportation Alternatives spokesman Joe Cutrufo**. "In 2019, cyclist Matt Travis was killed by a driver making an illegal turn just one block from the circuitous route drivers currently use. This new bypass will help to create a safer environment for pedestrians and people on bikes."

"Children are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of air pollution, due to their greater inhalation rates," said **Leonardo Trasande, MD, MPP, director of the Division of Environmental Pediatrics at NYU Langone Health**, and an internationally-renowned leader in children's environmental health. "Their lungs are still developing - and ozone levels have even been tied to the development of asthma. I am hopeful that these steps will reduce pollutants in the areas of NYC where children suffer from asthma all too frequently."

An average of more than 17,000 vehicles per day currently exit the RFK Bridge en route to the northbound Harlem River Drive. These vehicles today must exit the bridge between 125th and 126th Streets, travel northbound on Second Avenue, then merge onto an on-ramp next to the Crack is Wack Playground. Starting in 2021, those vehicles will be able to bypass this half-mile roundabout route using a gently-graded 1,200-foot long ramp.

The new route – a ramp conforming with all modern design standards and supported by 11 vertical support piers – starts as a right-hand exit branching off from the Manhattan-bound span of the bridge at an elevation of 45 feet above ground level. The ramp will rise slightly to an elevation of 57 feet as it passes over the Willis Avenue Bridge, then will slope gently downward until it touches down in the left lane of the Harlem River Drive, geographically just north of the northern end of Second Avenue. The MTA is also coordinating closely with the New York State Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

The project is being overseen by MTA Construction & Development in tandem with MTA Bridges and Tunnels, which owns, operates and maintains the RFK Bridge.

"This project will have huge transportation and environmental benefits for the public, so it has to be delivered as soon as possible," said **MTA Chief Development Officer Janno Lieber**. "Fortunately the Bridges and Tunnels capital project group has a terrific track record completing projects on time and on budget, so I'm highly confident they will continue that record of success as part of new MTA Construction & Development organization."

The MTA has partnered with the New York City Department of Transportation to expedite and cost effectively deliver this project. The two agencies have coordinated to ensure the alignment of the DOT's original design for the Harlem River Drive reconstruction project would be able to accommodate the construction of the new connector ramp. For example, the RFK ramp will be built on some of the support piers that were part of the DOT's recent reconstruction of the southbound Harlem River Drive.

"This project is a great example of how regional planning and inter-agency coordination can help deliver projects that enhance regional mobility and strengthen the resiliency of the greater transportation network, while minimizing customer disruption," said **Daniel DeCrescenzo, Acting President MTA Bridges and Tunnels**. "The RFK connector ramp will benefit both area residents and our customers through cleaner air and better traffic flow, and further underscores our commitment to investing in our facilities so we can better serve customers now and for many years to come."

The work to build the ramp is being done under a 15-month, \$48 million design-build contract was awarded to Judlau Contracting. This project is being funded through MTA Bridges and Tunnel's 2015-2019 Capital Plan.

About MTA Construction & Development

The MTA has been transforming internal operations and culture to reduce costs, streamline burdensome processes, and bring greater transparency and accountability to the way capital projects are scoped, planned, designed, built, and managed

The creation of the MTA Construction & Development is essential to the complete restructuring of the organization and simplifies a complex and inefficient organization so the MTA can focus on providing safe, reliable service for millions of New Yorkers every day.

The integration of all MTA capital planning, development and project delivery into MTA Construction & Development is a centerpiece of the MTA's historic Transformation Plan and reflects MTA's commitment to deliver the unprecedented 2020-24 Capital Program better, faster and more cost-effectively than ever before.

This innovative, agency-wide approach will allow us to plan and prioritize the right capital projects across the regional, and then package and deliver them together efficiently.



Diagram showing new ramp to be built



Map showing old traffic routing through Harlem