

New York City Greenway System

New York City has embarked on a historic effort to develop a 350 mile city-wide Greenway System. A Greenway is identified as a pathway along natural and manmade linear spaces such as rail and highway rights-of-way, river corridors, waterfront spaces, parklands and, where necessary, city streets. Identified in 1993 in DCP's A Greenway Plan for New York City, the Greenways are "at once the parks for the 21st Century and a part of the transportation infrastructure, providing for pleasant, efficient, healthful and environmentally-sound travel by foot, bicycle or skates." Since the release of the plan in 1993, the City has received over \$61 million in federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) funding for the planning, design and construction of the System.

Greenways can serve a host of functions, providing the following health, recreation, transportation and community development benefits:

- * Increases opportunities to explore the city's surprisingly diverse natural environment.
- * Provides a place to enjoy the sun, breeze or waterfront views and to exercise or relax.
- * Expands transportation options by offering a more flexible and environmentally sound means of travel to work or other destinations.
- * Reduces traffic congestion and improves air quality by providing non-motorized transportation facilities.

* Increases the value of property adjacent to once idle land and spurs private enterprises, including bicycle repair and rental shops, food establishments and other services.

* Connects neighborhood to neighborhood, borough to borough, and city to suburb, offering a new kind of public place, bringing together the young and old, rich and poor, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Greenways have played an important role in the history of open space development in New York City. Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect of Central and Prospect Parks, designed "park ways" for scenic carriage drives and bicycles in the late 19th century. Eastern and Ocean Parkways were planned by Olmsted as boulevards connecting Brooklyn's Prospect Park with its surrounding communities and the beaches and regional spaces beyond. In the 1930s, NYS Parks Commissioner Robert Moses built miles of pedestrian paths and esplanades in new parks, notably Riverside and East River Parks. Moses also built pedestrian and bicycle paths along new parkways, including the Laurelton, Southern and Shore Parkways, to satisfy the "groups, organizations and individuals ... clamoring and petitioning for bicycle tracks". The development of the New York City Greenway System represents a continuation of, and expansion upon, that strong and historically progressive tradition.



Belt Parkway - "A narrow shoestring park running around the entire city and including all sorts of recreational facilities" ... Robert Moses, Parks Commissioner

Opened on June 26, 1940, the Belt Parkway was developed by Parks Commissioner Robert Moses as part of a landscaped parkway system encircling New York City and connecting with the newly built parkways in Westchester and Long Island. Originally called the Circumferential Parkway (and mercifully renamed), the Belt contains the Shore Parkway in Brooklyn and the Southern, Laurelton and Cross Island Parkways in Queens.

According to Moses, landscaped parkways would provide for a smooth flow of traffic and act as "great neighborhood assets ... especially when provision is made for neighborhood playgrounds and for walks along these parkways so that they can be enjoyed by local residents and pedestrians as well as motorists." As such, the Belt Parkway was built as a "narrow shoestring park" skirting 26 park areas and totalling 3,550 acres. Pedestrian walkways and

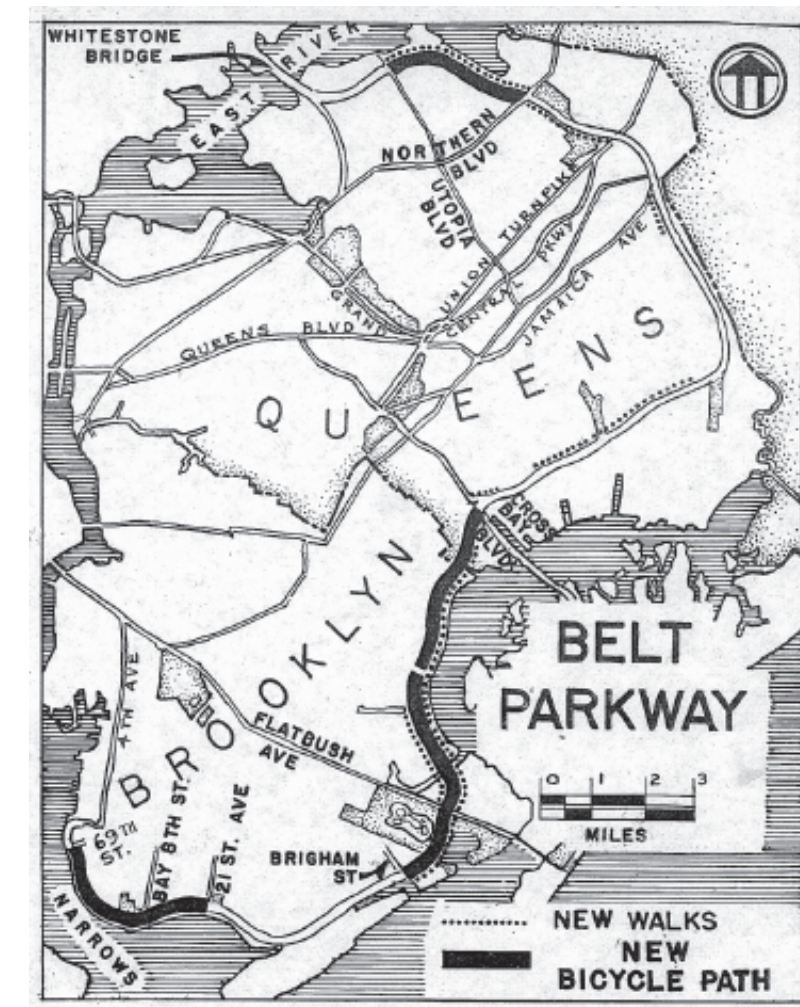
waterfront bicycle paths were built along The Narrows, Jamaica Bay and Little Bay Park. Conduit Boulevard, as it exists today, was developed two years after the opening of the Belt to provide a connection between the Belt and Atlantic Avenue, one of Brooklyn's major arterials.

Since the construction of the Belt, some of its recreation facilities have deteriorated due to

lack of maintenance and, as automotive traffic has increased, the intrusion of more recent parkway on and off-ramps. The Conduit-Southern Queens-Laurelton-Cross Island Greenway Master Plan seeks to revitalize the original Moses mission of a parkway system as transportation and recreation infrastructure to be used and enjoyed by users of motorized - and non motorized - transportation.



Indian Trails of Long Island, NYS Department of Parks, 1941



NYS Department of Parks, 1941