

Sheridan road show

Groups: Erase Bx. link and add park

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Cars and trucks jockey for position on the Sheridan Expressway, which community groups in the South Bronx want state to wipe out in favor of a park.



Roberts for NEWS

Not even megabuilder Robert Moses could finish the Sheridan Expressway.

Now local community groups want to wipe out what the urban developer did manage to build.

An alliance of advocacy groups in the South Bronx hopes to tear down the stubby roadway in favor of a park running alongside the Bronx River. But the state has eyes for a new interchange meant to boost traffic on the underused route.

The state Department of Transportation is considering a plan to build a more efficient Sheridan-Bruckner interchange and use the Sheridan to create a link between the sprawling Hunts Point produce market and the Cross Bronx Expressway.

Cars now can use the Bronx River Parkway to move from the Bruckner to the Cross Bronx, but trucks cannot. DOT officials contend the expressway link would be a vital conduit for trucking when the Cross Bronx is jammed up.

Upset that the DOT seemed to have made a decision long before the public hearings began last month, the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance delivered hundreds of postcards to Gov. Pataki's Manhattan office recently, urging him to consider a proposal to scrap the expressway altogether and turn the waterfront land into a park.

Seeking community input

Advocates complain that the community's proposal is not being seriously considered by the state DOT as it weighs options for the Sheridan.

"No options yet have been ruled out," responded DOT spokeswoman Jennifer Nelson. "We're coming with a blank slate to get the community's input."

Nelson said the decision-making process for a project this size takes years and is subject to extensive community oversight.

In the coming weeks, the DOT will empanel an advisory committee of about 30 local people, business and community leaders who will meet monthly with DOT officials for the duration of the five-year decision process.

"We won't dismiss any idea out of hand," said Nelson. "That would defeat the purpose of the process."

Originally planned to gouge through Bronx Park and link to the New England Thruway, the Sheridan work ground to a halt in 1962, and a political spat killed the rest of the project. The mile-long leftover spur has been derided for years as the most useless roadway in the region.

It carries fewer than 40,000 cars a day - while the nearby Bronx River Parkway carries about twice that - with the number dropping each year, according to the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

The convoluted Sheridan-Bruckner interchange is often cited as a main reason for a high rate of accidents - which is why the DOT first booted the idea of building a new interchange between the two expressways.