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KENSINGTON AND SCAJAQUADA EXPRESSWAYS INCLUDED IN NATIONAL REPORT, LOCAL COALITION CREATED TO SUPPORT THIS EFFORT

Freeways Without Futures recommends highways removal or transformation for Buffalo and other cities

Buffalo, N.Y. – Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), an international expert dedicated to making cities more walkable, today released a semi-annual report that urges redesigning or replacing Buffalo’s Kensington (Rt. 33) and Scajaquada (Rt. 198) Expressways.

[*Freeways Without Futures*](#), profiles urban highway segments recommended for removal or transformation in 10 U.S. cities.

The report, the sixth in a series since 2008, comes at a time when communities worldwide are considering or undertaking highway-removal projects. Since the 1980s, 17 American cities committed to replace or mitigate major freeways, including San Francisco, Milwaukee and New York. These cities successfully removed highways with no adverse impact on traffic, according to the report. In New York State, projects like these are already underway in Niagara Falls and Rochester.

“Inclusion of the Kensington and Scajaquada Expressways in CNU’s [*Freeways Without Futures*](#) confirms that this is the right time to consider alternative designs for these roadways,” said Stephanie Crockatt, executive director of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy. “The construction of these expressways divided communities and destroyed acres of parkland in the jewel of Olmsted’s first park system. We look forward to continuing this conversation with New York State officials, the City of Buffalo, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and other local nonprofits and activists to ensure that these roads reconnect and rebuild the communities and greenspaces that all Buffalo residents hold dear.”

Community groups and nonprofit organizations have called on local elected officials and the state DOT to address concerns over these roadways for the last several years. In November 2017, the Conservancy launched the #SaveDelawarePark Campaign, built on nearly two decades of advocacy for park restoration, which resulted in the DOT agreeing to reengage with the community regarding the design of the Scajaquada Expressway. That campaign galvanized

stakeholders along the entire corridor in the creation of the Scajaquada Corridor Coalition (SCC), which seeks to create a community-driven approach to a redesign of the Scajaquada Expressway.

“For nearly 60 years, the Scajaquada Expressway has severed connections between neighborhoods, polluted Scajaquada Creek, and destroyed Fredrick Law Olmsted’s masterpiece vision for Delaware Park,” said Justin Booth, vice chair of the SCC. “Our coalition is working tirelessly to create a community-driven approach for highway removal that supports Buffalo’s ongoing economic resurgence, while addressing environmental and economic justice concerns. CNU’s recognition of the Scajaquada Expressway as a ‘Freeway Without A Future’ underscores not only the negative impact that this roadway has had on the City of Buffalo, but also shines a light on the massive opportunities that exist to protect our urban legacy and invest in our city’s future.”

Simultaneously on the east side of the city, the Restore Our Community Coalition (ROCC) has focused their efforts since 2007 on the Kensington Expressway, in hopes of restoring Olmsted’s vision for Humboldt Parkway and remediating the damage caused by the construction of Route 33 in the community.

“We are grateful that CNU has recognized our movement to Restore Humboldt Parkway to a re-creation of the beautiful and inspiring vision of Frederick Law Olmsted,” said Karen Stanley, executive director, ROCC. “It is unconscionable that the Kensington Expressway not only destroys that internationally acclaimed design, but also caused untold health hazards of lung disease and cancer to the residents and taxpayers of the neighborhood that was cut into two very unequal pieces. It is our hope that placing our plight on a scale of national visibility will bring the attention of federal funders and even international philanthropists, so that we can ‘Put the PARK back in Humboldt Parkway!’”

“Ever since the announcements that the Kensington Expressway was to be built, dating back to the 1950s and 1960s, our community has sounded the alarm that this highway was destroying our neighborhoods, ruining our health and slashing our property values,” said Stephanie Geter, Chair of ROCC and president of Hamlin Park Community Taxpayers Association. “Sometimes people listened; most of the time they didn’t. But we keep raising our voices to insist that the federal and state departments of transportation do the right thing to correct this travesty.”

In light of this report, the SCC, ROCC and all stakeholder organizations across the city, in partnership with CNU, call on the DOT to replace these aging, car-oriented roadways and create appropriate and locally connected street systems, restored Olmsted parkways, and commercial and residential redevelopment – repairing the property damage and neighborhood disruption these highways originally caused.

The 10 cities roadways included in this year’s *Freeways Without Futures* report are:

- Kensington and Scajaquada Expressways
- I-10 (Claiborne Expressway), New Orleans, Louisiana
- I-275, Tampa, Florida

- I-35, Austin, Texas
- I-345, Dallas, Texas
- I-5, Portland, Oregon
- I-64, Louisville, Kentucky
- I-70, Denver, Colorado
- I-81, Syracuse, New York
- I-980, Oakland, California

A jury of nationally recognized transportation experts chose this year's list from 29 nominated in-city freeways. The panel reviewed each submission based on a number of criteria: The age and state of the highway; the quality of alternative boulevard or street design; the feasibility of removal; community support for removal; existing political momentum; redevelopment opportunities; potential cost savings; and potential to improve access to opportunity for underserved communities.

“Local, state, and federal resources are declining,” says Lynn Richards, president and CEO of CNU. “We need to use investments that meet multiple community goals: Enhancing all kinds of mobility, promoting economic development, creating jobs, and reimagining the possibilities for waterfronts, parks, and neighborhoods.”

The report also monitors the progress and challenges for three completed or underway highway removals or mitigations:

- Rochester’s Inner Loop in New York, where a range of new development is underway, including supportive and affordable housing;
- The Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle, whose closure to traffic in January 2019 did not result in the “carnaggedon” of nightmarish traffic predicted, and whose replacement with a tunnel is likely to have been (as local groups predicted) unnecessary; and
- I-375 through downtown Detroit, a removal scheduled to begin by 2022. The two current design alternatives for its replacement, however, still cater excessively to automobiles and very much resemble the freeway they will replace.

Local elected officials provided the following statements in response to the release of this report:

“The super-highway transportation projects of yesterday divided neighborhoods, created barriers, and removed parks and parkways where memories were made, and communities connected,” said Congressman Brian Higgins, D-Buffalo.

"The Congress for New Urbanism's latest report is adding to the chorus of advocates recognizing the damage caused by replacing parkways with highways in the City of Buffalo," said New York Senate Transportation Committee Chair Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo. "Thank you to the ROCC, SCC, and Olmsted Parks Conservancy for leading this effort to restore our parks and reunite our communities."

“I applaud and thank the Congress for the New Urbanism for recognizing the years of hard work undertaken by ROCC and SCC, who determined long ago that it’s time to replace or

redesign the Rt. 198 Scajaquada and Rt. 33 Kensington Expressways. These expressways have long severed and disrupted our communities and recreational spaces, particularly Humboldt Parkway, which connected MLK Jr. Park with Delaware Park, which is the nexus and crown jewel of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks system. We are reaching a tipping point, where eliminating these barriers would be a major step towards reunifying important parts of our city and healing decades- old wounds," said Assembly Major Leader Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, D-Buffero.

"Across our country, highways built in the name of urban renewal have caused countless impacts on communities," said Assemblyman Sean Ryan, D-Buffero. "It's well past time for us to rethink these roadways and develop alternatives that will better serve everyone in our community. I'm proud to support that effort here in Western New York, and look forward to working with everyone involved to find creative solutions that will help continue Buffero's growth."

Copies of *Freeways Without Futures* can be downloaded [here](#).

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About the Buffero Olmsted Parks Conservancy

The Buffero Olmsted Parks Conservancy is the first nonprofit organization in the nation to manage and operate an entire urban park system that consists of more than 850 acres of beautifully designed historic parks, parkways and circles. The Buffero Olmsted Parks Conservancy is an independent not-for-profit, membership-based, community organization whose mission is to promote, preserve, restore, enhance, and maintain the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed parks and parkways in the Greater Buffero area for current and future generations. More than 2.5 million people use Buffero's historic, award-winning Olmsted Park system annually for recreation, relaxation and rejuvenation. The parks were designed by America's first landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted more than 150 years ago; it was the first urban park system designed in the nation. Basic maintenance of the parks has been greatly improved since the 2004 groundbreaking public-private agreement with the Conservancy, City of Buffero and Erie County. Since that time, the Conservancy, now partnering with the City of Buffero, has retained full responsibility for the management and care of these green spaces which are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Most recently, the American Planning Association recognized Delaware Park as one of the 2014 Great Places in America and The Guardian named Buffero's Olmsted park system as one of the best park systems in the world and in 2018 the Conservancy set a Guinness World Record in historic Bidwell Parkway. Visit www.bfloparks.org to learn more.

The Buffero Olmsted Park System includes:

Six parks: Cazenovia Park in South Buffero, Delaware Park in Delaware/Parkside District, Front Park at the Peace Bridge, Martin Luther King, Jr. Park at Fillmore Avenue, Riverside Park at Niagara and Tonawanda Street, and South Park at McKinley Parkway

Seven parkways: Bidwell, Chapin, Lincoln, McKinley, Porter, Red Jacket, and Richmond

Eight landscaped traffic circles: Agassiz, Colonial, Ferry, Gates, McClellan, McKinley, Soldiers, and Symphony

About Congress for New Urbanism

Members of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) help create vibrant and walkable cities, towns, and neighborhoods where people have diverse choices for how they live, work, shop, and get around. People want to live in well-designed places that are unique and authentic. CNU's mission is to help people build those places. Visit www.cnu.org to learn more.

About the Scajaquada Corridor Coalition

The Scajaquada Corridor Coalition unites the communities north, south, east and west to advocate for the removal of the NYS Route #198, which lacerated Delaware Park and shredded the connections within our community. The SCC believes that a comprehensive, community-inspired 21st century design alternative to this 20th century highway will restore our historic parks and parkway system, connect our neighborhoods, create complete safe streets and enhance the economic vitality of the City of Buffero. Visit www.sccoalition.net to learn more.

Member Organizations: Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, GoBike Buffalo, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Parkside Community Association, Grant Amherst Business Association, Black Rock Riverside Alliance, Vision Niagara.

About the ROCC

Restore Our Community Coalition (ROCC) is a 501(c) 3 organization supported by institutions and community organizations such as the Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Black Chamber of Commerce, Citizens' Alliance, and the Hamlin Park Taxpayers' Association. ROCC is dedicated to the revitalization of neighborhoods along Humboldt Parkway. The visionary of this movement is Mr. Clarke Eaton, retired manager of the City of Buffalo Public Works division and owner of a construction management firm. Mrs. Stephanie Barber Geter is the Chair of ROCC; Karen Stanley Fleming is the Executive Director. The steering committee members are; Mr. Richard C. Cummings, Richard A. Cummings, Cornelius Johnson, Mark Mortenson, Greg Robinson, Sydney Brown, Al Baxter, Dave Stieglitz, Bradley Bethel, Jr. and David Roach, Esq. For more information please visit rocbuffalo.org.