

Prospect Park Drive Safety Study

March 2023



Prospect
Park
Alliance



Sam Schwartz

Background

- Prospect Park is a premier urban park destination, unparalleled in its natural landscape and extensive opportunities for passive and active recreation.
- Although private vehicles have been prohibited in Prospect Park since 2018, the Park Drive was never fully redesigned to accommodate the varied and sometimes competing interests of pedestrians, runners, cyclists and NYC Parks/City Agency vehicles.
- A significant increase in park usage of the Drive in recent years has only increased the need for a study to review how the Drive is designed and operated to improve access and safety for different users.
- This study was undertaken by Prospect Park Alliance in partnership with NYC Parks and NYC DOT, and funded through District 39 Participatory Budgeting, with feedback from the Prospect Park Drive Safety Task Force. Sam Schwartz acted as the advising traffic consultant.



Study Process

To develop recommendations, this study included the following steps and components:

1. Understand Existing Conditions

To determine critical issues and points of interest, the team analyzed crash data, pedestrian counts, roadway grade, existing crossings and signals, and park user correspondence (from 2017-2022).

2. Develop Recommendations

A “blue sky” set of potential solutions was developed, informed by the data and traffic safety best practices.

3. Gain Feedback from Drive Safety Task Force and Agency Partners

Potential solutions were refined with meetings and follow-up correspondence with the Task Force and members of DOT and Parks. In some cases, options were modified or deemed infeasible due to feedback.

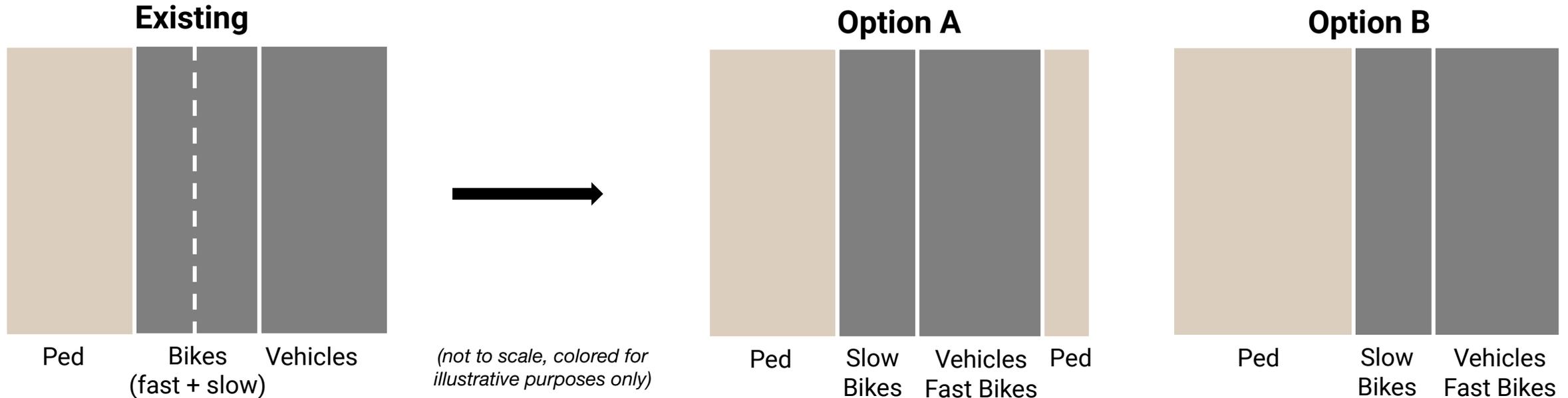
4. Determine Recommendations

Recommendations were refined based on further analysis, feedback, and precedents research.

Design Changes: Short Term

Modify Lane Design

- Conversion of outer vehicle lane into fast bike/vehicle lane to calm speeds and more formally separate fast and slow cyclists (note: while the Drive is closed to public vehicular traffic, it is still utilized by field operations staff)
- Both options create additional pedestrian space, with Option A adding space on far side of Drive
- Both options take into consideration stopped vehicles (adequate passing width)



Design Changes: Short Term

Modify Crosswalk Design

Increase Visibility

- Use high visibility paint or consider asphalt art
- Better placed markings before crosswalks, sized for cyclists (e.g. "PED CROSSING AHEAD")



Crosswalk Art at Vanderbilt Ave in Brooklyn (left) and South Clinton Ave, Trenton NJ (right)

Physical Barriers at Crossings

- Consider placing sturdy barriers such as large planters at key crosswalks to narrow roadway and slow traffic.
- While stanchions are currently in place at key crosswalks, consider adding barricades, which were removed after opposition, to make more effective and less easy to move.



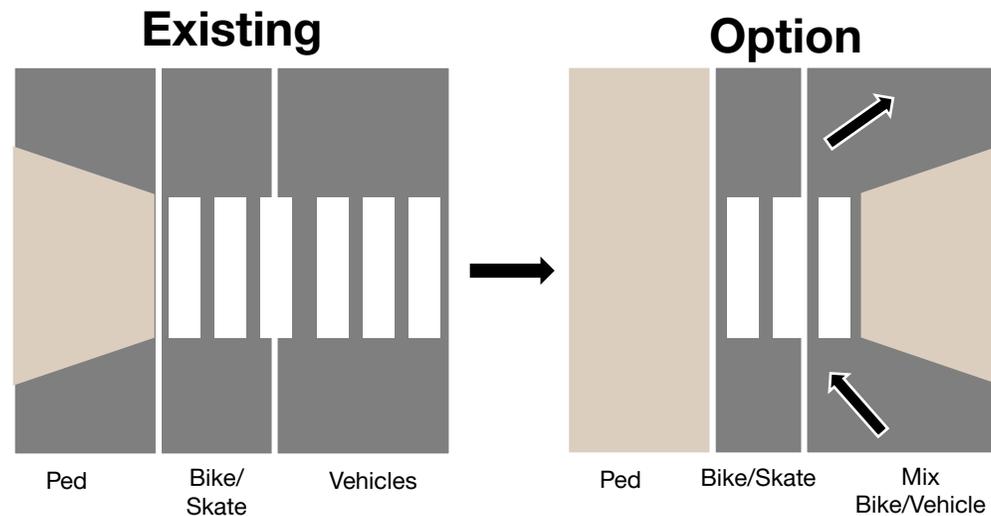
Concrete stanchions + barriers installed May 2018 (left); Image of planters used for traffic calming in Downtown Brooklyn

Design Changes: Long Term

Conduct Follow-up Study of Crosswalk Geometry

Make crosswalks shorter by extending pedestrian area into bike lane

- Vehicle/Fast Bike lane traffic merges into Slow Bike lane
- Accompanied by better signage leading up to crossing



(not to scale)

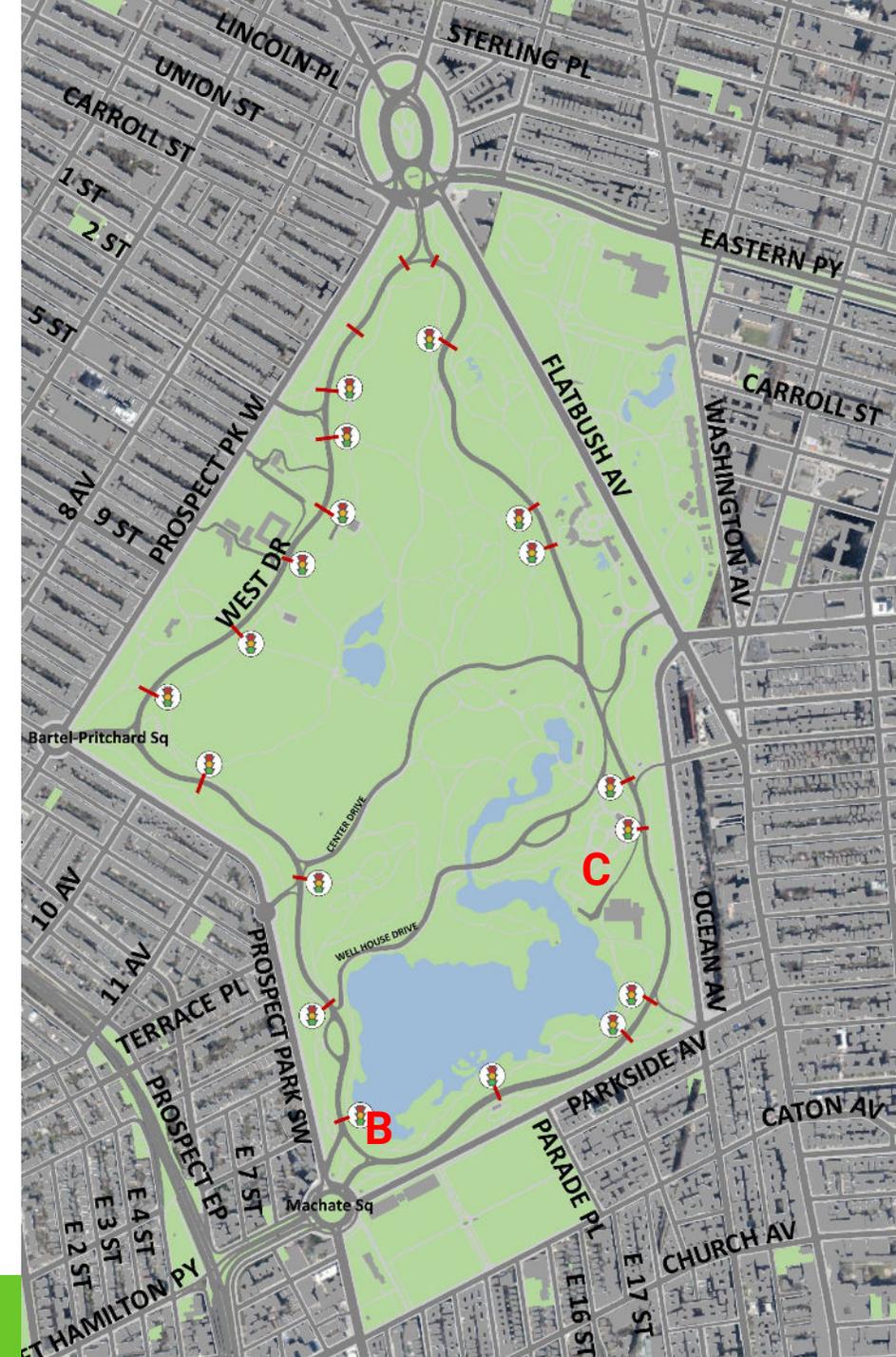
Design Changes: Long Term

Invest in Spot Improvements to Widen Pinch Points and Address Drainage and Pavement Issues

Stakeholder engagement revealed locations with specific issues needing to be addressed. Repairing these locations would reduce risk and conflict:

- Removal of traffic triangles to widen usable road space (Grand Army Plaza, Bartel Pritchard and Park Circle Entrances)
- Widening of roadway and renovation work to address drainage issues resulting in dirt build up (location B)
- Repairs of potholes causing dangerous swerving (location C)

Note: Slated to be addressed in Spring 2023



Design Changes: Pros and Cons

Recommendation	Pros	Cons
Modified Lane Design – Option A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calms motorist + cyclist speeds • Expands pedestrian space • Creates new pedestrian area on outer edge to wait before safely crossing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns raised about outer pedestrian lane causing conflicts with large service vehicles (garbage packers, tree work equipment) utilizing the vehicle lane
Modified Lane Design – Option B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calms motorist + cyclist speeds • Expands pedestrian space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address safety issues of pedestrians walking along outer edge of roadway or having space to wait to cross between crosswalks
Increased Crosswalk Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls attention to crossings, encouraging motorists + cyclists to slow down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not physically slow motorists + cyclists down • Requires ongoing maintenance to remain effective

Design Changes: Pros and Cons

Recommendation	Pros	Cons
Placement of Physical Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further calls attention to crossings, encouraging slower speeds• May physically slow down motorists + cyclists (by visually narrowing crossing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easily movable stanchions and barricades require regular maintenance not possible with current park staffing levels• Harder-to-move planters raised concerns about ability to easily utilize drive for races and other events
Modified Crosswalk Geometry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physically slows down motorists + cyclists by physically narrowing the roadway at crossings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concerns were raised about the risks of having motorists and cyclists merge into a single lane at crossings
Spot Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address specific roadway design and condition issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will require capital funding

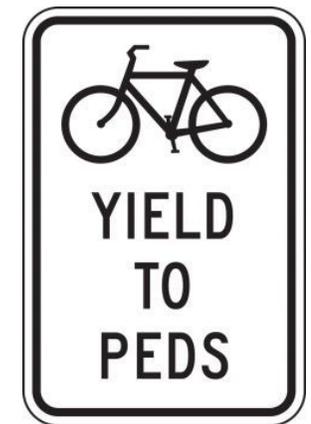
Operational Changes – Short Term

Increase Educational Signage

- Add signage to the Drive with expected yielding behavior, lane designations, what types of devices allowed in park
- Add crossing-specific signs (e.g. “approaching active bike lane,” “look both ways,” “cyclists must yield to pedestrians”)

Conduct Community Outreach

- Foster a “culture of communication” through distribution of materials (leaflets, flyers) containing information on yielding behavior and park rules to visitors, community groups, organizations utilizing the park, social media, etc.



These signs offer precedent examples of both posted and roadway signs

Operational Changes – Long Term

Consider Implementation of “Slow Hours”

- Fast/training cyclists must operate at lower speed (e.g. 10 mph) at certain times of day
- Precedent: NYCC Cycling Protocol for Central Park: “Training rides should be limited to times when the Park is least crowded (i.e., weekdays before 7am and after 8pm/6pm in winter)”
- Precedent: “Off-Leash” hours (knowing what to expect in the park at certain times)

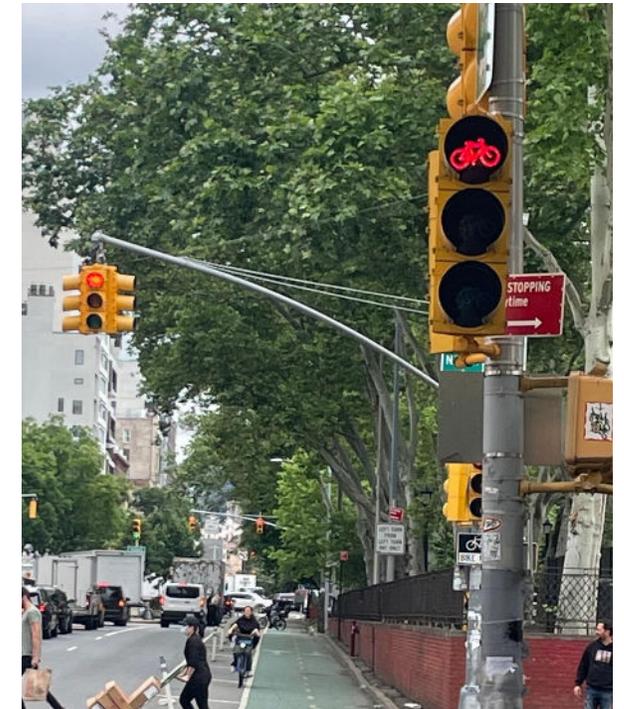


Current signage re: off-leash offers precedent

Operational Changes – Long Term

Improve Signage Accompanying Signals

- Explore sign options to increase awareness and compliance with traffic signals
- Consider bicycle signal heads



Policy

Create Holistic Access Policy for Electric Devices

We recommend that NYC Parks and NYC DOT work to create a thoughtful and comprehensive electric vehicle policy that balances park patron safety with the interconnections between the Park Drive and the city greenway system; as well as addresses the growth in e-bikes, including the Citi Bike fleet at park entrances, which has resulted from new, environmentally focused transportation policies.

Increase Signage Related to Policy

Once this policy is solidified, increase awareness via signs at entries and “reminder” signage throughout park, as well as an outreach campaign.



Operational Changes: Pros and Cons

Recommendation	Pros	Cons
Educational Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reinforces design + policy changes to improve compliance and foster safer practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">N/A
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reinforces design + policy changes to improve compliance and foster safer practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">N/A
“Slow Hours”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides more harmonious use of the Drive by various user groups by limiting specific use to certain times of day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Functions only as a “suggestion” without enforcementPotential limitations during certain times of year (e.g. it is colder and darker at 8 am in winter than in summer)

Eliminated Options

Several options originally considered in the long list were eliminated:

- **Vertical elements (speed humps, rumble strips, etc.)**
 - Issues for scheduled events/races
 - Safety concerns raised by stakeholders
- **Temporary traffic calming (removable speed humps, rumble strips, etc.)**
 - Maintenance challenge for park staff
 - Safety concerns raised by stakeholders
- **Conversion to two-way traffic**
 - Safety concerns voiced by task force on reduced space for users and increased conflicts with users in different directions and at crossings
- **Reversal of Drive Direction (to prevent issues at steeped grade hill at Vanderbilt Entrance drive crossing)**
 - Concerns raised by agencies about shifting problematic spots to other areas of Drive where steeped grade falls in reverse direction.
- **Changes to Signalization of Park Drive**
 - Drive Signals are currently "semi-actuated" and remain green until push-button activated. Agencies feel that research does not show that other approaches would increase safety.



Vertical elements (like the temporary speed hump above) are incompatible with programmed events and/or require significant maintenance resources

Your Feedback

Please fill out our feedback form to share your thoughts on these recommendations.

Take the survey: prospectpark.org/drive-safety-feedback.

Questions? Contact community@prospectpark.org.

Prospect Park Drive Safety Task Force

<p>Achilles International AdaptAbility Brooklyn Borough President's Office FIDO Gallop NYC Good Neighbors of Park Slope Kissena Cycling Club New York City Council District 35 New York City Council District 39 New York City Council District 40 New York Cycle Club</p>	<p>New York Road Runners New York State Assembly District 43 New York State Assembly District 44 New York State Senate District 20 Park Slope Neighbors Park Slope Parents Prospect Park Community Committee Prospect Park Track Club Trail Blazers Camps Transportation Alternatives</p>
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