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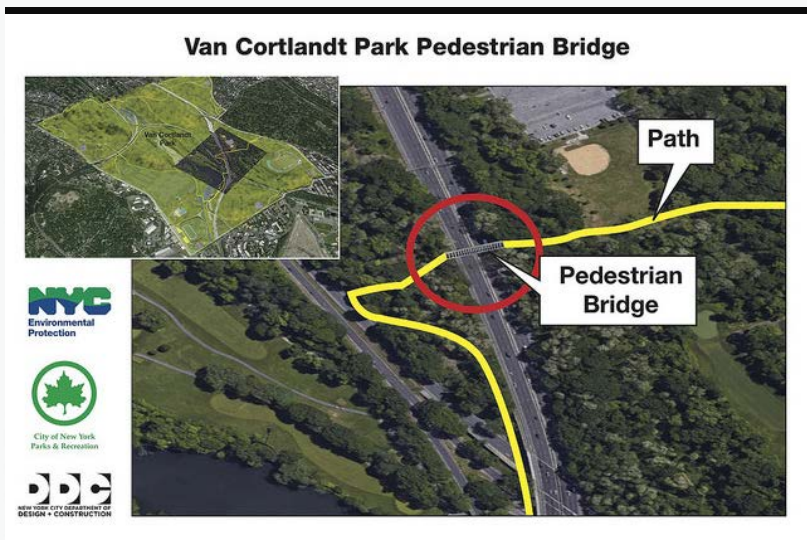
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City Announces Plans to Construct New Pedestrian Bridge Over Major Deegan to Improve Community Access to Van Cortlandt Park

\$12 Million Pedestrian Bridge is Part of Master Plan to Knit the Park Back Together and Restore the Natural Beauty Identified by Olmsted

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner, Emily Lloyd today joined Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Commissioner Dr. Feniosky Peña- Mora, and several elected officials and community leaders to announce plans for a \$12 million pedestrian bridge that will span the Major Deegan Expressway and improve community access to Van Cortlandt Park by connecting the Croton Woods and the Allen Shandler Recreation areas in the northeast section of the park. DEP and Parks will each invest \$4 million to construct the bridge, and the remaining \$4 million will be paid for with state funds secured by State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, and the Assembly Bronx Delegation, as well as State Senator Jeffrey Klein. DDC will manage the design and construction of the bridge, which is expected to be completed in 2019.

“This project is a true collaboration between the City, community leaders, and our elected officials,” said **Commissioner Emily Lloyd**. “This new pedestrian bridge will improve the community’s access to the park and provide a connection between two recreation areas in one of New York City’s largest and most beautiful parks.”

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"This pedestrian bridge project is a realization of one of the many proposals in the Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan, a plan that is meant to guide future projects in the park," said **Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver**. "Thanks to additional funding secured by State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Senator Jeffrey Klein, Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, and the Assembly Bronx Delegation, and our partnership with DEP and DDC, the City will be able to construct a new amenity for park users that will provide access to the park's natural areas and recreational opportunities."

"Van Cortlandt Park is the third largest Park in our great City and with the addition of this new pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway it is fast becoming one of the most accessible to the public," said **Commissioner Dr. Feniosky Peña Mora**. "This new bridge will reconnect an especially isolated part of the park and will open up more opportunities for residents to enjoy the park's natural vistas. We are proud to work with our partners at DEP and Parks to provide additional and significant ways for visitors to enjoy the beauty that is Van Cortlandt Park."

"Van Cortlandt Park is a treasure of the Bronx," **Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie** said. This pedestrian bridge will increase access and use of the vast park space to all Bronx residents. I am proud of my colleagues in the Assembly for supporting the funding for the bridge and commend the hard work of the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Design and Construction for their hard work and dedication to this project."

"By investing in our parks, we are not only ensuring children and families have a top quality space to play and spend time, but significantly improving our city's infrastructure for future generations," said **Senator Jeff Klein**. "I'm proud to have secured \$1 million in state funding for the new Van Cortlandt Park Pedestrian Bridge. By opening up the park and better connecting previously isolated sections, the new footbridge will increase access to a vital community asset for countless residents, visitors and tourists. I look forward to continuing to work with the DEP, Parks Department, DDC, my colleagues in government, the community and all relevant stakeholders as we move this important project forward."

"The communities surrounding Van Cortlandt Park have waited years to realize the promise of this long-anticipated project," **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz** said. "I am proud to have worked with my colleagues in government, the various city agencies, local activists, our community boards, neighborhood organizations and park enthusiasts whose vision for improved east/west access within Van Cortlandt Park will now be realized. This project is a bridge across the Bronx, uniting communities through recreation, and I am proud to be a part of this wonderful announcement."

"The construction of the foot bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway is something I and all the other local elected officials have been working on for some time now," **Congressman Eliot Engel** said. "This was a major priority, not just for me and my colleagues in government, but also for the members of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, as well as those in the community. This project was a long time coming, and I am excited for construction to get underway soon."

"Our community has fought for many years for a pedestrian bridge that would link the two sides of Van Cortlandt Park, which are currently divided by the Major Deegan Expressway," **Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz** said. "Van Cortlandt Park is perhaps the most beautiful park in the city, and among its largest. I am very pleased that the de Blasio administration has decided to fulfill a promise made to our community by supporting this important project. I am proud that Speaker Carl E. Heastie and I were able to help secure an allocation of \$3 million from the Assembly that will finance part of this bridge. This was a team effort by Mayor Bill de Blasio, Council Member Andrew Cohen, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie, State Senator Jeffrey Klein, myself, and the agencies involved. When we work together we can

accomplish great things."

"Residents of the Northwest Bronx have been waiting to see the Van Cortlandt Park pedestrian bridge project come to life since 1999," said **Council Member Andrew Cohen**. "This particular project has been a priority of mine since I was a Van Cortlandt Park activist and the construction of the bridge was the subject matter of one of the first meetings I had after taking office. The addition of a pedestrian bridge to the City's third largest park would allow members of its neighboring communities to easily access both sides of its 1,146 acre landscape, which was unfortunately divided after the construction of the Major Deegan Expressway. With the help of my colleagues, Borough President Diaz, Speaker Heastie, Senator Klein, Congressman Engel and Assembly Member Dinowitz, I am happy to say that we were able to work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the NYC Parks Department to revive this project and make it a reality,"

When Frederick Law Olmsted mapped the streets of the Bronx in 1876, he proposed that New York City buy the Van Cortlandt family estate because he believed the property was already as beautiful as Central Park. New York City purchased the land and constructed the nation's first municipal golf course but made no comprehensive plan for the park. Then, from the 1930s to the 1950s, the construction of three major highways fragmented the park and limited community access to its hills, forests, fields and wetlands.

In 2008, as a mitigation project associated with the construction of the Croton Water Filtration Plant, which was built underneath the Park and is slated to open later this year, DEP conducted a feasibility study to develop and evaluate alternatives to connect the Croton Woods and Allen Shandler Recreation Area with a pedestrian access bridge. The new pedestrian bridge, along with a new trail on the south side of the Expressway, will connect existing walking paths on either side of the Expressway that follow the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail. The bridge is part of the 2014 Van Cortlandt Park Master Plan – a comprehensive plan to knit the park back together and restore the natural beauty identified by Olmsted.

Plans for the new bridge were developed with extensive input from the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy, Community Boards 7, 8, and 12, Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee, and local elected officials.

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