

The North Shore Transportation Improvement Strategy and Western Richmond Terrace¹: The Forgotten Corridor

Introduction

Richmond Terrace is the northernmost corridor on Staten Island, stretching six miles from the eastern neighborhood of St. George – home to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal and Borough Hall – to a primarily industrial section of Northwest Staten Island known as Mariners Harbor. The corridor connects to several major arterial roads, like Bay Street and Port Richmond Avenue, and serves as a key passageway for many Staten Island residents.

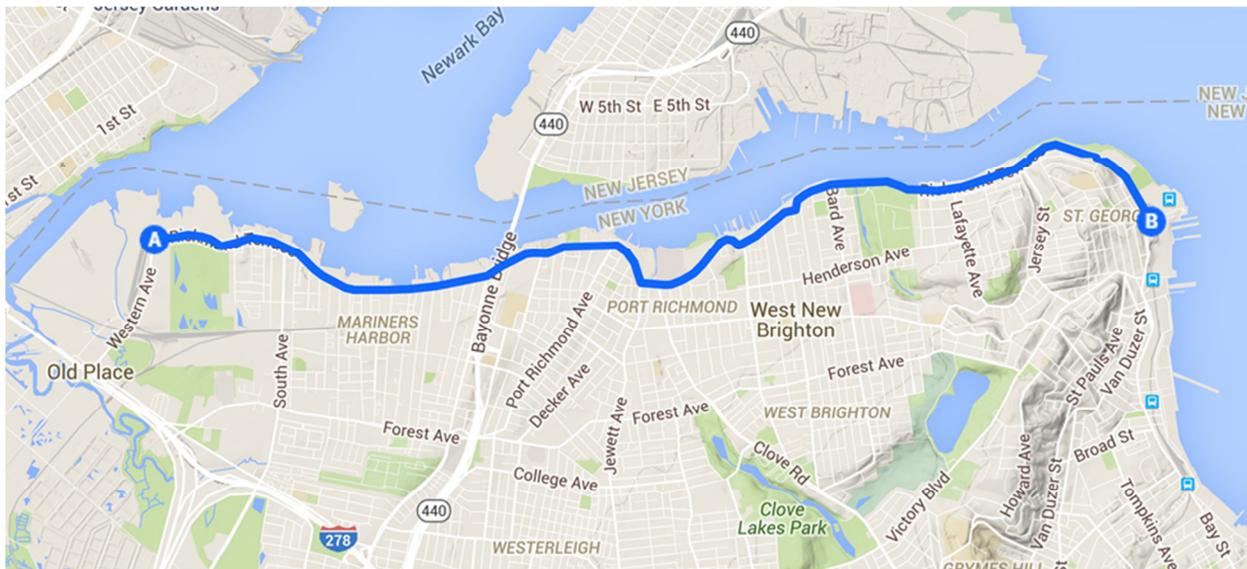


Image: Created via Google Maps

For years, a mix of heavy trucking, commuter traffic, inefficient bus service and a lack of dedicated space for pedestrians and cyclists have contributed to persistent traffic congestion on Richmond Terrace. These existing issues have been compounded by a spike in development along the North Shore. New attractions such as the New York Wheel and the Empire Outlets as well as heightened residential construction will bring even more car, foot and bike traffic to this passageway that was originally designed to accommodate a much smaller level of car-only service.

¹ In this report, we will refer to “western Richmond Terrace” as the segment between Western Avenue and Port Richmond Avenue. “eastern Richmond Terrace” refers to the segment between Port Richmond Avenue and Bay Street.

The Study

To address existing congestion and potential worsening that will result from upcoming development along the North Shore of Staten Island, the NYC Economic Development Commission (EDC) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of City Planning (DCP) have partnered with the engineering firm WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff to conduct a **North Shore Transportation Improvement Strategy (NSTIS) Study**, highlighting potential solutions to these longstanding problems. Parsons Brinckerhoff is evaluating 60 “problematic intersections” on the eastern portion of Richmond Terrace and along the Northern segment of Bay Street before it intersects with Hylan Boulevard. **Transportation Alternatives urges the NYC EDC and its partners to extend the NSTIS study to the western segment of Richmond Terrace.**

Why?

The eastern portion of Richmond Terrace that runs from Port Richmond Avenue to Bay Street is expected to experience population growth and increased traffic congestion due to an influx of new residents and development in the area, making it an obvious choice for inclusion in the study. But oft-ignored western Richmond Terrace has its own set of issues.

The table below highlights some of the socioeconomic and demographic differences between the populations of eastern and western Richmond Terrace.

Table 1: Basic demographic and socioeconomic data on two segments of Richmond Terrace

	Eastern Rich. Terr.	Western Rich. Terr.
Population	26,009	14,912
% under 14 years old	19%	23%
Median Household Income	\$57,556	\$46,984
White alone	49%	41%
African American alone	33%	43%
American Indian alone	0%	1%
Asian alone	4%	3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone	0%	0%
Other	0%	0%
Two or more races	6%	3%
Public housing rate (# of units/pop.)	10%	15%

Source: United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate: 2010 – 2014.

Socioeconomic factors

According to US Census data, the median income among residents of western Richmond Terrace is more than \$10,000 lower than the median income for eastern Richmond Terrace

residents. Research shows that families with lower incomes are less likely to own a car and are therefore more dependent on public transit for basic transportation needs. Nearly 31% of western Richmond Terrace residents rely on the bus for daily transportation versus just 25% of those residing in the east end². While 22 different bus lines converge at the St. George Ferry Terminal at the easternmost end of the Terrace, western Richmond Terrace is serviced by just two bus lines – the S40 and the S90 – one of which, the S90, only runs on weekdays between 4:00 and 7:00 PM. Without a direct link to the Staten Island Railway, the area is a transit desert for those without a private vehicle. As a result, nearly twice as many western residents rely on their bikes for transportation versus residents of the eastern portion, despite a dearth of bicycle infrastructure and dangerous road conditions.³



Image: Staten Island Bus Map via [Go NYC Tourism](#)

Due to a lack of substantial public transit options, low-income residents in western Richmond Terrace could have limited access to job centers, food markets, health care and educational institutions, restricting potential opportunities for economic prosperity. A 2014 US Bureau of Labor Statistics study showed that transportation is the second highest expenditure for U.S. households.⁴ By improving public transit access and installing biking and walking facilities along this car-poor, transit-poor portion of the corridor, New York City will improve economic and social opportunity for Staten Islanders.

Demographic and other factors

Western Richmond Terrace is also home to a greater proportion of school-aged children, people of color, and public housing units per capita; research shows that these populations are disproportionately impacted by traffic crashes.

According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, traffic-related injuries are the number one cause of unintentional child injury deaths in New York City.⁵ From 2009 to 2011, 48 children and youth aged 1 to 17 died from motor vehicle-related injuries. 65%

² United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate: 2010 – 2014.

³ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate: 2010 – 2014.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014). “Consumer Expenditures”. Retrieved electronically from: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nro.htm>

⁵ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (2016). “Understanding Child Injury Deaths: 1999-2013; Child Fatality Review Advisory Team Report”. Retrieved electronically: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/survey/survey-2016cfrat-report.pdf>

of those killed by motor-vehicle-related injuries were walking at the time of the incident.⁶ Traffic data also shows that people of color and residents of public housing are at greater risk of injury in traffic-related crashes. According to Smart Growth America, this unequal burden on populations of color and low-income communities can partially be explained by higher rates of walking and the fact that “African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to live in urbanized areas [...] and along busy arterial routes, which, as discussed previously in this report, are especially dangerous for pedestrians.”⁷ The poor street design and the frequency of dangerous driving behaviors on streets adjacent to public housing units aggravate these existing inequities.⁸

Despite the presence of an at-risk population, low population density has created a speedway for local drivers. According to a recent speeding survey conducted on an intersection on the western half of Richmond Terrace, nearly one-third, or 32% of driver speeds captured during the survey period were above the speed limit. In that same study, 10% of the drivers observed were traveling at least 10 miles per hour above the speed limit of 30.

These statistics make clear: the western segment of Richmond Terrace has greater socioeconomic obstacles to face than its eastern counterpart.

Existing studies aren't enough

Past studies of Staten Island's West Shore – which includes the North Shore neighborhoods of Arlington and Port Ivory – have not sufficiently addressed the area's unique socioeconomic, demographic and transportation challenges and potential solutions for improvement. A June 2011 study conducted by the EDC and the DCP, “Working West Shore 2030: Creating Jobs, Improving Infrastructure and Managing Growth” provided an overview of various challenges for the neighborhoods that make up the West Shore of Staten Island. The report's four primary objectives – to instill job growth, to improve road and transit connections between the West Shore and the rest of the Island, to expand and connect public spaces, and to enhance community services in the area – are much too broad to provide an in-depth analysis of the specific transportation challenges facing the corridor. Furthermore, the Staten Island South and West Shore Greenways Master Plan and the Port Richmond Brownfield Opportunity Area Study do not include the northwestern portions of the North Shore where western Richmond Terrace resides.

Given the unique transit challenges on the western portion of Richmond Terrace – which are exacerbated by the area's socioeconomic and demographic challenges – and a dearth of existing

⁶ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (2015). “Understanding Child Injury Deaths: 2003-2012; Child Fatality Review Advisory Team Report”. Retrieved electronically:

<https://timedotcom.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/survey-2015cfrat-report.pdf>

⁷ Smart Growth America. (2014). “Dangerous by Design 2014”. Retrieved electronically from:

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/dangerous-by-design-2014/dangerous-by-design-2014.pdf>

⁸ Transportation Alternatives. (2012). Child Crashes: An Unequal Burden”. Retrieved electronically from:

https://www.transalt.org/sites/default/files/news/reports/2012/Child_Crashes_An_Unequal_Burden.pdf

studies of the problem, **Transportation Alternatives urges the NYC EDC and its partners to extend the NSTIS study to the western segment of Richmond Terrace.**