

The Friends of Liberty State Park
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James Simpson, Chairman
New Jersey Turnpike Authority
581 Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095-1148

January 24, 2011

Dear Chairman Simpson,

The Friends of Liberty State Park, an all-volunteer park advocacy organization with over 900 members, and an Officially Recognized Friends Organization of the NJDEP's Division of Parks and Forestry, is very strongly opposed to the very ill-conceived and extremely harmful plan to divert all Jersey City and Bayonne port related heavy truck traffic away from exit 14A and to exit 14B in Jersey City. The plan brings high volumes of heavy trucks (tractor trailers) to exit 14B.

I'm writing on behalf of our members, our Board, and behalf of all those who have advocated for Liberty State Park (LSP) since the years before it opened in 1976 as New Jersey's Bicentennial gift to our nation. It is mind-boggling and inconceivable that the Turnpike's engineers failed to consult with Liberty State Park officials Superintendent Josh Osowski and Administrator Dr. Frank Gallagher, before presenting the 14B plan that would so negatively impact LSP. I'm also writing as the son of LSP's "father", Morris Pesin, who envisioned the park in 1957 and led the campaign for 19 years to create this beautiful waterfront green oasis behind Lady Liberty.

This horrendous turnpike plan totally fails to consider the overwhelmingly negative impacts on one of the New Jersey's, America's and the world's greatest urban parks. Liberty State Park (LSP), which turns 35 years old in June, has over 5 million visitors a year and is Exit 14B's main destination. Making an ugly, eyesore entrance area to the jewel of the NJ park system and one of NJ's greatest public resources is a travesty. This 14B plan is an assault on the public space behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island. The engineers' plan is uncaring and ignorant about the LSP impact.

The plan's impact is the equivalent of a mindless and anti-people giant stomping down on the present and future park's users who drive, walk and bicycle into LSP and leaving a much worse access situation in its wake and denigrating the park's main entrance area. There would be ugliness, extra noise, traffic and pollution right near LSP's main entrance and also the roadway configurations will make it more complicated for drivers to get from the Turnpike into LSP.

The plan doesn't even add essential sidewalks and crosswalks across the large intersection that the Turnpike Authority is designing. The plan is anti-lower income people as it blocks those without cars from walking or biking into LSP from the JC neighborhoods just west of the existing turnpike viaduct with its sidewalk. JC has been in agreement with the need to build a missing sidewalk link connecting the eastern end of the viaduct with LSP's entrance as a safety measure but this anti-urban people plan divides JC from LSP by providing no pedestrian/bike access.

We urge you to abandon the 14B plan with its negative impacts on our great, priceless asset LSP.

Sincerely,

Sam Pesin, president
cc Jersey City Mayor Jerramiah Healy, NJDEP AC Amy Cradic, Division of Parks & Forestry
Director John Trontis, LSP Superintendent Josh Osowski & Administrator Dr. Frank Gallagher