



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)  
www.OANA-NY.org

## **Safety for All on 31st Street Requires More Than a Bike Lane**

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(Revised 9/5/25)

This summer, the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) will begin installing a protected bike lane under the elevated N train on 31st Street in Astoria, stretching from 36th Avenue to Newtown Avenue. The redesign includes new curbside bike lanes with buffer zones, improved pedestrian crossings, and—importantly—no loss of travel lanes for vehicles.

The DOT's goal is to improve safety on a busy corridor that ranks among the top 10% of Queens streets for serious traffic injuries. That's a goal we share at the Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA). But to truly make this project successful, a few critical components need more attention.

We support the bike lane in principle, provided that the following concerns are addressed. Safety on our streets depends not just on infrastructure, but on how that infrastructure is used—and by whom. Our streets should be safe for everyone in the community, from grandmothers crossing 31st Street to pick up groceries to children walking to school in the morning. We believe four elements are essential to making this redesign work for everyone: traffic controls for bikes and micromobility, enforcement of vehicle type restrictions in bike lanes, reliable support for delivery access through loading zones and micro-hubs, and ensuring Saint Demetrios Preparatory School students can safely board their buses without losing the critical street parking their staff relies on.

Because of safety concerns raised by St. Dimitrios School, we also call for the creation of a designated school safety zone. These zones require reduced speed limits during school hours and enhanced enforcement. In addition, all micromobility, bicycles, and any other vehicles using the bike lane should be required to dismount and walk when crossing in front of the school to protect students and staff.

When we talk about traffic controls, we mean coordinated signage and timed traffic lights that give each group of street users—drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians—secure and predictable access to intersections. On 31st Street, this is especially important because the elevated train structure blocks sightlines. You often can't see what's coming until it's too late. Predictable, timed signals and clear signage could dramatically improve safety—not just for cyclists, but for everyone using the road.



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One of cyclists' most legitimate concerns is the sheer size and speed of automobiles. When bikes share intersections with vehicles that are several times larger and heavier, the imbalance is obvious—and intimidating. Thoughtful traffic controls can go a long way toward easing those concerns by creating a sense of order and predictability at conflict points. They don't restrict movement; they give everyone a fair turn and a clear expectation of what's coming.

We've seen this work in cities like Amsterdam, where bike infrastructure includes timed signals, dedicated signage, and even separate signal phases for bikes, cars, and pedestrians. These systems reduce conflict, minimize confusion, and improve flow.

Enforcement must also be part of the plan from day one. The bike lane is designed for bicycles—but in a neighborhood with a high concentration of delivery services, we've seen how quickly those lanes can become dominated by mopeds and scooters. These vehicles move faster, weigh more, and pose a different level of risk. When they use bike lanes illegally, they endanger cyclists and pedestrians alike. If mopeds and scooters are allowed to use the bike lanes unchecked, it undermines the safety and utility of the entire project.

Another key to success is ensuring the city supports safe and efficient delivery access along the corridor. We appreciate the plan's inclusion of loading zones—an important step that has already been implemented successfully on Crescent Street. But to fully meet the needs of businesses and residents, more is required.

We urge the city to incorporate its newly launched microhub program into the 31st Street corridor. These "last-mile" delivery hubs, announced on Earth Day and already operating on the Upper West Side, allow trucks to offload goods into smaller, cleaner vehicles like cargo bikes and handcarts. This reduces the number of large trucks on city streets, cuts down on double parking, and aligns perfectly with the goals of the 31st Street redesign. If these hubs can work in Manhattan, they can work in Queens.

There is also a practical concern with the proposed parking design. DOT's plan would have drivers parallel park between the support beams of the elevated train. But to park in one of these spaces, a driver must pull ahead and then back into the spot. On a street as congested as 31st, that becomes nearly impossible—especially during morning and evening rush hours. The trailing car is usually pressed right up against the one attempting to park, with no room to reverse or yield. The result is that drivers may circle endlessly or give up altogether, making parking functionally unworkable. Unless this design is rethought, the curbside arrangement could create more frustration and traffic backups than relief.

31st Street isn't just a bike route—it's a vital corridor for residents, businesses, drivers, pedestrians, and street vendors. Any redesign must serve all of these users. That's why our support is contingent on the inclusion and enforcement of these common-sense safety elements



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—including strong traffic controls, enforcement of vehicle restrictions in bike lanes, full deployment of delivery infrastructure like microhubs, safe accommodations for schoolchildren, and a workable approach to parking.

We're not opposed to bike lanes. Quite the opposite—we want them to succeed. But success depends on designing a system where all users have clear rules, safe space, and predictable movement.

This is a rare chance to reshape one of Astoria's busiest corridors for the better. Let's take full advantage of it—not just for cyclists, but for the whole community.

Richard Khuzami  
President

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