



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

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31st street Bike Lane decision

The recent ruling ordering the removal of the 31st Street bike lanes has been described as a victory for local businesses. We agree with the judge's decision, but only because the design presented did not go far enough to ensure safety and functionality. OANA is not against a bike lane on 31st Street. We are against implementing one without the full set of traffic controls, loading accommodations, enforcement, and safety measures that the corridor requires. A bike lane must be done correctly or not at all.

There is already a viable north-south route on Crescent Street. This gives the City an opportunity not to rush a 31st Street design before it is ready. No one is being left without cycling access. The Crescent route exists today, and that allows time to create a comprehensive plan for 31st Street that protects everyone — cyclists, pedestrians, schoolchildren, emergency response, deliveries, and commerce.

Our concern has never been framed as “business versus bikes.” It has been about implementation and completeness. In Queens, too often a single element of street design is introduced on its own. The supporting measures — traffic controls, loading zones, enforcement, and pedestrian protections — arrive later, or not at all. When a redesign ignores how the street is actually used, safety does not improve. It becomes harder for everyone.

From the start, our primary concern has been the lack of proper traffic controls for all users. Any redesign of 31st Street should include timed signals and dedicated phases that recognize how pedestrians, automobiles, and bike-lane users actually move. Today, cars and trucks have clear signals. Pedestrians have crosswalk indications. But bike lanes and micromobility devices are too often left without their own dedicated controls. Expecting cyclists and scooter riders to “fit in” around turning vehicles, with no specific signal timing or protection, is not fairness. It is a design choice that leaves them exposed.

When this plan was first discussed, OANA recommended a set of improvements designed to reduce conflict, not create it: turning restrictions, signals, consistent loading and delivery areas, enforcement for vehicles and bicycles, and a designated school safety zone in front of St. Demetrios Cathedral School. These were not side notes. They were essential to making any redesign work. Without them, the street would become more chaotic, not less.

Enforcement is another missing piece. On paper, any plan can look neat and organized. In practice, if traffic laws are not enforced — whether for parking, speeding, running lights, or biking behavior — then the best drawings will fail. Right now, infractions by drivers, cyclists, and scooter riders are too often ignored. A safe design requires clear rules and visible enforcement. Otherwise, everyone learns that the rules are optional.

Loading and access are also central. Under the current situation, loading happens almost everywhere along 31st Street. That is not ideal, but it reflects how businesses function day to day. The new proposal would have created designated loading areas, and restricted loading outside those zones. Any plan that

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reorganizes loading must account for how deliveries are actually made. A well-designed loading program can improve safety — but it must work for the street users, schedules, and business types that exist.

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.

The same applies to access under the elevated structure. Parking on 31st Street often requires backing into spaces. When the auto lane is crowded, there is no room for the trailing vehicle to back up and allow someone to reverse into a parking spot. This is not theory — it is daily practice. A redesign that narrows or constrains the auto lane without considering this movement creates gridlock and frustration.

We also believe the current approach discriminates against bike-lane users. Autos, trucks, and pedestrians are given dedicated traffic controls tailored to their paths and speeds. Bike-lane users are told to share space with turning vehicles or follow signals that were never designed for them. If the City is serious about cycling as transportation, it should provide full tools: bike signals, protected intersections, clear priority at key conflict points — not just paint and plastic. It is not anti-bike to demand that bike users receive the same level of thoughtful design and protection that drivers and pedestrians already get.

The judge’s ruling is not, in our view, a statement against bike lanes or against safety. It is a recognition that the required process and content were incomplete. We see it as an opportunity to reset and produce a comprehensive plan. If DOT returns with a proposal that addresses traffic flow, timed and dedicated signals for all users, realistic loading access, a school safety zone at St. Demetrios, and consistent enforcement, then it can improve 31st Street for everyone. OANA remains open to solutions that balance safety and access. What we cannot support is a design that duplicates existing routes, creates operational burdens, and leaves out the key elements required to make the street function.

We continue to advocate for safety improvements along 31st Street, including a robust school safety zone at St. Demetrios and real protection for pedestrians and cyclists. We are not against bike lanes. We are against incomplete projects that are installed piecemeal, without the necessary traffic controls, enforcement, and curb management that make them work. Crescent Street provides a safe current option. That means there is time to design 31st Street properly, without rushing or cutting corners. This ruling provides an opportunity to do it the right way, not halfway.

The path forward is clear. Listen to residents, schools, businesses, and cyclists. Design a street that recognizes how people and goods move today. Provide dedicated controls and enforcement for everyone who uses it. Safe streets and successful businesses are not competing interests. They only succeed when they are planned together.

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