



A rendering of what West River Parkway on Grand Island is expected to look like after New York State closes the road to vehicle traffic and converts it into an eight-mile long trail for bicyclists and pedestrians. (Courtesy New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation)

## N.Y. to Grand Island: Yes, West River Parkway will be closed for bike trail

By [Nancy A. Fischer](#) | Published 8:00 a.m. August 4, 2017



Social media has been buzzing about the status of the state's plans to close West River Parkway on Grand Island, but state parks Western District Director Mark W. Thomas made it clear: "In no way are we canceling this project."

This was a portion of the letter that Thomas recently sent to Grand Island Councilman Michael Madigan after Madigan wrote to him, "Please confirm that the Parkway Closure Plan has been canceled."

[Madigan's letter](#) to Thomas was posted online and shared widely on Facebook.

Construction of a \$2.5 million, 8-mile "[West River Connector Trail](#)" for bicyclists, joggers and walkers is expected to begin next year on the parkway. At that time, the state will close the parkway to vehicle traffic between Long Road and Oakfield Road and divert vehicles to West River Road which runs parallel to the parkway.

Madigan said in his letter that the Town Board rejected the Parkway closure and he outlined traffic concerns. He said the state was required to provide quarterly updates.

Those who commented on social media were confused. Some who favored the closure were dismayed while others who opposed the closure became excited that there may be a chance to reopen the issue.

But there has not been any change in the state's position, according to Thomas' response. He maintains the state has remained firm in its plan to close West River Parkway, despite a 3 to 2 vote opposing that by the town board in August 2016.

Thomas told the board and residents in November that the state plan was [the best option](#) in terms of cost and safety for the connector trail. Angela Berti, a state parks spokesperson, noted the parkway is a state road and the state does not need to sign a contract with the town to go forward.

Supervisor Nathan McMurray, who voted in favor of the closing, said, "I feel like it's Groundhog Day."

"This is part of a larger Greenway plan to connect Niagara Falls to Buffalo and to rehab the whole waterfront. It's part of the Greenway's mission," said McMurray. "It's really bigger than Grand Island."

Madigan said he plans to continue to fight the state plan and said he feels he has a lot of support.

"People have to stand up," said Madigan, who accused the state of not listening to town residents. "They are saying this is their land and not the taxpayers and this is unacceptable."

Thomas said in his letter the state exceeded the required public input sessions while planning the project. He stated that as the state progresses with the project's final design, the state's consulting firm and likely park staff will be in communication with the Town Board.

West River Parkway is a seasonal highway, and the state does not plow it in wintertime.