

**Robert Moses Parkway
South Segment
Travel and Transportation Conditions**

APPENDIX B

Prepared by:



HMM 253346

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Project Location	1
1.3 Transportation Evolution.....	2
1.4 Project Description.....	3
CHAPTER 2 – TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS	4
2.1 General Parkway Characteristics	4
2.2 Interchanges and Intersecting Roadways	4
2.2 Location Specific Features	5
2.2.1 Area 1—John B. Daly Interchange	6
2.2.2 Area 2—Transitional Zone	6
2.2.2 Area 2—Transitional Zone	7
2.2.3 Area 3—Prospect Point.....	8
CHAPTER 3 – CONCLUSION	9

CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of current traffic and transportation conditions of the Robert Moses Parkway (RMP) South Segment “Riverway”, its interchanges, and its intersecting roads within the project area. The project is located within the Niagara Falls State Park (Park) and is situated south/southwest of the City of Niagara Falls (City), New York.

1.2 Project Location

The RMP south segment extends from the North Grand Island Bridges (Interstate 190) to Niagara Street in the City of Niagara Falls, NY near the Rainbow Bridge. The study area for this project extends from the interchange with John B. Daly Boulevard, westward through the Park, along the Niagara River, all the way to Parking Lot #1 and Niagara Street at the foot of the Rainbow Bridge. The project location is shown in Figure 1 and the Study area is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1 - General Location Map

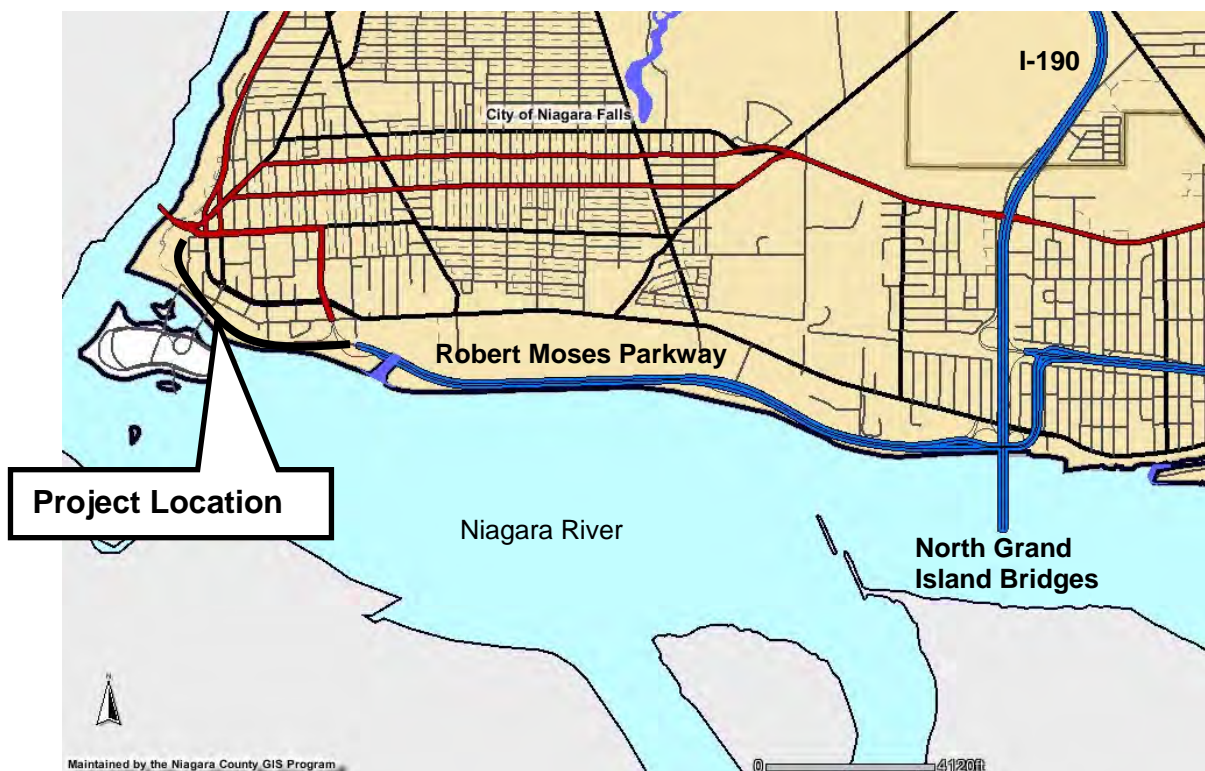


Figure 2 – Project Study Area



1.3 Transportation Evolution

Based on the 1887 Olmsted and Vaux plan for the Niagara Reservation, the village street along the Niagara River was replaced with the “Riverway”, a carriage road designed by Olmsted and Vaux, extending through the length of the park. In the 1960’s, the Robert Moses Parkway was constructed. It was originally envisioned as an expressway-style parkway connecting parks and urban centers along the Niagara River. At the time, the RMP provided a link from Interstate 190 with the City of Niagara Falls, the State Park, and Old Fort Niagara in Youngstown to the north. Construction of the four-lane parkway also utilized large quantities of excavated rock from the Niagara Power Project.

In 1983, a Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed for the park which recommended severing the RMP within the Park to improve waterfront access at Prospect Point vista. This decision was made as a result of the changing needs of the area and an increasing focus on maintaining the Olmstedian landscape and character, protecting the environment, and enhancing multi-modal access within the park. Thus, the Robert Moses Parkway was divided into a South Segment, extending from Interstate 190 at the North Grand Island Bridges to the Niagara Falls State Park Parking Lot No. 1, and a North Segment, extending from north of the Rainbow Bridge to Lewiston. The parkway then moves inland and terminates in the Town of Porter near Four Mile State Park.

The Robert Moses Parkway South Segment (Riverway Section) today operates as a two-lane, one-way westbound park entrance drive from John B. Daly Boulevard to Parking Lot No. 1 and the intersection with Niagara Street. The eastbound lanes are not contiguous, but serve as a one-lane, one-way interior

park road with marked parallel parking and access to the riverfront trails. The eastbound lanes are connected to the westbound parkway with turnarounds at intervals. The eastbound lanes are not connected to Parking Lot No. 1. The Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation operates and maintains the Robert Moses Parkway within the project area on behalf of the People of New York State.

1.4 Project Description

In 2006, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Niagara Falls, the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and the USA Niagara Development Corporation to reconfigure the Robert Moses Parkway between John B. Daly Boulevard and State Park Parking Lot No. 1. The project will seek to reconfigure the RMP expressway type configuration within the park to one that is a low-speed scenic park access road, including removing the east-west grade separation between the City and the river. The reconfigured road will be designed to fit in the context of a park on the National Register of Historic Places.

It is the intent of NYSOPRHP to retain and restore the historic elements of the 1887 Olmsted-Vaux general plan to the greatest extent feasible in consideration of contemporary needs, conditions and requirements. In keeping with the agency's mission, the project would look to incorporate design characteristics of that original design into the new setting.

CHAPTER 2 – TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS

2.1 General Parkway Characteristics

The RMP is classified as a parkway, meaning that commercial vehicles, including tractor trailers are not permitted to use the road. Buses and Recreational Vehicles are now permitted to use the road. Therefore, traffic on most of the RMP is limited to passenger cars. Near Parking Lot No. 1, the RMP merges into Prospect Street. In this area, Tour Buses and Recreational Vehicles are permitted to drop off and pick up passengers. The “Viewmobile” park trolley, and hotel shuttles also use portions of the RMP in this area.

The RMP was originally constructed as a limited access expressway and still retains many features associated with high speed roadways. For example, the roadway features large radius curves and relatively flat grades often associated with expressways. The RMP consists of two 12 foot lanes in each direction separated by a landscaped median 20-25 feet wide. It is primarily constructed of concrete pavement with mountable curb on both sides. Segments of this pavement are heavily cracked, spalled, and separated from adjacent sections primarily within the eastbound lanes that are closed to through traffic. The RMP connection to Prospect Street is constructed of asphalt concrete pavement which is in fair condition.

The through traffic traveling on the westbound Parkway operates at approximately 45 mph. until passing beneath the Goat Island Bridge where operating speeds are reduced to about 25 mph. This is consistent with the presence of the parking lot entrance, the bus/RV loop, and pedestrian crosswalks in this area. The speed limit within the project limits is 35 mph.

Roadway capacity was evaluated using readily available data. No capacity deficiencies were found. A more detailed evaluation of traffic volumes and intersection capacity will be completed during preliminary design. Due to the influx of tourists during weekends and holidays, this study will include evaluation of peak hour volumes during summer weekends and holidays.

In the last 3 years, one accident has been reported on the RMP within the project limits. Therefore, no safety deficiencies have been identified.

Within the project limits, parallel parking is only permitted along the right side of the eastbound RMP lanes. There are approximately 75 parking spaces on the eastbound lanes.

2.2 Interchanges and Intersecting Roadways

Access to and from the City from the RMP is possible from several City streets and one NYSDOT road:

- The interchange of RMP and John B. Daly Boulevard forms a high-capacity connection with the City. NYSDOT owns and operates John B. Daly Boulevard. Two bridges carry the Robert Moses Parkway over John B. Daly Boulevard, forming a grade separated interchange. At this interchange, westbound motorists can access the City via John B. Daly Boulevard and motorists from the City can enter the RMP going eastbound or westbound.

- At 4th Street, westbound motorists can make a right turn toward the City, and southbound motorists can enter the RMP westbound from the City.
- Just west of 1st Street, westbound motorists can access the City via Main Street or Buffalo Avenue. The ramp to Buffalo Avenue provides access to the American Rapids Bridge to Goat Island to the south and 1st Street to the north.
- West of 1st Street, the RMP intersects Old Falls Street. Old Falls Street had been restricted to pedestrian traffic only but is currently being reconstructed so it can be opened to vehicular traffic.
- Just north of Old Falls Street, motorists may bear left to access Parking Lot No. 1, turn right onto Mayor’s Drive or bear right onto Prospect Street. All traffic leaving the Park must exit through the City of the Niagara Falls. Motorists wishing to access the eastbound RMP may do so by taking Niagara Street to either Rainbow Boulevard or Buffalo Avenue, thence heading east to John B. Daly Boulevard.

2.2 Location Specific Features

In addition to the general characteristics of the RMP, there are features and conditions that are confined to specific portions of the project area. These areas are shown in Figure 3 and described in more detail below.

Figure 3 – Transportation Character Sub-Areas



2.2.1 Area 1—John B. Daly Interchange

The Robert Moses Parkway interchange with John B. Daly Boulevard is the eastern entrance to the Park. This interchange serves to connect both the City and the Park with the United States interstate system. A Niagara Falls State Park user survey in 2003 and 2004 identified that over 80% of park visitors originate from the United States and over 75% of visitors arrive by private motor vehicle. Therefore, the connection of the park with the interstate system serves a key transportation function. The most significant features of Area 1 are the grade separation structures and associated embankment.

The westbound bridge is open to traffic and carries the RMP over the ramp from John B. Daly Boulevard to the eastbound RMP. This bridge was rehabilitated in the 1990's. The eastbound RMP over the ramp is closed to all but OPRHP maintenance vehicles from the easternmost U-Turn point to just east of the bridge. The approaches to this bridge are spalled, with reinforcing visible in several places. The eastbound RMP near the bridge is not connected to the portion of the RMP that continues east to the North Grand Island Bridges. The embankment on either side of these bridges runs parallel to the Niagara River between the river and the City and is more than 13 feet high at the bridges.

The interchange was originally designed for two-way expressway traffic through the park. The speed limit in the park is now 35 mph but there are few visual cues to reinforce the reduced speed limit because the expressway-style lanes remain in use. In addition, the bridges are nearly 55 years old and are requiring maintenance at a greater frequency and cost as they age. Therefore the interchange is functionally obsolete.



2.2.2 Area 2—Transitional Zone

Area 2 is located between the John B. Daly Boulevard Interchange and the Goat Island Bridge. It consists of the RMP, its partial interchange with 4th Street, and a partial interchange with Main Street/Buffalo Avenue.

In this area, thru traffic can continue on the westbound RMP lanes or make a u-turn at just west of the American Rapids Bridge onto the eastbound RMP, which has one travel lane and one lane of parallel parking. This parking area can only be accessed from the westbound RMP. The exit from the parking area is via u-turn areas back onto the westbound RMP. The RMP in this area is constructed at grade and has no steep grades.

The 4th Street partial interchange consists of a right off, right on set of ramps that connect only the westbound parkway and 4th Street. 4th Street is a City Street that slopes steeply down to the RMP connection. There are no sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, or stop signs at this connection point to facilitate pedestrian travel. The eastbound parkway has no interchanges with the City in this area.

The Main Street/Buffalo Avenue partial interchange consists of a right off, right on set of ramps that connect only the westbound parkway, Main Street, and Buffalo Avenue. Main Street and Buffalo Avenue are City Streets. The off ramp splits just beyond the RMP, allowing motorists to continue straight onto Main Street or right onto Buffalo Avenue. From Buffalo Avenue, motorists can access the American Rapids Bridge to Goat Island at 1st Street. The American Rapids Bridge is the only vehicular bridge to Goat Island, which is part of Niagara Falls State Park. There are no sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, or stop signs on the RMP to facilitate pedestrian travel at this connection point. The eastbound parkway has no interchanges with the City in this area.



2.2.3 Area 3—Prospect Point

Area 3 extends from the Goat Island Pedestrian Bridge into the main Niagara Falls State Park visitor area and ends at the Prospect Street/Niagara Street intersection. It includes sections of the RMP and Prospect Street. Within Area 3, the eastbound lanes of the RMP have been removed and replaced by pedestrian paths. The westbound RMP bends slightly to the north to connect with Prospect Street and Parking Lot No. 1.

Old Falls Street, the first intersection drivers come to within Area 3, is currently being reconstructed and is expected to be open to vehicular traffic except for special events. Drivers on the RMP will have the option of turning right onto Old Falls Street or continuing straight onto Prospect Street.

One block past Old Falls Street, drivers traveling westbound on the RMP have the option of turning right onto Mayor Michael T. O’Laughlin Drive or continuing straight on the RMP. Mayor Michael T. O’Laughlin Drive is also an entry point for bus and RV traffic to access the drop-off area/turn around loop by turning left from the RMP.

Just past the intersection with Mayor Michael T. O’Laughlin Drive, drivers can bear right onto Prospect Street or turn left into Parking Lot No. 1.

Across from the Goat Island Pedestrian Bridge, drivers on the RMP encounter the first of four crosswalks. A second crosswalk is located at Old Falls Street. The third crosswalk is located at Mayor Michael T. O’Laughlin Drive and the fourth crosswalk is located at Niagara Street.



CHAPTER 3 – CONCLUSION

The existing Robert Moses Parkway within Niagara Falls State Park still retains many of the features from its previous function as a limited access expressway. The pavement, which is now over 55 years old, is distressed. In addition, the roadway in its current configuration, elevated and without curb ramps, provides a barrier to pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to access the east end of the park. Therefore, the RMP in its current configuration is functionally obsolete, condition deficient, and not consistent with the historic scale of the original park entry road.

The interchange with John B. Daly Boulevard does not provide visual cues to the driver that a 55 mph expressway is ending and a scenic park access road is beginning. This results in drivers exceeding the 35 mph speed limit within the park. During preliminary design, alternative configurations for this interchange will be evaluated. In addition, alternative treatments will consider pedestrian and bicycle access. Elimination of the embankment and bridges parallel to the river is also recommended to improve non-motorized access from the City, eliminate visual barriers, and eliminate excess infrastructure.

The remaining connections between the RMP and the City street grid should be maintained, but alternative configurations will be evaluated to better accommodate non-motorized traffic crossings and provide a traffic calming effect. A bus/Recreational Vehicle drop off/pick up zone should be provided under all build alternatives to serve those vehicles that use the RMP to access the Park.