

June 20, 2005 - Congresswoman Slaughter joins Canadian Member of Parliament, Rob Nicholson, to ...

Congresswoman Slaughter joins Canadian Member of Parliament, Rob Nicholson, to request new border access

Letter requests that bicyclists with special pass be able to travel Whirlpool International Bridge

Washington, DC - Representative Louise Slaughter (D-NY) signed a letter along with Canadian MP Rob Nicholson requesting that the American and Canadian governments allow bicyclists with a NEXUS pass to cross the Whirlpool International Bridge along with automobiles.

There have been numerous specific demands for bicycle access to Whirlpool Bridge, a crossing that spans the Niagara River. If granted, the new access could clear congestion at busier crossings, decreasing more dangerous traffic around the border.

Rep. Slaughter said of the plan, "I'm happy to be working with Rob Nicholson, Canadian Member of Parliament, on this proposal, and I hope that both of our governments will see that it makes good sense. We want travel between our two countries to be easy but also very safe. Bicyclists with a NEXUS pass have had the same background checks and hold the same credentials as drivers of automobiles. The end result is simple. Bicyclists are safer and happier, congestion at key locations is alleviated, and border security is in no way compromised."

The text of the letter can be found below.

Dear Commissioner Bonner and Deputy Prime Minister McLellan,

We are writing on behalf of a group of binational mayors from the Niagara region to request that the Whirlpool International Bridge be open to bicyclists with a NEXUS pass.

As you know, the Whirlpool International Bridge was made a NEXUS-only crossing in March 2004 to help alleviate congestion at other international crossings along the Niagara River. At the time this change took place, it was determined that for security and staffing issues the bridge would be open to vehicular traffic only. Since then, we have received numerous requests to open the bridge to bicyclists and pedestrians.

Both of us are very familiar with the issues that face our countries and the need to increase security along our borders. Yet as a holder of a NEXUS pass, bicyclists would have gone through the same stringent background checks as a driver of a vehicle. Therefore, we respectfully request that the restriction for bicyclists be waived.

If bicyclists are allowed the use of this crossing, it will not require any additional border agents. Bicyclists use the same lanes as vehicles and go through the same checkpoints. We also feel that allowing bicyclists the use of this crossing creates less of a safety issue for them. They would not have to compete with automobiles and even more importantly large tractor-trailers. We have been told that bicyclists who presently use the Peace Bridge between Buffalo and Fort Erie, would be thrilled to have the Whirlpool Bridge open to them. This would alleviate congestion at one of the busiest crossings on the northern border.

Thank you for your attention to this request. For questions concerning this issue please contact Alan Snyder in Washington, DC at 202-225-3615 or Kevin Macintosh in Ottawa at 613-995-1547.

