September 18th, 2014

Carmen Bianco
MTA New York City Transit, President
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Polly Trottenberg
DOT Commissioner
55 Water Street
New York, New York 10041

RE: Request for full-scale Bus Rapid Transit

Dear President Bianco and Commissioner Trottenberg

We write to express our support for the implementation of full-featured Bus Rapid Transit along Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevards, and to request that the City and the MTA work together with the community to improve traffic flow, increase pedestrian safety and prioritize faster bus service along this congested corridor.

Currently, Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevards pose challenges to everyone who uses them:

• Pedestrians are often scared to cross such a wide and congested street, and they are right to be concerned: Woodhaven Boulevard has the most pedestrian fatalities of any street in Queens.
• Drivers are caught in traffic, affecting residents who commute and businesses that rely on deliveries.
• Bus riders are forced into long “extreme” commutes, often more than an hour each direction, in order to gain access to jobs, health care and education using public transportation. In New York, almost 900,000 people commute more than an hour each way to work, and more than 2/3 of those residents are low-income wage earners.

We request that the City and the MTA work quickly to improve conditions along these congested streets. Woodhaven Boulevard should be a top priority for improvements to pedestrian safety, traffic flow and bus service.
Specifically, we request that the City and the MTA consider implementing full-featured Bus Rapid Transit along this route, including top-of-the-line services that can vastly improve transit access for “transit deserts” in Queens. Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevards could be an appropriate opportunity to implement services including protected center-median bus lanes, modern station-like bus shelters, and off-board fare collection, all of which would speed bus service while removing buses from the car and truck traffic lanes and making the street much safer for pedestrians to cross.

We also urge the City and the MTA to consider the needs not just of Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevard users but also of residents of Far Rockaway, who are isolated from the rest of the city by poor transit access and long commutes. We request that the City extend the proposed Bus Rapid Transit plan to Mott Avenue in Far Rockaway, providing expanded economic opportunity for Far Rockaway residents seeking jobs and education in other parts of Queens, Brooklyn and the rest of the city.

Through this entire process, we urge the City and the MTA to work with local communities and elected officials to explain the improvements, incorporate feedback from residents and businesses, and guarantee that a new plan for Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevards is responsive to local concerns. Establishing full-scale BRT, and not just Select Bus Service, will decrease the commute for people who live in these neighborhoods by over 30%.

With community involvement and leadership from the City and the MTA, we could change Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevards from being congested and forbidding to pedestrians into a world-class, 21st century transportation corridor that better serves pedestrians, drivers, bus riders, and all the communities that need better transit access to the rest of New York City. We request rapid movement and significant investment from the City and the MTA to implement full-featured BRT and get these streets moving again.

Furthermore, it is imperative that we increase access and equity to all New Yorkers. That is why we formally request to enhance the plans of Bus Rapid Transit along Woodhaven and Cross Bay Boulevards for full-scale implementation, and also that it extends throughout the entire Rockaway Peninsula.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Donovan Richards
31st Council District, Queens

Eric A. Ulrich
32nd Council District, Queens
Julissa Ferreras
21st Council District, Queens

Daniel Dromm
25th Council District, Queens

Elizabeth Crowley
30th Council District, Queens

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22nd Council District, Queens

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29th Council District, Queens