



January 8, 2015

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

Polly Trottenberg
Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10041

Dear President Bianco and Commissioner Trottenberg:

As elected officials who represent communities in Eastern Queens, we write in support of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor that would improve commuter, vehicular, and pedestrian transportation in a portion of a city that is a transit desert: the Flushing-Jamaica area.

As you know, Eastern Queens has only two transportation hubs on the edge of its western border that connect to the rest of the city: Flushing and Jamaica. The Flushing hub serves as the terminus for the IRT Flushing Line (7 train) and a point in the Port Washington branch of the Long Island Railroad (LIRR). The Jamaica hub serves the BMT Jamaica Line (J, Z train), IND Archer Avenue Line (E train), and LIRR.

Bus service is the only mass transit option available to the rest of Eastern Queens. The area is served by the Q20A/B, Q44 on Main Street and the Q25, 34 on Kissena Boulevard/Parsons Boulevard. There are over 90,000 riders on these bus lines. Approximately half of near-by residents utilize bus and subway service for their commute. Growing ridership has resulted in a proliferation of "dollar vans" to supplement the lack of adequate service in the area. BRT service in this corridor would greatly benefit the residents of Eastern Queens by getting them to the Flushing and Jamaica hubs in an efficient manner that is quick and safe.

While we appreciate the transportation initiatives the City has in the works for downtown Flushing such as the congestion management system and reconstruction of Main Street between 38th and 41st Avenues, we expect BRT to improve traffic flow and safety for the rest of the corridor. BRT in the Flushing-Jamaica Corridor would be 15 percent to 20 percent faster than the existing bus lines and would set the stage for a 10 percent increase in ridership.

We call on the City and the MTA to implement a BRT corridor that takes into consideration the following:

- The design of bus lanes to be mindful of pedestrian, vehicular, and cyclist safety;
- Increased frequency of buses servicing the area;
- Level boarding on buses for seniors and people with disabilities;
- Protected lanes where physically feasible;
- Adequate and well-maintained Off-board Fare Payment machines with instructions in locally spoken languages; and
- Any operational changes along the bus corridor as a result of BRT implementation do not reduce service to our constituents;

These measures are necessary to a successful implementation of BRT. Flushing and Jamaica are two rapidly growing economic centers that require a transportation system and infrastructure to serve its increasing population and activity. In 2007, the City Council approved a rezoning plan proposed by the Department of City Planning (DCP) for Jamaica to revitalize the area by increasing investment opportunities. Since then, the area has seen new development projects both residential and commercial.

Meanwhile, on the opposite end of the corridor, Flushing continues to see tremendous growth. Reports released by the New York State Comptroller's office cite the growth of small business in Flushing as a major source of jobs that expands at a faster rate compared to other parts of the City. In an area where development has continued despite the recent recession, it is crucial that we provide the proper infrastructure needed to maintain economic prosperity. Such a plan would help bring sustainable development to Eastern Queens that could be a model for urban planning and design across New York.

Eight hundred and seventy-nine thousand New Yorkers, many of which are disproportionately low-income, commute more than an hour each way. As this number grows, we must carefully approach service changes to ensure that all residents equally benefit from the implementation of new systems that are designed to increase accessibility, decrease commute time, and improve ridership safety. With the previous points in this letter kept in mind, we believe there would be substantial public support for BRT. We appreciate the outreach that has already begun within local communities and believe that with more community involvement and leadership from the City and the MTA, full-featured BRT can be successfully implemented in Eastern Queens.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We will follow up with your staff to arrange a meeting to discuss this project with you. We look forward to working with you to help bring BRT to Eastern Queens for the benefit of all who live in, work in, visit, or travel through our wonderful communities.

Sincerely,



Nily Rozic
Assemblymember



Grace Meng
Congresswoman



Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.
Senator



Toby Ann Stavisky
Senator



Leroy Comrie
Senator



Vivian Cook
Assemblymember



Ron Kim
Assemblymember



William Scarborough
Assemblymember



David Weprin
Assemblymember



Peter Koo
Council Member



Paul Vallone
Council Member

c: Chair Thomas F. Prendergast, MTA NYCT
Vice President Lois H. Tendler, MTA NYCT Government & Community Relations