

27 June 2019

To the Members of the Mayor's Expert Panel on the BQE Reconstruction:

Since the first Expert Panel meeting in April, the local communities adjacent to the proposed project area have united to discuss the future of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) and how its imminent reconstruction can best reflect our expectations and concerns. Our meetings have made one thing clear: we share a unified vision, one we hope will be adopted by the Expert Panel and Department of Transportation (DOT). Below is an outline of our collective vision and the requirements we would like you to consider as you move forward in your work.

Of great importance to us is a transparent process that gives all affected communities meaningful opportunities to engage with you throughout. We understand this is challenging, but we hope to participate in the process and affect the end result, which must be a 21st-century sustainable solution, one that will permanently change the relationship of the expressway to our adjacent neighborhoods. That solution must protect our neighborhoods and parks, emphasize our neighborhoods' historic character and enhance pedestrian connectivity and green space.

Unified Vision Statement:

What we desire:

- A forward-looking design that incorporates future traffic requirements, alternative routing options, enhanced public transportation and pedestrian access;
- Unify and integrate adjacent neighborhoods and parks, including enhanced public access, and the improvement and creation of open space for public use throughout the corridor;
- The holistic re-imagining of Van Voorhees Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park, the Promenade and the network of smaller parks within their surrounding neighborhoods and with each other, with greater connectivity, welcoming gateways and safe pedestrian pathways;
- Maintain the historic character of the Promenade;
- Neighborhoods connected by new open spaces and community amenities, with no real estate developments; and
- Minimal air, noise and visual impact on nearby residential buildings and all adjoining neighborhoods.

What we expect during the process:

- Significant and meaningful engagement with our community during the design and construction phases to ensure that residents of all affected neighborhoods are included as important stakeholders throughout the process;
- Implementation of traffic demand management measures, including street direction reversals, which minimize diverted traffic through local streets in all affected neighborhoods;
- Mitigation of all environmental impacts, including noise and vibration, and continuous air monitoring during construction;
- Protection of the buildings and character of our historically significant neighborhoods during construction;

- Support for small businesses on nearby commercial corridors during construction; and
- Community compensation for closures or temporary takings of existing parks or playgrounds with equivalent green/play space.

What we expect will be avoided:

- A Promenade Highway or any other temporary or permanent structure that would place a heavily-trafficked interstate highway at the doorstep of any of our neighborhoods;
- A mere rebuilding of the current highway, even if upgraded to current federal standards, that perpetuates the adverse noise and pollution impacts of the highway on adjacent neighborhoods and on Brooklyn Bridge Park and Van Voorhees Park. Nor do we wish to continue the unsafe access points at Atlantic Avenue, Joralemon Street, and Old Fulton Street;
- Any type of new development or commercial space that impinges on any of our Parks, green spaces, the waterfront, or the adjoining neighborhoods;
- Destruction or substantial reduction of any existing parks or green space; and
- Non-consensual eminent domain.

We recognize the difficulty of the job you have undertaken but we are excited at the possibilities that might emerge from your endeavors. This is an opportunity to improve and correct the planning ideologies of the past that prioritized automobiles – dividing and destroying many of the city's historic neighborhoods. We must not just rebuild and maintain the status quo, but reimagine the future of our city, with a greater emphasis on public space and healthy walkable communities. What is done here can help to lead the way for many more areas throughout the City of New York. This is our future.

Signed:

Martha Bakos Dietz
President
Brooklyn Heights Association

Amy Breedlove
President
Cobble Hill Association

Hilary Jager
A Better Way

cc:

Honorable Mayor Bill de Blasio
Honorable Corey Johnson, City Council Speaker
Honorable Jumaane Williams, NYC Public Advocate
Honorable Scott Stringer, NYC Comptroller
Honorable Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President
Honorable Nydia Velazquez, U.S. Representative
Honorable Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senator
Honorable Jo Anne Simon, NYS Assembly Member
Honorable Brad Lander, NYC Council Member
Honorable Stephen Levin, NYC Council Member
Polly Trottenberg, NYC Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Mike Racioppo, Brooklyn Community Board 6 District Manager
Rob Perris, Brooklyn Community Board 2 District Manager