

June 29, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Eric Adams
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Governor Hochul & Mayor Adams,

I write in support of conducting an Environmental Impact Study for the QueensLink. This proposed extension of the NYC Subway M Train from Rego Park to the Rockaways would run along a city-owned, 3.5-mile right-of-way that the LIRR Rockaway Beach Branch once used. The QueensLink is to South and Central Queens what the IBX is proposed to be for Brooklyn and Western Queens. Both projects would reuse existing rail assets to improve mass transit for neighborhoods that desperately need it, while simultaneously reducing carbon emissions.

Some of the many potential benefits of the QueensLink include:

- **New transit connections** that reduce commuting time by up to an hour a day, allowing for faster access to education, employment, and recreation opportunities.
- **Reduced traffic** on Woodhaven Blvd. and the Van Wyck Expressway, curtailing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.
- **Transit equity** for the underserved communities of Glendale, Woodhaven, Richmond Hill, Howard Beach, Broad Channel, and the Rockaways. The latter endures some of the longest commuting times in the country.
- **Faster, car-free access to ResortsWorld Casino/Aqueduct Racetrack, JFK Airport and Queens' Beaches** from Midtown Manhattan and other parts of Queens.
- **A boost to businesses districts** along Metropolitan Ave., Jamaica Ave., 101st Ave., Atlantic Ave., Liberty Ave., Cross Bay Blvd., Queens Blvd., and in the Rockaways.
- **Returning the G train to Forest Hills** once capacity is increased along the Queens Boulevard Line. Increasing capacity along the QBL will be possible when the M is diverted south at Rego Park, instead of ending at Forest Hills.
- **Faster, more reliable travel** between Queens neighborhoods via one-train access.
- **Up to 33 acres of space for parks, trails or newly created farmer's markets** alongside and underneath the tracks.

In 2019, the MTA released its Rockaway Beach Branch Sketch Assessment. This study determined that subway reactivation is feasible and estimated it would serve nearly 50,000 riders a day. This approximation does not include the millions of travelers who could utilize QueensLink for access to attractions in S. Queens, such as ResortsWorld or the Rockaways, or for shopping at the malls along Queens Boulevard. As described in the title, the MTA's report is only a "sketch," and many of the assumptions made admittedly

require further study. While the MTA estimated the project would cost \$8 billion, an independent transportation consultant (TEMS) determined it would cost far less – about \$3.5 billion.

QueensLink is an investment that could pay for itself in economic return in less than a decade, while serving New York City for generations. An EIS would provide greater detail on QueensLink’s potential economic and environmental impact, as well as provide solutions to preserve quality of life for people and businesses along the right-of-way. With the new federal infrastructure bill dedicating \$10 billion for transportation projects in NYS, we want to move as fast as possible to understand how best to allocate these funds. Attached to this letter you will find the MTA’s Rockaway Beach Branch Sketch Assessment, released in 2019, and the 2021 QueensLink Corridor Analysis, conducted by TEMS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregory W. Meeks". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the name.

Representative Gregory W. Meeks