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The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

In 1962 New York City ended service on Queens' only north-south rail corridor, the Rockaway Beach Branch. This termination of service severed many Queens communities from access to jobs, education, and recreation.

Today, Queens exists as a divided borough. From analyses of average household income to data on racial stratification, a clear and perhaps predictable pattern emerges: south Queens is worse off than north Queens.

The Rockaway Beach Branch corridor lies between two of the most congested roads in the city, Woodhaven Boulevard and the Van Wyck Expressway. Reactivation of this city-owned right of way would reconnect southern neighborhoods such as Richmond Hill, Woodhaven, Ozone Park, and the Rockaways with northern neighborhoods like Rego Park, Forest Hills, and even midtown Manhattan. It would provide better access and opportunity for disadvantaged residents while significantly reducing congestion and carbon emissions, thereby resulting in cleaner air for the entire borough.

I therefore ask the USDOT to grant the funding for the Rockaway Beach Branch Community Equity Analysis, which aims to help reconnect the Queens communities that need it most. For the relatively small investment of \$500,000, this study would provide a framework for rectifying more than six decades of transit inequities in the borough's most disconnected and disadvantaged communities. It would do so by measuring the environmental, economic, and quality-of-life impacts of restoring this vital transit link, and by detailing how a comprehensive rails and trails project like QueensLink would fulfill the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program's goals.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Donovan Richards Jr.
President
Borough of Queens