



Connecting Communities with Rails & Trails

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BREAKING: MTA Ignores QueensLink Communities in 20yr Needs Report

In the 2025-2044 20 Year Needs Assessment, the MTA has denied transit equity for south-east Queens communities. This shocking announcement comes on the heels of [QueensLink's City Hall Rally](#), where elected representatives and supporting community organizations from across the political spectrum stood in support of QueensLink's Rails & Trails vision.

Since the last LIRR train traversed the Rockaway Beach Branch in 1962, numerous community groups have advocated for adaptive reuse of this neighborhood treasure. With QueensLink's visionary Rails & Trails concept, the borough finally has a consensus plan to turn this 3.5 mile abandoned line into both transit and public space. The organization's [sheer breadth of political support](#) only serves to underline its unanimity, yet today, the MTA ignored the decades of arduous community activism of Queens residents by rejecting the Rockaway Beach Branch from the next Capital Construction Program.

In response to the recent report, QueensLink's Executive Director, Rick Horan, announced that "once again, the MTA has broken their promise with regards to the Rockaway Beach Branch." Mere weeks ago, the [MTA assured the public](#) that the agency would not let a competing park plan preclude transit reactivation on the right of way. "As we can clearly tell from today's report, the MTA has never been interested in listening to the local communities and representatives who want transit on the Rockaway Beach Branch. We've always been skeptical of the city's promises because they never added up. Today, that skepticism has turned into grave confirmation." said Mr. Horan.

The MTA's 20 Year Needs Assessment is a report that evaluates long term investments in public transportation for the metropolitan region in preparation for its next five-year Capital Program. The report includes reviewing required maintenance, enhancements to the existing system and ensuring a state of good repair. This assessment also comparatively evaluates potential expansions of New York's transit network. In order to provide a public and transparent look at investment priorities within the agency, the 20 Year Needs Assessment is released every five years in conjunction with MTA Capital Programs. The last Needs Assessment was released ten years ago in 2013, prior to the 2015-2019 Capital Program. The MTA did not release its Needs Assessment for the current 2020-2024 Capital Program.

As a means of evaluating the different capital program possibilities, the [MTA identified five key principles](#) that represent the region's current needs. QueensLink believes that the Rails & Trails plan not only thoroughly satisfies these principles, but also exceeds the region's mobility goals. By creating the first North-South subway corridor through Queens, QueensLink's vision both strengthens overall network resiliency and [serves changing commuting patterns in the post-COVID era](#). Instead of traveling to Manhattan every day, residents now find that utilizing crosstown connections are much more valuable to their day-to-day needs. Work-from-home is reorienting the arteries of New York, making it imperative to build out a modern transportation network that better serves these inter-borough and intra-borough journeys.

By ignoring QueensLink, the city also loses out on substantial economic growth that such a vital link could bring. [The Rockaways have gained new affordable housing units at an unprecedented rate](#), and the [Aqueduct Racetrack site stands to unlock 110 acres of land for development](#). Neighborhoods around the Rockaway Beach Branch [continue to gain population](#), which presents a considerable strain on the area's existing transportation infrastructure. QueensLink would help better serve these existing developments and set the stage for bigger economic investments to come.

[Equity remains at the center of recent efforts to bring better access to all New Yorkers](#), making QueensLink a strategic project for future infrastructure investment. Not only will this rails & trails plan help connect communities of color, but it will also create [over 150,000 more jobs and 47,000+ daily riders](#). South Queens has faced historic disinvestment, and new transit connections would help reverse this glaring societal inequity.

In the recent 20 Year Needs Assessment, the MTA also claims that there will only be a times-saving of 4 min per person, which is a highly questionable claim when [travel times for South Queens residents remain some of the highest in the nation](#). An [independent report](#) contradicts the MTA's findings, asserting that QueensLink would save riders about 30 minutes for a round trip.

Although the 20 Year Needs Assessment holds substantial weight with the MTA, it remains a guide, not an official policy. Despite the MTA's rejection of these vital community benefits, QueensLink will continue to advocate for transit equity by fighting for the reactivation of the Rockaway Beach Branch. The organization has several upcoming community events, including a [Rego Park Town Hall on October 12th](#), where residents will continue to be able to share their thoughts. Mr. Horan noted that "We can't let this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity go to waste. Our rails and trails plan stands to help so many New Yorkers, and our coalition of support strongly believes in this potential. We're not backing down."