QueensLink Initial Business Case

March 2026

steer x QueensLink

QueensLink

March 25, 2026

Dear Reader,

It is no accident that Queens is known as a "transit desert." Queens is the city's largest borough in area and the second-largest by population, yet it has the fewest subway stations per capita.

A fast, efficient subway system is especially important for New York City's outer boroughs, like Queens, whose residents endure the longest commutes in the country. Time isn't just money; it is our life. QueensLink will give some of that time back, leading to a better quality of life and more time for what matters. QueensLink is a rails-and-trails transit project that gives dignity back to Queens residents and is one of many building blocks for connecting people with opportunity.

The QueensLink Initial Business Case (IBC) examines the value of a subway line connecting the beaches in Rockaway to JFK Airport, Resorts World, Forest Park, Queens Blvd., and Midtown Manhattan. The study then compares that to the cost of building the project. Unsurprisingly, subways that move many riders quickly are an investment, not an expense.

QueensLink aligns with the city's broader goal of providing economic opportunities for all its residents. It also supports the MTA's aim of leveraging existing assets to deliver network-level benefits while improving service for its outer-borough customers.

Queens deserves QueensLink and should be included in the MTA's 2030-2034 Capital Plan. But it will not happen on its own. Residents, Community Boards, transit advocates, civic and business leaders must work with elected representatives and transit planners to make this a reality. The value is there, and so is the funding. We would love to hear from YOU, future QueensLink rider.

But first, I must acknowledge the people who helped make this compelling report a reality.

- The Steer team, which compiled, analyzed, and presented the information contained herein.
- Franklin Tang and Malik Salman at NYU Marron, who conducted ridership research and modeling.
- Our all-volunteer staff who continue to devote large chunks of their lives to ensure that this transit corridor serves the greatest number of people. Find them and other information at QueensLink.org.
- Finally, this study would not have been possible without the generosity of over 1,600 individuals through our GoFundMe campaign in January 2025. Thank you!

Yours for a Reconnected Queens,

Rick Horan
Executive Director

Report
March 2026

QueensLink Initial Business Case

Prepared by:

Steer
55 Washington St, Suite 504
Brooklyn, NY 11201
USA

+1 (646) 989 9945

www.steergroup.com

Prepared for:

QueensLink

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The Challenge

Today, there are no direct subway routes between Northern and Southern Queens, such as Elmhurst to the Rockaways. Transit trips are difficult and slow, involving long bus trips and/or multi-modal transfers, resulting in some of the longest commute times in NYC.

The Queens Blvd Line, one of the busiest subway corridors outside Manhattan, also suffers from severe overcrowding, with infrastructure constraints limiting MTA's ability to increase service frequency. The wider subway network also lacks resilience, worsening delays for riders across the system.

Despite being geographically near high-quality city parks, many neighborhoods lack equitable access to green space. Additionally, high traffic volumes on Woodhaven Blvd form a major barrier for walking and cycling, with a clear lack of suitable alternative routes.

Some communities near the corridor also lack convenient subway access, making it challenging for the city and developers to build transit-accessible communities and housing. The project also supports new development at Resorts World, whose upgraded facilities will draw more riders seeking direct connections to Queens and Manhattan.

The Opportunity

QueensLink is the project to revitalize the abandoned 3.5-mile Rockaway Beach Branch in Queens into a combined subway line, with 4 new stations, and a 33-acre linear park.

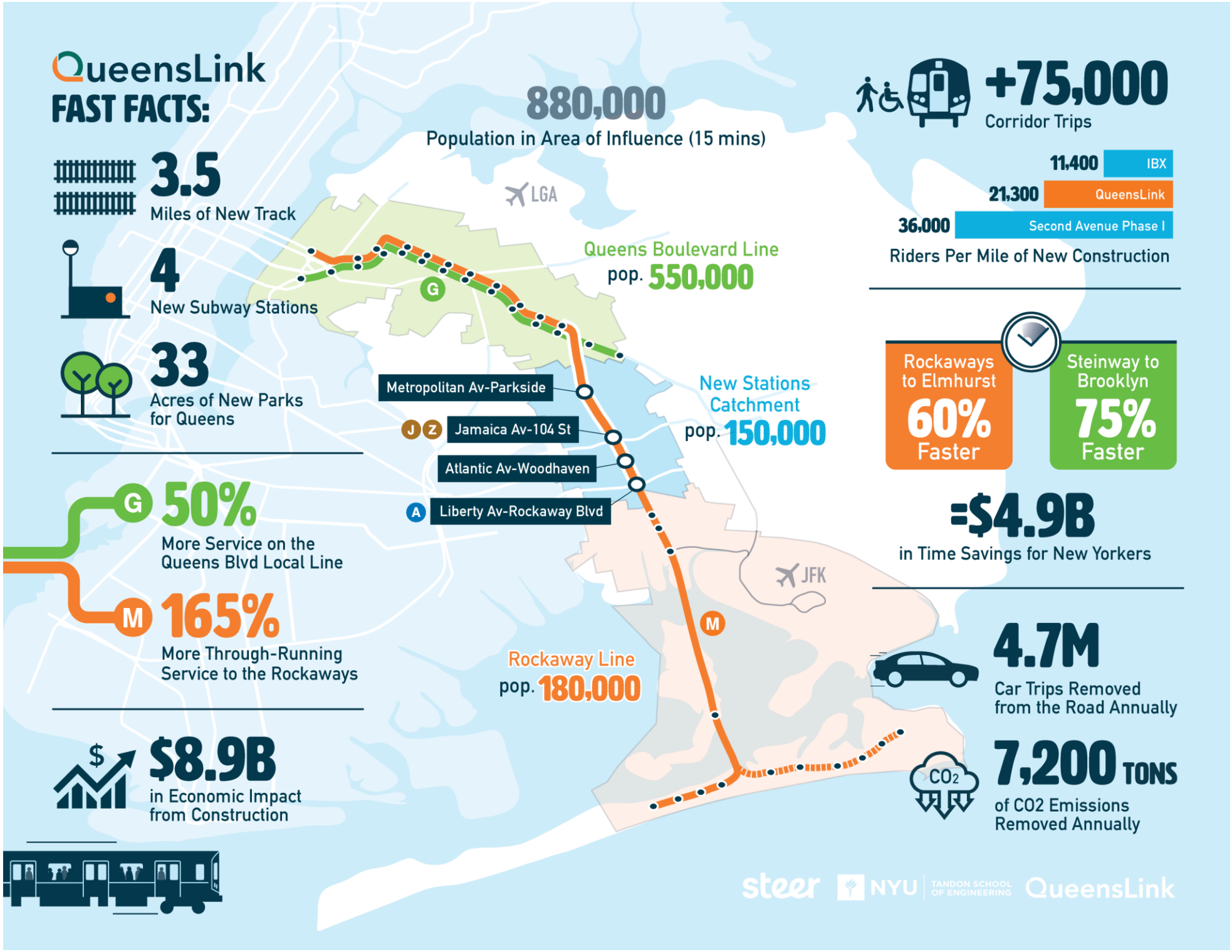
The project would provide **fast, reliable, and high-capacity transit service across currently underserved corridors in Queens** and create new green spaces. It would:

Unlock orbital connectivity across Queens by providing new, direct, and seamless travel opportunities

Enhance Subway experience and operations by improving subway capacity and reliability

Transform access to parks and open space and reduce the region's reliance on major vehicular corridors

Support transit access and growth in Southern Queens, including the city's urgent need for new homes


QueensLink
FAST FACTS:
3.5
Miles of New Track
4
New Subway Stations
33
Acres of New Parks for Queens
G
50%
More Service on the Queens Blvd Local Line
M
165%
More Through-Running Service to the Rockaways
$
$8.9B
in Economic Impact from Construction
880,000
Population in Area of Influence (15 mins)
LGA
Queens Boulevard Line
pop. 550,000
Metropolitan Av-Parkside
J Z Jamaica Av-104 St
Atlantic Av-Woodhaven
A Liberty Av-Rockaway Blvd
New Stations Catchment
pop. 150,000
JFK
Rockaway Line
pop. 180,000
+75,000
Corridor Trips
11,400 IBX
21,300 QueensLink
36,000 Second Avenue Phase I
Riders Per Mile of New Construction
Rockaways to Elmhurst
60% Faster
Steinway to Brooklyn
75% Faster
=$4.9B
in Time Savings for New Yorkers
4.7M
Car Trips Removed from the Road Annually
CO2
7,200 TONS
of CO2 Emissions Removed Annually
steer
NYU TANDON SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
QueensLink

How to read this document

This document is the Initial Business Case (IBC) for the QueensLink project.

The purpose is to set out the strategic rationale for the project before major funding or procurement decisions are made.

It is intended for a broad audience, including residents, community organizations, and key decision-makers interested in the QueensLink project and how it can transform their commutes, businesses, and quality-of-life. It is also intended to highlight how the project supports wider MTA and NYC goals.

The IBC is divided into **four cases** that consider different attributes of the project: the Strategic, Economic, Financial, and Deliverability and Operations Cases, supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence.

The Strategic Case

The Strategic Case tells the "QueensLink story" and investigates common questions about the project. It sets out a series of challenges and corresponding opportunities that the project can address and describes the benefits it will deliver.

Takeaways

- **Projected daily ridership of 74,600** equating to over 21,300 riders-per-mile, compared to 11,400 for IBX.
- **Up to 75% faster trips** between destinations along the corridor.
- **Expanded service,** with 50% more service on the Queens Blvd Line, 95% more service to Howard Beach, 55% more service to Far Rockaway, and 165% more through-running service to Rockaway Park.
- **Reduced traffic and 14,800 vehicle trips per day off local roads**, resulting in:
  - **Fewer crashes and safer roads,** eliminating an estimated 74 injuries each year, and one fatality every two years.
  - **Improved air quality**, eliminating 1,200 lbs of NOx, 140 lbs of SOx, 370 lbs of particulates (PM2.5s) and 7,200 tons of CO2 annually.
- **Reduced overcrowding** at Jackson Heights-Roosevelt Av, a transportation hub that will see a major influx of new ridership when the IBX opens.
- **250,000 residents** within a 15-minute walk of the new QueensLink linear park.
- **Expanded transit access** for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.
- **Up to $9 billion in total economic output for the NYC economy from construction,** supporting up to 37,000 job-years and total wage earnings of $2.5 billion.

The Economic Case

The Economic Case quantifies the benefits of QueensLink for transit users, park users, and wider society. It compares the sum of these benefits against the cost to build and operate QueensLink over a 30-year assessment period, known as a "benefit-cost ratio" (BCR).

Takeaways

The benefits of QueensLink outweigh the costs: investing $1 in QueensLink returns $1.10 to society, demonstrating the projects' cost-effectiveness.

Under the core scenario assessed, QueensLink generates:

- About $5 billion in transit benefits (based on the value-of-time saved) to transit users.
- $1 billion in health and quality-of-life benefits to local residents and park users.
- $780 million in congestion, safety, and environmental benefits to wider society.

Together, these effects contribute to:

- Stronger local and regional economic growth.
- Increased tax revenues for governments.
- Greater resilience and diversification of the labor market.
- Long-term productivity gains driven by improved connectivity and access to jobs.

The project therefore acts not only as a transit investment but as a **catalyst** for sustained economic development across the wider economy.

Further business case work would seek to quantify additional benefits to further establish the case for the project.

The Financial Case

The Financial Case asks and answers the question, "*How much will this affect the MTA's capital and operations budgets during and after construction?*". It shows that while QueensLink will generate some fare revenue, it will ultimately require subsidies from the city and state, as is standard for transit projects.

Takeaways

- Extending the M- and G-trains along QueensLink will cost between $200 and $265 million annually to operate (depending on exact late-night and weekend service operated).
- The projected system-wide net increase of 18,500 daily riders will generate $15 million in annual revenue for the MTA.
- The projected capital construction costs are estimated to be $4.8 billion in 2025 dollars, based on the 2021 TEMS reevaluation of the 2019 MTA Rockaway Beach Branch sketch assessment, adjusted for 2025 inflation, excluding an estimated fleet cost for 85 new train cars of $330 million.

The Delivery and Operations Case

The Delivery and Operations Case describes potential service patterns on new QueensLink infrastructure and selects an initial service concept to inform the rest of the IBC. It also shows how the project could be delivered and the specific challenges and mitigations that may alter how and over what time period QueensLink could be built.

Takeaways

- Serving QueensLink by extending the M-train to the Rockaways and the G to Forest Hills-71 Av appears to be the strongest service concept at this stage.
- QueensLink would be delivered and operated by the MTA, in partnership with local organizations, as is common with other NYC Subway projects.
- There are several potential challenges that QueensLink, as a large transit project, will face during the development and construction of the project. None at this stage present a fundamental barrier to delivery.

As an Initial Business Case, many of the four areas are only developed at an **outline stage**. They would be expanded upon as the project becomes more fully developed in the coming years.

The **primary focus** of the IBC is to demonstrate QueensLink's strategic rationale and benefits, and to guide its development to the next planning stage.

Strategic Case

1 Strategic Case Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The **Strategic Case** forms the foundation of the IBC for QueensLink. It is intended to support project partners and decision-makers in advancing the case for re-activation of the Rockaway Beach Branch right of way, creating the first north-south subway link and a linear park in Queens.

The document is intended to:

- **Demonstrate** the rationale for the QueensLink project.
- **Describe** the strategic benefits of QueensLink to MTA, policymaking partners, and NYC residents.
- **Position** the project within the context of citywide development plans.
- **Identify** the next project steps.

The table to the right explains the key content included the Strategic Case, and the key questions it is intended to address.

		Content Included	Questions Explored in Section
2	Project Rationale	Describes the purpose and need for the project, underpinned by the specific opportunities and challenges facing Queens and the QueensLink corridor. The challenges and opportunities set the frame for the benefits of the project as described in Section 4.	• Why should this corridor be re-activated? • What opportunities does QueensLink present? • How does QueensLink enable orbital connectivity and access across the borough? • How does the project advance equity?
3	The Project	Defines the broad scope of the project, and the specific service plan assumed within the rest of the IBC.	• What subway service could the re-activated Rockaway Beach Branch support?
4	Project Benefits	Assesses the strategic benefits that QueensLink can realize, including for ridership, travel times, connectivity and reduced vehicle-miles traveled.	• What benefits does the project deliver for local residents, businesses and visitors? • What are the impacts on travel times, connectivity and how people travel across Queens?
5	Project Partners	Identifies partners with overlapping challenges and opportunities and outlines how QueensLink can benefits them.	• Who is invested in the development of QueensLink and why? • How does QueensLink address their partners' challenges?

1.2 Project Background

QueensLink aims to re-establish a subway line and create a linear park on the alignment of the former Long Island Railroad Rockaway Beach Branch (RBB). It will better connect residents, businesses and visitors in Queens to destinations across the borough and across NYC.

QueensLink Corridor Definition

The **Strategic Case** explores how benefits are distributed across different geographic levels. The analysis in this section focuses on impacts to the corridor, borough, and city.

The project Area of Influence (AOI) considers all areas impacted by QueensLink-proposed service extensions and improvements.

The region in Figure 1.1 captures census tracts within ¾ mile (roughly 15-minutes walking) of station locations for three distinct areas that would see material benefit from QueensLink:

- **The New Station Catchment** – from **new** service.
- **Queens Blvd Line** – from **expanded** service.
- **Rockaway Line** – from **extended** service.

Figure 1.1: QueensLink Area of Influence

2 Project Rationale

2.1 Purpose and Need

The purpose of QueensLink is to provide **fast, reliable, and high-capacity transit service across currently underserved corridors in Queens.** The project also aims to enhance rail service on major trunk lines, provide greater reliability across the system and create new green spaces for local residents and visitors.

The project responds to the following needs:

- **Provide direct, seamless travel between Queens neighborhoods and key destinations**: needed due to limited and/or convoluted radial transit options, resulting in long journey times for residents in the project area.
- **Improve the transit system's capacity and reliability**: needed because of existing overcrowding and infrastructure constraints along the Queens Blvd Line and the associated bottlenecks which lead to limited resilience to delays.
- **Facilitate safe and efficient travel for pedestrians and cyclists and limited access to parks and open space**: needed based on the local transportation network's overreliance on heavily trafficked north-south corridors such as Woodhaven Blvd, as well as limited non-car connectivity to regional parks.
- **Facilitate sustainable growth in Queens:** needed to support the delivery of new homes in neighborhoods well-served by transit and thereby support the city's housing goals.

2.2 Introducing Opportunities and Challenges

Queens is the largest borough by area of New York City (NYC), as well as one of the most ethnically diverse counties in the country. With over 2 million residents, but the least subway miles per person of all NYC boroughs, Queens deserves a transportation network that better connects communities and reflects how people desire to travel.

The rest of this section provides a deep dive into the key opportunities and challenges that underpin the Purpose and Need Statement. This considers the needs of Queens residents, transit riders and local communities, alongside wider regional development objectives.

These are described in Table 2.1 and underpinned by the need to address **transit equity** across Queens and NYC.

Table 2.1: Summary of Key Issues and Crucial Challenges to Solve

Opportunity	Crucial Challenge to Solve
Opportunity 1: Unlock orbital connectivity across Queens	**Challenge 1 – Poor orbital subway connectivity.** There are no direct subway routes between Northern and Southern Queens, such as Elmhurst to the Rockaways. Transit trips are difficult and slow, involving long bus trips and/or multi-modal transfers.
	Challenge 2 – Long commutes and limited access to opportunity. Consequently, limited transit connectivity results in some of the longest commute times in NYC and reduces access to opportunity amongst some of the cities most disadvantaged communities.
Opportunity 2: Enhance Subway experience and operations	**Challenge 3 – Overcrowding along the Queens Boulevard Line (QBL).** Terminal constraints at Forest Hills / 71st Ave limit the ability to increase service frequency on the QBL, and therefore alleviate overcrowding on the R and M.
	Challenge 4 – Limited resilience and redundancy. Both the QBL and Rockaway Lines are susceptible to service disruptions with few options for re-routing trains. This reduces the resilience of the wider subway network and worsens delays for riders across the system.
Opportunity 3: Transform access to parks and public space	**Challenge 5 – Poor access to parks and green space.** Despite being bounded by high-quality city parks, many neighborhoods lack equitable access to green space, with limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
	Challenge 6 – High traffic volumes on Woodhaven Blvd. Woodhaven Blvd forms a major barrier for walking and cycling, with high traffic volumes, noise and air pollution, and a lack of suitable alternative routes.
Opportunity 4: Support transit access and growth in Southern Queens	**Challenge 7 – Many communities surrounding future QueensLink stations lack convenient subway access.** Several neighborhoods lack direct access to the subway, requiring either bus transfers or extended walks to access the network.
	Challenge 8 – Poor transit access hinders the delivery of new homes. Delivering housing is a major policy priority in Queens. Several potential development sites along the corridor lack reliable access to transit, undermining the delivery of sustainable transit-orientated development.

2.3 Addressing Transit Equity

2.3.1 Background

Transit equity refers to the fair distribution of transit service, infrastructure, and investment for all.

Historically, in NYC and Queens, communities with higher non-white populations and families with low income have been marginalized by historic transportation planning practices, including the development of expressways through vibrant neighborhoods. The NYC Subway has also historically prioritized traditional commuting patterns (i.e., into Manhattan) over other trip types.

These decisions have led to disproportionate access among certain demographic groups to opportunities like jobs, education, and healthcare. QueensLink aims to address transit equity by explicitly including these communities in the planning process.

2.3.2 Equity Challenges in Queens

Table 2.2 summarizes the demographics of the geographies that QueensLink will serve.

880,000 Queens residents (38% of the total, and 10% of NYC residents) live in census tracts within walking distance of existing or proposed stations directly impacted by the QueensLink project. Of these, 150,000 reside in the ¾ mile catchment surrounding the new stations.

Broken down by project segments, this analysis reveals:

- The New Station Catchment area has a **higher non-white population (78%)** than city average
- Neighborhoods around Queens Blvd have **more zero-vehicle households (56%)** than Queens on average
- The Rockaways have a **higher proportion of households with low income (18%)** than Queens on average.

Table 2.2: Core Demographics of NYC, Queens and the Area of Influence

Indicator	New York City	Queens	Area of Influence	QueensLink New Station Catchment	Queens Boulevard Catchment	Rockaway Catchment
Population	8,520,000	2,330,000	880,000	150,000	550,000	180,000
Households with low-income	17%	13%	13%	11%	12%	**18%**
Households without a car	55%	37%	47%	28%	**56%**	31%
Non-white population	69%	76%	73%	**78%**	73%	68%

Source: Analysis of US Census Bureau 2023 American Communities Survey data

2.3.3 Addressing Equity Through the Project

Many of the challenges described in the rest of the Strategic Case directly address transportation equity.

Transit projects in NYC, including QueensLink, directly support equity by better connecting people – especially those without cars – to employment, schools, healthcare, and childcare. This is particularly important for households with lower incomes, young people, older adults, and people with disabilities, for whom limited mobility can directly constrain economic and social outcomes.

In Queens, long travel times on transit often means that there is no choice but to own and maintain a vehicle, reducing the ability of these households to spend or save money for other purposes. High costs of car ownership can create a strain on households with lower incomes, leading to auto-dependence and limited economic mobility.

Frequent and reliable transit, such as delivered by QueensLink, by providing a viable alternative to car ownership, can therefore directly help reduce the cost of living and free up income for other, more valued essentials and activities.

The New Station Catchment is home to 150,000 residents in 48,000 households. Currently, only 28% (13,000) of these do not have vehicles available. If the proportion of households without vehicles increased:

To Queens-wide levels (37%)	this would result in	18,000 car-free households (+5,000)
To AOI levels (47%)		23,000 car-free households (+10,000)

Given the high proportions of non-white population within both the AOI and Queens as a whole (relative to the citywide average) benefits from the project are more likely to accrue to these diverse populations, improving equity outcomes for the city.

2.4 Opportunity #1: Unlock Orbital Connectivity Across Queens

Queens is well-served by the existing NYC Subway network, especially for trips to and from Manhattan. However, trips not centered around Manhattan (such as non-work trips, or commutes to other emerging job centers) typically involve long bus trips and/or multi-modal transfers.

Northern and Southern Queens are particularly disconnected. Transit trips between the Rockaways and points north of Forest Park, for example, are not served by any one rail line directly. Those seeking transit options between these areas must either use a combination of buses, ride the subway through Manhattan, or skip the trip altogether.

The ongoing Interborough Express (IBX) project is intended to address similar challenges in many Brooklyn and some Queens neighborhoods. QueensLink offers a complementary solution for neighborhoods in Southern Queens not benefiting from IBX.

2.4.1 Challenge 1 – Poor Orbital Subway Connectivity

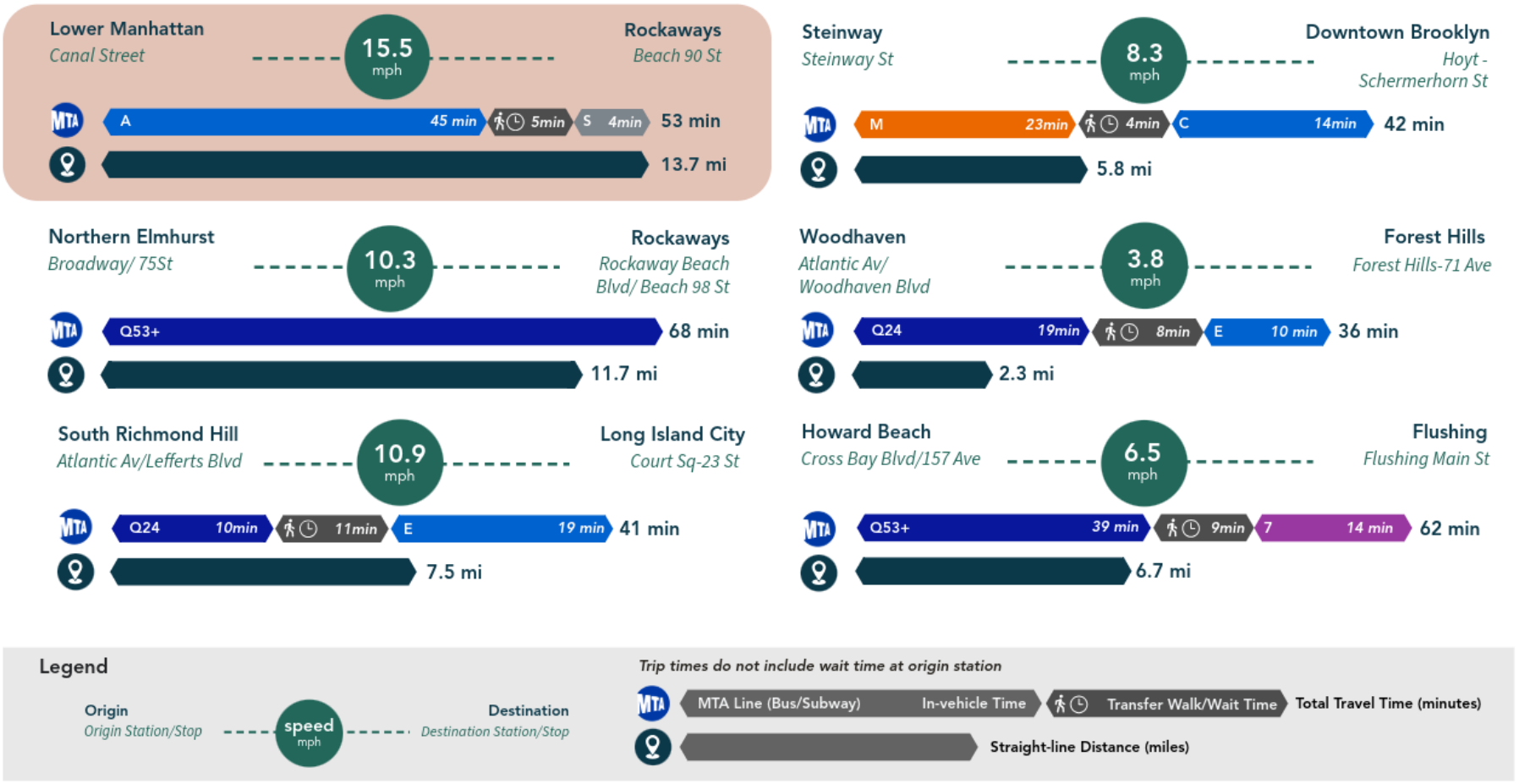
There are no direct subway routes between Northern and Southern Queens, such as Astoria to the Rockaways. Transit trips are difficult and slow, involving long bus trips and/or multi-modal transfers.

Figure 2.1 describes the problem of limited orbital connectivity in detail, illustrating how the existing transit network is poorly suited to many Queens trips. The graphic compares the transit travel time and average speeds for a sample of five orbital trips (within Queens or between Queens and Brooklyn) to a representative radial trip from Lower Manhattan to the Rockaways.

Many short-distance trips within Queens are inconvenient via transit, involving long rides and transfers. This is especially true for trips starting and ending along the QueensLink corridor, such as Woodhaven Blvd/Atlantic Av to Forest Hills or Howard Beach to Flushing.

A trip between Canal St and the Rockaways can be made relatively simply and quickly, by comparison – despite involving travel through three separate boroughs. Orbital trips, even those involving adjacent neighborhoods, often require riders to sit through tedious and time-consuming journeys.

Trips between Manhattan and Queens (highlighted) are easier and faster than trips within Queens.



Source: Google Maps station-to-station public transit travel times (based on Nov 2025 schedules, Tuesday at 3pm). Calculation uses straight-line distance from origin to destination.

2.4.2 Challenge 2 – Long Commutes and Limited Access to Opportunity

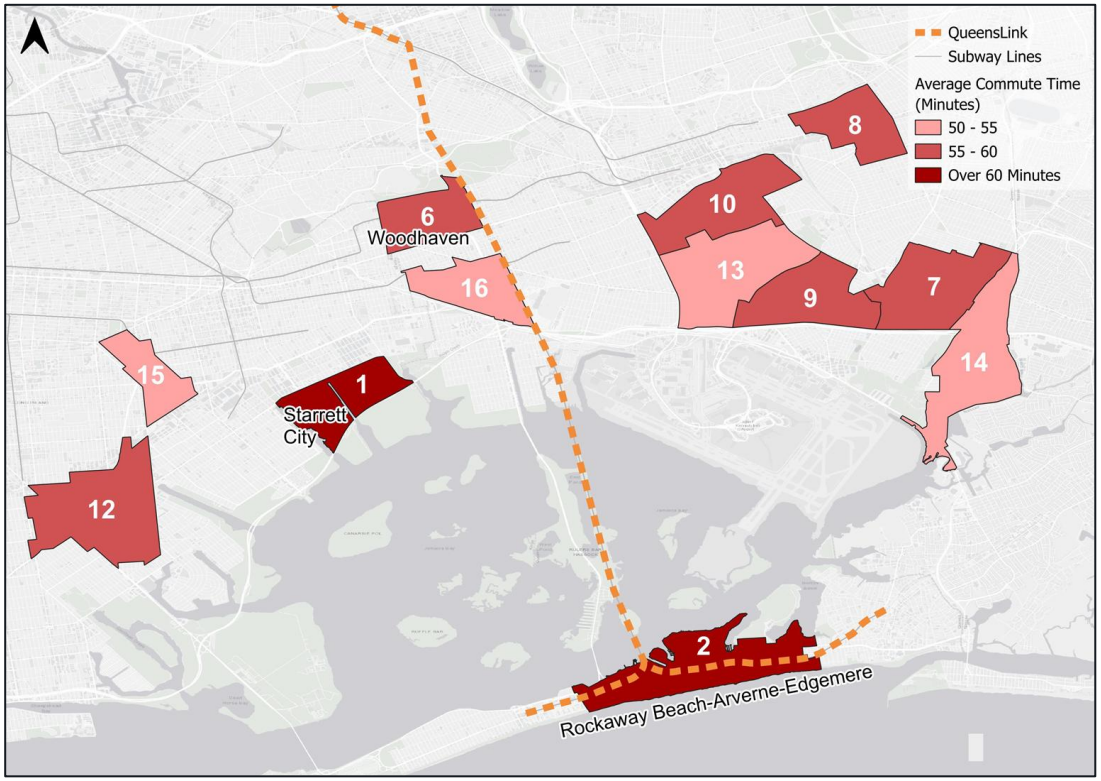
Consequently, limited transit connectivity results in some of the longest commute times in NYC and reduces access to opportunity amongst some of the city's most disadvantaged communities.

Commuting times

Many neighborhoods adjacent to or within access distance of QueensLink are among the top 20 NYC neighborhoods with the longest commutes. Of 188 neighborhoods in NYC:

- The two neighborhoods with longest commutes are directly adjacent to the QueensLink corridor: Starett City in Brooklyn and Rockaway Beach-Arverne-Edgemere in Queens.
- Another 12 of the top 20 are within 5.5 miles of the QueensLink proposed alignment (4.5 miles if #12 – Flatlands is excluded). The neighborhoods highlighted in Figure 2.2 have average travel times to work of 54 minutes or higher.

Figure 2.2: Top 20 NYC Neighborhoods with Long Commutes



Source: *The Best — And Worst — Commute Times in New York City,* Metro Manhattan (2023). Retrieved from: **Best and Worst Times for NYC Commutes Revealed**

Although not all these neighborhoods are directly along QueensLink's path, they are near enough to benefit from the project's additional transfer opportunities and new routes that can make daily travel faster and more convenient.

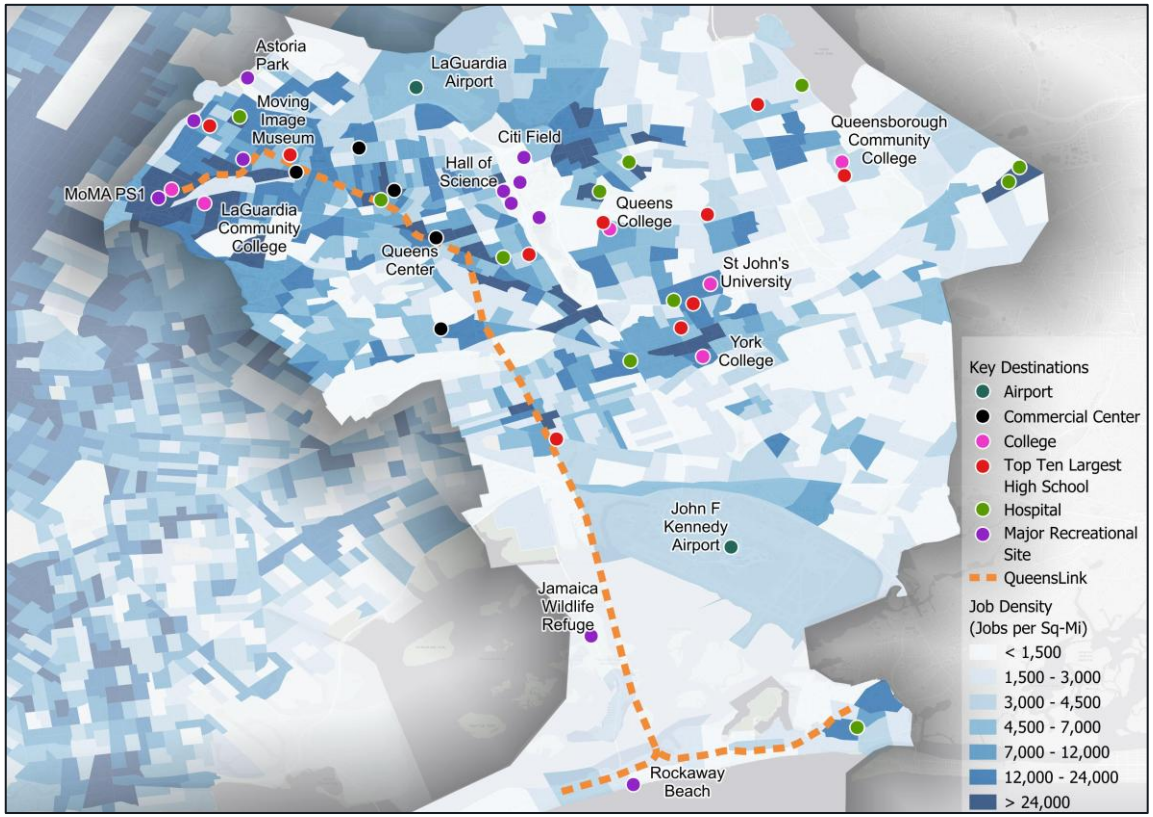
Access to Opportunity

Access challenges are not limited to trips to work. Communities within Queens also experience reduced access to educational institutions, hospitals and other public resources, when compared to other neighborhoods in NYC.

Figure 2.3 shows employment density and the locations of key cultural destinations and community resources across Queens. Note how, without QueensLink, residents of Southern Queens lack convenient subway connectivity to destinations in Northern Queens, and vice versa.

QueensLink can increase residents' opportunities for better schooling and jobs by shortening travel times to key destinations across the region and expanding the area accessible to them via a short transit ride. Southern Queens' communities would become better connected to employment centers and educational institutions to the north, and Northern Queens to recreational and cultural destinations to the south.

Figure 2.3: Queens Key Destinations



Source: Visit Queens NY, CUNY, NYC Open Data, Google Maps

2.5 Opportunity #2: Enhance Subway Experience and Operations

QueensLink can alleviate constraints throughout the NYC Subway system to enhance the network's potential and improve passenger experience. Specifically, the project enables:

- **Improved frequencies** along the Queens Blvd Line due to unlocking the terminal constraint at Forest Hills-71st Ave.
- **Additional train storage** and turnback capacity along the RBB.
- **Greater ability to effectively reroute trains** in response to service disruption.

These changes can **shorten wait times and reduce overcrowding during peak hours and delays** – providing an enhanced and more comfortable experience for all Subway riders.

The remainder of this section explores how QueensLink can directly create more operational and storage capacity, as well as improved systemwide resilience and redundancy.

2.5.1 Challenge 3 – Overcrowding Along the Queens Boulevard Line (QBL)

Terminal constraints at Forest Hills / 71st Ave limit the ability to increase service frequency on the QBL and therefore alleviate overcrowding on the R and M.

Queens Boulevard Line (QBL) riders are subject to overcrowded conditions during peak commute times, but subway network limitations prevent the MTA from optimizing capacity along the corridor. This is a growing problem as the QBL links together rapidly developing areas of Queens. While planned technological upgrades should allow for additional capacity on QBL's local tracks, the current terminal at Forest Hills is constrained by existing infrastructure[1] – limiting the potential for service on this route and the entire system.

Jackson Heights-Roosevelt Av/74 St-Broadway is the **busiest subway station outside of Manhattan, with over 14,000,000 annual entries**[2] - not including riders transferring between express and local lines on the E/F/M/R platforms. This contributes to uncomfortable levels of overcrowding.

Express E/F trains arrive more frequently than local M/R trains, letting passengers out into the station faster than they can board first-last mile connections. The station also allows transfers between the QBL and Flushing Line (7), adding to already crowded conditions and the potential for cascading delays. With the planned IBX light rail also offering transfers at Roosevelt Ave, future ridership at this station will likely intensify these issues.

With communications-based train control (CBTC) signal upgrades currently operational on QBL, local routes on the line could operate at a potential frequency of 30-40 trains per hour (TPH) upon completion.

The terminal capacity constraints mentioned above, however, limit local frequency along the route to 20 TPH. With express routes running close to their maximum potential capacity along the QBL, local routes offer the best opportunity for relief from overcrowding and ability to respond to demand along the line. Extending a local route past Forest Hills via QueensLink can unlock spare capacity along the QBL, reducing waiting times and overcrowding on trains.

Figure 2.4: Jackson Heights-Roosevelt Av at Rush Hour

[1] The current Queens Blvd local terminal is hamstrung by stringent, existing fumigation work rules (dictating how the MTA must clean trains and clear passengers), which reduce the terminal's turnback capacity during peak hours.

[2] MTA Subway and bus ridership for 2023. Retrieved from: **https://www.mta.info/agency/new-york-city-transit/subway-bus-ridership-2023**.

2.5.2 Challenge 4 – Limited Resilience and Redundancy

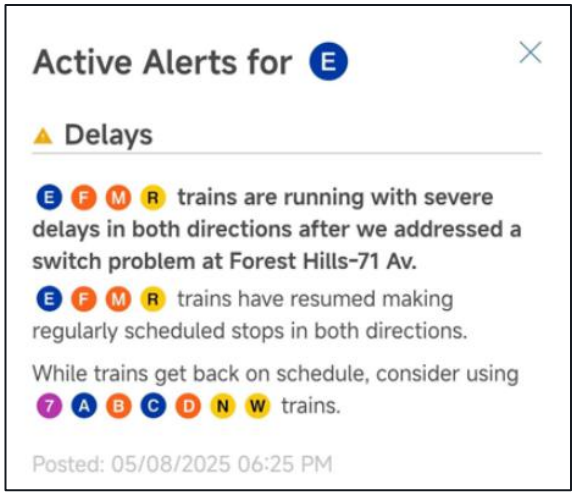
Both the QBL and Rockaway Lines are susceptible to service disruptions with few options for re-routing trains. This reduces the resilience of the wider subway network and worsens delays for riders across the system.

The NYC subway system is vulnerable to major service disruptions, but QueensLink can provide additional resilience. The network is operationally complex: most routes share tracks with other routes for part of their journeys. QBL is no exception, with routes interacting amongst each other and three major Manhattan lines (6th Ave, 8th Ave, and Broadway). This "interlined" network design creates many one-seat and single-transfer rides but also exposes the system to major disruptions, especially when paired with terminal and capacity constraints (as discussed above).

During the evening peak hour on May 8, 2025, a switch failed at Forest Hills-71 Av. Multiple service changes were issued to get people moving. However, many trips were diverted or cut short – leading to major delays across the entire system. This incident shows the fragility of core components on this ridership powerhouse, as the original failure rippled out onto other lines that interface with the E/F/M/R.

This incident is a real-life example of why QueensLink should be integrated with the QBL for additional redundancy. The proposed connection between the Rockaway Beach Branch (RBB) and QBL lies between express stations (east of Jackson Heights, west of Forest Hills). QueensLink would have enabled trains to be rerouted along the RBB corridor to unload passengers, removing trains out of service, and short turning at potential pocket tracks on the corridor[3]. Future disruptions could be addressed using similar solutions, with QueensLink unlocking a range of options for operational redundancy.

Figure 2.5: MTA Service Disruption Alert



Screenshot captured from new.mta.info on May 8, 2025

[3] Future business cases should explore the tradeoffs of including a third track along the RBB.

2.6 Opportunity #3: Transform Access to Parks / Public Space

Queens is home to world-class parks in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Forest Park, and Gateway National Recreation Area. However, there are currently no convenient transit options to connect residents along the QueensLink corridor between these.

Rather than supporting movement, the local roadway network often hinders travel. Woodhaven and Cross Bay Blvd are built for cars at the expense of other modes, impacting quality of life for all road users and neighbors. Current efforts to improve design on these routes underscore the need to consider how people circulate within the region.

QueensLink, as a rails and trails initiative (the project would balance the utility of transit service with the recreational benefit of parks), would provide proximity to a linear park, improve pedestrian & bicycle infrastructure, and transform access to existing green space for communities along the corridor.

Figure 2.6: Illustration of the Subway and Linear Park, Looking South to Forest Park Drive

Source: QueensLink

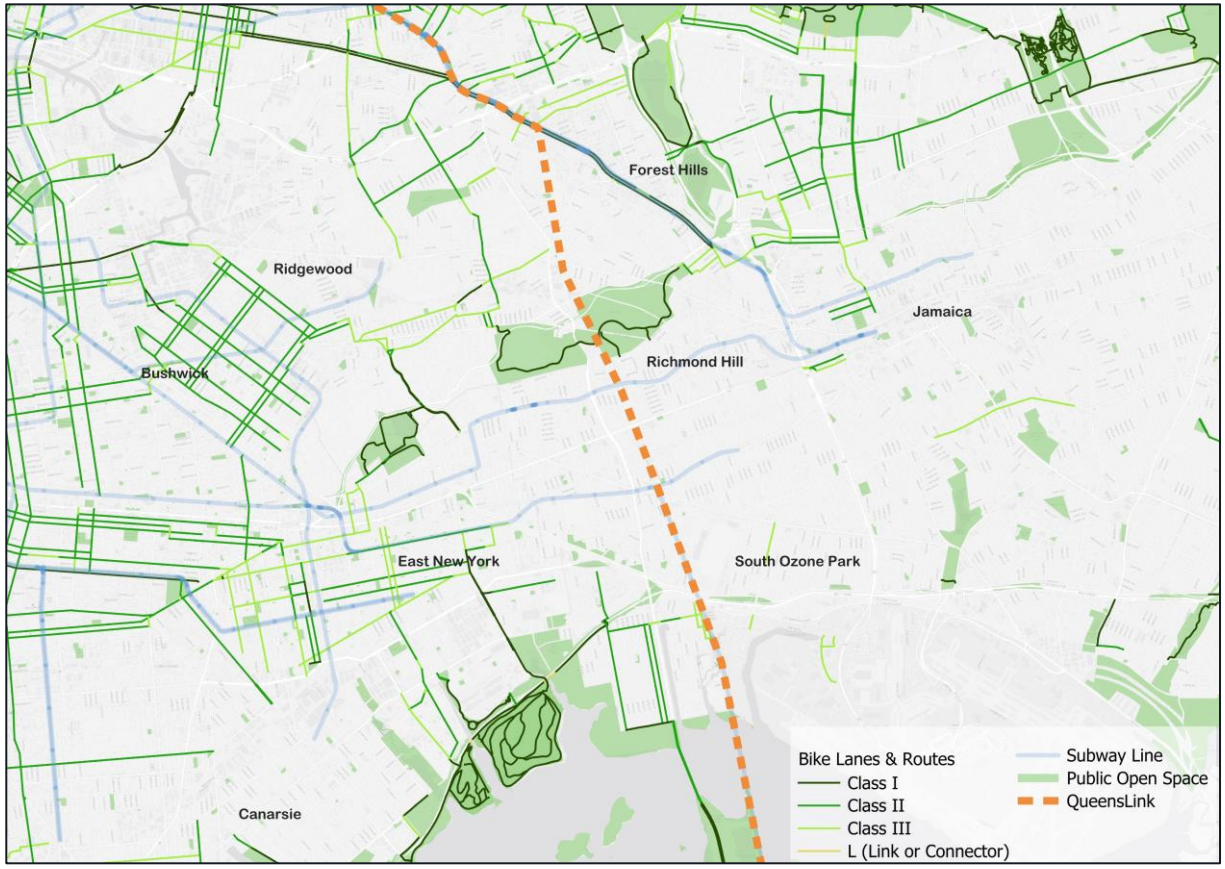
2.6.1 Challenge 5 – Poor Access to Parks and Green Space

Despite being bounded by high-quality city parks, many neighborhoods lack equitable access to green space, with limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Figure 2.7 shows where parks and bike lanes are located near the QueensLink core. Many residential areas are not within easy walking or cycling distance of their nearest local park. Proximity to public parks and open space improves quality of life in many ways, addressing typical urban concerns including stress, air quality, and noise pollution. QueensLink's proposed linear park design can provide the thousands of residents within 15 minutes of the alignment with these benefits.

QueensLink gives residents not only a new linear park, but also additional non-driving options for accessing existing parks and green space across the region. Expanded ability to take a train, walk, or cycle along protected paths to high-quality parks will transform how those living in the region interact with public space.

Figure 2.7: Parks and Bike Routes in Southern Queens



Source: EJNYC Mapping Tool

This is true both for communities directly adjacent to proposed stations and for those benefiting from new first-last mile connections to rail or parks along the multi-purpose corridor.

QueensLink's vision for a joint rail-and-trails project contrasts with the federally funded QueensWay, which proposes a High Line style development along the abandoned Rockaway Beach Branch. However, Queens and the City stand to benefit more as a greater number of local and regional visitors can visit parkland via transit. **A holistic view of park space, travel options, and community access is needed** to understand how the alignment can be used for mobility and green space.

2.6.2 Challenge 6 – High Traffic Volumes on Woodhaven Blvd and Highways

Woodhaven Blvd forms a major barrier for walking and cycling, with high traffic volumes, noise and air pollution, and a lack of suitable alternative routes.

The region's primary north-south corridor, Woodhaven Blvd, attempts to serve all users at once, poorly serving everyone. However, its heavy traffic volumes mean that transit users, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers are often competing for road space, and no group of users are well-served. Over 30,000 daily riders on the Q52/Q53 Select Bus Service corridor[4], for example, **face delays with few viable alternatives**. That these riders continue to use these services despite the suboptimal road design points to residents' reliance on limited north-south transit connections and a demand for faster trips. Recent work to install bus lanes and other street improvements underscore the importance of continuing to improve conditions for transit riders traveling north-south in this region.

Woodhaven Blvd has also been a Vision Zero Priority corridor since 2019, with a poor safety record—56 people have been killed or seriously injured on the corridor between 2019-2023. High traffic volumes not only pose risks to walking and cycling but also contribute to a hostile environment, with high levels of noise and air pollution. Upcoming NYCDOT capital projects along this route indicate that city officials recognize the need to provide suitable travel alternatives for the communities in the QueensLink core.

The nearby Van Wyck Expressway, which parallels the Rockaway Beach Branch to the east, presents similar issues. Although the

[4] NYCDOT/MTA Presentation on Woodhaven Blvd, Capital Projects to CB10 Transportation Committee. Retrieved from **Woodhaven Boulevard, Queens Boulevard to 107 Avenue | Community Board 10 | December 2024**

expressway is used for different purposes than Woodhaven Blvd (longer, cross-regional auto trips with no transit or provisions for active modes), the heavy traffic volumes on both corridors underline the need for attractive transit and walking and cycling alternatives.

QueensLink addresses these issues by drawing transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists onto parallel routes created by the project. This can **reduce the strain and dependence on a singular road** and help distribute travel demand more evenly on the region's transportation network.

Figure 2.8: Woodhaven Blvd Bus Riders on a Sunday Evening

2.7 Opportunity #4: Support Transit Access and Growth in Southern Queens

New housing development in NYC is most successful and desirable if it is well-served by transit. Similarly, transit-oriented development and densely populated areas near stations drive increases in transit ridership.

Citywide growth mandates envision continued housing growth in Southern Queens. However, many of these neighborhoods do not have the spare transit capacity (and in some cases connectivity) to support growth. QueensLink would increase the number of people within walking distance of the subway, enabling the type of development that makes households, businesses, and communities thrive.

2.7.1 Challenge 7: Many Communities Surrounding Future QueensLink Stations Lack Convenient Subway Access

Several neighborhoods lack direct access to the subway, requiring either bus transfers or extended walks to access the network.

The QueensLink core, composed of census tracts within a 15-minute walk from proposed new stations, includes several neighborhoods that do not currently have walking access to the NYC subway. **More than 8,000 residents in the QueensLink core do not have subway access**[5], defined as being further than ¾ of a mile from the nearest subway station.

Eastern Glendale is particularly disconnected relative to nearby neighborhoods. While Northern Maspeth, another neighborhood currently without access to the NYC subway, is slated to receive a new station as part of the ongoing IBX project, Glendale will remain one of the few remaining areas in central Queens without subway coverage, providing an opportunity for QueensLink to fill the gap.

8,000+ residents

in the QueensLink Area of Influence **are not within walking distance of the NYC subway system** and rely on other modes.

[5] Analysis of US Census Bureau 2023 American Communities Survey population estimates

2.7.2 Challenge 8 – Poor Transit Access Hinders the Delivery of New Homes

Delivering housing is a major policy priority in Queens. Several potential development sites along the corridor lack reliable access to transit, undermining the delivery of sustainable transit-orientated development.

Convenient subway access enables car-free living in cities such as NYC with space and affordability constraints. Proximity to frequent subway service improves access to jobs and services, supports high-density transit-oriented development (TOD), and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by shifting trips from private vehicles to high-capacity transit.

NYC's land values and zoning incentives also favor mixed-use density near stations – making projects near transit more attractive and desirable to developers and residents.

Although NYC and Queens neighborhoods have been developing rapidly between 2000 and 2023, this growth is not equally distributed. Over the past two decades, neighborhoods around proposed QueensLink stations have added less housing than citywide average. While the average Community District delivered around 8,400 new certified housing units from 2000 to 2023, these have consistently each added less than half of this amount[6]:

Table 2.3: New Housing by Community District

Community District	Added Housing Units (2000 – 2023)
QN 05 – Ridgewood/Maspeth	~3,000
QN 06 – Rego Park/Forest Hills	~2,900
QN 09 – Kew Gardens/Woodhaven	~2,500
QN 10 – South Ozone Park/Howard Beach	~1,500

Development patterns are influenced by several market and regulatory factors, from transportation access to existing density, land values and demographics. The neighborhoods described above typically have more single-family homes, fewer renters, and are further from Manhattan's CBD and other regional job centers than rapidly growing areas in Western Queens and Northern Brooklyn. That said, QueensLink offers a transformative solution: unlocking the area around proposed stations for TOD while expanding access to resources for current communities – benefiting existing and prospective residents alike.

QueensLink provides an opportunity for NYC and local residents to reimagine how their communities can best serve public interest around housing, affordability, and growth. This potential is strongest for areas directly around proposed stations.

[6] *Parkland and Public Transit: QueensWay and QueensLink Eye Deactivated Rail Line in Southeast Queens.* NYC Independent Budget Office. (2025). Retrieved from: Parkland and Public Transit. Note that Community Districts range in population from 50k to 185k (with all listed here housing over 110k).

Local Residential and Commercial Development

For example, a new station and transfer point at Liberty Av and Rockaway Blvd can stimulate commercial activity within and around the right-of-way, improving ease of access to community resources for local residents.

In addition to supporting local development in existing communities, there is potential for QueensLink to support larger redevelopment efforts on under-utilized land, such as surrounding the proposed station at Metropolitan Av-Parkside. This area is currently occupied by big-box stores and parking lots, but its proximity to the project provides the opportunity and financial incentive for dense, transit-oriented mixed-use development, subject to zoning changes and community consultation.

Facilitating Major Investment

Aqueduct Racetrack station, served by the A-train on the Rockaway Branch, is also adjacent to Resorts World New York—planned to become New York 's largest integrated resort (IR). The $5.5bn expansion would transform the 73-acre Aqueduct site into a 5.6 million-square-foot integrated resort and entertainment hub, including a 7,000-seat arena, 2,000 hotel rooms, 6,000 slot machines and over 30 dining outlets. While the site is served by the A, the location on the Rockaway Line means that frequencies are limited as service splits across the two branches to Ozone Park-Lefferts Blvd and the Rockaways.

Figure 2.9: New Commercial Space at Liberty Ave Station

Although the impacts of this development are not assessed directly in this IBC, QueensLink would support the success of the new Resorts World project by providing additional transit frequency and direct service to new destinations, also inducing subway demand.

2.7.3 Alignment with Plans and Policies

QueensLink supports regional goals for equitable transit access, sustainable growth, and economic development. The opportunities and challenges explored below directly respond to strategic objectives stated by the MTA and regional planning organizations.

The 2023 MTA 20-Year Needs Assessment describes goals around rebuilding, expanding, and transforming access citywide. The document also introduces a comparative evaluation framework for transit investments that supports these strategic objectives.

The MTA 2025-2029 5-Year Capital Plan (MTA Capital Plan) similarly highlights initiatives to improve subway capacity and recognizes the agency's role as an economic engine, indicating a commitment to stimulating growth in the region.

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) sets objectives around regional planning challenges and how to prioritize spending of federal transportation funds in its "Moving Forward 2055" Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Table 2.4: Regional Planning Objectives

Source Document	Stated Objectives	QueensLink Relevance
MTA 20-Year Needs Assessment (2023)	• Expand service to underserved areas • Improve accessibility for all users – ADA, pedestrian & cyclist facilities • Enhance system resiliency • Build connections between neighborhoods • Comparative evaluation considers: – Cost-effectiveness, ridership, and system resiliency	QueensLink aligns with goals for **connectivity, resiliency, and serving growth areas**
MTA 2025–2029 Capital Plan	• Advance critical projects from Needs Assessment • Improve subway capacity • Stimulate economic growth – MTA directly employs 70,000 people	QueensLink **enhances subway capacity and economic vitality** of outer boroughs
NYMTC RTP "Moving Forward 2055"	• Integrate multimodal transit network • Manage future demand and mobility for all • Prioritize investments where development occurs	QueensLink **addresses multimodal gaps** and aligns with regional growth and equity objectives
QueensLink Proposal	• Policy-aligned and community-driven • Advances transportation, housing, and equity goals • Merits prioritization in future capital plans	Directly supports objectives around **regional connectivity and equitable access**

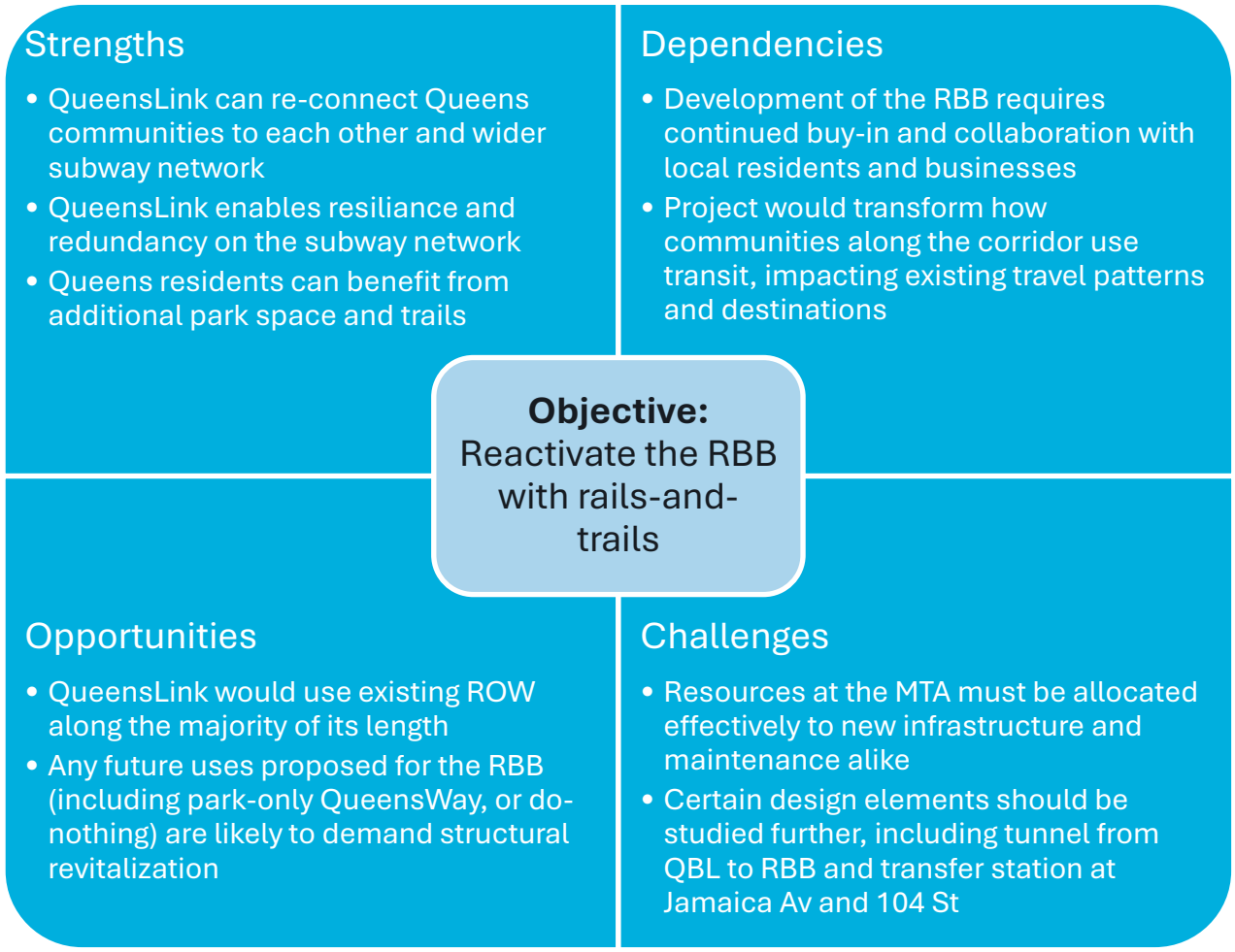
QueensLink supports these ambitions as a project that **addresses multimodal connectivity gaps** and addresses key regional growth and development concerns.

2.8 Strengths, Dependencies, Opportunities, and Challenges (SDOC)

This section summarizes with an SDOC analysis **identifying internal and external factors that may influence the success of QueensLink**. These are shown in Figure 2.10 and highlight QueensLink's ability to connect communities across Queens, improve park access, and leverage existing right-of-way. Still, continued community engagement is critical for ensuring local support of the project. Additionally, design considerations and decisions around resource allocation present real challenges to financing and delivering the project.

The next section quantifies the value of QueensLink's strengths and costs, while subsequent sections explore how the project can address potential challenges.

Figure 2.10: SDOC Analysis



3 The Project

3.1 Project Definition

At its core, the QueensLink project includes:

- **Four new subway stations**, at:
  - Metropolitan Av-Parkside
  - Jamaica Av-104 St
  - Atlantic Av-Woodhaven
  - Liberty Av-Rockaway Blvd
- **New dual-track alignment that extends subway service from the Queens Blvd Line (QBL) to the Rockaway Branch** via:
  - (1) underground tunnel between 63 Dr-Rego Park and Metropolitan Av.
  - (2) surface, embankment, and viaduct sections between Metropolitan Av and Liberty Av.
- **A linear park** that spans most of the new alignment, with several access points to/from the surrounding neighborhood.

This infrastructure could enable a broad range of service options to be operated, including extensions of the M and/or G, or the re-introduction of historic lines such as the V. Potential service options, including their distinct benefits, costs, and trade-offs, are discussed in the Delivery Case.

3.2 Assumed Service: 6th Ave M Extension

The benefits set out in the IBC assume a single service concept, reflecting the early stage of development for the project. They envision:

- Re-routing the **6th Ave Local M**-train from 63rd Dr-Rego Park to Rockaway Park via tunnel to the Rockaway Beach Branch.
- Extending the **Crosstown G**-train from Court Square to Forest Hills 71 Av.
- The replacement of the current **Rockaway Shuttle (S)** service with the extended M.

Change to Manhattan Service

The IBC assumes that the 6th Ave Local M is rerouted from 63rd Dr-Rego Park to Rockaway Park, providing new rail service to the QueensLink corridor and additional service to the Rockaway Line.

The 6th Ave local trunk line will operate at current frequencies, although the additional turnback capacity delivered by the project could support additional peak-hour, short-turn service north of 2 Ave in Manhattan.

Change to Crosstown Service

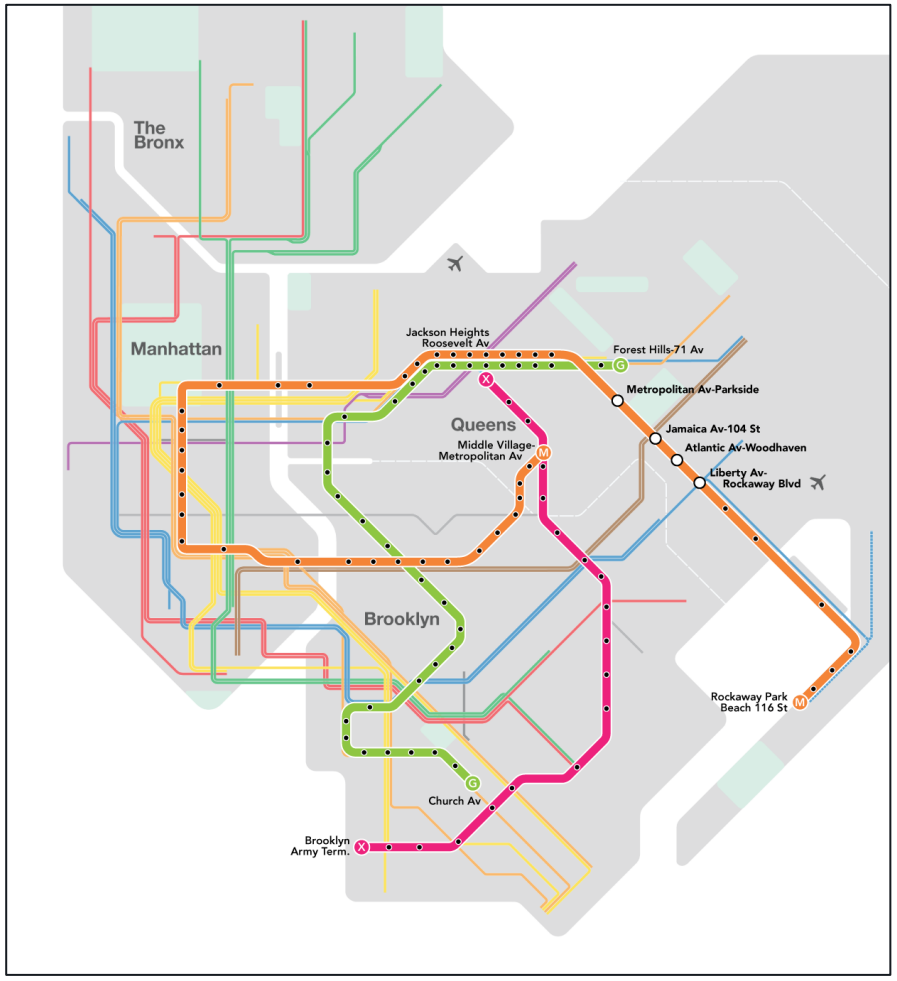
Additionally, the IBC includes the extension of Crosstown G to run between Church Av and Forest Hills-71 Av at current frequencies.

Further Work

This option was selected for the IBC as early ridership and cost analyses indicate the strongest performance versus other concepts, with the least operational challenges. It is also most intuitive service pattern for QueensLink.

Future work would seek to evaluate different service concepts against each other, such as more or less service from QueensLink to Brooklyn versus Manhattan, prior to any final option being selected for the project.

Figure 3.1: 6th Ave "M" Concept Diagram



Source: NYU Ridership Study

4 Project Benefits

4.1 Overview

QueensLink will transform how and where people move within Queens and NYC, with the project enabling travel time savings, improved systemwide ridership and service frequency, and wider access to parks and transportation.

This section explores the benefits of QueensLink for each of the three service concepts identified. It is structured in line with the core opportunities identified in Section 2:

- **Opportunity 1**: Unlock orbital connectivity across Queens
- **Opportunity 2:** Enhance NYC Subway experience and operations
- **Opportunity 3**: Transform access to parks and open space
- **Opportunity 4**: Support transit access and growth in Southern Queens

Lastly, the project will generate new jobs, and stimulate additional economic activity, through its construction and operations. These impacts on the local economy are described in Section 4.6.

4.2 Unlock Orbital Connectivity Across Queens

4.2.1 Benefit 1: Increase Transit Ridership

QueensLink can support increased ridership along the project corridor and systemwide with new and expanded rail service in Queens and Manhattan.

The ridership values described in this section are based on a recent NYU STOPS modeling effort (hereafter referred to as the "NYU Ridership Study"), described further in Section 7.2. The results assume that IBX is completed in advance of QueensLink – all ridership and benefits presented are additional to those that IBX will deliver for orbital trips in Brooklyn and Queens.

Corridor-Level Boardings

All riders along the QueensLink corridor will benefit from new and expanded service. The NYU Ridership Study estimates that QueensLink will support 74,600 daily trips boarding at stations along the corridor.

74,600 corridor trips

Trips along the QueensLink corridor after the project opens

New Boardings

QueensLink adds 65,000 riders to the extended M-train corridor, including 20,700 entries at new stations and an increase in 34,500 daily boardings along the QBL. Stations along the Rockaway Line also see ridership increases from the project, with 9,800 new boardings at stations with expanded service.

Table 4.1 shows the **change** in daily station boardings along the QueensLink project corridor. "New boardings" are estimated as the difference between Build and No-Build scenario station entries at Queens stations along the project corridor, from Court Square along the Queens Blvd Line to both Rockaway Line branches.

Table 4.1: Corridor-Level Ridership Increase, 2040

Geography	New Boardings
QueensLink Area of Influence	**65,000**
Of which from new stations	*20,700*
Of which from Queens Blvd Line Stations	*34,500*
Of which from Rockaway Line Stations	*9,800*

This metric is lower than total corridor-level boardings, as some trips using QueensLink divert from other subway routes. For example, a trip from Howard Beach-JFK Airport to Midtown Manhattan currently uses the A-train but could instead use QueensLink with the project (counting towards corridor-level boardings but not new boardings).

Systemwide Ridership Benefit

QueensLink increases net ridership across NYC's transit system by 18,500 daily trips. Of these, 7,200 (or 39%) are made by residents of households with no vehicles available.

Table 4.3 4.3 shows the change in daily transit trips on MTA subways and buses for a QueensLink build scenario.

Table 4.3: Change in Systemwide Ridership, 2040

Metric	Ridership
Net change in total systemwide linked transit trips	+18,500
Change for households with zero vehicles available	+7,200

This metric is lower than the change in station boardings, since improved rail service attracts some riders from other nearby bus and subway services.

Comparison to Other Transit Projects

Table 4.2 compares QueensLink daily boardings against other completed and planned transit projects in NYC and elsewhere in the country. Projected or observed ridership figures are used as the basis for a "**riders per mile**" metric, allowing for a more standardized comparison across infrastructure projects.

QueensLink is on par with recently completed and planned federal- and state-funded transit projects in terms of riders per mile. Even amongst other NYC subway projects like the Interborough Express or the Hudson Yards 7 extension, QueensLink is projected to attract riders at a similar magnitude as a completely new line across outer boroughs (IBX) or as a crosstown extension of the 7 in a densely developed area of Midtown Manhattan. Only the Second Avenue Subway extension has more riders per mile than QueensLink, which is unsurprising given high population density and existing transit demand on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

QueensLink performs particularly well on ridership in a national context. Ongoing and completed projects on the West Coast, for example, are drawing fewer than 10,000 riders per mile at comparable scales of investment levels. By comparison, the **21,300 riders per mile on QueensLink** highlights its value as a project linking otherwise disconnected branches of the network together to strengthen its ridership potential.

This assessment is based on best available data from other projects. Trip estimates for NYC use 2024 subway station-level ridership.

Table 4.2: Ridership on U.S. Transit Projects

Project	Mode	Length (mi)	Daily Ridership	Riders per Mile
QueensLink	Heavy Rail	3.5	74,600 *(projected 2040)*	~21,300
Interborough Express	Light Rail	14	160,000 (*projected 2035)*	~11,400
Second Avenue Subway	Heavy Rail	1.8	53,000-65,000 *(observed 2024)*	~29,000-36,000
Hudson Yards (7) Extension	Heavy Rail	1.5	19,000 *(observed 2024)*	~12,700
Sound Transit Lynwood Link	Light Rail	8.5	47,000-55,000 (*projected 2026)*	~5,500-6,500
Sound Transit West Seattle Link	Light Rail	4.1	>20,000 (*projected 2032)*	>~4,900

Change in Transit Trips by Geography

Although ridership increases systemwide with QueensLink's M & G extensions, the largest changes are concentrated in Central and Northern Queens.

Figure 4.1 illustrates how transit trip changes are distributed across the region by origin geography (i.e., where trips begin). Neighborhoods like **Astoria, Elmhurst, Maspeth, and Woodhaven/Richmond Hill experience the greatest increases in transit riders** – emphasizing the value of improved service along QBL local to residents in these communities. QueensLink also generates a material increase in transit trips across Central Queens, Long Island City, Northern Brooklyn and the Rockaways.

Figure 4.1: Increase in Transit Trips by Origin District

Source: NYU Ridership Study

Benefit 2: Reduce Travel Times and Transfers

QueensLink will dramatically improve travel times for inter-borough trips. It will also shorten subway travel times from the Rockaways and the JFK airport to Manhattan. In addition to creating a direct north-south link, QueensLink also reduces the need for riders to transfer to other modes or rail services by connecting into the wider subway network. This enables more frictionless travel across all of NYC for Queens subway riders.

Figure 4.2 illustrates how QueensLink shortens travel time and decreases the number of transfers required selected origin-destination pairs (originally introduced in section 2.4.1). It shows how the project can **improve transit travel speeds for orbital trips by up to 60%,** often eliminating the need for local buses and/or transfers.

Trips with origins and destination along the corridors that would be connected by QueensLink (i.e. between the Rockaways or new stations and Queens Blvd Line stations) especially benefit from direct rail connections. Still, the improved ability to transfer between subway lines within Queens results in broader connectivity and faster travel times across the entire borough.

Figure 4.2: Improved Travel Times and Average Speeds for Key Orbital Trips Within Queens

Source: Google Maps station-to-station public transit travel times (based on Nov 2025 schedules, Tuesday at 3pm) and projected QueensLink service travel times.

Transit Travel Time Savings Benefit

Table 4.4 below shows projected changes in daily travel time due to the QueensLink project. These are aggregated across the entire system and capture time savings for both new and existing transit riders.

Table 4.4: Daily Systemwide Travel Time Savings, 2040

Metric	"6th Ave M"
Change in total transit person-minutes	-969,340
Change for households with zero vehicles available	-418,100

QueensLink leads to an **overall reduction of over 950,000 daily person-minutes** for those using transit in NYC. Of these, over 400,000 person-minutes of savings (or ~43% of total) accrue to residents of households with no vehicles available.

Time Savings by Project Segment

Table 4.5 shows how daily travel time savings are distributed amongst the city's transit riders. All subway riders generally benefit from increases in systemwide capacity. Specifically, trips starting in the Area of Influence can expect **average time savings of up to 10 minutes**, with transit users in the QueensLink core experiencing the greatest benefits.

Riders on the QBL local and Rockaway Lines also save time from shortened headways and reduced need for transfers. For daily commuters, these changes are significant: 10 minutes per trip equates to 100 minutes saved every week, giving them time back for other activities and pursuits.

While QueensLink's impact on individual trips may vary, benefits are concentrated in neighborhoods with few existing transit options and regions with long travel times. All other transit riders experience modest, but material, benefit through improved systemwide connectivity and frequencies – riders outside of the area of influence experience a collective 312,800 minutes of time savings – a third of the total.

Table 4.5: Travel Time Savings by Segment, 2040

Trip Origin	Station Riders	User Benefits (Person-Minutes)	Average Time Saved per Trip	Percentage of User Benefits
QueensLink Core (New Stations)	20,700	213,600	~10 min	22%
Queens Blvd Line	310,000	304,400	~1 min	32%
Rockaway Line	35,600	138,400	~4 min	14%

Source: NYU Ridership Study

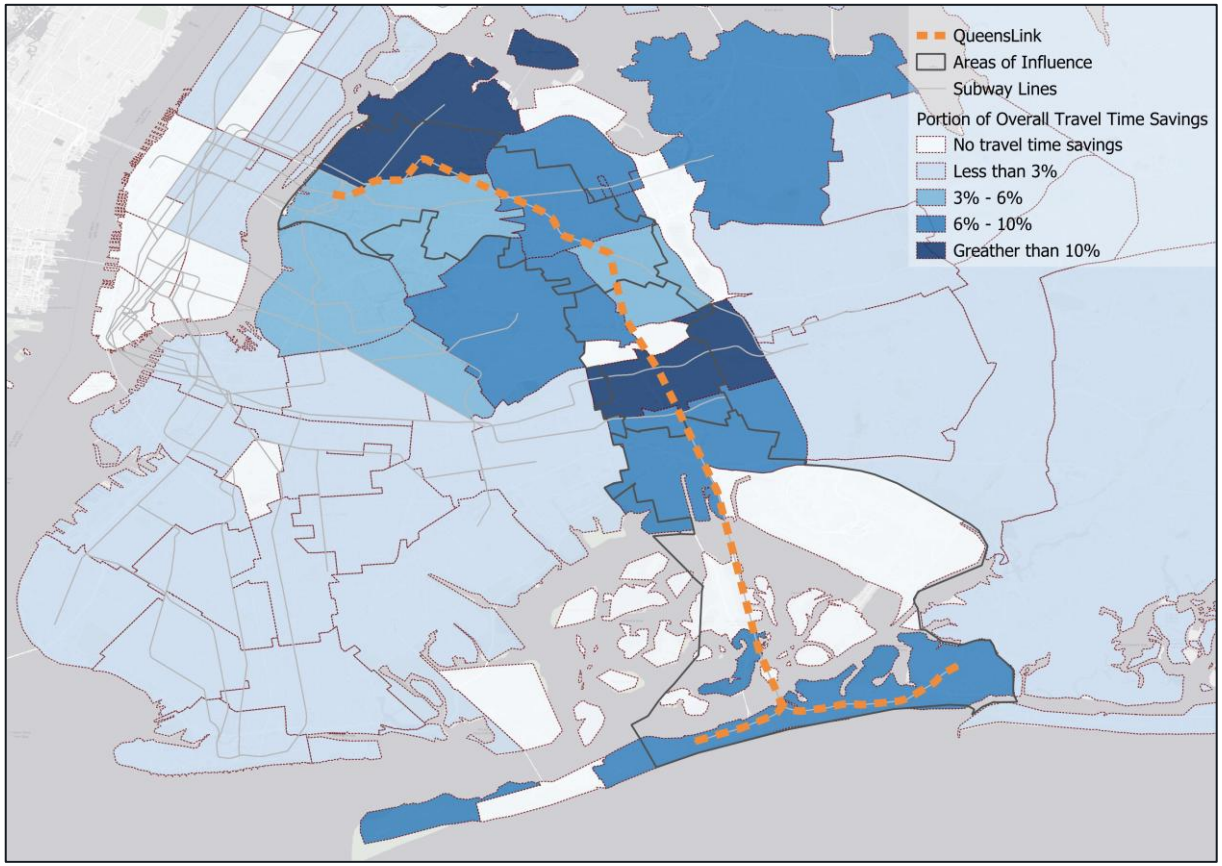
Time Savings by Geography

Figure 4.3 further explores how time savings accrue to areas across the region by origin geography (i.e., where trips begin).

Areas like Astoria and central Queens have relatively high ridership densities; thus, they experience the greatest magnitude of collective time savings. Travel time savings are also concentrated along the project corridor in Woodhaven and Richmond Hill, a direct result of access to new stations and services.

Still, neighborhoods in Southern Queens, notably Ozone Park, Howard Beach, and the Rockaways, also receive substantial travel time benefit despite relatively lower ridership densities – indicating that riders experience greater individual trip time savings (i.e., more time saved per average trip).

Figure 4.3: Travel Time Savings Benefit Allocation by Origin District



Source: NYU Ridership Study

4.2.2 Benefit 3: Improved Access to Key Destinations

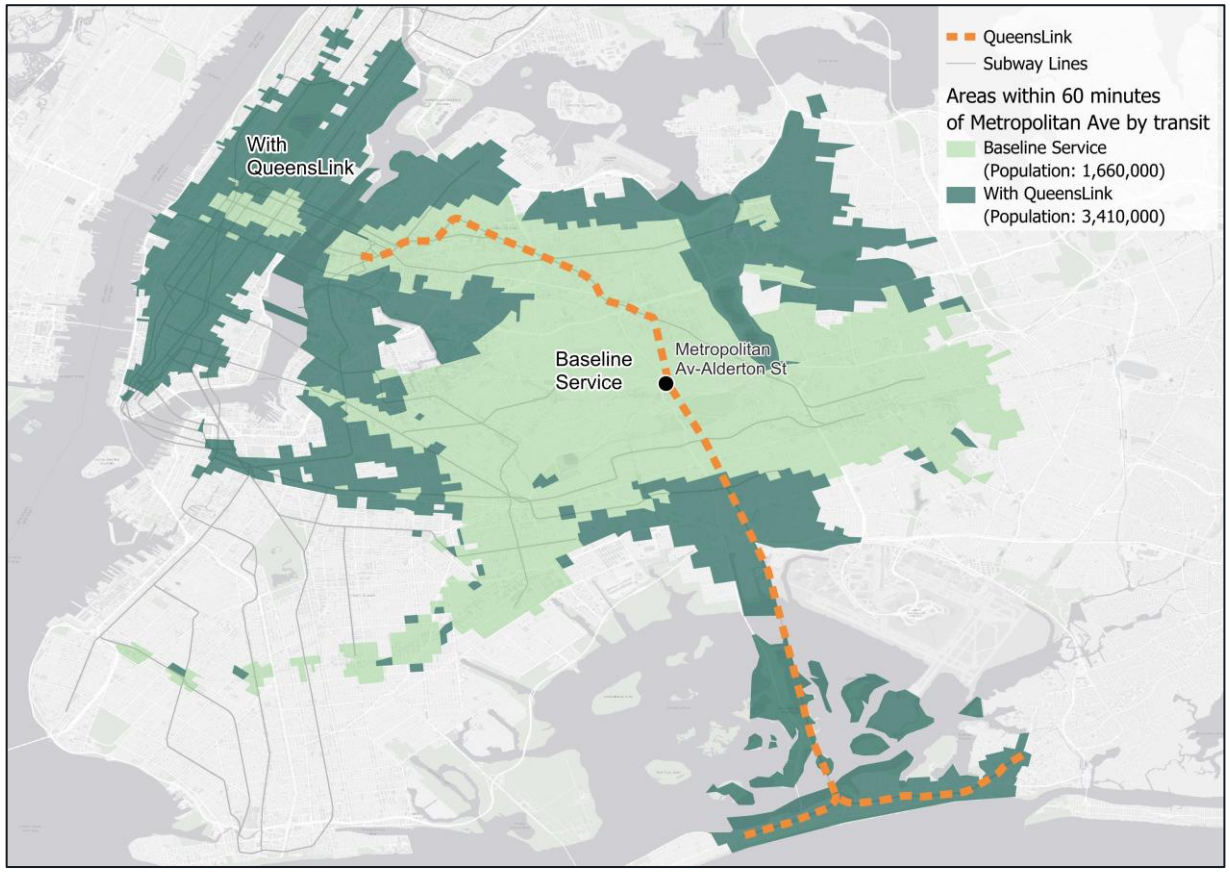
QueensLink can improve access to key destinations for millions of NYC residents. Figure 4.4 represents how transit access to destinations in the QueensLink core is transformed by proposed service extensions. The multicolored bands represent areas reachable from the new station at Metropolitan Ave-Alderton St (site of a major shopping center and potential transit-oriented development) by public transit within 60 minutes **before *(light green)* and after *(dark blue)* the QueensLink project.**

QueensLink unlocks travel to key destinations for residents who previously would have been unable to access them within 60 minutes, including from dense areas like midtown and lower Manhattan, northern Brooklyn, and other disconnected Queens neighborhoods.

+1,750,000

additional residents would be within 60 minutes of Metropolitan Ave via public transit if QueensLink were built today.

Figure 4.4: Areas Accessible Within 60 Minutes of Metropolitan Ave-Alderton St, Build vs. No-Build



Source: Steer Analysis using “r5r” multimodal routing software.

QueensLink can also improve access to destinations along the Rockaway Line.

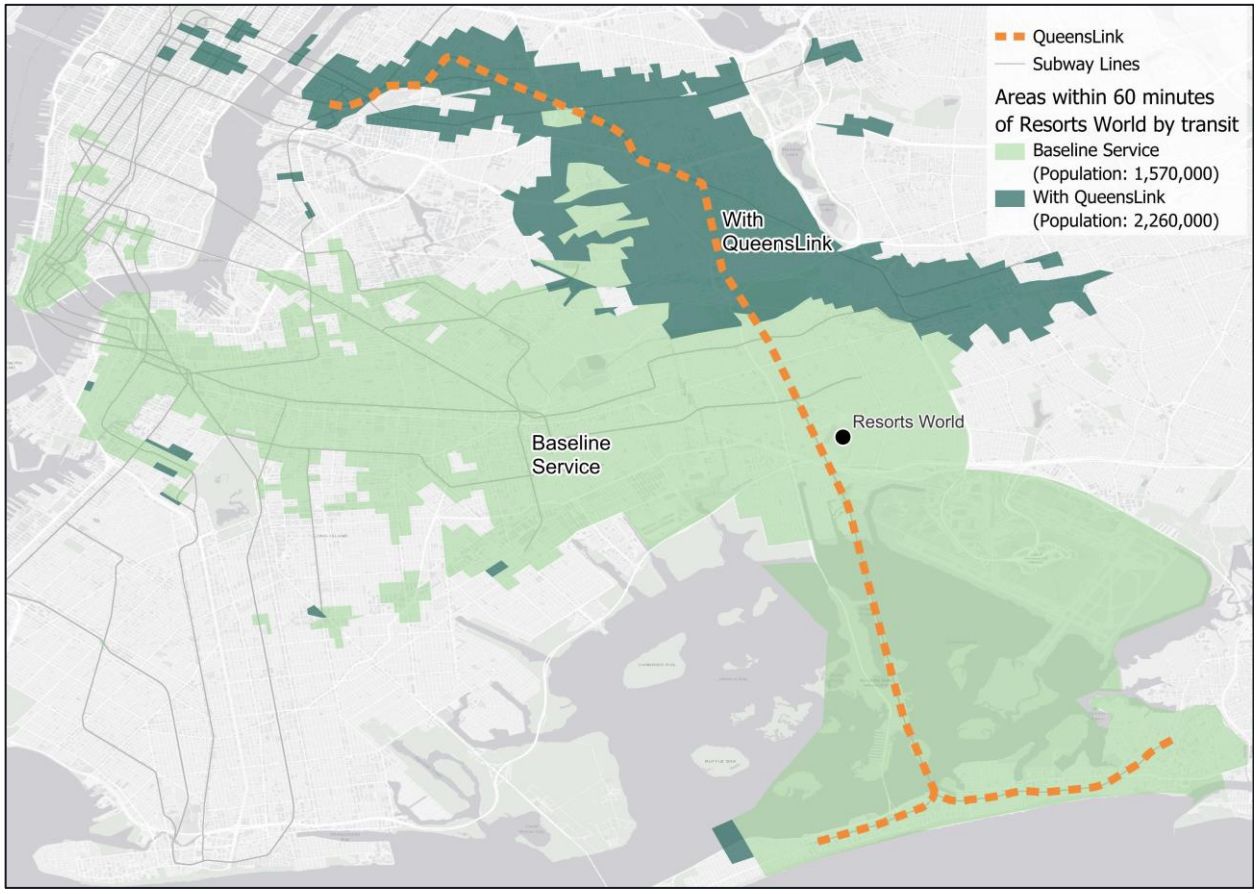
Figure 4.5 represents how transit access to Resorts World (an integrated hotel & casino near the JFK airport currently undergoing expansion) benefits from extended service. The multicolored bands represent areas reachable from Resorts World by transit within 60 minutes **before (*light green*) and after (*dark blue*) the QueensLink project.**

+690,000

additional residents would be within 60 minutes of Resorts World via public transit if QueensLink were built today.

These analyses reveal how QueensLink unlocks access to more economic opportunities, including jobs, education, and health care, for residents across the entire city.

Figure 4.5: Areas Accessible Within 60 Minutes of Resorts World, Build vs. No-Build



Source: Steer Analysis using “r5r” multimodal routing software

Table 4.6 summarizes how the QueensLink project transforms NYC residents' access to these major destinations – using population[7] to quantify the impact of the project[8].

Table 4.6: Change in Resident Access to Key Destinations

Destination	With Existing Services	With QueensLink	Absolute Change	Percent Change
Metropolitan Ave Station (*45-minute catchment*)	370,000	1,220,000	850,000	230%
Metropolitan Ave Station *(60-minute catchment)*	1,660,000	3,410,000	1,750,000	105%
Resorts World *(60-minute catchment)*	1,570,000	2,260,000	690,000	44%

Source: Steer Analysis using "r5r" multimodal routing software

[7] U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates by block group (2023).

[8] Note that the accessibility mapping and change in resident access described above uses baseline and proposed transit schedules (including the planned IBX light rail, as well as existing Brooklyn and Queens buses) to construct travel time matrices for a typical weekday at 4pm. The multimodal routing tool assumes riders will walk to and from their starting and ending transit stations.

4.3 Opportunity 2: Enhance NYC Subway Experience and Operations

QueensLink can enable shorter wait times for riders across Queens, in addition to providing the MTA with much-needed relief from capacity and yard space constraints that currently limit operations along the QBL.

4.3.1 Benefit 4: Reduce Subway Crowding and Station Wait Times

QueensLink improves frequencies across many lines that connect with the new rail infrastructure, benefiting riders along QBL in northern Queens, and the Rockaway Line in southern Queens with shorter time between trains and average wait times. This increase in train service will directly lead to reduced overcrowding on the subway.

Queens Blvd Line Service Benefits

Extending the 8 TPH G-train to Forest Hills can **increase the number of trains along the QBL local by 50%** to 23.5 TPH, or one train every three minutes, reducing wait times and overcrowding at all stations along the route.

Rockaway Line Service Benefits

Due to the A-train's branching operation, frequency varies corresponding with the peak travel direction. The M extension adds 8 TPH to the line, **increasing service between Aqueduct Racetrack and Broad Channel by 95%** to 16.5 TPH, reducing headways by three minutes (from 7 to 4 minutes between trains).

- **Far Rockaway riders** benefit from more frequent A-trains during peak hours.
- **Rockaway Park riders** benefit from full-time dedicated Manhattan-bound service (in addition to better through-running frequencies during peak hours).

Station-Level Service Benefits

Table 4.7 summarizes level-of-service benefits to stations impacted by the QueensLink project, listing frequency increases (expressed as percent change over existing) and proposed headways (time between trains).

Table 4.7: Weekday Peak Service Benefits to Existing Stations

Station	Change in Non-Shuttle Trains per Hour (%)	Change in Headway (minutes)
Queens Blvd Local: • Queens Plaza (M, R, G) • 36 St (M, R, G) • Steinway St (M, R, G) • 46 St (M, R, G) • Northern Blvd (M, R, G) • 65 St (M, R, G) • Elmhurst Av (M, R, G) • Grand Av-Newtown (M, R, G) • Woodhaven Blvd (M, R, G) • 63 Dr - Rego Park (M, R, G)	*+50%*	*-1 min*
Rockaway Line: • Aqueduct Racetrack (M, A) • Aqueduct-North Conduit Av (M, A) • Howard Beach-JFK Airport (M, A) • Broad Channel (M, A)	*+95%*	*-3 min*
Far Rockaway Branch: • Beach 67 St (A) • Beach 60 St (A) • Beach 44 St (A) • Beach 36 St (A) • Beach 25 St (A) • Far Rockaway - Mott Av (A)	*+55%*	*-4 min*
Rockaway Park Branch: • Beach 90 St (M) • Beach 98 St (M) • Beach 105 St (M) • Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St (M)	*+165%*	*-13min*

Source: Steer Analysis of MTA December 2025 Route Schedules

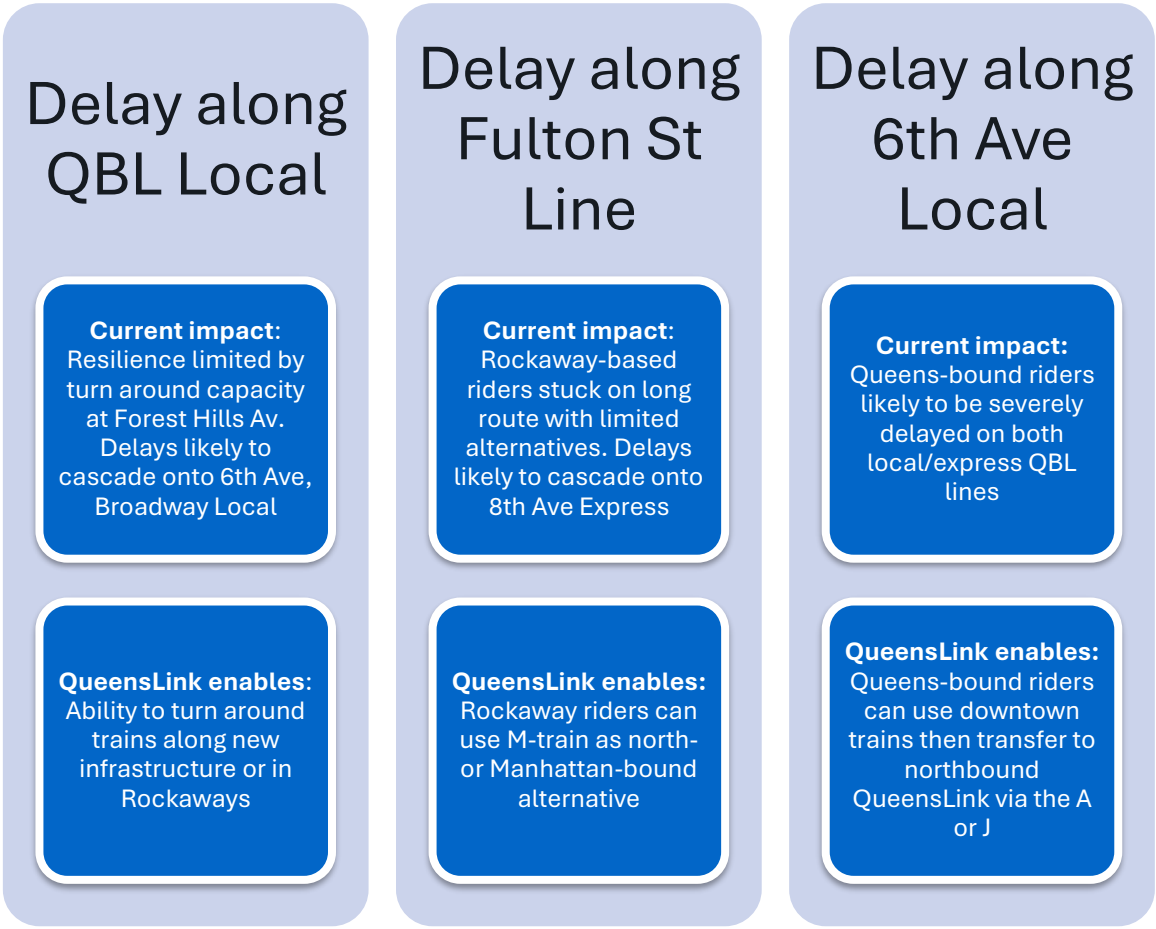
4.3.2 Benefit 5: Increased Resilience and Redundancy

Figure 4.6 describes how QueensLink adds resilience and redundancy to the subway network, enabling MTA to quickly respond to service disruptions, as well as providing riders with feasible alternatives when their routes are affected.

Given the subway's operational complexity, delays in one area of the network are likely to affect lines elsewhere – for example, a disruption along the Fulton St Line (A/C) might impact all Brooklyn and Queens bound riders as far as into Manhattan. QueensLink would establish a radial "loop" between Manhattan and Queens, giving riders alternate routes to outer borough destinations. The new link can also create new opportunities for shifting trains around during major disruptions.

The Economic Case further explores the value of this improved service reliability and resilience for riders in terms of additional time savings and resulting economic benefit.

Figure 4.6: Examples of How QueensLink Improves Systemwide Resilience



4.4 Opportunity 3: Transform Access to Parks / Public Space

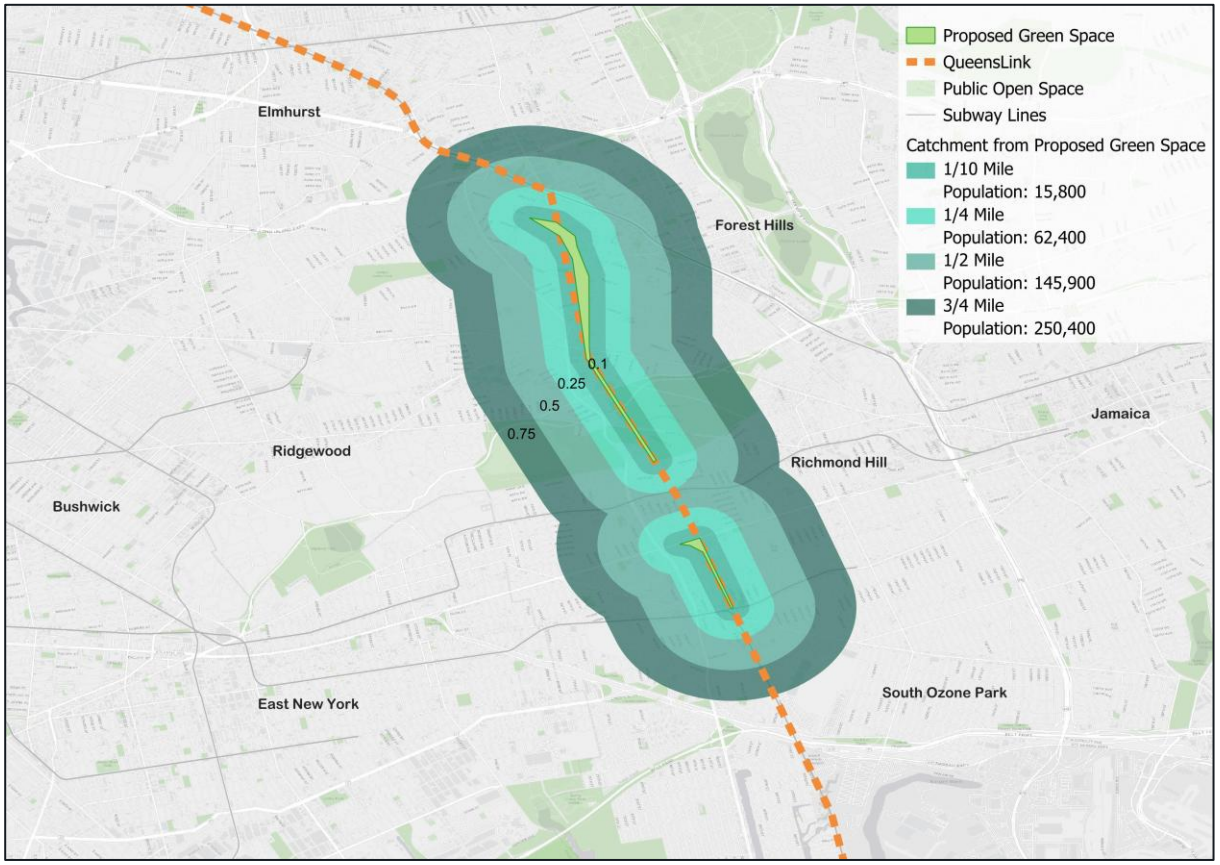
Local communities can benefit from public amenities built alongside rail in QueensLink core. Expanded bike/pedestrian infrastructure, as well as new transit service, can also improve quality of life for adjacent residents.

4.4.1 Benefit 6: Increased Access to Parks and Open Space

Figure 4.7 illustrates the areas within walking distance of the QueensLink linear park. The map includes a range of catchment areas to describe how access varies depending on an individual's preference for proximity to a park.

a 0.1-mile radius (2-minute walk)	gives access to	16,000 residents
a ¼ mile radius (5-minute walk)		62,000 residents
a ½ mile radius (10-minute walk)		146,000 residents
a ¾ mile (15-minute walk)		250,000 residents

Figure 4.7: Population Within Walking Distance of QueensLink Linear Park



Source: Steer Analysis of QueensLink Proposed Green Space Footprint

The linear park will be complemented by infrastructure for active modes:

- Protected bike lanes running parallel to the rail alignment to establish greenway for safe travel to regional parks.
- Pedestrian paths for leisurely strolls and local transportation.

4.4.2 Benefit 7: Increased Park Visits

The Trust for Public Land estimates that NYC residents (across all five boroughs) visit the city's parks about 527 million times per year: about 60 times a year per resident, or a little more than once a week.

250,400 people live within ¾ of a mile – about a 15-minute walk – of the QueensLink linear park. They represent the core group who would be expected to use the linear park regularly. If they each visit:

Once a month	this equates to	3 million visits a year
Once every two months		1.5 million visits a year
Once a year		250,000 visits a year

Each park visit leads to tangible quality-of-life benefits for local residents realized through recreation, safety, and community interaction.

4.4.3 Benefit 8: Reduced Traffic and Improved Air Quality

The NYU ridership study estimates that QueensLink reduces daily automobile Passenger Miles Traveled (PMT) by 140,700 across the city. Assuming an average vehicle occupancy of 1.48 for New York City counties[9], this results in a daily reduction of 95,000 Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and 14,800 car trips from NYC roads, and an **annual reduction of 30.0 million VMT and 4.7 million car trips**. For context, the MTA 20-Year Needs Assessment estimates that IBX would reduce VMT by 73,000 daily and 23.4 million annually.

Reducing VMT can support wider regional mode shift and traffic reduction goals, as well as directly influencing quality of life for communities along busy roads and highways. Changes in VMT lead to a decrease in tailpipe emissions, estimated at an annual level in the following table:

[9] New York Metropolitan Transportation Council. "Congestion Management Process Performance Metrics". Retrieved from https://www.nymtc.org/en-us/Required-Planning-Products/Congestion-Management-Process/Congestion-Management-Process-Performance-Metrics on December 15, 2025.

Table 4.8: Reduction in Air Pollution

Pollutant	Reduction
Nitrous Oxide (NOx)	1,200 lbs annually
Sulfur Oxides (SOx)	140 lbs annually
Particulate Matter (PM2.5)	370 lbs annually
Carbon Dioxide (CO2)	7,200 short tons annually

Source: Steer analysis

Similarly, reduced VMT leads to fewer crashes each year. The safety benefits based on mode shift are summarized below:

Table 4.9: Reduction in Serious Crashes

Crash Type	Reduction
Serious – Injuries	74 annually
Serious – Fatal	0.5 annually

Source: Steer analysis

These reductions are likely to be concentrated on major arteries carrying high traffic volumes, especially when combined with safer infrastructure for vulnerable road users in and around the QueensLink corridor.

4.5 Opportunity #4: Support Transit Access and Growth in Southern Queens

4.5.1 Benefit 10: Improved Transit Access for Underserved NYC Neighborhoods

As mentioned in section 2.7.1, over 8,000 residents of the QueensLink Core lack convenient walking access to a subway station. Additionally, there are over **28,000** residents in census tracts along the Rockaway Park branch who rely primarily on the Rockaway Park Shuttle (apart from a few special A-trains in the peak period), a short service that forces riders to transfer for destinations beyond the Rockaways.

QueensLink would provide **over 36,000 Queens residents with walking access** to 'full-service' subway stations (those with direct service to Manhattan), eliminating the need for transit riders to make long access trips.

36,000+ residents

will benefit from **new and direct subway service** to Manhattan and Queens.

4.5.2 Benefit 11: Support Housing Delivery

As discussed in Section 2.7.2, QueensLink can support housing delivery through transit-oriented development (TOD).

The recently adopted NYC housing policy "City of Yes for Housing Opportunity" enables greater housing density within ¼ mile of transit stations, with maximum building heights of up to 55ft allowed for qualifying sites. By improving transit access and development viability, facilitated by recent zoning changes, QueensLink could support 'gentle density' efforts, such as new rowhouses and small apartment buildings. It could also support

larger-scale development on large, under-utilized sites.

For example, if the 16-acre big-box store complex at Metropolitan Ave and Woodhaven Blvd—adjacent to a proposed QueensLink station—were converted to housing at an intensity of 80 units/acre (using guidelines from S.B. 79 in California), this would suggest over 1,200 new housing units at this site alone.

4.6 Local Economic Impacts

Lastly, in addition to their transportation benefits, transit investments are proven drivers of job creation. Delivering and operating a project of the scale of QueensLink will stimulate economic activity and create jobs across a wide range of skills, roles, and experience levels. Key jobs that QueensLink will directly create include:

- MTA staff who will operate and maintain the rail infrastructure, including engineers, conductors and station agents.
- Contractors responsible for constructing and maintaining infrastructure.
- Engineers, architects, and planners involved in the design and planning of the project.
- Professional services staff supporting procurement, project delivery, and program management.

Beyond the direct jobs created through construction and operation, QueensLink will also support additional jobs and economic activity through indirect and induced impacts, strengthening the broader regional economy.

As the MTA procures materials, equipment, and services to deliver and operate QueensLink, it creates demand for businesses that provide:

- Construction materials such as steel, concrete, signaling systems, and rolling stock.
- Engineering, design, legal, and financial services.
- Manufacturing, logistics, and maintenance support.

This increased demand allows suppliers to expand production, invest in new equipment, and hire additional staff, supporting job creation across multiple sectors.

Further impacts arise from increased household spending by workers employed directly and indirectly by the project. As these workers earn income, they spend more in the local economy on everyday goods and services.

This additional spending supports further employment and business growth, creating a multiplier effect that continues to circulate through the economy.

Together, these effects contribute to:

- Stronger local and regional economic growth.
- Increased tax revenues for governments.
- Greater resilience and diversification of the labor market.
- Long-term productivity gains driven by improved connectivity and access to jobs.

In this way, QueensLink acts not only as a transport investment but as a catalyst for sustained economic development across the wider economy.

4.6.1 Construction and Operating Impacts

QueensLink's total contribution to the wider economy can be split into two categories, during construction and during operation. These impacts have been assessed using industry-standard input–output analysis, using Bureau of Economic Analysis RIMS II multipliers. They capture how spending on rail construction and operations circulates through the broader economy, as businesses and workers spend the income they receive from wages, creating successive rounds of economic activity[10].

Construction Impacts

During the construction period, QueensLink is expected to generate **$8.9 billion of total economic output to the NYC economy.** This equates to **37,000 job-years** (some people may be employed during the entire construction period, and others may have temporary positions) with total wage earnings of $2.5 billion.

Operating Impacts

Expanded services resulting from the QueensLink project require ongoing maintenance and operations. These expect to generate **$400 million annually for the NYC economy**, equating to **1,000 jobs** and $100 million in wage earnings every year.

[10] Note that these economic impacts are **distinct** from the economic benefits discussed in the Economic Case, and cannot be included in benefit-cost analysis. This reflects how input-output analysis treats the investment in QueensLink as a stimulus to the local economy, rather than as a cost to the project sponsor, and does not consider the extent to which positive impacts in one region or industry may be accompanied by offsetting losses in another. Unlike BCA, they do not examine or enable comparison with how the resources used for QueensLink might have been put to alternative beneficial uses (i.e., they do not assess the net effect on society).

5 Project Partners

This section highlights likely project partners and how QueensLink can respond to their concerns. The challenges and opportunities are based on insights from the Strategic Case and do not necessarily represent the full views of groups or communities listed.

Table 5.1: Stakeholder Matrix

Category	Partner	Challenges and Opportunities	Case for QueensLink
Local Champions	Queens Residents	Improved transit access; reduced commute times; noise and environmental impact	Supports community goals for high-quality transportation, public space, and expanded access to opportunity
	Community Boards (CB 9, CB 10, CB 14, etc.)	Community engagement and approval; land use; quality of life; impact to local businesses	Catalyzes discussion around intentional development and appropriate land uses
	Businesses along the corridor	Impact to customer base and access, economic revitalization, construction disruption concerns	Enables commercial activity associated with TOD, including increased food traffic
Government Agencies	NYC Transit (MTA)	Operational feasibility; integration with existing lines; funding concerns; ridership projections; long-term maintenance and system expansion	Improves system resilience and operational flexibility, decreases overcrowding, and increases ridership while using existing ROW
	City of New York (Mayor's Office, DOT, DCP)	Alignment with urban planning, equity, and climate goals; economic development; budget constraints	Integrates with incoming mayor's objectives to make transit faster and supports equity goals
	State of New York (Governor's Office, NYSDOT)	Critical infrastructure investment; regional mobility; environmental compliance	Allows governor to improve regional mobility outcomes and reduce GHG emissions
	Federal Agencies (FTA, EPA)	Compliance with federal standards; funding eligibility; environmental review (NEPA)	Follows from P&N statement – captures federal goals around transit investment
Special Interest Groups	Environmental Groups	Green space preservation, sustainable transit, climate resilience, mitigation of ecological disruption	Expands access to public parks, reduces air pollution
	Transit Advocacy Organizations	Improved service, accessibility, equity, multimodal integration	Increases capacity of existing transit system, reduces travel times citywide
	Community Organizations (QueensWay, etc.)	Parks creation, efficient use of public space, cost-effectiveness	Expands access to public parks, creates opportunity for collaboration amongst public advocates
	Real Estate Developers & Property Owners	Land value appreciation, zoning changes, development opportunities	Supports TOD and redevelopment for regional housing and economic growth
Public Influencers	Schools and Educational Institutions	Safer and faster student commutes, noise and safety concerns	Improves safety on routes to school and provides alternatives for accessing educational institutions
	Media & Public Opinion Leaders	Shaping public perception, transparency, accountability	Shows how investment into Queens' transportation system benefits all New Yorkers

Economic Case

6 Economic Case Introduction

6.1 Purpose

The role of the **Economic Case** is to translate the strategic benefits of QueensLink into economic terms and demonstrate the overall benefits of the project to society compared to its costs. It considers the overall value of QueensLink to society, and:

- Assesses the **costs and benefits** of the proposal to individuals and society as a whole across a 30-year evaluation period.
- Adopts **standard economic analysis** to detail benefits and costs in monetized (dollar) terms.
- **Discounts** costs and benefits to reflect the value of future costs and benefits as if they occurred today, rather than in the future.
- Establishes '**what the benefit to society**' is in economic terms.

The Economic Case analysis allows decision makers, project planners, and the public to understand how the costs of delivering QueensLink compare to the value to the region from delivering it. They help value the benefits described in the Strategic Case and relate them to the costs of delivering the project.

6.2 Stage of Development

This Economic Case forms part of an Initial Business Case for the project. Reflecting this early stage, the benefit-cost analysis aims to provide an **order-of-magnitude assessment** of the socioeconomic benefits and costs of QueensLink, for both the transit and park components of the project, on a fair and consistent basis to other projects.

The focus to date has been an initial quantification of the benefits of the three service concepts to transit users (time savings and reductions in crowding) and wider society (reduced air pollution, auto-involved crashes and greenhouse gas emissions; and improved health outcomes). It should be stressed that **not all benefits have been quantified to date,** such as wider economic benefits arising from greater access to opportunity and jobs.

7 Evaluation Approach

7.1 Introduction

The Economic Case uses a social benefit-cost analysis (BCA) to assess how the costs of the project compare to its benefits to users and wider society:

- **Benefits –** these are how QueensLink improves quality-of-life and the wider economy of Queens and NYC.
- **Costs** – these are the resources estimated to build, operate, and maintain QueensLink.

7.2 Benefit Assessment

7.2.1 Transit Project Benefits

The core approach uses the ridership and model outputs of the NYU Ridership Study to estimate the benefits that arise from the **extension of the Subway network** along the former RBB alignment.

This involves the use of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) **Simplified Trips-on-Project Software** (STOPS) to forecast how QueensLink will influence mobility patterns, travel behavior and transit ridership within NYC.

It simulates how travelers choose routes and modes based on cost, time, and convenience, allowing agencies to compare a scenario with and without the QueensLink project. This is based on both today's transit network, plus additional committed MTA projects (such as IBX and the Second Avenue Subway Phase 2), and a projection for future population and employment growth and land-use patterns.

The model estimates three core impacts:

Transit ridership with and without the QueensLink project.

Travel time changes for existing and new riders.

Mode shift (e.g., people switching from driving to transit) and associated reductions in vehicle miles traveled and emissions.

These three core impacts are used to estimate the majority of the benefits of the transit component of QueensLink, in line with established USDOT benefit-cost guidance.

Note that this **includes** IBX in the No-Build scenario – all ridership and benefits values are net additional to the benefits that IBX will deliver for orbital trips in Brooklyn and Queens.

7.2.2 Linear Park Benefits

In addition to the benefits of the transit component, we have also estimated the benefits of the linear park component of the project.

Compared to transit projects, where there are established methods to estimate project benefits in economic terms, the approach to estimate the benefits of parks is less certain.

We have therefore drawn from *The Economic Benefits of Parks in New York City* 2022 study for the Trust for Public Land, undertaken by the University of Delaware Data and Statistic Lab to understand the potential benefits of the linear park.

This academic study provides estimates of the recreation, health and quality-of-life benefits **per user** from public parks. Since there is no available forecast or projection for the number of linear park visitors, we combine this with a **scenario approach** to the number of potential park visits, informed by local population and the typical frequency with which NYC residents visit parks a year.

Potential Park Visits

The Trust for Public Land estimates that NYC residents – across all five boroughs – visit the city's parks about 527 million times per year – about 60 times a year per resident, or a little more than once a week. This provides a starting point for considering how often local residents may utilize the 30+ acres of new parks and protected bike paths to be delivered through the project.

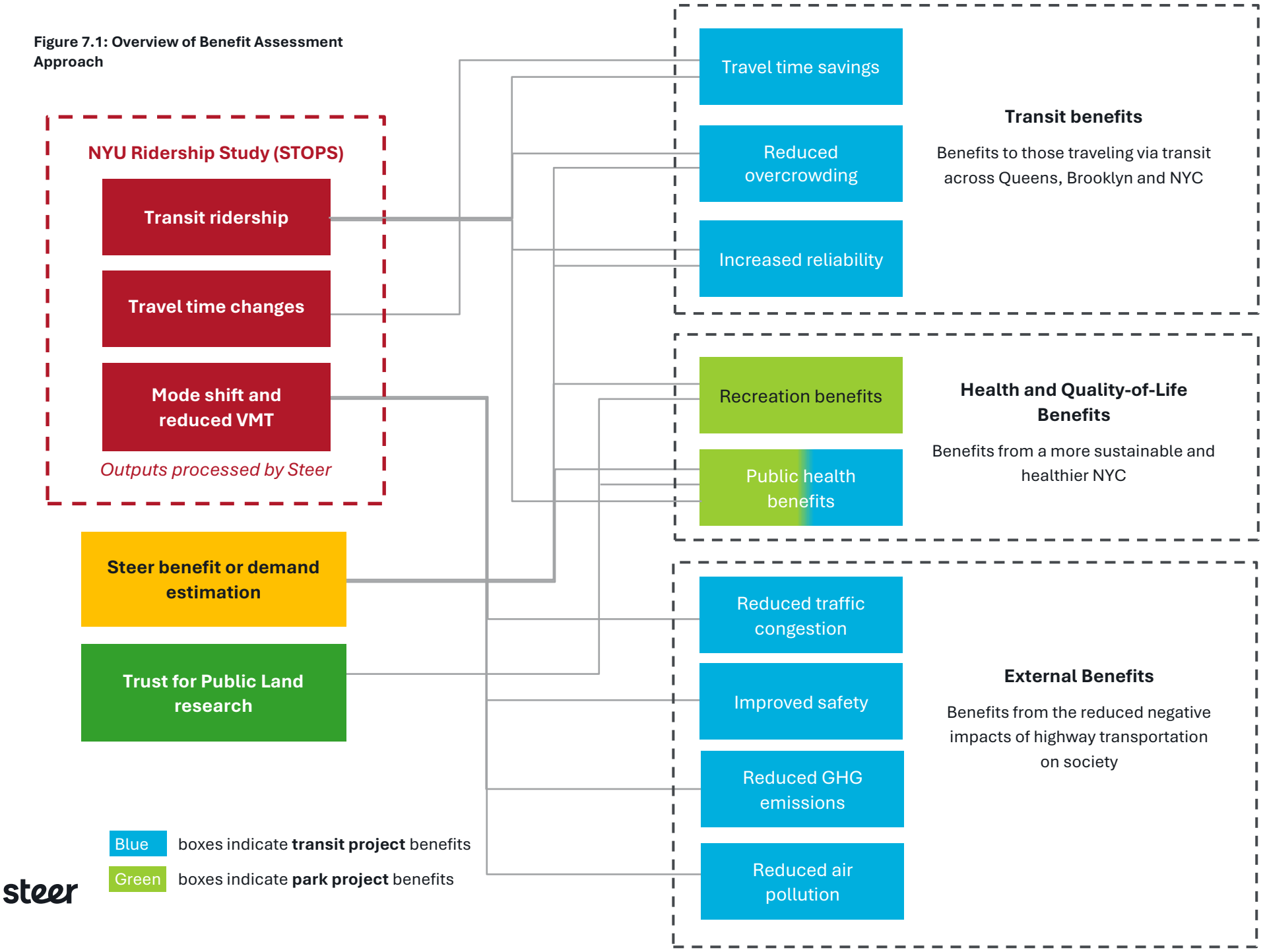
250,000 people live within ¾ of a mile (about a 15-minute walk) of the QueensLink linear park. They represent the core group who would be expected to use the linear park regularly. If they each visit:

Once a month	this equates to	3.0 million visits a year
Once every two months		1.5 million visits a year
Once a year		250,000 visits a year

This range is used as the basis of estimating the usage of the linear park, and the benefits that it delivers.

Figure 7.1 summarizes how the transit project and linear park benefits have been evaluated, and how they reported in the rest of the Economic Case.

Figure 7.1: Overview of Benefit Assessment Approach



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Several guiding assumptions and parameters are used throughout the BCA and Economic Case analysis, as shown in Table 7.1.

Project benefits (and costs) are presented as **ranges,** reflecting the high level of uncertainty in the benefits of the project at this stage. Lower and upper bounds correspond to low and high benefit and/or cost scenarios, respectively, and the values for the 'core' scenario are described in the text.

Note that the analysis:

- is **incremental** to the No Build scenario – meaning that all costs and impacts only consider those directly related to QueensLink.
- is presented in **real terms in 2025$ prices.**
- adopts an economic **discount rate** of 3%, which is used to represent the fact that goods/benefits today are valued more than goods/benefits in the future.

Table 7.1: Economic Case Inputs and Assumptions

	BCA assumption			Explanation
	Low scenario	Core scenario	High scenario	
Evaluation period	2035 – 2065			30 years from assumed opening, in line with US DOT BCA guidance
Discount Rate	3.0% per year			Used to represent value to future benefits to individuals and society today
Value of Time per hour	$22.35			USDOT BCA guidance, consistent with MTA planning
Real growth in value of time per hour	0%	1%	2%	Represents future productivity growth, and how individuals will value their time more in future as wages increase
Ridership growth	1%	2%	3%	Reflects future growth in long-term ridership post-2035
Average vehicle occupancy	1.48 persons per vehicle			NYMTC data
Annualization factor	320 standard weekdays per year			Implied from average weekday & annual total MTA subway ridership

8 Transit Benefits

Transit benefits quantify how QueensLink benefits those traveling across Queens, Brooklyn and NYC as a whole

8.1 Overview

QueensLink will help improve travel across Queens, Brooklyn and New York City through three core means:

1. **Travel time** – Riders will benefit from benefit from faster, more convenient trips across Queens and to and from the area immediately surrounding new QueensLink stations. Many trips will not only be faster, but significantly more convenient, with reduced wait times for subway trains (from increased frequency on the QBL) and reduced need to transfer (to/from bus or via Manhattan or Jamaica). These travel time reductions also provide access to **new destinations** via transit, which otherwise would not be practical to reach.

2. **Reduced overcrowding** – Improved frequencies on the QBL will mean more comfortable travel conditions, both on-train and at crowded stations such as Jackson Heights–Roosevelt Avenue/74th Street.

3. **Increased reliability –** greater resilience from new QueensLink infrastructure, and greater ability to re-route trains, will help reduce disruption to riders.

Two broad groups will benefit:

- **Existing transit riders** – QueensLink will reduce travel times for those already making transit trips along the corridor.
- **New transit riders** – By improving connectivity across Queens, QueensLink will attract new riders to the subway. These riders previously traveled by another mode, to another destination, or not at all.

How are Transit Benefits Estimated?

Travel time benefits for **transit users** have been estimated based on direct outputs of how many equivalent minutes riders save from the STOPS model. This captures the absolute change in travel time, applying weightings for how riders value reducing transfers and wait times over-and-above that of the in-vehicle time alone. This is converted into a monetized value through applying a value-of-time (VOT) of $22.35 per hour.

Travel time benefits for **road users** are estimated from the reduction in vehicle miles traveled estimated from STOPS. According to USDOT guidance on monetizing road user benefits, each VMT eliminated reduces traffic congestion and improves travel times to the equivalent of $0.159.

Reduced overcrowding is calculated based on applying an estimate of the equivalent minutes saved per subway rider from reduced overcrowding. This captures riders' preferences to avoid traveling in the most crowded conditions. This estimate is applied to the 87,000 projected daily subway riders (peak period only) on the QBL and the 13 stations on the A south of Rockaway Blvd. The total equivalent minutes saved is then monetized using the VOT.

Improved reliability is calculated based on an estimate of the reduced travel time per rider from both the ability for trains to re-route and the ability of riders to seek alternative routes during disruption. This estimate is applied to the 301,000 daily projected subway riders on the QBL and the 13 stations on the A south of Rockaway Blvd, for the 15%[11] of subway trains arrive at terminal locations more than five minutes late, did not operate, or skipped planned station stops. The total equivalent minutes saved is then monetized using the VOT.

[11] MTA, New York City Transit Key Performance Metrics, June 2025; measure is subway on-time-performance.

8.2 Benefit Assessment

Table 8.1 presents the transit benefits of QueensLink. Transit benefits are significant over the lifecycle of the project, totaling over **$4.9 billion** under the core scenario.

Transit user benefits reflect an average time savings of 4 minutes per trip from increased frequency, reliability, and travel times.

Transit travel time benefits for **new users shifting from other modes** are also included in the overall travel time savings benefit. These are estimated using the "rule of half,"[12] capturing the net utility of faster and more convenient transit trips to the new user.

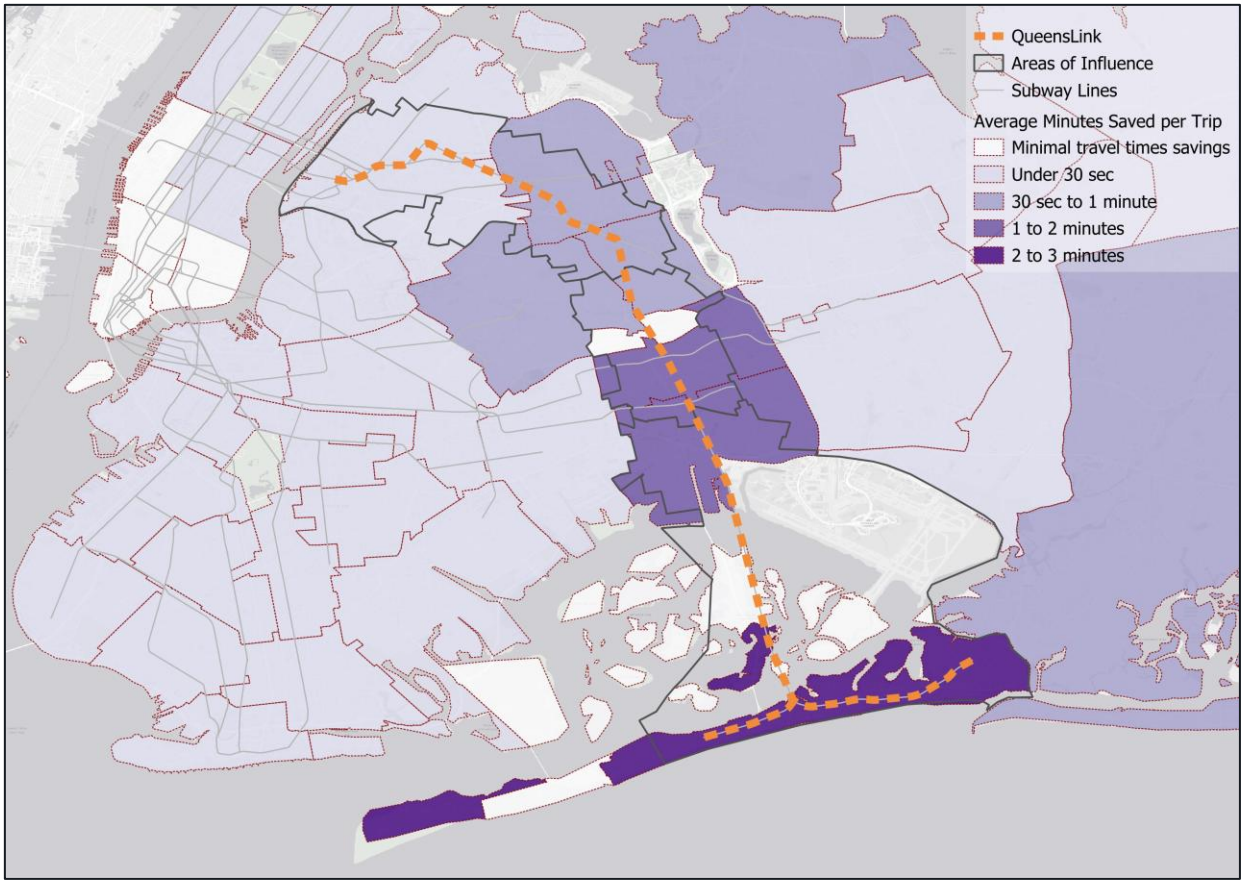
Table 8.1: Transit Benefits

Category of Benefit	Number of Trips per Day	Savings per trip, minute equivalent	Days per year	Value of Time	Value of Benefit (2035, 2025$, millions)	Value of Benefit (2035-2065, 2025$ discounted)
Travel time savings from faster and more convenient trips	366,000	2.6	320	$22.35	**104 - 127**	**1,740 – 3,750**
Reduced overcrowding	87,000 (peak trips only)	5.0	320	$22.35	**46 - 57**	**780 – 1,670**
Improved reliability	45,000 (delayed trips only)	10.0	320	$22.35	**48 - 59**	**810 – 1,750**

[12]The rule of half is a principle from transportation economics reflecting the incremental value of time saved and resulting economic benefits from change in perceived cost, convenience, and mobility for new transit users. For more information, see *Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis II – Evaluation Transportation Benefits* from Victoria Transportation Policy Institute: **https://vtpi.org/tca/tca07.pdf**.

Figure 8.1 outlines how the travel time savings from the project are experienced by transit users across Queens and wider NYC. Note that average time savings per trip is estimated at the district level; individual trip benefits are expected to be greatest in magnitude near stations impacted by the project.

Figure 8.1: Average Travel Time Savings per Trip by STOPS District



Source: NYU Ridership Study

9 Health and Quality-of-Life Benefits

Health and Quality-of-Life Benefits quantify how QueensLink leads to a more sustainable and healthier NYC

9.1 Overview

Public open space provides city residents with places to unwind, exercise, or simply escape from everyday life. Investment into an urban rails-and-trails initiative can facilitate public health benefits by promoting physical activity for both park and transit users. Parks can encourage **healthy recreation levels** while transit more broadly **enables active modes** (walking and cycling) to access transportation.

There are three core groups of Health and Quality-of-Life Benefits:

1. **Recreation benefits** – benefits to park users for recreation and relaxation activities, such as hiking, picnicking, visiting playgrounds, and participating in fitness programs.

2. **Public health benefits** – benefits from improved health outcomes from greater physical activity, including both direct healthcare cost savings and improved well-being.

How are Health and Quality-of-Life Estimated?

Recreation benefits are calculated based on the potential number of park visits and 'per visit' values from the Trust of Public Land study. According to their report, every park visit is worth $17 (2021$) in benefit to society. This is scaled up to the expected number of additional park visits to calculate the total benefits.

Public health benefits are calculated for the following categories based on:

- **From park use** - Evidence from Trust of Public Land regarding healthcare savings between active and inactive people.
  - The number of residents who use QueensLink for physical activity is estimated as a range from 1%-5%, with 2% of the nearby population considered in the core benefits scenario.
  - Benefit value depends on age of the park user. These are estimated at $1,600 per 18–64-year-old and $3,200 per 65+ year old user.

- **From transit trips** – Following USDOT guidance, transit trips include an average walk of 0.86 miles and are valued at $8.54 per trip for persons aged 20-74 years. The core scenario assumes that 50% of new transit trips are induced from private vehicles with an average walking distance of half a mile.

9.2 Benefit Assessment

Table 9.1 presents the health and quality-of-life benefits of QueensLink. Recreation and public health benefits are material over the lifecycle of the project – totaling **$1.0 billion** under the core scenario.

Recreation benefits reflect the utility for up to 1.5 million annual visitors; benefits from transit reflect the utility for the close to 6 million transit trips induced annually.

Table 9.1: Health and Quality-of-Life Benefits

Category of Benefit	Number of users	Benefit per user	Value of Benefit (2035, 2025$, millions)	Value of Benefit (2035-2065, 2025$ discounted)
Recreation benefits	**250,400 – 3,004,800**	**$20.24**	**5.1 - 60.8**	**80 – 1,790**
Public health benefits			**11.4 - 30.7**	**190 - 900**
Of which park	*2,000 – 10,100*	*$1,900*	*3.9 - 19.3*	*60 - 570*
Of which transit	*5,917,000*	*$1.30 - $1.90*	*7.5 - 11.3*	*130 - 330*

10 External Benefits

External benefits quantify how QueensLink reduces the negative impacts of transportation on society

10.1 Overview

Every trip taken on the transportation network can contribute to negative impacts on wider society – whether it be congestion on the roads, emissions that pollute the air or injuries that can occur from collisions. These impacts are called the 'social externalities of transportation'.

Transit, park and urban realm projects such as QueensLink are an opportunity to reduce these social costs by providing alternatives to the private car with less societal impact per mile of travel.

There are four core groups of External Benefits:

1. **Reduced congestion.** Since some new users would otherwise drive for their trips, particularly along Woodhaven Blvd, QueensLink will reduce traffic congestion and therefore reduce travel times for those who continue to use the road network, including both drivers and bus passengers.

2. **Improved safety** – Riders switching from car to QueensLink take trips off the road network, reducing the number of collisions causing death and serious injury in NYC.

3. **Reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** – Vehicle traffic generates GHG emissions that contribute to climate change. Riders switching from auto to QueensLink are switching to a more sustainable, electric form of transportation with significantly less GHG emissions per mile, reducing the impact of transportation on climate change.

4. **Reduced air (and noise) pollution** – Vehicle traffic also generates pollutants that are damaging to human health, such as NO_x (which contributes to smog) and particulate emissions such as PM10s. Riders switching from auto to QueensLink therefore contribute towards reducing these emissions and therefore improving health outcomes.

How are External Benefits Estimated?

External benefits are estimated from the reduction in VMT forecast by STOPS. Specific

parameters for accident rates (from Queens accident data) and emissions per VMT, combined with values from USDOT guidance, are applied to estimate the external benefits.

10.2 Benefit Assessment

Table 10.1 presents the external benefits of QueensLink. Traffic congestion, safety, and pollution related benefits are material over the lifecycle of the project – totaling over **$780 million** under the core scenario.

The greatest drivers of external benefit are reduction in collisions resulting in death or serious injury (preventing an estimated 75 crashes annually), reduced traffic congestion for the millions of NYC road users, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Table 10.1: External Benefits

Category of Benefit	Description	Value of Benefit (2035, 2025$, millions)	Value of Benefit (2035-2065, 2025$ discounted)
Reduction in traffic congestion	Estimated value of time savings from reduction in 30 million annual vehicle-miles	4.6 - 5.6	80 - 170
Reduction in collisions resulting in death or serious injury	Estimated reduction in 75 fatal and serious injuries per year	30 - 37	510 – 1,100
Reduced GHG emissions	Estimated reduction in 7,200 tons of GHG emissions per year	1 - 2	20 - 50
Reduced air pollution	Estimated reduction in 1,700 lbs of NO_x, SO_x, and PM2.5s emissions per year	0.18 - 0.21	2.9 - 6.3
Reduced noise pollution	Estimated value of vehicle-related noise pollution from reduction in 30 million annual vehicle-miles	0.16 - 0.2	2.7 - 5.8

11 Benefit-Cost Analysis

11.1 Overview

At this early stage of project development, a benefit-cost analysis is used to broadly quantify the value of impact to society, not to assign a precise dollar value to the project.

Figure 11.1 sets out individual discounted benefits and costs in 2025$ across the 30-year evaluation period from 2035-2065 for the three scenarios considered and compares the overall total benefits to costs[13]. These form the basis for estimating the following key metrics:

- **Net Present Value (NPV)** – the net benefits minus net costs, which is used to indicate the overall magnitude of net benefits to the region
- **Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)** – the net benefits divided by the net costs, which is used to indicate how many benefits are realized per dollar spent.

Figure 11.1 illustrates how, for the core and high scenarios, the benefits of QueensLink outweigh the costs.

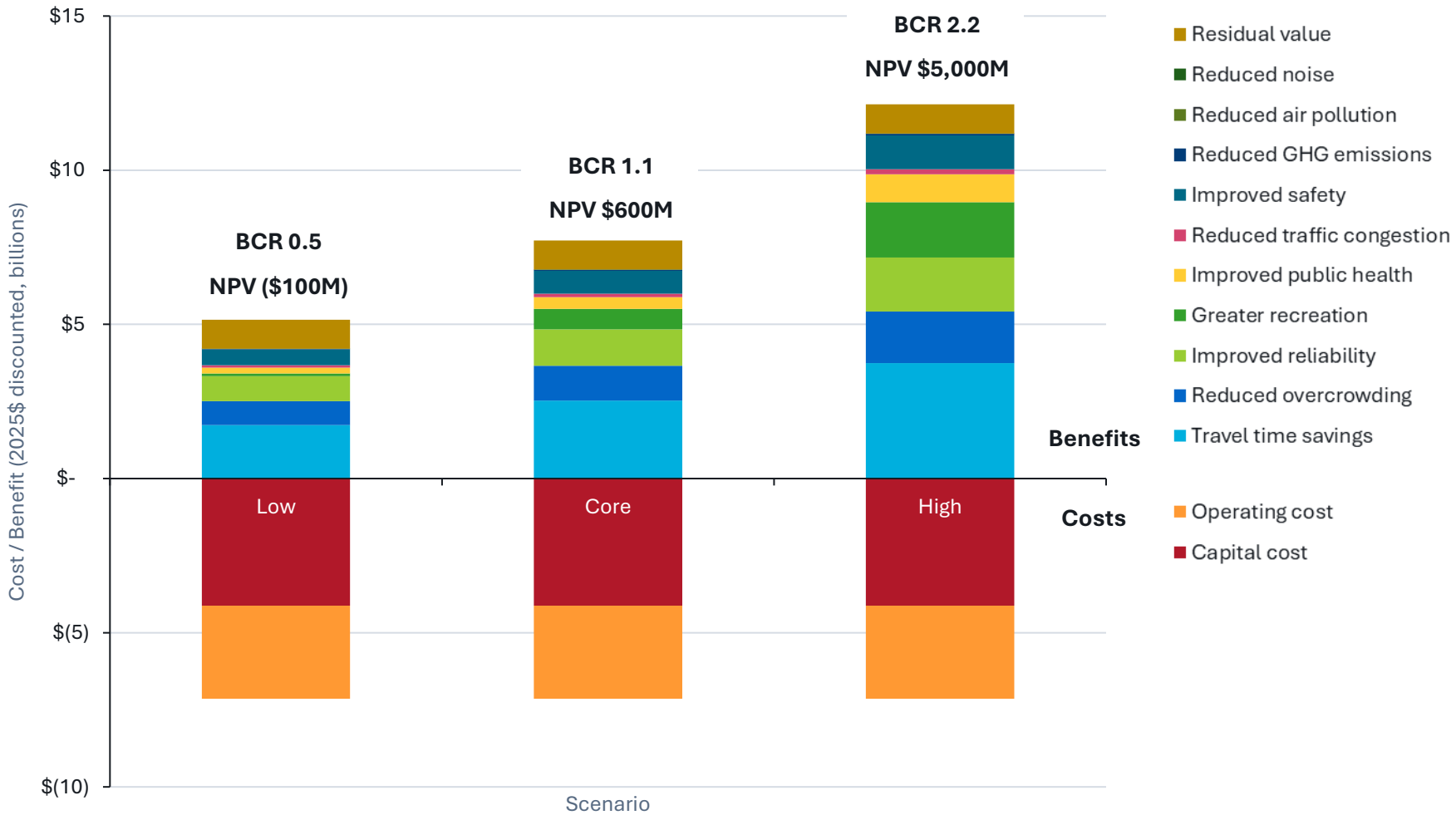
Under the core scenario, QueensLink is estimated to have an NPV of $600m and BCR of 1.1, meaning that investing $1 in QueensLink returns $1.10 of benefit to wider society, demonstrating the projects' cost-effectiveness. The largest share of benefits is those to transit users, including travel time, reliability and reduced overcrowding.

Under the high scenario, the BCR increases to 2.2, meaning that QueensLink could deliver up to $2.20 of benefit to wider society for every $1 of investment.

The range in the BCR at this stage reflects the level of uncertainty in the analysis, and the early stage of development. Further planning work would provide more confidence regarding projects and benefits and enable the BCR to be estimated with greater certainty.

[13] Fully detailed project costs are described in the Financial Case. Costs presented in the Economic Case are discounted, which reflects how goods/benefits today are valued more than goods/benefits in the future.

Figure 11.1: QueensLink Initial Benefit-Cost Analysis, by Scenario



As this is an Initial Business Case, not all benefits are quantified at this stage. For example, the BCA does not reflect benefits such as:

- **Wider economic benefits** – benefits from increased productivity, such as from improved labor market access.
- **Transit oriented development** – benefits from enabling increased development, and the consequent increased transit demand. This includes future development at Resorts World.
- **Streetscape benefits** - benefits from improved public realm for those traveling in and around the corridor.

These would be expected to further improve the BCR and cost-effectiveness of the project. An Enhanced Business Case would seek to narrow the range of uncertainty in the benefits and costs, and through the design process, seek to optimize benefits relative to costs. This would help ensure benefits meet or exceed those under the core scenario and secure project cost-effectiveness.

Financial Case

12 Financial Case Introduction

12.1 Purpose

The role of the **Financial Case** is to set out the financial impacts of the QueensLink project, including the costs to build, operate and maintain the project, estimated revenue from fares, and potential project funding sources. It sets out:

- The **capital costs** to deliver QueensLink, and how these costs could be funded.
- The **operating and maintenance costs** to operate QueensLink.
- The **potential revenue** QueensLink could generate.
- The **estimated subsidy requirement**, in the context of the MTA budget.

Unlike the Economic Case, which is concerned with the cost and benefits to wider society, the Financial Case is concerned with the **net financial impact** on the operating agency. All costs are therefore **undiscounted** and in shown in 2025 dollars, to better contextualize against current agency funding plans, unless stated otherwise. This is distinct from the Economic Case which uses discounted values.

12.2 Stage of Development

This Financial Case forms part of an Initial Business Case for the project. Reflecting this early stage, the focus on the Financial Case is providing an **order-of-magnitude assessment** of the costs, revenues and funding requirements, and an initial identification of funding sources.

The aim is to better understand the financial implications of delivering QueensLink, and demonstrate the project is affordable.

13 Construction and capital funding

13.1 Capital Costs

Capital Costs represent the fixed, one-time costs incurred during the construction of QueensLink.

Based on the estimates undertaken by SYSTRA and TEMS, QueensLink is expected to cost $4.8 billion to construct in **2025 dollars** – if the project was built today – plus an additional $330m for the cost of the train fleet.

The cost of the project in **year-of-expenditure dollars,** or the cost in $ in the early 2030s when it is expected to be built, is estimated at $6.3 billion ($6.7 billion including fleet), assuming future construction inflation of 3.9%.

Figure 13.1 on the next page outlines the individual elements of the capital costs for the three different cost metrics.

13.1.1 Basis for Cost Estimate

The cost estimate for delivering QueensLink synthesizes draws from the work undertaken by QueensLink's consultant TEMS in 2021, which in turn drew from estimates from SYSTRA released by the MTA in 2019. The differences in cost between these two studies primarily reflect the price base and inflation applied to the cost estimate, and the escalation and contingency factors applied.

The estimate in this IBC uses the TEMS report as the basis for capital cost, adjusted as follows:

- Inflated to convert from 2021 (TEMS report) to 2025 (this report) values and then grown to year-of-expenditure terms to reflect forecast construction inflation with project delivery in the early 2030s.
- Addition of $330 million in fleet costs, for an estimated 85 train cars.[14]
- Inclusion of an estimated cost for the park element of the project of $150 million, drawing from prior work undertaken for the QueensWay proposal by the Trust for Public Land.

[14] Further detail set out in the Delivery and Operations Case.

Figure 13.1: QueensLink Capital Costs by Category

13.2 Potential Funding Sources

NYC's transit system is currently funded primarily through the NY state-backed $68.4B MTA 2025–2029 Capital Plan. Congestion pricing provides a second major revenue source, projected to generate $15B for capital improvements, with 80% directed to subways and buses, enabling capital projects, signal modernization, ADA upgrades, and fleet purchases.

NYC parks funding comes mainly from the city operating budget, which allocated 1.2% of its budget to the Department of Parks and Recreation in Fiscal Year 2026. Capital projects to create new parks typically require external sources – for example, a $117M USDOT grant awarded to QueensWay in 2024.

13.2.1 MTA Capital Plan

The MTA Capital Plan is funded by a mix of local, state, federal, and MTA sources, as well as new Payroll Mobility Tax revenues from the region's largest businesses.

The plan includes specific funding allocations to:

- Begin construction of the new **Interborough Express** (IBX),
- Purchase thousands of **new subway cars**,
- Upgrade **maintenance facilities**, and
- Repair **structural deficiencies**.

$880M is set aside exclusively for advancing regional investments, including capacity and connectivity improvements, as well as provisions for changing development patterns. These funding sources empower the MTA to continue evaluating, developing, and delivering transformative capital projects.

13.2.2 Federal funding

The **FTA Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program** provides discretionary funds for heavy rail and other modes, including new projects and extensions of existing networks.

QueensLink is eligible for federal funding as a **"New Starts"** project. The project justification criteria for such projects include[15]:

1. **Mobility improvements** – evaluated as the new linked transit trips generated by the project and, particularly for transit dependent persons.
2. **Environmental benefits** – based on the EPA air quality designation; projects in nonattainment- or maintenance designated areas receive higher scores (Queens County received nonattainment status for 8-hour Ozone NAAQS in 2025).
3. **Congestion relief** – indirectly tied to new linked transit trips and potential cars taken off the road.
4. **Economic development effects** – FTA evaluates impact of project on supportive zoning, transit-supportive policies, and tools to maintain or increase affordable housing in station areas.
5. **Land use** – includes measures of population and employment density, housing affordability, community risk, and essential services near project stations.
6. **Cost-effectiveness** – evaluated on a cost (annual capital and O&M) per total trips on project measure.

Based on preliminary ridership, cost, and economic analyses, QueensLink performs strongly against many of these criteria, especially regarding mobility improvements, congestion relief, land use, and economic development effects. Still, further business case work should explore whether QueensLink can achieve high ratings in the environmental benefits and cost-effectiveness categories.

QueensLink is also eligible for federal funding under USDOT's **Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program**[16] – previously known as RAISE and TIGER. This program's requirements allow project sponsors – including transit agencies – to pursue multi-modal projects more challenging to fund through other grant programs. Applications for BUILD grants can include multiple related eligible project components (for example, potential construction and fleet costs), as well as funds for planning or design.

Other potential funding opportunities include MEGA grants (should they be re-authorized),

[15] Capital Investment Grants Policy Guidance - November 2025

[16] Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program | US Department of Transportation

which are designed for major, often multi-modal, infrastructure projects. Project financing could also be secured through Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) or Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loans, although these would need to be backed against secure, dedicated long-term funding streams.

13.2.3 Local funding

Aside from state and federal funding, NYC can enact the **mayor's power of the purse**[17]. A 2016 NYS law enables the mayor to capture land value created by new MTA projects through a "split-rate land value tax," allowing the city to raise funds (as long as MTA accepts the city's money) without a new state law.

The first phase of the Second Avenue Subway project created over $7 billion in private land value, although this was not captured by the power of the purse. QueensLink is in a lower-density area and may not generate as much value. Still, this funding mechanism presents an opportunity for QueensLink to be funded more directly by local sources.

[17] *Vital City,* "A Housing Roadmap for New York's Next Mayor. Alex Armlovich (November 6, 2025). Retrieved from: **Vital City | A Housing Roadmap for New York's Next Mayor**

14 Day-to-Day Operations

14.1 Operating and Maintenance Costs

Operating and Maintenance Costs represent the ongoing costs required to operate the investment and provide day-to-day maintenance, including all labor and materials.

Ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) of QueensLink is estimated to cost approximately $200 to $270 million per year—the vast majority of which is attributable to the transit service.

14.1.1 Transit Service Operating Costs

The NYC Subway is a mature system. QueensLink is expected to be operated in line with existing Subway practice.

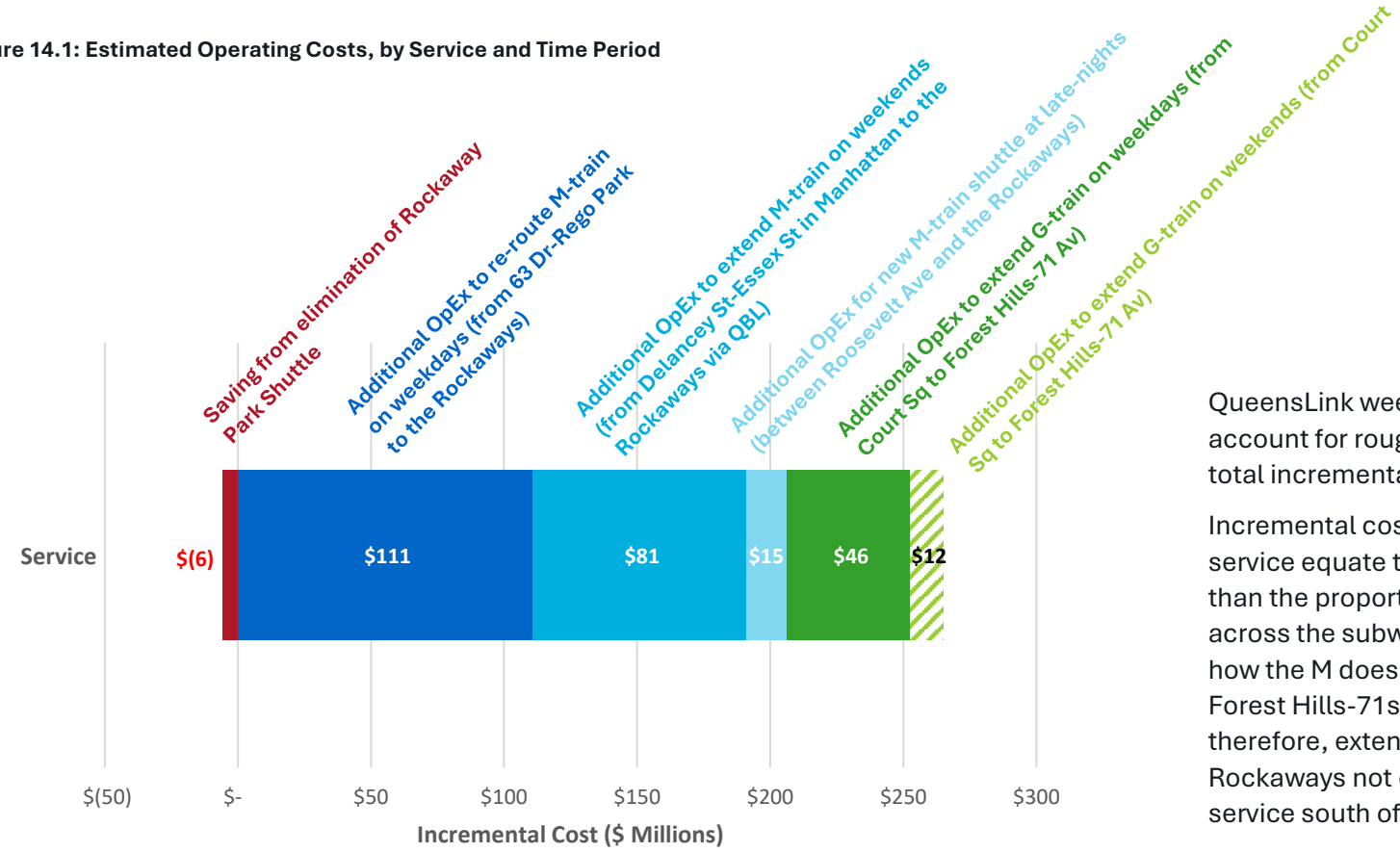
The USDOT Federal Transit Administration (FTA) agency profile of MTA NYCT indicates that, in 2024, each NYC heavy rail vehicle revenue-mile (VRM) costs $18.63 (2024$) to operate, inclusive of routine maintenance and administrative costs.

Information regarding trip times and frequencies for each amended line has been used to estimate total change in subway vehicle miles and the total fleet requirement. This includes the extension of M and G lines, as well as reduction in Rockaway Park Shuttle service.

As such, this indicates that **the transit component of the project would cost circa $200M to $265M to operate in 2025**, depending on the extent to which service is expanded outside of peak commuting hours.

Figure 14.1 shows QueensLink's incremental impact on O&M costs, broken down by route and operating pattern. This chart also represents incremental vehicle revenue miles for each service, as operating cost is directly proportional to VRM using this approach.

Figure 14.1: Estimated Operating Costs, by Service and Time Period



QueensLink weekday service extensions account for roughly 60% ($157 million) of total incremental operating costs.

Incremental costs associated with weekend service equate to 35% of the total, higher than the proportion of weekend service miles across the subway as a whole. This reflects how the M does not currently operate to Forest Hills-71st Ave at weekends, and therefore, extending the M through to the Rockaways not only involves extending the service south of 63 Dr-Rego Park but

Source: Steer Analysis

additionally extending it through most of Midtown Manhattan and Northern Queens[18].

This illustrates the need to consider how best QueensLink should be served at weekends (and late evenings) to minimize incremental MTA operating costs. For example, extending the G at weekends to Forest Hills-71st Ave would clearly benefit passengers, it may not be justified against its operating costs. Future business case work would seek to more fully optimize service patterns.

Extending the weekend G-train to Forest Hills is shown as dashed in the figure, reflecting how neither the benefits nor costs of extending the weekend service are included in the Economic Case BCA.

14.1.2 Park Operating Costs

Park O&M costs are envisaged to be less than $5M annually, less than 1% of the entire annual NYC parks budget. These costs are on par with those of similar newly developed city parks - in 2011, operating costs for the High Line linear park came to $3 million annually[19].

14.1.3 Renewal and Lifecycle Costs

Average maintenance and lifecycle costs will vary by track age and level of service. The operating expense per VRM metric discussed above includes provision for basic regular maintenance. Long-term renewal and lifecycle costs typically require procurement of additional, project-specific capital funds.

The cost estimates in this Financial Case do not include any allowance for long-term renewal costs, reflecting how large renewal of QueensLink infrastructure will not be required within the first 30 years of operation.

[18] Note that, due to limitations of the STOPS model, the BCA analysis does not capture the **benefits** associated with the weekend extension of the M through Midtown Manhattan and Northern Queens, and **only** the benefit of running along the QueensLink corridor. For consistency, the BCA does not therefore include a) the costs of extending the weekend service through Midtown Manhattan and Northern Queens – only that of extending the M through the costs of re-routing from 63 Dr-Rego Park to the Rockaways; b)

[19] **$20 Million Gift to High Line Park - The New York Times**

14.2 Revenues

As described in the Strategic Case, QueensLink is expected to generate a net increase of 18,500 daily or **5.9 million annual transit trips**.

This change in ridership generates an estimated $15 million in annual passenger revenues, assuming average fare revenue per passenger trip in line with reported subway revenues[20] and ridership[21] of $2.42 in 2024 (inflated to $2.48 in 2025 dollars). This would grow annually, in line with ridership and/or fare increases.

$15 million

in annual passenger revenues generated by QueensLink infrastructure and services

14.3 Operating Funding Requirement

The operating costs minus expected revenue results in the total annual funding requirement. This is estimated at **approximately $245M (transit and park) annually.**

Annual funding requirements may vary based on the service concept ultimately selected for the QueensLink project. The Delivery Case will discuss further potential options for service changes along QueensLink, QBL, and the Rockaway Line, including alternative services for weekend and late-night operations.

For context, 2024 NYCT heavy rail operating costs amounted to $6.7B (in 2025 dollars). The operating funding requirement represents a 4% increase in total operating costs, equivalent to roughly 1-2 years of inflation (average consumer inflation between 2020-2025 was 4.6%). This order of magnitude of cost could be accommodated within MTA budget planning across the project timescale.

[20] FTA 2024 Annual Agency Profile – MTA New York City Transit

[21] MTA - **Subway and bus ridership for 2024**

Delivery and Operations Case

15 Delivery and Operations Case Introduction

15.1 Purpose

The role of the **Delivery and Operations Case** is to outline how QueensLink would be successfully delivered and operated, and that key risks can be managed. It sets out:

- **Operations**: The different ways that QueensLink could be operated, including changes to the M, G and/or other subway services.
- **Delivery**: How the project could be procured and constructed, in line with other established MTA projects.
- **Potential Challenges**: the potential risks and challenges associated with delivering QueensLink, such as environmental, right-of-way and direct and indirect displacement.
- **Schedule and Next Steps:** the broad pathway to delivering QueensLink and the next steps for the project.

15.2 Stage of Development

Reflecting the stage of the project, the Delivery and Operations Case is therefore high-level in nature, with emphasis on an initial assessment of risks and implementation requirements.

Subsequent business cases would include a more detailed review of how the project should be delivered in practice, such as a review of different procurement programs.

16 Operations

This section outlines how QueensLink could be **operated in practice**, involving changes to the M, G and/or other subway services

16.1 Introduction

Fundamentally, the QueensLink project includes the infrastructure required to operate subway service from 63 Dr - Rego Park on the Queens Boulevard Line (QBL) to the Rockaway Line, including:

- **Four new subway stations**, at:
  - Metropolitan Av-Parkside
  - Jamaica Av-104 St
  - Atlantic Av-Woodhaven
  - Liberty Av-Rockaway Blvd
- **New dual-track alignment** via:
  - (1) underground tunnel between 63 Dr-Rego Park and Metropolitan Av.
  - (2) surface, embankment, and viaduct sections between Metropolitan Av and Liberty Av.
- **A linear park** that spans most of the new alignment, with several access points to/from the surrounding neighborhood.

This infrastructure could enable a broad range of service options to be operated, involving changes to the M, R, G and/or new (or re-instated) services. Since QueensLink overcomes specific existing service constraints (notably the limited turnaround capacity at Forest Hills-71st Ave), it also enables a wider expansion of subway service along the QBL and/or through Manhattan.

This section discusses the different service concepts identified that QueensLink infrastructure could support, the service assumed within this IBC, and the implications for the NYC Subway network as a whole.

16.2 Assumed Service: 6th Ave M Extension

This IBC assumes, for the purposes of the benefit and cost assessment, that QueensLink is predominately served by the M-train, with the following core changes to existing subway service on **weekdays**:

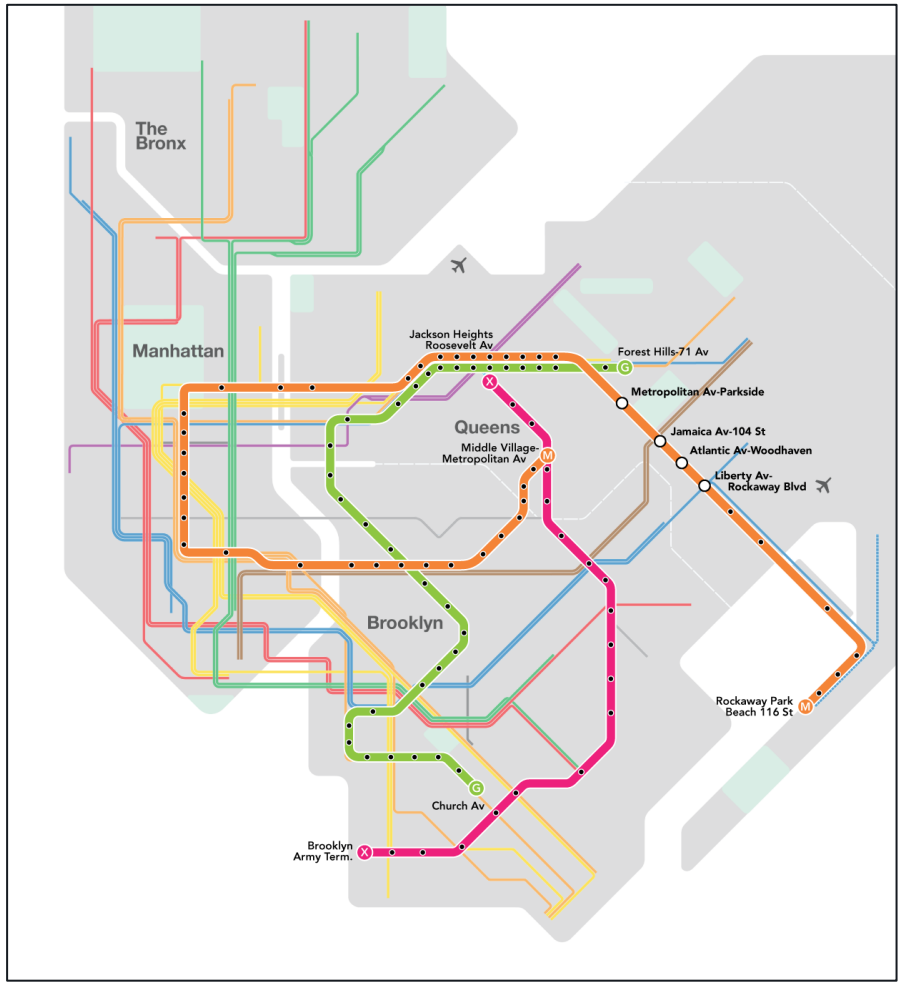
- Re-routing the **6th Ave Local M**-train from the current terminus at Forest Hills-71 Av to Rockaway Park (8 TPH).
- Extending the **Crosstown G**-train from Court Square to Forest Hills-71 Av (8 TPH).
- The **replacement** of the current Rockaway Shuttle (S) service with the extended M.

Combined, on weekdays, this would mean:

- 8 TPH serving the QueensLink corridor in each direction.
- An additional 7.5 TPH on the QBL compared to today – a circa 45% increase in service.

Other service patterns could operate during weekends and late nights, when the level of service on the QBL is reduced and the existing M-train does not operate along the QBL.

Figure 16.1: 6th Ave M Extension



Source: NYU Ridership Study

Service During Weekends

Today, during **weekends**, the M does not operate along the QBL and only operates between Middle Village and Delancey St-Essex St in Manhattan. Local service along the QBL is entirely provided by the R.

Extending the M to the Rockaway Park via the QBL, and the G to Forest Hills-71 Av in line with the service at weekdays would therefore represent an effective tripling of weekend service along the QBL—from one line today (R) to three with QueensLink (R, M and G).

Alternatively, extending **only** the M and **not** the G at weekends could reduce the increased operating costs of QueensLink and better match weekend demand. The IBC benefit and cost assessment assumes the latter, with M operating to Rockaway Park and G to Court Sq (as existing) during weekends. This study does not preclude the ability for planners to expand weekend service in the future if required.

Late-Night Service

During **late nights**, the M does not operate to/from Manhattan, only running between Middle Village and Myrtle Av in Brooklyn. The R also does not operate on the QBL and only runs between Bay Ridge-95 St in Brooklyn and Whitehall St-South Ferry in Lower Manhattan. Local service on the QBL is provided entirely by the F and E.

This poses the question of how best to serve QueensLink during the late nights. Serving QueensLink with the M would involve extending the M through the entirety of Manhattan and the QBL, significantly improving late night frequencies on both the QBL and the 6th Ave Local through Manhattan but incurring significant additional operating cost.

Alternatively, the G could be extended *during late nights only* along the QBL and the QueensLink corridor to Rockaway Park. This would reduce operating costs but would lead to additional complexity since stations on the QueensLink corridor and the Rockaways would be served by different trains during these times.

Lastly, trains could serve the QueensLink corridor and the Rockaways as a shuttle service, if a suitable turnaround could be identified at a station on the QBL. This could include:

- At Roosevelt Ave, which provides a transfer to the 7 and IBX once that is operational. This option would face some operational constraints.
- At 63rd Dr-Rego Park, which would require an additional track on the Manhattan-bound side of the station.

Subsequent business case stages would assess different levels of service during these times, balancing operational costs and complexity with benefits for riders.

16.3 Alternative Service Concepts

Several alternative service concepts were considered. These involve extending different services to the QueensLink corridor than the M, providing service from the Rockaways and the new QueensLink stations to a different set of stations in Manhattan or Brooklyn.

8th Ave H (New Service)

This concept would introduce a new subway service **(the H)** from World Trade Center to Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St via the 8th Ave Express trunk in Manhattan.

In addition to the current M and R, the H would also operate on the QBL. No other services would change, and the M and R would retain their current termini at Forest Hills-71st Ave and Court Sq. All trains on the QBL would run to/from Manhattan.

The H would supplement A trains along 8th Ave Express in Manhattan, and likely be nested into E operations.

6th Ave V (New Service)

This concept would restore and extend a route **(the V)** between Manhattan and Queens that historically operated from 2001 to 2010.

The new V would operate from LES-2 Av to Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St via the 6th Ave Local trunk in Manhattan.

In addition to the current M and R, the V would also operate on the QBL. No other services would change, and the M and H would retain their current termini at Forest Hills-71st Ave and Court Sq. All trains on the QBL would run to/from Manhattan.

Crosstown G Extension

This concept would extend the G into Queens, from the current terminal at Court Sq to Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St, via the QBL and the QueensLink corridor.

In addition to the current M and R, the G would also operate on the QBL. No other services would change, and the M would retain its current termini at Forest Hills-71st Ave.

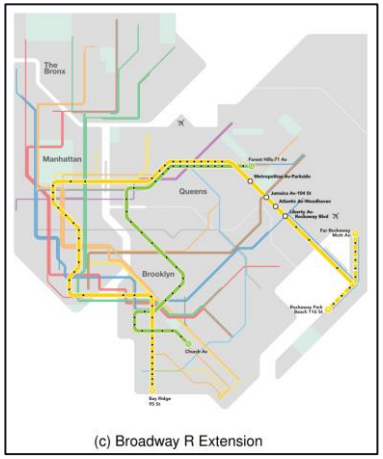
No trains from the new QueensLink stations would directly serve Manhattan.

Broadway R Extension

This concept would extend the R to Rockaway Park-Beach 116 St, via the QBL and the QueensLink corridor, and by alleviating the turnaround constraint at Forest Hills-71st Ave, also enable extending the G to Forest Hills.

In addition to the current M and R, the G would also operate on the QBL. No other services would change, and the M would retain its current termini at Forest Hills-71st Ave and Court Sq.

This would create a challenging route to operate, with one of the longest run times of any subway service, and the potential for cascading delays due to interlining.



(c) Broadway R Extension

16.4 Concept Evaluation

Each service concept has distinct strengths, weaknesses and trade-offs. These include the level of service provided to Manhattan versus Brooklyn, both from QBL and the four new QueensLink stations, and specific operational and reliability challenges associated with different service patterns.

Table 16.1 summarizes some of the key differences between each of the concepts.

Ridership and benefits also form an important factor for determining the preferred service plan for QueensLink. However, the current ridership modeling is not sufficiently comprehensive to effectively compare ridership between the concepts. Future work would seek to better understand how ridership and benefits compare between the concepts, prior to any decision regarding how QueensLink would operate in practice.

Table 16.1: Service Concepts Considered During IBC stage

		6th Ave M	8th Ave H	6th Ave V	Crosstown G	Broadway R
QueensLink <> Manhattan service	Which Manhattan trunk line would trains from QueensLink serve?	**6th Ave Local**	**8th Ave Express**	**8th Ave Express**	**Trains serving QL stations would not serve Manhattan**	**Broadway Local**
QBL <> Brooklyn service	Would trains from the QBL directly serve Brooklyn (via an extended G?)	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Frequency on the QueensLink corridor	What is the frequency (in TPH) at the new QueensLink stations?	**8 TPH**	**8 TPH**	**7-8 TPH**	**8 TPH**	**8-9 TPH**
Frequency on the Queens Boulevard Line	What is the frequency (in TPH) on the QBL?	**24 TPH**	**24 TPH**	**23 - 24 TPH**	**24 TPH**	**24 TPH**
Compatibility with F/M swap*	Can the F and M retain their current more optimum routes between Manhattan and Queens?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓
Reliability risk	How challenging would the amended services be to operate reliably?	✓ Extension of existing M+G; no wider network changes	? New service adds operational complexity	? New service adds operational complexity	✓ Extension of existing G; no wider network changes	? Lengths an already-complex line with significant operational challenges

* Some concepts may not be feasible without 'undoing' the recently implemented F/M swap and therefore require wider changes to other services and additional complexity to introduce.

Rationale for Selection of 6th Ave M

Reflecting the assessment, the 6th Ave M was selected for the IBC as it:

- **Directly serves Manhattan** (rather than Brooklyn) from the QueensLink corridor and the Rockaways, better reflecting travel demand.
- **Appropriately balances local service** on the QBL between Manhattan (with the R and M) and Brooklyn (with the G).
- **Is operationally simple**, with no need to amend other services elsewhere on the network and minimizes potential for additional network delay.
- **Is most consistent with QueensLink's current advocacy efforts** and represents the most intuitive service pattern.

It should be highlighted that this would be reviewed at a subsequent business case stage, after more comprehensive ridership modeling and an operational assessment. The assumption that QueensLink would operate with an expanded M service is a **planning assumption for the purposes of the IBC only**.

16.5 Operational Requirements

Fleet Requirement

Early operating assessment of 6th Ave M suggests it would require circa 85 cars to operate, assuming:

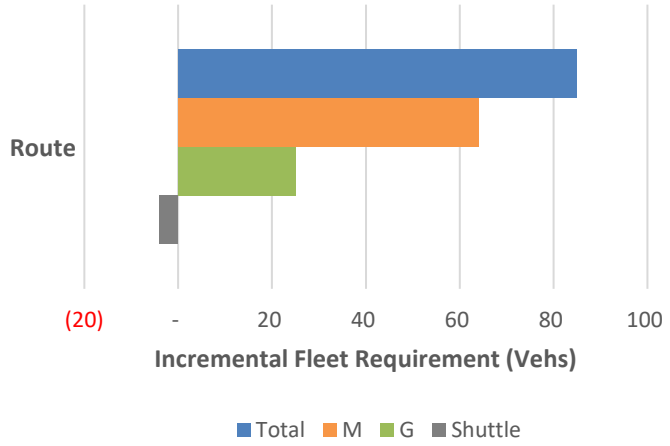
- 8-car operation of the M
- 5-car operation of the G
- An allowance for spares

This would represent a modest increase of circa 1.5% compared to the 2024 subway fleet of ~5,400 vehicles operating in maximum service (VOMS).

Figure 16.2 shows the fleet requirement based on the number of vehicles needed to provide service during weekday peak periods. The total fleet requirement of **85 additional cars** (all B-Division) includes:

- M: 8 additional 8-car sets
- G: 5 additional 5-car sets
- 2 fewer 2-car sets for the Rockaway Park Shuttle

Figure 16.2: Fleet Requirement by Route



Train Storage

M-trains are currently stored at Fresh Pond Yard and East New York Yard and maintained at East New York Yard.

Some weekday M-trains are also stored (but not maintained) at Jamaica Yard, which suffers from overcrowding, with some trains stored along the QBL express tracks during off peak periods. Planned expansion of Jamaica Yard could alleviate this and provide storage opportunities for the additional fleet requirement.

Additionally, there is an 8-track yard at Rockaway Park for A-trains, which could be available to support storing the expanded M fleet.

A subsequent business case stage would further explore how the expanded fleet could be stored and maintained, alongside wider NYC subway operations.

17 Delivery

This section outlines how QueensLink could be delivered and operated by the MTA in partnership with local entities

17.1 Background

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) delivers billion-dollar projects, including the Second Avenue Subway, East Side Access, Penn Station Access, and major signal modernization programs, through a highly structured, centralized delivery model designed to manage scale, complexity, and risk.

These projects are among the largest and most technically challenging infrastructure investments in North America. This is testament to the maturity of the MTA as an organization capable of successfully delivering such projects.

The MTA would be the clear body to deliver the transit component of QueensLink, and it is expected that the project would be delivered alongside other subway capital projects using similar delivery approaches and mechanisms. While large, the scale of QueensLink (in both cost and complexity) is well within the remit of the MTA delivery functions.

17.2 MTA Strategic Planning and Capital Programming

Major capital projects under development are embedded within the MTA's **five-year Capital Program**, which sets priorities and funding allocations across the agency. Delivery of projects at this scale are typically driven by long-term capacity constraints, network resilience needs, regulatory or accessibility mandates, and strategic growth objectives. They are developed over multiple capital program cycles and must be approved by the **MTA Board** and the **New York State Capital Program Review Board (CPRB)**.

Because of their size and visibility, projects such as QueensLink are subject to enhanced scrutiny on business case, affordability, deliverability, and risk exposure. Early planning focuses heavily on scope definition, environmental review and funding. This would be the primary focus of the next stage of planning work for QueensLink.

17.3 Procurement and Delivery

MTA Construction & Development (C&D) is the body responsible for planning, renewing and expanding the MTA's extensive network of transportation infrastructure.

QueensLink would be expected to be delivered through C&D, providing project leadership and standardized procurement and contract management, project controls, quality, safety, and technical assurance.

Different procurement or delivery models could be suitable for the QueensLink project. To manage scale and complexity, the MTA increasingly uses **alternative delivery models** for mega-projects, including:

- **Design–Build (DB)** and **Progressive Design–Build** to integrate design and construction and reduce interface risk.
- **Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR)** for projects requiring early contractor involvement.
- Selective use of **Public–Private Partnerships (P3)** where risk transfer and innovation can be achieved.

Each of these models has specific strengths, weaknesses and trade-offs. Further work would assess which is most applicable to the QueensLink project.

17.4 Partner Engagement

Project partners, from Queens residents and businesses to City of New York and Federal Agencies, play a critical role throughout the development of the project. Engaging diverse groups sufficiently early in the process helps ensure that the project best addresses actual community needs and maximizes its long-term benefits.

Initial engagement efforts will most likely focus on close co-ordination with the MTA, regarding the technical elements of the project and consideration in the future MTA Needs Assessment. Wider engagement with the community would likely occur during the pre-planning phase, as set out in Section 21.

18 Potential Challenges

This section describes the **potential challenges** that QueensLink will face during the development and construction of the project

18.1 Overview

Large projects such as QueensLink inevitably face potential challenges to delivery. This section summarizes the core barriers and considerations facing the project at this stage, to support planning efforts and identify key mitigations as required.

Table 18.1: Initial Challenge Assessment for QueensLink

Challenge	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Corridor Condition				
Poor condition of current viaduct and structures	Many existing structures along the former Rockaway Beach Branch, including bridges, embankments and the viaduct south of 97th Ave, are in a poor state of repair and have been neglected since the line closed. It is unclear whether they can be renewed or will need to be replaced.	High	Medium	Initial cost estimate presented in the IBC assumes full replacement of bridges and structures. Future work would include full structural assessments to evaluate conditions of structures. Community engagement can mitigate risks from disruption during the renewal or replacement of such structures.
Tunnelling and ground conditions	No technical work has been undertaken to date on the proposed tunnel between the QBL and Metropolitan Ave. The technical and engineering challenges of tunnelling in this area have not been fully explored.	High	High	Early geotechnical investigations should be undertaken to assess current conditions. The IBC cost estimate already assumes a conservative allowance for complex tunnelling. As design progresses, a detailed tunnelling strategy would be developed to mitigate engineering and community risks.
Contaminated land	Environmental challenges related to historic rail use and illegal dumping on project suite.	Medium	Medium	Planning process should include Phase I/II environmental investigations and remediation allowances.
Land and Right of Way (ROW)				
Additional land acquisition	Additional land is required to deliver the project, over and above the existing disused corridor owned by the City of New York. This could include land required to facilitate modern ADA-compliant stations and construction staging (such as a TBM pit).	High	Medium	Future design development should refine station footprints, construction staging areas, and emergency access requirements to minimize additional land needs. Early engagement with affected landowners and coordination with NYC agencies can reduce acquisition risk. Detailed parcel-level assessments will be required during environmental review.
Existing land uses and encroachment	Since closure, some of the right-of-way has been repurposed, for example with auto and repair businesses under the viaduct south of	High	Medium	A relocation strategy should be developed to identify temporary or permanent accommodation for affected businesses. Coordination with NYCEDC and local leaders can

Challenge	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
onto former ROW	97th Ave and bus storage at 95th Ave and 100th St. These businesses may be required to relocate, either permanently or temporarily, as a result of the project.			reduce economic and community impacts. Construction sequencing can be optimized to minimize downtime for businesses operating beneath or adjacent to corridor structures.
Environmental clearance	Several plots or properties along the abandoned RBB and proposed tunnel path are publicly owned parks or serve as public space and may require Section 4(f) analyses during NEPA process.	Medium	Medium	The environmental review process should include early coordination with federal agencies on potential Section 4(f) use, as well as comprehensive alternatives analyses to demonstrate avoidance and minimization. Engagement with parks agencies and local community groups will help identify context-sensitive design solutions that reduce adverse impacts.
Adjacent property underpinning	Buildings close to alignment, including public buildings, may require protection during construction. This challenge also applies to local roads parallel to or intersecting with the corridor structure.	Medium	High	Initial cost estimate presented in the IBC assumes provision for condition surveys and protection works in early construction period. Future work would identify relevant properties and include specific plans for underpinning them.
Utility company objections	Reluctance of utility providers to relocate assets crossing or running alongside the project corridor.	Medium	Medium	Agreements and third-party interfaces with utility providers should be set out during planning and engineering process. This could include permanent or temporary measures.
Community & Political Challenges				
Competing agency priorities	The MTA has identified several transit expansion projects in their 20-Year Needs Assessment, some of which are seen as higher priority than QueensLink. The success of QueensLink depends on the agency's ability to prioritize it alongside other subway, bus, and commuter rail projects.	High	High	Continuous engagement with MTA planning and capital program teams would be needed as the QueensLink project progresses. Further analysis to demonstrate cost-effectiveness, ridership and wider benefits would help to demonstrate the project's strengths versus comparable projects.

Challenge	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Lack of consensus on future of corridor	Among local community members and advocacy groups, there is ongoing competition and tension with the alternate QueensWay proposal. This has led to lack of consensus about whether the corridor should be used as a park only or a joint park-transit asset. Early design and construction of QueensWay without full consideration of a rail element could make incorporating transit more challenging in the future.	High	High	A structured engagement program coordinated with both QueensLink and QueensWay advocates should be deployed to evaluate corridor needs, emphasize the compatibility of rail and park elements, and ensure design progression does not preclude multimodal options. Transparent communication and shared-benefit framing can reduce polarization.
Local community concerns	Residents, business owners, and workers may be concerned with potential increased noise, decreased privacy, and impact on property values.	Medium	Medium	QueensLink aims to deliver high-quality transit to support local communities. Early outreach should be conducted with neighbors to identify specific concerns so that mitigations such as noise/privacy screens and landscaping elements can be included in project design. Transparent communications that encourage residents to participate in the planning process can ensure a more empowered and informed local user base.
Disruption during construction	A highly constrained corridor can result in significant disruption to residents, businesses, and travelers/commuters during construction.	High	Medium	Construction can be appropriately phased to minimize impact on individual households, businesses, or institutions (i.e., a single section should only be under construction for a portion of the total project delivery period).
Population displacement	Potential for direct displacement (from land acquisition and demolition) and indirect displacement (increased housing costs and demand leading to gentrification) because of the project.	Low	Medium	Further design refinement should minimize direct property impacts and avoid residential displacement wherever possible. Coordination with NYC housing agencies can help anticipate and mitigate indirect displacement. Transit-oriented development can also support more density to offset increased housing demand.

Challenge	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Design and Scope Challenges				
Interface complexity	Significant design complexity from proximity between the new subway line, linear park and existing land-uses and infrastructure.	Medium	Medium	Potential interfaces would be actively explored during the design phase with the view to identifying and resolving conflicts early. Complex project interfaces are common for comparable projects in NYC.
ADA compliance challenges	Given the age and state of repair of station bodies along the abandoned RBB viaduct, it may be challenging to ensure ADA-compliant designs at disused, space-constrained stations.	Medium	High	Initial cost estimate presented in the IBC assumes fully accessible station design and construction.
Scope creep	Partner or political pressure to add stations, park features, or urban design elements which impose significant additional cost or complexity to the project.	Medium	Medium	A formalized scope control process, including stage-gate reviews, should be established to evaluate partner-requested features against cost, schedule, and operational impacts. Clear communication of project objectives can help resist pressure for additive scope.
Operational Challenges				
Day-to-day operating feasibility	Additional QueensLink service results in additional complexity to the subway network, potentially reducing reliability of newly interlined services. The proposed changes also may require modifications to existing established routes and services.	Medium	High	Operational modelling should be undertaken to evaluate reliability impacts of new interlined services. Early coordination with NYC Transit operations planners can identify timetable strategies, crew constraints, and service patterns that minimize adverse impacts.
Yard storage	The MTA continues to explore solutions to overutilized yards, especially for B Division lines. It is possible that NYCT has insufficient yard capacity to accommodate the increased	Medium	Medium	Future operational planning should include analysis of yard capacity, storage patterns, and potential yard expansion or reconfiguration options. Provisions for additional fleet

Challenge	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
	fleet required to operate QueensLink. Also, changes in service could lead to less efficient use of yard space for A/M-trains at Rockaway Park.			resulting from QueensLink should be incorporated in the project's operational strategy.
Interlining	The project would introduce additional interlining to the Rockaway and Queens Blvd Lines, with M sharing track for a portion of the Rockaway line and G sharing tracks with local services on the QBL.	Medium	Medium	Service planning tools should be used to test interlining scenarios, including impacts on dwell times, junction conflicts, and headway reliability. Ongoing design refinements like signal upgrades and revised service plans may help reduce operational stress.
Cost and Funding Challenges				
Underestimated capital cost	The capital cost estimate for QueensLink may be understated due to multiple sources of early-stage uncertainty.	Medium	High	The IBC incorporates industry-standard allowances for civil works, environmental remediation, and property and utility impacts. As the project advances, detailed surveys, geotechnical investigations, and early contractor involvement should be used to refine cost estimates and reduce uncertainty.
Funding uncertainty	Securing full funding may be challenging due to competition for grants and reliance on state funds. Without a clearly defined multi-year funding strategy, project advancement could be slowed or require phased delivery.	High	High	Developing a diversified funding strategy will be essential to success of the program. Early conversations with funding agencies can position QueensLink competitively for programs such as New Starts.
Inflation & market pressure	QueensLink faces financial exposure from high regional inflation, supply chain unpredictability, and constrained capacity.	High	Medium	Cost escalation assumptions should be regularly updated using current NYC market indices. Strategic procurement packaging and early contractor engagement may help mitigate exposure to future cost inflation.

Challenge	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Operating cost impact	Incremental operating and maintenance costs associated with QueensLink may create long-term budget pressure for the MTA. If farebox revenue, ridership recovery, or dedicated subsidies do not materialize at projected levels, the MTA may face challenges sustaining new service.	Medium	Medium	The IBC discusses how incremental O&M costs are fundable in the context of agency-wide expenses. Further efficiencies can be generated through restructuring bus routes that become redundant in the context of QueensLink to help offset incremental costs.

19 Project Schedule and Next Steps

This section outlines the broad timescale to delivering the QueensLink project and the key next steps

19.1 Project Schedule

Table 19.1 provides a high-level overview of key steps for the project, from today through planning, construction and operation.

Table 19.1: Project Schedule

Institutional Alignment	Pre-Planning	Preliminary Design	Final Design & Procurement	Construction	Testing & Opening
1	2	3	4	5	6
Establish a unified foundation for future project development • **Advocate and align strategy:** Continue coordination with MTA, elected officials, and stakeholders to refine project scope, validate public benefits, and align to systemwide priorities • **Demonstrate need and feasibility**: Use IBC outputs to support case for further study • **Continue to engage in conversations** with the community • **Secure inclusion in 2030-2034 MTA Capital Plan**	**Establish the baseline technical, operational, and financial groundwork** • **Refine project scope and preferred concept** • **Identify early risks and challenges**: Environmental, property, structural, and operational • **Develop preliminary funding strategy** • **Prepare for environmental review and design:** Identify resources and survey/data needs	**Advance through environmental review and early engineering** • **Undertake NEPA/SEQR environmental review** • **Conduct preliminary engineering (PE),** advancing corridor design to ~10-30% completion • **Select a preferred alternative:** Integrate findings from engineering and environmental review • **Refine capital cost range and scheduling**	**Complete technical design and prepare the project for construction** • **Final Design (FD): Advance engineering to near-final detail,** including civil works, architecture, track, power, communications, signals, drainage, and structural rehabilitation • **Acquire necessary approvals:** right-of-way, environmental permits, and third-party coordination • **Develop and launch procurement strategy**	**Deliver major civil, structural, and systems work along the corridor** • **Prepare site:** Undertake utility work, environmental remediation, and demolition • **Construct or rehabilitate** structures and stations and install major systems • **Maintain transparent communication** and coordinate mitigation for construction impacts	**Complete all systems integration, operations testing, and bring the project into service** • **Conduct pre-revenue operations:** trial-running, training, and safety certification • **Full opening of the QueensLink corridor**

19.2 Scope for Future Business Case

The QueensLink project is at an early stage. A future Enhanced Business Case should focus on the following three areas as priorities, to directly support inclusion in the next MTA Capital Plan:

- **Revised cost assessment** – the current assessment undertaken by SYSTRA/TEMS, while fit for the IBC stage, is outdated and should be updated to provide greater confidence in the project costs and key risks. The tunneled section north of Metropolitan Ave should be a key area of focus.
- **Benefit assessment** – further modeling of the project using the New York City Transit Demand Forecasting Model (TDFM), typically used for MTA transit projects, would provide greater confidence to the ridership and benefit assessment. Further work could also better quantify the projects' wider economic benefits, particularly for supporting housing delivery.
- **Operational analysis** – no detailed operating analysis of the project has been undertaken to date. Further work should include undertaking a comprehensive operating assessment (scheduling / operational modeling of fit with other subway services), a detailed review of yard capacity and options for expansion, and a review of service concepts including during weekend and late evening periods.

Control Information

Prepared by

Steer
55 Washington St, Suite 504
Brooklyn, NY 11201
USA
+1 (646) 989 9945
www.steergroup.com

Prepared for

QueensLink

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Author/originator

Tom Leach

Reviewer/approver

Gabor Debreczeni

Other contributors

Noah Larson
Gabor Debreczeni
Matt Ciborowski
Monet Shibata
Philippa Gallagher

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