QueensLink

Connecting Communities with Rails & Trails

## I. NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### A. Purpose

The purpose of this RFP is to solicit proposals from qualified firms for the creation of a community engagement plan, to develop a long-range community engagement plan and related organizing activities as related to the QueensLink project and surrounding neighborhoods.The outcome of this project should help guide public activities for QueensLink for the foreseeable future as our organization continues to build grassroots support for the rail reactivation.

Specifically, this project will build off ideas and activities generated through a previously administered Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) process and the QueensLink team's extensive work with partners and stakeholders in Queens and beyond. A successful proposal should aim to build a plan to sustain and deliver efforts to build support from decision-makers and people who would benefit from QueensLink during the duration of planning, construction, and beyond. We are seeking a mix of creative and practical solutions.

A significant expectation for this RFP is to lead coordination efforts among QueensLink's *other* RFPs as part of our FHWA Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) program, explored in more detail below. This includes helping our selected firms disseminate findings to specific and general audiences. As such, we expect responses to this RFP to address how their firm or partnership will approach this challenge.

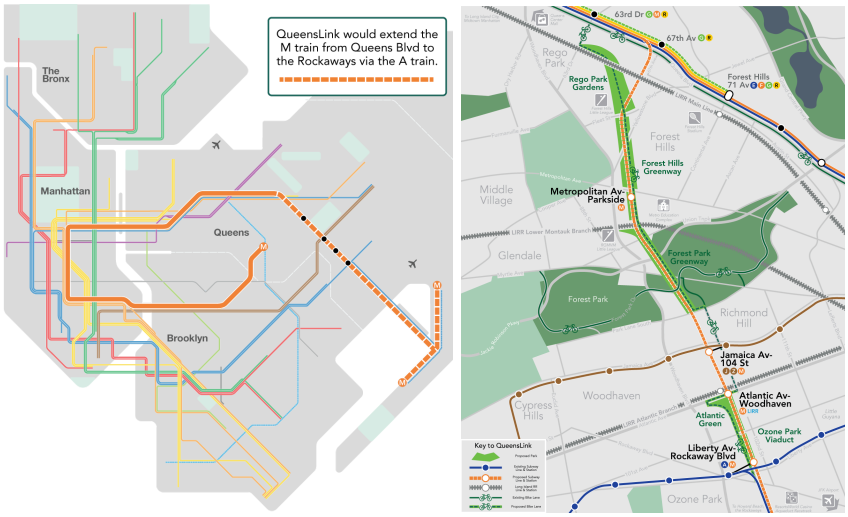
***QueensRail Corporation***

QueensRail Corporation is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created in 2015 to advocate for the reintroduction of rail transit on the abandoned Rockaway Beach Branch (RBB) in the New York City borough of Queens. In 2019, the name "QueensLink" was adopted to better describe the combined rails AND trails vision for the RBB corridor. For the purposes of this RFP, all references to "QueensRail Corp." and "QueensLink" refer to the same entity.

***QueensLink Project Background***

QueensLink

Connecting Communities with Rails & Trails




QueensLink's goal is to reactivate the abandoned RBB as part of New York City's subway network, bringing four new stations to critical transit deserts and struggling commercial corridors. The QueensLink vision will also provide bicycle trails, walking paths, and park space on the remaining 33 acres of land in the right-of-way. In addition to reconnecting north and south Queens with the M train, the QueensLink project includes bringing the G train back to Forest Hills.

QueensLink is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a new backbone for sustainable transportation and recreation within New York City.

In early 2026, QueensLink released an Initial Business Case (IBC) study, authored by the Steer Group, solidifying the socioeconomic value the rail reactivation would bring to riders, nonriders, nearby community members, the MTA, and the State budget. The IBC should be used as a positioning document for future refinement and should keep the need for QueensLink urgent and relevant. Its findings demonstrated that the requisite ridership exists and will grow as the corridor develops and that the net benefit to the community means that New York State and the MTA should invest in this project over warehousing the investment dollars long-term.

***Reconnecting Communities Grant Background***

QueensLink intends to build upon the success of the IBC study by running three simultaneous projects under the Reconnecting Communities Program grant administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). These concurrent projects are:

- Regional Input/Output Analysis Study
- Housing Tenure & Antidisplacement Study
- ***Community Engagement Plan and Program Delivery (This project)***

Firms selected for these studies will work together on a parent timeline to deliver intermittent findings to be collated and distributed to interested stakeholders, elected officials, local champions, developers, and

nonprofit organizations with keen interest in the success of the project. For the purposes of this study, the QueensLink primary impact area includes Forest Hills south to the Rockaways and LIC east to Rego Park.

***Community Engagement Plan and Program Delivery Background***

As a generational, catalytic project, QueensLink takes community engagement seriously. Based on fifteen responses from the RFEI and the QueensLink team's extensive experience organizing local stakeholders, this RFP seeks methods and tools to consolidate resources and expand our authentic outreach. We are also seeking a firm to help coordinate findings from this grant's other two projects concerning the future of housing and economic development along the corridor and beyond. Lastly, we hope the winning firm will help us create a 10+ year engagement plan so our reach extends beyond the opening and operations of the QueensLink.

## General Information

***Proposed Timeline***

November 10, 2026 - Advertisement of Request for Proposals

November 20, 2026 - RFP Q&A for Proposers (3:00pm EDT, RSVP on the **RFI Form in Section III** required)

December 11, 2026 - Deadline for Proposal Submission

December 21, 2026 - Selection of Consultant Team

January 4, 2027 - Notice to Proceed Issued to Consultant

July 31, 2027 - Target Completion Date for Study

QueensRail Corp. reserves the right to modify this timeline at any time. The consultant must include a timeline in their proposal that identifies key milestones to complete work by the Target Completion Date. Upon contract execution, the consultant must adhere to the timeline outlined in their proposal, unless otherwise directed by QueensRail Corp.

***Budget***

The consultant should provide a competitive cost estimate for completion of tasks as defined in Section II, "Scope of Services."

**Submission Deadline**

Prospective consultants must submit their proposals by December 11, 2026, at 11:59:59 PM Eastern Standard Time.

**Qualification and Requirements**

QueensRail Corp. is seeking consultants who have the following qualifications and experience.

1. Experience developing and delivering community engagement plans, particularly in the New York City Metropolitan Area and particularly with rail projects.
2. Expertise in getting results: both increasing reach and encouraging deeper involvement from stakeholders already engaged with QueensLink activities and goals.
3. Proposers must submit a package that includes a cover letter, a detailed response to the below Scope of Work, a Project Schedule and Budget expanded by staff and hours expected on each task, resumes/CVs of key project personnel, and examples of similar projects as described below.
4. Proposers must also submit three reference projects with contact information for similar studies. All references must entail studies with completion dates within the last ten years of the advertisement date of this RFP.

## II. Scope of Services

Consultants will evaluate the tasks below and provide a comprehensive report detailing their findings as the final end product of this Community Engagement Plan. Proposals must explain how the proposer plans to approach/address both throughout the report creation process and the final report. Explain how your group is best suited to analyze the following items. Proposers may also suggest alternative approaches to the Tasks with justification. We are seeking the best approach, and are open to being convinced.

The QueensLink team expects the outputs of these tasks to be organized in milestones to coordinate with the Regional Economic Input/Output Analysis and Housing Tenure and Anti-Displacement study team's (other studies funded by this Reconnecting Communities Grant) ability to deliver results to stakeholders and community members. The firm chosen to deliver the Engagement Study will be responsible for co-organizing with QueensLink members to plan for all the subgrantees to deliver regular updates to community members.

### Task 1: Project Management and Coordination

The consultant will produce concise, 1-2 page monthly progress updates on the study process sharing progress in addition to regular standing meetings. The consultant will also maintain a parent project schedule and inform QueensLink in advance any changes that affect the project's delivery. The consultant will also be responsible for providing a coordination plan that syncs milestones developed within this project's scope with the other two projects QueensLink is running concurrently: the Housing Tenure & Anti-Displacement Study and the Regional Economic Input/Output Analysis.

### Task 2: Development and Delivery of Local Engagement Activities

As part of this engagement, we are asking the consultant to assist, enhance, and expand the engagement activities the QueensLink team has developed and delivered since its formation. We view community engagement as a cornerstone of how learning and listening from local stakeholders what their needs are for a connected Queens. We hope that respondents to this task will analyze past performance with QueensLink staff's help and suggest how we can capture a larger audience and/or develop deeper relationships with people in Queens and interested stakeholders.

### Task 3: Coordination Planning & Dissemination of Findings from Economic and Housing Studies

QueensLink expects the consultant team to co-lead with the QueensLink staff to coordinate regular findings from consultant teams assigned to work on this grant's *other* two projects and to incorporate them into our engagement strategy. We seek a consultant team that will develop a strategy to train our stakeholders to expect findings and to create the collateral materials to maximize impact and further QueensLink's advocacy strategy.

### Task 4: Plan for Semi-Permanent Pop-Up and Local Installation(s)

QueensLink seeks a plan to imagine a permanent or semi-permanent installation that can double as a community meeting space and/or gathering space for in-neighborhood activities. This plan should include enough detail to guide QueensLink staff to eventually secure space and local art and other project installations. Consultant should feel free to describe what this space could look like and cycle through and might suggest local partners to engage to fill the space over time. QueensLink

### Task 5: Multimedia Plan, Development and Delivery (OR OTHER)

The consultant will use this task to develop some out-of-the-box strategies around multimedia engagement. QueensLink is looking to expand our reach beyond traditional social media strategy and traditional outreach to stakeholders. We received some interesting ideas through the RFEI and would like to explore some of them further that could include multimedia development and delivery, gamification of certain activities, better engagement with local schools and youth programs, and, but not limited to, the collection and the retelling of history and stories of the site before abandonment.

*Please feel free to explore ideas not listed here.*

### Task 6: Development of 10-year-plus Plan

The consultant will build a final report that will double as a 10-year-plus plan for QueensLink to continue its advocacy and organizing efforts through the development and operational implementation of the rail reactivation. The plan will include an audit of past activities, review of current and near-future activities and a forward-thinking plan that helps QueensLink transition from active project advocate to community beacon and organizational partner for future transportation endeavors that link to the QueensLink project and beyond. Ten years is a base horizon and we are open to proposals that have shorter or longer horizons with justification.

## III. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be submitted to the following email address with the following in the subject line: PROPOSAL SUBMISSION for QueensLink Community Engagement Plan and Program Delivery 2026 from *Your Firm's Name*.

Proposal Submission Email: info@queenslink.org

QueensLink will provide a confirmation response upon receipt of the proposal. If you do not receive a receipt confirmation within 3 days of proposal submission, please follow up at the above email address as necessary.

All Requests for Information (RFI) regarding questions or clarifications must be submitted via the following web form **before 11:59:59 EDT on November 19, 2026**.

**CLICK HERE FOR THE RFI FORM**

If necessary, interpretations or clarifications in response to such questions will be made by issuance of an "Addendum" within a reasonable time prior to proposal closing. QueensRail Corp. may, at its discretion, extend the submission deadline date with written notice. It is the Proposer's responsibility to ensure that proposals are received prior to the stated closing time. QueensRail Corp. shall not be responsible for the proper identification and handling of any proposals submitted incorrectly. **Late proposals, late modifications, or late withdrawals will not be considered** after the stated submission deadline. The submission and signing of a proposal shall indicate the intention of the consultant to adhere to the provisions described in this RFP.

Only questions answered by formal written addenda will be binding. Oral and other interpretations of clarifications will be without legal effect.

## IV. PROPOSAL CONTENT AND FORMAT

Consultants should prepare their proposal in the format specified below.

1. Title Page - Proposer should identify the RFP subject, name and title of contact person, address, telephone number, email address, and date of submission.
2. Transmittal Letter - The transmittal letter should be no more than two (2) pages long and should include, as a minimum, the following:
    a. A brief statement of the Proposer's understanding of the project and services to be performed.
    b. A positive commitment to perform the services within the time period specified, starting and completing the project within the deadlines stated in the RFP, the names of persons

authorized to represent the Consultant, their title, address, and telephone number (if different from the individual who signs the transmittal letter).

3. Table of Contents - The table of contents should include a clear and complete identification by section and page number of the materials submitted.
4. Scope of Work - Submit a work plan, broken down by task, to accomplish the work defined in the "Scope of Services" section in this RFP. The work plan should include time estimates (in hours) for each significant segment of the project and the staff level to be assigned. The planned use of subconsultants (if any) should be described and justified.
5. Experience - Provide a description of the Consultant's experience in performing similar studies that address the key elements of the proposed scope of work. A minimum of 2 Statements of Experience (SOEs) are required that demonstrate previous experience delivering regional input/output analyses/studies (some or all). Provide a resume (1 page each) for each key project team member and an organization chart.
6. Coordination Plan - Provide a short (< 1 page) description of how your firm will coordinate with other firms and commitment to developing findings consistent with other project needs. NB: If you are submitting a proposal for *more than one* of these related RFPs please also include a narrative (>1 page) describing how you will coordinate internally. Please submit this with each proposal and note which *other* proposals you are submitting. Please do not submit a single, joint proposal for 2 or 3 projects within this larger grant.
7. References - Provide a list of three (3) references that may be contacted about the Consultant's qualifications and experience. Include the contact's name(s), email address, and telephone number for each reference.
8. Cost Proposal - Sealed fee proposal (via password-protected PDF) shall include the total hours and fully-loaded costs, including direct and indirect costs, organized by task.

## V. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPECTED TIMELINE

The estimated budget of this project is ~$150,000 and final report and data should be delivered by July 2027.

## VI. PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES

QueensLink will evaluate proposals based on the five criteria below to determine the Consultant or Consultant team that best fulfills the requirements of the RFP using the following rubric. The proposals will be evaluated on both their response quality and fee aspects. QueensLink reserves the right to modify, alter, or adjust the review and evaluation process. In addition, QueensLink will treat all proposals and related communication confidentially.

1. **Task Evaluation Factors**:
    a. Articulated understanding of the project and project approach
    b. Cost competitiveness
    c. Pertinent experience and past performance of the consultant
    d. Quality of experience of the key personnel

e. Overall quality of the proposal and references

Each of the scoring areas has a possible minimum to maximum score of one (1) to four (4) points for a maximum of 20 points.

2. **Interview**: At QueensLink's discretion, the top two or three Consultants may be required to make a short presentation of their proposal. This will provide an opportunity to clarify or elaborate on the proposal, but will not, in any way, provide an opportunity to change any fee amount originally proposed. QueensLink will schedule the time and location of these presentations (if necessary) and notify the selected Consultants.

3. **Investigation of References**: QueensLink reserves the right to investigate references and the past performance of any proposer with respect to its successful performance of similar projects, compliance with specifications and contractual obligations, its completion or delivery of a project on schedule, and its lawful payment of employees and workers.

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Additional Submission Notes:

1. **Generative AI policy**: Please do not submit responses to this RFP that have been generated by an AI or LLM tool. It will be rejected and disqualified at our discretion. QueensLink will use available LLM-detection software to determine the veracity of responses.

2. **Clarification of Proposals**: QueensLink reserves the right to obtain clarification of any point in a consultant's proposal or to obtain additional information necessary to properly evaluate a particular proposal. Failure of a Proposer to respond to such a request for additional information or clarification within a reasonable timeframe could result in rejection of the Consultant's proposal.

3. **Reservation in Evaluation**: QueensLink reserves the right to either:
    a. Select a consultant directly from the written proposals, or
    b. Request "Best and Final Offers" from the two finalist consultants and select based on the most competitive price.

4. **Intent of Award**: Upon review of the proposals submitted, QueensLink will negotiate a Professional Services Agreement with a Consultant(s).
5. **Proposal Rejection**: QueensLink reserves the right:
    a. To reject any or all proposals not in compliance with these requirements.
    b. To reject any proposal not meeting the specifications set forth herein.
    c. To waive any or all irregularities in proposals submitted.
    d. To reject all proposals.
    e. To award any or all parts of any proposal.
    f. To request additional references and other data to determine responsiveness.