

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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March 25, 2014
Start: 1:07 p.m.
Recess: 1:42 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
250 Broadway - Hearing Room,
14th Fl

B E F O R E: YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ, Chairperson
I. DANEEK MILLER, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Daniel R. Garodnick
James Vacca
Margaret S. Chin
Stephen T. Levin
Deborah L. Rose
James G. Van Bramer
Mark S. Werpin
David G. Greenfield
Costa G. Constantinides
Carlos Menchaca
I. Daneek Miller
Antonio Reynoso

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Tom Lucania
Director
Community Boards & Legislative Affairs
Bronx Borough President Rubin Diaz, Jr.

Dave Powell
Coordinator
Southern Bronx Watershed Alliance

Vincent Pellecchia
General Counsel
Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Elena Conte
Pratt Center for Community Development

Kellie Terry
Point Community Development Corporation

Angela Tovar
Director of Policy and Research
Sustainable South Bronx

Anna Menendez
Program Manager
We Stay/No Quedamos

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to this hearing of the City Council Transportation Committee. My name is Ydanis Rodriguez, and I'm the Chair of this committee. First, I'd like to introduce and acknowledge my colleague Carmen Arroyo, who has been one of the leaders in this initiative. And before we get into this topic, I'd also like to invite everyone for the Town Hall Meeting that we have on Vision Zero tomorrow at John Jay College. This is a town hall meeting that we're going to be holding one in each borough to hear from New Yorkers about the Administration Initiative of Vision Zero.

Today, we will be--we will hear testimony on Resolution 15, a resolution calling upon the Governor and the New York State Department of Transportation to implement the recommendation of a the Sheridan-Hunts Point Land Use and Transportation Study, which is sponsored by council members Palma and Arroyo. The Sheridan Expressway is a relatively short and underused highway in the Bronx that connects the Cross Bronx and the Bruckner Expressway. Robert Moses is already planning for the Sheridan to continue north and connect with the New England

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2 Throughway, by the ways of the Bronx, but a regular
3 roadway was never built.

4 For decades, the Sheridan has divided
5 communities in the Bronx, inhibit growth and economic
6 development, and virtually cut off access to the
7 Bronx River waterfronts, all while serving relatively
8 limited transportation needs even with the Hunts
9 Point Food Distribution Center, the largest wholesale
10 full distribution market in North America located
11 nearby.

12 For many years, communities and advocate
13 groups have urged that something is to be done with
14 the Sheridan. And last year, those efforts resulted
15 in an important milestone when the city led by the
16 Department of Transportation and the Department of
17 City Planning released the result of a comprehensive
18 study and a series of recommendations. In order to
19 dramatically improve community access to the recently
20 revitalized Bronx River Waterfront under the city's
21 vision, a primary recommendation is to transform the
22 portion of the Sheridan that now run at grade into a
23 local boulevard complete with crosswalk and other
24 pedestrian-ready enhancements.

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2 A second important aspect of the city's
3 recommendations is the construction of new access
4 ramps of the Bruckner expressway, which would allow
5 trucks associated with the Hunts Point Food Center to
6 avoid a major portion of the local street they most
7 currently use. This improvement together with the
8 city's other recommendation will have many benefits.
9 Removing trucks from local streets will improve the
10 air quality and pedestrian safety.

11 Improving access to the Bronx River will
12 allow many more residents to take advantage of newly
13 renovated waterfront parks, and shrinking the
14 Sheridan footprint will open up land for development,
15 and offer an opportunity to really revitalize a
16 neglected area of the Bronx. The next step in making
17 this project a reality would be for the state to
18 undertake an environmental impact study. One of the
19 reasons we are addressing this topic today is the
20 budget administration process that is happening as we
21 speak in Albany.

22 I know that many of us are hopeful that
23 funds for such an environmental impact statement can
24 be set aside in the budget that the state's leaders
25 are expected to finalize in the coming days. If

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2 adopted, this Resolution will serve as a notice that
3 the City Council firmly believes that the state
4 should--

5 [Pause]

6 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: --should move
7 forward with an environmental impact statement, and
8 the entire vision, and vision transformation of the
9 Sheridan. With that, let me now introduce those
10 Council Members who are here with us. Council Member
11 Vacca and Council Member Girani.

12 [Pause]

13 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Now let's hear
14 from one of the leaders in the Commission, Council
15 Member Arroyo.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Thank you, Mr.
17 Chair, and first I'd like to thank Speaker Mark
18 Viverito, yourself, and Council Member Palma for the
19 leadership and support on this Resolution,
20 particularly those in the community who have
21 advocated for the transformation of the Sheridan
22 Expressway and the community for I think far too
23 long. There's a lot of energy and work that has gone
24 into what recommendations the State should consider.

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2 There is a consensus around the study and the
3 recommendations included therein.

4 I think for our community the most
5 important aspect of this is not only transforming the
6 Sheridan and opening up access to the waterfront,
7 Starlight Park and those beautiful facilities right
8 across the way that are very difficult to get to on
9 foot by the community residents. But, the building
10 of the ramps or the elevated Bruckner Expressway that
11 would take thousands of truck miles off the local
12 streets. That will not only improve air quality, but
13 hopefully keep our streets better intact and easier
14 to navigate given all of the truck traffic that we
15 experience.

16 I certainly urge my colleagues to vote in
17 favor of this resolution, but I want to first--I'm
18 looking forward to the testimony from the local folks
19 who have a great deal to say about these
20 recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, and
22 now I'm going to be calling the first panel, and to
23 make for the--all the colleagues to--from the
24 Transportation Committee to make a quorum. So we'll
25 take it to a vote. We're going to be limited on

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three minutes because there's also other colleagues that they also have other commitments. So the first panel is going to be Elena Conte, Vincent Pellecchia, and Thomas Lucania.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: So, if your testimony you think might take more than three minutes, please summarize. But we're going to be putting the clock on three minutes.

[Pause]

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Okay, so we're going to be doing a section for the representative of the president of five minutes.

TOM LUCANIA: Good afternoon Chairman Rodriguez, members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Tom Lucania. I'm Director of Community Boards and Legislative Affairs for Bronx Borough President Rubin Diaz, Jr., and I'm here today to speak on his behalf in support of Reso No. 15.

Since the award of a federal grant from the United States Department of Transportation in 2010, the South Bronx community has worked intensively with the City agencies, including our office, to develop a vision for the Sheridan

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2 Expressway and surrounding neighborhoods. The
3 Sheridan-Hunts Point Land Use and Transportation
4 Study was pursued in response to community calls for
5 new development opportunities, better access to the
6 Bronx River waterfront, and safer, more livable
7 streets.

8 Following numerous public meetings and a
9 comprehensive discussion with all community
10 interests, including those affiliated with the Hunts
11 Point Market, a vision for the Bruckner and Sheridan
12 Expressways was achieved in the spring of 2013. The
13 highlights of this vision include:

14 Decommissioning the Sheridan Expressway
15 where this expressway is at grade level and
16 reconstruct this section based on a boulevard design,
17 the Sheridan Boulevard.

18 Install a pedestrian crossing along the
19 Sheridan Boulevard offering improved access to the
20 Bronx River and Starlight Park.

21 Construct access ramps to the Brooklyn
22 Expressway at Oak Point Avenue, offering improved
23 access to the Hunts Point Market while reducing such
24 traffic on local streets.

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The New York City Department of Transportation's extensive modeling has shown that these benefits could be realized with no negative impact on regional travel. The model shows that travel time for most drivers in the study area would improve with these changes, and that there would be no backup onto the Cross Bronx Expressway, the area's most congested roadway. The changes have the possibility of transforming the South Bronx by opening up new development opportunities, and greatly improving the quality of life and business climate.

After over two decades of discussing the future of this highway, the time has come to take action. I look forward to working with the City Council pursuant to Reso 15 to implement these study recommendations. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

[Pause]

DAVE POWELL: Hi, good afternoon. Hello. My name is Dave Powell. I'm the Coordinator of the Southern Bronx Watershed Alliance, and our membership groups, many of who are going to be testifying this afternoon as well, include Mothers on the Move, Mosque Ramos [phonetic], Pratt Center for Community

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2 Development, the Point CDC, Sustainable South Bronx,
3 Trusted Transportation Campaign, and Youth Ministries
4 for Peace and Justice. Our mission is to advance a
5 community-based transportation and land use plan for
6 social and environmental justice in the South Bronx.

7 I just want to say we're very excited to
8 be testifying before the Transportation Committee on
9 the subject of Resolution 15, which calls upon the
10 State to implement the recommendations of the
11 Sheridan Expressway, Hunts Point Transportation and
12 Land Use Study. We would like to thank Council
13 Member Rodriguez for bringing this resolution to a
14 hearing, as well as Council Members Reynoso for Levin
15 for their co-sponsorship on the measure, and from the
16 Bronx as well, James Vacca, the former Transportation
17 Committee Chair.

18 Last, but certainly not least, we want to
19 acknowledge the work of Council Members Arroyo and
20 Council Member Palma whose leadership on this issue
21 led to the drafting of the Resolution and to its
22 introduction, and we hope swift passage tomorrow. So
23 thank you all for your leadership for this issue, and
24 for hearing us today.

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2 For over six decades, the transportation
3 network and highway infrastructure of the South Bronx
4 has produced negative health, safety, and economic
5 outcomes for residents. The South Bronx, as many of
6 us know, has hosted a Hunts Point Food Distribution
7 Center, the largest food distribution center in the
8 country. With no direct connection to any highway,
9 the 15,000 plus daily truck trips associated with the
10 center must use neighborhood streets to enter and
11 exit Hunts Point causing health and safety issues for
12 residents, aggravation for truck drivers, and lost
13 productivity for local businesses. The current
14 roadway configuration contributes to some of the
15 highest asthma rates in the United States, and
16 severely compromising pedestrians' safety,
17 particularly around the Bruckner Expressway and the
18 Sheridan Expressway.

19 In December of 2013, the New York City
20 Department of Transportation and New York City
21 Department of City Planning completed the Sheridan
22 Expressway and Hunts Point Transportation and Land
23 Use Setting Study or SEHP Study. The recommendations
24 from the SEHP Study largely merit long-standing
25 community priorities for the area.

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2 And I just--you know, I want to
3 acknowledge there are organizations in this room that
4 have literally been working on this issue for two
5 decades, which is very squarely situated not nearly
6 in the middle of a transportation issues in the South
7 Bronx, but very much as part of the Environmental
8 Justice Movement. And this has been a long time
9 coming. So we were very excited to see the City
10 coming online with their recommendations, which
11 mirrored community priorities.

12 The recommendations revolve around three
13 large-scale improvements. And for those of you who
14 have copies of my testimony, I just want to talk you
15 through them. There are some color slides that are
16 attached to that. The first and most critical
17 improvement is the construction of direct access
18 ramps from the Bruckner Expressway to the Hunts Point
19 Peninsula home to the Food Distribution Center, and
20 that's this slide right here. You can see that, the
21 rendering that was done by New York City DOT.

22 The second is closure of two Sheridan
23 ramps that currently pour traffic onto busy
24 pedestrian intersections. That's Hunts Point Avenue
25 and Bruckner Boulevard, and also Whitlock and

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Westchester Avenue. The proposed closed ramps are representative in the second slide, and that's made possible by the creation of direct access into Hunts Point from the highway. If you have direct access, you don't need to be pouring truck traffic on those very busy pedestrian intersections.

One of them by the way, and it's really fantastic that the borough President's office is here today showing their support because they've also showed support and leadership on another issue that's very germane to this particular intersection, Hunts Point Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard, and that is the coming online of the future Metro North Station. So we literally have a six-train station on one side of Bruckner Boulevard. The Six Point or the Hunts Point Avenue Six, and the future Metro Rail Station on the other.

And you have what residents know as a mad dash across ten lanes of truck traffic. And these recommendations will make that project work. Without that, we're sending commuters from Metro North into harm's way. So we're very excited about that. And third, and also important, is the conversion of the

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Sheridan into a boulevard that will create access to the parks along the Bronx River.

I know my time has run out, and I appreciate that. I just want to--I want to just give one more mention of a very important part of this because I think this definitely has a lot in common with Vision Zero, which I know this committee has looked at very carefully. This is a grassroots Vision Zero, and we're very excited to be working with the Council on realizing that. Also, I think everybody here, and particularly Bronxites know that we host the largest food distribution center in the region. And there is an issue of food security here that has not really been considered by previous administrations. And that is the fact that over 50% of our produce, meat, and fish in the New York Metropolitan Area sits in a flood plain, and also on a peninsula. And when a super storm such as Sandy hits this point--

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: I'm sorry, could you summarize because of the time? I'm sorry.

DAVE POWELL: Sure, Councilman. When a super storm hits the Peninsula, there needs to be a way to get that food in and out. Otherwise, a

1 crucial link in our food distribution network will be
2 cut off from the rest of the city and the Tri-State
3 area. So we look forward to working with the Council
4 on the passage of this Resolution, and the mayor and
5 the city speaker to implement these critical
6 improvements, which are fully aligned with the Vision
7 Zero Action Plan. And which we'll begin to address
8 the inequity in the built environment that's the
9 result of decades of environmental racism and poor
10 transportation planning. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, and
13 I'm sorry again. You know we worked together with
14 you and the Reso advocates who accommodate us so that
15 could pass the--pass this Resolution--

16 DAVE POWELL: We just did. [interposing].

17 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: --before the study
18 so--

19 DAVE POWELL: Yes. [interposing]

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: So the time sill
21 means, you know.

22 DAVE POWELL: Okay.

23 VINCENT PELLECCCHIA: My name is Vincent
24 Pellecchia. I'm General Counsel for the Tri-State
25 Transportation Campaign, a non-profit organization

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2 working toward a more balanced transit friendly and
3 equitable transportation system in New York, New
4 Jersey, and Connecticut. Tri-State is one of seven
5 member organizations comprising the Southern Bronx
6 River Watershed Alliance. Tri-State supports
7 Resolution 15, and strongly encourages each member of
8 the committee to vote in favor of Resolution 15.

9 The current moment of consensus in the
10 community for making these changes must not be
11 squandered. Resolution 15 will go a long way toward
12 showing Albany that it should prioritize bringing
13 health, safety, and economic improvements to a
14 community that has endured the burdens of the current
15 highway network for too long. For over six decades,
16 the transportation network of the South Bronx has
17 produced negative health, safety, and economic
18 outcomes for residents and businesses.

19 The Hunts Point Peninsula is home to many
20 industries, including the largest food distribution
21 center in the nation. Therefore, the thousands of
22 daily truck trips going to and from these businesses,
23 there's no direct connection from any highway.
24 Rather, all vehicles including large trucks must exit
25 the highway system and traverse local the streets, in

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2 some cases for up to two miles when entering and
3 exiting the Peninsula.

4 Forcing these trucks onto local streets
5 causes all sorts of problems in the South Bronx, from
6 health and safety issues for residents to aggravation
7 for truck drivers, and lost productivity for local
8 businesses. In addition to severely compromising
9 pedestrian safety, particularly along the Bruckner
10 and Sheridan Expressways, the current roadway
11 configuration contributes to asthma rates in the
12 South Bronx that are some of the highest in the
13 nation.

14 In December 2003, City DOT and DCP
15 completed the Sheridan Express-Hunts Point
16 Transportation and Land Use Study. The
17 recommendations from the Sheridan Study include many
18 aspects that are community priorities for the area,
19 and if implemented would dramatically improve
20 business efficiency, resident health, and pedestrian
21 safety.

22 One of the Sheridan Study's three large-
23 scale recommendations is the subject of this
24 Resolution 15, namely construct ramps that provide
25 direct vehicular access from the Bruckner Expressway

1 into Hunts Point Peninsula. These ramps will produce
2 many clear benefits to the South Bronx, including
3 increased efficiency for the Hunts Point Peninsula
4 business, create safer conditions for pedestrians by
5 moving trucks off local streets, and complement the
6 Sheridan's Study's recommendation to convert the
7 Sheridan Expressway to a neighborhood friendly
8 boulevard. Tri-State supports this effort, and we
9 urge you to pass Resolution 15. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you and
12 since now, we have a quorum, before calling the next
13 panel, I'm going to be--I will now call a vote on
14 Resolution 15. I recommend a yes vote, and I ask the
15 Clerk to please call the roll.

16 CLERK: William Martin, Community Clerk.
17 Roll call vote, Committee on Transportation,
18 Resolution 15. Council Member Rodriguez.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER: RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

20 CLERK: Garodnick.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Aye.

22 CLERK: Vacca.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Aye.

24 CLERK: Rose.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye.

2 CLERK: Van Bramer.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

4 CLERK: Weprin.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WEPRIN: Aye.

6 CLERK: Miller.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Aye.

8 CLERK: Reynoso.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Aye.

10 CLERK: By a vote of eight in the
11 affirmative, zero in negative, and no abstentions,
12 the item is adopted. Members please sign a committee
13 report. Thank you.

14 [Applause]

15 COMMITTEE MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]

16 COMMITTEE MEMBER: You could only mess it
17 up from here, Reynoso.

18 MALE SPEAKER: Thanks to all the council
19 members for your hard work.

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: We did, we did.

21 [Cheers and applause]

22 [Crosstalk]

23 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: The next panel is
24 Elena Corte, Kellie Terry, and Angela Tovar.

25 [Pause]

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2 Elena Conte: Good afternoon. I'm Elena
3 Conte with the Pratt Center for Community
4 Development. And on behalf of Pratt Center, a proud
5 member of the Southern Bronx River Watershed
6 Alliance, it is my extreme pleasure to testify before
7 you today in support of Resolution 15 calling on the
8 State and the City to partner closely together with
9 local communities to advance the recommendations of
10 the City's Sheridan Expressway-Hunts Point
11 Transportation and Land Use Study. The Study is
12 sometimes also known as the TIGER Study because of
13 its federal funding source. But as catchy as those
14 two names are, we prefer a name in the South Bronx,
15 and with the Alliance. The plan to transform the
16 Sheridan Corridor, that the City's recommendations
17 largely reflect, is known to us as the Community
18 Plan.

19 Fifteen years ago, local environmental
20 justice and the community development organizations
21 in the South Bronx, that formed the Alliance,
22 partnered with technical assistance groups including
23 Pratt Center to crack the plan that would address
24 dangerous air quality, deadly streets, divided
25 communities, lack of open space and waterfront

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2 access, lack of access to quality jobs, and badly
3 needed affordable housing while making it safer and
4 easier for commercial vehicles to access the Hunts
5 Point Food Distribution Center.

6 And the answer was found in undoing the
7 legacy of Robert Moses' incomplete and ineffective
8 Sheridan Expressway. And in reconfiguring the
9 transportation network into a safe and efficient set
10 of connections that serves all users better. Major
11 portions of the community plan were finally codified
12 through a City-led process, and for the first time it
13 did what community residents had been calling for in
14 a planning approach. It actually looked at the
15 relationship between the transportation network, and
16 land use, and the lives of those land users in a
17 simultaneous and interconnected way.

18 The result of the two-year process is a
19 set of consensus recommendations that enjoys broad
20 support across multiple neighborhoods and interests
21 that when implemented will do no less than be the
22 most singularly transformative project the South
23 Bronx will see. Improving the health and quality of
24 life for existing residents, who are overwhelmingly
25 low income and people of color, while improving their

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2 access to economic opportunity and safe, decent
3 affordable housing.

4 The Community Plan, when implemented,
5 will improve the lives of South Bronx residents, and
6 it will be the shining example of national
7 significance -- Governor Cuomo, are you listening? --
8 of the power of community-based planning to solve
9 issues that government cannot tackle alone. We have
10 described in the appendix materials that illustrate
11 the major features of an extensive plan.

12 There's another point I really want to
13 highlight, which is that as inspiring as the major
14 elements are, the strength of the plan is that it
15 contains hundreds of recommendations touching the
16 neighborhoods of West Bronx, Crotona Park East,
17 Longwood, Hunts Point, and Bronx River that can be
18 commenced immediately. Local residents can begin
19 experiencing relief from the legacy of top-down
20 racist planning in the South Bronx tomorrow.

21 All of that is needed is a proactive and
22 cooperative partnership between the State, the City,
23 and the local community. We can do it. That is what
24 Resolution 15 calls for, and that is why we are here
25 to enthusiastically support its passage. We thank

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the Council for its efforts in introducing it. And we look forward to continuing to work with all our partners in the South Bronx, and with you, Mayor de Blasio, Governor Cuomo, and all his agencies to make this historic plan a reality. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: All right, before we call for the next panels, I would like to--I need to excuse myself to go to another meeting. But before, I would like a council member-- Thank you Council Member Miller, who will continue running this hearing. But before, I would like to recognize Council Member Menchaca, Chin, Drone and Miller who are also here with us today. This is about climate change. This is about social justice, this is about creating opportunity for more new developments, and this is about Vision Zero, too. Thank you. I'm sorry, the other Council Member of the Transportation Committee can you also vote before I leave?

CLERK: Council Member Chin.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I vote aye.

CLERK: Menchaca.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I vote aye.

Count me.

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2 CLERK: Well, my count it stands at 10 in
3 the affirmative.

4 KELLIE TERRY: All right. Good
5 afternoon. My name is Kellie Terry, and I am here
6 representing the Point Community Development
7 Corporation, a proud long-standing founding member of
8 the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance. The
9 Point Community Development Corporation is a non-
10 profit organization dedicated to youth development,
11 and cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts
12 Point area.

13 We are here today to continue what has
14 been not always an easy conversation, and I am
15 overwhelmed with joy, although I am not necessarily
16 showing it right now. I'm really, really excited to
17 stand here. I'm very proud to sit there beside
18 Council Member Arroyo, who I remember talking about
19 this issue before I even had children, and I should
20 say they're eight and six. And we understand that
21 this is also part of our legacy, and we're all here
22 today because we understand that this legacy is going
23 to take a while to implement.

24 I want to sort of build on the
25 treacherous conditions that we know our community is

1
2 facing. I don't want to necessarily go into the
3 stats. Yes, we had disproportionate asthma rates,
4 and all other health disparities. And infrastructure
5 we understand the poor planning, and lack of
6 foresight was the result of that. I want to talk
7 about where we're going, and you have made possible
8 today. What you have made possible today is a broad
9 sweeping consensus that has been needed to back up
10 the community members whose blood, sweat, and tears
11 literally over the past two decades has pushed this
12 community plan to where it is today.

13 Moving forward, we have broad sweeping
14 consensus not only amongst ourselves, but with
15 business, with the business community, which used to
16 formerly be seen as adversarial to this
17 transformative change. We have now found a way to
18 join them into this vision moving forward. We also
19 have federal attention paid to the importance of food
20 security, and the importance of climate change, which
21 the council member rightfully mentioned before he
22 exited. It's not--the status quo is no longer
23 acceptable for anybody.

24 We have learned the lessons, hopefully,
25 all too harshly. And moving forward a community-

1 based plan such as this, which looks at
2 transportation infrastructure, how it relates to the
3 social infrastructure of our communities, and is not
4 only needed for this particular area, but should
5 serve, and is serving, as a model for how we should
6 move forward with planning in all environments for
7 justice communities. Not only around the city, but
8 on a national and international scale. So what you
9 are doing today is allowing strategy like this to
10 take hold, and we look forward to joining with--not
11 only with City Council members, but all the city,
12 state, and federal agencies that are now looking at
13 this plan.

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15 I want to call attention to one little
16 recommendation that we have from the Penn Owen
17 [phonetic] Team, which is now currently involved in
18 Rebuild by Design, which is a national competition
19 looking at climbing adaptation and change. And these
20 recommendations are a part of that conversation. So
21 we look forward to being a part of the transformative
22 change that will be happening thanks to your support
23 today. Thank you so much.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you. Before
25 we get started, we've been joined by Council Member

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2 Greenfield, and I would ask him to vote on Resolution
3 15.

4 CLERK: Council Member Greenfield?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you. I
6 vote aye.

7 CLERK: The vote is now eleven.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay. Go ahead.

9 ANGELA TOVAR: Good afternoon. My name
10 is Angela Tovar. I'm the Director of Policy and
11 Research at Sustainable South Bronx. We are a non-
12 profit organization on the Hunts Point Peninsula, and
13 we're also one of the seven member organizations of
14 the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance. I just
15 wanted to begin by thanking all of you for your votes
16 and your leadership today. This vote is an historic
17 moment for our campaign, and I think it's decades in
18 the making for sure. And I think I also just want to
19 just acknowledge some of the community members that
20 are here in the room today that have been given--
21 given this campaign a lot of time and effort.
22 There's a lot of people here that won't be speaking,
23 but are represented by the people that are on this
24 panel. So thank you all for your energy and your
25 effort for this campaign.

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2 I think you've heard a lot from the
3 existing--I think you know about the existing
4 conditions. We're here all the time testifying in
5 City Council, but I'll just add a couple of things.
6 This plan is a no-brainer. I mean it really is, and,
7 you know, the great thing about this exercise was at
8 the end of these recommendations it really was a plan
9 that that-- This study we tried our best to
10 communicate with the city and to make this plan
11 really align with the community's priorities.

12 So as Elena mentioned before the
13 community plan. And we really think that this is a
14 good foundation to bring positive transformation to
15 the South Bronx. Some of the components of this plan
16 that we're very excited about, creating the direct
17 access to the Bruckner from Hunts Point--from the
18 Bruckner Expressway to the Hunts Point Peninsula.
19 That's good because it alleviates traffic--truck
20 traffic from local streets. It supports economic
21 development in the community, and it makes it safer
22 for pedestrians and for transit riders.

23 It also is going to bring out the
24 opportunity to create developable land, which, of
25 course, would bring--could potentially bring

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affordable housing, green space, local jobs, and community waterfront access. We're also talking about pedestrian access to the Bronx River. As our councilwoman mentioned, we have these beautiful parks, Starlight Park, CompuPlan [phonetic] Park, and we have limited access.

So this would really allow us to have a design for the new crosswalks and an impact analysis that would bring that and would make that a possibility. And then the closure of these ramps at these really dangerous intersections, which would dramatically reduce truck traffic, and would increase pedestrian safety at these--at a couple of intersections, which are the most dangerous in the Bronx. So we believe that this plan is mutually beneficial for both businesses and for community residents.

We really hope that this passes tomorrow because I think that this plan sends a strong message to Albany to the Governor and to our state legislators about the critical nature of this project. But it also symbolizes this new administration, and the Council's efforts to create

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safer streets, vibrant communities, and a commitment to South Bronx and its transformation. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you to the members of the panel for showing up and testifying.

[Pause]

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay, and we have one more and that is Anna Melendez [phonetic]. Ms. Melendez.

[Pause]

Anna Melendez: Good afternoon. My name is Anna Melendez. I'm the Program Manager of We Stay/No Quedamos. First, I would like to thank all of the Council members for reviewing and also passing the Resolution 15, and hearing our testimonies today. We Stay/No Quedamos has been a member of the South Bronx River Watershed Alliance for over ten years. Our organization has improved the quality of life for the South Bronx community through the development of green and healthy affordable housing. We participated in an early air quality study. So we're well aware of the correlation between poor land use and housing as contributing factors to poor health.

The Transportation network and highway infrastructure of South Bronx have produced negative

1 health and safety outcomes for residents, and it also
2 contributes to the high asthma rates, one of the
3 highest in the United States. The recommendations
4 for the Sheridan Expressway and Hunts Point
5 Transportation and Land Use Study, there are a long-
6 standing community priorities for the area, which
7 includes year of striving for a safer, more
8 sustainable community that address critical issues of
9 affordable housing, healthy living, and safer
10 communities.
11

12 The city recommendations revolve around
13 three large-scale improvements, which include
14 construction of lands for direct access from the
15 Bruckner Expressway to Hunts Point Peninsula, closure
16 of two shoulder lanes that pour truck traffic into
17 busy pedestrian intersections at Hunts Point,
18 Bruckner Boulevard and Westchester Whitlock Avenue.

19 Conversion of the Sheridan Expressway
20 into a boulevard that is constructed, and implements
21 extensive pedestrian safety improvements near the
22 Bronx River Waterfront. These changes would make way
23 for new development in the South Bronx, which may
24 include new opportunities for affordable housing,
25 open space, and possibly new businesses as well.

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2 We ask that you support the New York
3 Safety Council Resolution 15, which has been a
4 community priority, and we see this resolution as an
5 opportunity to move the pendulum forward. If
6 implemented, these recommendations will dramatically
7 improve resident health and pedestrian safety. Thank
8 you so much.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay. So that
10 is the final testimony of the hearing, and on behalf
11 of my Chair, Council Member Rodriguez and the rest of
12 the members of the committee and Council Member
13 Arroyo, who is just sitting there, thank you for your
14 work on this project. And I just want to say to the
15 folks out there, and to your constituents how proud
16 you should be of yourselves. Because I represent
17 Southeast Queens, and we experienced some similar
18 issues. And to be at the forefront of environmental
19 issues like this, environment and social issues are
20 certainly things that are not synonymous with our
21 communities often, and you guys have done a
22 phenomenal job. Keep up the good work because that's
23 going to be required in order to get this thing done
24 and completed.

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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So with that being said, thanks everybody
for coming out, and we will bring this meeting to a
close.

[Gavel]

[Applause]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 17, 2014