

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

TASK FORCE ON BQX

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May 30, 2019  
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: CARLOS MENCHACA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Costa G. Constantinides  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Mark Gjonaj  
Antonio Reynoso  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
James G. Van Bramer

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

Seth Myers, Executive Vice President and  
Director of Project Implementation  
New York City Economic Development Corporation

Will Fisher, Senior Project Manager  
Government and Community Relations Team  
New York City Economic Development Corporation

Rebecca Zack, Assistance Commissioner for  
Intergovernmental Affairs  
New York Department of Transportation

Christopher Hrones, Director of Strategic  
Transit Initiatives  
New York Department of Transportation

Jessica Schumer  
Executive Director  
Friends of the BQX

Christopher Torres  
Deputy Director  
Friends of the BQX

Harris Schechtman, Principal  
Sam Schwartz Engineering

Mitchel Moss  
NYU

Laurie Mora  
Atlantic Avenue Bid

Renee Reynolds, Transportation Planner  
New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

Joseph Calata  
New York Building Congress

Santos Rodriguez  
Building and Construction Trades Council of  
Greater New York

Sal Soreese  
Sheetmetal Workers Local 28  
The Building Trades Union

Beth Shevry  
New York State Laborers LECET Labor Management  
Cooperation and Trust Fund

Claudia Koger, President  
Astoria Houses

Darrell Burgess, President  
Ingersoll Houses

Adriana Espinosa, Director  
The New York City Program  
New York League of Conservation Voters

Mullen Metta, Senior Associate  
Regional Plan Association

Bryan Lozano  
Tech NYC

Paula Crespo, Senior Planner  
Pratt Center for Community Development

Ron Zack  
Director of Development and Communications  
Fifth Avenue Committee

Culvis Michelstein [phonetic]  
(Testifying for Alexandria Sica)  
Executive Director of the Dumbo Business  
Improvement District

Terry Carta  
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative

Caroline Perry  
(Testifying for Regina Meyer)  
President of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

Toba Potosky  
The Brooklyn War Memorial

Samara Karasyk  
Chief Policy Officer  
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Shebath [phonetic] Stewart  
(Testifying on behalf of Tucker Reed)  
Cofounder and Principal of Totem

George Haikalis, President  
Institute for Rational Urban Mobility

Eric McClure, Executive Director  
StreetsPAC

Greg Waltman  
G1 Quantum

David Yang  
Cofounder of Pursuit

Dawn Skeet  
Jammit Bistro  
Red Hook

Jessica Ford  
(Testifying on behalf of Nick Defonte)  
Owner of Defonte Sandwich Shop

[Sound check] This is a test. Today's date is May 30, 2019. This is the committee hearing on the BQX Task Force being recorded by Sergeant-at-Arms Alan Lopez.

[pause]

CHAIR MENCHACA: Buenos Diaz. We're gonna get started in just a minute. I want to make sure if everyone can just take their seats. We good, yeah. Buenos Dias, everyone. Real excited that you are all here today at the City Council Chambers. My name is Carlos Menchaca, New York City Council Chair of the Task Force of the and I am pleased to welcome all of you here today. This is the first public hearing at the New York City Council through this Task Force on the proposed Brooklyn Queens Connector. As you all know and have stickers, some of you on your chests, called the BQX. The Task Force on the BQX was formed by Speaker Johnson and myself to shed light on the planning process for the proposed streetcar system and to provide a venue for public feed back on this project. We're gonna hear a lot about origin stories today and I think this is a really important point to make in the origin story of this Task Force that really what I wanted to do and

the Speaker has been so strong on transportation and really making sure that the voices of the people were heard when we think about transportation City wide is to actually look at this corridor and understand the transportation needs along this corridor from the people themselves and that's what we're gonna be hearing today. We will hear that testimony from you and the City agencies who will be presenting today who have been most involved in the planning process for the BQX, the New York City Economic Development Corporation and the New York City Department of Transportation. They will both be here today testifying. We also look forward to the public testimony from those who have been involved in the planning process thus far, transit experts as well as the residents who will be mostly affected by the proposed project. A project of this scale, a permanent reallocation of public streets along the Brooklyn and Queens waterfront requires both the expert knowledge of engineers and planners and the intimate knowledge of local stakeholders about their community. This hearing should be an opportunity for residents to learn more about the proposal and how they can be more involved in the planning process,

civic engagement, civic engagement. This hearing is also an opportunity for decision makers, including the City agencies here today and my fellow Council Members along the corridor to hear from their constituents about what matters most to them along this corridor as we look at the transportation needs. The proposed 11-mile route affects many of the waterfront communities between Red Hook and Astoria and I will say that since the park was once part of the BQX proposal and is no longer there but still remains as part of the conversation as a need for transportation along this corridor. Residents want answers to how this proposal will affect their daily lives and what changes they should expect with the introduction to the BQX in their own communities. I expect many people from the public to voice their support or their opposition of the project today but above all else I hope that there's an opportunity for everyone to leave here today with the facts of the proposals themselves and I'll repeat that. I want everyone to leave with a sense of the facts of the proposal being discussed today. The agencies are here today to provide: 1. A rationale for the proposed streetcar system in this portion of the

waterfront, 2. The most up-to-date status of the planning process for the BQX, and 3. How has the proposal changed during the community engagement process? There's a long road between now and the eventual vote by the City Council on this project, that's for sure, but the information we gather here today from the agencies and the feedback provided by the public will help us here at the City Council to inform our own deliberations about this ULURP process that is on it's way. I want to thank EDC and DOT who are providing testimony today and all the committee members that I'll name later in the process and thank all the members of the City Council who are here today, Jimmy Van Bramer from Queens, Antonio Reynoso was here. He'll pop back in. There's another Transportation hearing happening over there on the other side and again, I want to say thank you to all for being here. I hope you leave being heard. We have a lot of people who are testifying so we're gonna move to the clock so we can get a sense of your testimony today and the first, we're gonna actually move to, directly to the administration. We can get the administration on for the first panel. We will be asking for Mr. Seth Meyers from EDC, Will Fisher,



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2 EDC, Rebecca Zack from the DOT and Chris Hrones from  
3 the DOT. Please make your way up and we're gonna  
4 swear you in first. Hey Chris, good to see you.

5 COUNSEL: Would you all please raise your  
6 right hands. Do you swear or affirm to tell the  
7 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in  
8 your testimony today and to respond honestly to  
9 Council Member questions? You may begin your  
10 testimony.

11 CHAIR MENCHACA: Make sure that the red  
12 light is on, Seth.

13 SETH MYERS: Much better, the red light  
14 helps. Thank you.

15 CHAIR MENCHACA: You should repeat the  
16 first good morning.

17 SETH MYERS: I will, thank you, good  
18 morning, Buenos Dias, Chair Menchaca, Council Member  
19 Van Bramer, members of the BQX Task Force. My name  
20 is Seth Myers and I'm an executive vice president and  
21 director of project implementation at the New York  
22 City Economic Development Corporation or EDC. I am  
23 pleased to testify before you on the Brooklyn Queens  
24 Connector or BQX streetcar project. I'm joined today  
25 by my colleague, Will Fisher. He's a senior project

manager on EDC's government and Community Relations Team and our colleagues at the Department of Transportation, Rebecca Zack, Assistance Commissioner for Intergovernmental Affairs and Chris Hrones, Director of Strategic Transit Initiatives. New York City is known for its unique and successful culmination of mixed-use communities, walkable street, great public spaces, premier cultural and educational institutions and job centers including the financial district to Mid-town Manhattan. Much of its notable success is directly attributed to past investments and transportation, most of which were Manhattan focused and helped support the City's evolution over the past century. New York City also has a long history of embracing innovative transportation technology from the steam powered ferry to elevated trains to a network of cutting-edge bridges and tunnels and one of the world's most extensive subway systems. These infrastructure innovations continue to be the backbone of the City's economy. They fuel economic growth, connect neighborhoods and create opportunities where none had existed. It is indisputable that today's economically thriving New York City would not exist

without this vast multi-faceted and complex mass transit system but it is critical to note that there remain serious gaps in connectivity. While the current bus networks help link gaps and subway service and other new forms of transit like City Bike or NYC Ferry have been implemented, there is certainly more we can do to invest in transit infrastructure. We must continue to close these gaps for the City's continued development and commuting needs. Manhattan remains the single largest employment hub in the region, yet an increasing number of businesses and residents are opting to set up shop or live in neighborhoods in the other four boroughs. This presents both an immediate need, an unprecedented opportunity to develop new modes of transit that are cost effective, efficient and inclusive. Every day EDC works on projects with the goal of making the City fairer today and stronger tomorrow. Aligning economic development with the City's overall mass transportation network is a critical strategy to accomplish this goal. That is why we believe in making strategic new investments that reflect the economic realities of today and the years to come and not the 100 years prior. For over

a century the MTA subway system has functioned as the lifeblood of the City by ensuring New Yorkers could get from point to point. While our subway was designed to support a Manhattan centric economy, thriving new residential and economic hubs have developed across the City and this growth can be acutely seen along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront. This vast growing corridor is home to 300,000 jobs and over 400,000 residents, including nearly 40,000 New Yorkers living in public housing. As these numbers continue to grow and as new job centers emerge in the outer boroughs, the City must prepare to accommodate this growth responsibly and equitably. Recognizing the value of connecting over a dozen waterfront neighborhoods along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront, the de Blasio administration has made important investments in transit options that better link these communities to each other and to the rest of the City. Just last year, EDC completed implementation of the NYC Ferry system to neighborhoods with few existing transit options. These include Western Astoria, Red Hook and Long Island City and earlier this month we launched a new route to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, an emerging job

center. Stretching from the Rockaways to the East Bronx, our water born transit system has already served close to nine million riders. Like NYC Ferry, the Brooklyn Queens Connector is intended to stitch together the gaps left by the subway system, prioritizing connections within and between boroughs outside of Manhattan and improve commuting options for residents. This proposed state of the art zero emission streetcar will run 11 miles from Astoria through downtown Brooklyn and ultimately to Red Hook. It will connect dozens of diverse neighborhoods across 13 subway routes, over 30 bus lines, 10 ferry landings and dozens of City Bike stations. For residents along its route, it will be a game changing mode of transportation. In addition, the BQX's presence is expected to generate over \$30 billion in economic benefits over 40 years indicating a strong return on its investment. This investment equates to greater neighborhood connectivity and increased integration with the existing public transit system. This will, in turn, boost access to the many parks, academic institution, job opportunities and cultural centers within the evolving corridor. Moreover, the BQX has the potential to reduce average commutes by

as much as 14 minutes at full buildout. That means that New Yorkers will spend less time stuck in traffic and tunnels and more with friends and family. Since the proposed BQX streetcar was announced in 2016, EDC and the Department of Transportation have been hard at work studying critical elements such as infrastructure, feasibility, design, construction, all needed to bring it to life. Simultaneously, we have been in continuous conversations with New Yorkers about this new mode of transit. We have had more than 150 engagement touch points that yielded indispensable feed back and we look forward to more engagement in the very near future. Our collective work informed a conceptual design report released last summer which represents approximately 5% of the overall project design. This report details engineering and design feasibility, potential impacts on communities, cost of construction and the economic benefit that the BQX stands to deliver. Following the completion of the study, our current estimate of the project costs is \$2.7 billion. Approximately half of the capital budget \$1.3 billion, would be generated through a financing strategy called value capture. Value capture is a mechanism that dedicates

a portion of the modest increase in property tax revenue collected brought about by the infrastructure improvements to pay for those investments. Regarding the additional funding need, the City anticipated pursuing federal funding for the project and we are following all the requisite processes to make this a qualifying and competitive project. Starting this fall, New Yorkers will continue to have additional opportunities to provide input on the BQX and help further define the project's development. Over the next year the City in partnership with our engineering consultant, VHB, will complete an environmental review which will examine impacts and potential mitigations as well as alternatives to the project such as bus rapid transit or BRT.

Additionally, the work will further analyze project delivery methods such as the design build process in addition to operations, implementation and phasing. While we understand the critical need for investment in the City's current transit system, we also need to prioritize proactive planning for our growing population and future generations of New Yorkers. It is imperative that we take action to diversify transit modes today to strengthen the City's economy

tomorrow. Thank you for your attention. My colleagues from DOT will now provide their testimony, after which we are happy to take questions.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Good morning, Chair Menchaca, good morning Council Member Van Bramer. My name is Christopher Hrones. I'm Director of Strategic Transit Initiatives for the DOT. I'm joined today by Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs, Rebecca Zack, to my left and we are honored to be here on behalf of Commissioner Trottenberg together with our colleagues from EDC to provide this testimony and address your questions as they may relate to DOT's supporting role in this BQX project. DOT has been assisting EDC with the planning and conceptual design of the BQX. We are excited to be part of this project that would on the one hand offer improved mobility and access for thousands of New Yorkers and on the other hand provide additional opportunities to transform our streets, not only prioritizing transit but also making the work better for bicyclists, pedestrians and other users. With the rapid surface transit investment in this corridor, the City would compliment many of DOT's key initiatives, including



Vision Zero and our recently initiated Better Buses Action Plan. DOT has been working and will continue to work with EDC on determining how the BQX would fit into and function within a constrained urban street environment. We view the development of a major rapid transit service along this corridor as not only a challenge but also an opportunity to reenvision how our streets in these neighborhoods can be transformed into spaces that prioritize transit, pedestrians and bicyclists over automobiles. DOT continues to innovate in our street management approach by implementing new designs that make walking biking and using transits safer and more efficient and we're currently in the process of implementing a few types of new designs that we would build upon in this BQX project. These include on the one hand shared streets, secondly projects that limit or restrict traffic such as our pilot truck and transit priority treatment on 14<sup>th</sup> Street and third, physically protected transit lanes that we will be piloting this year with up to two miles of bus lanes in the planning. The BQX would involve extensive application of these approaches along a densely populated 11-mile corridor. With the currently

proposed BQX alignment, DOT and EDC would provide direct routing between major destinations and a high level of transit priority while also maintaining the functionality and safety of the streets on which it runs. We've had great success on many corridors around the City reconfiguring our roadways to provide more space for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit and improve safety for all users. Indeed, this is one of the primary ways in which we have been able to reduce serious injuries and fatalities and make process towards Vision Zero. We would integrate many of our key Vision Zero tool that we employ to reduce fatalities and serious injuries into the BQX project. These include sidewalk extension and medians, traffic calming through lane reduction and limiting of through traffic. New transit stations themselves would decrease pedestrian crossing distance either by expanding sidewalks or creating accessible median refuges. Replacing general traffic lanes with dedicated streetcar lanes would have a traffic calming effect. Finally, with some of the proposed street designs we would discourage cut through traffic resulting in lower traffic volumes and speeds particularly on residential streets. Calming traffic

also improves bicycle safety. As the project progresses, we will develop more detailed bicycle designs that ensure that bicyclists can safely negotiate in-street tracks as they do in many North American cities and around the world. Although a streetcar would be an unfamiliar mode for many New Yorkers and require some adjustment, we believe the project would contribute to the overall safety of our streets. In addition to cutting edge street design, BQX would require innovative curb management. The BQX serves multiple commercial corridors which would continue to have goods and passenger loading needs. Building on existing DOT programs, we look forward to continuing to work with local business communities on innovative approaches such as off hour deliveries, loading on cross streets and even bicycle delivery programs. At DOT we are currently stepping up our efforts to improve bus service in New York City. Our Better Buses Action Plan aims to speed up buses by 25% by 2020 and increase reliability. We will accomplish this through various forms of transit priority treatments, dedicated additional enforcement and by coordinating our efforts with MTA's borough bus network redesigns which will reconfigure bus

routes in an effort to improve service and reverse negative bus ridership trends. With BQX, the City would provide an important addition to surface transit in key sections of Queens and Brooklyn and compliment an improved bus network. The BQX would neither merely replace bus routes nor run totally independently of them. Instead, we are committed in the future to integrating the new service with buses and subways in a way that fully optimizes transit in this part of the City and of course, fare integration with MTA which including free transfers would also be an essential component of making the BQX a success. In conclusion, the BQX is an innovative, forward looking transportation investment in a key growth corridor that would improve mobility for thousands of New Yorkers. The project would advance DOT's mission to provide for the safe, efficient and environmentally responsible movement of people and goods in the City of New York. We look forward to continuing to support EDC in this project. Thank you very much.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you, thank you, Chris and thank you both for your testimony. We have two members of the Council that I want to recognize

for questions. I'm gonna start with a few questions before I go through my list to respect, I know there's a few hearings today and I want to make sure that they can get their questions in but I'm gonna start with the origin and cost of the BQX concept as was proposed and what I really want to understand is what, what was the origin and the concept for the light rail along this corridor, this specific corridor and what agencies and non-governmental partners were initially consulted to birth this concept and idea. Can you walk through that a little bit?

SETH MYERS: Sure, thank you, Council Member. You know, I think we have long looked at, as well as our colleagues at DOT, areas of the City that are, you know, underserved by transit and would benefit by better connections. That's in part why we launched initiatives like NYC Ferry to better connect a lot of these waterfront neighborhoods, both with each other and with other job centers, including Manhattan or like Sunset Park or Brooklyn Navy Yard where we're looking to support industrial jobs in quality neighborhoods there. Particular to the streetcar, there was a group of both community and,

you know, local owners and residents along the alignment that grouped together and came up with a proposal for this streetcar notion. It was something that was discussed with City Hall and Deputy Mayor Glen and then EDC was asked, along with DOT, to help evaluate this for its feasibility. We took a look at it and over several months' time said that there were portions of the proposal that made a lot of sense and helped in alignment with our goals bridge some of those existing transit gaps and help better connect those communities and there were other parts of it that we didn't think were feasible and required some modifications and, you know, whether that's analysis around ridership or cost or that's specific to the actual alignment and streets that they chose to run the streetcar along and made a series of significant modifications to the proposal that results in kind of what you have today.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Do you have any sense of timeline on when the City first started working on the BQX and the proposal?

SETH MYERS: Council Member, I believe it was in 2016 that we first started working on this

with our first of what we call the rapid assessment phase.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, and just so I could get a sense of it, I'm kind of hearing two different pieces and this is all important. This is gonna kind of build into a larger, kind of narrative here, but what I'm looking for are different pieces that kind of started the questions about the corridor itself and the needs and you speak to the needs. Are there specific moments that came out of studies that showed need, high need here in this corridor and can you point to those studies and maybe this is more of a DOT question for transportation but I'm looking to that and when that kind of started the conversation or was the BQX concept really an offering of this group that you mentioned?

SETH MYERS: It's an excellent question, Council Member, and if I could just continue first and then I'll happily yield to my DOT colleagues. You know, we look at jobs and economic growth and residential growth and this is one of the fastest growing corridors in the City. We've seen enormous development. We've seen enormous growth and emerging job centers and hubs as people choose to locate their

businesses, whether that's larger or smaller in these areas. That's exactly the type of analysis that we did that concluded that we needed a very robust expansion of the ferry network here and so in terms of meeting those goals for connections, that's very much in line with what we had, you know, for the longer term been planning.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Yeah, I would just add that from our perspective, I mean, I think we're on the same page with EDC about this being sort of a unique corridor that's growing fast that we expect to grow in the future that doesn't have great existing transit connections all along the corridor. In terms of, like some of the studies we've done in determining SBS routes for instance, we tend to focus more on, you know, a number of factors but one of the big things is existing ridership looking, you know, obviously working with MTA on that project, looking at what are their bus routes that have high ridership that have continuous corridors with the potential to, you know, in a fairly short order, put in some meaningful bus priority measures. The BQX corridor, I'd say, is a little bit of a different beast. It's a little less continuous. You know, this project is



a little bit of a different approach. It's looking more towards the future as opposed to addressing existing capacity issues so that's kind of where we come at it from.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, I'm gonna wait for some, there's some juicy stuff that we're gonna unpack later but I'm gonna stay on costs here. Has the administration hired consultants in this time since 2016 that were directly connected to the BQX proposal? If you can kind of give us a sense of those consultants, the costs and the price. I want to get a sense of how much was spent thus far on the BQX with consultants and then on the other side, any kind of inhouse costs for people on team, if that's been measured at all both from DOT and from EDC.

SETH MYERS: Thank you Council Member. We have a, we've spent a good deal of time taking a look at both the feasibility of the initial proposal kind of making it our own, if you will, making those modifications I talked about and then developing more details around both the ridership, financial and cost models involved with the project. Over the three phases of work which would be the initial assessment, a phase one and a phase two which resulted in the

August report that we put out last summer. We've spent about \$7.5 million to date and that's using a series of outside consultants around engineering studies, transit analysis, ridership analysis, doing some of the detailed cost estimates as well as the financial and growth modeling.

WILL FISHER: And I would just add Council Member that those were funded by EDC's self-funds, not from City capital or another source like that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Wait can you, I'm sorry, can you repeat that one more time. Those are what?

WILL FISHER: So it's funding what is called EDC's self-funds, so the funding allocated there, the \$7.4 million that Seth referred to is not coming out of the City Council budget.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Got it, so this is self EDC

WILL FISHER: It's the corporation's funds [Inaudible].

CHAIR MENCHACA: Corporation funds and these are essentially the revenues that you collect from all the properties that you have within the EDC portfolio.

WILL FISHER: Correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's EDC's it's \$7.5 million and then can DOT talk a little bit about your, your costs on your side?

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Sure, our costs would be solely staff costs. I don't have a figure in front of me. I will say that at this moment we have myself pretty much fully devoted to the project and then we bring in other staff as needed to work on the project and I think, you know, probably having that pattern has persisted since the project started with different people and I can certainly get you the figures in terms of the actual cost breakdown if you'd like them but staff based.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Yes, please, and on EDC's side as well, a breakdown of the \$7.4, if that's something that you can get within the hearing, it would be great but a breakdown of the \$7.4. I know there was a hired consultant that came in from Canada maybe so there's other folks. If you can kind of do a line item, that would be great to kind of just see the infrastructure. We want to get a sense of the infrastructure and it sounds like

[Inaudible]

CHAIR MENCHACA: And you got it, okay.

REBECCA ZACK: See if I can get it.

CHAIR MENCHACA: You'll see if you can get it, awesome, great. I'm gonna pause my cost questions and then hand it over to Council Member Reynoso for the first set of questions with a clock of three minutes.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you Chair and thank you all for being here. I want to ask some more general questions because I think a lot of the concern that folks have related to this project, if they have any concerns are very basis questions that need answers. A lot of folks are concerned about the cost of what a BQX project would amount to. I think it's \$3 billion at this moment and how we would get that money in the City to actually build this out and the timeline by which this would be built is another concern and then the last one is alternatives. A lot of folks believe that if the DOT decided they wanted to build out a SBS system with a dedicated route for buses, the same way we would take streets on for the BQX, removing parking and just allowing for there to be an express SBS. That could be an alternative that's more short term and more cost effective so can

you just talk to me about how much you think this project would cost, how you would get the financing for it and why a SBS alternative, for example, would be something that you don't believe can do the same things? Thank you.

SETH MYERS: Council Member, thank you for the question. It's an important one to go through. If it's all right with you, I'll try to take a shot at answering your questions around the cost of the project and how we arrived at that figure, the mechanism that we propose to pay for it and then I'll ask my DOT colleagues to talk a little bit more about SBS as it relates to options to address bridging some of these gaps.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Before you start, cause I only have three minutes, I want to ask, I just want to say one thing is that I represent Williamsburg, a portion of the route here. We're going to see an increase in population of over 100,000 people I believe within the next three years. According to the 2005, 2006 rezoning they said it was a significant increase in the North Brooklyn area. We have a very limited amount of transportation in the waterfront as you can see, the ferries which I

think are over subsidized are a big problem for me but even the ferry this weekend, folks are waiting one hour to be able to move to, let's say, far Rockaway to go to the beach and so forth. The out train, you have to wait for three trains. Before you can get on the out train during rush hour, going and coming, it's not a convenient route. The G-train is a short train that to this day I don't understand why the MTA still hasn't made it a full eight cars and opposed to the six that it currently exists and all these cases, unreliable with time, the cleanliness is an issue and this is something I want to take very serious, an alternative to transportation in an area that I think has a lot of people that are continuing to move in with a limited amount of transportation options but in taking it serious, I want to make sure that I ask you the right questions which come down to cost and alternatives so, there you go, that's my time.

SETH MYERS: Good use of time, sir. I couldn't agree with your assessment more and I think that speaks to exactly what we're here to talk about. You know, looking at the level of growth and it may be acutely felt in places like Williamsburg where

there's both a lot of growth and it's happening quickly and, you know, I don't want to get into the definition exactly of a well-served or poorly-served neighborhood but broadly speaking, you know, you list the number of transits, options that you have today between the L, the G, the ferry and many other neighborhoods would be happy or happier to have even some of those but exactly to your point sir, you look at the diversity of options that you have and there still is more need, more need for more choices and options that better reflect exactly how people make their way to their destination be it the job or off to go to a recreational area so I think it's well said and it's a good point and we're always trying to both work on more options and better connections to the existing ones. For cost, our cost estimate ended up at a \$2.7 billion estimate and that was on the final or the current proposed alignment that we're gonna go into our environmental impact statement with which is the 11-mile route running from Red Hook up to Astoria. We arrived at that number based on a series of assumptions about, you know, how much track we'd have to build, where we'd have a train yard, how many vehicles we'd need to purchase to operate the

fleet, the amount of utilities we'd have to relocate and who would pay for those and some of the major distinctions between previous estimates which were around \$2.5 billion but for a larger, a 16-mile route with the removal of Sunset Park from the initial proposal was really due to being more conservative around carrying escalation numbers, accounting for a 2024 construction start with a completion in 2029 so we moved up the numbers to allow for a longer construction period and happening later. We factored in higher contingency rates to reflect the amount that we know or more accurately don't know around conditions that were likely to come into and factored in more specifics around some of the bridge costs, some of the potential to acquire private property and deal with the unknowns that we may encounter like remediation or hazardous materials under the earth. In terms of paying for it, that's where we again were very conservative in coming up with a value capture analysis. We projected that the BQX, the addition of more transit options in the streetcar mode would create a \$1.3 to \$1.4 billion additional revenues that the City would collect over 40 years. That's about 1.8% increase over residential values and 2% on



commercial over 40 years and while initially there was hope or even expectation that the value capture could pay for the entire project itself, I think we were extremely conservative in the way we looked at the value analysis. We were consistent in not having any other associated land use actions with the BQX so there are no additional rezoning or City actions that would cause more or additional growth or value to be caused and that leaves us with a gap between what we think the value capture model earns us and what we think it would cost for the project to be delivered and for that we need to seek additional funds to address that and we are talking with the federal government around funds. That's gonna be one of the important steps in pursuing the EIS. That's a prerequisite as well as advancing our design to make our case around the transit benefits to the federal government for the remainder of the funds. For alternatives, to your third question, our EIS does plan to look at a BRT or bus rapid transit as a real alternative to the streetcar and I'd ask Chris or Rebecca to talk a little bit about how BRT or SBS may fit in as an alternative and perhaps a little bit about the differences between those two.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Sure, I guess what I'll say is that as part of the technical analysis that was done for this study, there was sort of a screening of all potential modes. It's kind of standard practice when you look at a corridor to look at all potential modes, not just BRT and streetcar but things like subway and aerial tram and, you know, some of those were screened out pretty quickly just due to costs and impact.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: I hope helicopter isn't part of that.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: I'd have to look but you're probably right. I don't think we went, they went that far. At the end of the day, not the end of the day but as a result of that initial assessment, it was found that streetcar was the preferred option. However, a bus rapid transit option was identified as kind of the second ranking one and one that was worthy of further exploration so as part of, as Seth mentioned, as part of the EIS we look forward to and were required to study alternatives to what our preferred concept is right now and we look forward to digging deeper into a potential bus option.

1 TASK FORCE ON BQX

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2 CHAIR MENCHACA: Chris, can you tell us,  
3 you said you pulled from what, you pulled that  
4 something was ranked, the BQX was ranked first, the  
5 light rail was ranked first and then BRT ranked  
6 second. Is that a DOT study that you're pulling it  
7 from?

8 CHRISTOPHER HRONES: No, that was part of  
9 the EDC contracted work that was done.

10 CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's already  
11 happened?

12 CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Corrected, their  
13 initial study.

14 CHAIR MENCHACA: And when did that  
15 happen?

16 CHRISTOPHER HRONES: It would probably  
17 have been somewhere in 2017, 2016 or 2017.

18 CHAIR MENCHACA: 2017, is that a report  
19 that we can get, that the Committee can get?

20 CHRISTOPHER HRONES: I would have to  
21 defer to EDC on that.

22 WILL FISHER: Yes, absolutely, Council  
23 Member we can share the, we can try to see what other  
24 information we have to be able to share with you all  
25 on specific mode comparison. The report that we

released in August does have a high level comparison of modes, everything from the streetcar to bus rapid transit to other sorts of services but we can see what other information that's more in depth beyond the report that we can share with you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, that would be great. I'm gonna hand this over to Council Member Van Bramer from Queens and we have been joined by Council Member Costa Constantinides.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Chair, and I want to first start off by welcoming a lot of friendly faces that I see are in the audience from Queensbridge, Ravenswood and Astoria houses in particular in Queens. Great to see so many great New Yorkers in the people's house and it is my honor and privilege to represent so many of you in the Council. I just want to say at the outset, I believe clearly there's a need for more and better transportation options. I think all of us can agree on that. We want better mass transit options particularly for our residents in public housing and that's important to me. I think that's important to everyone in this room. I have some questions just about the administration's commitment to this because

as the Chair alluded to, we've been talking about it for a few years. There've been some changes along the way and I just want to know if we're gonna keep talking about it or if something's gonna happen because I don't want anyone to have any false expectations, so I have a few questions. I'll ask them in sort of rapid-fire successions as well so I can meet my timeline and then maybe you can share some of the answers. One is the federal contribution here that we think is necessary and that's a change from the beginning and I understand that plans change all the time but while we, I will speak for myself, I will hope and pray and work to make sure that there's a different occupant of the White House in two years, the current occupant is not necessary the most friendly to New York City, ironically enough. How do you anticipate overcoming that barrier if in fact we continue to have a hostile occupant of the White House and yet we require federal funding to actually make this a reality? The second, and I was interested in what you just said about the EIS, and I think DOT said that BRT is an alternative, your second choice but as an alternative. Is it possible that after the EIS is completed you'll come back and

say, well, you know, I actually took a look at this whole thing weighing the first option which is the BQX and then that second preferred option which was BRT? Is it possible that you're gonna come back at that point and say after looking at all of this and doing the EIS, the BRT is actually the more doable option and that gets to my sort of commitment? Is the administration fully committed to this and implementing it and those are two things that I think speak to both its realization but then also the potential for it to either slow down, peter out, to use some puns in the transportation world and so that's what I'm trying to figure out here. We're not faced with a decision yet because we sort of don't know exactly what we're looking at, right. It's sort of still being decided. There are still changes being made. We know we need better and more transportation options but I'm trying to assess just for my early look at this, how committed and how realistic is this?

SETH MYERS: Thank you, Council Member, we are planning to continue our dialogue with the community, and I hear you loud and clear about talking and it's an important part of the process

obviously. Throughout the summer and in the fall we will actually be beginning the formal process of EIS work and that will be followed by our scoping process which is where we will present what we think the range of the project would be and let people respond to it to make sure we are studying the right components of it so I think that will be real material process, real material progress and further explain exactly where we are and how we can seek the community's inputs on what exactly the project is as well as alternatives to it. If I could answer that third question, second, you know, putting in the BRT analysis, it is not atypical in the slightest to put in a real alternative inside of EIS. This is a extremely complicated project with very different types of funding sources and governance models potential and operations models and a very complicated set of construction steps and sequencing steps. There's a lot to look at and consider and when we benchmarked our progress against other streetcar projects around the United States, we found that we're moving at a fairly similar timeframe that they are so what I think you'll see as we get the EIS up and running is a further development of what the

BRT option is, what it can do very well, what it may not meet in terms of expectations like around cost savings or what the tradeoffs are for, by reducing the capital costs via BRT versus a streetcar, what you may lose in terms of ridership or time savings for people using it so I think that's a great format and process to have those conversations around the tradeoffs and the choices and how much benefit or savings we actually get out of the different alternatives.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Just to follow-up real quick, Chair, so then, so that's my point is you're doing an EIS on this proposed BQX but it sounds like you're sort of simultaneously doing at EIS on the BRT option as well and if not specifically but because you're entertaining that option and looking at all of the costs and benefit analysis as you should and then kind of major planning effort, is it possible then that you come back after completing the EIS and say no, we looked at all of this, both options completely top and bottom, talked to everyone, weighed out all the costs, benefits and come back with the BRT being the preferred option?



SETH MYERS: Yeah, I want to be very clear and echo what my colleague Chris said about this. We looked at the different modes, a streetcar versus a BRT and we felt strongly that from a ridership, from a time savings, from a ability to generate value that would help offset the capital cost, that the streetcar was a better option that met more of our goals. That said, we are going to do a full analysis of BRT as an alternative and have the conversation around those pros and cons and we'll see where we come out of it with. It's a real alternative and it's something we're gonna look at seriously so I think that's an answer to your question. Lastly on the federal funds, I don't pretend to be an expert on either the Trump administration or Washington, D.C. Obviously, there are challenges there. We think we have a lot of merits for the project and we'll be continuing our conversations with them and one of our prerequisites is completing a federally compliant EIS which we'll be doing and advancing some of the design which will be happening as part of this EIS and continuing the conversations there around sources of additional funds.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: No one fully understands the Trump administration, even the people in the Trump administration.

SETH MYERS: Good, yeah, probably correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Council Member Costa Constantinides.

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you Chair Menchaca. Good afternoon everyone, well good morning still, I guess. It's good to see Ms. Claudia Koger and Bishop Mitchell Taylor here as well. It's always good to have friends from Astoria here in City Hall. I'll echo in my beginning what Council Member Van Bramer said is that we recognize the need for different transit options. The end of the Hallets Cove Peninsula is 15,015 feet, not that I've gone to Google maps and gained that at all from Manhattan and yet it's one of the longest commutes in the City, in my district and, you know, the ferry has been a huge win for the residents on the Hallets Cove Peninsula. Now looking at this streetcar, I am intrigued but I have some real concerns. The concerns that I have are around the value capture. This corridor is one of the most gentrified parts of my district and thing

are, homes are being torn down. There is a real affordability crisis in this part of our community, and I see that the value capture is gonna go all the way to the train line on 31<sup>st</sup> Street which is only gonna make the challenges in Astoria even greater. What are we doing to safeguard affordability and make sure that our neighborhoods aren't just, you know, we're knocking down buildings continuously to build new buildings and what are we doing to protect those residents? We talk about traffic, I know DOT, we've gained out over 2,000 cars an hour on 21<sup>st</sup> Street where the streetcar is scheduled to go and it's also a truck route and this street functions more like a highway than a street. What are we going to do on 21<sup>st</sup> Street to make sure that pedestrians are kept safe, that bicyclists are kept safe, that this is actually, you know, will continue, will start functioning more like a street cause we've made some improvements? We're in need of more improvements there. What are we going to do with the streetcar coming in to really make sure that people get the message that this is a neighborhood here? We have senior centers, we have schools, we have the Variety boys and girls club, I mean this is a real community.

How are we going to safeguard that with putting, shrinking lanes and making things even more crowded? You know, those are some of my questions because we have trucks that are there, and they don't treat our community like we're a neighborhood. They're a pass through to get to Manhattan. That's always been none of my, you know, big concerns and then looking at, you know, how many cars do we expect to get off the road by doing this, right? Like what is, what are our, what are the environmental benefits? Have we thought about that? I know we are about to do an EIS but what are we gaming out here for environmental benefits cause this part of the community has higher than the borough average as MERITS, ER admissions, hospitalizations. You know, they're already overwhelmed when it comes to emissions. What are we going to do to improve air quality there and is this gonna be part of our analysis?

SETH MYERS: Thank you Council Member, a great set of important questions and if I could start with the gentrification or affordability concerns. That's one that we are very aware of and take incredibly seriously. I think the answer is a multi-part one and essentially we look at a corridor that

is across the entire corridor, 25% of residents are in owner occupied houses and another 56% are in some form of rent controlled residence where they have some protections against affordability rising. Left without the BQX and kind of a no build scenario if you will, you're already seeing a lot of the concerns that you have with growth happening. What we think is that by putting in the BQX we're giving more options for the people who do live and will continue to live in the area for them to have transportation option.

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Mr. Chair, can I just throw in something really quick? For the owner-occupied buildings, you know, they may be, you know, they're property rich and cash poor, right. It might be seniors, it might be individuals who have, you know, this is the American dream, that buy their home and now that property is gonna increase. I hope that's being factored into your calculus as well.

SETH MYERS: Yeah, and we will have a robust analysis around some of the socioeconomic impact as part of our EIS and that's a dialogue that we're continuing to have. I also really take pride

in this administration's efforts for things like tenant protections, increasing the amount of affordability of housing and being very unapologetic in allowing and fighting for people to stay in their neighborhoods and stay in their homes and not apologizing for trying to improve transit connections to areas in a way that, you know, requires us to strike that balance of how do we improve something that we know is gonna make a neighborhood more accessible but yet allow people to stay there and not have to make a choice about having good transit or a neighborhood that they can afford to stay in so it is a balance. It's one we take incredibly seriously and are going to be continuing to address and talk about more and analyze more. Chris, did you want to talk a little bit about the transit impacts?

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Sure, I think he had two questions. One was about congestion more generally and 21<sup>st</sup> more specifically and then it was about sort of the air quality implications. In terms of talking about 21<sup>st</sup> Street, we fully recognize it, DOT, that that's a challenging street that has heavy traffic volumes exactly as you say. We've tried to work to put in safety measures, some pedestrian

safety measures. We want to do more. In terms of the BQX, one thing that would benefit, right now the alignment would be a center running alignment which would mean that the stations would be in the middle of the road. What that also means is that at station locations, there would be in effect a pedestrian refuge so that people crossing at those locations wouldn't have to cross all six lanes at one time. They'd have a place to stop if they needed to and we found that in terms of pedestrian safety counter measures, placing pedestrian refuges is one of the biggest things that you can do. In terms of air quality impacts, this is a fully electric vehicle. It wouldn't have any local pollution at all. Obviously, we try to source the electricity so that it would be as close to zero emissions as possible overall so in terms of contributing to air quality and green house gassing emission global warming goals, it's something that wouldn't do so. In terms of actually quantifying that, I mean we'll do that as you say in the EIS. It's a matter of quantifying how many people are changing from more polluting modes, like vehicles to this mode where you don't have any pollution at all and that's not 100% of the new

riders but that's a percentage that new riders we do anticipate will be getting out of cars and into the streetcar.

COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Yes, before I go, the Chair has granted me one last question and I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Around freight delivery, you know this corridor is also a business corridor and we see challenges now on 21<sup>st</sup> Street around the issues of, you know, when a delivery happens, we have double parked cars. With a shrunk streetscape, what is our thought process around freight delivery times and hours and how are we going to keep things moving, right? We have an electric streetcar down the middle of the street but if we aren't, you know, planning out what we're gonna see on the street itself, we're gonna have congestion backed up on 21<sup>st</sup> Street much more contributing to emissions in our communities so what's our thought process there on freight delivery in the long term?

WILL FISHER: Sure, I can take that. Yeah, I think freight delivery is a first of all, ensuring that in these commercial corridors there can be both passenger loading, but more importantly good



loading and unloading is an important part of DOT and what we do. We have a whole group that focuses on that and some of our most recent focus has been looking at innovative ways to make that happen whether that's overnight deliveries. We have a pilot program on that. We have, often now we look at, you know, does the delivery have to be right on the main street or could it be right around the corner on one of the spur roads. In some cases that works. We're even looking at delivery by bicycle. Will it work everywhere? Maybe not but this is something we're piloting and it's not just 21<sup>st</sup> Street. It's other commercial corridors along the alignment that we will need to work very closely, the City will need to work very closely on making sure that this works for businesses. I would point out that in addition to, you know, these challenges and needing to work them out, you know, this will also be, this will also have positive impacts for business with, you know, 50,000 rides a day provided on this service, some of those rides are gonna get off and shop at the businesses and certainly in an environment, in environments like Kansas City, which are very car dominated, they've seen growth in their sales receipts based on the

streetcar so in an area like New York City where it's not as car dominated, I would expect that this would have a positive contribution to the commercial community.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you Council Member Constantinides. I have to say one thing really quick before I go into the next round of questions so we have a budget negotiating team meeting right now and so this is why you're seeing Members come and go but I will keep with the questions. They care about this project and they're texting me ideas and questions as well, so I just want you to know that the Members that were here today, are at a budget negotiating team. We're in budget season so let's go right up, we're gonna put up a slide that talks a little bit about the costs. Many of the questions that Members have are about costs and I want us to kinda walk through this. The first slide that we wanted to put was the comparison between 2016 and 2018 for the BQX fiscal analysis here and in 2016 we added 16-mile route and we had a cost per mile. That cost went up in 2018 at a shorter route and this is one of those big moments. I think the press really caught on to this. What happened here? Walk us through what, how

did this happen and now we have Sunset Park as a question here not because we want the BQX in Sunset Park. I think that's been very clear but because now we're not focused any more on this corridor that really excited a lot of people because of the jobs. I think there's a lot of values that we're all pointing to like jobs and economic opportunities but let's just answer the question about that cost. How did this happen?

SETH MYERS: Well thank you, it's an important question and it's one that, you know, we took a look at both the amount of information that we had and the way that we structured our estimate and the way we made certain assumptions around it and both with a best practices of making sure that we were identifying the right need and the full need so we would not be in the place of having a lower estimate than we assumed and also following some federal guidelines about the right way to price, which was important that we again be in compliance with federal best practices there.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Can I pause you there, Seth? So, let's just take that one statement. I want to break it up a little bit, so you had

information, I think Chris was talking about a 2017 data sheet that gave you a sense of information. Are you saying that 2016, where did you get the numbers for 2016 to get you to the cost per mile for the BQX? What did you use for that?

SETH MYERS: Sure, this was, the 2016 report there and you see it from the footnote, that is what we were referring to as our rapid assessment, that was taking the proposal that we received initially and doing

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that proposal came from where?

SETH MYERS: That was from that group of public stakeholders and the residents along

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's what we're calling the Friends of the BQX?

SETH MYERS: Friends of the BQX, that's correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, that's the proposal you got.

SETH MYERS: Yep, that's right and, please

WILL FISHER: But to be clear there, that was the City's independent analysis of that idea of

that project that was proposed so they had their own independent report which the City took, rethought the assumptions that were made therein, did our own value capture analysis, etc. so I would just draw that distinction, Council Member. It's a good question, between the initial report that was done by the private party and then the City adopting, taking a look at that idea and producing the numbers you see here.

SETH MYERS: That's right, thank you Will, so this was our initial and first take off, our number based on their proposal as Will correctly clarified and I think that was with, you know, a few months' worth of feasibility and review to come up with that. In the intervening period with a much larger, more dedicated team to it and a lot more time and resources to it, we revised and revised again our number looking at different assumptions around both the route, the alignment and assumptions about the condition of utilities and soil quality that we would find. We did a series of test pits and actually investigated what was physically in the streets to help inform that cost estimate and got, frankly, a lot smarter about what a streetcar network would look

like in terms of how many vehicles we'd need to have running and available for it, the power supply, the amount of power substations we need to site along the route and then adding in what we think is appropriate but conservative sets of contingencies and allowances on top of that to come up with the final number that we did.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you, and the Friends of the BQX are going to be testifying later and we'll ask them how they got it. That way we can kind of piece all this together but just to recap, the 2016 was a rapid review from the private partners that you received the initial proposal from and then you did the work and two later came up with a different number, a shorter route, removing Sunset Park from this and the one question I have on Sunset Park, just so we can get it out, is is the EIS also including Sunset Park as part of the corridor for discussion?

SETH MYERS: So, let me just clarify for the avoidance of doubt and hopefully it's not repetitive. We received a proposal. That proposal had its own set of assumptions or details around what they thought the alignment would be, what they

thought the cost of it would be. We performed a rapid assessment looking at that proposal, evaluating what worked, what didn't, and coming up with numbers that we thought a proposal could be, so we were already deviating from what they proposed. In large part, it was following a similar concept. It's a streetcar along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront but we made several changes to it and that was the initial number, the outcome of our rapid assessment, that we thought it would cost so I'm sorry if that's repetitive, I just wanted to be absolutely [crosstalk]

CHAIR MENCHACA: No, it's important to get it clear. It's gonna help us understand the full, give us a full understanding and then you did again for 2018.

SETH MYERS: That's correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's the August report that came out.

SETH MYERS: With the benefit of the [Inaudible]

CHAIR MENCHACA: Of the bigger team

SETH MYERS: The larger team, the analysis that I mentioned previously, that's right.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Great.

SETH MYERS: And then to your question about Sunset Park and the EIS, it is not going to be in the EIS, that's correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Sunset Park is not going to be in the EIS, even if you're thinking about BRT and other alternatives?

SETH MYERS: Correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, and so tell us a little bit about how that decision is made. I'm assuming that Sunset Park for EDC is an important portfolio for economic development and so tell us a little bit about how that got decided and can that change?

SETH MYERS: Correct, as you well know Sunset Park is incredibly important to EDC and one we take a lot of pride in.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Oh, I know.

[Laughter]

SETH MYERS: The rationale that we removed it from our BQX study was that it was, it was very expensive. It required a crossing of the Iguanas [phonetic] and the bridge of several hundred million dollars to get the train there and then it



was a several mile run that really didn't attract a level of ridership that seemed to justify that cost and that potential disruption to a lot of the local business. There are, as you know, an extensive amount of curb cuts and businesses that are really dependent on heavy truck deliveries as you have a very active industrial area. We did not want to disrupt that and with the limited benefits of riderships for residents of the area, we just determined that that was not going to be the right fit for the project so we removed it from the BQX proposal which is by no means to say that that is the end of conversation on how to improve transit access or transportation access to Sunset Park. It's just gonna be a different, a different vehicle if you will to deliver that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Couldn't we benefit from a conversation that includes Sunset Park as part of a conversation in general about transportation and connecting job centers to people along the corridor? I'm thinking about Red Hook getting to Sunset Park and that being something very important for residents and so is that an opportunity to open that up and

allow for the corridor to remain as you look at alternatives like bus?

SETH MYERS: I think the answer to that is we are always delighted, as are our colleagues at DOT, to talk about different ways we can solve transportation gaps or problems. I think using the EIS process for BQX may not be the right forum to have that conversation and perhaps it's another either DOT process around SBS or other street improvements or something around with EDC and the NYC Ferry that we might be able to talk about different alternatives or just coordinating with both of us which can happen sometimes when things are working well around City Bike or other options we have to improve access.

REBECCA ZACK: We'd be happy to have that conversation.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, well we'll just move on. Made the point, we're gonna move on. Okay, let's talk about the next slide, let's show the bus rapid transit project slide here. I don't know if you can see that from where you're at but essentially you have the kind of comparisons for the Select Bus Ridership and the numbers compared to other light

rail lines and or I should say other cities BRT numbers and so the numbers are pretty high here and I kinda want get a sense about, you said something earlier that the BQX would have more ridership than BRT and certain numbers and so I want to get a sense about how you can compare those and then also look at the cost as well and so how does the BQX become number one on your analysis sheets when we're seeing kind of cost per mile here and ridership at a different rate. It's hard for us to reconcile.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Sure, I can take it. Maybe just as a way of sort of clarifying, because I think there are these terms SBS, BRT that maybe not everyone in the room may be familiar with.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Please walk us through 101. We're here to learn, I think everyone here's ready to learn.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Sure, sure, so SBS stands for Select Bus Service and it's essentially a brand. It's New York City's brand of something called Bus Rapid Transit or BRT so what is Bus Rapid Transit which is the more generic term. Bus Rapid Transit or BRT is basically the application of a number of tools including things like bus priority

lanes, signal priority to make buses go faster, looking at the service, having stops that are further apart, providing vehicles that are more appealing, having offboard fare collection so it's a package of these improvements that you apply to a specific bus service in order to make it faster or more reliable and more attractive. Now there's a whole range of what Bus Rapid Transit or for that matter, Select Bus Service can consist of. You could do a light touch, maybe put in bus lanes where it's kinda easy to do. In other places maybe you don't put in bus lanes but still have offboard fare collection, maybe in a few areas you have some signal priority so that's a light touch. There are probably some of our SBS routes that are close to that and others that are more robust. On the other end of the spectrum is sort of the most robust SBS service that you could image, right, and that would mean as close as possible replicating, not replicating, but trying to get as close as possible to something like a rail or traditionally what rail has had so that means, you know, physically separated bus lanes for most or all of the way. It means full raised stations. It might even mean, you know, having doors on both sides of

the bus so you can board from the center. There are very few examples in the U. S. where all of those things are manifest in their most robust way so when you talk about sort of comparing SBS to rail, streetcar or light rail transit, it's important to distinguish sort of, or recognize that you could be talking about a number of different things and, you know, the examples you give here represent a range of different applications of both SBS or in this case, that are all SBS so I just wanted to put that out to begin with but

CHAIR MENCHACA: In terms of, our question is, are buses faster than the light rail that is being proposed? I think that's the question and what we're hearing from you is that actually the light rail is gonna be faster than the bus and I kind of want to get a sense about how you're coming to that conclusion while we're kinda already seeing some data showing that SBS works and you like it, you're trying to push it out, we're advocating for that as well. I think that's the

[crosstalk]

SETH MYERS: If I can, perhaps there's a, our logic to this was we see many benefits of a

streetcar. It increases the value, thus helping with the value capture and offsetting its capital cost. If then one were to say how do I get the same transportation

CHAIR MENCHACA: Seth, that was a really important thing you just said there.

SETH MYERS: Yep.

CHAIR MENCHACA: I just want to unpack that a little bit more, that we're gonna increase the value of, of what?

SETH MYERS: Sure, the value of the streetcar generates an additional increase in the property values thus the revenue that we collect versus a BRT which would, you know, studies have shown that it generates a smaller increase as a, like a transit premium.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, sorry I just wondered.

SETH MYERS: Yep, the question would then go how do I get the same transportation benefit and how much value do I lose and get some savings back from a BRT as an alternative and what we found is, to Chris' point, there is a range of different BRT or SBS options you have and to get a commensurate amount

of transportation benefit you end up incurring many of the same capital costs. We found in a kind of apples to apples comparison that you're only seeing a capital cost savings of as much as 30% by doing BRT versus, you know, a light rail or a streetcar and

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's important to, let's just unpack that.

SETH MYERS: Yep.

CHAIR MENCHACA: So you save more by going to the light rail because it generates more value and property and I have a few questions about value capture to understand exactly what that means but you're saying because, because light rail increases property values and then you can capture that to pay for it. Compared to a bus, it doesn't increase property values as much.

SETH MYERS: As much, right.

WILL FISHER: And I would say, I would just add that,

CHAIR MENCHACA: But then, that's a savings.

WILL FISHER: That Council Member, respectively, that the value increase that Seth is citing is accompanied by a ridership increase, that

the streetcar is seen as a more permanent investment that drives higher ridership numbers as well as the associated value capture so we see that because of, we see that when folks see a capital construction place taking place with a dedicated right of way, with utilities moved out of the right of way so you don't have service interruptions, that sort of thing, that it's seen as a more permanent investment being made by an entity so the ridership generated there is also higher in addition to the value capture piece.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, let's get into the value capture so, actually, I'm gonna skip over to value capture right now and so there are many kinds of value captures, right, so let's just get an understanding of that. Can you please explain what that exactly means in terms of the specific value mechanisms that EDC intends to use for the BQX? Will the City need to pay the interest on any debt, on a potential bond floated by a new LDC for example or and is NYCHA gonna be paying into the value capture model? There's a lot of NYCHA along the route. Are they paying in as well and is that part of the scheme for the Mayor's plan for paying into this value capture?



SETH MYERS: The value capture, generally speaking, the idea is that we are causing an improvement that has a benefit to people which is the ridership and time savings and how they use the transit system versus what their alternatives could be. That has, what our calculations showed is in a half mile radius adjacent to the alignment of the streetcar, a approximately 1.8 increase in revenue collection from residential properties and 2% from commercial values and that adds up to the \$1.7 billion that we would collect over course of 40 years that would offset that so the concept generally is we would then find a way to capture that value over time by issuing bonds against it. To the specifics, I don't think we are there yet. That's the questions around determining future governance or the operating model of what we are planning to implement but, you know, there are a couple of different ways to do it and a couple of different ways to set up the financial structure and how the value is back stopped against the future revenues.

WILL FISHER: And, Council Member, I would add that in regard to your question specifically about NYCHA properties, the value

capture study that we performed specifically excludes tax-exempt properties so for properties where there is property tax already being collected, they would be involved, but for properties that do not pay property tax, they would not.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Got it, so Navy Yard, NYCHA, which is a lot of that corridor.

WILL FISHER: Religious institutions, for example.

CHAIR MENCHACA: So, you're putting the pressure on the private owned spaces.

SETH MYERS: We aren't, just it's wordsmithing perhaps, but we're not putting the pressure on so much as that's what's generating it.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Right.

SETH MYERS: I mean, those are the people that are paying taxes today in a way that we're not going to be adding taxes to anyone additional or putting pressure on. It's just they are going to be benefitting in large degree from the improvement and would be paying that increase over time that I talked about.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Great, so again I want to try to see if I can simplify this for folks that

are listening or here today, about how this works so essentially you have property, said property mile in the corridor, and if you didn't know BQX the property would still keep going up cause that's what happens in New York City. Property value goes up. It's a great investment, people come from all over the world to, which is causing problems. Well, that's another hearing, okay, so BQX comes in and now the property at X% goes up. Are you only capturing the value of the increase by measuring say an average in the neighborhood that is not impacted by this investment and then pulling that, those dollars out?

SETH MYERS: That's correct, the idea is to measure and attribute a certain value that was caused by the BQX and then earmark or set aside that increase to then be reinvested to pay for the costs.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Got it, and so essentially those dollars are not gonna go back into the general revenue to support other things like schools, other things like parks and other things that the community might need. It'll just go back to pay over time the infrastructure for the BQX.

SETH MYERS: Generally speaking, that's right. There is a, you know, the BQX would be taking

the amount of value that it created and using it to offset its costs. I think in the larger picture there's a enormous benefit of what the BQX can offer. We calculated a \$30 billion overall impact, several thousand, 16,000 construction jobs, several hundred permanent jobs, 4,000 indirect jobs just as a result of the streetcar going into place so we think that there are many larger both benefits and financial benefits that would come from it.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And again, just so I can understand and unpack it a little bit more, the value capture increases the property value for a property. You're gonna take that measured increase of the property value and put it into the BQX which means that the property will have to be paying more in taxes that you're taking to put into the BQX so we're also gonna see an increase in taxes along the corridor.

SETH MYERS: As long as the value continues to increase, that's correct, and what we need to do is attribute the value that is caused by the BQX versus the amount of increase that we're seeing just as to your point, the value of property

in the City is increasing on its on without the BQX happening.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, and on the other side of that coin, essentially say the value doesn't go up and there is no value to capture, then what do we do?

SETH MYERS: That's what the governance model will have to do is it identifies the risks of what happens if there are, you know, prolonged economic, you know, downturns or the revenue doesn't materialize the way that we want it to. You try to structure these arrangements in a way that gives some certainty to the people who are going to be buying the bonds, the person issuing the bonds and, you know, you can set up [Inaudible] of risk taking that people will buy into or pay for.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Are these EDC bonds or are these City bonds?

SETH MYERS: I don't think we're there yet. I mean, I think

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, that's still, that's a big question then.

SETH MYERS: Yep, I think there's a

CHAIR MENCHACA: And tell us both, because are the only options, right? City would do the bond or the EDC would do the bond?

SETH MYERS: Of if we to create some other governance

CHAIR MENCHACA: An LDC, a local development corporation, another governance body that would take that on.

SETH MYERS: Something like that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, and then the scenario's changed from one to the other so if EDC is kinda held holding the bond without being able to pay for it through the capture, then EDC would then have to pay for that cause that's your responsibility from EDC which will you be taking from your general, so I kinda want, I want you to play out those scenarios. This is very important for the Committee as we think about this project and for the community as well. I mean these are essentially public funds even though EDC has its own pot, these are still public funds that are coming from portfolios of property owned by the public, so this is important so EDC, go through the scenarios, EDC

SETH MYERS: I don't, I don't, the different scenarios that we've looked at would be some entity issues bonds that are backed by the increased revenue that would then pay for the capital cost and/or the City issues bonds specifically for it against that value again. There are a couple of different iterations within that but we're simply not there yet. That's something we're gonna have to continue to look at, exactly the mechanism of that financial arrangement.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, I'm gonna pause there. We're gonna look at that too, clearly on our side as well. We've been joined by Council Member Cumbo who's along the corridor as well or the newly proposed corridor anyway, because the corridor did change, with some questions.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you, Chair Menchaca. Had a few brief questions about the process so with this particular design, have you looked at other urban cities who have done a similar light rail to this one in urban cities and more specifically, urban cities that didn't have some sort of trolley system in place that then got upgraded where you're laying down brand new, never seen

before, light rail in an urban city. Are there cities that you looked at or documented or understand the outcomes from that experience?

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: I can take that, Majority Leader Cumbo. Chris Hrones of the Department of Transportation. The project looked at all sorts of presidents both in North America and abroad. There are a number of different types of models. They're certainly when people think of streetcars, sometimes I think, or modern streetcar, a lot of times they'll think of, you know, a downtown circulator that is more focused on economic revitalization, maybe in a mid-western or western city. That's sort of very different from what we're talking about here. We're talking about actually, although we're calling it a streetcar, it's not that sort of streetcar at all, it's

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: No, I understand exactly but I'm, there are some that might have had a streetcar model that might have gotten upgraded to what we're talking about with efficiency, state of the art, brand new, energy efficient, all of these different sorts of things. Is there a city, an urban



city more specifically, that is doing what New York is proposing to do?

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: I think the closest analogy is actually abroad in Frances. There are multiple French cities that actually introduced new streetcars into dense urban environments and one of the things that's a little bit different about how they approached it there, they call them trams generally, but is they tend to be more focused on higher speed, station spacing to really ensure those higher speeds, covering large corridors, large parts of the city and like I said, you know, there are multiple cities in France that have that characteristic. The other sort of analogy I'll point to, right across the river, is the Hudson-Bergen light rail project. Although that's called the light rail and we're calling ours a streetcar, there are a lot of similarities there in terms of working, you know, refitting a streetcar or a rail into, you know, an older urban environment and also focusing more on the commuter, on the traveler as opposed to thinking of it as purely an economic development project, although that was certainly part of that project.

There was a lot of economic revitalization that accompanied that project.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: What I would be more specifically interested in and would even think it warrants, a hearing specifically on that, would be looking at those models, particularly in urban cities, and really unpacking and understanding the impact that it has on those communities because while we may talk about urban renewal and economic development, those often have casualties that are very real to many residents in those areas so, for example, in my district I represent five NYCHA developments. Three of them would be more in close proximity to where the BQX is being proposed. I would want to understand while the benefits of ease of transportation seem very exciting and we can make all sorts of different arguments about how this will connect people to jobs, employment, move faster and those sorts of things but there are also challenges in terms of displacement and understanding how those communities will be impacted by this "great opportunity" that's being proposed for their neighborhoods so has that type of economic impact study been done to show how displacement arises, how

people are removed from their communities, how property values increase because now you're connected to a popular transportation hub and we know one of the major factors in terms of how communities become more affluent or more attractive is all around transportation so any place where there are multiple train hubs and ease to get to work or ease to get to wherever you're going, that becomes a destination for people that want to move into the community and displace others so have those sorts of impact, economic impact studies been done around this project based off of samples from other cities?

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: So, I'm not aware of a specific study that specifically, in the type of environment that you're talking about. I know in some of these other types of environment, they have looked at the impacts. I mean I guess I would say from a gentrification standpoint, which is what you're concerned about, and I mean I think

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: And I'm sure you're concerned about it too.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Absolutely, absolutely, I mean just, I'll speak from the DOT standpoint. I mean obviously being part of the

administration, we're concerned about equity, right?

I think our role in ensuring that equity continues to, that this continues to be an equitable city, is on the transportation side of things, making sure as you mentioned that people have those opportunities, that they have transportation service in neighborhoods that are challenged that are just as good as they have in Manhattan or other neighborhoods that currently have better transportation so that's kind of our focus when it comes to equity. That being said, we recognize that there are many different components of equity and, you know, maybe EDC or someone else is better positioned to speak about sort of what we're doing as a city to ensure that with these improvements, whether it be transportation or other things, there are strategies in place to make sure people can stay in their neighborhoods.

SETH MYERS: Yes, Council Member, I would just, I think it's a critical question and I think it's one that we're gonna be judged on, how successful a project is by how much it has or doesn't have an impact, not only on like transit benefits or ridership benefits or time savings but what it means

to the actual neighborhood and its growth or its retention of character or retention of residents. I think your suggestion around an additional dialogue is a great one. It's a complicated balance that we're trying to strike the right note on between offering those opportunities and offering those benefits and also ensuring that we don't displace. You know, there are a long list of things that this administration has been pushing hard for for tenant protections and rent control guidelines and those are an important part of it. It's obviously multifaceted and complicated set of protections and set of initiatives that are underway across the administration far beyond our agencies or this group here today over the BQX but it's an important one and one that the BQX will be judged by, I believe, and to that end, you know, we have been very aware of this issue from the outset. It's something we've been looking at as we structure the value capture scenario, as we make sure that we are leaving plenty of room in our value capture to assume that there are large affordable housing programs that continue or that we're not going to be collecting value from, non-profit or non-taxpaying properties like we

mentioned earlier and then there will be continued analysis around socio economic impacts as we go through the EIS which will be yet another forum for that conversation to continue but in any way that we can make sure we are striking the best balance possible, that is a metric or a goal that we are extremely committed to meeting.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: I appreciate that. However, I feel that that question should be really what's driving this process, so I don't want it to be after a couple of years of conversations around this that that is a conversation or that's not a reality that's driving this particular process

SETH MYERS: [Inaudible]

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Because for elected officials to really understand what we're looking at, we really have to understand that information about how this is specifically going to impact our districts, our community, our people, particularly those that are the most vulnerable economically. How is this going to benefit them? How is this going to displace them because those are real issues and in order for us to make an educated decision or to have real conversation, we have to

know that. I also wanted to delve into just two more issues and then I'll turn it back to the Chair, around hiring. What are your thoughts in terms of the plans that have been put forward in terms of how this is going to benefit, I'll just go specifically to my NYCHA residents? How will they benefit from employment for the building and the creation of a proposed BQX? How will training happen? How will outreach happen? How has this been done before? I really want to understand that.

SETH MYERS: Great questions, I think on your first point about evaluating the local impacts, we're at a stage where I certainly don't want to get carts ahead of horses in terms of doing something and then finding out whether it's effective or not or it's striking the right balance or not and I don't think we are in a place where the cart is ahead of the horse is here. We've done our initial design. We think it offers a lot of merits and opportunities. We're setting, we're, you know embarking on an EIS process which is exactly I think the right point to have that dialogue and share our facts and then decide if we want to continue with it or make modifications to it and as Council Member Menchaca

knows, I've had one of my more impressive changes to an EIS project that I was working on as a response of working with a Council in the community where we heard it, we checked our set of facts, we changed in response to what the community asked for and took a different approach around NYC Ferry so that's something, you know, we commit to having a really candid and open discussion with you about and I think it's the right process so to that point. On local hiring, on opportunities for NYCHA residents or local residents along the alignment, specifically it's a little premature to be answering let. We still have to look at exactly how we're going to be building, operating and maintaining the system and the structure around it. I think what we have found at EDC is that we have very aggressive MWBE goals where we are exceeding the 30% goal set by the City ahead of schedule. It's something we take an enormous amount of pride in and are frequently held accountable to internally. We take it very seriously on a companywide basis. We always look for opportunities to reach out to different sectors that we can pull from whether it's finding new MWBE firms that aren't, we don't work with now or just new firms



generally where they're finding opportunities to hire more from the community or when we're talking about, less about construction jobs and more about long term jobs, working with SBS, the Small Business Services in Workforce 1. That was something we saw a very large number of candidates come from for NYC Ferry when Hornblower, the operator of that, started hiring people so we've seen a lot of cross connections where we can partner with local communities, the MWBE construction community and partner agencies like SBS to find those opportunities and create them.

WILL FISHER: And, Council Member, I would just add with the Hire NYC program and the contract language that EDC uses to compel the private parties with which we work to advertise jobs locally first, you know, I think, as we discussed earlier, I think we're estimating more than 10,000 temporary construction jobs for the project, several hundred jobs on a permanent basis to operate the system so I think, you know, given the fact that we, this is both connecting people through opportunity as a project as a whole. I think the project itself will also create an enormous amount of opportunity for folks up and down the corridor and the language that EDC has begun

implementing in many of its contracts and development agreements accommodates for making sure that folks on the ground who live in these communities hear about the jobs first or are shown these jobs first and get hired on these jobs.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: It would be helpful to, those numbers are helpful in terms of the amount of jobs that are going to be created but I would like to know more specifically a pipeline or a training program and what that's going to look like because out of the so many jobs, some will require a level of training. Others will not require a level of training. Some are very specific trades that are necessary. I want to understand, any time you're doing a project of this scale, everybody wants to know how it's gonna benefit them and so if so much of this development is going to happen in and around and near NYCHA developments, then they have to understand and we have to understand as elected officials, how is it going to benefit them. How is this going to create jobs? How is this going to connect them to jobs? How is this going to affect the future of their NYCHA development? All these questions have to be answered in order to make rational decisions about

what's happening next. The last thing you want to do as an elected is to make a decision on behalf of a community and this be something that potentially can exacerbate gentrification in a highly gentrified community and my final question is what level or percentage, and Council Member Menchaca may have asked this already, what percentage of private investment in order to create the BQX has been estimated? Are you looking at some level of private investment or is this something that you're looking specifically at for governmental support?

SETH MYERS: That is a good question. It came up a little bit, but I think we kinda brushed by it. Right now, the value capture which is tax revenue that's collected by the City pays for a little over half of the project. The remaining funding that we need to do the full capital cost of it, we're looking into federal funds for that. There are different funding models where you can ask and this depends on how you are implementing the project and structuring the finances around it where on large design build, or private public private partnerships or through fee arrangements where you can the private parties that are responding to your procurement to

build or operate the system to come in with their own financing as incentive for them to see success or a certain outcome of it so the answer is we don't know yet but there are scenarios where there could be a variety of different funding options.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: So, another hearing will be in order.

SETH MYERS: We're happy to continue the conversation, yeah.

MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you very much.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you, Majority Leader Cumbo from Brooklyn, and I want to ask a question and I know you're gonna go back to DOT but this is an important moment that she asked about, each of the Council districts are gonna have their own conversations with their communities and can you walk us through what the ULURP process might look like if we get to a point where the BQX is an option that we all want to move forward with and engage in the ULURP process. How do you do that with seven possible or more districts? What does that look like, lay it out? I think it's important for people here to know how that works and this isn't just a

money game and a lot of the focus and I want to think everyone for staying here because this is, this is the first time we've had a conversation like this in open, like we're learning a lot of information right now and thank you for your patience to really sit through this because this is gonna help us all understand what we're gonna do at the end of the day cause we're gonna do this together. You're not gonna be making the decision. We're not gonna, we're gonna do this together so walk us through what the ULURP looks like. How does that work? Does that happen all at the same time? Do you go one corridor at a time? If one corridor says nnn't, not gonna happen, how does, does the whole thing fall apart? Can you walk us through the strategy for ULURP?

SETH MYERS: I think, I think it's important to determine exactly what we are going for a ULURP approval, what approvals we are asking for. Right now, the potential for several different actions that need ULURP approval which could be site selection, you know,

CHAIR MENCHACA: Site selection, is just to be clear. This is essentially eminent domain?

SETH MYERS: No site selection is to cause a public benefit using City money to be put in place so if there are bonds back stopped by City capital money, that could be a site selection.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Got it, that's for the financing side.

SETH MYERS: Correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: But you did mention that there might be eminent domain.

SETH MYERS: Property acquisition certainly could be one of the ULURP packages, yes.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay.

SETH MYERS: And then there are, you know, changing map streets would be another land use associated ULURP action. What I think we would do is go through the different community boards and hold our hearings and go through the ULURP process. It's a bigger one but one that would ultimately follow a similar process of coming to the City Council for there, you know, their votes and their discussions around it and yes, I mean if we are unable to get a real consensus that what we're doing is important or if it has an outside effect on one Council Member versus another that's a balance we're gonna have to

try to strike and win the conversation to see the project move forward.

WILL FISHER: And, Council Member, I think in response to, sort of, how it would work as a multidistrict, just to kind of elaborate there, I think very quickly to just sort of harken back to the engagement that was done during 2016 and 2017, during some of those studies that we mentioned earlier. I think, you know, it's very important. This is a now an 11-mile corridor passes through many different neighborhoods through many different districts, through different community districts, etc. so I think, you know, one of our goals throughout this process has been to be open and transparent. I think during the last round of outreach, we had more than 150 external conversations from large public hearings and visioning sessions to individual briefings. We maintained an open door policy for any sort of other community groups of civic organizations that wanted to speak with us about the project so I think, Council Member, in response to sort of forward looking and ULURP, I think in advance of the EIS scope that's gonna be happening later this year, we look forward to beginning another round of public

engagement and I think we would really want to make sure that we work with you and your office and the Task Force here to ensure that the process that we're going through to follow ULURP once we get to that stage, make sure that we take in account all those conversations that we're having along the way. Eleven miles is, it's a long way and we want to make sure that we speak with the folks along the corridor who know it best and advance it moving through a process like that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, I'm just, I think that well, we want to get through the rest of the panels, so I want to end with this. This conversation was dominated by EDC. Just want to note that. I think we want to hear more from planning on the transportation side and so we're hoping that you can get us some of those studies, the underlying studies to help us share that information with our constituents about these decisions are made. When we look at transportation needs across the boroughs, both Brooklyn and Queens, I think it's a mistake that Sunset Park isn't part of this conversation when we look at alternatives since BRT will be part of this and so I hope we can go back and rethink what that



looks like even if it's not the BQX to be studied, that the BRT side can be studied and a bus connection. I think there are fears of gentrification along this corridor that you've seen and are beginning to see in parts of borough, both Queens and Brooklyn, that need to be studied and it sounds like it's gonna be studied. There are questions about the route that you can't answer right now but are very real, like parking, removing parking, tons of parking and you might even have that number and I would be open to hearing that right now. How many parking spots are you going to be removing from all the corridors that include near parks, near NYCHA, how many parking spots are you removing? Do you have that information now? Is that?

REBECCA ZACK: No, I don't have it right now.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, so these are all still questions.

SETH MYERS: I didn't want to dominate the conversation, but I think our report showed about 2,000 parking spots.

CHAIR MENCHACA: 2,000 parking spaces will be removed along the corridor that go along

places like Atlantic Avenue and other NYCHA property and so we want to hear from NYCHA residents about parking, removing parking from streets. I'm a supporter of that, by the way, but I want to hear from the NYCHA residents about what they think about removing parking from their quarters gonna be and I think what, what was most telling was the cost. Essentially, we're creating this value capture, possibly LDC bonds for this infrastructure that we can get faster, potentially faster bus, cheaper without value capture, without pushing rates of tax revenue on top of businesses and residents, renters and owners and so this is the kind of analysis that we want to get back to all of you so you can see that with us and we'll get that, we'll get that but those are the questions that we wanted to ask of you today and some of them you had, some of them you're still working on and we're gonna keep working together on that front.

SETH MYERS: We appreciate it, thank you.

WILL FISHER: Thank you for having us.

CHRISTOPHER HRONES: Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you so much.

We're gonna go to the next panel and again, I want to

thank you for your patience for this. We're gonna get through this. We're gonna invite the Friends of the BQX next on this next panel. Ms. Jessica Schumer, Christopher Torres, we're gonna also invite up the NYU, this is Mitchel Moss, actually if he's still in the house and then Harris Schechtman from Sam Schwartz Engineering to come on up for the next panel to give us a sense about the study and another origin story and we've also been joined by Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez.

[pause]

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, welcome. Not yet, press the button. If it's red, it's on and you're ready to go.

JESSICA SCHUMER: Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you and bring it closer, you can bring the mike closer to you.

JESSICA SCHUMER: I can move myself closer to the mike.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And yourself and the mike, perfect, there you go.

JESSICA SCHUMER: I think we're in the right

CHAIR MENCHACA: Welcome to the City Council.

JESSICA SCHUMER: Thank you Council Member. My name is Jessica Schumer and I'm executive director of Friends of the Brooklyn Queens Connector, BQX. I'm thrilled and thankful the City Council has chosen to hold this hearing and talk to the entire community about an important project for multiple boroughs in the entire City and I'm excited to be here to speak about it and to answer any questions you might have. The Friends of the BQX is a non-profit formed four years ago to educate people about the project and help advocate for it. We represent a diverse and broad coalition from trans-advocates to public housing residents to community-based organizations to local business groups. As a fourth generation Brooklynite and new Mom to a baby boy which is the fifth generation to be born in Brooklyn in my family, I'm incredibly excited about what the BQX could mean for Brooklyn, Queens and our whole City. Every day the Friends group works to engage local communities up and down this corridor. We have found the vast majority of residents, workers and business owners are open to the idea. People want

more transit and they want better transit. We have over 56,000 supporters to date. We're proud they come from all walks of life in our great City and I'll let Chris talk more about that. The BQX represents the sort of bold and visionary thinking our City needs if we are going to continue to grow equitably and increase opportunity for all New Yorkers. It's our best chance to expand our mass transit system without going through the MTA which needs to focus on fixing the system we currently have. The project has the potential to connect this corridor and create a new spine of our City and new affordable transit for the people who need it most. Too many people are struggling and in desperate of affordable transit. There are many areas along the BQX that are not well served by transit and suffer from persistent and high unemployment. Residents in Astoria and Red Hook deserve access to opportunity and we know that with better transit comes more income mobility. The BQX would not only save people time but would increase the number of good paying jobs or better schools within commuting distance. There are also places in the nine neighborhoods that the BQX would run through where we're seeing pockets

of explosive job and population growth. Downtown Brooklyn, Long Island City and Williamsburg have mass transit but mostly in the form of subways that go to and from Manhattan. In discussions with hundreds of residents along the corridor, time and time people say they want to live and work outside of Manhattan. If we don't improve mass transit along this corridor, the current trend of growing trends and equality will continue. Those who can afford to are taking Ubers, Lyfts, private shuttles along the corridor and those who rely on buses are stuck in slower and slower traffic amid worsening congestion. The BQX would equalize transit with a true dedicated right of way. The BQX will take cars off the road and replace them with reliable, accessible and affordable mass transit. The BQX would also transform places like the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It currently is home to 10,000 jobs and expects to add an additional 10,000 by 2021 and 10,000 more in the coming decades. The Navy Yard is the potential for tremendous job growth but could grow even more and put more of those jobs in reach with better transportation options. A new ferry stop will help but that ferry runs from Manhattan to the Navy Yard. Ferries can and should

pay a role in helping commuters and their success shows the need for more transit. The BQX can complement other mass transit options like ferries, subways and buses and it will carry over five times the number of commuters served by ferries with a lower operating subsidy. In fact, the operations subsidy required for the BQX is similar to that of subways. One question we see a lot and was addressed earlier, why a streetcar. I think we can all agree that given the cost, there will be very few new subways added in our lifetimes. In many cases, new or improved bus service is the answer to expanding transit access but not on this corridor where ridership is projected to be over 16 million a year using a fairly conservative ridership model. That would make the BQX the largest streetcar line in the country in terms of ridership. In the BQX we have the ability to carry more passengers than most bus lines in the City currently do. Modern streetcars with a dedicated right of way provide many of the benefits of a subway but can be built much more cost effectively. Yes, the capital costs are higher than a bus line but they support more density and can move faster with true dedicated rights of way that won't

be blocked by cars or stopped when you do underground utility work. They are fully accessible for those with mobility challenges. They are resilient and green. They are cheaper to operate than most forms of mass transit and they are a way to reimagine and take back our streets and curbs from public transit. The BQX can quite literally help pave the way for more complete and safer streets and we hope to be the first of a broader network of light rail running on our streets. I know there are still many questions about this project. I can tell you, we at Friends of the BQX also have many questions so I'm glad the Council and our entire community is focusing on this project. We believe community engagement is essential to getting this project right which is why we've spent years discussing the BQX with residents and are glad to see the City pursuing a process that engages the community more through environmental review, ULURP, and other types of outreach. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you.

JESSICA SCHUMER: You're welcome.

CHRIS TOREZ: Thank you, Council Member, for having us. My name is Christopher Torez. I'm



the deputy director of Friends of the BQX or the Brooklyn Queens connector so I grew up in southern California where access to quality transportation was always lacking. Having to use public transit was difficult. In fact, it's part of the reason why I chose to move to New York City is because of our massive, all encompassing 24-hour transit system. I've lived here for about 15 years now and the frustration from delays, overcrowding and lack of maintenance remind me of how hard it was getting around when I was younger and I know I'm not alone in saying that we have to do better and we can do better. If Los Angeles can add a modern, reliable streetcar to its public transit option, this City should be able to do so as well. That's why I'm excited to be part of an organization working hard to create new mass transit options to get around Brooklyn and Queens. Over the last 13 years in New York City and nationwide, I've devoted myself to progressive causes, fighting for others on issues like the New York State GMAG to raising the minimum age and clean and fair elections and now I'm fighting for something else that I believe should be a fundamental right to our City, is access to

affordable and reliable transportation. I believe that in building grass roots power in communities and that when it comes to the betterment of people's lives, we all have the responsibility to do the hard work of finding solutions even when the fruit of that labor is not immediate. In my experience, difficult problems require sitting down at the table to find common ground and listening to people for input. The work that the Friends has done over the last four years to educate New Yorkers about the BQX is real and widespread. That work includes knocking on 48,000 doors, gathering 7,333 signatures through one on one conversations including 1,742 signatures coming specifically from NYCHA, 16,000 coming from Sunset Park while we were down there. These supporters are not just signing their name. They elected to share their letter of support with their neighbors and to be printed in local newspapers. In total we have collected signups from 57,221 New Yorkers including 510 new supporters in the last three weeks while leading up to this hearing who have at one point or another shown interest in engaging with Friends of the BQX to make this project a success. This spring, more than 100 small business

owners from along the corridor attended an event we organized, focused on how a streetcar would impact business both during and post construction. Small business owners from around the City joined up and talked about their experiences. They talked about enduring the construction and change that comes with building a streetcar but the resign and refrain was that access to mass transit is good for business. More than 25 local business signed up to be part of our local business working group. A poll we conducted of voters who live along the corridor found that nearly 75% support the BQX including 71% of those who live in public housing; 16% of voters we spoke to were opposed to the project. The Friends outreach team has done a lot of listening. Overwhelmingly we hear from residents that moving up and down the corridors is unacceptably slow and unreliable. They want the BQX to cost the same as the subway and include a free transfer. They want to make sure it can actually move in NYC traffic and has a dedicated right of way. Among the many obstacles stacked against low income and working class New Yorkers, a lack of reliable and affordable transportation is one of the most difficult to

overcome. In 2015 the *New York Times* quoted a study by a Harvard economist who looked at nine U.S. cities, including New York City. He wrote "the relationship between transportation and social mobility is stronger than between mobility and several other factors, like crime, elementary school test scores or the percentage of two parent families in a community." Along the BQX corridor, we are talking about giving 44,000 NYCHA residents better access to tens of thousands of jobs along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront and it's not just NYCHA residents who will benefit from the opportunities the BQX will provide. Over half the residents along the route live in some form of rent protected and affordable housing. We're talking about a ADA accessible, single ride from Astoria to downtown Brooklyn and the Navy Yard. They will have a dedicated right of way that will further protect pedestrians and cyclists and that's something we desperate need as this year's fatalities by car continue to rise. I understand that the prospect is daunting of building a new mode of transit that will hopefully lead to a broader City-wide network. Progress is measured in years, but I also know that

this Council understands reliable accessible transportation is crucial to improving the lives of residents in their districts. I believe that this is the Council that can help energize this ambitious project, show leadership when our City needs it most and make sure we get this historic project right. Thank you for your time and I look forward to any questions you might have.

Thank you. Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Harris Schechtman, and I'm senior principal at Sam Schwartz Engineering, a transportation and planning firm. I was formerly general manager for buses and head of operations planning and schedules for New York City Transit Department of Buses. I am here today to testify in support of the Brooklyn Queens connector, a project that will have a crucial impact on sustaining the ongoing growth the Brooklyn Queens waterfront has experienced while allowing it to mature into a thriving corridor for both residential and commercial uses. Sam Schwartz, a/k/a Gridlock Sam, and former New York City traffic commissioner shares my views and endorses this statement. Our firm did the original alternatives analysis,

feasibility study and conceptual design for Friends of the BQX. That project determined that BQX was feasible but could only succeed with the higher capacity that a modern streetcar could provide, and this was based on projected daily ridership higher than any bus route in New York City and likely the highest daily ridership of any streetcar in the United States. From the time BQX emerged as a proposed streetcar, critics have questioned why it could not be a BRT or in New York lingo, an SBS service. They cite how much cheaper SBS could be comparing it as a bus route without the infrastructure investments necessary for higher speed and reliability. They also ignore history. For some 60 years, New York City Transit ran buses over a similar route called B61. That route took as 90 minutes, averaging six miles an hour end to end but that was on paper. In reality, frequent delays lead to bunching and service gaps and unbearably slow trips that drove riders away as service became unmanageable. In response, New York City Transit split this into separate routes about ten years ago. Why repeat the failure of B61 with another bus alternative? Critics often overlook the fact that

even the highest capacity bus that could be used on this service has only about half the passenger capacity of the BQX's proposed modern streetcars. Of course, that means higher bus operating costs, but the bigger problem is that buses would have to run every one to two minutes to meet the passenger demand. Traffic signal timing, uneven loading, etc. will guarantee that even if buses leave the terminal on time, within a short distance the bus service will become bunched and irregular on almost every trip. Without the ability to run reliably and smoothly, the service will fail from day one if it is an SBS. This may all sound too technical but I can say as a lifelong New Yorker as you can probably tell from my accent, who has planned, scheduled, studied, operated and advocated for our New York City Bus network for over 50 years, that buses cannot be the answer for this robust, yet underserved, Brooklyn Queen waterfront corridor. This is not about nostalgia to bring back the trolley. Our firm was a key player in the eight-year long project that designed and implemented the first five and very successful SBS routes to ever operate in New York City. Elsewhere we have advocated for BRT in lieu of proposed modern

streetcars where that was the right solution. We support bus solutions where appropriate, but in this corridor, buses won't cut it so, streetcar is the right choice but why do we need this route at all. The combination of job, residential and recreational growth along this corridor is key to New York City's future. Some 40,000 residents of public housing along this route will find well paying opportunities in the future economy in a vastly expanded area within New York City that now becomes within a reasonable commuting distance of their homes. The mixing of their needs with those of residents of new developments is not a bad thing. That multiuse, broad spectrum of demands is what makes New York City's transit routes the most used and useful in the country. We cannot tap that potential without this streetcar spine that connects people and jobs with much shorter travel times. Currently, many trips along this corridor actually take less time if one improbably takes the subway into Manhattan and comes back out. This encourages residents to crowd onto over capacity subways entering Manhattan, instead of attracting them to a faster, more direct route on the streets. What happens if we don't build BQX?



Residents are gonna find another way to get around and as the last five years have shown, that way is often going to be TNC's or FHV's. We are already seeing the consequences in Manhattan where increased auto mileage is slowing everyone down now to the speed of buses. The newly enacted congestion pricing program will hopefully bring some relief to midtown, but we need innovation elsewhere to avoid the environmental and travel consequences. The best way to win customer's to transit is to provide an attractive, competitive service. The frequency and reliability of BQX will mean that residents can likely go to the nearest BQX station and board a streetcar in the same or less time than they would wait for an Uber or a Lyft. The signal and lane priorities that would be available only to BQX streetcars will further cement its role, and customers will enjoy that reliability and fixed fare of BQX even when it's raining or snowing. There is no better option on the horizon. The City's adoption of BQX is a bold, insightful, and strategic move. MTA's capital burden for state of good repair, modernization and very limited expansion leaves it as a practical matter, unable to consider BQX regardless

of its merits. The innovative value capture financing proposed for this project is a model widely used in other countries and can ensure that, unlike Second Avenue subway, enhanced real estate values can be put toward a public good. The BQX would reduce personal car usage as well and offer improved street scape opportunities, an improved path towards Vision Zero, a cleaner environment and reinforcement of a future that does not require car ownership. For these reasons and more, I support BQX as an effective transit strategy for the Brooklyn Queens waterfront and for the entire City and hope that I've helped your understanding of that. BQX can stand alone on its transit merits but more than that, it is an investment in our long-term future, diversifying our growth geographically and capitalizing on and sustaining the attention the waterfront has gained. Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you for that analysis. We're gonna come back to you and I want to start with the Friends of the BQX. Thank you for your testimony today and the work that you've done on the engagement. I want to really get your sense of the origin story, if you will. We talked about the

origin story of this Committee, the EDC, when they started. When was the Friends of the BQX organization founded? What year?

JESSICA SCHUMER: It was before my time. I believe it was 2015 but four year's old, so 2015.

CHAIR MENCHACA: 2015, but are you sure about that?

JESSICA SCHUMER: I believe it's right, '15. I want to triple check and confirm.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, let's see if we can, if someone's out there with that information, if you can get that to Ms. Schumer, that'd be great, and then who founded that organization?

JESSICA SCHUMER: Friends of the BQX was founded by a group of folks obviously within Brooklyn and Queens so we have, obviously, our chair is Jed Walentas. The Brooklyn Chamber was involved. We've got, our Board represents a diverse group of people. We've got several NYCHA leaders on our Board, community-based organizations. We can get you a full Board list. A lot of people are out on the front steps of City Hall today and yeah, we've got, that was the founding Board and we've had a few people

come on and off, but it's been the core group since then. 2015, we're confirming.

CHAIR MENCHACA: What was it, 2015?

JESSICA SCHUMER: 2015.

CHAIR MENCHACA: 2015, any like month or, see if you can get that

JESSICA SCHUMER: We'll get that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Just so we can a sense of timing and December 2015 is different from January 2015 so let's just see if we can get that and so this included, it sounds like, non-profits, Brooklyn Chamber

JESSICA SCHUMER: Business organizations

CHAIR MENCHACA: Business organizations, developers as well as, you said, NYCHA.

JESSICA SCHUMER: Yes.

CHAIR MENCHACA: So NYCHA was at the table at the beginning in 2015?

JESSICA SCHUMER: I joined the group in February of 2017, so I don't want to speak to exactly what happened. It's my understanding but I will, we can find that out.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Again, these are going to be important pieces

JESSICA SCHUMER: Of course.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And what was the goal of the organization if you understand that or if you know that in the founding moment?

JESSICA SCHUMER: So, the origin of the BQX came from, we're submitting some testimony. In 2005, Alex Guardman [phonetic] who was a former City planner had done some work and looked at this and we have a letter from him and then in, I believe it was April of 2014, although again I'm not sure about the month, Michael Kelman wrote a story in the *New York Times* that laid out this vision of a streetcar along the Brooklyn and Queens waterfront. After that, obviously that got some interest from members who would go on to found the Friends of the BQX. They did some work to make sure that this actually a real, or to see how real this idea could be because it was so intriguing and that article and the subsequent work that was done to actually see if there was any, if it was both possible and practical, lead to the formation of the Friends of the Brooklyn Queens connector.

CHAIR MENCHACA: In that, so it sounds like was some ideas that kinda popped up in the press

and a group formed and then there was, you said, an ask of, or not an ask but a question, is this feasible. So how was that questions asked and was there funding that was connected to that ask of the questions? Is this a study that was done?

JESSICA SCHUMER: Yes, there was a study I know done by Sam Schwartz. They did the original study and we can get that to you as well to look at the feasibility and to actually really explore if this was

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's what Mr. Schechtman just spoke to?

JESSICA SCHUMER: Just referenced, exactly.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And when was that study done?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: 2015, 2016.

CHAIR MENCHACA: 2015

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Pretty much finished, I think, in January of 2016.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay so end of 2015 and then to 2016, and how was the organization then, how did the organization pay for that to get Mr. Schechtman and

JESSICA SCHUMER: So this again was before my time, so let me, I want to get the correct answer to you so I will

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, if you can, that'd be great. In real time, we're gonna have a few questions. We want to come back to that and then essentially, Mr. Schechtman, who hired you? Who was the entity that hired you to do this work?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: The Friends did then.

CHAIR MENCHACA: So it was a contract between the Friends of the BQX and

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Sam Schwartz

CHAIR MENCHACA: Sam Schwartz, Inc. Okay, great, do you have a sense, I'm gonna come back to you, do you have a sense of how much money has been spent since the beginning of the organization on studies, first on studies? Sounds like this is the only study that you conducted.

JESSICA SCHUMER: We've looked into some other minor studies, but this was the main one.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And how much did that study cost?

JESSICA SCHUMER: Again, I'm sorry. I will look, I joined the organization two years after this study was basically done.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Totally understand. If there's anybody, if there's a Board member out there listening, it would be great to get that information. Otherwise, we're gonna put a big question mark on that and then how much money have you spent thus far on outreach and doing kind of outreach campaign work?

JESSICA SCHUMER: So, we've, I mean it's hard to break down exactly because obviously, you know, we have, some of our expenses are somewhat linked. We have a slight staff that's doing outreach with other outreach work but would say we spend a majority of our budget, funds on outreach and staff.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And what is the budget? What is the annual budget and do you have a breakdown?

JESSICA SCHUMER: I don't have a breakdown in front of me. We will, I don't want to give you a wrong number so let me.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Yeah, we don't want to get a wrong number there.



2 JESSICA SCHUMER: I don't want to get a  
3 wrong, want to get the number wrong.

4 CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, so then you're  
5 gonna get us information about what you, you don't  
6 have it right now, what your yearly funding has been  
7 and I'm assuming there's like yearly audits and stuff  
8 like that that you've put together

9 JESSICA SCHUMER: Yes, of course,  
10 [Inaudible].

11 CHAIR MENCHACA: And we want to get a  
12 sense about what has been raised? Do you have a  
13 sense about what's been raised thus far?

14 JESSICA SCHUMER: Again, let me get you,  
15 I want to be precise in our

16 CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, so maybe the rest  
17 of the questions I won't be ask, won't ask cause  
18 they're all related to this funding. Let's move over  
19 to you, Mr. Schechtman, and you were hired to have a  
20 conversation or a, not a conversation but an analysis  
21 and if we could, maybe have a planning scenario here.

22 HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Sure.

23 CHAIR MENCHACA: Cause you laid our some  
24 very specific information that I think is important  
25 for us to unpack a little bit and think about

together, in terms of comparing the BQX to a BRT or a SBS, a bus essentially, a bus or light rail and I think that a lot of the facts that you presented are not incorrect. I think they're very correct information but I'm not sure that they're completely, well, before I make the judgment, let's walk through some of the questions that I have for you. So, the assumption here that we are moving forward with on the BQX is that the BQX will be a line that has, and I wrote down the things that you are kind of pointing to and I think I have them memorized, dedicated lanes, which will require us to remove parking so in a world where we remove the 2,000+ parking spaces, which I'm in support of and I think the community's in support of, right, we remove the parking spaces, we have dedicated lanes for the rail, then you have signal priorities that allow for the train to move through and up and down the corridor and in that world, you get fast light rail, correct?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Correct.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And you compared it to a B61 line that doesn't exist any more because it got broken up and it took, it took forever to get from one

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Half of it exists.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Say that again.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Half of it exists,  
the other half is B62.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Well, the original route  
does not exist. It exists in pieces and one of them  
goes through my neighborhood and I know that very  
well. I take it home, okay, but that comparison  
might not be completely accurate because if you  
essentially create, and walk me through this, as a  
planner, walk me through what it would look like if  
we had that same route, with dedicated lanes, signal  
priority, and there's essentially the mechanics of  
offboard payment for a bus and would you still have  
that same 60 minute situation on a bus if you compare  
it to the BQX and the infrastructure that the BQX  
would have, minus the cost. There's nothing, you  
can't argue the cost. It's more expensive to build  
the BQX than it is to put a bus down, but would you  
still hold that to be true, that a B61 that's  
improved with all the things that have the fixings of  
a BQX, that you would still have a 90 minute  
disaster?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: No, I don't think you would have 90 minutes. You might have 80 minutes but the issue here is and let me go back to that cause

CHAIR MENCHACA: Yeah, walk me through it so compare, just a quick little behind the envelope transportation analyst. What would then, how would you make that determination about essentially a bus on a BQX fixings versus a BQX?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Okay, so as I mentioned earlier, our firm was a key player in the first five, designing the first five SBS's for the City. This corridor, except perhaps for the 21<sup>st</sup> Street in Astoria section

CHAIR MENCHACA: Which you heard from Costa talk a little bit about that.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Does not have the attributes of a successful SBS. It has narrow streets, often one lane in each direction, sometimes in one area of Red Hook, not even technically one lane in each direction and what this all, and you combine all that, okay, which means a loss of flexibility. You combine that with a one to two minute headway that, even assuming the largest articulated buses that you can get today, at one to

two minutes I don't think I'm bringing anything new up here to say that bunching is the bane of New York bus service. I ran that service. I tried to improve that for years. It is a tough, tough cookie. When you run buses at one to two minutes, you may succeed in having them leave the terminal on time, but because some of the traffic signal phases are longer than a minute, it's impossible to keep the buses spaced evenly and one of the reasons why bunching is so difficult to cure is that once buses become bunched, it's very, very difficult. I don't want to say impossible. It's very, very difficult to separate them again and you have here

CHAIR MENCHACA: Well, what causes bunching exactly? Are you talking about

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: It's cause by a variety, sometimes it's even driver behavior, sometimes it's the timing of signals, sometimes it's uneven loading of buses.

CHAIR MENCHACA: So even with signal priority, you still get bunches?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Oh, absolutely.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And then so then how does the BQX get around the bunching?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Because the key is the BQX can carry the same number of people, running every four minutes let's say. Maybe five but let's say four and that spacing keeps the vehicles from bunching. In other words, when you're a minute apart, it's impossible and that's why I say once you leave the terminal, it's impossible to go 11 miles and not have those buses start going back to back. With a four-minute frequency, you can manage the service better and that's the key and you asked the right question. You asked the right question which we looked at in the study. Let me backtrack, because I saw you were kinda curious about something and let me take the curiosity out. We were not hired by the Friends to design a streetcar. We were hired to look at this corridor, determine what the demand was and then essentially do an alternatives analysis to decide what was the best way to tap and meet that demand, so we extensively looked at BRT. Obviously, we're quite expert in that and we as a firm, and I tried to convey that in the testimony, we're mode agnostic. We're not a streetcar firm that lives to design streetcar systems. We're a transit and

transportation firm that looks for the best solution.  
That's why we call ourselves mode agnostic.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's what we're trying to figure out well and that's why we're trying to have this conversation that allows us to hear from you directly and have an honest comparison between the, which did not come out in your testimony, so if there is more information that you can have in comparisons to a BQX versus dedicated lane, signal priority bus infrastructure that allows us to remove the cars and have bus dedicated corridor up and down today. That's what we're looking for and it sounds like you might have already done that analysis and if you've done that analysis, we'd appreciate that you share that with the Committee.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: The study that you'll be getting a copy of will give you a full picture of how we looked at all of this.

CHAIR MENCHACA: That would be super helpful.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Right.

CHAIR MENCHACA: That's gonna help us.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: And by the way, we looked at more than just streetcar or BRT. We looked

at a lot of other modes which fell out pretty quickly  
as not

CHAIR MENCHACA: Well, we haven't had the  
luxury of looking at it so it would be great to share  
that with the Committee and the rest of the Members  
who I think are going to be very curious about that  
one question as we kind of compare alternatives here.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: Right.

CHAIR MENCHACA: EDC's gonna be doing  
their thing but it would be great to have a sense of  
how you created that origin understanding for  
everybody that you're engaging with here today.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: So, the other thing I  
want to convey is, you know, much of my career was in  
the bus end of the business. Okay, I consider myself  
to be an expert. I also consider myself to be an  
advocate and believe me when we looked at the BRT  
alternative, it was not with any baggage. Okay, if  
there was a way from my years of experience with  
buses and with SBS, if there was a way that we could  
have designed a service that I could say with  
confidence would achieve the goals of this corridor,  
it would have been there. It just doesn't work.



CHAIR MENCHACA: And I want to just, I appreciate that as a engineer and I think you're the first engineer that has kinda spoken.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: I'm a planner, I'm a planner, not an engineer.

CHAIR MENCHACA: A planner, did I read engineer somewhere?

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: The firm is engineering

CHAIR MENCHACA: The firm is an engineering firm. You're the planner. Thank you so much for making the case and I think that's what we wanted to hear from a planner and that's who we want to hear from in this and I think that's who the community wants to hear from as well when we think about infrastructure as big as this.

HARRIS SCHECHTMAN: One of the, I'll call it a slogan that I use is a bargain is not a bargain if what you get is worth nothing so yes, the cost of doing this as an SBS, even a full flowering SBS is less than doing it as a streetcar but no matter how we twist and turn that, on day one, the service is gonna fail and it's not gonna please anybody to say

we saved \$500 million if on day one, someone goes out there and says this reminds me of the old B61.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Right, nobody wants that. This isn't just about cost and it's not \$500 million. We're talking in the billions and then three, this isn't just about cost, it's about time and Reynoso talked a little bit about 100,000 people coming in in the next few years. We need an answer now and I think, and this is maybe to the Friends of and I can talk to Ms. Schumer here about what I the work that you're doing on the engagement side, essentially, we're not just saying BQX only. It sounds like you're looking at transportation solutions now. Can you talk a little bit about that and what we can kinda glean from the data that you're getting from people is that people would want good transportation, they want better transportation than what they have now? Can you expand on that, either you or Mr. Torres?

CHRISTOPHER TORRES: Sure, I mean I think when you go out there and we're talking to folks whether it be, you know, along the corridor, at a picnic, or in NYCHA housing at a picnic, family days, I think that the need for better transportation is

there and I don't really think the public really cares what the form is. I think, because we've been informed by the studies and the Friends of the BQX was created out of the idea that light rail is the best version of moving people, you know, that's how we reframe the conversation, right, so I think that people want to get around the best way possible and through our studies we say the BQX is the right way.

JESSICA SCHUMER: The other thing I'll add is when we talk to people, what we hear a lot. They want to make sure this is gonna cost the same as a subway or a bus and the City has said it will and they think it should and they also want to make sure they'll be a free transfer which we think is very important. If there's no free transfer, we don't think this works in the way it needs to for people.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And I think that, that may have already been over said in the press. This idea that this a standalone piece of infrastructure unless we get the MTA to say yes and that's, those are political winds. Can you talk a little bit about that strategy? How do you get the Mayor and the Governor to talk, right? One is not even in the City

most of the time and the other whatever like,  
literally, what is the strategy to make that happen?

JESSICA SCHUMER: So, we are still  
obviously thinking that through. It's a little, I  
mean we're not there yet. Hopefully we will be soon.  
Some of the barriers that will be helpful to making  
that happen are the phasing out of the metro cards.  
They've got this new technology coming in. We  
believe the metro card will be phased out by the time  
the BQX will be up and running but, you know, we've  
heard, I think the City has said and they said here  
today that they believe a free transfer should happen  
so we're hoping that there is political will to make  
that happen and we will be advocating for it using  
all the tool that we have to advocate for it.

CHAIR MENCHACA: You and me and everyone  
we know.

JESSICA SCHUMER: And we would hope you  
and [Inaudible] would as well, oh yeah.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, I think, I think  
that's it. We're gonna move on to our next panel.  
Thank you so much. Okay, we're gonna bring up, if  
you're in the house, the Atlantic Avenue Bid, Laurie  
Mora, the New York City Environmental Justice

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2 Alliance, Renee Reynolds, Transit Center, David  
3 Brudon [phonetic] and then Ms. Amy Breedlove from the  
4 Cobble Hill Association, you can come on up.

5 [pause]

6 CHAIR MENCHACA: Hi.

7 RENEE REYNOLDS: Hi.

8 CHAIR MENCHACA: So, Transit Center? New  
9 York City Environmental Justice Alliance, no?

10 RENEE REYNOLDS: Here.

11 CHAIR MENCHACA: Oh yeah, sorry, Renee,  
12 yeah you're here. Sorry, I mean Atlantic Avenue Bid.

13 LAURIE MORA: That's me.

14 Both of you are here. Okay, so these  
15 two, Cobble Hill Association is not here anymore.

16 LAURIE MORA: She had to leave.

17 CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, great, floor is  
18 yours.

19 LAURIE MORA: Good afternoon and thank  
20 you for this opportunity. My name is Laurie Mora and  
21 I'm here to represent the Atlantic Avenue Bid but I'd  
22 also like to represent myself because I've lived in  
23 Cobble Hill for more than 50 years and I own a  
24 building on Atlantic Avenue along the route of the  
25 proposed trolley. There may be one or two people in

this room who also share something else with me. I grew up in Brooklyn with trolleys. I know all about trolleys, fixed rail vehicles. I know first hand how inconvenient they were to get in and out of. I know how they often bunched up and got in trouble with vehicles, regular free vehicles and that they often had power loses but then the City decided that wasn't such a good mode of transportation, so they changed them to trolley buses. The trolley buses were much, much more flexible and they ran on the same power lines as the trolleys and they were much, much better but they also had issues. They often lost the power and other such things so then what happened. We got real buses. I grew up along Utica Avenue and the B46 bus is still running along Utica Avenue and it was a much, much improved situation and now with really good buses, ones that are nonpolluting, buses seem like a very good idea so it was absolutely amazing to me to see that a trolley, a fixed rail vehicle was now being proposed to run through one of the most densely developed areas of Brooklyn and that it was completely inflexible. I can't speak about other areas but I can speak about my own area, that is the corner of Atlantic and Court Street which no one who

planned this route ever went there. They would have seen all our buses, the famous 61 bus, the 63, the 57, lots of trucks, lots of cars, everything like that and lots of people crossing Atlantic Avenue. A trolley making a turn on that corner would be a disaster and we know that 70% of the dedicated routes will be for this trolley and maybe Court Street may even be one of them and we now learned about value capture. These are not areas that are afraid of being gentrified. They have been gentrified for years. There are two historic neighborhoods through which this trolley would pass and it is really unfair to think that these neighborhoods would benefit in any way, these neighborhoods, not other neighborhood but these neighborhoods would benefit from this trolley. I think it's amazing that we'd be asked to pay for something which would not only not benefit us but would have a very great negative impact on our neighborhoods. No one would question the need for improved transportation both in Queens and in Red Hook. The 61 bus is not as bad as the guy says it is but they could do much, much better. I think that it's an expensive, inflexible, fixed rail system is certainly not the answer, certainly not for our

neighborhood. Additional new bus routes, whether they are SBS's, BRT's, no matter how fancy, no matter how new and modern they are should certainly be the answer for our neighborhood and for these other neighborhoods. Thank you very much.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you so much and before, before Renee you go, can I ask did anybody grow up in New York City that saw light rail in the City?

LAURIE MORA: Trolleys?

CHAIR MENCHACA: I'm just asking if anybody like you, who grew up, light rail in the City. Nobody here, okay. Well, that was so beautiful and special that we heard Ms. Mora.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Yes.

[Inaudible]

CHAIR MENCHACA: [Laughter] Okay, so there's another person that's experienced it. Thank you so much for sharing that. That was beautiful. Renee.

RENEE REYNOLDS: So, good morning, my name is Renee Reynolds. I'm the transportation planner for the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance and I'm here on behalf of my organization



and our membership network. We are a City-wide membership network or grass roots organizations from low income neighborhoods and communities of color and so our work focuses on the struggles for environmental justice and that include transportation justice so many people have already said how important it is that we have equitable transportation. We can't argue that that is a need but I want to take the opportunity to highlight one thing, an issue that I haven't heard come up today and that's the issue of living in a coastal city in the context of climate change so, Super Storm Sandy wreaked havoc on our coastlines. Everyone is aware of that and it laid bare the reality of climate change and in just this past week we had hail storms in Staten Island and tornado warnings and flood warnings and so it's amazing and unfathomable that in 2019 with the extreme weather events as our new reality that EDC is proposing a fixed rail system on our surface level and on our waterfront. It makes no sense and while EDC is reporting his claim that a small portion of the BQX would be within the 100 year flood plain, it doesn't account for the fact that the majority of the line is within the storm surge zone

and so we don't need to wait 100 years to find out that the BQX is an ill-conceived project. We know it now and since the inception of this project, our member organization UPROSE in Sunset Park has been pushing back and asking critical questions. Why a trolley, when we have multiple train lines? Why a trolley when we can reactivate bus lines and so the answer is that the BQX project is not about transportation. It is about real estate development. It is a project marketed to vulnerable communities who understandably are in search for better transit but are unaware that they are being sold snake oil. The price tag for the project has ballooned to nearly \$3 billion and the route has been shortened and the City cannot continue to expend vital resources that could be utilized, that could fix transit gaps now, not ten years from now when the BQX would be complete and in operation. Who's waiting until 2029 to get to work on time? People can get to work on time if we close those gaps now and the easiest and most cost-effective way to do that is to improve our bus networks so, I feel that we need to stop this project in its tracks right now [laughter] to use another transportation pun but I, I also think that we need

support from our elected officials and I'm so glad that the Council has brought us here to respond to this proposal, to ask the critical questions about what are the right investments and for whom they serve and so I want to thank the City Council and I want to thank the Task Force on BQX and I look forward to us being much more critical about developers with value capture schemes and pretty renderings that actually don't illustrate what the true picture of the project is and I also want to highlight one other thing about the project. Value capture is obviously extremely speculative, but one of the things you see in the reporting is that this rail system would also require overhead contact systems to run on, right. These are wires that would then need to be included so with construction chaos, with the laying of rail tracks, hanging wires and creating exclusionary street and then potentially forfeiting public land for substations. I think it's insanity and I think we need support in stopping this misadventure as soon as possible. Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you both. I have a couple questions if I can, before you leave. How

did you each hear about the BQX? How did you hear about it?

LAURIE MORA: Oh, a long time ago, a couple of years ago a representative, I guess, came to the Atlantic Avenue Bid.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And was this a EDC person or

LAURIE MORA: I may, I think it probably was. I don't remember but it was at least two or three years ago and at that point I expressed amazement at the idea of a "trolley" because of the total inflexibility of it. We did not know the route then. If we would have known the route that it was actually planning to go and make a turn from Court Street and go west on Atlantic Avenue until it got to Columbia Street and make a turn through two or three of the most important blocks of our district, we wouldn't have calm and quiet about it. I mean we would have been much, much more upset then and in all candor, when you talk to the local elected officials, our Councilman, the two that we bridge, they weren't even sure it was really gonna happen so the idea that you took this seriously, you know, marching with

2 placards and all that didn't seem necessary at that  
3 time. That was before the Friends of the BQX.

4 CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay.

5 LAURIE MORA: And the funding and the  
6 promotion. In my opinion now, it's absolutely  
7 necessary. We need our own placards and our own  
8 buttons and our own, you know, efforts in order to  
9 stop this as Renee says.

10 CHAIR MENCHACA: Well, and before I go to  
11 Renee, I wanted to ask you one last thing about,  
12 essentially, we've jotted down and noted your issues  
13 and the turns and that's gonna be important for this  
14 conversation, especially for businesses along the  
15 corridor. What I haven't heard necessarily is  
16 whether or not the Atlantic Bid has business concerns  
17 around construction. You heard the EDC say well, we  
18 decided not to go to Sunset Park because of the  
19 disruption on small businesses and because of cost  
20 but they mentioned that as one of the notes. What's  
21 the disruption for businesses along?

22 LAURIE MORA: Well, it's tremendous, of  
23 course.

24 CHAIR MENCHACA: What is that, what is  
25 your expectation that that's gonna cause?

LAURIE MORA: We have a shop on Atlantic Avenue. The ability for UPS to come, the ability for customers to come.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And is that just through construction, so after the construction

LAURIE MORA: Well, that's, no, afterwards there's only, I can only talk about our route. I'm not, I can't really talk about

CHAIR MENCHACA: And that's not why I'm asking you, just look at

LAURIE MORA: We have only one stop proposed which is technically along our route. That is the corner of Court and Atlantic Avenue, the absolute worst place in the world if anybody ever say that but that's what planned so we meaning the business people are hardly going to terrifically benefit from this trolley because they'd be walking what, three blocks to our shop, my daughter's shop, or six blocks the other way. It's not like the present famous B61 and so the length of construction, of course, is terrible but more to that point is the end, the end result, where stores cannot be, businesses cannot get their deliveries. We don't even know what's gonna happen with the existing bus

lines. We don't know what would happen with an ambulance. We have a medical center, you know, down there. We have none of those things. All we know is that our present situation along Atlantic is one of the most heavily trafficked streets in this City and to impose upon that a fixed rail vehicle is absolutely amazing.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you for that and I just wanted to make sure that that voice was in and moving over to Renee and the work that you've been doing in the organization and the coalition including UPROSE, talking about climate change. I know we didn't mention it because we were really focused on things that we just hadn't been privy to, in terms of information. It's not lost on us. The climate change question is a real question. Are there studies that you can share with us or information about light rail in terms of impacts from storm, be it water or whatever kinds of impacts light rail has had. Is that information that you can share with us at a later time or if you have now, that kinda shows the vulnerability and the resiliency issues around a fixed infrastructure like this.

RENEE REYNOLDS: So, unfortunately I'm not aware of a study that would give like a comparison of like a City like New York so I could definitely look and see if I could find something that would give a clearer picture. I mean, this is simply something that can be observed and understood like if you have a fixed rail system and there's a storm event. In their own reporting, they've indicated that their response, their climate resiliency response would be to park it, you know, so it wouldn't be an operable system. Let's say a tree falls down on the rail, you know, like we're talking about bunching because of signals but anything else can happen to impede that rail line and a bus can make a turn and reroute. A fixed rail system can't do that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Got it, that's pretty clear. Okay, thank you both for being here today and for your testimony.

LAURIE MORA: Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: We're moving on to our next panel, the New York Building Congress - Joseph Calata, TWU Local 100 - Duvay Williams, the Waterfront Alliance - Roland Lewis, and then did you



guys fill out a, you didn't. Can we have both of you guys up here as well?

[pause]

CHAIR MENCHACA: Who wants to start?

First off I want to say thank you, Council Member, it takes a lot of endurance to sit through hearings and to keep a clear mind so appreciate it.

CHAIR MENCHACA: I was born for this, I was born for this. Go ahead.

My name is Joseph Calata and I'm here to read a statement on behalf of Carlos Scissura and the New York Building Congress. The Building Congress is a non-partisan coalition of business, labor, professional and governmental organizations serving the design, construction, and real estate industry. Our Association is made up of over 550 organizations, comprised of more than 250,000 professionals. On behalf of the Building Congress, I urge the City Council to make the Brooklyn Queens connector a reality. For New York to continue to thrive as a global City, we've got to dream big and put shovels in the ground. I implore this Council to return to a spirit of aspirational planning and building that

transformed New York into the City it is today. With the BQX, New York City is taking a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to infrastructure planning. The City no longer operates on the hub and spoke model we've experienced in previous decades and there are very real opportunities in the boroughs outside of accessible for all New Yorkers. If you live or work in a part of Queens or Brooklyn that isn't currently adequately served by mass transit, you deserve the same access to jobs and housing as those on the upper west side or midtown. The current efforts to improve our existing transit are critical but they do not reflect this principal. All New Yorkers deserve equal service. The BQX would catalyze new development and retail, all the while being mindful and inclusive of the neighborhoods that have virtually cut off from opportunities since their inception. The project will also boost the number of available jobs and expand access for many minority and women owned businesses. We need to grow our City inclusively and the BQX is one of the most promising projects to do just that. Furthermore, this project will serve as a crucial blueprint for future transit investment by using value capture to fund part of the

cost. This financial model is a proven approach to reducing the budget impacts of large-scale infrastructure construction. I would urge you to support this transformative project and welcome the improved transit for all of New York. Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you.

SANTOS RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon, I'm glad you will vote for this, Council Member. Thank you, members of City Council for holding this hearing today on an important topic that deserves attention. My name is Santos Rodriguez and I am here to testify on behalf of Gary Labarbera, president of the Building and Construction Trades Council of greater New York comprising local affiliates of 15 national and international trade unions representing more than 100,000 hardworking men and women living in New York City. I'm here to testify in support of the BQX and I am thankful to the City for their promise that the construction of this 11-mile light rail line along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront will be built by union labor. I'm proud to say that I am a supporter of the BQX and let me tell you three reasons why you should be too, jobs, jobs and jobs. From union construction jobs from building the light rail line which is

estimated to be around 16,000 to the jobs that will be created with new housing and office buildings that the light rail will enable, we're talking about thousands and thousands of job opportunities for New Yorkers. The BQX as planned will be one of the largest light rail projects in America. If done correctly, it can spur new and important development projects like affordable housing along the route and can serve as an example that New York City can still do big things. The City should move this project forward to prove that it can build out our transit system in a new intelligent way and that it can take control of its transit destiny. Our members are eager and ready to go to work. We really are just waiting on you to get behind this project so we can speed it through the public process review. It would be better for the communities you represent for our workers in the City, if we can get this to yes quickly to avoid the pain and headaches of the will they, won't they build transit and create jobs. We've unfortunately seen that many of the same organizations that complaint to working people, yell and scream about the BQX giving false reasons for opposing it like that is not no guarantee to be

integrated with the MTA fare system. Well, of course, it be integrated. It's not guaranteed because it hasn't been built yet. It makes sense, the City and State integrating. This is the single best transit project of the City of New York currently has in front of it and it would serve thousands of people, while creating thousands of jobs, tens of thousands of jobs. All members of the Building and Construction Trades Council are ready to go to work with you and the City to fast track this project and get it done so we can realize the tremendous benefit. The BQX stands as an opportunity in the City of New York to be ambitious about the future and building of infrastructure that will grow and sustain our economy for the next several decades. Thank you for your time, Council Member.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you Santos and for the very strong, passionate testimony. I will say that there has been one thing that has been built that has yet to be integrated and that's the ferries so if Gary wants to give a call to the Mayor and the Governor and see if that can happen, I'd be more hopeful that integration can happen.

SANTOS RODRIGUEZ: Sounds like a plan.

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2 CHAIR MENCHACA: All right, awesome.  
3 We'll work on that together. [Laughter] Please.

4 SAL SOREESE: Good afternoon, my name is  
5 Sal Soreese [phonetic]. I'm a member of the  
6 Sheetmetal Workers Local 28, the Building Trades  
7 Union here in New York City. I grew up in  
8 Gravesend, Brooklyn which some consider the southside  
9 of Brooklyn. As a child, I would hear my Mom speak  
10 about growing up in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. She  
11 talked about First Place and how much fun it was  
12 playing hopscotch and other games with her friends  
13 while her parents would sit on the stoop and hang out  
14 till the wee hours of the morning. I always wondered  
15 why she only stories about her block as a young child  
16 so later on in life I asked her why. She told me  
17 that she had to move out of the area at a young age  
18 because of her Dad and work. My grandfather was a  
19 police lieutenant and he worked at 1 Police Plaza in  
20 Lower Manhattan. He moved his family out of Carroll  
21 Gardens because of his commute to work. It took him  
22 two hours to get to Manhattan and he felt he was  
23 taking too much time away from his family so they  
24 moved to Bensonhurst when the commute was easier.  
25 Because of his love for the area, my grandfather used

some of the money from the sale of his house to buy a property in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn to keep a piece of the area with his family. After his passing and the passing of my Mom, this property has now been handed down to the grandchildren, me being one of them. There's 38 of them. 424 Clinton Street has a special place in my heart now. With this Brooklyn Queens connector, we have the opportunity of giving the tenants of my property and other people living in Carroll Gardens, Red Hook and other areas along this corridor a chance to stay and raise their children in such a beautiful place. We give them the opportunity to spend more time with their children in stead of their commute. These people will have something my Mom and her parents didn't, precious time. This streetcar is a huge project for our City. With an inclusive, collaborative approach, we can anticipate the creation of 16,000 temporary construction jobs. Our City has committed to building and operating the BQX with Union labor which is very important for us middle class families. The BQX would help accelerate both commercial and residential growth. It will spur more growth along lengths of the corridor and will create tens of thousands of jobs in construction

alone. I wholeheartedly support this project. It will bring good paying Union jobs. It will give families extra time to be with each other. It will keep many families living in these beautiful areas, and it would definitely make my Mom and her parents smile. Please build the BQX. I have one other thing to say, 16 years ago my wife got pregnant. Her company moved from Manhattan to Jersey City. We decided to make the move out of Brooklyn which was very tough because I grew up in Brooklyn, so I live in Hoboken, New Jersey now. My wife every day now commutes from Hoboken, New Jersey using the light rail. The light rail is built in a flood zone. Hoboken, as you know, was flooded very badly during Sandy. You don't have to look very far to do a study and figure out how a light rail system works. You just really need to look across the river. It's efficient, it's very safe and I honest to God, I've been there 16 years. I don't see many problems with the light rail at all. As far as the cost for repairs and maintenance and everything, I don't know that. That's something that you guys should really look into. Do a study on what it costs. It's very efficient and it runs from Bayonne all the way up



through Ft. Lee, New Jersey and it's right on the water. Same thing, okay, thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you for that, buy the way, and Sal, we'll, maybe could do a field trip and go ride it together. Thank you.

Good afternoon, my name is Beth Shevry [phonetic] and I work for the New York State Laborers LECET Labor Management Cooperation and Trust. We represent over 40,000 Union members employed by our signatory contractors in the construction industry in New York City and throughout the State. Our aging transit system does not adequately serve all City residents. The BQX is a solution that will connect underserved neighborhoods from Astoria to Red Hook where many residents live including many of our own members who do not have acceptable access to public transportation. The BQX has the ability to efficiently move projected daily riders along a single corridor that is integrated into the existing transit system and will ease traffic congestion. The streetcars will travel primarily in dedicated lanes separated from vehicle traffic and bikes along the route. It is anticipated that the BQX will result in 16,000 jobs to building trades members which will

strengthen the middle class while providing the City with safe, quality construction. There is no dispute that the current transportation system is inadequate. Moreover, the population along the BQX route is forecast to increase by 30% by 2045. Therefore, the BQX will provide desperately needed transportation now and for decades to come. That's one of the many reasons why we are in support of this project. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you all for your time and I think the theme of this panel is jobs, jobs, and jobs which is important and I hear that and I think that that's gonna be a balance of all the other pieces and I'm just thankful that you're here representing the men and women every day that work for the City. I will ask one question and maybe your faces will tell me the answer to this question but I thank Carlos Scissura from the New York Building Congress really is calling on and imploring on the Council to return to a spirit of aspirational planning and this is a question for him and for everybody, would you support the concept. I mean the most aspirational thing that we can do is to essentially remove free parking on our streets. That

2 changes everyone's concept of being able to park your  
3 personal belonging on the street for free. That  
4 overnight will make this thing different and change  
5 the way that we use transportation, including cars  
6 that are a problem right now in the City and it  
7 sounds like that is the most aspirational thing that  
8 I've heard so far and would you all support that  
9 concept?

10 SANTOS RODRIGUEZ: The Building and  
11 Construction Trade Council of Greater New York  
12 supports building so if that's gonna assist us in  
13 building and continuously build with labor, putting  
14 our members to work, you know, sometimes parking goes  
15 away with this. When we're building 30, 40, 50 story  
16 buildings, there are not parkings around these  
17 buildings in the City. There's not enough parking  
18 along any corridor.

19 CHAIR MENCHACA: Free parking.

20 SANTOS RODRIGUEZ: Free parking when you  
21 think of that right, so, I mean there's a lot

22 CHAIR MENCHACA: And I hear that, thank  
23 you and I just want to be able to balance this  
24 concept of aspirational. There's some really  
25 aspirational things and it'd be great to get support

from sectors that might not be traditional connected to transportation and it sounds like you're here for the BQX for that reason, for the jobs, but when you enter conversations around transportation, we have to start thinking about that and so

SAL SOREESE: So Councilman, I think you need to come to Hoboken, New Jersey.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Yeah, I'm

SAL SOREESE: Really deal with the parking issue is the same issue with transportation always and they've come up with some great ideas as far as parking garages and other entities that have worked to bring parking to it so maybe part of the development is putting parking garages in these areas to help out people parking. Just throwing it out there.

CHAIR MENCHACA: I like that. I like that, well aspirational is what we have or I should say there's not enough, there's enough. I said aspiration right now for the Council and we're going to keep going in that direction. Thank you so much for your time today. Okay, our next panel from the Astoria Houses' Residents Association - Claudia Koger, Ingersol Houses - Darrell Burgess, Urban

Upbound - Bishop Mitchell Taylor and then from East Elmhurst - Mr. Tom Greich, The Queens Chamber maybe, are you here?

[pause]

CHAIR MENCHACA: And then can we get the Waterfront Alliance, representative from the Waterfront Alliance and the League of Conservations Voters - Adrian Espinosa, if you're here. Is Roland here still? No, and then the RPA, the Regional Planning Association - Mullin Meta. Okay, great. I think that's good for this panel. We want to see if we can get full panels as we move forward. Okay, Ms. Koger you can begin. Make sure that the light is pressed and on and it's close to you.

CLAUDIA KOGER: Yes, it is. Hello, and thank you, members of the City Council for allowing me to testify today before. My name is Claudia Koger. I'm the Astoria Residents Association president for SW Houses residents of approximately over 3,000 residents and I'm here in support of the BQX. I've lived in Astoria Houses for approximately 64 years as an adult but I also have worked, I worked for the New York City Transit Authority for 25 years so I'm talking from two points of the arrow. I know

what it is to travel around the City from Astoria which Astoria has been neglected as far as Astoria Houses has been neglected [Inaudible] of us work in Queens more or less but Astoria Houses has been neglected as far as transportation, having transportation. We are actually situated 30 blocks away from the nearest subway and that's been our life there and I'm here to testify in support of the BQX because I and many of the residents I represent need better transportation options. The Astoria Houses are the definition of a transit desert. Sitting on the far side of Astoria, 15 blocks from the closest, I said 30 really blocks from the closest subway station. For residents who are seniors like myself, if you don't have a car to get about, traveling anywhere in the City is a major hassle. We could really benefit from the BQX as more jobs and opportunities come to Queens and the Brooklyn waterfront, historically NYCHA developments like mine, have been set off from these opportunities effectively existing on an island removed from everything else happening in the City. This is true with other developments up and down this corridor. The BQX is the perfect chance to right the wrongs of

the past and bring a new long-term transit solution to communities in need. My residents and I encourage the Council to get behind this important project so we can have an easier time getting to work, to school, to doctor's appointments in other municipalities and to just anywhere. Everyone knows that in New York time is money and time it takes for us to get anywhere is a major drain on our wallets. While we've been pleased with the new ferry service, we need transportation that runs more frequent and with more stops in growing job center and everybody cannot ride the ferry because a lot of people have motion sicknesses and things like that so we can't call that just the way that we would travel from the peninsula. We want to say clearly that you hear us. We support the BQX and we hope you will too. We're thankful to the Mayor, Mayor de Blasio for putting transportation first for communities in need and we believe this is an investment in communities that historically have not seen the same level of investments as those in Manhattan and thank you for hearing us.

DARRELL BURGESS: Good afternoon Members of Council and thank you for listening to my

testimony today. My name is Darrell Burgess and I'm the president of the Ingersoll Houses Resident Association. I'm here to testify in support of the BQX and I urge you to support it as well. For those who are unfamiliar with the Ingersoll Houses, we are located in an area poorly served by transit, tucked away between Dumbo, downtown Brooklyn and Ft. Green, near the Brooklyn Navy Yard. For my residents, the BQX would be a lifeline establishing new connections to opportunities beyond immediate surroundings. NYCHA is talked about so much in the news these days but you rarely hear from residents about the conditions and needs. I'm here today, standing with my fellow residents and resident leaders to say clearly we need the BQX. It is a solution to one of our historic challenges at the Ingersoll Houses. Being cut out from transit even as the Brooklyn Queens expressway dissects our neighborhood. The poor planning has lead to a stagnant and disconnected area that the BQX would help to rectify injecting new life into our community. Our residents are eager to travel in ways that are modern, accessible and can take us to areas surging with opportunity. The City should capitalize on the job growth the waterfront is



experiencing by delivering the transit that makes it sustainable and equitable. The City must make sure the opportunities are afforded to communities historically removed from the job growth of Manhattan and the BQX is one of the best ways to do that. For my residents, the BQX would shave time off of difficult commutes establishing a five-minute ride to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a 15-minute ride to Williamsburg and a half hour ride to Long Island City. Right now, getting to some of these areas can take over an hour when traveling by public transit. The long walks to Dekalb Avenue, J Street and York Street subway stations can be especially hard for seniors, especially when they're in mobile cars and in walkers and there's elevators at those stations that aren't always working. If you ask about the bus, let me tell you that if I had to take the bus here today, I might still be waiting for it but it will be quick and easy to board the BQX and we will have fewer stops. As you continue to discuss the needs of NYCHA residents, as you continue to examine the transit crisis our City is facing, as you continue to think about how to make job growth equitable to underserved communities, I hope you will

see the true value the BQX can provide in all three areas. This is an important moment to work with us, work with us beyond just thinking about our buildings, work with us in collaboration instead of just thinking you have the answers, work with us to help lift our residents up and fulfill the promise of a better life our City provides. We ready to work with you and I thank you.

ADRIANA ESPINOSA: Good afternoon, I'm Adriana Espinosa and I'm the director of the New York City Program at the New York League of Conservation Voters. We represent over 30,000 members in New York City and we're committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. Thank you, Chair Menchaca, for holding this important hearing today. NYLCV supports expanding New York City's transportation network to increase mobility and create a more sustainable transportation system especially where that expansion can reduce reliance on cars, improve air quality and connect New Yorkers living in transit desert to the places they need to go. We embrace new multi-mobility strategies that bolster the public

transportation including support for bike share programs, bike infrastructure, light rails and ferries. The BQX represents one such opportunity to expand access enabling New York to travel between Brooklyn and Queens more efficiently. Manhattan is no longer the center of gravity in New York City and new transportation solutions should reflect modern travel patterns and growing economic hubs of the outer boroughs. The damage to our subways by Super Storm Sandy and the prohibitively high cost of underground expansion make focusing on new options above ground a smart investment. The BQX has potential to connect New Yorkers living in the Brooklyn and Queens waterfront to transportation hubs all over the City but only if integrated into the City's existing transportation network. Light rail projects are also an opportunity to reprioritize street space to get people around more efficiently and thus could be considered as part of Speaker Johnson's transportation master plan. However, in order to be a effective transportation option, they must be given the right of way to operate without getting stuck in traffic or they'll be subject to the same inefficiencies as our buses. Transit signal

priority and dedicated lane are already emerging as ways to increase bus reliability and similar strategies should be implemented as part of the BQX. Ultimately New York City needs to invest in innovative transportation options that make the best use of our resources to provide the greatest benefit to our people and our environment. Expanding transportation options to meet the needs of more people, especially those not adequately served by the existing system, is key to building a stronger and more sustainable City. Especially in light of congestion pricing, it is incumbent upon all of us to think about how we can better serve people in New York's most populous, two most populous boroughs. To conclude, there are still many questions about this project that need to be answered deliberately and thoughtfully and I will add transparently as well, such as whether fares will integrate with the MTA, who will pay for it and the effects on the existing community that the project will run through. Nonetheless, this project does have potential to be part of a better transit future for New York City. I'd like to thank the BQX Task Force for holding this important oversight hearing. Thank you.

MULLEN METTA: Good morning, Chairman Menchaca, and thanks for holding this hearing to discuss the BQX project. My name is Mullen Metta [phonetic] and I'm a Senior Associate at Regional Plan Association. New York City is experiencing a transportation crisis. Fixing it will require new resources, better planning and the right balance of transit solutions. A crisis is the result of an aging system that needs investment, congested City streets and a Manhattan central transit network that doesn't take people where they want to go. Our aging infrastructure, ongoing delays and increasing capital costs continue to strain our transit system while 40% of New Yorkers cannot walk to a subway station and limited ADA accessibility limits access even further. This has caused an increase in private and for hire vehicles, clogging our streets and polluting our air. These factors have caused us to have some of the slowest bus fees in the country and between 2012 and 2017 average weekday bus ridership has declined by 250,000 systemwide. Over 50% of New York City job growth for the last 15 years has been in the outer boroughs yet improvements in outer borough transit have not kept pace. Right now, too many New Yorkers

have to take [Inaudible] routes from one borough to the next unless they have access to a car. Commute times for inner borough travel outside of Manhattan can be over an hour long. Congestion pricing will help provide funding and reduce congestion in midtown but it doesn't help connect the fastest growing boroughs. A project like the BQX is needed to connect areas of Brooklyn and Queens, spur job growth and contribute to a more robust transit system that can accommodate a growing City particularly in the outer boroughs. These neighborhoods also deserve a comprehensive set of investments such as implementation of RPA's tri-borough line is the passenger rail line on existing tracks between Brooklyn and the Bronx, more robust and reliable bus routes, discounted fares on LIR trips, implementation of metro north access to Penn Station and enhanced bike share. BQX is a vital part of a much-needed outer borough transit strategy. Many of these investments were called for in our 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Plan. We look forward to seeing what the EIS impact analysis shows and working to best meet community transit needs with an expanded and connecting network for all New Yorkers. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR MENCHACA: I'm going to ask a couple questions before I let this panel go and I'll start with the resident associations and if either of you can talk a little bit about when you first heard about the BQX and how did you hear about it?

CLAUDIA KOGER: I met the BQX in 2015 I believe it was when they were first getting organized. They came to Astoria at our Boys and Girls Club and we gathered there just to be introduced to them at that time. They'd called the association presidents along with Urban Upbound and the other constituents just to introduce it to us and from that time we had made contacts with them and they organized Friends of the BQX from there and I became a Friend of the BQX from day one.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Are either of you, oh actually, yes, Mr. Burgess.

DARRELL BURGESS: I too was introduced to the Friends of the BQX in 2015. At the current time I was the vice president of the Resident Association and it was a wonderful opportunity because we knew Wegmans was coming to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and there was an opportunity for residents in her development to come down to our development without

the underground of the train and traveling along the waterfront with the BQX to come to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and visit Wegmans as well.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Got it, got it, and so essentially it wasn't the City. Have you been interacting with the City itself, either DOT or EDC, the City officials on the BQX? Have they reached out? Have they connected with you on any, for any reason?

CLAUDIA KOGER: I have a continued connecting with EDC and all of their information, whatever they are involved with, they constantly email. I'm on their email list and those are the things so I do have a connection to discuss with them.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Good, I want to make sure that that is strong, okay.

DARRELL BURGESS: And we do as well, we're also connected.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, great cause these are two different organizations. One's government and the other one is non-profit, kinda private, so I want to make sure that you have good connections as Adriana spoke to you, transparency is going to be



important so I want to make sure that you're there and connected to both.

DARRELL BURGESS: Absolutely.

CHAIR MENCHACA: And then for, actually no, I think you were both very clear on items so thank you so much for your testimony. We're gonna go to the next panel now. Thank you. From Tech NYC - Bryan Lozano, are you here? Yes, and then Pratt Center for Community Development - Paula Crespo, if you're here, Dumbo Bid - Alexandria Sica please and then Ron Zack from the Fifth Avenue Committee, if you're here.

[pause]

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, who would like to begin? Let's begin with you.

PAULA CRESPO: Good afternoon, Chair Menchaca. Thank you for creating this opportunity to publicly examine the BQX project. I'm Paula Crespo. I'm a senior planner at the Pratt Center for Community Development and as an organization working to address socio economic inequity in New York City, we place special focus on the ways that public actions can either exacerbate or alleviate that inequity. In the past year, we've launched the

public value recovery policy project to examine whether and how value capture tools can be used to advance social justice and how to distinguish when these tools instead exacerbate inequality. To do that, we have identified criteria for an equity framework and today I'm going to apply some of these criteria in question format to the BQX project so criterion 1. From whom will the public sector recover the economic value created as a result of the BQX? Those who own land near the proposed route will see their property values rise as a result of this amenity and in turn will pay higher property taxes that will indirectly finance the BQX. However, the low-income households and many small businesses near the BQX will either be forced to pay for this increased value in the form of higher rents or they'll be displaced, 2. Who will receive the economic value created as a result of the BQX? Landowners near the route will most directly receive the economic value that the BQX may create because living near a new transit mode will create a greater demand for housing. This will put even more upward pressures on rents while exacerbating the displacement of pressure on low-income residents and

small businesses. This has already been the case with low-income areas near Atlanta's beltline which is a 22-mile corridor of trails, bike paths, and eventually transit that is funded by value capture,

3. Who bears the financial risks of depending on future tax revenues to fund the BQX up front? EDC's 2016 study presumes that the BQX will spur an increase in property values but it doesn't quantify how much property values would have risen even if the BQX weren't built. If property values don't rise significantly more than they would have anyway without the BQX, the City will have to siphon off tax revenues that should have been spent on other things. This means that the general public bears the financial risk for a project that has been falsely touted as self-financing, and finally, who is involved in governing and how does this affect the budgeting and decision-making process. If the Council approves the BQX, it will fall under the jurisdiction of a special purpose entity and you, our elected decision maker and your colleagues, will have limited oversight. The revenue generated through value capture will be governed by others and you will not be able to consider other ways of using it that

might create more broad based transportation benefits or benefits designed to reach people negatively affected by rising housing costs and I just want to end by mentioning that more information about this equity framework and how it applies to Atlanta beltline project that I mentioned, is available in a piece that was published earlier this week in *Metro Politics* and my testimony has a link to that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you for that and I think you heard some of the questioning that we had of EDC, that teased out some of the questions that you had too so let's keep working together to understand that together. Thank you.

BRYAN LOZANO: My name is Bryan Lozano. I'm with Tech NYC. Thank you, Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today. Tech NYC is a non-profit association with a mission of supporting the tech industry in New York through increased engagement between our more than 750,000 member companies in the New York government and the community at large. Tech NYC works every day to foster a dynamic, diverse, and creative ecosystem ensuring New York is the best place to start and grow a tech company. Today, New York City's tech

ecosystem is stronger than ever, and New York has become a global hub of innovation. The New York Tech ecosystem now boasts more than 333,000 jobs and 9,000 start-ups in the Tech and Tech has a significant impact on the City's economic wellbeing. As the issue continues to grow, companies are regularly looking to establish offices beyond Manhattan central business district and locate throughout the five boroughs. This pattern of growth limits congestion, crowding and helps ensure a great number of communities benefit from economic growth. However, our public transportation system does not adequately account for current growth trends and has slowed tech companies adverse embrace to outer boroughs. Going forward, we must ensure our public transportation system accounts for outer borough development and helps fuel geographically equitable growth. Brooklyn and Queens are two boroughs that have already seen significant growth. The corridor from Sunset Park to Astoria is already home to more than 500 tech companies and is projected to have 56 million square feet of office space within the next ten years yet, there's no efficient public transportation that spans the entirety of the Brooklyn Queens waterfront. Our

City must address this lack of transportation by expanding the number of transportation options and the types of options in the corridor having multimotor transportation options from trains to buses, from bikes to ferries, will be vital to the continued success of the area and New York City as a whole. The BQX is one of the transportation options the City should pursue as it would allow New Yorkers to more easily access jobs and to help tech companies located in the corridor track employees. Just as importantly, the BQX will help connect thousands of New Yorkers, including 44,000 NYCHA residents, the workforce development opportunities, and growing tech education hubs like places like downtown Brooklyn which is home to New York Camden CUNY Tech. It is clear that the growth of the tech sector is key to our City's future. However, this growth and the pattern of growth are not predetermined. The City can and should take steps to ensure the sector grows in a diverse and equitable manner. A key step forward to achieving that goal would be to build the BQX. I'd like to thank again the City Council for holding this hearing on an important project and hopefully they can commit to creating the BQX in the

name of better transit for all New Yorkers. Thank you.

Thank you, okay, thanks very much. Good afternoon and thank you for holding this important hearing on this new important public transit option. My name is Ron Zack and I'm director of development and communications at Fifth Avenue Committee. Fifth Avenue Committee "FAC" is a 41-year old south Brooklyn based non-profit, comprehensive, community development corporation and neighbor works member who's mission is to advance economic and social justice. We develop and manage affordable housing, community facilities. We create economic opportunities and ensure access to economic stability for over 5,500 low- and moderate-income residents each year. Many of the people that FAC serves, the affordable housing that we have built and manage or will be building or the jobs that we place unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers into are along the Brooklyn waterfront. We built Red Hook single largest development of affordable coops called Red Hook Homes. We own and manage affordable housing along the Columbia Street waterfront. Our main office is in Gowanus and we're developing further

projects in Gowanus including Gowanus Green which will bring over 750 units of affordable housing to Gowanus. We provide adult information and literacy to a wide range of folks from throughout the City, financial coaching and a range of community development services. Many of our participants are NYCHA residents and we have their interests at heart. Our workforce development affiliate runs a NYCHA resident training academy and has offices in the Brooklyn Navy Yard that connect people to jobs there and train people with various interests to employment so in all of these respects, we know the waterfront very well. Sorry, I'm, let's see, we know that many people fear the BQX will only add fuel to the fire of gentrification and displacement that already exists in many communities across the City. Those are legitimate concerns that must be addressed as part of advancing the BQX but not investing in the BQX in communities that deserve public transit and need that investment is not a solution to gentrification and displacement. The value capture mechanism that is being contemplated to fund a portion of the cost of BQX must be applied surgically to mitigate displacement pressures on low- and moderate-income



families and job generating industrial businesses. For example, the City must institute the Certificate of No Harassment Program which is currently in a pilot phase and only implemented as part of the City's sponsored land use actions in advance of the public approval process for BQX to protect tenants against possible harassment and ensure that tenant harassment is severely punished. The BQX literally has the ability to connect tens of thousands of public housing and other residents along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront to opportunity and to improve the quality of life for thousands. The Fifth Avenue Committee believes the BQX is worthy of support and that any negative impacts can and must be mitigated with a range of public policies and programs so that you very much for this opportunity to speak.

CULVIS MICHELSTEIN: Hello, my name is Culvis Michelstein and I'm testifying for Alexandria Sica who's the executive director of the Dumbo Business Improvement District. As you know, Dumbo is a lovely waterfront neighborhood in Brooklyn. We are also the single densest cluster of tech and creative companies in the City with thousands of start-ups including Etsy, Rent the Runway and Quip. We are

also visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists each month thanks to gorgeous views, City investments in Brooklyn Bridge Park and the amazing buzz for Brooklyn that has grown over the past years. A large challenge in Dumbo is transit. The options to reach the neighborhood and the emerging employment clusters in the Brooklyn tech triangle are severely limited. The F train is one of the only options which means many Queens residents must travel through Manhattan to get to Dumbo. Even if you are willing to cross borough lines, the York Street F station is woefully overcrowded with a single entrance that backs up at rush hours so severely that it has been a deterrent for many businesses looking to locate in the neighborhood. We need more transit options and better transit options. The demand for reliable transit will only intensify as new offices continue to open up at the Empire stores and former Jehovah's Witnesses properties and 3,000 residential units are set to open up in the next two years. In order to service the needs of our workers, residents, current and future local businesses, the City needs to make inroads in sustainable transit solutions. A BQX connection to Dumbo would allow for more start-ups

and business hopefuls to expand their reach, eventually culminating in a waterfront wide network of closely coordinated and robust economic growth. When I ask about challenges to growing a business in Dumbo, our CEO's are always pointing to the limits of existing transit and they follow up that sentiment by telling me that the majority of their workforce hails from Brooklyn and Queens. We would encourage the City to consider a spur to Dumbo but even the current route would help our businesses and employees especially at the northern end of our neighborhood. A 12-minute walk to the Etsy offices from the BQX is a good start. It would also be meaningful for thousands of our workforce and our neighbors at the Farragut Houses as well. We don't want folks driving to Dumbo from Red Hook or Long Island City. We want them hopping on the BQX. It's clear the New York City of the past is very different from the New York City of today which sees an abundance of economic activity outside of Manhattan. It is incumbent upon the City to support innovative transportation ideas like the BQX which will deliver the transportation infrastructure needed to help our City thrive in the future. Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: We were just looking at the map and new map doesn't have, you spoke to a spur. Can you tell us what that means?

CULVIS MICHELSTEIN: Well, the idea would be a spur is something that kinda just branches off the main line that could either connect two ends or just run into the neighborhood. It's just an idea that, you know, transit directly through Dumbo would be beneficial, even more beneficial if it was right through the neighborhood as opposed to being adjacent to it.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Got it, okay. Well, thank you all for your testimony. I think we want to move through the rest of the panels but I think everyone that I heard today really spoke to transparency, understanding information, gentrification that's real, job opportunities that's real and we've got to make sure that we understand it all before we kinda, we kinda move forward and okay, that's what we're dedicated to so thank you. Next we have from the Brooklyn Greenway Initiative - Terry Carta, if you're here, Downtown Brooklyn Partnership - Regina Meyer, and the Brooklyn War Memorial - Toba

Potosky, the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce - Samara Karasyk, are you here?

SAMARA KARASYK: I'm here.

CHAIR MENCHACA: You're here, awesome. Come on up. We're also joined by Council Member Mark Gjonaj earlier today. Okay, let's start over here. Thank you.

TERRY CARTA: Thank you, thank you for holding this hearing, Council Member Menchaca. We're happy to be having the conversation. My name is Terry Carta and I'm the executive director of Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, BGI. We're a private non-profit organization that has been focused for nearly two decades on the development, establishment and long-term stewardship of the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway as you're well aware and the Greenway is, for anybody who is not familiar, a landscaped, protected, pedestrian, and cyclist route along the entirety of the Brooklyn waterfront that provides continuous access to the waterfront, connects parks and open space and adds new mobility options for transit starved residential and business communities. The vision for BQX complements the vision for the Greenway in that it addresses similar needs and

offers some of the same benefits. I'm here today to ask that the Task Force and City Council and City agencies working on this project address the proposed alignment and implementation timeline so that BQX does indeed compliment and not compete with the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway. BGI has a history of success in community based visioning and planning which in 2012 lead to the City's creation and publication of an implementation plan for the Greenway that consists of 23 distinct capital projects and six future enhancement projects as they were called, one of which actually is also proposed as part of the BQX plan which is a pedestrian and cyclist bridge over Newtown Creek better connecting Brooklyn and Queens. The Greenway's construction thus far has been realized through significant financial investments from local, City, State, and Federal entities to the amount of more than \$220 million. Approximately 18 miles of the full 26 mile planned route are currently in use by an estimated 10,000 pedestrian and cyclist users daily demonstrating public demand for and the immediate benefits afforded by the Greenway. However, the Greenway can't fulfill its full potential until the

remaining gaps are filled and the route is fully connected. It's clear that multiple mobility solutions need to be simultaneously sought and coordinated in order to meet the current and future demands of increasing population and population density along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront. No single solution is a panacea and giving people viable and reliable choices means giving people higher quality of life. Again, BQX compliments BGI's vision for the Greenway and yet the proposed alignment for BQX seems to overlap the Greenway in a few locations, Columbia Street waterfront, Flushing Avenue along the Navy Yard and a small section of Kent Avenue in Williamsburg to be direct. BGI asks that these locations are coordinated to allow the full realization of the Greenway in concert with BQX. Second, closing major gaps in the Greenway which are in Red Hook, Sunset Park, Coney Island, and Dumbo can and should be done before BQX breaks ground. Completing the Greenway route can be done in five years and is estimated to cost less than 10% of the total BQX proposed budget. So third and last, BGI also hopes that coordination of BQX with the Greenway will result in increased connectivity in the short

term between Brooklyn and Queens waterfront neighborhoods and we hope that this includes the design, funding and construction of a pedestrian and cyclist bridge over Newtown Creek on the front end of BQX implementation as an immediate benefit to these communities. BGI looks forward to continuing to work with the City Council and our City agencies to realize this vision and I thank the Task Force and City Council at large for its work on behalf of our City. Thank you.

CAROLINE PERRY: Good afternoon, my name is Caroline Perry and I'm here to read a statement on behalf of Regina Meyer, the president of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership. DBP is a not for profit local development corporation that manages three different business improvement districts that comprise downtown Brooklyn. The partnership's mission is to advance economic development activities in downtown Brooklyn and help create a world class business, cultural, educational, residential, and retail destination. As New York City's largest central business district outside of Manhattan, downtown Brooklyn has seen record employment, residential and industry growth in recent years. However, this growth is impeded by the



lack of transit access to the Brooklyn Queens waterfront. Downtown Brooklyn is served by 13 MTA subway lines and countless bus routes but getting to and from Red Hook, Long Island City, Williamsburg and even the Brooklyn Navy Yard is a challenge, one that we must solve if we are to remain competitive. We know that infrastructure projects can take a good deal of time, political will and advocacy to get done. That is why we're here today to lend our support for the Brooklyn Queens connector. The BQX would carry 50,000 passengers a day, a capacity currently unmet by most existing transit modes in the City. It would offer a connection not only for the areas 46,000 and counting residents but for downtown Brooklyn's 45,000 college students for whom reliable transportation is especially important. Likewise, a diverging jobs hub in its own right, downtown Brooklyn's companies that need to attract the best talent from across the City in order to thrive are not easily accessible for those living in growing residential areas of Queens and Brooklyn including the NYCHA developments along the streetcar's route. Downtown Brooklyn is one of the many areas poised for remarkable economic growth in the coming decades.

The BQX offers a street mode alignment that bridges the transit gaps in Brooklyn and Queens in a way we've never seen before. By connecting the innovation corridor stretching along the East River waterfront from Brooklyn to Queens we can support businesses, educational, and cultural institutions, attract new investment and grow our talent pool, not only in downtown Brooklyn but in every neighborhood along the 11-mile route. With an increasing abundance of economic activity focused outside Manhattan, it's clear that we need to embrace a new vision for transportation and that this is the place to start. It is incumbent upon the City to support innovative transportation ideas like the BQX and deliver the transportation infrastructure needed to help our City thrive in the future. Thank you very much.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you.

SAMARA KARASYK: Good afternoon, Chair Menchaca and Members of the BQX Task Force. I am Samara Karasyk, chief policy office at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is the voice of Brooklyn's business community offering the resources, programs, tools, and direct support services needed

to continue creating jobs and opportunities in their communities. We are here today to express our support for the BQX. We endorse this project because the Brooklyn Chamber works to develop and sustain a healthy and robust business environment which requires an extensive and efficient transportation infrastructure. Our work catalyzes community, workforce and economic development. We are witnessing a surge in business growth along the Brooklyn waterfront so much so that we have named this area the Brooklyn Innovation Coast because of the large influx of technology, new manufacturing and creative companies. These companies are drawn to the region because of the vibrancy of the landscape, diversity of culture and strong talent pull but our current transit infrastructure is inadequate for the economy and jobs to continue to grow at this pace. Our transit infrastructure was built to move people into Manhattan's central business, not to move them around Brooklyn and the outer boroughs. This transportation deficiency prevents workers in Brooklyn's transit deserts from commuting to good paying jobs along the coast, all the way up to Queens and into other parts of Brooklyn. We are staunch

proponents of supporting the growing job sectors that will benefit all our residents. Transportation must be improved for more equitable growth to occur. For this reason, we strongly endorse various forms of new transit from ferries to bus rapid transit and expanded subway service to the BQX. We need more and better transit to achieve the waterfront's full potential and give Brooklyn residents equal access to jobs of all levels in manufacturing, creative industries and technology. The BQX would help underserved commuters in Brooklyn and Queens. It would serve as a model for developing new and reliable transit in other parts of our City to grow job opportunities for all. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

TOBA POTOSKY: Good afternoon, Chairman Menchaca and Task Force Members, thank you for the opportunity for speaking to you today. I should say that I am a member of the Friends of the BQX Board so like many of us here, we all sit on many, many boards and so when I wrote down on the card, I just wrote down the Brooklyn War Memorial which is a great organization that everybody should learn about. We're restoring really New York City's only World

Ward II memorial and it's located in downtown Brooklyn which once the BQX is available, more and more people would be able to visit once we get it reopened. Okay, that's not why I came here today. More than twenty years ago, members of the New York City Council approved funds to create bike lanes in New York City. That decision took vision and understanding that New Yorkers were looking for alternatives to buses and subways. It also took courage because allocating tax payer funds for something as simple and old fashioned as bike lanes were certain to be criticized by those who lack the same vision and understanding. Certainly the loudest people in the room would say it would be a waste of money, which they did, and nobody rides bicycles anymore, and that's what they were saying so fast forward 20 years and according to NYC.org, in 2017 New Yorkers averaged 490,000 bike rides per day. Of these rides, 20% were commuter trips so those Councilmen 20 years ago were right and now New York has over 1,200 miles of bike lanes so here we are again talking about a simple and old-fashioned idea, streetcars, the BQX. It would be stranger to have this conversation if streetcars weren't so successful

everywhere else. They're successful around the world and much closer to home as we heard now in New Jersey. I just wanted to point out two examples that I looked up on-line, the Buffalo metro light rail runs 6.4 miles and it averages 16,900 riders per day and then even closer is the Hudson Bergen light rail runs 17 miles and it averages 54,434 per day. The BQX represents jobs and opportunities where they don't exist now. It's cleaner than cars as well all know and more efficient and more versatile than our current bus service. I just need another, just half a second. This is really, really important. It's stroller and wheelchair accessible, no steps and that's so vital for our senior community that is focused on keeping their independence as they age. I don't know how many people are from downtown Brooklyn, but I can't wait for the BQX so I can go to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and shop at Wegmans which we've been waiting for a long time for. You know, I know this is not in the immediate plan but I would love to be able to take it to Prospect Park or even Industry Park so I hope that that is something that is revisited, going down to Sunset Park. I just want to leave you with this thought, so, Brooklyn's

population no secret is booming and will continue to boom. The MTA is not adding new buses or subway lines and so we're here asking for you to have the same vision and understanding that Council Members had when considering this crazy idea of bike lanes so once again I just want to reiterate, please support the BQX. Its time has come. Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you to this panel and again I think these are important things to talk about and important to hear and I hope you felt heard today and there are two things I just want to point out cause we keep on hearing the same talking point about the 50,000 ridership for BQX and I know that in some ways we're gonna get a little bit more details with EIS from EDC which I think we're all looking for and I keep on looking up at the screen and there's a sense of discrepancy here on just one of the routes in the City which is the weekly, kind of ridership, and so we're trying to figure out how we can get the ridership right in terms of how the BQX is kinda structured on their weekly numbers versus the bus systems that we have right now and I think that's gonna be important to do so I want to go back and maybe ask Ms. Meyer where she got those numbers and

we can come back and talk a little bit later because she used them in the testimony and I want to kinda get a sense. Maybe she has a transportation planner that she's working with I want to, but we want to talk to them but it seems like it's the same number so I want to know if it's the same person or whatnot but I think those are important things to talk about and then for the Chamber, you heard from the Atlantic Avenue Bid. Are you hearing from businesses on both sides? Are both sides kind of talking to the Chamber right now about business issues along corridors that are gonna be directly impacted and what are some of those voices saying to the Chamber, that are members potentially of the Chamber?

SAMARA KARASYK: I mean we hear from our businesses that it's really hard to find good employees in many different ways and we hear on the workforce development side that, you know, it can be tough for people to get to jobs in Brooklyn so, you know, we are pro-jobs.

CHAIR MENCHACA: So, it's kind of a transportation question, right. It's a general transportation question.



SAMARA KARASYK: We came out with a comprehensive economic development strategy last year and in that one of the major points we put in there is for us to continue to grow our economy and to grow jobs, we really need to have better transportation and the BQX is one of the transportation projects that we cited as helping with that.

CHAIR MENCHACA: But what about the businesses that are along the corridor that are going to be impacted as we heard from the Atlantic Avenue, I think you were here when you heard them speak to that. Have you been hearing from those businesses that will essentially, like EDC mentioned, Sunset Park and one of the many reasons they removed Sunset Park included business interruption? Are you hearing from businesses that are going to be interrupted throughout the course of the utility changes and the construction of the rail?

SAMARA KARASYK: I have not at this point.

CHAIR MENCHACA: You haven't, okay. I have and so I want to make sure that you connect with them and they're Chamber members and so I want to make sure that you listen to your constituency in a

way that I can connect you to them so that you can talk to them as well.

SAMARA KARASYK: That would be great.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Okay, thank you all.

Next panel, we have Southwest Brooklyn Tenant Union - Ms. Balanda Yokum, the Brooklyn New York Nanodina Phukon Architects, StreetsPAC - Eric, come on up. I see you here. The Merchants on Atlantic Avenue. Is Matthew Lasorga here? Okay, so we have Eric.

[pause]

CHAIR MENCHACA: And we can start with you please, thank you.

GEORGE HAIKALIS: High tech. My name is George Haikalis and I'm the president of the Institute for Rational Urban Mobility. IRUM is a New York City based nonprofit concerned with reducing motor vehicle congestion and improving the livability of dense, urban places. IRUM has long supported light rail as an important element of a comprehensive transportation and land use plan for New York City. Light rail provides an attractive alternative to rubber tire transport modes. It provides a smooth self-enforcing path and a permanence that reinforces new development. Some 70 years ago the City hosted a

five-borough light rail, streetcar, tram network that was the envy of the world. As important as subway and elevated railways were, it was the surface street railways that fostered much of the City's early development and filled in the gaps between stations on the rapid transit network. Unfortunately, Robert Moses, the City's master builder, had a different vision for the City that emphasized the automobiles. While New York City could have accommodated both modes, Moses had an almost messianic view that streetcars had to be removed for traffic to move freely. This vision as we know failed because a City as dense and crowded as New York could not accommodate a totally auto centric surface transportation network. The result has been chaotic. IRUM commends the Mayor for advancing the Brooklyn Queens waterfront light rail line as a sensible first stage in bringing this mode back to the City. Just across the Hudson River, as we've heard earlier today, New Jersey has built a similar waterfront light rail line which is quite popular and has served as an important instrument for economic development. IRUM urges the City Council to make a junket across

the river to see how much of the world is moving towards more sustainable urban rail transit.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you, and I think there's a couple invites to cross the river for that so we're gonna do that, we're gonna do that. Thank you.

I'd like to thank the Committee for allowing me to speak. My name is Shebath Stewart. I'm here to read a statement on behalf of Tucker Reed. Hi, my name is Tucker Reed. I am the cofounder and principal of Totem. At Totem our work draws upon the expertise of our team in urban revitalization to promote a vibrant local economy. We've all seen downtown Brooklyn and Brooklyn as a whole blossom into a world class destination for culture, the arts and economic opportunity. In Brooklyn, there are lessons and models that we can export to the rest of the City, in turn insuring the collective prosperity of our five boroughs. The question of implementing a streetcar line between Brooklyn and Queens has been floating around for quite some time now but a lot of crucial points tended to get eclipsed by the narrow analysis of the proposal. We need to take a step back and look at

the bigger picture. We're seeing a new spine of New York along the Brooklyn Queens waterfront and the one limiting its potential is the lack of transit.

Although the BQX will be a boom to commuters, and our most underserved neighborhoods, it's by and large a tool for economic development and growth. One can look to the construction of the East River bridges in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and see the opportunities that were unlocked for millions of New Yorkers through the East/West connections which helped cement the economic ties between the City's population centers. Our north/south connection has not yet been made and the BQX would be a comprehensive transit solution required to lay the foundation for job growth, more affordable housing and office space. We are seeing unprecedented employment and residential growth in Brooklyn and Queens which paves the way for a labor force and creative talent pool that should no longer have to rely on traveling through Manhattan to reach their destinations. The Brooklyn Tech triangle and Long Island City are driving a lot of this growth and it's imperative that we make them accessible to our public housing residents living along the proposed route. We cannot allow this corridor to be

left just to market forces alone. The waterfront would be otherwise dominated exclusively by luxury housing and our streetscape would be fraught with car, taxis, Ubers and private shuttles. Without the BQX, the Brooklyn Queens waterfront will be haunted by missed opportunities for job growth and equity for our most neglected neighborhoods. This is a huge project that can lay the groundwork and foundation for growth for generations to come and a promise and economic return that would allow the great City of New York to become even greater.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you for reading the statement. I think this is the strongest argument for what we've been kind of hearing today which is this is an economic development project and it's pretty clear. Maybe you can join us in the no free parking in New York City Coalition, send them that request, and I'll talk to them later about it. Eric.

ERIC MCCLURE: Mr. Chair, thank you. My name is Eric McClure. I am the executive director of StreetsPAC, a political action committee that advocates for safer streets and better public transit in New York City and you can count me as a member of

the No Free Parking Coalition as well. In general, enhancements to public transportation are things that we should embrace as a City. New transit lines that enhance connectivity and provide service to areas that have been underserved by existing systems have the potential to greatly improve people's lives. I'd like to sit here today and welcome the proposed BQX with open arms but there are a number of reasons for concern. The cost of building the BQX will be significant and it's easy to argue that parallel bus service, which would offer potentially equal or superior transit service could be implemented far more cheaply and far more quickly as well. Most new streetcar projects built across the country during the past decade, however, have been constructed primarily to enhance economic development rather than as robust additions to local transit networks. The costs tend to be borne widely while the benefits accrue much more narrowly. It's also easy to argue that investments in transit would have much greater return if directed toward improving the City's struggling bus network, building protected bus lanes, speeding up the implementation of signal priority and off board all door boarding and the like. Most

importantly there are two essential features critical to the BQX's success and without ironclad commitments to those features, the project should not proceed.

The first is fare integration with the existing New York City transit system. If the BQX is to serve as a pathway to economic opportunity for economic opportunity for those neighborhoods along the planned route, it must offer seamless and free transfers to and from intersecting subway and bus lines.

Requiring people to pay a second fare to connect to other transit options will create a barrier that those most in need won't be able to afford and will render the BQX a streetcar line serving mostly affluent riders. The second key element required for the BQX to succeed is a 100% dedicated right of way along the entirety of the route. Where streetcars have failed, it has been principally due to encouraging by drivers into the paths of streetcars.

We all know far too well New York drivers propensity to double park with impunity and to think that somehow that won't happen along a streetcar route is pure folly. Right of way cannot be enforced. It must be created and maintained structurally and without a completely dedicated right of way, the BQX



will be doomed to failure. We urge the Task Force to mandate fare integration and exclusive right of way if the BQX project is to move forward. Thank you.

GREG WALTMAN: Good afternoon, Council and Chair Menchaca. I am Greg Waltman. I have a clean energy company, G1 Quantum. We spoke a couple of months ago about Quantum tracks which is a variation of speed breaker technology, speed breaker technology being cars going over speed breakers which then in turn creates kinetic energy which can be redirected back into the energy grid. Now, if we take a solution like that and reapply it to subways, at the type of tremendous amount of load that goes through subways, you're well on your way to creating the first ever self-sustainable City in the world which is, you know, nothing to shy away from. When considering different types of concerns, the BQX and profitability and making sure the budget within the City Council's limits is, you know, being addressed the way that it can be. Moving from there, you know, as I remind the Council about the Quantum tracks initiatives and this initiative as it falls or is parsed by the Green New Deal Initiative, different types of constituents through New York, putting it

all together, you know, when you were talking about allocating resources, budgetary concerns and I'm telling you that there is a solution Quantum tracks that has the ability to not only resolve all these indifferences or concerns but create the first ever self-sustainable city in the world, it should be something that should be, you know, kind of celebrated I would think that we're on our way to that type of solution but instead we have, you know not to speak too negatively, but Mayor de Blasio now running for President and announcing his presidency at Trump Tower under the guise of 76 or so protesters of a Green New Deal Initiative and again, we're not parsing through the value hyper protectionists narratives within the main stream media presenting the public an illusion of choice when these solutions exist. Does that make sense? It, you know, it's almost like well, one side of the argument is saying well much does it cost, it's too expensive, it's too expensive. I've already said that it paid for itself so as we go on and on and on and we see these types of budgetary considerations, \$18 million, \$10 million, etc. like that and as we move our way along these initiatives, I'm not advocating for a big dig

Boston type of style track enhancement but as track enhancements go along, these Quantum tracks can be implemented and then retroactively activated and then added back to the current existing energy grid to resolve these type of budgetary discrepancies in the long run indefinitely if we're able to move beyond the value hyper protectionism within the existing type of argument or discussion around these issues. Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you, thank you for that and again I think we're always wanting to look at new ideas and how to think about this, both the concerns that were brought up in this panel that are not unique to this panel but consistent in the panel about fare integration and how that works, will that work, federal funding, when does that come in and do we have to have all these things in place before we move forward or a whole other concept in technology that might be coming in and so we're, if you want to give us more information, we'd be happy to take that as well and this is why we're doing this public hearing is to really get a sense about what these blind spots are at this point and then remove those

blind spots, understand it and see if we can make a decision together.

GREG WALTMAN: Exactly.

CHAIR MENCHACA: District by district by district, and this is a long set of districts. Okay, thank you all for your attention to this and we look forward to working with you. This is not over, and we want to make sure to keep engaging you. Okay, is Abney here, Christopher Spiraza, Pursuit - David Yang, come on up, Zachary Weiner from Barkno Nutrient, no not here, Don Skeet from Jammit Bistro, Sophia Guittar - Casa Rubio, Claudia Gonzales, are you here? Matt Emmey, Friends of BQX, are you here? And then Nick Defonte, representing Nick Defonte, Jessica Ford, come on up. Is there anybody else that wanted to testify that has not testified that wants to testify? That's it. We're at the end, wonderful. Let's start over here.

DAVID YANG: Good afternoon, my name is David Yang and I'm a cofounder of Pursuit. Pursuit is a nonprofit that creates transformation where it's needed most. Through our four-year intensive software development training program, we train adults with the most needed potential to get jobs in

technology, advancing their careers and become the next generation of leaders in technology. Our graduates are hired by leading companies like Pinterest, Kickstarter, LinkedIn, BlackRock and J. P. Morgan. Our graduates on average come in making \$18,000 a year and they graduate and get jobs making over \$85,000 a year. The tech industry is at the forefront of much of the progress in New York City. The success of many industries is contingent on the growth of the tech sector. The rate of innovation within tech demands reliable and equitable education and we at Pursuit seek to equip adults with the expertise required to carve out their place in the increasingly competitive job market. The public transit routes to and from our office in Long Island City, however, are limited and further constrained by worsening bus and train performance and congestion. As our City grows, hundreds and thousands of New Yorkers in need to equitable transit are effectively being left behind. About half of Pursuit's graduates are Black or Latino, half are women and almost two-thirds do not have a college degree. Over 60% of our participants receive public assistance. We need the BQX to continue empowering these students to achieve

their dreams because they have not been adequately served by existing resources. The BQX bridges the gap between our most marginalized neighborhoods and the educational hubs that are designed to cater to their needs. There is also a substantial number of blue-collar workers that could benefit from retraining and workforce development programs that currently do not have a convenient outlet to refine existing skills as well as learn new ones. The BQX will not only help students during their time at Pursuit but after they graduate and are ready to enter the workforce. With the number of tech companies ready to embrace the waterfront both in Queens and Brooklyn, the streetcar would connect students to the job opportunities that they have worked so hard to prepare for. An investment in the BQX would be an investment in the health of our tech economy. We implore the Council to consider the longevity of this project and the fundamental promise of opportunity that it guarantees for New Yorkers in need. Thank you.

DAWN SKEET: Good afternoon, my name is Dawn Skeet and I own a small restaurant called Jammit Bistro in Red Hook, Brooklyn. We opened just earlier

this year but I have been running a catering company throughout Brooklyn for 14 years. Currently we hire people from Red Hook because we believe in investing in the community in which we serve. Operating a small business in Red Hook has become a challenge in the sense that it is difficult for staff to get to work on time. Given the location of Red Hook, it is difficult for community members to navigate the community due to the lack of public transportation. The neighborhood of Red Hook has so much more to offer its residents and visitors. The nearest train is between 15 to 25 minute walk. One can say we all need the exercise. However, when the only option to commute is within a 15 to 25 minute walk, that creates a burden, both on the residents and the employers in the community and that's not okay. As Brooklyn borough president, Eric Adams, puts it there are communities now in this City if we'll honestly admit that are prisoners because of the lack of public transportation within the communities itself and we don't want to be prisoners in the Red Hook community. The proposed BQX streetcar would be an added value to all in Red Hook as it would offer an alternative form of transportation. Over the last

ten years, we have seen and experienced tremendous growth both in housing, jobs and residents. Within the growth we need to provide daily services that will provide, you know, the enhancement that we've seen over the last ten years and that includes public transportation being top of the list. Yes, there are renovations being done on the trains and the buses which service most of the communities within Brooklyn. However, communities like Red Hook has limited public transportation choices, one bus in and out, one train 15 minutes away. The BQX would provide a needed relief to commuting in and around the Red Hook area. The BQX will create more exposure to all the small restaurants like mine and businesses located along the proposed route of which my restaurant is also located, essentially turning my store front into a standard advertisement. Friends of BQX held an event on March 5 called BQX, real impacts on local businesses. Here we saw how small businesses from big cities around the country came to Brooklyn to talk to us about how the addition of this streetcar is worth it. They vocalize about how scary it was at first, just to think about the project itself and the impact that it would cost, but in the



end the final product showed that this would become more satisfying to the people within Queens and Brooklyn who would be serviced by this streetcar and it would be a win win for both the members and the small businesses. The BQX creates new areas for New Yorkers to explore between Brooklyn and Queens that are currently inaccessible without going through Manhattan first. Whether it's one seat ride for commuters coming in to dine or for an employee coming to work, the BQX offers a real solution that bring with it convenience and time saving. BQX has the ability to help residents of Red Hook work and play outside and within Red Hook itself. Every New Yorker should have a chance for a better of life and the BQX should do that for the hundreds and thousands of commuters who already live in these neighborhoods. As a owner of a business in Red Hook since February, I must say my greatest challenge is employees getting into work because of the commute, coming from Queens, coming from other parts of Brooklyn, and what that does, it limits qualified employees to gain employment within the Red Hook area. Thank you.

Good afternoon, my name is Jessica Ford and I'm here on behalf of Nick Defonte owner of

Defonte Sandwich Shop. Hi, my name is Nick Defonte and I'm a lifelong Red Hook resident and small business owner. I own and run Defonte's Sandwich Shop and practically grew up in the place. My grandfather opened Defonte's in 1922 and we've kept it in the family ever since. We are the epitome of what a neighborhood staple is. I have watched with a front row seat how Red Hook has changed over the years. Our family has seen what happens when our City doesn't welcome change. We watched as everyone fled from New York in the 1980's, yet we stayed strong. Throughout it all I have watched Red Hook suffer from lack of transportation. We know that Red Hook residents on average are 10 to 25 minutes away from a subway station. That is not okay. The closest subway to Defonte's Sandwich Shop is a 16 minute walk away. The closest ferry is 11 minutes away. The BQX has proposed to run right by my shop bringing with it a stop that will put Defonte's within a 5 minute walk from public transportation. In addition, the BQX will bring an estimated 50,000 additional eyes on my business a day. On March 5, Friends of the BQX had other small business owners from big cities around the country come to Brooklyn

to talk to us about how the addition of a streetcar is worth it. They spoke about their fears regarding construction but also praised the addition of the streetcar for increase in foot traffic and revenue. This is a win win. The BQX will open up new areas for New Yorkers to explore between Brooklyn and Queens that are virtually inaccessible to each other now. They will no longer seclude Red Hook from Queens and creates better, more reliable access to northern Brooklyn. We deserve a real transportation solution that not only opens up new neighborhoods to Red Hook residents but that can stand up to the weather as well. Currently Red Hook is located on the flood plain and we need a form of transportation that is resilient from a hurricane. We saw in Texas after Hurricane Harvey that the light rail was up and running just a day after the flood waters receded. If we can continue to rely on State run agencies to help us, we will be waiting forever. Seven years later, we are still waiting for a flood protection plan post Super Storm Sandy. Whether it be commuters coming to dine or an employee coming to work, the BQX offers a real solution. The BQX has the ability to help residents of Red Hook work and play outside of

just their neighborhood. Every New Yorker should have a chance at a better quality of life and the BQX can do that for the hundreds of thousands of commuters. Thank you.

CHAIR MENCHACA: Thank you and I especially enjoyed hearing from Red Hook as well. I think Red Hook has a special story about a lot of the things we're talking about along the waterfront and maybe not unlike other waterfronts with the post Sandy work, transportation desert, a real transportation desert in a lot of ways. It's not just like connections we needed and making sure that our businesses can grow and I hear that big time and I think getting that understood and a handle on that has been a struggle for us in trying to figure out what we can do and I think maybe my only question, specifically to the Red Hook businesses, to both Dawn and Jessica actually, this is a project that has a long timeframe. This is 10 years from and construction will happen so you're gonna get impacted in some ways at Defonte's and are we kinda looking at that too because not only are you waiting for the train, the light rail to come in 10 years, there's gonna be impact along the way and what happens to

Defonte's when there's construction in front of it for a while and removal and so these are real questions that we have to thin about because we have pieces of this already that are very important, like 55,000 people that are gonna ride a day or the 50,000, whatever it is and so how do we work backwards from that? When we think about some of the transportation planning that's been happening in Red Hook, you look at things like a connector bus that does two or three stops in Red Hook and then goes right into the City, into the hub in the City like on Fulton Center where all the trains are at and that's a way to get people to connect to Red Hook quickly with a bus so there's other options that we can do and I'm not saying no to the BQX. I have a lot of concerns and I've been very clear about that. It's more how do we get stuff now, today, to help your business now, to get your employees to your business today? That, I think is something we should additionally be looking at, and if people are, and we had so many folks here that wanted better transportation, how can we phase it in so that we have better transportation now and look for the future, whatever that future aspirational thing might

be. It might be the BQX. It might be something else but what do we need now, cause you need it now? I didn't hear you need it in 10 years, you need it now, both of you need it now and so that's something I'm going to leave you with as your representative in Red Hook that that's how I'm looking at it and I'm hoping that that's what you felt was happening here today.

Is anybody here wanting to testify that has not signed up? I'm just gonna do one last final flow and as a closing thought and maybe you kinda heard that was a little bit of a closing thought about what this oversight hearing is and essentially this is the first time we've had a conversation with the City and the Friends of BQX was able to testify openly about what's happening and a lot of good things cam out of it, I think, and a lot of questions were answered.

We're gonna keep asking these questions that we can feed it back to you as residents, separate and apart from whatever organization you might be representing as just people in New York that can be helpful in making these decisions with us because as Council Members, eventually this is gonna turn into possibly a ULURP process and those are really difficult sometimes because there's not a lot of transparency

and you can read some of the stuff that we're doing in Sunset Park about more transparency and ULURP but we don't want it to be that. We want to have that information before we walk into that kind of discussion so that we can make better decisions as communities so we can be impacted positively, not negatively, with gentrification and displacement. Not just for residents who are renters or homeowners but businesses as well so this is very complicated and I'm really happy that we did this and we dedicated time to make that happen and there were so many people here so thank you for anyone who has organized to get people here. I think we all learned something and let's just keep organizing, businesses on your block, in your neighborhood, let's keep engaging and I just want to thank the whole staff for your incredible work. You all did an amazing job of making today incredibly possible. There's a list that I need to read because you guys are all incredible. First of all Alex here Polonauf [phonetic], legislative counsel to the BQX Task Force; Emily Rooney, the senior legislative policy analyst; John Douglas, senior project manager; Emery Dev, assistant director; Davis Winslow, the senior

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2 economist; my chief of staff, Socheatta Meng and  
3 Renee Widdison, my land use director who's been  
4 sitting to my left here, and all of you who came out  
5 today. Thank you all. This hearing is now adjourned  
6 [gavel].

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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 June 25, 2019