

## CB #14 Transportation Committee Meeting: MAY 4, 2016

The meeting started promptly at 7:00 PM. The Co-Chairs of the Committee, Danny Ruscillo and Marty Ingram, organized and conducted the meeting. The meeting was held at the Bayswater Jewish Center in Far Rockaway. Transportation Committee Board Members present were Chris Tedesco and Steve Cooper. We did not have a Quorum. Representatives from NYC DOT (Al Silvestri and Erin Maciel) were present along with Department of Design and construction. Councilman Donovan Richards and Amanda Kernozek representative from Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder's office were in attendance. Rick Horan from Queens Public Transit Committee also made a presentation on the QueensRail (QRL).

The meeting started with an update regards the on-going transportation issues on the Rockaway Peninsula. The following issues were addressed:

**Beach 169<sup>th</sup> and Rockaway Point Boulevard traffic light:** Despite thousands of complaints from residents and objections made from Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder the NYC DOT is continuing to re-establish the traffic light at Beach 169<sup>th</sup> Street. This light is within one hundred yards of a previously existing light at Heinzelman Road and in the past was the root cause for traffic backlogs on the Bridge.

**Beach Channel Drive (BCD) Closure between Bch 108<sup>th</sup> Street and the Rockaway Freeway:** The NYC DOT reported that work was about to start and that the project would be completed by the Memorial Day weekend.

**Downtown Far Rockaway:** The project is estimated to cost between \$24M-\$25M and would start in 2017 and end in 2019. This plan was coordinated with multiple city government agencies and addresses sidewalks, road surfaces, bicycle lanes, lighting, landscaping and improved storm and septic sewers. Plans include accommodations for commuter vans with curbside and layover space. It is intended to revitalize the Downtown Far Rockaway area. This combined with the plans to build a new library will help to produce jobs and possibly lure shoppers from Nassau County. The plan intends to keep a constant flow of traffic and avoid grid lock. The Transportation Committee was very impressed with their presentation. The presentation was made previously and concerns were expressed about the loss of a slip turn. The planners listened to our concerns and made adjustments to accommodate our concerns. Overall the plan is very professional and will contribute greatly to the revitalization of the area. The one major concern was parking. The travel lanes will absorb street parking during critical times. The Committee asked the DOT to inventory the amount of public and private parking available and the amount of parking that would be lost with the implementation of this plan. The Committee will ask the Board for a vote to support this project with the one caveat regarding our concerns for parking.

QueensRail Update: Rick Horan gave a very thorough update on the Queens Rail Issue. The 4.2 mile stretch of abandoned Long Island Railroad track from Ozone Park to Rego Park formerly known as The Rockaway Beach Line was deactivated in 1962. Reactivation of the QRL would reduce travel time from the Rockaways to Manhattan by 30 minutes. So on average QueensRail would reduce a round trip commute to and from Rockaway by about an hour. It would help reduce traffic congestion in Central Queens especially in the Van Wyck and Woodhaven corridors. It would reduce air pollution and also provide a cross Queens rail connection for the entire Borough. The Committee will ask the Community Board at the May 2016 meeting to support the following motion: "Community Board 14 reaffirms its March 2012 (unanimous) support rebuilding the Rockaway Beach Line (AKA QueensRail) from Rockaway to Rego Park. Additionally the Board urges the MTA to complete its study in a timely manner so that construction can begin without further delay and without interrupting existing service."

Community Board 14 supported a similar statement in March 2012 when the issue was known as the "Rockaway Beach Line Transit." The QueensRail discussion also centered on the outstanding support from Assemblyman Goldfeder's Office and the recent success to have the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to conduct a feasibility Study for the QueensRail. If CB 14 successfully votes to update the statement of support then the Transportation Committee would like a this second motion to be addressed: "Resolved that a letter be sent to all City, State, and Federal representatives, both elected and the heads of relevant transportation agencies that Community Board 14 has renewed its March 2012 support for rebuilding the Rockaway Beach Line (AKA QueensRail). It is further resolved that these letters ask for the recipient's position of this issue and what positive actions they will take to make this vital rail link a reality." The Committee would present this as a motion in the May meeting.

Their goal is more access and new infrastructure. They intend to improve transit service where possible and in particular to support ferry service. They also intend to build flood protection into the transportation network. They were asked if they support the development of the Rockaway Beach Line (RBL) in that it would help reduce the commute for those in Far Rockaway. They responded that the DOT is has not officially endorsed Queens Rail at this point but are in favor of the feasibility study. The need for more and current Hurricane Evacuation signs was discussed. Also the need for progressive traffic lights (timing) that prevent traffic lock outs was addressed. Pedestrian Don't Walk signs with countdown features. They plan to continue with their community outreach at libraries, local churches and community organizations. A final report of long-term improvements will be provided in the fall of 2017.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.