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Meeting Summary

TO: **Aaron Sugiura, NYCDOT**

FROM: **Patrick B. Jordan, Zetlin Strategic Communications**

SUBJECT: **LaGuardia Airport Access Alternatives Analysis:
Summary Public Meeting #2, November 2, 2011**

Summary

The second public meeting for the LaGuardia Airport Access Alternatives Analysis was held on Wednesday, November 2, 2011. The meeting was held in the workshop format with 23 participants spread over four small groups. The workshop included four parts:

- 1) Project Introduction
- 2) Connecting Key Points – identifying routes to get to the airport from key points
- 3) Rider Preferences
- 4) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) features

Participants also took a survey at the completion of the workshop.

Workshop Discussions

This summary covers all four tables from the workshop

Part I: Project Introduction

Each facilitator presented a brief series of informational slides that introduced and reinforced some of the material presented in the first Public Meeting that took place on June 22, 2011. The full presentation can be found at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/brt/html/other/laguardia.shtml>.

The presentation used data to show the participants how passengers access the airport by travel mode and where they are coming from. A majority of travelers arrive by hired car (such as taxi or black car) or van service, followed by personal cars. A majority of passengers (whose trip begins in New York City) are coming from Manhattan, followed by Brooklyn and Queens. While many of these trips could be made by public transportation, only seven percent of passengers are arriving at LaGuardia by bus.

After examining several different transportation modes, the decision was made to move forward with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as the locally preferred mode since it fulfilled the three primary goals of the study:

- Improve Transit Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility to LaGuardia Airport
- Improve Transit Service to Neighborhoods
- Provide Cost Effective and Efficient Transport Options in a Short-term Timeframe

During and after this introduction by the facilitators, the participants raised the following concerns:

- Traveling public to/from LaGuardia and within local communities.
- Participants stated they would prefer fewer buses in local communities.
- Manhattan is the hub to get to LaGuardia and should be the focus of routes.
- A participant inquired about the difference between BRT and streetcar.

Part II: Connecting Key Points

Where do you live?

Participants were asked to identify their homes on a map of the project area. Different colored stickers were assigned to airport employees and non-employees.

Two participants were airport employees, one living in Manhattan and the other in Rego Park.

A majority of non-employee participants hailed from the areas immediately adjacent the airport, such as Astoria, East Elmhurst, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. Other Queens neighborhoods such as Floral Park and Cambria Heights were also represented. There were two participants from Brooklyn and one from Staten Island.

How do you get to LaGuardia today?

[This information is also covered in Question 5 of the post-workshop survey]

A majority of participants either drive to LaGuardia or take a car service or taxi. One employee commuting from Gramercy usually drives. According to her, the fastest route during the AM is the FDR Drive to the RFK Bridge; and the fastest route home during the PM is the BQE to the Queens-Midtown Tunnel.

Of those that take public transportation to the airport, the Q23 and Q48 routes are both used to access the airport, but participants expressed they would like to see the Q23 extended onto the airport property and the Q48 provide express service to the airport.

How would you like to get to LaGuardia in the future?

Participants identified how they saw future BRT-based access to LaGuardia Airport. They were asked to consider routes that would maximize ridership by connecting key trip-generating hubs, such as transfer points from public transportation.

Participant Identified Routes:

- Originating at 31st Street and 23rd Avenue, south on 31st Street, and east on Grand Central Parkway to LGA

- Originating at 85th Street and 24th Avenue, east on 24th Avenue, north on 87th Street, east on 23rd Avenue, and north on 94th Street to LGA
- Originating at Citi Field (from a bus hub), north on 126th Street, west on Northern Boulevard, and north on Grand Central Parkway to LGA
- [Water Taxi] Originating in Upper East Side/East Harlem area, north through East River, under the RFK Bridge, and through Bowery Bay to LGA
- Limited stops on Q72 bus route
- Originating at Jackson Heights-Roosevelt Avenue, west on Broadway, north on Brooklyn Queens Expressway, north on Brooklyn Queens Expressway East, east on Grand Central Parkway to Marine Air Terminal (bus riders would exit the bus near the Marine Air Terminal, and wait for an on-airport bus, which would pick up and drop off at Delta, US Airways, and the Central Terminal Building
- Originating at Humphreys Street and 29th Avenue, east on 29th Avenue, north on Ditmars Boulevard to LGA
- Bx41/Bx55 from northern Bronx to LGA via Robert F. Kennedy Bridge
- Q105 from Midtown to LGA via Northern Boulevard
- Q53 from Rockaway Park to LGA
- Q48 (or Q26) from North Shore Towers to LGA

Additional comments made by participants during this portion of the workshop:

- I used to be a frequent user of the M60 when I commuted to Harlem from East Elmhurst. The M60 often has bus bunching, with very long gaps between buses. Conditions on board are very crowded. The M60 needs a bus route just for airport travelers that makes 2 to 3 stops on 125th Street and then travels directly to LGA. This would be especially helpful on trips to the airport, when people are under stress to reach their flights on time. However, this LGA route should be a new service with limited stops, not a reduction of service on the M60. Contrastingly, one participant was surprised at the speed of the M60, which took less time than expected for today's trip to the public meeting.
- The Q47 is often backed up and there are no buses at the 74th Street Terminal (Victor Moore Bus Arcade).
- Q47 is often stuck behind sanitation vehicles.
- The Q33 is very slow along Roosevelt Avenue. It would reach the airport much faster if it traveled east/west along Northern Boulevard or Astoria Boulevard.
- Q72 Commuter: It is quick during the morning hours – 25 minutes from Queens Boulevard to the LGA. But Junction Boulevard is very congested in the afternoon. It can take 45 minutes to get from LGA back to Queens Boulevard during the afternoon hours. Plus, bus bunching in the afternoon often results in a wait as long as 45 minutes for the bus to pick passengers up at the terminal. A route along 108th Street would be much faster than Junction Boulevard.

- Another problem with the Q72 route is that bus drivers often do not stop to pick up passengers, even when there's space on the bus.
- Q72 is popular with flight attendants.
- Q72 is hindered by double parkers in commercial areas.
- The Q23 route should go directly to LGA. It could meet 71st Street and Continental Boulevard, which would provide better subway access than the Q72. It would also help relieve the Q44.
- Express routes do not serve community and add to health issues, such as asthma.
- Some buses do not run before 6:00 AM.
- Dedicated bus lanes are needed on LGA property.
- A bus hub should be created at LGA.
- E train should have luggage racks.
- Continue the Q48 route to LIJ Hospital and North Shore Towers in eastern Queens.
- Provide instructions to riders (via signs and audio announcements) to direct them to put luggage under seats or in luggage racks. Provide off-board signage to indicate how to dip Metrocards.
- Run buses along 3rd Avenue or Webster Avenue in the Bronx to LGA.
- We know there will be a lot of growth at Willets Point. How will we accommodate it?
- Is transit over the Whitestone Bridge an option to be further explored? The Robert F. Kennedy Bridge is already very congested.
- A participant asked about whether other modes (ferry, AirTrain) were under consideration.

Part III: Rider Preferences

Participants were offered a set of six choices to state their preference by voting with a dot sticker. Some participants chose not to state preference since they either did not have one or supported both preferences equally. The results of the responses are shown in the table below.

Preference	Number of votes
60 Min., 1 Seat Ride	16
No Preference or Equally Support	0
45 Min., with 1 Transfer	3
Express Bus	16
No Preference or Equally Support	1
Limited Stops	3
Highway	15
No Preference or Equally Support	2
Local Streets	2
Luggage Racks	9
No Preference or Equally Support	3
Passage Capacity	6
45 minute ride in mixed traffic	1
No Preference or Equally Support	2
35 minute ride in dedicated lane	16

Part IV: BRT Features and Amenities

Facilitators introduced the features and amenities that are part of the NYCDOT/NYCT's BRT toolbox. These included: Offset and Curbside Bus Lanes, Off-Board Fare Collection, Enhanced Stations, Real-time Arrival Information, BRT Vehicles, Subway-like Station Spacing, and Traffic Signal Priority for Buses. Below are the comments recorded during the discussion of these features and amenities.

Comments:

- Off-board fare payment would be particularly helpful.
- Bus lanes do not work; local streets are too congested.
- Off-Board fare collection is good.
- Where would bus lanes be?
- Need to tie treatments to areas.
- How does traffic signal priority work without a bus lane?
- How successful is off-board fare collection in New York City?
- Schedules are needed at bus stops.

- Junction Boulevard is good for bus lanes.
- Timed parking restrictions would be better than bus lanes.

Workshop Survey

A total of 18 surveys were returned at the completion of the workshop. A majority of the participants were informed of the workshop by email or by hearing about it from another source, such as word of mouth or from local elected officials. Almost all participants came to the workshop with a specific issue or concern in mind, mostly to improve the transit network. When asked how they get to the airport, a majority of the participants either took a private vehicle or “black car” service. Most only used LaGuardia Airport occasionally, one to three times per year.

In looking at the features and amenities that a BRT system could offer, the participants preferred Real Time Bus Information, Enhanced Stations, Off-set Bus Lanes and Off-Board Fair Collection. They did not prefer Curbside Bus Lanes. When asked which neighborhood could benefit the most from a new BRT service, the route between the airport and the 74th Street/Roosevelt Avenue station through Jackson Heights drew the most interest.

Asked how they now felt about BRT as a solution to access LaGuardia Airport, a majority of the participants either supported it or supported with concerns.