



Summary Response to the Sheridan Expressway-Hunts Point Land Use Study Draft Recommendations

Since 1999, The Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance (SBRWA) has advanced community-led solutions to address the health, safety, social and economic impacts caused by the legacy of poor transportation planning and environmental racism. To this end, the SBRWA has long advocated for the holistic transformation of the Sheridan Expressway corridor as a means of improving the lives of South Bronx residents.

While the City's study missed an opportunity to look closely at the most comprehensive approach to improving the area, we see many of its proposals as having the potential to create meaningful change in our communities. Of the scenarios presented by the City we feel that Modified Combined represents the best first step towards realizing the positive transformation we seek for the South Bronx. For a complete view of SBRWA's vision see www.southbronxvision.org.

We strongly support the following recommendations that align with the SBRWA's goals for the area:

- **Creating direct access from the Bruckner Expressway to the Hunts Point Peninsula** takes trucks off of local streets, supports economic development in the area and is an essential precursor to enable the other changes that we'd like to see in the area. It shifts truck access away from Hunts Point Avenue, making the crossing safer for pedestrians and transit riders.
- **Creating new developable land for community uses in the Sheridan footprint** is maximized through the Modify Combined scenario. This land can be redeveloped to meet community needs for affordable housing, quality local jobs, waterfront access and green space.
- **Pedestrian access to Starlight Park and the Bronx River across the Sheridan** is an issue that we have long fought for. The newly renovated 13-acre park remains extremely difficult to access. We await a comprehensive design and impact analysis of creating new crossings.
- **Closure of the southbound Sheridan off-ramp at Westchester Avenue and shifting the on-ramp away from Hunts Point Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard.** These two changes will dramatically reduce truck traffic on local streets and will increase pedestrian safety at two intersections close to public transit which are amongst the most dangerous in the Bronx.
- **Redesigning the E177th Street /Devoe Avenue/ East Tremont Avenue area** Currently a dangerous maze for pedestrians trying to access transit with confusing and inefficient routes for vehicles, this area has long required an overhaul to create safety.
- **Installation of public plazas on Southern Boulevard** along with other traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures.
- **"Decking" the Sheridan at Westchester Avenue** to create new spaces for retail and other uses, would improve pedestrian safety, neighborhood connectivity, create opportunities for new local jobs and promote economic development.

- **Pedestrian improvements on Bruckner Boulevard** to calm traffic, introduce greenery and make crossings safer, in order to reconnect neighborhoods.

Moving forward

Implementation of the above recommendations must be done through meaningful engagement and consultation with the community with appropriate studies of impacts. In addition, the level of public investment needed to realize these recommendations, together with the history of environmental justice issues in the surrounding communities, necessitate a proactive and prescriptive approach to planning and redevelopment. Strategies that maximize community input into proposals should be employed in order to ensure that financial incentives, land-use decisions and planning efforts are leveraged to maximize “triple bottom line” outcomes:

- 1) living wage jobs and economic opportunity;
- 2) affordable housing and protection from displacement;
- 3) local environmental quality that promotes public health and resiliency.

Critical issues that must still be addressed by the City and State

- **Closure of the northbound Sheridan off-ramp at Westchester Avenue** is essential to fully realize community goals for park access, pedestrian safety and neighborhood connectivity. We believe that the ramp can be closed without significant impact on the traffic network.
- **Four-way direct access to the Hunts Point peninsula from the Bruckner Expressway** was not considered in the City’s study, which only modeled two ramps that come from and go to the East. Four-way direct access should have been modeled and we call upon the State to do so as part of the environmental review that implementation will require.
 - Four-way ramps provide the most effective and efficient alternative to local streets for the variety of commercial vehicles that enter and exit Hunts Point.
 - In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, two-way access falls short of addressing issues of food security, emergency preparedness and resiliency of the transportation network. The City should recommend an analysis of four-way access through the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR).
- **Fixing the Bruckner-Sheridan interchange**
The dangerous bottleneck causes the most inefficiency for commercial vehicles that need to access Hunts Point remains unaddressed in the City’s study. Also known as the “Bruckner curve,” this part of the network must be addressed by the State through the environmental review process that will be required to create the direct access to the peninsula.
- **Strategies and mitigations to prevent displacement** of current residents and viable businesses in the Sheridan Expressway corridor and Hunts Point should be studied and incorporated as part the implementation process of all recommendations.
- **Comprehensive planning and meaningful consultation with the community** for new development is essential to realize a project that has true community and public benefit.

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