



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams
MTA New York City Transit Canarsie Tunnel Project
Supplemental Environmental Assessment
Monday, August 6, 2018**

Good Evening,

My name is Eric L. Adams and I am the Brooklyn borough president representing more than 2.6 million residents. I am happy to submit testimony on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) New York City Transit Canarsie Tunnel project Supplemental Environment Assessment (SEA) review.

The importance of this critical project cannot be overstated. However, with the upcoming shutdown of the L train Canarsie Tunnel in April of 2019, it is imperative that residents and commuters have alternative modes of transportation provided to them. When the MTA leadership team came to meet with myself and my staff, they provided me with a presentation of the current conditions of the tunnels showing how seriously damaged they were by Superstorm Sandy in 2012. The tunnel

was inundated with saltwater that caused major damage to duct banks and communication cables.

Seeing the pictures of the damage in the tunnels and hearing from the MTA staff on how important the proposed action of shutting down the tunnel, it became very clear to me that this repair work must move forward in the most expeditious manner possible.

As the MTA prepares for the upcoming shutdown, it is imperative that all necessary accommodations be made for residents and commuters to mitigate the impacts of the project. The temporary closure of the Canarsie Tunnel will result in disruption to nearly 400,000 daily L train riders. Of the 400,000 daily L train riders, 125,000 travel only within Brooklyn and these riders would still be able to use the L train, although in peak hours it would operate at reduced frequencies (instead of a train every three minutes, it would be every six minutes); 225,000 are riders traveling between Manhattan and Brooklyn. MTA New York City Transit estimates that about 79 percent of daily L train riders would use other subway lines for their trip and 21 percent would be the most likely to take advantage of alternative transportation programs.

In the SEA proposed action alternative, the MTA outlines various mitigation options which riders can take, including:

Subways

For the subway alternative, the MTA outlines the increase in subway service by adding capacity at Nassau Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue G line and the reopening of the Hope Street station entrance at Metropolitan Avenue. I would strongly encourage MTA New York City Transit to look to expanding extra cars for other subway lines such as the A, C, J, M, Z and the 2,3,4, and 5 lines.

In addition, in 2016 I called for the MTA New York City Transit to establish a free transfer connection between the Junius 3 line and the Livonia Avenue L line. Funding for this connection is included in the MTA's 2015-2019 Capital Plan, but the free transfer can happen immediately if the MTA implements an out-of-station transfer like we see on at the Lexington Avenue/59th Street station on the Upper East Side. The MTA has indicated that 50 percent of commuters at Junius/Livonia station use Unlimited Metrocards, which may very well be true. That also means 50 percent of residents at a station in one of the poorest census tracts in the United States have to pay a double fare in order to transfer at this location. It is imperative that this capital project be fast-tracked and in the interim residents be provided with a free out-of-station transfer as the commuting capacity will be shifting towards these lines and will be seeing an influx of additional riders.

Buses

Buses will play a vital role during the temporary shutdown of the Canarsie Tunnel. MTA New York City Transit and the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) have been working together to address the shuttling of passengers between Brooklyn and Manhattan during the shutdown. We know that there will be an increase of buses being used and it is integral to make sure that residents and commuters have dependable service.

In the SEA, the proposed Alternative Service Proposal (ASP) would add bus service along the L train route in two separate forms: temporary interborough bus service and temporary enhanced 14th Street Select Bus Service (SBS). I would like to encourage and support the 80 bus trips per direction in the peak hour and also bus priority treatment on the Williamsburg Bridge. Providing these bus priority treatments, especially along portions of Grand Street, Borinquen Place, and Roebling Street, can help with keeping bus frequency travel times and mitigate to the greatest extent possible the impacts of the shutdown on local communities. In addition, we must have an equitable distribution of electric buses being used in Brooklyn and Manhattan. MTA New York City Transit will deploy 25 electric buses during peak hours in Manhattan and I urge that Brooklyn have an equitable distribution of electric buses as well. The Williamsburg and Bushwick neighborhoods have one of the highest rates of asthma in New York City necessitating

parity in the number of electric buses being deployed across the two boroughs.

Ferry Service

Ferry service is an important mode of transportation, and I am surprised that very little attention is given towards ferry service expansion during the shutdown. In the SEA, the expansion of NYC Ferry service is mentioned between Manhattan and Stuyvesant Cove and with service along the Lower East Side to Long Island City. The service will initially operate with four boats per hour between Wall Street, Grand Street (Lower East Side), Stuyvesant Cove, 34th Street, and Long Island City.

During the shutdown, ferry service operation will run every seven minutes during peak hours and 10 minutes during off peak. MTA should work with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to explore using the much larger ferry boats with an expanding number of seating from the current 149 seats to add more capacity.

EDC should also work with the MTA to identify if free transfers between modes could be included as part of the mitigation efforts.

Bike Improvements

Bike improvements are vitally important. As someone who bikes around our borough on a regular basis, I see how cycling is not only a resource as an alternative transportation mode choice but also an important alternative to improve health. I also see that there is much to be done to

improve the safety of our streets in order to encourage more cyclists to feel safe to ride as a viable form of transportation during the L train shutdown and beyond. I am encouraged to see that DOT is including bike improvements with bike lanes along Union Avenue, Devoe Street, Metropolitan Avenue, and Morgan Avenue. I am also pleased about the recent installation of the protected bike lanes linking to the Williamsburg Bridge from South 3rd Street, Scholes Street, South 4th Street, and Meserole Street, which includes traffic calming measures to provide bikers a safer transportation alternative. I encourage DOT to constantly monitor the cycling trends in the run-up and during the beginning of the shutdown to identify whether or not additional safety measures must be taken to ensure that our communities have the safest and most viable transportation options available during the shutdown and into the future.

In addition to tangible transportation enhancements during the shutdown, communication between the MTA and the community will be key. That is why I am also calling on the MTA to open an L train Canarsie Tunnel Reconstruction information center that will provide information to residents during the temporary shutdown. This center could be something similar to the facility that existed during the Second Avenue extension project for residents in the Upper East Side and would be staffed by MTA Capital Construction so residents will be able to get real-time information on the progress of the construction.

This reconstruction project of the Canarsie Tunnel is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to get it right by bringing our tunnels up to a resilient and safe standard for the MTA's current and future customers. It is my hope that once this temporary shutdown is complete, we will have a tunnel that can last another hundred years and a tunnel that will ensure that the economic development and prosperity of our borough and city remain for future generations to come.