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June 22, 2009

**Brooklyn Heights Association Position on:**

**BQE Rehabilitation: Atlantic Avenue to Sands Street**

**ID No. X730.56**

There is no other current or planned infrastructure project that will affect Brooklyn Heights more than this rehabilitation. The neighborhood abuts the BQE for most of the length of the proposed project. One of most renowned urban public spaces – the Brooklyn Heights Esplanade (Promenade) is an integral part of the cantilever portion of Interstate 278 within the project boundaries. While we are anxious that this portion of the highway be rehabilitated and brought up to current safety standards for Interstate highways, we realize that our community will bear the brunt of the impacts of the work. We, therefore, have a dedicated interest in reducing and mitigating those impacts to the maximum degree that is feasible.

**Brooklyn Bridge Park**

After twenty-five years of support for a park on the upland and piers from Dumbo to Atlantic Avenue, initial construction has begun on Brooklyn Bridge Park. We urge the NYS Department of Transportation to study and plan the reconstruction so it does not interfere with the progress of the park – i.e. by using the uplands to create space for traffic diversion. We further request that traffic studies, particularly off and on-ramps, take into account the projected uses and access (vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle) to the park that are planned for the future. We strongly urge continued communication and coordination with the various entities that are involved in park construction, maintenance and programming. We anticipate that the park will be built and functioning well before the start date of this project in 2015-17, so we believe it will be incumbent upon NYS DOT to minimize any impacts on the park through careful planning and scheduling of the work.

**Traffic Mitigation & Safety**

We recognize that New York State DOT has worked hard to reduce traffic diversions onto local streets in the various projects it has completed on the I-278 corridor. The most recent example was the long-term interim repair project on the Park Avenue Viaduct (Sands Street to Flushing Avenue) where outrigger lanes were built to allow repair work to take place while maintaining traffic flow on the highway. Inevitably some traffic will divert from the highway but the experience here (and on the northern stretch around Woodside) has been more positive than earlier reconstruction such as the Atlantic Avenue Bridge, which had more significant traffic diversions onto local streets. Since the reconstruction of the Atlantic Avenue Bridge, there has been a tremendous amount of new

development and new population growth in downtown Brooklyn with a consequent increase in vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic on arterial and local streets. Many of these intersections have a poor Level of Service and are over capacity. We do not believe that more traffic can realistically be added making it all the more critical to maintain highway capacity during the reconstruction. Additional traffic will cause safety problems and will impact local businesses. We request that any unavoidable traffic diversions be implemented as short-term programs and be co-coordinated with NYC DOT and the Stakeholder Committee. We also would request that Traffic Enforcement agents be assigned where difficult diversions occur during the course of the project. The City has constructed many new bicycle lanes through our neighborhood and downtown Brooklyn. We urge that this important means of travel be maintained throughout the construction so as not to interrupt the momentum of bicycle travel. We request that all intersections between Atlantic Avenue on the south, the Promenade on the West, Adams/Street Brooklyn Bridge Boulevard on the east and Old Fulton Street on the north be studied in the EIS. We further request that pedestrian activity be studied separately on the Promenade and adjoining streets (Columbia Heights, Pierrepont Place, Montague Terrace, Remsen Circle as well as the Montague Street to Court, Remsen to Court, Clark to Henry and other perpendicular streets to Hicks Street).

#### **Traffic Volume and Air Quality**

The traffic volume within downtown Brooklyn (including Brooklyn Heights) is heavy, especially on routes leading to and from the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges. The intersections at Flatbush and Tillary, Adams and Tillary, Livingston and Adams – to name a few – are currently strained by car and pedestrian traffic. Any traffic diversions onto local or arterial streets in this area will inevitably cause further breakdown of traffic flow. While car emissions have been reduced, more traffic does equal more air pollution. We urge the EIS to consider measures to reduce this traffic – even if only temporarily during the reconstruction phase of this project. Such measures might include tolls on the Brooklyn Bridge to equalize the cost between the Brooklyn Bridge and the Battery Tunnel or establishment of ferry service from Brooklyn (Bay Ridge and downtown).

#### **Noise & Vibration Mitigation**

Due to the proximity of the highway to our residential streets – Columbia Heights, Pierrepont Place, Montague Terrace and Remsen Circle and the streets perpendicular the streets adjacent to the Promenade – we would like to stress the importance of noise mitigation during construction as well as for the highway once it has been reconstructed. Over the years both noise and vibrations have been an issue for residents who live near the promenade. This appears to be a surface problem that is worse as the deck wears down, often unevenly from heavy trucks. The result is that speeding trucks, especially empty ones, cause vibrations on the residential blocks near the highway. We understand that the highway was constructed prior to the widespread use of modern tractor-trailers that

exert a huge toll on highways and we request that the design phase take these issues into account to eliminate future vibrations.

**Historic Resources**

The Brooklyn Heights Esplanade and the accompanying Scenic View Plane are an important historic resource in the Borough of Brooklyn. Any reconstruction project must protect this wonderful urban space, the significant gardens and the view from it. We also request that any closings of the Promenade be minimal as it serves as a critical year round outdoor recreation space for the community and tourists. The Brooklyn Heights neighborhood is an historic district with some of the finest examples of mid-nineteenth row house dwellings in New York City. The reconstruction project must take care not to damage, cause deterioration or disturb any of properties, streets or infrastructure within the Brooklyn heights Historic District.