

Queens Public Transit Committee (QPTC) Press Release

Faster transportation will create more social, economic, recreational, and environmental opportunities

For Release

IMMEDIATE

Date: Monday, February 22, 2016

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Subject: QPTC recommends the U.S. Department of Transportation should postpone approving funds for the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) to build the \$231 million Woodhaven Select Bus Service (SBS), in Queens, NY

The Queens Public Transit Committee (QPTC) continues to fight the installation of Select Bus Service on Woodhaven Boulevard in Queens. QPTC [in the past](#), has urged the U.S. Department of Transportation to postpone the approval of funds for the NYCDOT's (New York City Department of Transportation) plan to build the \$231 million Woodhaven Select Bus Service (SBS) in Queens, NY. Instead the U.S. DOT should conduct a full scale alternatives analysis, including examining rebuilding the currently inactive ex-Long Island Rail Road Rockaway Branch Line (RBL), with community input, before green lighting the project.

Allan Rosen, former MTA New York City Transit Director of Bus Planning, recently made this request in a letter and detailed submission (with the assistance of Brendan Read) to USDOT secretary Anthony Foxx, citing issues with the NYCDOT program.

In addition to this urging of the US DOT to withdraw funding for this bus service, the QPTC is also urging the NYCDOT to stop this plan from going forward.

The NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) recently issued a document titled "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)" in which they claim to have answered the communities' [60 Questions](#). The QPTC believes that only about half the questions asked were addressed and many questions were not answered satisfactorily. QPTC explained which questions were and were not answered in their own 35-page document available on the QPTC website at <http://www.qptc.org/rebutal.html>.

QPTC Recommends USDOT should postpone Woodhaven Blvd SBS implementation – February 22, 2016

QPTC Chairman Philip McManus has criticized the NYC DOT for completely ignoring the idea of reactivating an existing rail line, a few blocks to the east (a plan now called QueensRail™). McManus states, “Queens Rail™ should at least have been considered as an alternative.” He added, “A trip to Penn Station in Manhattan via subway, QueensRail™ and the LIRR from Rockaway Park could be made in 33 percent less time than DOT’s proposed SBS, 50 minutes, as opposed to 75 minutes with SBS.”

McManus adds that the NYC DOT has failed to ask communities on what they believed the transportation problems are or what solutions they envision. “They first stated SBS was only one option they were considering but without any further discussion, it soon became the only option.” He further stated, “It is not turning out to be the cost efficient quick fix to transportation problems they originally claimed it would be.” Rosen added, “DOT only presented the positives of SBS omitting all the negative issues such as the loss of parking spaces because of the lengthened bus stops that will be needed. The NYC DOT never mentioned at any of the public meetings all of the left turns that would be prohibited.”

Rosen, a QPTC member and former director of bus planning for MTA New York City Transit does not believe that SBS as proposed is a short term solution while Queens Rail is “long term.” He asked, “Since DOT has been studying SBS on Woodhaven since 2012 and full completion is proposed for 2022 or 2024, how is that ‘short term’? He also wants to know why DOT initially came to the communities with a plan costing \$20 million and later escalated the price to as much as \$231 million depending on how many BRT features they plan to implement without explaining how the newer plan will have ten times the benefit of the original plan.

Rosen has also asked if DOT can be trusted since they changed the entire focus of the project. He said, “SBS was originally presented as a plan to speed bus service and independent of Vision Zero. Now it is being presented as being part of the Complete Streets Program, which includes Vision Zero, since they have not been able to prove through their models and forecasts how much time the buses would actually save at different times of the day. When asked how he knows this, Rosen added, “At one of the first meetings residents questioned how buses would move faster when the speed limit is being lowered, and DOT responded, that lowering the speed limit was part of Vision Zero which was unrelated to the SBS plan.”

Eugene Falik, also a QPTC member stated, “Implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) without considering realistic alternatives is irresponsible and jeopardizes reuse of the existing railroad right of way.” Falik claims QueensRail could be built for as little as \$700 million without the negative traffic impacts on Woodhaven Boulevard that BRT would cause and would help three times as many people, 100,000 as compared to 30,000 daily.

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The QPTC report casts doubt on DOT's ability to competently implement their SBS/BRT plan. The report asks how many shortcuts is DOT taking in their analysis when they were too lazy to even run a spell check on their document and misspelled the word "Glossary" in big bold print multiple times as "**GLOSSERY**". It also accuses DOT for failing to understand a basic transportation term "transportation corridor" which QPTC believes also includes the abandoned right-of-way, not only the boulevards DOT is redesigning.

Their document also questions DOT claims that SBS will result in improved mobility and cleaner air without providing any documentation. Rosen stated: "They have not projected how many will switch modes from car to bus to reduce traffic so as to improve air quality."

Rick Horan, also a QPTC member, criticized DOT for implying pedestrian deaths on Woodhaven Boulevard would have been prevented if SBS had been in place. "If you analyze each one of the Woodhaven pedestrian deaths within the past four years, you will see that SBS could not have prevented any of them.

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