

## **Statement of the Brooklyn Heights Association to the City Council Regarding the Future of the BQE City Council Hearing – February 25, 2020**

Good morning. My name is Martha Bakos Dietz. I am the President of the Brooklyn Heights Association, which is a member of the Coalition for the BQE Transformation.

The BHA thanks the Speaker, the Council, and other elected officials here today for their commitment to solving the challenge posed by the BQE repair and reconstruction project. This hearing is evidence of the critical importance of the future of the BQE to all the neighborhoods which adjoin this outdated and unsafe highway.

The BHA and others in our neighborhood first became engaged on this issue when we learned of the City Department of Transportation's plan to put six-lanes of traffic on top of the Promenade. We quickly recognized, however, that the problem is bigger than just the Atlantic Avenue to Sands Street stretch of the BQE. We recognized that this problem has given us the opportunity to reimagine what can be built along the entire BQE Corridor to serve the transportation needs of a new age. The BHA, along with our fellow Coalition members, are calling for a comprehensive and transformative plan for the entire BQE Corridor. That is why we are here today.

We are certainly not alone in this call. The Mayor's Expert Panel and the City Council have both recognized the need to address the Corridor in its entirety so that New Yorkers can benefit from a plan that does not just move people and goods from one place to the next, but makes divided communities whole, results in cleaner air and quieter streets, and serves as a model for how to replace the infrastructure of the past with one for the future. That is the long-term.

In the short term, an essential and immediate next step is the creation of a governing body made up of local, state, and federal partners who will work together to implement a comprehensive and transformative plan. This governing entity must be transparent and responsive to community priorities and must work on integrating any immediate repair work with a long-term vision. As for the intermediate repair work, a task force must be set up so that community representatives can meet routinely with the DOT, be apprised of its plan for repairs, and have input into that plan.

The BQE has been a problem for decades. At this point, we simply cannot spend billions of dollars to replace in kind one short section of a crumbling roadway, only to do the same with other sections in the coming years. The time for leadership on this issue is now. New Yorkers deserve a plan to reduce the scale and environmental impact of an antiquated thoroughfare that served the transportation needs of a previous century. They deserve a plan that serves the needs of the next century. Thank you.