



October 30, 2023

Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi
City Hall
New York, NY 10007
via email

Dear Deputy Mayor Joshi,

Thank you for briefing the Conservancy board in May about the City's plans for the rehabilitation of the BQE's triple cantilever and for the site visit you gave us on September 27.

We, the undersigned, are the Directors of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy. While we appreciate your efforts to inform us about your various proposed plans, we are writing today to express our grave concerns regarding the rehabilitation of the triple cantilever and its potential impact on Brooklyn Bridge Park (the "Park"), during and after construction. From our origins in the 1980s as grassroots advocates to build the Park, to our role today as the Park's principal public programming partner, we have a deep appreciation of its importance to the visitors and program participants who use and love the Park. The Conservancy brings to life more than 500 free and low-cost innovative and engaging educational, cultural, fitness and recreational programs each year to tens of thousands of visitors.

As you know, the Park, like Central Park, has become a world-renowned destination for tourists and an essential, accessible, beloved oasis for millions of New Yorkers. We are challenged to think of a better example of New York City at its best - diverse, vibrant, open and spectacular. It has been transformational for the Brooklyn waterfront and any plan to rehabilitate the BQE must make thoughtful preservation of the Park a top priority.

We are troubled by the current lack of clarity we have been provided with respect to the impact the construction and final design will have on the Park. We are concerned that any plan to tear down the cantilever and rebuild it while redirecting traffic will have an enormous impact on Park accessibility and could render sections of the Park unusable for an extended period of time. We

would like to echo the Park Corporation Board's concerns, specifically with regard to how such a project will be accomplished and how long it will take. Do you propose to widen the footprint of the highway into the Park or build a temporary highway above the berms or otherwise into the Park? How will you provide sufficient space for staging the construction in the heart of the Park without rendering it inaccessible and unusable? How will the construction noise and inevitable pollution impact the park users' safety and enjoyment of that critical green space? How will the construction phase limit first responder access to the Park? These are critical questions given the projected 7-9 year construction period.

While we acknowledge the public safety concerns driving the project, the importance of the BQE in the City's transportation infrastructure and the complexity of the challenges its repair and rehabilitation pose, we agree with the Corporation Board that we "cannot condone sacrificing the use and enjoyment of such an essential public space for the sake of expanding and perpetuating a highway, particularly when less destructive alternatives have been proposed by others."

With that, DOT should take all reasonable steps to avoid encroachment on parkland and the impacts of construction staging on parkgoers' access to the Park and their Park experience. Most particularly, we are extremely concerned that the current exploration of a 3-lane highway, which will be significantly wider than the current BQE, will have a hugely detrimental impact on the Park and its visitors. And while we recognize the potential benefits of additional pedestrian connections to the Park from Brooklyn Heights, we need more information about the current options as we advance into the EIS process to determine if they will truly enhance the Park experience or if other alternatives would be preferable.

In particular, while we understand that that a No-Build option will be studied as part of the EIS process that you indicated will begin in the Spring of 2024, we would like to know if the repair and waterproofing plan advanced by the de Blasio administration in 2021, which was projected to extend the lifespan of the cantilever by at least 20 years at the cost of less than \$1 billion and to take less than one year to complete, will be studied as part of the EIS process as well? In evaluating the various options and their impact on the Park, it seems prudent to compare this plan to the approximately \$5.5 billion dollar plan that is outlined in your Federal Grant Application and which you noted will take 7-9 years to build and will extend the life of the structure by roughly 40 years.

Finally, we implore the DOT to make pedestrian access safer, easier, and more enjoyable at the Old Fulton and Atlantic Avenue entrances to the Park. The ramps onto/off of the BQE at Atlantic are among the most dangerous in the state. Please focus resources on making them safer for the thousands of pedestrians who cross them on the way to the Park. The recent deaths of pedestrians

on Atlantic Avenue, mere blocks from the Park, is related to the problems presented by the BQE and must be addressed.

In closing, we note that Brooklyn Bridge Park is a beloved waterfront park enjoyed by millions of visitors throughout the year. Families celebrate birthdays, engagements and anniversaries in the Park daily. Children chase balls across the Pier 5 soccer fields, cool off in the water lab on hot summer days, and play hide and seek in the Pier 3 labyrinth. Teens shoot hoops and ride bikes along the Park's greenway. Seniors get fitter, young people who have never touched the water paddle a kayak in the East River, and families and children from across Brooklyn, New York City, and the world play, relax and learn on the Park's lawns, fields, piers, shoreline, and natural areas.

Given the extraordinary role Brooklyn Bridge Park plays in the lives of so many New Yorkers, we urge the City and DOT to adopt as a guiding principle the prioritization of the integrity, safety and citizen enjoyment of this vital public space as you plan for the rehabilitation of the BQE.

We look forward to working with you on this important endeavor.

Very truly yours,

The Board of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy

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cc: NYC DOT Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez, Congressman Dan Goldman, State Senator Andrew Gournades, Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, NYC Council Member Lincoln Restler, Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation Board, Brooklyn Bridge Park President Eric Landau