** Media Release  
For Immediate Release **  
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Build Them Now! Bronx Business and Community Groups United  
in Call for Ramps from the Bruckner to Hunts Point

Bronx, N.Y. – Hunts Point businesses and South Bronx community groups gathered this morning to call on Governor Andrew Cuomo to move forward with the construction of direct access ramps from the Bruckner Expressway to the Hunts Point peninsula. The peninsula is home to the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center and hundreds of other businesses. With no direct connection to any highway, the 15,000 daily truck trips associated with these businesses must use neighborhood streets to enter and exit the peninsula, causing health and safety issues for residents, aggravation for truck drivers and lost productivity for local businesses. The seven groups comprising the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance called the press conference and were joined by representatives of Jetro Cash and Carry, Down East Seafood, Il Forno Bakery and Baldor Specialty Foods.

“The lack of a direct connection from the Bruckner results in otherwise-avoidable traffic accidents, wasted time, wasted fuel and a general loss of productivity. Lack of basic connectivity impacts Hunts Point businesses and threatens the economic competitiveness of our region,” said **Josephine Infante of Hunts Point Economic Development Corporation.** “Constructing 4-way ramps from the Bruckner Expressway into Hunts Point will increase connectivity, productivity and ensure competitiveness now and for the future”.

The Hunts Point Food Distribution Center, the nation’s largest food distribution center, is home to over 12,000 jobs and produces over $3 billion in annual economic activity. There are hundreds of additional industrial businesses located on the peninsula, all of whom would benefit from this type of transportation improvement.

About twenty Hunts Point business entities have signed a letter calling on the Governor to move forward with the ramps. In addition to the attendees at the press conference, signatories include: the Hunts Point Produce Market, EastCo Boiler Company, Next Gen Ready Mix Cement, Oak Point Properties, Port Morris Tile and Marble Corp., Tri-State Bio-Diesel, Fancy Foods Inc., Victory Food Service Distribution Corp. and Chef’s Warehouse/Dairyland.

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“The ramps just make sense,” said Ed Taylor, owner of Down East Seafood. “This will help keep trucks off of the local streets where children live and go to school. It’s good for businesses and good for our communities.”

“Baldor makes over 400 trips a day driving past residences and clogging the streets of Hunts Point” said Steve Tufo, Transportation Manager of Baldor Specialty Foods, Inc. “We want to be a good neighbor to the community we work in and to the residents we employ. We need a direct route from the Bruckner Expressway and we need these ramps.”

Residents of the predominantly low-income communities of color in the South Bronx have long organized for comprehensive action in the area, citing dangerous streets, poor air quality, divided neighborhoods and inefficient roadways.

“These ramps will take commercial traffic off of local streets, improving respiratory health for thousands of South Bronx residents,” said Kellie Terry Sepulveda of SBRWA member organization The Point CDC. “Our asthma rates are among the highest in the nation; the time is now to make these critical changes.”

Community groups also note that the ramps would pull traffic away from the sites of repeated pedestrian accidents and fatalities. “With direct access from the Bruckner, commercial traffic that is currently drawn into busy pedestrian intersections – such as Hunts Point Avenue-Bruckner Boulevard and Whitlock-Westchester Avenues – will be kept on the expressways where it belongs,” said David Shuffler of SBRWA member organization Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice. “This will make our busy commercial corridors safer and allow safer pedestrian access to Concrete Plant Park.”

The united call from business and community groups coincides with the conclusion of a two-year, $1.5 million dollar, multi-agency City study. The study, called the Sheridan Expressway-Hunts Point Transportation and Land Use Study (SEHP Study), engaged dozens of area stake holders and recommends direct ramp access as its centerpiece. A final report is expected later this week, but final recommendations have already been released.

“The State has a rare moment of opportunity to build on the work of the SEHP Study and actually save money while addressing long-standing problems to a transportation network of regional importance,” said Assemblyman Marcos Crespo. “Setting aside funds for this purpose in the upcoming year would guarantee momentum at a critical moment and I call upon NYSDOT and the Governor to do so. Moving forward with this plan is a top priority for the Bronx. It is crucial for the livelihood of the area businesses and for the health and well-being of my constituents.”

“The South Bronx has spoken loudly and clearly about what we need. This substantial two-year effort by the City makes major strides toward realizing long-term community priorities. It provides a clear mandate to the Governor and the State Department of
Transportation to take action,” said Angela Tovar of SBRWA member organization Sustainable South Bronx.

Organizers of the press conference called on Governor Cuomo to capitalize on the current consensus among diverse stakeholders on the need for direct access from the Bruckner to Hunts Point. The next step in moving the project forward would be an environmental review by the State Department of Transportation.

Organizers also expressed optimism that the incoming mayoral administration of Bill de Blasio, whose message of “two cities” brought him a landslide victory this fall, will embrace the project. “We look forward to working with the new Mayor and with the Governor on this critical environmental justice and economic development issue,” said Vincent Pellecchia of SBRWA member organization Tri-State Transportation Campaign. “The health of South Bronx residents and the economic vitality of the City and the region cannot wait any longer.”

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The Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance consists of Mothers on the Move, The Point CDC, Pratt Center for Community Development, Sustainable South Bronx, Tri-State Transportation Campaign, We Stay/Nos Quedamos, Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice. The SBRWA was founded in 1999 to advance community-led solutions to the legacy of poor land-use and transportation planning and its negative impacts upon South Bronx communities.

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