City Concludes Two-Year, 1.5 Million Dollar Study of Sheridan Expressway Corridor: South Bronx Community Groups and Elected Officials Call for Action

Bronx, N.Y. – Coinciding with the official conclusion of a two-year, $1.5 million study that identifies ways to improve the Sheridan Expressway corridor and Hunts Point area, South Bronx community groups and elected officials call for action on proposals to address dangerous neighborhood conditions.

The final recommendations will be released during a public meeting tonight marking the official conclusion of the federally funded Sheridan Expressway-Hunts Point Land Use Study (SEHP Study) conducted by several city agencies. The City’s recommendations build on and include various aspects of a vision for the South Bronx originally articulated by the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance (SBRWA) including direct access from the Bruckner Expressway to the Hunts Point Peninsula, creation of developable land in the Sheridan footprint, extensive pedestrian improvements including safer access to Starlight Park and the Bronx River and the re-routing of trucks off of local streets.

The next step toward implementing the final recommendations requires a commitment by the State Department of Transportation to complete an environmental review as well as continuing political support from the incoming City administration to see that the process continues to move forward, all in order to rectify long-standing problems to a transportation network of regional importance, to support local businesses, including the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center and for the health, safety and well-being of community residents.

“Our neighborhoods have long endured some of the highest asthma rates in the country and are plagued by dangerous local streets. The status quo is completely unacceptable,” said Kellie Terry-Sepulveda of SBRWA member organization The Point CDC.

“The State must capitalize on the two years of engagement from community stakeholders, City agencies and elected officials and take a step forward to create transformative change in the Sheridan corridor. The environmental and economic health of South Bronx communities is at stake,” said Vincent Pellecchia of SBRWA member organization Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

“With the community anxious to see the next steps associated with the Sheridan modifications, the time to start is ASAP,” said Congressman José E. Serrano, who helped obtain funding for the study. “We need the unfettered access to the new parks and green spaces along the Bronx River, the traffic improvements, the pedestrian safety and the air quality improvements that this plan would give us. It is time to move forward.”
As part of the TIGER study, new traffic data and a detailed, state-of-the-art model was created that can be used by other agencies and studies seeking to improve the area; the value of the model alone is estimated at $1 million.

“The State has a rare moment of opportunity to build on work already done 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 current year would guarantee momentum at a critical moment and I call upon NYSDOT to work with its colleagues in the City 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 call for full, direct access into the Hunts Point peninsula is echoed by business organizations as well as community groups and elected officials. “Businesses in this area need a direct, safe way to get in and out of the Hunts Point Peninsula. The State should move swiftly to review the creation of that access not just in two directions, but in all four directions, to maximize the traffic benefits,” said Lourdes Zapata of the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation.

“As we move the discussion regarding the future of the Sheridan Express forward, we must ensure that all government entities understand that we cannot allow the tremendous effort invested, by so many, to languish on a shelf. The State and our next mayor need to invest capital funding to execute the proposed plan, which must also include an added component of four-way ramps” said Council Member María del Carmen Arroyo, who represents the area and has been supportive of the Community Plan developed by SBRWA.

Council Member Annabel Palma, chair of the Bronx City Council Delegation, recently authored a letter to Deputy Mayor Robert Steel calling for implementation of the plan to include four-way access to the Hunts Point Peninsula, the closure of the Northbound Sheridan ramp at Westchester Avenue and collaboration with NYSDOT.

“The SEHP study’s findings make one thing crystal clear, an overhaul of the Sheridan Expressway corridor and Hunts Point Peninsula is long overdue. Action needs to be taken immediately to alleviate the decades-long impact of poor transportation planning and I will work with my colleagues at all levels of government to make this project a priority. Bronx residents cannot afford inaction,” said Council Member Annabel Palma.

Unlike the creation of the Bruckner ramps, the City recommendation to create developable land in the Sheridan footprint may not require a state environmental review. “Access to the Bronx River, affordable housing and job creation are ideas first advanced by our campaign,” said Wanda Salamán of SBRWA member group Mothers on the Move. “We are encouraged to see so many pieces of our vision incorporated into the recommendations and are committed now more than ever to work with our communities, local elected officials and State and City agencies to fully realize our vision for environmental justice.”

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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.