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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

**TESTIMONY OF GALE A. BREWER, MANHATTAN BOROUGH
PRESIDENT ON THE TIER 1 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
STATEMENT ON THE CROSS HARBOR FREIGHT
January 23, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Cross Harbor Freight Rail Program, which is charged with identifying alternatives to improve the movement of freight across the Hudson River and New York Harbor. I am here today to speak in support of the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel, which would connect Brooklyn, Queens, Long Island, Westchester, and Southern Connecticut to the national freight rail grid.

New York City is the only major city in the world that is not connected to its country's national freight rail network. What this dubious distinction means in practice is that we move goods throughout the New York region extremely inefficiently compared with other major cities. As our region's population and industry continues to grow, moreover, this problem is growing right along with it. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the Cross Harbor Freight Program, released in November 2014, studied 11 alternatives to address this problem. However, it is my opinion that the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel alternative is the best, long-term solution to help improve the transport of goods into the region.

In the absence of rail infrastructure, most of the goods that come into the New York region are hauled by large trucks, which is incredibly inefficient. In fact, moving goods just two miles from Manhattan to New Jersey can cost the same as transporting goods 500 miles or more in areas of the country that are better supported by rail. Connecting our city to the national freight rail network, in other words, will allow us to more cheaply and effectively move goods throughout this region.

Creating the Cross Harbor Freight Rail Tunnel would therefore have a profoundly positive impact on our local economy. The amount of freight projected to be brought into New York City and Long Island is expected to increase by 37 percent over the next 20 years. This project, therefore, could help dramatically reduce the cost of moving these goods throughout the area. The November 2014 DEIS also estimates the project would help boost job creation, bringing in over 40,000 new employment opportunities.

The positive impacts of building this infrastructure, however, extend further than the economic benefits. As the Borough President, for instance, I travel through Manhattan—and Manhattan's infamous gridlocked traffic—on a daily basis. Many New Yorkers simply accept this horrible traffic as a part of city living. But according to the November 2014 DEIS, the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel could dramatically reduce our dependence on trucks, improving the flow of traffic. In fact, it is estimated that this project would remove roughly 500,000 trucks off our congested streets each year.

This reduction in truck volume would also have a corresponding impact on quality of life and safety in Manhattan and the region as a whole. Our dependence on trucks, for instance, contributes to higher rates of pollution and asthma. Reducing the number of trucks that are driving through the region each day could help address these problems. Easing traffic flow, moreover, could help save lives by improving the ability of emergency vehicles to navigate through the city.

While few would disagree with the clear benefits of the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel alternative, some have mentioned cost as a potential deterrent to proceeding. The project is estimated to cost anywhere from \$7 to \$11 billion for a two-track tunnel. While this amount is substantial, the November 2014 DEIS analysis found the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel alternative to have one of the highest benefit-to-cost ratios of any major transportation project under consideration in New York. In other words, it's worth the cost.

Many have been advocating for the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel for decades. Congressman Nadler, for instance, has been advocating for the project for over 30 years. Since that time, an impressive coalition of leaders from a wide variety of sectors have come together to endorse this project as a commonsense, long-term oriented solution to this serious problem. This coalition include Senators Schumer and Gillibrand as well as the entire New York Congressional delegation, New York City Mayor de Blasio, and a host of other leaders in the transportation, environmental, and labor sectors, including the Partnership of New York City, the Long Island Association, the NY AFL-CIO.

Given the clear benefits of this project to Manhattan and the surrounding areas, I am likewise a vocal proponent of the Cross Harbor Freight Rail Tunnel, and urge for the project to proceed. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.