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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

**Public comments by Athena Moore, Northern Manhattan Director
Draft Scope of Work for the 126th Street Bus Depot Proposed Project
Tuesday, September 27, 2016
CEQR No. 16DME011M**

Good evening. My name is Athena Moore, Northern Manhattan Director with the Office of the Manhattan Borough President, and thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight in regards to the Draft Scope of Work (DSOW) for the proposed 126th Street Bus Depot Project.

Our office wanted to take an opportunity to share some comments this evening on the proposed project though we are waiting to submit our final observations in response to the DSOW till first having more time to hear from members of the public.

First and foremost, we wanted to thank the office of City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) for convening a thoughtful and comprehensive planning process to plan for the future of the former MTA Bus Depot. The Harlem African Burial Ground (HABG) Task Force, co-chaired by Speaker Mark-Viverito and Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Singletary, Pastor of the Elmendorf Reformed Church, has been unwavering in their advocacy for a thorough investigation of the site's historic and cultural significance. Their efforts have resulted in ensuring any future programming will incorporate the pivotal role early African communities played in establishing New Harlem and the outpost of New Amsterdam. Additionally the ongoing discussions and meetings between the HABG/East 126th St Depot Task Forces, EDC, DCP and HPD to discuss goals for the site's redevelopment have been positive and inclusive. We look forward to seeing the request for proposal and participating in those next steps.

After reviewing the DSOW our office wanted to highlight several items we believe should be included as part of any subsequent environmental impact statement (EIS).

As mentioned in previous East 126th Street Bus Depot Task Force meetings, the Borough President believes this site should include an expanded role as a cultural beacon for East Harlem beyond the memorial and have committed space for performing and visual arts. Additionally any analysis of the commercial space should include potential programming for light manufacturing

and maker work spaces. We urge that the parameters of the Reasonable Worst Case Development Scenario (RWCDs) include any potential impacts of the aforementioned programming.

On page 21 of the DSOW under the chapter related to historic and cultural resources the applicant state that any measures to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources may be developed in consultation with several organizations including but not limited to the HABG. Given HABG's experience and knowledge of the historic and cultural significance of the site we urge that the applicant make sure that HABG has input into the drafting of this section and furthermore, solicit the input of Manhattan Community Board 11 Economic Development, Culture & Tourism and Land Use Committees.

Given an estimated duration of construction period of 40 months, any mitigation methods should outline how impacts to neighborhood quality of life and the status of protective measures for the designated memorial site will be monitored by the 126th Street Depot task force or separate community-based oversight entity. We would also ask that the summary EIS chapter include additional benchmarks that compare the EIS findings to the recommendations of the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan (EHNP) and the most recently published Community District 11 District Statement of Needs.

Finally the Borough President believes strongly that any residential component to this site should be 100% permanently affordable and meet the lower income tiers called for under the EHNP's Affordable Housing Development recommendations. Building on publicly-owned sites dramatically reduces the cost of developing affordable housing and creates an opportunity for this project to be an economically-diverse construction reaching deeper levels of affordability ranging from 30% AMI to 130% AMI, though we acknowledge the challenge of developing with an archeological resource to consider.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on these comments thus far. Our office looks forward to joining you in listening to and reflecting on the public feedback on the DWOS. We hope these comments will contribute to a better project and memorial.