



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f

431 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f

www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

June 27, 2018

**Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Testimony Before the New York City Council
Committee on Transportation**

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. First, I would like to thank Chair Rodriguez for holding this oversight hearing to discuss the upcoming closure of the L-train. Every day, 275,000 people use the Canarsie tunnel to travel to their jobs, friends, family, medical appointments, and so much else. The upcoming closure of the Canarsie Tunnel will be an immense disruption and will require sacrifice by us all.

This is exactly why we need the strongest possible mitigation efforts to ensure that our streets and our transportation systems still work for New Yorkers during this disruption. I support the DOT's plan to turn 14th Street into a Busway that restricts private vehicle traffic, and am calling for the Busway to be in effect 24/7. I also would like to draw attention to the disproportionately negative effect that instituting a Busway solely during peak hours will have on low-income workers, who are more likely to travel outside of traditional business hours.

Additionally, while I support the DOT's plan to run shuttle buses between Brooklyn and Manhattan, I do worry about the negative effects that running 80 buses an hour over the Williamsburg Bridge, in addition to the 60 buses an hour on 14th Street, will have on our neighborhoods. I also support the DOT's plan to make the Williamsburg Bridge HOV3 and would like to call for the DOT and the MTA to study the effects of expanding HOV3 restrictions to all of the East River bridges during this time period, an idea supported by a number of community boards in Manhattan who fear excessive traffic at the other crossings.

While much of the focus thus far has been put on the 275,000 displaced commuters, it is also important to remember the nearly 150,000 residents who live along or near the 14th Street corridor as well. It is crucial then to make sure that we allow some exceptions to the Busway for local deliveries, drop-offs and pick-ups, and other uses that will enable local residents to retain access to their homes and preserve their quality of life. There should also be a focus on expanding commercial loading and pick-up and drop-off zones along the avenues close to 14th to allow travelers and deliveries who can use the avenues to do so. While of course exceptions to the Busway must be limited to guarantee the Busway's effectiveness, it is important to remember that we are balancing the concerns of both commuters and residents.

Thank you to Council Member Espinal for his efforts to push the MTA to use all-electric buses on the affected routes. Not only is it imperative that commuters are still able to travel during the shutdown, it is also important to protect the air-quality of our neighborhoods. Specifically, I would like to call for air-quality monitoring in the effected neighborhoods on a monthly basis, at the minimum.

Additionally, I stand in support of the DOT's plans to institute protected bike lanes on 12th and 13th Streets. Every year biking becomes a more ingrained part of transit life in New York City and additional protected bikes lanes are needed to keep up with the demand and ensure safety. Crosstown protected bike lanes in this neighborhood will bring a 20% reduction in overall traffic injuries to the streets on which they are installed, as the DOT's own analysis has found.

However, I would like to highlight the amount of frustration we have seen with the DOT and the MTA's lack of communication and transparency to date. It is unacceptable that now, 10-months away from the L-train shutdown, we don't have a final mitigation plan. I thank Speaker Johnson and Council Members Levin and Rodriguez for their two bills up for discussion today which will increase transparency and address the serious shortcomings of the process thus far. I hope that as we move forward in this process, we remember to not only listen to concerns of both commuters and residents but to work to amplify their voices as well.

Beginning in May, my office convened an L-Train Taskforce comprised of Community Boards 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in Manhattan as well as local elected officials. Our aim is to have Boards talk to each other to ensure that their recommendations are inclusive of all voices in the community including their neighboring districts. Over the summer, the taskforce will have presentations by impacted stakeholders such as area block associations and coalitions. We expect to submit a summary of our work to DOT and MTA in the fall when they are finalizing plans.

We have also organized a real-time bus tour with local Manhattan officials and Community Board members to examine the routes and get a foretaste of what commuters will experience.

It is certainly clear that many of the recommended and planned changes will require a lot of getting used to. I strongly support instituting these plans earlier than the actual shutdown date not only to allow commuters and residents to acclimate but also to allow us the opportunity to study their effects and make changes where needed. To this end, I recommend that bi-weekly meetings take place amongst the relevant city and state agencies to monitor the mitigation effects as the shutdown unfolds so that changes can be made where applicable.

This shutdown will bring a lot of temporary pain. The L-train moves a population the size of Orlando each day. However, if we work together to prioritize the quick and efficient movement of people we can minimize the disruption while protecting our neighborhoods from undue traffic congestion, noise, and air pollution.

Thank you again for holding this hearing. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure the L-train's closure unfolds as smoothly as possible.