

INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY, INC.

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Statement at May 30, 2019 City Council Hearing on the BQX – Brooklyn Queens Connector

The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM) is a NYC-based non-profit concerned with reducing motor vehicular congestion and improving the livability of dense urban places.

IRUM has long supported light rail as an important element of a comprehensive transportation and land use plan for NYC. Light rail provides an attractive alternative to rubber-tired transport modes. It provides a smooth, self-enforcing path and a permanence that reinforces new development.

Some 70 years ago the city hosted a five-borough light rail/streetcar/tram network that was the envy of the world. As important as the subway and elevated railway system was, it was the surface street railways that fostered much of the city’s early development and filled in the gaps between stations on the rapid transit network.

Unfortunately, Robert Moses, the city’s “masterbuilder”, had a different vision for the city that emphasized the automobile. While NYC could have accommodated both modes, Moses had an almost messianic view that streetcars had to be removed for traffic to move freely. This vision, as we know, failed because a city as dense and crowded as NYC could not accommodate a totally auto-centric surface transportation network. The result has been chaotic.

IRUM commends the Mayor for advancing the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront light rail line as a sensible first step in bringing this mode back to the city. Just across the Hudson River, New Jersey has built a similar waterfront light rail line which is quite popular and has served as an important instrument for economic development. IRUM urges the City Council to make a “junket” across the river to see how much of the world is moving toward more sustainable urban rail transit.

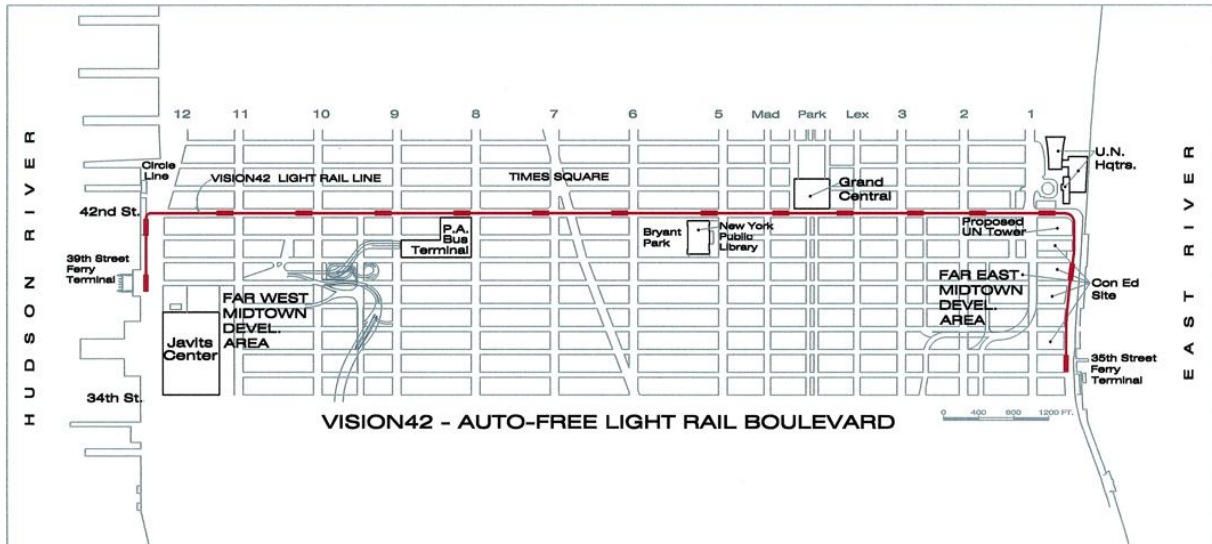
A long-standing IRUM initiative has been the restoration of a river-to-river light rail line in an auto-free boulevard on 42nd Street in Manhattan. IRUM submitted comments about this proposal at a NY City Council Hearing on a Citywide Ferry system several years ago (statement attached).

With plans for congestion pricing forward it is important to advance investments in surface transit (the “carrots”) that complement the “stick” of pricing.

As a life member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and a fifty-six year resident of NYC I can assure the City Council that the Mayor is following a well-crafted planning effort to advance the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront light rail.

George Haikalis President, IRUM

Statement at September 21, 2015 NY City Council hearing on Citywide Ferry System
George Haikalis, President, Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc.



The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM) is a NYC-based non-profit concerned with reducing motor vehicular congestion and improving the livability of dense urban places.

IRUM urges the NY City Council to seriously consider including a 42nd Street light rail line – river-to-river, ferry dock-to-ferry dock, as an integral part of a plan for a citywide ferry system. A map of this proposal – **vision42** - is shown above.

The Manhattan Central Business District (CBD), by far the nation's largest, is an important economic engine for NYC and the entire the NY-NJ-CT region and is a key generator of public transit trips. Clearly good access to the core of the CBD is an important element in a successful ferry system. The Staten Island Ferry owes its utility to the valuable subway and bus connections at South Ferry.

A crosstown surface light rail on 42nd Street would allow passengers using ferries to reach important destinations that are a long walk from the city-owned waterfront ferry terminals at 39th Street on the Hudson River, and at 35th Street on the East River. While the Hudson River ferry terminal is an imposing new facility, the East River terminal clearly needs a major expansion.

The 42nd Street light rail line is estimated to cost a half billion dollars. It will greatly improve access to the many developments that line this renowned thoroughfare, boosting commercial and residential property values in the corridor by an estimated four billion dollars. Capturing a fraction of this gain would pay for the light rail investment, not even counting the enhanced value to a citywide ferry system.

As a second phase, the light rail line could be extending across 34th Street, creating a loop that would conveniently distribute ferry riders to much of Midtown.

IRUM urges the City Council to seriously consider this inland connection as an integral part of a citywide ferry system.