Dear Mr. Gutman and Ms. Forgione:

It is a pleasure to learn that Mayor de Blasio has asked you to lead the NYCDOT. Our very best wishes to you both as you take on this challenging effort.

We are writing to request your careful consideration and endorsement of a proposal that we began more than two decades ago – vision42 – a modern low-floor river-to-river light rail line in an auto-free, landscaped 42nd Street. This proposal might have seemed innovative in 1978, when civic activist Fred Papert first advanced the idea of light rail along 42nd Street. But today light rail lines have been very successfully completed in cities around the world, many of them in auto-free streets. Despite these advances, however, New York, the largest and densest city on our nation, remains mired in its love affair with the automobile. To his credit, the Mayor has recently championed a modern light rail line along the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront – dubbed the BQX. We are happy to see that Mr. Gutman has lent his support to this initiative.

The vision42 advocacy is hosted by the NYC-based Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM), whose purpose is to advance transportation projects that will reduce car use and improve the sustainability of the city and region. Since 2004, under the aegis of the NY Community Trust, IRUM has commissioned a group of technical studies of vision42, including its expected economic impacts (by Urbanomics, Inc.), its traffic impacts (by Sam Schwartz, LLC), and its costs (by Halcrow, LLC). Even this late in the Mayor’s second term, he retains substantial authority, both under existing laws, and with the bully pulpit of his office. While clearly, the vision42 project could not be completed before he leaves office, the Mayor can complete a comprehensive technical study of the project within existing USDOT procedures. Commissioner Gutman, as a voting member of NYMTC’s governing council, could gain sufficient planning funds to complete the studies for vision42 that were begun by our organization.

IRUM would urge NYCDOT to take charge of these analyses and complete the work needed to make vision42 a shovel-ready project. Given your current experience with the BQX project, there would not be an extensive learning curve needed to move forcefully ahead with vision42. Margaret Forgione was quite involved in the initial 42nd Street light rail proposal from its outset and would be a tremendous resource for detailing the remaining work.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this proposal with you at your earliest convenience.

Roxanne Warren, AIA, Chair, vision42 and George Haikalis, ASCE, President, Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. rwarchitectsv42@gmail.com