

INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY, INC.

George Haikalis
President

One Washington Square Village, Suite 5D
New York, NY 10012 212-475-3394
geo@irum.org www.irum.org

Statement at September 17, 2015 Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer Hearing on Manhattan Congestion

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 Borough President to outline a comprehensive planning process that would be led by the NYCDOT and the NYCDCP, focusing on the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD). This process, with adequate public input, should produce a Comprehensive Street Use Plan that rationally allocates street space, the city's most valuable real estate, among competing users – pedestrians, transit riders, cyclists, truckers making deliveries, motorists and for-hire vehicle passengers. Such a planning effort was outlined in a November 13, 2009 letter to sent to NYCDOT by Manhattan CB5. (Copy attached).

The MBP should also urge NYC to partner with other regional entities to produce a coherent plan for modernizing and expanding the regional rail system serving the 22 million person NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area. A fresh opportunity to develop such a plan can spring from the recent commitment by the Governors of New York and New Jersey to help fund much needed new Hudson River passenger rail capacity. Planning for this rail tunnel should begin with a full release of detailed planning studies carried out by the 2003 Access to the Region's Core (ARC) Major Investment Study. Rail advocacy organizations in NY and NJ outlined such an effort during the 2013 centennial celebration for Grand Central Terminal (copy attached).

These two planning initiatives should include a Manhattan CBD Cordon Toll, as a way to systematically reduce vehicle-miles of motor vehicle use in the core. With fewer cars in the core, an ambitious plan to develop a grid of auto-free streets could be advanced, starting with a river-to-river auto-free light rail boulevard on 42nd Street, long supported by the Borough President and other elected officials. A regional rail plan would show how the parts of the region outside the Manhattan CBD, including the five boroughs and the suburbs, can be better served by taking advantage of the extensive rail network that focuses on the Manhattan CBD.

IRUM urges the Borough President to champion these two planning initiatives.