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QUEENS CIVIC CONGRESS OPPOSES P.A. AIRTRAIN

The Queens Civic Congress [QCC], a coalition of more than 90 civic and community organizations which span the borough of Queens, urged against local approvals for the proposed AirTrain airport access rail link project JFK International Airport proposed by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. QCC representatives delivered testimony prepared by QCC Aviation Committee Chair Seymour Schwartz, at three Queens Community Board's last week and will deliver testimony next week at a fourth board. On January 5, QCC Vice Presidents Edwin Westley testified at Community Board 8 and John Liu testified at Community Board 9; Seymour Schwartz, also QCC's Secretary, testified at Community Board 10 on January 7 and will testify at Community Board 12 on January 20.

The testify prepared by Mr. Schwartz and delivered by Mssrs. Liu, Schwartz and Westley follows:

The Queens Civic Congress and its affiliated civic and community groups recognize the need for an airport access solution. We are not opposed to the on-airport portion of the plan. However, we oppose proceeding with the off-airport spur designed to run along the Van Wyck Expressway to Jamaica.

The Congress has made clear its opposition to this specific project for a number of reasons. While it is to be one of the largest capital expenditures in behalf of our city in many years, the Port Authority has proceeded even before the ULURP [The City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure] has begun, with a project that is a recipe for functional and financial failure. The Port Authority's actions deal with issues that are broader than the community districts to which the plan has been certified, and profoundly impacts on other neighborhoods in Queens.

The current design for the JFK Airport-Jamaica segment of the Airtrain, or "Van Wyck El", with its uncomfortable passenger transfers does not offer a seamless, comfortable ride to passengers and their luggage. It will surely discourage ridership. Its chosen technology, with steel-on-steel light rail cars which will not meet federal standards, will be incompatible with our city's existing mass transportation network. The Van Wyck "El" will attract few airport users out of their cars, taxis and express buses to make any dent on traffic, and will produce a minimum drop in demand for these vehicles.

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Most importantly this project would have a profound negative impact on nearby homes and communities. We are concerned with the serious objections that have been raised by the residents living along the path of the project who want to ease the impact of this plan, and who want greater consideration to be given to alternate proposals that have been suggested.

These automated trains are meant to run along an elevated concrete roadway as high as 60-ft. above grade level, and within 150-ft. of homes along its path at up to 5-minute intervals, every day and night. It will fundamentally ruin the residential landscape and create an ugly, noisy blight on these neighborhoods for the next century.

The many years of construction along an already extremely distressed Van Wyck Expressway Extension will interrupt the lives of the residents, community facilities and businesses alike, causing them to suffer the highest degree of noise levels, pollution and hazardous street and traffic conditions that will overflow into nearby streets and neighborhoods.

For these reasons and more, the Queens Civic Congress opposes the Van Wyck Expressway spur of the "AirTrain" project. We urge responsible public officials to seek a better solution to an airport access plan for New York City. A more careful design should result in a rail link that will be more effective and successful for our city, and will at the same time bring less harm and disruption to the lives of Queens residents, both short-term and long-term. Thank you.