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January 3, 2008

Corey Bearak, Esq.
President
Queens Civic Congress
Post Office Box 238
Flushing, NY 11362

Dear Corey:

Happy new year to you, Vice President Rich Hellenbrect, and the entire Queens Civic Congress! I commend the hard work of long-time President Sean Walsh and the QCC members who invested so much energy and thought into creating the new CIVIC 2030 platform. As a former Transportation Chair of QCC who helped develop previous platforms, I know how much effort is involved in drafting and building consensus on this document. It's good to know that QCC's leadership is still in very capable hands.

After careful review of CIVIC 2030, I want to convey my vigorous support for the platform on nearly every specific agenda item. However, I point out one area where our approaches differ (and where a fair amount of public controversy has been stirred): determining the best strategy for mitigating traffic congestion and building a greener, more sustainable economy. As you know, I support the Mayor's proposal for congestion pricing – provided that real transit options are implemented for Queens' residents beforehand. As the City Council's Transportation Chair, I've consistently pushed the Mayor and MTA to expand express buses, Long Island Railroad access and ferry service in neighborhoods with limited access to subways. We should look at congestion pricing as an opportunity to greatly improve transit options for local residents and businesses – not simply as an additional tax. Congestion is literally choking us and without drastic action the viability of our growing borough and the health of our children are at risk.

I look forward to continuing our partnership to implement the many important ideas embodied in CIVIC 2030 as well as to discuss any differences we may have on congestion pricing. Thank you for the opportunity to collaborate with the QCC leadership in protecting our quality of life and ensuring the future of our borough.

Sincerely,

John C. Liu