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MICAH Z. KELLNER
65th Assembly District

April 16, 2008

Howard H. Roberts, Jr.
President
MTA New York City Transit
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Dear President Roberts:

Thank you for your letter of April 2, continuing our discussion about both short- and long-term transportation problems confronting the residents of Roosevelt Island. I appreciate your commitment to addressing some of the concerns I communicated to you in our conversation and correspondence. However, I am concerned that the MTA's planning for the upcoming tram overhaul, as well as its response to questions about long-term transportation infrastructure on the island, seem to be somewhat lacking in a sense of urgency and focus.

Roosevelt Island resident Marc Diamond has calculated that, based on NYC Transit data of turnstile swipes at the Roosevelt Island subway and tram stations in September, 2007, tram ridership is approximately half that of subway ridership during the morning rush hour period. This would seem to indicate that there will be a 50% increase in morning rush passenger numbers at the island's subway station during the several months that the tram is to be out of service – unless vigorous measures are taken to mitigate the increase.

While I appreciate that the MTA and RIOC have discussed the possibility of extending RIOC's Red Bus service to Queens during the tram overhaul, I must express my doubts as to whether RIOC will have the capacity to do so at a sufficient rate. I urge you to consider the possibility of instituting MTA rush hour express bus service not only during the tram outage, but permanently. MTA express busses capable of carrying 60-70 passengers at a time directly to the Queensboro Plaza subway station could make an appreciable contribution to reducing overcrowding at the Roosevelt Island F train station as the island's population continues to grow.

I also welcome your commitment to working with RIOC and Roosevelt Island residents to find long-term solutions to the island's transportation challenges. I am very supportive of the idea of instituting ferry service to Roosevelt Island as a long-term measure, but immediate solutions are also necessary. Residents have made other suggestions worth exploring – as both interim and long-term possibilities – including the possibility of rerouting every second Manhattan-bound R or V train through the 63rd Street tunnel during the morning rush, or extending the Q train to 71st Ave/Forest Hills.

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It is my hope that the MTA's discussions with Roosevelt Island stakeholders will result in concrete, achievable solutions to the island's long-term transportation challenges, and that the MTA will be able to move forward with implementation of these measures in the very near future. On an immediate basis, I ask the MTA to go beyond vague assurances and develop a workable plan to use its express busses to accommodate riders who will be displaced during the upcoming tram overhaul.

Again, thank you for your commitment to working with me and other Roosevelt Island stakeholders to address these issues. If you would like to discuss this further, please don't hesitate to call me at (212) 860-4906.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Micah Z. Kellner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Micah Z. Kellner
Assembly Member

MZK/phc

cc: Matthew Katz, President, Roosevelt Island Residents Association
Stephen H. Shane, President, Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
Deborah VanAmerongen, Commissioner, NYS Division of Housing and Community
Renewal