



**Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
FY 2027 Budget Hearing**

June 10, 2026

Submitted by Friends of the QueensWay

Honorable Chair Ty Hankerson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of continued funding for the QueensWay project, specifically Phase 1 - known as “MetHub” - for which New York City has already committed \$50 million in capital funding.

Friends of the QueensWay is a volunteer-led grassroots community organization dedicated to transforming the long-vacant former Rockaway Beach Branch corridor into a vibrant, safe, and accessible public space that delivers meaningful benefits to surrounding neighborhoods. The QueensWay represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reclaim underutilized land and create new green space, recreational opportunities, and community connections for Central and Southern Queens.

Phase 1, MetHub, located between Metropolitan Avenue and Forest Park, is envisioned as a welcoming gateway to the broader QueensWay corridor. The project will provide open space, recreational amenities, community programming, and improved connectivity while laying the groundwork for future phases of development. Importantly, MetHub is positioned to deliver tangible community benefits in the near term.

Over the past several years, Friends of the QueensWay, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, has worked diligently to engage local residents, civic organizations, schools, and stakeholders to build support for this vision. Our outreach and stewardship efforts have included:

- Organizing dozens of cleanup events in Forest Park and along the QueensWay corridor;
- Participating in community engagement efforts through tabling at local farmers markets and Metro Village Community Day for three consecutive years;
- Engaging students at local schools, including Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School (MELS);

- Conducting presentations and briefings for civic organizations, including the Forest Park Trust and the Women’s Club of Forest Hills;
- Organizing community 5K races in Forest Park; and
- Hosting site tours and informational sessions for members of the community and local stakeholders.

This sustained outreach reflects both our organization’s long-term commitment and the broad, diverse base of support that exists for the QueensWay project.

The QueensWay is also supported by a strong coalition of elected officials at every level of government. This alignment presents a rare and important opportunity for the City to advance a transformative community investment with substantial public backing.

The need for additional accessible open space in this part of Queens is significant. Approximately 245,000 people live within one mile of the QueensWay corridor, spanning the neighborhoods of Rego Park, Forest Hills, Glendale, Richmond Hill, Woodhaven, and Ozone Park. Within a ten-minute walk of the corridor are:

- 28 schools;
- 7 subway stations; and
- 35 bus stops.

The QueensWay has the potential to become a critical recreational and environmental asset serving residents of all ages and backgrounds.

While we respect ongoing discussions regarding future transit possibilities along portions of the corridor, it is important to note that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has repeatedly identified reactivation of the Rockaway Beach Branch as a very low priority within its long-term capital planning process, including in the MTA’s 2023 Twenty-Year Capital Needs Assessment (2025–2044). That assessment estimated potential costs at approximately \$5.9 billion and did not prioritize the proposal relative to the agency’s broader transit infrastructure needs.

By contrast, the QueensWay is a fully actionable project with FY27 funding committed and the ability to deliver near-term public benefits. Discontinuing or delaying the current work would mean losing a valuable opportunity to improve quality of life, expand access to green space, enhance public safety, and catalyze community and economic development in neighborhoods that deserve investment today.

The first 0.3-mile MetHub phase alone will create approximately five acres of new open space and serve as a proof of concept that can position the broader QueensWay project for future public grants and private philanthropic support.

The QueensWay is aligned with the City’s priorities around parks, public health, environmental resilience, recreation, and equitable neighborhood investment. Most importantly, it is ready to move forward now.

For these reasons, Friends of the QueensWay respectfully urges the Committee and the City Council to support the continued allocation of \$50 million in FY 2027 capital funding for the QueensWay MetHub project.

Thank you for your consideration.