

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony at the Atlantic Yards Public Hearing Tri-State Transportation Campaign

August 23, 2006

Good evening. I am Kate Slevin from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit advocacy organization working for a more environmentally sound and equitable transportation system.

While we support development near transit hubs, we have strong reservations about the Atlantic Yards DEIS, particularly its analysis of transportation and transit impacts.

Before the final environmental review, the developer must reduce the supply of parking, offer deeper incentives to take transit, study impacts on bus speeds, and manage a residential parking permit program on game days. The city and MTA must also work hard to implement necessary mitigation, including more traffic calming around the site, and more transit service on subway lines and bus routes.

- **Manage parking supply, rather than building for parking demand**

The availability of parking is a key factor in the decision of whether or not to drive to a destination. The DEIS offers limited discussion of this dynamic, instead asserting how many parking spaces will be required to supply new demand, and building new parking capacity to accommodate it. In fact, the developer proposes to provide an oversupply of parking capacity. The DEIS states that even during the busiest times (weeknight game times in 2016), there will be 596 vacant spaces within ½ mile of the arena.

Instead, the developer should use parking supply as a means to limit driving. The developer should determine how many new cars the street network can accommodate, and provide parking for only those cars. The developer has not done this, since two-thirds of the intersections in the study area will see significant impacts by 2016.

- **Eliminate “temporary” surface parking lots**

The 944-space “temporary” parking lot should be eliminated from Phase I of the project. Six years is not temporary. The developer claims the study area is “blighted” now, but a large surface parking lot will only bring new blight to the area. A surface parking lot is extremely out of character with local land uses, will hamper NYC DOT plans to implement traffic calming along Vanderbilt Ave, and discourage the commercial redevelopment that is already occurring.

- **Implement residential parking permits**

The DEIS clearly states that arena patrons will park in free on-street spaces. To reduce this impact to local residents, the city should implement a residential parking permit program during game days. The Nets can manage this program, as the Chicago Cubs do for Wrigley Field.

- **Include stronger transit incentives**

The Tri-State Campaign applauds the developer’s inclusion of transit fare discounts and a 400-space bicycle parking area to promote alternative transportation to the site. However, we question whether a \$2 price

incentive on a round trip transit fare is going to encourage significantly more people to use transit to relatively expensive arena events. A stronger incentive would be to bundle a mass transit fare with every ticket sold.

- **Use a more realistic transit ridership growth rate to accurately assess likely subway crowding**

The DEIS uses annual subway ridership growth rates of 0.55% to 1.25%. In fact, recent Brooklyn subway ridership has grown at a much faster rate, with ridership increasing 1.6% annually between 2000 and 2005, even with September 11th and the subsequent economic downturn. If ridership continues to grow at this recent pace, the subways will become severely and dangerously overcrowded.

Further, the DEIS uses an MTA volume-to-capacity standard which greatly understates actual crowding. That standard considers 3 square feet to be adequate for standing passengers, a space just 21 inches by 21 inches. If a more appropriate standard were used, subways would far exceed capacity constraints, even applying the low ridership growth rates used in the DEIS.

- **Discuss project impacts on the city's plan for rapid bus service along Flatbush Ave.**

The City and NYC Transit have chosen Flatbush Ave as a potential route for bus rapid transit. However the DEIS makes no mention of this study, and the project proposal includes drop-off lanes for taxis that may hinder plans to speed buses along this route.

- **Expand the traffic calming plan**

The DEIS states that accidents with pedestrians and cyclists will increase with the project. This warrants a more extensive traffic calming plan to slow cars down on local streets.

- **The City's and MTA's responsibility**

Many of the developer's proposed mitigation measures are beyond the developer's actual control. The developer does not control the city streets, or the subway and bus lines. Therefore, the city must implement the mitigation plan outlined in the DEIS, and create a more thorough traffic calming program around the site that includes more than just re-stripped crosswalks. The MTA must run more service on already crowded lines, especially during game times, including possibly extending the 4 train into Brooklyn, as recommended by the developer.

Before I finish, I would also like to comment on the poor public process for this project. It's August 23rd, and many people I know, including coworkers and colleagues who would like to be here, are on vacation. The ESDC has given the public one month prior to the public hearing, and two months total, to review a 1400-page document that took years to create. The size, density, transportation impacts, and eminent domain issues of this project merit a thorough and inclusive public participation process of the very highest quality.

Thank you.