Western Queens Transportation Study

NYC Planning
Department of City Planning City of New York

October 2014
Meeting Agenda

1. Introduction
   - Background
   - Issues and Challenges
   - Key Goals

2. Recommendations
   - Regional Connections
   - Local Connections

3. Next Steps

4. Questions and Comments
PROJECT TEAM

New York City Department of City Planning

- In consultation with:
  - NYC Economic Development Corporation
  - NYC Department of Transportation
  - NYS Department of Transportation
  - MTA Bus Company
  - MTA New York City Transit
  - MTA Long Island Rail Road
  - Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
ABOUT THE STUDY

The Western Queens Transportation Study Explores:

- Linking existing and new development and improve access and mobility throughout the study area

- Connecting new and existing destinations such as waterfront parks and cultural institutions

- Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements
**KEY GOALS**

Improve overall transportation network while providing choices for people

1. Enhance connections between the various neighborhoods of Western Queens
2. Create and enhance connections to neighborhoods outside Western Queens
3. Create and enhance connections to Roosevelt Island
4. Link existing and new development and improve access and mobility throughout the study area
5. Connect new and existing destinations such as waterfront parks and cultural institutions
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REVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL RECOMMENDATIONS

REGIONAL:
• BROAD IN SCOPE
• CONNECT MULTIPLE AREAS
• MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS
• CITYWIDE
• FOCUS ON MOBILITY

LOCAL:
• FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL SITES
• WITHIN SINGLE AREA
• FOCUS ON SAFETY
STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE MOBILITY - LEGEND

- Lighting improvements
- Bulb-outs
- Pedestrian Crossings
- Wayfinding
- Sidewalk Improvements
- New Open Space
- Bike Facilities
- Bike Routes
- Bike Share
- Street Operation Changes
- Signal Changes
- RRFBs
- Park Smart
- Bus Route Changes
- Infrastructure Improvements
- New Express Subway Service
- New Ferry Route/Stop
- New Transit-way
REGIONAL CONNECTIONS
CONCEPTUAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCED REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

GOAL:

Improve the neighborhood’s access to the region’s mass transit network, recognizing recent land use and employment changes

- Technology corridor transit improvements
- Bus network redesign
- Ferry service
- Express subway service
- Ramp from Pulaski Bridge to LIE
**Technology Corridor Transit Improvements**

**Goals:**
- Link existing job centers, emerging technology jobs and housing
- Spur economic and residential development

**Issues:**
- Existing network doesn’t link housing and jobs directly
- A lack of transportation connections deters development
RECOMMENDATION:

- A study on the feasibility of a transit route that connects existing and planned development and waterfront destinations between Brooklyn’s Tech Triangle, Downtown, Greenpoint and Williamsburg as well as LaGuardia Airport.
- Creates opportunities for future transit oriented development along the route
- Integrates with existing transit network
- Considers the potential for additional crossing over Newtown Creek
Key Issues

When considering these options for a dedicated transit route, there are several considerations that will need further study in order to further this recommendation:

- **Impact on existing transit network**: The streets and route of the parallel B62 cannot handle the demands of the anticipated tech sector growth and the G train serves a different trip type.
  - This route can complement the existing bus system, especially if a dedicated lane is created and shared with existing buses.
  - The G train currently serves a large number of long distance trips that are peripheral or hub-bound rather than tech corridor trips, due to station spacing, land uses and job centers locations.
  - The G route and station spacing also makes feeder bus service ineffective for serving technology corridor trips.
  - The impact on these longer distance riders is anticipated to be small but requires further study.

- **Street Alignment changes**: Dedicated transit lanes require use of a general traffic lane and in some areas, streets are already narrow. Changes could include:
  - Removal of parking on one side of the street and left or right turns at certain locations.
  - Reduction of sidewalk width or in number and general vehicle lanes.
  - Utility lines may need to be relocated or constructed.

- **Street Capacity changes**: In order to accommodate a dedicated transit lane, vehicle-trip capacity could be reduced and person-trip capacity will be significantly increased.

- **Bottlenecks and Bridges**:
  - Only the Pulaski Bridge is available for crossing Newtown Creek and travel lanes are already being reduced for an expanded bicycle and pedestrian path. Current traffic volume is low and excess capacity will still exist with the removal of the lane.
  - Areas in proximity to high volume locations such as Queensboro Bridge, RFK (Triboro) Bridge and Queens Plaza have street segments with high traffic volumes and limited capacity.
TECHNOLOGY CORRIDOR TRANSIT ROUTE: CONCEPTUAL STREET ALIGNMENT – WESTERN QUEENS SECTION (WIDE STREETS)

OPTION 1: CURBSIDE TRANSIT LANE, ONE TRAVEL LANE AND ONE PARKING LANE PER DIRECTION
Technology Corridor Transit Route: Conceptual Street Alignment – Western Queens Section (Wide Streets)

Option 2: Center Transit Lane, One Travel Lane And One Parking Lane Per Direction
EXISTING

BUS NETWORK

ISSUE:
Existing bus network provides good access to Queens Plaza but has limiting connectivity to other destinations.

- Many routes run from residential neighborhoods to defunct industrial areas
- Several routes are redundant.
- Few routes span the entire study area, leaving several areas with no direct connection (transfer required.)
  - Hunter’s Point – Astoria
  - Roosevelt Island – Sunnyside
  - Roosevelt Island – Woodside
**PROPOSED BUS NETWORK**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**
Create better service for existing and new populations in Western Queens through the reorganization of existing routes and creation of new routes.

- Eliminate Q102
- Extend Q19
- Extend Q39
- Extend Q67
- Extend Q104
- Extend Q103
- Create new route Q105

This will result in better service to:

- Roosevelt Island
- Western Queens destinations
- Other Queens neighborhoods.
ISSUES:

- Waterfront developments with limited transit access will need alternative modes to access major employment hubs.
- Currently, the East River Ferry makes only one stop in Queens at Hunter’s Point South/Long Island City.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Extend East River Ferry service to Roosevelt Island and Hallett’s Point.
- Construct additional ferry landings at Hunter’s Point, Roosevelt Island, and Astoria Cove for new ferry route.
**SUBWAY NETWORK**

**ISSUE:**
New development along the Astoria Line may create crowding and delays for passengers further down the line.

**RECOMMENDATION:**
Encourage New York City Transit to use unused track to run express service at peak periods to reduce overcrowding and delays, similar to the 7 express service. New express stops would be:
- Astoria/Ditmars Boulevard
- Astoria Boulevard
- Queensboro Plaza
LOCAL CONNECTIONS
NEW AND ENHANCED LOCAL CONNECTIONS

GOALS:

Improve overall connectivity between neighborhoods in the study area by providing improvements that cater to a variety of users.

1. Improved and safer corridors

2. Bicycle network improvements and access to Roosevelt Island

3. Mixed-use streetscape and lighting improvements

4. Site specific safety improvements
1. Improved and Safer Corridors

Goal:
Make significant north/south corridors safer for all users

Recommendations:
- 21st Street: traffic calming
- Vernon Boulevard: traffic calming and PARK Smart
**GOAL:**

Create a safer street for pedestrians while accommodating vehicular traffic using various traffic calming measures.
ISSUES:

- 21st Street seems unsafe for some pedestrians
- Many intersections do not have signals or crosswalks
- Street is characterized by high speeds and heavy truck traffic
- Parking lane used as travel lane; extra lane width contributes to speeding
21ST STREET: LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS

New Residential Construction

Sanitation Depot

Community Facilities, schools and senior centers

NYCHA Properties
Ravenswood & Queensbridge
21ST STREET: LONG DISTANCES BETWEEN SIGNALIZED CROSSINGS
21st Street: Existing Conditions
21st Street: Proposed

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**GOAL:** Create a safe street that prioritizes pedestrians while accommodating vehicular traffic

**ISSUES:**
- Few pedestrian crossings
- Multiple irregular intersections pose challenges for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers
- Existing Vernon Boulevard Mall, a New York City Greenstreet, lacks sufficient seating, landscaping, and other amenities
- Parking is in very high demand along the retail portion of the corridor.
Vernon Boulevard: Land Use Considerations

Limited pedestrian amenities

NYCHA properties:
- Astoria Houses and
- Queensbridge Houses

New residential construction
VERNON BOULEVARD: LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS
**Vernon Boulevard: Pedestrian Crossings**

**Issues:**
- Vernon Boulevard links several important retail, residential, and cultural nodes.
- All Q103 southbound bus stops are across Vernon Blvd.
- Many intersections do not have crosswalks.
- Nearly 2,000 feet between signalized crosswalks in some locations.
- Low traffic volumes do not meet minimum threshold for installation of traditional traffic signal or stop sign.

**Recommendations:**
- Fill in the gaps of crosswalk along Vernon Boulevard by marking crosswalks and using a traffic controlling device.
  - A Rapid Response Flashing Beacon is a potential solution that has worked in other low volume streets with crossings.
Vernon Boulevard: Pedestrian Crossings
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**ISSUES:**

- Existing Vernon Boulevard Mall, a New York City Greenstreet, lacks sufficient seating, landscaping, and other amenities
- Long term metered parking south of the Vernon Boulevard Mall results in commuter parking and traffic congestion
- Crosswalks are needed to provide safe access to Old Hickory Park at southeast corner of Jackson Avenue and 51st Avenue intersection
**Vernon Boulevard: Jackson Avenue Intersection**

**Option 1:**
Extend Greenstreet median from 51st Avenue to Borden Avenue
- Enhanced pedestrian space with amenities
- Calms traffic
- Parallel parking retained along median
- Safer crossings to Old Hickory Park and pedestrian medians

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**Option 2:**

Align Vernon Boulevard with the rest of the street by extending sidewalk

- Enhanced pedestrian space with amenities
- Calms traffic
- Parallel parking retained along new eastern side of the street
- Protected bike lane from Borden Avenue
- Safer crossings to Old Hickory Park
BIKE NETWORK
2. BIKE NETWORK AND ACCESS TO ROOSEVELT ISLAND

GOAL:
Encourage bicycling as a viable mode of transportation in the study area by creating a safe and efficient network

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- Construct two-way protected bicycle lane on 36th Avenue
- Enhance the descent from the Roosevelt Island Bridge to the street network on Roosevelt Island
- Improve connection between Roosevelt Island Bridge bike/pedestrian paths and East River Greenway
- Reduce bicycle-pedestrian conflicts at Dutch Kills Green
- Enhance connection between Queens Plaza and 29th Street bike lane
- Improve bicycle path on Queens Plaza Greenway between 21st Street and Vernon Boulevard
- Construct two-way protected bicycle lane on Borden Avenue

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ISSUES:

- New east-west bike connection needed between future Cornell Technion campus and Western Queens destinations to meet anticipated demand from new students and employees
- Wide roadbed on 36th Avenue (46’) between Vernon Boulevard and 24th Street is underused
**RECOMMENDATION:**

Construct a two-way protected bike path along the north side of 36th Avenue between Vernon Boulevard and 24th Street.
Access to Roosevelt Island

- Roosevelt Island is the site of the upcoming Cornell Technion campus, creating a new technology hub and increasing demand for travel to the island.
- F train provides subway access.
- Bridge to 36th Avenue provides vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access, there are opportunities for improvement.
- Map Source: Google 2014; Map Data: Google 2014.
ACCESS TO ROOSEVELT ISLAND: EXISTING
ACCESS TO ROOSEVELT ISLAND: PROPOSED UPPER LEVEL
EXISTING: LOOKING EAST OVER ROOSEVELT ISLAND BRIDGE
PROPOSED: LOOKING EAST OVER ROOSEVELT ISLAND BRIDGE
EXISTING: LOOKING WEST TOWARD ROOSEVELT ISLAND ENTRANCE
PROPOSED: LOOKING WEST TOWARD ROOSEVELT ISLAND ENTRANCE
ACCESS TO ROOSEVELT ISLAND: PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR LEVEL
EXISTING: CONNECTION BETWEEN ROOSEVELT ISLAND BRIDGE AND GREENWAY
PROPOSED: CONNECTION BETWEEN ROOSEVELT ISLAND BRIDGE AND GREENWAY
3. Mixed-Use Streetscape and Lighting

**Goal:**
Improve pedestrian environment while accommodating existing mix of uses, including residential, commercial, light industrial and community facility

**Recommendations:**
- Provide a street design conceptual framework for mixed-use streets – to be studied further with DOT and other City partners.
- Add pedestrian street lighting under elevated structures
- Conduct lighting analysis along key pedestrian corridors
Mixed-use Street
A Conceptual Design Framework

Mixed used streets cater for diverse use groups such as residential, commercial, light industrial and community facility and as such pose an inherent conflict between needs and use of the public realm space.

Issues:

- Needs of industrial businesses such as loading and storing goods are not accommodated well
- Many mixed-use streets lack basic street amenities such as sidewalks and adequate lighting
- Businesses are concerned that pedestrian improvements will drive up rents and lead to displacement
Mixed-use Street
A Conceptual Design Framework

Goals:

- Meet the needs of the existing businesses
- Maintain a walkable and pedestrian-friendly environment
- Greening the streets where possible
- Enhance the neighborhood character by introducing additional amenities within the public realm
**Mixed-use Street**

**A Conceptual Design Framework**

The uses that occur within the private property impact how the street needs to function directly adjacent to it.

Typical Street

- Generally similar uses throughout

Mixed-use Street

- Evolved with a mix of building typologies & land uses

We recommend a feasibility study of this proposal.

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Mixed-use Street
A Conceptual Design Framework

The use that occur within the private property impacts how the street needs to function directly adjacent to it.

To some degree street treatment could respond to the adjacent use/Physical elements.
MIXED-USE STREET
A CONCEPTUAL DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Mixed-use design
Concept scenario
(for illustration purposes)

Consistent Streetscape Elements:
Continuous uses that need to be connected &
coordinated along the length of the street

Varied Streetscape Elements: That might
vary depending on the adjacent use
4. **STRATEGIC SITES**

**GOAL:**

Improve safety for all modes and create conditions that encourage walking, biking, and transit between neighborhoods.

- Lighting improvements
- Bulb-outs
- Pedestrian Crossings
- Wayfinding
- Sidewalk Improvements
- Bike Routes
- Street Operation Changes
- Signal Changes
- Bus Stop Relocation
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Park Smart
21ST STREET: 
ASTORIA BOULEVARD INTERSECTION REDESIGN

ISSUES:

- Complex six-leg intersection
- 80-foot long crosswalks
- Confusing roadway for vehicles
- Wide, unchannelled road space on west side of intersection

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Add curb extensions to create pedestrian space and shorter crossings
- Offset left turn lane onto 21st St
- Add signal and crosswalks at 22nd St and Astoria Blvd
21ST STREET: QUEENSBRIDGE BUS SHELTER RELOCATION

ISSUE:
- Proximity of bus shelter and subway entrance narrows sidewalk width, creating congestion

RECOMMENDATION:
- Relocate bus shelter to the north of the subway stair
**Vernon Boulevard Corridor: Astoria Boulevard Intersection Redesign**

**Issues:**

- Angled intersection creates long crosswalks of up to 110 feet
- Wide roadway allows vehicles to gain speed around corners

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Close portion of 30th Avenue to allow for potential expansion of two adjacent parks

Add bulb-outs to align 8th Street at Vernon Boulevard

Restore two-way operations on Astoria Boulevard between 8th Street and Main Avenue
**Vernon Boulevard Corridor: Broadway Intersection Redesign**

**Issues:**

- Irregular intersection creates a high number of complex motor vehicle maneuvers and long crosswalk distances
- Difficult intersection to navigate as a pedestrian.
**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Add bulb-out to create pedestrian space and shorter crosswalks

- Add pedestrian crossing time across Vernon Boulevard

- Prohibit left turn from northbound 11th Street in order to simplify traffic movements and accommodate a shorter pedestrian crosswalk for Vernon Boulevard
**Vernon Boulevard Corridor:**

**30th Road Bus Stop Relocation**

**Issue:**
- Location of bus stop at 30th Drive is located far from crosswalk and destinations

**Recommendation:**
- Relocate bus stop to 30th Road intersection with crosswalk
**VERNON BOULEVARD CORRIDOR: PARK SMART ALONG RETAIL CORRIDOR**

**ISSUE:**

Parking is difficult to find on Vernon Boulevard retail corridor due to low turnover in high demand locations.
**INTRODUCTION**

**REGIONAL CONNECTIONS**

**LOCAL CONNECTIONS**

**SAFE CORRIDORS**

**NEXT STEPS**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Explore the implementation of PARK Smart along the corridor

- Encourages short stays and high parking turnover
- Charges lower rates for inconvenient parking spots on side streets
- Parking costs increase as parking time increases

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QUEENS PLAZA GREENWAY
QUEENS PLAZA GREENWAY

ISSUE:
Pedestrians crossing Queens Plaza North unknowingly cross the path of two-way bike lane.
**Queens Plaza Greenway**

**Recommendation:**
Add pedestrian signal heads and signs to inform pedestrians of two-way bicycle traffic.
QUEENS PLAZA GREENWAY
ISSUE:

Cyclists ride through Dutch Kills Green, Queens Plaza’s new park

- Favored as an alternative to the 28th and 29th Street bike lanes
- Creates potentially dangerous conditions for pedestrians
QUEENS PLAZA GREENWAY:
DUTCH KILLS GREEN

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Install signs and pavement markings to reinforce connection between bike lane and 29th Street.

2. Install signs and chevrons along Queens Plaza North to direct west-bound bikes away from Dutch Kills Green.
PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING UNDER ELEVATED STRUCTURES

ISSUE:
Lighting under elevated structures is either non-existent or over the roadbed instead of the sidewalks (except in areas where capital improvements were recently made), causing pedestrians to feel unsafe when walking under these structures at night.
Pedestrian Lighting Under Elevated Structures

Recommendation:
Install or relocate lighting over sidewalks instead of the roadbed under elevated structures
**ISSUE:**

Key pedestrian corridors are dark at night even though streetlamps are installed and functioning.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Conduct a study of lighting needs on key pedestrian corridors in the study area, especially from transit to the waterfront.
**NAVIGATION**

**GOAL:**

Allow all modes to understand their location in order to reach their destination.
**Wayfinding Signs**

**Issues:**

- The area has many public transportation users, pedestrians, and cyclists but existing signage is limited.
- WalkNYC program has been implemented with the LIC Partnership along key streets in their focus area.
Wayfinding Signs

Recommendation:
Expand WalkNYC, DOT’s wayfinding program, established in cooperation with the LIC Partnership, to additional locations near:
- Transit hubs and subway stations
- Parks and recreation
- Cultural institutions
Queensboro Bridge Approach Signs

Issue:
Signs to Queensboro Bridge were not installed at important intersections
RECOMMENDATION:

Install clear signs and lane designations on all local street approaches to Queensboro Bridge.
**STEINWAY STREET: PARK SMART ALONG RETAIL CORRIDOR**

**ISSUE:**

Parking is difficult to find along the Steinway Street retail corridor due to high demand and low turnover.
**RECOMMENDATION:**

Explore the implementation of PARK Smart along the corridor

- Encourages short stays and high parking turnover
- Charges lower rates for inconvenient parking spots on side streets
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Newtown Avenue/30th Avenue Intersection

**Issues:**

- Angled intersection creates pedestrian-vehicle conflicts
- High volumes of pedestrians
- Included in DOT’s School Safety Program

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**Newtown Avenue/30th Avenue Intersection**

**Recommendations:**

Option 1: Curb extensions

- Add public space
- Create shorter and safer crossings
- Calm traffic onto Newtown Avenue
Recommendation:
Option 2: Pedestrian street
- Add public space
- Eliminate dangerous crossing at Newtown Avenue
ISSUE:
A lack of crosswalks across the south side of Jackson Avenue and 47th Avenue creates unsafe pedestrian conditions near two pedestrian generators:
- MoMA PS 1
- Hunters Point Plaza
**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Shorten crossing distances with curb extensions
- Add crosswalks at 47th Avenue and south side of Jackson Avenue
- Create left-turn lanes on 21st Street with signal phase
- Add pedestrian lead time (head start)
ISSUE:
Street segment between Vernon Boulevard and East River does not meet NYCDOT standards:
- Missing sidewalks
- Haphazard parking
- Large loading zone associated with New York City Department of Education building
**RECOMMENDATION:**

Bring street segment up to NYCDOT standards for sidewalk and street design.
**ISSUE:**

Intersection has no signal or pedestrian crosswalk and is characterized by:

- High volume, free-flowing entrance and exit traffic to and from the LIE
- High truck traffic volumes along Borden Avenue
- Increasing volumes of pedestrians and bikes using Pulaski Bridge stairwell
**BORDEN AVENUE/LIE INTERSECTION**

**RECOMMENDATION:**
Install a traffic signal and crosswalks
ISSUE:
Upper level platform at Queensboro Plaza subway station is open to elements

RECOMMENDATION:
Install windscreen similar to the windscreen on lower level platform to mitigate wind and cold temperatures
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER STUDIES

- NYCDOT/DDC Hunter’s Point Reconstruction Project
- NYCDOT Court Square Street Improvement Project
**Next Steps:**

- Q&A session
- E-mail us your comments
- Revise report based on comments
- Publish final report on DCP website
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