



PRESS RELEASE

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Reconnecting Queens: Students Lead Town Hall on Future of Subway Expansion

Town Hall at Queens College Showcases Support for QueensLink Subway Proposal

(Flushing, NY) On Monday evening, more than 100 students, faculty, and community members came together at Queens College for a Town Hall focused on the QueensLink proposal, a grassroots plan to transform the long-abandoned Rockaway Beach Branch into a new north-south subway line through central and southern Queens.

Ask any Queens resident who uses public transportation, and they'll tell you it's essential—but frustrating, with limited subway access and long, unreliable commutes. That's why QueensLink matters—it would transform an abandoned rail line into a vital north-south subway connection, finally linking transit-starved neighborhoods and easing borough-wide travel.

Hosted by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) at Queens College, the event gave attendees the chance to learn about the project, engage with leaders of the QueensLink proposal, and share their personal experiences with Queens' transit challenges.

"Too many Queens residents feel disconnected from the rest of the city by poor transit options," said **Matthew Paolucci, a student organizer with NYPIRG**. "QueensLink offers a real opportunity to fix that, and this event was about giving people a platform to help lead that conversation."

Queens residents face some of the longest and most frustrating commutes in the country, with average travel times exceeding 45 minutes each way—nearly double the national average. Despite being New York City's largest borough by area and second-largest by population, only about 27% of Queens residents live within walking distance of a subway station, compared to over 75% in Manhattan. In central and southern Queens neighborhoods like Glendale, Ozone

Park, and Howard Beach, it can take up to 90 minutes to reach Midtown Manhattan, even though these communities are just 10 to 12 miles away.

"Transit is the lifeline of our communities, but too many neighborhoods in Queens have been left behind. QueensLink represents an opportunity to finally connect our borough in a way that works for everyone — cutting commutes, creating jobs, and building a more sustainable future. Tonight's town hall is about making sure student voices and community stories are at the center of that vision," said **Natasha Elder, Regional Director at NYPIRG**.

Throughout the evening, participants explored interactive stations, including a "Build Your Line" activity where they mapped their daily commute, a straw poll on transportation priorities for the abandoned branch, a "Cost of Delay" survey where they calculated the time and money lost to transit delays, and a Storybank station where attendees recorded their own stories about how transportation—or the lack of it—has shaped their lives and opportunities in Queens.

In concert with these interactive stations, volunteers from QueensLink were present to share the history of the proposal, the current political climate and challenges surrounding it, estimated ridership numbers from a recent study conducted at NYU Maron, and to answer any questions attendees had. Much focus was placed on the future of the proposal, with the QueensLink team recently reaching the \$100,000 local match requirement for the Reconnecting Communities Program grant, illustrating vast community support for this proposal.

"We're thrilled to see so many passionate students who are looking to reconnect the borough," said **Rick Horan, Executive Director of QueensLink**. "As the city moves towards a park-only project on the Rockaway Beach Branch with no space for a rail line, we need more people to show local representatives just how badly we need parks AND transit. We're proud to see so many future leaders making the right choice for our communities."

The evening concluded with a raffle giveaway for an unlimited Weekly MetroCard and press availability with QueensLink leaders, NYPIRG student organizers, and community advocates.

The QueensLink project would be a transformative solution, connecting tens of thousands of residents who currently lack easy subway access. By converting 3.5 miles of abandoned railway into a new transit corridor, QueensLink would dramatically cut commute times, reduce borough-wide congestion, and promote environmental sustainability by preventing thousands of new car trips and lowering carbon emissions. In addition to the transportation benefits, QueensLink would create an estimated 2,000 construction jobs and help fuel long-term economic growth in underserved areas by connecting more people to jobs, education, and healthcare opportunities.

About NYPIRG at Queens College:

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit student-directed advocacy group focused on environmental protection, consumer rights, higher education, government accountability, and mass transit.

QueensLink is a project of QueensRail, a volunteer-run 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 2015 to improve transit in South and Central Queens. For more information, please visit www.QueensLink.org