



## **Statement of the Cobble Hill Association (CHA) with regard to the BQE Reconstruction**

The position of the Cobble Hill Association has been clear and consistent: **NO BQE traffic on our narrow and fragile local streets, and embrace a new vision for the project that places communities over cars.**

Cobble Hill has had more than its fair share of inequitable treatment when it comes to transportation policies. Most notably, seventy years ago when Robert Moses granted Brooklyn Heights a triple cantilever highway with a stunning public promenade to save their neighborhood, Cobble Hill and Carroll Gardens, to the south, got a noxious, fume-spewing open trench that divided our neighborhoods and left disconnected communities. The denizens of Brooklyn Heights didn't care then what happened to their neighbors to the south, and it is unclear whether they care now. It is time to repair the breach!

Recently, there seems to be some recognition of Cobble Hill, but we are not convinced that we will have the past inequities corrected and our neighborhood made whole again. The biggest problem south of the cantilever is the trench itself, which spews toxins into our air 24/7 while it permanently separates one part of the community from the other. Another huge problem is the deadly on/off ramps at Atlantic Avenue, the site of horrific car crashes and truck rollovers at the neighborhood's pedestrian entrance to Brooklyn Bridge Park. These ramps have been at the top of the state DOT's most dangerous roadways list for the past decade. Finally, this interchange trisects our largest green space, Van Voorhees Park, into little despondent unconnected pieces surrounded by the Expressway.

So, what does the Cobble Hill Association envision?

- We want an equitable BQE reconstruction that includes the Atlantic Avenue interchange, Hicks Street trench, and the surrounding park space and streetscape. Although the discussion originated around the weakening cantilevered section – the

only stretch of the expressway controlled by NYC DOT – any solution to this problem will have a profound impact on the southern portion, which must be included in the first phase of the project. Furthermore, this is the opportunity in our lifetime to rethink and redevelop this southern segment and can't be deferred.

- We want a process and plan that restricts trucks from local streets and doesn't include excessive lane closures or other scenarios that cause vehicles to bypass the expressway via our streets, creating bumper-to-bumper traffic. Our streets are already congested and cannot handle increased car traffic – quality of life would be irreparably harmed with increased pollution, noise, and unsafe streets.
- New on/off ramps must be safe and modern, eliminating overturned tractor-trailers and deadly car crashes. The streetscape around the Atlantic Avenue interchange must be redesigned to incorporate traffic calming techniques and provide a safe and pleasant gateway to the waterfront that lies on the other side of the expressway.
- Most importantly, we want a state-of-the-art, resplendent green space to cover the entire trench, reuniting us with our waterfront and restoring our clean air. These green spaces and parks should be for everyone, not a select few – therefore any new land created cannot contain private housing – like originally proposed for the promenade, which was established as a public amenity when some called for extended private backyards. The Cobble Hill Association sees our neighborhood as part of a greater greener whole. We are prepared to fight vigorously for our vision of a community that is reunited with its waterfront with a safer and cleaner environment for us all to walk, play and live.

This is an opportunity to correct the planning ideologies of the past that prioritized automobiles – dividing and destroying many of the city's historic neighborhoods. We must not just rebuild and maintain status quo, but reimagine the future of our city, with a **greater emphasis** on public green space and healthy walkable communities. This is our chance to reimagine the city's public infrastructure and how it coalesces with the surrounding urban fabric. We can imagine that future and it can be achieved.