

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION  
ULURP APPLICATION NOS: C 140251 MMX, C 140252 PQX  
CITY ISLAND BRIDGE  
Community Districts 10 & 12  
April 20, 2014**

**DOCKET DESCRIPTIONS**

**ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 140251 MMX**

**IN THE MATTER OF** an application submitted by the New York City Department of Transportation pursuant to Sections 197-c and 199 of the New York City Charter and Section 5-430 *et.seq.* of the New York City Administrative Code for an amendment of the City Map involving:

- The delineation of a bridge corridor on a portion of Pelham Bay Park;
- The delineation of a bridge easement over Eastchester Bay;
- The narrowing by elimination, discontinuance and closing of a portion of City Island Avenue between City Island Bridge and Kilroe Street;
- The establishment of a park between City Island Bridge and Kilroe Street;
- The adjustments of grades necessitated thereby;

Including authorization of any acquisition or disposition of real property related thereto, in Community Districts #10 and #12, Borough of the Bronx, in accordance with Map No. 13123 dated December 8, 2011, and signed by the Borough President.

**ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 140252 PQX**

**IN THE MATTER OF** an application submitted by the Department of Transportation and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, pursuant to Section 197-c of the New York City Charter, for the acquisition of easements over land under the waters of Eastchester Bay in the general vicinity of City Island Road Bridge to facilitate construction of temporary and replacement bridge structures; and the acquisition of an easement (Block 5636, part of lot 100) to facilitate seawall rehabilitation.

**BACKGROUND**

Approving these applications facilitates a series of actions necessary to accomplish:

- A transfer of property located in Pelham Bay Park from the Department of Parks and Recreation to the Department of Transportation
- A transfer of property belonging to the Department of Transportation to the Department of Parks and Recreation
- Establishing an easement under a privately owned portion of property located under a seawall located in Eastchester Bay

In order to:

- Construct a temporary bridge to replace the existing City Island Bridge during the time a permanent replacement bridge is under construction
- Establish an additional park located on City Island
- Repair and rehabilitate an existing seawall

Budgeted Funding for the City Island Bridge Project is:

- **\$102,688,000.20** of which **\$82,000,000.00** is being provided by the federal government

The current City Island Bridge is:

- **27 feet, 11 inches in height allowing for 12 feet of navigational channel height**

The proposed City Island Bridge is:

- **164 feet, 10 inches in height allowing for 14 feet, 10 inches of navigational channel height**

The current City Island Bridge is:

- **51 feet, four inches wide**

The proposed City Island Bridge\* is:

- **68 feet, five inches wide**

These actions are all made necessary in order that the existing City Island Bridge placed into service in 1901 can be entirely replaced with a new span that satisfies all current standards for such spans. The City Island Bridge transverses Eastchester Bay via City Island Avenue, connecting City Island with the Bronx mainland within Pelham Bay Park at City Island Road. The current span is a truss bridge rising to a maximum of 27 feet, 11 inches while providing approximately 12 feet of navigational channel height for vessel traffic on Eastchester Bay. The bridge's width measures 51 feet, four inches wide, providing one travel lane in each direction plus one additional lane for emergency vehicles. As such, these measurements fail to satisfy current lane width standards. Likewise, due to the narrowness of the current span it is not possible to close one half of this bridge, allowing it to function as a temporary bridge while constructing the new span.

In addition to its narrow width, ongoing engineering studies of the current City Island Bridge reveal pervasive corrosion and deterioration. The six supporting piers located in Eastchester Bay require extensive maintenance. At the public hearing convened by the Bronx Borough President on April 3, 2014, it was also noted by the Department of Transportation's Deputy Chief Engineer, Bridge Design and Construction, that movement of one of the bridge's abutments was detected. The most recent Biennial Inspection Report issued a General Recommendation Rating of 3.38;\*\* "serious deterioration" or "not functioning as designed." These factors, coupled with the narrowness of the current bridge, has prompted the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) to determine that the current City Island Bridge has outlived its useful life and consequently must be entirely replaced.

The DOT proposes to replace the current span with a single tower, cable stayed bridge on the existing alignment. This new bridge will be 68 feet, five inches wide and therefore able to accommodate three lanes of traffic, each lane being 12 feet wide, satisfying current minimum lane width standards. This span will also include two bicycle lanes each measuring six feet in width plus two pedestrian lanes each lane also measuring six feet in width. A single tower, to be located in Pelham Bay Park, will rise approximately 164 feet and will serve as a "mast" for the supporting cables. A "backstay" anchor for these cables will also be located in Pelham Bay Park, and therefore will require the taking of parkland approximating 1.17 acres of property within Pelham Bay Park. From the total of 1.17 acres to be discontinued as parkland, 0.64 acres currently accommodates an existing roadway, leaving the need to acquire an additional 0.53 acres for the new span's functionality as proposed in this ULURP application. This new span will allow for a navigational channel height of 14 feet, 10 inches.

During construction of the City Island Bridge a temporary span is required. The DOT will locate this temporary bridge on the south side of the existing, original bridge, which will be demolished once the temporary span is in place. The temporary bridge will be constructed over approximately 1.64 acres of mapped parkland. The easement necessary for this purpose will be valid for a maximum of three years.

The DOT and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) have also agreed that the DOT will transfer approximately 0.53 acres of property located within the Esplanade (located within the mapped portion of City Island Avenue) on City Island in return for the required taking of parkland within Pelham Bay Park. This action will therefore mandate that a portion of City Island Avenue be narrowed and/or eliminated. Improvements to this area to be made by the DOT include new benches, plantings and a new railing for the sea wall, all of which will conform to DPR standards.

In addition to constructing a new City Island Bridge, the DOT proposes to delineate a Bridge Easement of 0.704 acres over Eastchester Bay, where property below the median high water (MHW) is under the jurisdiction of the State of New York, Office of General Services (OGS). This office has approved the application for a grant of this permanent easement to New York City.

**\*\*This figure represents a safety rating scale commencing at 1(critically deficient) to 7 (excellent). A safety rating below 3 is considered poor. The City Island Bridge is 3.38 (low end of fair)**

The DOT and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) are also endeavoring to obtain both permanent and temporary easements made necessary to construct City Island Road, over Eastchester Bay (via the new City Island Bridge). At the same time, improvements will be made to the adjacent seawall. Properties include Block 5636, Lot 100, plus additional properties located underwater in Eastchester Bay. There is no Block and Lot identification for underwater properties. In total, four easements are being sought, (A-D) highlights include:

- **Easement A:** A permanent easement allowing for the replacement of an existing bridge over property owned by the State of New York underwater within Eastchester Bay. The amount of property included in this easement is 30,699 square feet.
- **Easement B:** A temporary easement allowing for construction of a temporary bridge over property owned by the State of New York underwater within Eastchester Bay. The amount of property included in this easement is 14,727 square feet. This easement will expire in three years, during 2017.
- **Easement C:** A temporary easement allowing for construction of a temporary bridge over property owned by the State of New York underwater within Eastchester Bay. The purpose of this easement is the same as Easement B however the amount of property included in this easement is 10,542 square feet. This easement will expire in three years, during 2017.
- **Easement D:** A temporary easement in private property to allow for the rehabilitation of a seawall adjacent to City Island south of the bridge construction site. This seawall supports the Esplanade Park and consists of approximately 500 feet in length. Somewhat unique to this project is that the seawall and esplanade are within the DOT's right-of-way, however property located underwater that abuts the seawall is privately owned.

Existing development in the vicinity of the new City Island Bridge location includes Pelham Bay Park, located on the Bronx mainland. Development on City Island is typified by low-rise one family homes, a majority of which are wood frame structures constructed over 50 years ago, on modest sized landscape properties. Restaurants and shops specializing in seafood and nautical merchandise typify the non-residential development, a majority of which is found on City Island Avenue. Marinas located on the shore of Eastchester Bay are also prevalent. The entire City Island is located within the Special City Island District, which among other restrictions, does not permit any structure located on City Island to exceed a height of 35 feet. The prevailing zones on City Island include R3, C3 and C2-2. Bus service operates on City Island Avenue. There is no

access to any form of rail transport located within a three mile radius of City Island. It is estimated that the residential population on City Island approximates 4,500 persons.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION**

These applications were reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQRA and received a Negative Declaration, meaning that the proposed project poses no threat to the environment. The City Planning Commission certified these applications as complete on January 21, 2014.

## **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Bronx Community Board #10 and Bronx Community Board #12 convened a joint public hearing on these applications on February 25, 2014.

Bronx Community Board #10 voted on March 20, 2014, recommending denial of these applications. This vote was zero in favor of approving these applications, 33 voting to deny these applications and one abstaining.

Bronx Community Board #12 voted February 27, 2014. A unanimous vote recommending denial of these applications was zero in favor of approving these applications, 25 voting to deny these applications, and zero abstaining.

## **BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING**

A public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President on April 3, 2014. The applicant was represented by the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, City of New York who spoke in favor of these applications. There were four members of the public in attendance, all of whom spoke against approving these applications. The District Manager of Bronx Community Board #10 read a statement recommending that these applications be denied. No other members of the public were present and no other comments were made and the hearing was closed.

## **BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION**

The linking of City Island to the Bronx mainland is an absolute. There can be no risk of failure and at no time can this linkage be in any way severed. Beyond the economic hardship any loss of this linkage might prompt, if a break between City Island and our mainland were to happen the lives of everyone on City Island would be in jeopardy. Consequently, I am adamant in suggesting that we must do what is necessary to make certain the safe and secure passage over Eastchester Bay is always viable and available.

The ULURP applications I am considering pertain to the transfer of city-owned property between the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Department of Transportation (DOT), the granting of easements to facilitate construction of a temporary bridge, the development of the newly acquired property by the DPR for an esplanade, and the rehabilitation of a seawall.

Beyond these matters, however, is the impact the proposed bridge will have on the City Island Community and my belief that the objections of those on the Island are well founded and are entirely appropriate. Indeed, we acknowledge the low-profile scale and the history of development that exists on City Island. Consequently we have enacted a special zoning district that forbids any structure on the Island to exceed 35 feet in height. Given that the proposed cable stayed City Island bridge will rise nearly 165 feet, I believe those on the Island are entirely correct when they object to this proposed new span. I, therefore believe it is imperative that the DOT modify the bridge. To do otherwise will severely impact the historical character of City Island.

I am extremely grateful that the newly appointed Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation, Polly Trottenberg, attended my public hearing to assure my office and the community affected that the DOT is considering the feasibility of an alternative design for a new City Island Bridge. Clearly, I welcome this change of perspective, given the significant opposition so many local interests have expressed regarding the proposed cable-stayed bridge design.

Without question I believe this entire matter could have been better addressed by the previous administration. The ushering in of a new administration, however, provides an opportunity to address the current bridge design. I am committed in pursuing an alternative vision for the City Island Bridge, which has for so long been sought by the City Island community.

I concur with Community Boards #10 and #12 and recommend that these applications be denied.