

MAYOR ADAMS KICKS OFF LANDMARK STUDY TO REIMAGINE CROSS-BRONX EXPRESSWAY

Currently a Major Source of Noise and Air Pollution, Cross-Bronx Was Built to Divide Largely Black and Latino Working-Class Neighborhoods

With \$2 Million Federal Grant, Community-Driven Plan Will Study Decking Highway and Identify Strategies to Reconnect Communities, Address Inequitable Health Outcomes, Expand Open Space, and Increase Safety

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams today kicked off a landmark community-driven study to reimagine the Cross-Bronx Expressway, including examining the feasibility of decking sections of the highway. Constructed largely in the 1950s and 1960s, the Cross-Bronx divides the borough, cutting directly through largely Black and Latino working-class neighborhoods — devastating the local communities and economies while bringing significant noise and air pollution that, in turn, has brought elevated asthma rates and other inequitable health outcomes to local residents.

Funded by a \$2 million U.S. Department of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant submitted by the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the community-driven effort will aim to redress negative impacts of the highway on surrounding communities while promoting residents' health and well-being.

“The Cross-Bronx Expressway was a scar carved through the heart of the Bronx, turning bustling streets into ghost towns,” said **Mayor Adams**. “But 50 years later, we see the resilience of this great borough, and we have an opportunity to make the Bronx whole again. This historic study will allow us to reimagine the entire Cross-Bronx corridor and the communities around it, and we will look at every possible way to reduce pollution and noise, improve safety and sustainability, and reconnect the communities of this borough. Thank you to our city, state, and federal partners for helping us secure this important grant, and we look forward to bringing everyone to the table together with the community to chart a new course for the Bronx.”

“Since my first State of the State address, I have made it clear that reconnecting communities divided by infrastructure decisions made generations ago has been a top priority,” said **New York Governor Kathy Hochul**. “I am proud to partner with the mayor on this grant, which will support vital community engagement programming and listening sessions to help reimagine the future of the

Cross-Bronx Expressway, an essential component of righting the wrongs made when the Expressway was constructed more than seventy years ago.”

*A map of air pollution-driven asthma emergency department visits for children under age 18. Credit:
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*

Images from before and after construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway at Fulton Avenue and East 175th Street. Credit: Segregation by Design

“With critical support from the Biden administration — and U.S. Transportation Secretary Buttigieg and Deputy Secretary Trottenberg — we are proud to put federal infrastructure dollars to work on this critical project,” said **Deputy Mayor for Operations Meera Joshi**. “Reconnecting communities torn apart by discriminatory highways and improving air quality for the surrounding community are at the foundation of worthy infrastructure progress.”

Formally signed last week by participating agencies, the grant to fund the “Reimagining the Cross-Bronx Expressway” study marks an unprecedented partnership across all levels of government to help undo the damage to Bronx neighborhoods. The study will identify strategies to deck sections of the expressway and create new public open space with pedestrian and bike connections, reconnect communities north and south of the current highway, reduce vehicle emissions and address inequitable public health outcomes across the adjacent communities, improve safety on local streets and along the corridor with a focus on ramps on and off the highway, and more sustainably manage freight and other vehicle traffic.

With the two-year RAISE grant, the city and the state will:

- Work closely with residents, community groups, and stakeholders to create a common understanding about community needs, with the first round of community meetings planned to begin in February 2023;
- Create a holistic vision for the Cross-Bronx corridor and develop project ideas based on community input; and
- Present a multiyear plan, by 2024, that includes both near- and long-term project proposals to improve neighborhood conditions around the Cross-Bronx.

A vestige of the Robert Moses era, the Cross-Bronx bulldozed through the borough, destroying the homes of approximately 40,000 residents. With an average of 300 diesel trucks using the roadway every hour and tens of thousands of cars per day traveling in each direction, the 220,000 New Yorkers who live near the highway are regularly exposed to elevated levels of noise and air pollution as well as excessive heat. Communities near the highway experience elevated rates of respiratory disease, including asthma, and other chronic disease. Rates of diabetes and hypertension exceed citywide rates by up to 100 percent and 50 percent, respectively, and there are approximately 100 emergency department visits for asthma and about 25 premature deaths due to traffic-related fine particulates (PM2.5) each year.

The Cross-Bronx has also become notorious among American interstates, with some of the highest crash and fatality rates. Between 2014 and 2018, an average of 159 injuries occurred each year on streets adjacent to the expressway.

“I thank all of our partners in government for coming together to advance this critical project, which addresses so many of the issues of equity that Mayor Adams has identified as the highest priority,” said **NYCDOT Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez**. “Special thanks go to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg, who have made fixing terrible 20th-century urban highways across the country — and all of their attendant problems — such a real priority. I am confident we can fix the Cross-Bronx and make this a real legacy of our time as public leaders.”

“Building the Cross-Bronx Expressway, and dividing connected communities, has had a truly harmful effect on the people of this borough,” said **DCP Director and City Planning Commission Chair Dan Garodnick**. “It’s time for us to step up and find ways to correct the ills of the past and create a healthier, cleaner, and safer environment for all residents of the Bronx.”

“This landmark study will evaluate the needs of the long-underserved communities situated alongside the Cross-Bronx Expressway corridor and help us create more equitable living conditions by identifying actionable ways we can increase safety, improve access to open space, and combat noise, air, and traffic pollution,” said **Chief Climate Officer and New York City Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Rohit T. Aggarwala**. “The RAISE grant came out of a productive partnership between city, state, and federal partners, and successful collaboration such as this is essential to accomplishing the generational work of environmental justice.”

“For decades, residents of the Cross-Bronx corridor have disproportionately borne the brunt of roadway bifurcation, suffering high rates of heart and lung disease due to vehicle pollution,” said **Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice Executive Director Kizzy Charles-Guzmán**. “We must change that. Senator Schumer and Representative Torres have taken bold action

to advance environmental health and equity while ensuring that community stakeholders are a central part of the process.”

“Good health is, in part, a function of the environments in which we live,” said **DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan**. “And infrastructure and transportation shape these environments in ways that can serve to promote health for all or to divide us and reinforce health and social inequities. Reimagining this stretch of the Cross-Bronx Expressway offers a chance to undo disparities created decades ago with its construction and to advance the health of our city and the great borough of the Bronx.”

“For too long, the people of the Bronx have borne the brunt of the consequences of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, which literally split neighborhoods in half and left a legacy of pollution and high asthma rates,” said **U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer**. “That’s why I’m proud to announce a \$2 million federal RAISE grant to fund the community-based study to determine the best solutions and redesign the Cross-Bronx sustainably and equitably, including decking, which would reduce pollution and add open space. I personally advocated with my partner Rep. Ritchie Torres to Secretary Buttigieg to deliver this federal grant, and in the Bipartisan Infrastructure and Jobs Law, we secured \$1 billion in a ‘Reconnecting Communities Fund,’ as well as \$3.2 billion for the ‘Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program’ in the Inflation Reduction Act, which can be used in the future construction phases of the project under the leadership of Mayor Adams.”

“The Cross-Bronx Expressway cut through working-class neighborhoods, isolated communities, closed local businesses, and increased traffic levels in our poorest communities, exposing Bronx residents to noise, pollution, and poor health outcomes,” said **U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**. “I fought for funding for the RAISE grant, which will take us further toward transforming the Bronx, while redressing the many injustices of the Cross-Bronx’s construction. The project will ultimately create good-paying jobs in the Bronx and exemplifies the great work that can be accomplished when federal, city, and state agencies work with environmental justice and community advocates to address the issues that impact our community.”

“I am delighted to help bring \$2 million in U.S. Department of Transportation funding to New York City to help reimagine the Cross-Bronx Expressway and bring this project closer to the finish line,” said **U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat**. “I commend Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez for their commitment to prioritizing lower-income communities that lack access to affordable transportation and job opportunities for new routeways, and for the ongoing efforts to keep this project at the forefront of our discussions. This grant funding is a win for the Bronx community and the families who call New York City home.”

“My office is proud to be an early supporter of the initiative to address the injustices of the Cross-Bronx Expressway,” said **U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**. “We look forward to a study that incorporates the perspectives of grassroots community and street safety advocates — and that improves health outcomes for the Bronx.”

“The Cross-Bronx Expressway is literally and metaphorically a structure of racism from which me and so many others in the Bronx live with the consequences of,” said **U.S. Representative Ritchie Torres**. “Reimagining infrastructure like the Cross-Bronx sends a message that the federal government is stepping up for communities like mine. This RAISE grant will help to finally bring this project to life and make a lasting impact on the Bronx for decades. Thanks to the partners across all levels of government for investing in this critical project, and I look forward to their continued support as we see this to the finish line.”

“For far too long, the Bronx has suffered under harsh environmental policies that have resulted in our residents experiencing some of the worst health outcomes across the country,” said **Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson**. “The Cross-Bronx Expressway divided communities to make way for a roadway that has contributed to poor health outcomes for many of our residents and families in adjacent neighborhoods as well as a surge in noise and air pollution in our borough. For these reasons and more, I am excited by today’s announcement to undo the wrongs of the past by getting community input on how we reimagine the Cross-Bronx Expressway with an emphasis on equity and restorative justice. I want to thank Mayor Adams and all of the other city and state elected leaders, agencies, and advocates who have pushed to see this day happen, and I look forward to seeing the results of this very important study.”

“The Cross-Bronx Expressway has contributed to air pollution, noise pollution, and poor health outcomes in the Bronx since its creation,” said **New York State Senator Jose Serrano**. “The ‘Reimagining the Cross-Bronx Expressway’ study will give local communities the ability to help identify more sustainable ways to travel, improve access to green spaces, and better manage freight traffic.”

“The Cross-Bronx Expressway has fueled decades of environmental racism and pollution, displaced entire communities and neighborhoods, and exacerbated health disparities impacting Bronx residents,” said **New York State Senator Jamaal Bailey**. “For too long, the Bronx has borne the brunt of the harm caused by the expressway — surrounding communities face disproportionately higher rates of pollution, asthma, chronic illness, and overall worse health outcomes. This initiative represents a historic opportunity to reimagine the Cross-Bronx corridor for future generations, create new public spaces, and ensure community needs are centered in advancing a vision for the future of our borough.”

“We are slowly seeing significant infrastructure changes in the Bronx. The administration of Mayor Eric Adams is taking the necessary steps to modernize our infrastructure and access routes,” said **New York State Senator Luis Sepúlveda**. “These changes propose improved mobility and, with it, economic development, and improved quality of life for our people. The study announced today proposes the integration of diverse groups into this discussion, including all sectors of our community. It is my hope that this study will propose improvements to our infrastructure in the Cross-Bronx as well as the construction of new facilities.”

“The Cross-Bronx Expressway has long divided our great borough of the Bronx, while simultaneously poisoning those who live near it from smog emitted by heavy traffic,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz**. “I am very excited to see this reimagination study begin and for the future of our borough. It is vital to ensure that this landmark project be built on consensus-driven community outreach, and I am pleased to see that this is what the RAISE study is seeking to do.”

“For generations, racial segregation, redlining, and the intentional placement of pollution-emitting infrastructure in Black and Brown communities has led to long-lasting health problems and the lowering of our children’s academic performance in the Bronx,” said **New York State Assemblymember Latoya Joyner**. “It has left children in my community suffering with some of the highest asthma rates in New York and a lifelong legacy of damaged lungs and shortened life expectancies. By engaging the community in reimagining the Cross-Bronx Expressway, the study announced today is an important step forward in improving health outcomes for countless families in Mount Eden and throughout the Bronx. I thank Mayor Adams for his commitment to engaging my constituents in this important public health issue.”

“The Bronx currently has one of the highest asthma rates in the country and consistently ranks as the unhealthiest county in all of New York State — 62 out of 62 counties,” said **New York State Assemblymember Kenny Burgos**. “Air pollution from trucks traveling on the Cross-Bronx Expressway has been the main cause of health issues throughout the borough. A study of the Cross-Bronx is a great step towards finding a solution that will protect the health and well-being of Bronxites. I thank Mayor Adams and all parties involved for taking this necessary initiative.”

“The Bronx has dealt with numerous negative impacts due to the development of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, from issues of displacement to high rates of asthma,” said **New York State Assemblymember Chantel Jackson**. “It’s time we focused on righting the wrongs done to Bronxites, and this study is the beginning. I’m glad to know Mayor Adams has included the community in the reimagining of the Cross-Bronx. I look forward to a borough that is environmentally safe and useful for all members of the community.”

“The mayor’s inspiring plan organizes the community to reimagine the Cross-Bronx Expressway corridor and resolve longstanding inequalities,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar**. “By engaging every stakeholder, we will re-envision the corridor as one that respects the needs of people living along it, ensuring no one is displaced or exposed to pollution. We can create a Cross-Bronx Expressway that both uplifts marginalized communities and provides rapid transit for the 200,000 vehicles it serves each day, with fewer accidents and low emissions. Reimagining the Cross-Bronx Expressway follows Mayor Adams’ plan to add four Metro-North Stations in the borough. I am proud to partner with the mayor on both initiatives to lift up the Bronx and make sure no corner of our city is forgotten.”

“I applaud the U.S. Department of Transportation for awarding our city with a \$2 million grant to reverse the historic impacts of environmental racism and injustice at the hands of Robert Moses and developers,” said **New York State Assemblymember Karines Reyes**. “I am hopeful that the next two years will bring community engagement and involvement to the forefront, ensuring that Bronxites can reclaim sorely needed public land and space. This is crucial to creating a more equitable and fair society for all, no matter your specific zip code or economic status.”

“This is an incredibly exciting and long-awaited day for Council District 18 and the Bronx as a whole,” said **New York City Councilmember Amanda Farías**. “For decades, residents, including myself, have been fighting for elected leaders to acknowledge and act on the negative impact the Cross-Bronx has on the health of Bronxites. The Bronx has suffered the consequences of Robert Moses-era infrastructure for decades. It is past time we move forward and heal our communities, whose health and wellness have been most affected by air pollution and dangerous road conditions. Thank you, Mayor Adams, for your attention and leadership on this issue. I look forward to working with the mayor, his administration, and my community on this critical reimagining project.”

“Since its completion, the Cross-Bronx Expressway has saddled the communities it ripped apart with overwhelming amounts of noise, traffic, and, worse, harmful health effects caused by vehicular emissions,” said **New York City Councilmember Rafael Salamanca**. “As a lifelong Bronxite, I myself suffer from asthma as a result of Robert Moses’ stained legacy. With the announcement of the RAISE community study, we are creating the framework for a fairer, more just future through a reimagined Cross-Bronx. I thank the Adams administration and city, state, and federal partners for their collective efforts in building a healthier Bronx.”

“The legacy of Robert Moses is one that has left our communities in the Bronx with heavy traffic, noise, and pollution,” said **New York City Councilmember Marjorie Velázquez**. “His ill-conceived traffic mitigation has negatively impacted the quality of life in my community for

generations. It is my hope that with the RAISE investment, we are able to expose the socioeconomic and racial injustice we have incurred. I look forward to the community being an active part of this study and contributing to the desperately needed changes in their communities to fit their needs.”

“The Cross-Bronx Expressway is one of the country’s most congested roads, bringing thousands of cars and trucks to the Bronx every day,” said **New York City Councilmember Oswald Feliz**. “It has inundated our neighborhoods with air pollution and has created a well-documented and deleterious asthma crisis. Everyone, including low-income Bronx residents, deserves access to clean and safe air, and I’m thankful that steps are finally being taken to reimagine the expressway.”

“The Cross Bronx Expressway tore through diverse, racially integrated, working-class Bronx communities in its creation, serving as an awful model the Federal government would pursue time and again, bulldozing and destroying the fabric of city communities across the country to create urban highways that facilitated white flight and urban disinvestment,” said **New York City Councilmember Pierina Sanchez**. “Today, our borough is burdened with loud noise, alarming levels of pollution, poor health with some of the highest rates of asthma in the country, and painful economic outcomes. Beginning planning that could result in decking over the Cross Bronx to connect communities with affordable housing, parks and overdue neighborhood infrastructure serves as a roadmap for how government can address the harms of the past while putting racial, economic and climate justice first. I commend our city, state, and federal partners for securing this grant and look forward to engaging deeply in this planning process.”

“As we await the decision on the implementation of New York’s historic congestion pricing policy, there could be no better news than the launch of redressing generations of harm caused by the Cross-Bronx Expressway,” said **Renae Reynolds, executive director, Tri-State Transportation Campaign**. “We look forward to a process that places the voices, health, and needs of the local communities first and foremost. They have waited far too long for this wound on their community to be healed. We look forward also to strong collaboration across federal, state, and city entities in the study, to then enact identified solutions swiftly. This is one of the most important and needed infrastructure justice projects of our region.”

“When it was built over 50 years ago, the Cross-Bronx Expressway tore apart countless neighborhoods — the beating heart of New York City — and the 6.5-mile structure was developed without community consultation nor a single mile’s worth of concern for the city’s most vulnerable residents,” said **Julie Tighe, president, New York League of Conservation Voters**. “Now, thanks to this \$2 million federal RAISE grant and a comprehensive new study — with community perspective — we have the chance to envision a new way forward for the South Bronx. From funding to implementation, the ‘Reimagining the Cross-Bronx Expressway’ study is an inspired example of cross-government coordination, and we’re grateful for the leadership of Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Schumer, Congressman Torres, and Mayor Adams for making it happen.”

“It is not often that we have an opportunity to reverse decades of structural and infrastructural racism that holds back our communities, neighborhoods, and local economies,” said **Michael Brady, senior vice president of economic development and policy, Bronx Chamber of Commerce**. “Today’s announcement to launch a landmark study to reimagine the Cross-Bronx Expressway will create a community-driven plan and identify strategies for transportation connectivity and sustainability, expand open space, and improve regional commerce. This \$2 million investment by the United States Department of Transportation will provide the vehicle for change that has been demanded by our communities for decades. We are grateful for this down payment on plans to revitalize and reconnect our communities and neighborhoods in the Bronx and position our borough for future economic

growth and innovation. We extend our sincere thanks to our congressional leaders and federal partners in the United States Department of Transportation.”

"It's long past time to reconnect Bronx communities divided by infrastructure that promotes driving, congests neighborhoods, and pollutes our air," said **Kelechi Iwuagwu, member, Riders Alliance, and Bronx bus rider.** "Bronx riders deserve frequent, reliable, affordable, and accessible public transit to secure access to work, education, healthcare and all New York has to offer. It's good to see our leaders working together to minimize the impact that the Cross Bronx Expressway has on its neighbors."

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