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Critics say de Blasio's proposed streetcar will do more to boost real estate values than improve transit

Amid the praise, some say the city should catch up on maintenance before expanding transit

[Rosa Goldensohn](#)



Friends of Brooklyn Queens Connector

A rendering of the proposed Brooklyn-Queens streetcar in downtown Brooklyn.

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The mayor rolled out his sexy [new streetcar proposal](#) complete with a glamorous rendering of the sleek silver trolley and a broad coalition including real estate developers, civic groups and transportation advocates behind it.

"This is the right solution at the right time at the right place," CUNY professor and civil engineering expert Robert Paaswell said of the plan, adding that it helps the city keep pace, transit-wise, with European capitals.

But some have not been seduced, saying the \$2.5 billion project does not deal with the city's systemic transportation problems.

"This is all about improving real estate prices," Columbia University transportation expert David King said. "It's not about improving the network."

Both King and Tom Angotti, a CUNY professor and planner, said the city should be investing in busways.

"You could take the same amount of money and improve the bus system and that would go a lot further to improving commuting times," Angotti said.

The streetcar will be paid for with tax-increment financing, according to a mayoral spokesman. As property values rise because of the streetcar plan, the balance of increased tax revenue from large residential and commercial buildings will fund it.

That means that \$2.5 billion would not exist without the streetcar, defenders of the plan say.

The city studied increasing bus service in the area as an alternative, but found that it would cost \$1 billion without generating the property-tax increases necessary to pay for it.

The upped real estate values on which the plan depends could push the waterfront's remaining industry out in favor of higher-paying residential projects, Angotti said.

The streetcar plan to connect the Brooklyn and Queens waterfronts was developed by city engineering guru Harris Schechtman, who ran the city bus system for two decades, and former city traffic commissioner Sam Schwartz.

Real estate developer Jed Valentas, whose Two Trees owns the [Domino Sugar site](#) near the potential route, was among that study's funders, the [New York Times](#) reported.

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