INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY, INC.

March 1, 2007

Statement at New York City Council Transportation Committee Hearing on Achieving Mobility Goals of NYC2030 Sustainability Plan

My name is George Haikalis and I am President of the Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM). For many years IRUM has been advancing its Livable City Transport Plan – a comprehensive package of fifteen strategies that would greatly enhance New York City’s transit system, while reducing congestion and improving the walking environment. This plan could serve as a model for achieving the mobility goals of the city’s Sustainability Plan. A copy is attached. Today I would like to highlight just a few of the strategies contained in the plan.

1. Light Rail

IRUM has long-hosted – vision42 – a plan for a river-to-river light rail line operating in a pedestrian-only 42nd Street. This project could be placed in service before the Mayor completes his second term. It could serve as a pilot project -- leading to a grid of auto-free light boulevards in Manhattan. A map of one possible network is attached. While there are many opportunities for bus rapid transit throughout the city, light rail in very dense locations provides the most appealing and efficient way to make this city more sustainable. IRUM very much appreciates the invitation extended by Councilmember Liu to its vision42 Advisory Committee to participate in an Earth Week presentation in the Red Room in City Hall on Thursday, April 19, 2007 at 8.30am.

2. Regional Rail

Refashioning the three commuter rail lines that serve New York City into a Regional Rail system – with frequent service, integrated fares and thru-running -- can provide an order of magnitude gain in mobility in the next few years. With thru service at Penn Station, capacity would increase by 25 to 50%. By running many more trains, and allowing city residents to use their city MetroCards without payment of extra fares, these priceless, but underperforming rail assets become much more useful. Instead of building costly, passenger-unfriendly high risk Deep Cavern stations some 150 feet below the street, under Grand Central Terminal or Penn Station, a link between the two stations, and connections using existing platforms and tracks would produce a world-class Regional Rail system at one-third the cost of the current agency proposals. Council members and the public are invited to see this Regional Rail plan now on display in the lobby of the Conde Nast building at 42nd Street and Broadway thru Friday, March 9, 2007.

3. Carrot-and-stick pricing

In a city long associated with the hustle and bustle of trading on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, all of us know that price matters! Well it is also true in allocating scarce transportation capacity. That’s why, in introducing a plan for cordon tolls around the Manhattan Central Business District, it is important to consider reducing or eliminating entirely the fares charged for transit service. Thanks to a generous grant recently announced by Theodore Kheel, IRUM will be exploring this combination of carrot-and-stick pricing over the next few months. IRUM greatly appreciates the cooperation extended by transport agencies to provide data for this study.