Statement on the September 17 BMTDC Meeting

John Leyva | September 18, 2026

The September 17, 2026 meeting of the Brooklyn Marine Terminal Development Corporation (BMTDC) revealed that a major investment promised for this waterfront could leave Brooklyn: the port's cold-storage facility. EDC is now considering building it at Hunts Point instead. That changes everything. **Removing cold storage from Brooklyn changes what this port can do, the businesses it can attract, the jobs it can sustain, and its ability to grow and thrive.** A commitment this consequential cannot be treated as an interchangeable detail. The community deserves an explanation and a say before any decision is made.

Are they setting this port up to fail?

The cold storage facility was a central part of this plan. If officials take away a function they said would help BMT thrive, how can we trust that they are providing what the working port needs to succeed?

Cold storage was promised here from the beginning

The original May 14, 2024 announcement committed $15 million in state funding to cold storage at BMT. Officials made the case themselves:

- **New York Governor Kathy Hochul** promised "a future cold storage facility on this site" and described its absence as a longstanding barrier contributing to unnecessary traffic and pollution. (Watch from 15:35; quotation at 15:53.)
- **U.S. Representative Dan Goldman** said that with cold storage, "this port will be allowed and will thrive." He explained that food arriving here was sent through New Jersey warehouses and trucked back, undermining the benefit of moving goods by water. (Watch from 29:16; quotation at 29:56.)
- **Andrew Kimball**, then president and CEO of EDC, described goods being "stored here and then barged up" to places such as Hunts Point. Storage at BMT and a connection to Hunts Point were both part of the system he presented. (Watch from 44:38; quotation at 45:09.)

The city's full press-conference transcript preserves that explanation: Hunts Point was already part of the argument for investing in cold storage here.

The original $15 million was the state's announced contribution; I believed then that the state should contribute more. The final Vision Plan later listed $65 million in state support, subject to project approvals, including that $15 million. Cold storage remained central to the package the original task force voted to support.

What the EDC said, and what Brooklyn could lose

At the September 17 meeting, EDC said it would work with the future BMT operator and the Hunts Point operator to determine which location made more sense, then seek to transfer the funding through the governor's office if Hunts Point was preferred. No final relocation decision was announced, but the commitment to build it here is now in question.

Hunts Point already has extensive refrigerated facilities: 835,000 square feet at its Meat Market alone, according to EDC. It also houses the Produce Market and Fulton Fish Market, and a planned Produce Market redevelopment would expand refrigerated warehouse space. Redirecting Brooklyn's investment would add to that existing hub while taking our promised facility away. The city should strengthen both ends of the network it promised us.

For neighbors unfamiliar with ports, think about fish, fruit, and vegetables. BMT already handles fresh and frozen food. A cold-storage facility adds room to hold perishable goods and can attract food importers and distributors, supporting work storing, sorting, packing, and preparing orders for delivery. It could also help keep food available during emergencies when deliveries are disrupted.

Moving the facility would move those opportunities for local workers and businesses elsewhere, limiting the services BMT could offer and the customers and revenue it could attract. EDC presented BMT as a critical hub in the Blue Highways network, connecting the Harbor of the Future. The Vision Plan specifically ties cold storage to supporting both the port and Blue Highways. If EDC removes that capability, how will BMT fulfill the role we were promised—and deliver the promised reductions in truck traffic and pollution?

This is a matter of trust.

What I see is a slow chipping away at commitments to this community and the original task force. A passing mention cannot replace a full explanation or be treated as community acceptance. This is exactly why so many residents distrust the EDC.

My concern is that the EDC's real-estate priorities are overshadowing what this working port needs to succeed. This is why I have long called for a dedicated maritime agency or department, with experienced maritime leadership and a clear responsibility to strengthen our ports, waterborne freight, and maritime jobs. Maritime voices need to help lead these decisions.

State Senator Andrew Gounardes pressed EDC to acknowledge the original cold-storage commitment to BMT; staff confirmed it. Jim Tampakis, CEO of Marine Spares International and a BMTDC board member with decades of maritime experience, asked why cold storage here could not support distribution directly through the city's waterfront network. I have criticized Gounardes on this project, but he and Tampakis deserve credit for pressing these questions. The community should not have to depend on that scrutiny to learn about a change this consequential.

Before any decision, EDC, the state, and the BMTDC board must explain:

- Where the proposal originated—Moffatt & Nichol, another consultant, port businesses, or the agencies—and what analysis supported BMT then and a different location now.
- What the change would mean for the port's services, jobs, business opportunities, revenue, and financial viability; how the promised traffic and pollution benefits would be delivered; and what would replace the investment here.
- Who has authority to change the location and transfer the funding—EDC, the state, the board, or the future operator—and where the community gets a say.

The public should also see the financially viable larger-port alternative the Vision Plan commits to examining. EDC, the board, and our elected officials should state whether they support keeping the facility and funding at BMT. The board must require public discussion, supporting analysis, and written answers before any decision to move it.

Other concerns

We need a straight answer about Dutch X.

Before this meeting, I heard from a reliable source that Dutch X had already left BMT because of electrical problems. I believe that account. Yet EDC discussed its Green Logistics Training Academy launching later this year, acknowledged electrical problems at the Pier 11 shed, and promised more information without explaining whether the existing operation had left or would return.

EDC's Executive Committee records document authorization of up to $261,000 for the academy, identifying Red Hook as its location and the community expected to benefit most. The program targeted up to 120 participants, with successful graduates expected to find employment with Dutch X or its subsidiaries. Hank Gutman, former New York City transportation commissioner and chair of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, pointed out that local hiring can be required by contract.

Is Dutch X operating at BMT today? If it has left, is it coming back? Where will the training take place, and have the electrical problems been fixed? What local-hiring requirements are in place, which residents will benefit, and what jobs will this public funding deliver?

The traffic will still be here

The transportation consultant explained that new development traffic would fill space on local streets, making them less attractive to drivers bypassing the BQE. Some bypass traffic would shift to Van Brunt; some would stay on the highway. But replacing through-traffic with new traffic still leaves residents facing congestion when we need to cross the street, receive deliveries, and get emergency vehicles through.

James DeFilippis, a professor at Rutgers University's Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and a BMTDC board member, questioned the estimate that 84 percent of trips to and from the site would be made without an automobile: "we haven't seen the work. We just have the reported estimate." He also questioned bypass routing and the effects around Congress Street and Van Voorhees Park. Staff offered routing clarifications, but residents still need the underlying analysis to judge whether this will work.

The Atlantic Avenue BQE ramp remains unresolved.

DOT said interchange changes are outside its current BQE proposal because of the federal review they would trigger. EDC said studying the ramp's closure is outside BMT's current scope, too. Two major projects meet here, and neither has taken responsibility for studying the closure residents are asking about.

Gounardes said members had voted in good faith expecting the earlier process to address these concerns. Gutman said transportation problems raised during the original task force

process remained unsolved and questioned whether proposed restrictions could work without meaningful truck enforcement. With years of BQE construction ahead, residents need to see how these projects will work together.

Transportation

The presentation focused on the B61 corridor and ferries, but the Vision Plan also promises up to $50 million for a shuttle to subway stations, starting before development; a study of restored B71 service; and work with the MTA on a direct Red Hook–Lower Manhattan bus through the tunnel. These commitments need dates, funding, and someone responsible for delivery. Columbia Street Waterfront District and Red Hook residents need useful transit, especially when the project assumes so many people will travel without cars.

Show us where the money is going

Gutman described earlier cost discussions as "loosey-goosey and fluid" and called for updated figures. I appreciated him putting that on the record.

EDC said some cruise-terminal investments sit outside the larger BMT financial model, while Pier 10 repairs are included. The estimated $75 million Pier 10 project would use state grant money and part of the federal MEGA grant. The Vision Plan also identifies that federal funding and the city's match as support for the new marginal pier. How much is going to each project, how much remains for the new pier, and what still needs funding?

EDC also reported unsuccessful first-round NYSERDA grant applications and plans to reapply. What work depends on those awards, and what happens if they do not come through? The crane's arrival and repair work are welcome, but residents need to see the full picture: money available, money being sought, and money expected from future development.

Flood protection and accountability

The public needs clear answers about what the flood-protection work protects, when it will be built, how it connects with the rest of Red Hook, and how the working port will recover after a major storm.

The Vision Plan already requires the city and state to explain how subsequent plans and the final environmental-review scope match what was approved, including changes. That explanation should be available to the whole community in plain language.

We want this port to succeed. I urge our neighbors to raise these questions with their representatives and insist on clear commitments, named responsibility, and delivery dates. This community has invested enormous time in this process. Our support is for a thriving working port, not the Vision Plan’s housing development. This is our waterfront. The promises made to this community must be kept.