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DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL: NYS DOT'S POLICY IN BRIARWOOD

"It seems no number of queries of the NYS Department of Transportation about the chaotic construction here in Briarwood can elicit a response," says Aida Vernon, President of the Briarwood Action Network (BAN). Vernon is referring to NYS DOT's lack of communication from the agency about the Kew Gardens Interchange Project (KGIP), named for the "Interchange" where the Van Wyck Expressway, the Jackie Robinson Parkway and the Grand Central Parkway intersect under Queens Boulevard. The project, aimed at improving traffic flow, has thrown Briarwood into upheaval since the fall of 2010. And, while completion of the overall project is targeted for 2016, it is unclear when the work in Briarwood will end.

On Wednesday, June 12th, Briarwood awoke to the latest round of confusion caused by the project due to sudden changes in traffic patterns on Queens Boulevard. "Subway entrances open and close, traffic patterns on Queens Boulevard change, buses are rerouted. All without any advance notice to the community," protests Vernon. After numerous meetings with NYS DOT and its partner agencies on the project, NYC DOT, NYC Transit, NYC Sanitation, Briarwood was promised a community liaison representative whose duties were to include keeping the neighborhood up-to-date on KGIP. "We can't even get DOT to put these changes on the project website the agency itself created," said Beth Brooks, BAN's Director of Communications.

At a meeting hosted by Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz in October 2012, and attended by BAN, NYS DOT, its partner agencies and even NYPD, a NYS DOT representative said the community liaison would be in place by the end of that year. Briarwood is still waiting.

"It's our neighborhood. But residents of Briarwood continue to be an afterthought to the partners and implementers of the KGIP," said Vernon. As the community waits in vain for NYS DOT and its partners to make good on their commitments, the construction chaos continues.

For further information: www.briarwoodactionnetwork.com

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