Testimony of Roland Lewis  
President & CEO, Waterfront Alliance  
Empire State Development Public Hearing  
Re: Modification to the Modified General Project Plan for the Brooklyn Bridge Park  
Civic and Land Use Improvement Project

**About Us:** The Waterfront Alliance is a bi-state coalition of over 850 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders committed to restoring and revitalizing the New York and New Jersey waterways. We envision a harbor and waterways alive with commerce and recreation: where sailboats, kayaks, and pleasure craft share the waterways with commuter ferries, barges, and container ships; where parks and neighborhoods are connected by affordable waterborne transit; where exciting waterfront destinations reflect the vitality and diversity of a great metropolis; where the waterfront is no longer walled off by highways and rails or by private luxury residences, but is a shared resource for all; and where our coastal city—a city of islands—intelligently and resolutely prepares for the reality of sea level rise.

**Brooklyn Bridge Park is a transformative, 21st century park that represents the best of our regional waterfront.** From free, volunteer-supported public paddling and sailing; to berthing space for New York’s historic vessels and those visiting from around the region; to ferry access for commutation and recreation; to a publicly accessible launch site for human-powered boating; to environmental education programs where youths can touch the water and learn about the habitats that share our waterways; and to a resilient shoreline that can help protect us from future storms, not to mention waterfront barbeque and picnic areas with the best view in the world: Brooklyn Bridge Park has set a standard for access, education, and resiliency from which future waterfront parks would be wise to learn. For that reason, the Park has been recognized by our Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines (WEDG) program, an incentive-based rating system that offers best practices in waterfront design.

The Waterfront Alliance supports Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation (BBP)’s proposed modification to the General Program Plan (GPP). An ongoing challenge that our organization has been working to address has been how we finance the maintenance of a 21st century waterfront, one that is accessible to all people and to a diverse range of vessels. Our 520 miles of coastline require extensive investments in maintenance and upkeep to keep piers, bulkheads and other infrastructure in place, and those costs and responsibilities are often borne by a multitude of City, State and federal agencies. And our island metropolis faces infrastructural challenges across the outer boroughs of New York City in particular with respect to access to the waterways for recreation and education.

**BBP has demonstrated that it has sound plans for both sides of this equation, receiving no public funds for maintenance or operations.** The Park supports the maintenance of waterfront infrastructure that can be allowed to fall into disrepair elsewhere, and provides a broad range of programs for people to access and interact with the water. Rather than “kicking the can”, the proposed modification will permit the park to increase its investment in the repair of maritime facilities now, avoiding costly repairs into the future. This model will free up capital dollars for waterfront maintenance and repair for parks around the City that do not have the same market-driven assets that BBP enjoys. The proposed modification to the GPP can be a win not only for this beautiful park, but also for waterfront parks in underserved sections of the City.