



BRONX Times

Music to soothe El rattle

By Ben Kochman

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You can bus-t a move at these Crotona bus stops.

The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) plans to install "listening stations" under the elevated subway line on Southern Boulevard.

Bronxites will be able to relax sitting at the first initial stop while speakers embedded into an overhanging canopy play old-school Bronx jams curated by the nearby Bronx Music Heritage Center.

Belmont's first station is set to come in on Freeman Street and Southern Boulevard as soon as this February, and if all goes well, organizers plan to install a few more installations along the boulevard.

Musical Throwback

Bronx's listening stations are designed with the idea in mind of honoring the borough's rich musical history. WHEDco netted a \$50,000 grant from the city's Department of Small Business Services as part of a citywide Neighborhood Challenge program that aims to help local economic development organizations enrich commercial strips.

"A lot of people don't know that Southern Boulevard is a street that has hosted a lot of musicians and clubs," said Kerry McLean, WHEDco's director of community development.

A musical bus stop was chosen as the final design in the hopes that it will blend into the way locals already use the space, she said.

"Bus and train lines are natural gathering places for people," she said. "We don't want it to be separate from how people already use the neighborhood."

Bettering the strip

The stations, designed by the Design Trust for Public Space, will also be outfitted with lights that aim to brighten an often dim stretch. Sunlight often struggles to penetrate through the elevated subway line and illuminate the street.

Straphangers will be able to read about the borough's musical history on plaques attached to the stations while they wait for the bus.

“We hope it will distract people a bit from the cold,” said Caroline Bauer, who is part of the Design Trust team that engineered the stations.

Preliminary designs also call for the installation of greenery on the strip as part of the project.

Citywide winners

The South Bronx winning proposal was one of six grant winners citywide. Other new urban design projects coming in include a new ice rink in Bedford-Styvesant, Brooklyn and a rebranding of 125th Street in Harlem into the “Uptown Grand Central,” complete with new lighting and installations.

The idea behind the grants is to spice up commercial strips and spruce up neighborhood pride.

“The winners of the Neighborhood Challenge have proposed innovative programs,” said Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert Steel at a press conference announcing the winners, “And I look forward to seeing the difference they will make along their commercial corridors, and as a model citywide.”