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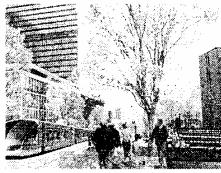
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MATTHEW DELORME/
INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY

A proposed light rail system would span 42nd Street.

Vision of 42nd St. With No Cars

It's an idea that at first blush seems almost more fantastic than congestion pricing: closing 42nd Street to vehicular traffic from river to river and creating a 2.5-mile street-level light rail line that would ferry passengers across the entire width of Midtown in a mere 21 minutes.

The idea — which has been batted about for at least 25 years — has drawn new force from a tiny nonprofit organization called the Institute for Rational Urban Mobility. Since 1999, when the institute unveiled Vision42, its proposal for the line, it has given 300 presentations, commissioned three rounds of technical studies and presented its ideas at two community forums.

In a new 49-page report, Roxanne Warren, an architect who is chairwoman of Vision42, and George Haikalis, a civil engineer who is the president of the Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, summarized the key findings from the studies. The light rail line would cost \$411.3 million to \$582.3 million in 2007 dollars, according to the report, generate \$704.9 million in annual economic benefits and yield \$175.4 million a year in additional fiscal benefits to the city and state. By speeding up crosstown travel time, the project would raise commercial property values by \$1 billion — a result of ground-floor business revenue, rent and occupancy increases and reduction in accidents — and increase business in retail shops and restaurants by 35 percent, the study estimates.

The study did not directly address the principal vulnerability of the proposal: It so far does not have support from the Bloomberg administration, although officials at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority have expressed interest.

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