

34th Street Transitway Community Advisory Committee Meeting #1 Summary

Tuesday, June 15, 2010, 6pm-8pm

Hotel Pennsylvania

330 Seventh Ave, New York, NY

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Arnie Bloch of Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates (HSH) opened the meeting by welcoming the CAC members and asked all attendees to introduce themselves and to ask one question they hoped to have answered about the Transitway project during the meeting. The following topics were brought up and later addressed:

- Accessible pedestrian signals
- Mid-block pedestrian crossings
- Impact on the bus industry
- Traffic flow on the far-east end of 34th St
- Hospital and medical office buildings
- Timeframe of project
- Project funding
- Emergency/fire/Access-a-ride access
- Residential curb access
- Fare validation
- Private bus operator restrictions
- Oil deliveries
- Truck routes
- Long distance/commuter buses
- NYPD

II. PRESENTATION

Eric Beaton, Project Manager of the Transitway at DOT, and Ted Orosz, the director of Long-Range Bus Planning for NYCT gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 34th Street Transitway. This presentation included background on 34th Street, what Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is, and what the next steps for the Transitway are. This presentation can be found online at

http://nyc.gov/html/brt/downloads/pdf/20100614_34th_transitway_cac.pdf

III. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Following the presentation, Arnie Block invited the CAC members to comment or ask questions about the project. These questions and comments were addressed by Eric Beaton of NYCDOT and Ted Orosz of NYCT. Participants were also encouraged to fill out comment sheets to provide their additional feedback. All questions asked by CAC members during the meeting are categorized and summarized below

(*Q=question, C=comment, A=answer*):

Design and Traffic Flow

Q: Will commuter/tour (bolt bus, etc) use the Transitway?

A: This is something to be considered in the design – the design will ensure that buses do not block each other loading and unloading.

Q: Why wasn't the Access to the Region's Core project connected to Penn station?

A: The ARC project design is more or less fixed, and the Transitway will work to accommodate pedestrian flow from that project. Bill Redl of STV, who has also worked on the ARC project, pointed out that the ARC tunnels needed to be very deep for engineering reasons, and so a connection to Penn Station was not possible.

Q: What will happen to drivers exiting Lincoln tunnel if 34th St is one way for general traffic?

A: The upcoming traffic analysis will show the effects on traffic exiting the tunnel

C: Tour buses are slow and stop frequently, and therefore are not good for the Transitway and should not be allowed to use it.

Q: There are several parking garages and lots on 34th St, will they be considered?

A: DOT will maintain access to all garages in the design

Q: Will opening 33rd St at Sixth Avenue be considered?

A: Yes, that will be considered in the traffic analysis.

Q: How committed is DOT to increasing pedestrian space?

A: Improving pedestrian space is a major priority for the project

C: It is good that curb access at one side of the entire street will be given, and the pedestrian safety improvements will be very positive.

C: There have been counts recorded of up to 8,000 pedestrian per hour on 34th St near 7th Ave. That number increases during the holiday season. Therefore, pedestrian improvements must be a big part of this Transitway project.

Traffic Analysis

Q: When will DOT provide the list of items studied in the scope for the EIS?

A: The FTA has not identified the level of environmental review required for this project, so it may not exactly be an "EIS." However, we are committed to doing an in depth traffic analysis for this project, and are accepting suggestions for things to study.

Q: When will traffic analysis be ready to view and analyzed?

A: We will meet with the CAC to review this in late 2010/early 2011

Curb Regulations and Parking

Q: Will additional space be given for NYPD parking? For example, on 33rd Street?

A: DOT will review parallel streets to determine appropriate parking regulations, which may include NYPD authorized parking, if appropriate.

Enforcement

Q: Where does enforcement come in?

A: The project is meant to have a more self-enforcing bus lane design. DOT is pushing for a bill in Albany for bus lane camera enforcement

Outreach and Implementation

Q: Where is the money coming for the current studies being done? If DOT doesn't get the grants it has applied for, how will the project be implemented?

A: Current planning work for the Transitway is being funded by the Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) grant from the federal government. DOT has applied for additional federal grants for construction; if these grants are not approved, the project will apply for additional grants.

Q: How will outreach be done for the local community forums?

A: DOT will flier for the community forum meetings door to door to residents/store front businesses, and publicize through the DOT website and social media. We will also rely on CAC members to help encourage attendance.

C: We are committed to working with you to give input on the project design, if you are willing to actually listen to us and take our comments seriously.

C: Residents need to be incorporated into the language when talking about specific groups impacted by the project (along with transit riders, pedestrians, and business owners)

Transit

C: The bus is already quick and the MTA is cutting service on certain buses that use 34th St. Just putting in the fare collection system and low floor buses seems like it would improve the system enough.

A: Fare collection improvements will likely go in ahead of the Transitway, in 2011, and low floor buses are out on the streets now.

Q: Has ridership improved after the current lanes were painted?

A: Yes, ridership has increased, and NYCT will be adding service on the corridor.

Q: How do you pay and enter/exit?

A: There will likely be 3 fare machines at every stop, and boarding on/off all three doors on the bus. There are inspectors to check for proof of payment

C: DOT needs to consider truly "level" boarding for buses, not 13 inches (sidewalks are 5-10 inches)

Q: What are the other benefits of the Transitway other than for crosstown bus service?

A: Express/Commuter buses using 34th St will benefit. Traffic will become better organized, pedestrian space will be enhanced/improved, and curb access will be expanded for one side of 34th St.

Q: What will be the speed limit in the Transitway? If buses go too fast, it may be dangerous

A: We are not concerned that buses will be going so fast as to present a danger to pedestrians or traffic.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The CAC Meeting adjourned at 8pm.