

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT & SANITATION AND THE
TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEES
HELD FEBRUARY 7, 2008
AT THE BOARD OFFICE, 5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE**

Board Members of the Traffic & Transportation (T&T) Committee or the Environment & Sanitation (E&S) Committee present:

PRESENT

AFFILIATION

Saul Scheinbach	E&S Committee Chairman
Bradford Trebach	T&T Committee Chairman, E&S Vice Chairman
Anthony P. Creaney	T&T
Warren Dolny	T&T
Robert Fanuzzi	T&T
Philip Friedman	T&T
Maria Khury	T&T
Damian McShane	T&T
Laura Spalter	T&T, E&S
I. William Stone	T&T

Other Board Members present:

None

Community Members of the T&T Committee present:

None

Community Members of the E&S Committee present:

None

Also in attendance:

Michael P. Arotis (from Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc.)
Paul G. Brueck (from Dewberry-Goodkind, Inc.)
David Daks (from MTA Metro-North Railroad)
Rachel Loonin (from Riverdale Nature Preservancy)
Richard McAllan

Terrence P. McCauley (from MTA Metro-North Railroad)
Robert Press

The two Committees met at 7:30 p.m. – S. Scheinbach in the Environment & Sanitation (E&S) Chair, and B. Trebach in the Traffic & Transportation (T&T) Chair.

1. The E&S Chairman explained that, as with the previous meeting, the current meeting was being held jointly between two committees because of the obvious overlap on alternate-side parking reform, and the need to move swiftly on this issue.
2. It was agreed by both Committees that their respective portions of the Minutes of the joint E&S and T&T meeting of Nov. 20, 2007 be adopted.
3. Construction to Repair Retaining Wall at Marble Hill Metro-North Station.

The representatives of MTA Metro-North Railroad reported that on Feb. 11, 2008, construction would begin for necessary repair of the 168-foot-long retaining wall at Marble Hill Station. Work will take place on weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and is expected to last approximately one year.

The existing wall, which is in unacceptable condition, is made of stone masonry with mortar. The replacement section will be made of reinforced concrete and will have built-in drainage outlets.

The contractor is using lighted barricades to close the sidewalk adjacent to the station entrance plus 18 feet of the roadway. This leaves 12 feet of the 30-foot-wide roadway available for traffic along W. 225th St. and necessitated removal of 32 parking spaces.

Lighted plastic barrels and "No Standing Anytime" signs will be installed to insure smooth traffic flow past the work area. A stop sign will be installed in front of a high-visibility temporary pedestrian crosswalk at the entrance to the train station.

The Metro-North representatives said that the current wrought-iron fence will be replaced with a black vinyl-coated fence that will be higher in order to discourage littering on the slope below. As part of this project, Metro-North will also clear the slope of all debris and litter.

I.W. Stone asked whether there is any special security for the worksite at night. The Metro-North representatives replied that the 50th Police Precinct and the Metro-North Police have been notified that construction will be occurring.

Community resident Richard McAllan complained that too many parking spaces have been eliminated. The Metro-North representatives replied that their hands are

tioned since it is the NYC Transportation Department that decides how much parking should be temporarily eliminated.

4. Reform of Alternate-Side Parking Rules in District 8.

The T&T Chairman reported that the seven-member Special Committee on Reforming Alternate-Side Parking Rules, which was appointed at the Dec. 11, 2007 regular Board Meeting, held two public hearings to receive comments and recommendations. In addition, the Special Committee conducted a field visit to locations throughout District 8 to assess their cleanliness and suitability for modified alternate-side parking rules.

He said that among the resources being used are the Sanitation Department's scorecard reports and the 35-page "route narrative," which details the block-by-block schedule for every street-cleaning truck operating in District 8.

The E&S Chairman said that the field trip confirmed that the Sanitation Department's scorecard ratings are an accurate reflection of the relative cleanliness of our streets. He also noted that alternate-side parking was originally an experiment that was expanded carefully over time. He expressed the hope that a new experiment to reduce the parking burden on motorists would now occur in areas that do not need cleaning as often. Calling such a reduction a quality-of-life improvement, he said that it will also help to reduce air pollution.

The T&T Chairman said that a formal meeting of the Special Committee and the issuance of a recommendation report to the full Board are anticipated shortly.

A detailed discussion ensued regarding possible locations that should be considered when the Special Committee meets.

5. Update on Reconstruction of the W. 252nd St. overpass of the Henry Hudson Pkwy.

In response to a question from R. Fanuzzi about delays in reconstructing the W. 252nd St. overpass of the Henry Hudson Pkwy., the T&T Chairman said that the contractor for the NYC Transportation Department's Division of Bridges has almost completed the first half of the project that began on Jan. 3, 2006.

So far, they have demolished and reconstructed the north side of the overpass but still need to install a stone parapet and metal picket fence.

Starting sometime in the middle of Mar. 2008, they will demolish and then reconstruct the south side of the overpass, including the installation of a water main. Once that is completed, they will do roadway work, including sidewalks, asphalt, traffic striping and signage.

Most of the construction work will be done during daylight hours, and only on very rare occasions at night, when it is more convenient due to safety reasons such as decreased pedestrian and vehicular traffic. And special effort will be made to avoid work on weekends.

The projected time for completion of the last half of the project is 330 CCD's ("continuous construction days").

6. Update on Con Edison M29 Power-Transmission Line.

The E&S Chairman reported that, in response to demands from the community and elected officials, the NYS Public Service Commission has required Consolidated Edison to repave the entire lane in which the trench for the transmission line will be dug instead of just covering the trench. He said that Community Board 12 in Manhattan has already asked for ratepayer reductions during the duration of construction for those businesses and residents in the path of the M29 line.

It was decided that the following item should be laid before the Board for approval by resolution:

**RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING UTILITY RATE REDUCTIONS DURING
CONSTRUCTION OF THE M29 TRANSMISSION LINE**

WHEREAS, Consolidated Edison will construct its M-29 transmission line along a 2.7-mile route through the major thoroughfares of Community Board No. 8 beginning at West 263rd Street and Riverdale Avenue, then running south along Riverdale Avenue to West 230th Street, then east along West 230th Street to Broadway, and south along Broadway to the Harlem river; and

WHEREAS, One hundred and forty-five businesses, twenty apartment buildings and sixty-five private homes in Community Board No. 8 will be directly affected by this project, in addition to thousands of other residents in the surrounding community that also will suffer adverse impacts during the construction period, which is expected to last for as long as 1.5 years; and

WHEREAS, The construction will adversely affect the business community due to the loss of curb-side parking for customers and for the receipt/delivery of goods and services, and the likelihood of fewer walk-in customers, noise, dust and utility service interruptions; and

WHEREAS, The construction will adversely affect the residential community due to the difficulty in reaching local businesses, the loss of on-street parking, increased traffic congestion, rerouting of seven major bus lines, noise, dust and utility service interruptions; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That Community Board No. 8, Bronx, calls upon the New York State Public Service Commission to grant residential and business customers who are directly along the Bronx portion of the M29 transmission route utility rate reductions during the period of construction of the M29 transmission line in Community Board No. 8.

VOTE: 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions

IN FAVOR

Community Board Members of the Committee: S. Scheinbach, L. Spalter, B. Trebach

7. Illegal Placement of Signs on Public Property.

The E&S Chairman reported that businesses continue to place commercial signs, particularly A-frame signs, in public spaces. He said that he is fighting this on two fronts: On Feb. 5, 2008, he sent a follow-up letter to the NYC Sanitation Commissioner Doherty requesting increased enforcement on weekends. He also introduced a resolution supporting NYS Senate and Assembly bills that would eliminate loopholes that make it difficult to ticket offenders who place signs in public areas.

Under current law, a summons may only be issued to the person responsible for the premises where the sign is placed. In addition, while *attaching* signs to public property is clearly illegal, *placing* them is open to interpretation. The new bill shifts the presumption of liability to the entity whose name is on sign, instead of the owner of the property where the sign is placed. The bill makes it illegal to place signs anywhere on public property.

The E&S Committee decided that the following item should be laid before the Board for approval by resolution:

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING SENATE AND ASSEMBLY BILLS
ON ILLEGAL PLACEMENT OF SIGNS**

WHEREAS, there has been a proliferation of commercial signage being placed on public property in Bronx Community District 8; and

WHEREAS, there are companion bills before both houses of the New York State Legislature that would close many loopholes used by commercial advertisers to avoid being fined for placing their signage on public property; and

WHEREAS, the bills are known as Senate Bill 6106-A and Assembly Bill 9414; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That Community Board No. 8, Bronx, supports Senate Bill 6106-A and Assembly Bill 9414, and urges passage of these bills by the respective houses of the Legislature.

VOTE: 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions

IN FAVOR

Community Board Members of the Committee: S. Scheinbach, L. Spalter, B. Trebach

8. Parking at Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil Metro-North Stations.

The T&T Chairman noted that on Jan. 9, 2008, Councilman G. Oliver Koppell wrote to the Board about the parking situation at the Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil stations of the Metro-North Railroad.

Regarding the parking lot at Riverdale Station, which requires a fee, Mr. Koppell wrote that although the lot has not been fully utilized until recently, "in past weeks all available spots have been taken by 8:30 a.m." and "there is no available parking on nearby streets," thereby leaving commuters who arrive for trains after 8:30 a.m. with no available parking.

As for the lot at Spuyten Duyvil Station, which has free parking spaces, Mr. Koppell wrote that "there does not seem to be any additional available parking" and that "all available parking spots are taken on regular business days."

In response, the T&T Chairman said he visited both stations between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 16 and again on Thursday, Feb. 7.

During his first visit to Riverdale Station, the T&T Chairman said he observed a total of 23 empty spaces, including four empty spaces reserved for handicapped parking. On his second visit, there were a total of 28 empty spaces, including 3 reserved for handicapped parking. In addition, he spoke with numerous motorists who said they park there regularly. And while all of them agreed that more commuters seem to be using the lot, the only consistent complaint they voiced was about having to park farther away from the entrance than usual.

As for Spuyten Duyvil Station, the T&T Chairman said that during the first visit he saw just one empty space in the lot, and it was a reserved handicapped space. However, he said that there were empty spaces along the east and west portions of Edsall Ave., which leads to and from the train station. And the commuters he spoke with told him that although it is extremely difficult to get a space in the parking lot, street parking is often available along Edsall Ave. and, depending on the street-cleaning rules, nearby portions of Palisade Ave. and Johnson Ave.

The T&T Chairman said that he plans to visit both stations again to see whether the conditions he observed are fairly representative of the general parking situation.

9. Update on Mayor Bloomberg's Traffic Congestion-Pricing Plan.

The T&T Chairman noted that the commission examining Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's congestion-pricing initiative issued its final recommendations on Jan. 31, approving a scaled-down version of the original plan outlined last summer.

The proposal approved by the NYC Traffic Congestion Mitigation Commission would charge drivers with an E-ZPass \$8 a day to enter Manhattan below 60th St. (instead of 86th St.) on weekdays from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Those drivers would also receive a credit for bridge and tunnel tolls they pay on the same day. Drivers without an E-ZPass would pay \$9 and would not receive credit for tolls. There would be no fee for driving only within the district. Those revisions greatly lower the cost of administration, thus increasing the funds that will be available for mass-transit improvements.

W. Dolny noted that the proposal would eliminate the only free route between the Bronx and Brooklyn or Queens. Drivers using the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive or an East River bridge would have to pay the congestion fee, even if they did not stop in Manhattan.

The T&T Chairman added that the commission and the City have embraced other traffic relief measures, which include cracking down on City workers' abuse of parking placards, raising the cost of on-street parking and deterring taxi-cruising.

The commission's proposal will now be subject to negotiations in both the City Council and the State Legislature. Both must approve the proposal by March 31, 2008 to qualify for \$354 million that the Federal Government has pledged to give the City for mass-transit improvements in support of a congestion-pricing plan.

10. Update on Croton Water-Filtration Plant Project

The E&S Chairman said that at the December 17, 2008 meeting of the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee, a resolution passed by a vote of 5-to-2 asking the NYC Comptroller, NYS Comptroller and NYC Independent Budget Office (IBO) to review the costs for construction of the Croton Filtration Plant in Van Cortlandt Park. The IBO responded on Jan. 14, 2008, saying it would compare the original cost estimates made by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with the actual and current projected costs, including the assumptions made at that time, and the rise in construction costs.

The next Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee meeting will be held on Feb. 21, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the DEP office at 3660 Jerome Ave. DEP Deputy

Commissioner Lawitts will provide an explanation of how water rates are determined. He suggested that board members attend.

He also noted that the Schiavone Construction Company was originally slated to build the plant (they dug the pit), but dropped out last summer amid rumors of organized-crime connections. In a February 17, 2008 Federal indictment, several construction-union officials were charged in a scheme to steal union benefits. Among those charged was Anthony Delvescovo, a project manager and director of tunnel operations for Schiavone. The current contractor is Skanska, a Swedish firm.

11. Community resident Robert Press complained about the condition of the asphalt around a recently reconstructed catch basin at W. 236th St. and Independence Ave. He said that the asphalt is unfinished and sloppy. The T&T Chairman said that he would ask the Board Office to follow up on this matter.

Any other business -- No other matters were raised.

At 8:56 p.m., the two Committees were adjourned to days and times to be fixed by their Chairmen.

Respectfully submitted,

Saul Scheinbach
Chairman
Environment & Sanitation Committee

Bradford Trebach
Chairman
Traffic & Transportation Committee