125th Street River to River
Transportation Workshop Results
February 16th, 2005

PLANNING GAME NOTES BY GROUP
Please note: there were five working groups at the February 16th meeting. Each group reported back to the larger gathering citing their key points, which had been agreed to by that group. These "Key Points" are recorded here. In addition, for each group, the notes taken by the recorder during the group discussion have been typed and organized by topic area – referred to as "Notes".

GROUP 1

KEY POINTS

1. Maintain 20' sidewalk.
2. Use bollards, paving and street furniture to enhance and protect sidewalks.
3. Remove neckdowns and keep mid-block crossings.
4. Share curb lane between parking, bus lane and loading.
5. Celebrate subway stops entrances and street activity.

NOTES

Traffic
Southbound traffic on 5th Avenue is a bottleneck at rush hours.
Amsterdam is heavily congested too.
124th street is used as service street: traffic around Marcus Garvey Park forces traffic to go on 124th street West of Lenox.

Pedestrian Crossing
Introduce pedestrian crossings at corners of Marcus Garvey Park.
Remove mid-block neckdowns but keep lights. Keep parking during regular business hours, it provides a safety buffer from traffic for pedestrians.

Vendors
Tables create congestion on the sidewalk and generate pedestrian traffic around vending areas. Provide fixed-dimension kiosks for vendors and locate them all along 125th street.
Vendors should coordinate with BID to have a common business goal (tax vendors for licensing fee and use it toward financing BID?)

Bike lane
Existing bike lane on St. Nicholas Street is in poor condition. Bike/bus conflict at curb lane: buses can't get to sidewalk, parking sometimes occurs in the bike lane, lane needs repainting and cyclists need bike racks especially by the park (Marcus Garvey Park.)
A bike lane along 125th street could generate same issues.

Center median
Introduce a "ramblas" model (street section with center median) for section of 125th West of Morningside Avenue (part of CB9 197A plan.)

Dedicated bus lane
Study enforcement procedures and their impact on parking and businesses.

Loading
Determine a proper time for loading/ unloading activities and coordinate with existing shops' business hours.

GROUP 2

VISION

Promote cultural and behavioral sense of the street through design.
Reduce East/ West traffic along 125th street.

KEY POINTS

1. Curb bus lane at peak hours (4-7 am, 4-7pm)
2. No neckdowns! Eliminate existing ones.
3. Mid-block crossings at key locations; limited bus stops along corridor.
4. Reduce East/West traffic along 125h by redistributing it on 124th Street (Eastbound) and 126th Street (Westbound).
5. Enforce law to ensure 15' sidewalk clearance for pedestrian circulation at all times (no vendors should be in front construction sites).

NOTES

Curb lane
Share curb lane to allow more flexibility of use.
Introduce a dedicated bus lane at the curb during rush hour (peak time: 4-7am, 4-7 pm). This implies the removal of all existing neckdowns on 125th street; neither new neckdowns should be introduces to allow bus circulation at the curb. Early AM loading could also occur at the curb lane.
Parking should be accommodated at curb during off-peak hours.

On-street parking
Eliminate on-street parking on Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue.

Vehicular traffic
East/West: Reduce vehicular traffic on 125th street. East/ West traffic is very heavy, especially towards the Triborough Bridge. In addition, lack of sequenced lights towards downtown causes congestion.
Synchronize lights to allow better traffic flow. Consider redistributing traffic on 124th street (eastbound traffic) and 126th (westbound traffic) to alleviate congestion on 125th street.
North/South: Southbound traffic heavier than northbound traffic during AM rush hour. Redirect Triborough bridge traffic along Second Avenue and introduce temporary dedicated bus lanes during rush hour on Madison Ave and Fifth Ave.

Pedestrian crossing
Introduce mid-block crossing to facilitate pedestrian movement across 125th street. Mid-block crossings don't need to be tied to neckdowns. An especially critical area is the section between Madison Avenue and Lenox Avenue and at Broadway and Morningside Avenue where many accidents already occurred in the past.

Sidewalk
Maintain sidewalk at 20'. Enforce 15' sidewalk clearance to allow a constant, comfortable pedestrian flow. Vendors should be allowed only in the remaining 5' of the sidewalk. It would be also beneficial to look at other black or latino neighborhoods to study how vendors and pedestrians are accommodated.

Subway
Improve signaling (sound) at the subway stations to make service to commuters more efficient.

Long Term Improvements:

Explore the possibility of eliminating one lane in each direction and introducing a light rail system at the center of 125th street. Look at successful case studies such as Denver, Co and San Francisco, CA.

GROUP 3

KEY POINTS

1. Keep 20 feet sidewalks: it is what makes 125th street what is.
2. Share curb lane according to the following priority of use: bus lane, loading areas for businesses, parking.
3. Enforcement is critical: such as vendor location and available space, use of lanes for designated use.
4. Make West to East cross-town circulation easier.
5. No bike lane on 125th street.
6. Consider removing neckdowns to allow for better bus service (don't introduce alternate bus stops.)

NOTES

Traffic
Alleviate traffic on 125th street by considering 126th street as westbound route.
124th street restricts traffic between Lenox and 5th avenue; it switches direction 3 times along its length and causes transportation problems (especially for westbound traffic).

Vendors
Lack of enforcement is a problem because vendors tend to take up most of the available sidewalk space, no matter how wide the sidewalk is.

Loading areas
Current lack of loading areas along 125th street presents a problem: consider including loading areas at specific locations along the 125th street corridor; 124th street and 126th street are currently being used as loading areas and could be effectively used as such in the future.

Relate transit to zoning
Different nodes of development create different transportation needs along the corridor: may necessitate unique treatment along the different portions of the corridor.

Express vs. local bus service
Elderly people use every stop so express lane is not the solution; to ensure a better traffic flow best solution may be have a dedicated bus lane at special hours of the day.

Sidewalks
Sidewalk should remain at 20 feet: this is one of the best elements of the street.

Curb lane
Real opportunities are at the curb lane: some parking could be removed to facilitate a dedicated bus lane at special hours of the day.

GROUP 4

VISION
Make 125th street a transit oriented, pedestrian oriented street.

KEY POINTS

1. Enforcement is critical
2. Eliminate parking on 125th street
3. Make 125th street more pedestrian (124th / 126th street can bear part of the traffic).
4. More density = more mass transit
5. Think "BIG".

NOTES

Zoning as related to transit
Rezone buildings on 124th street and 126th street from residential only to commercial on the ground floor.
Encourage mixed-use development with underground parking,
Bring more light to existing housing development at Amsterdam Avenue; make building/street interface more pedestrian oriented to ensure life on the street.

Short term improvements
Short term improvements may start in preparation for a larger scale, long term redesign of 125th street. Some of these improvements could be striping loading zones, ensure enforcement of street regulations, etc.

Turn lanes
Limit left turns: eliminate left turn movements at peak hour.

Loading areas
Have temporary loading areas at curb at specific hours.

Buses
Introduce a bus dedicated lane to reduce congestion and car/ bus conflict at peak hours.
Study bus routes and introduce limited bus stops.

Loading Areas
Consider loading/ unloading at certain hours of the day (night hours best); share lane with bus.

Subway
Take the 2nd Avenue Subway to the Hudson River.
125th street and Lexington: subway stop is very crowded.

Parking
Accommodate cars on lots on 124th street and 126 streets. Use parking lots more efficiently. Introduce stacked parking systems in small lots.
Possibly have mini parking meters for parking regulations on these two streets.

Vendors
Vendors are currently a nuisance on 125th street (causing congestion on sidewalk.) Addressing the parking issue might reduce number of vendors as parking is currently mostly used by business owners and vendors.

Ferry Service
Would like to see ferry service at both ends of 125th street.

Long term improvements

Street section
Make 125th street a more pedestrian oriented street. Consider narrowing the street.

Sidewalk:
Make sidewalks 25' wide.

Bike lane:
Have a 5' bike lane in the middle of the street (center lanes) as a traffic calming device; (or between bus lane and travel lane).

Light rail:
Consider the possibility of introducing a light rail system on 125th street by eliminating one lane in each direction at curb lane. Look at European model and have people pay for ticket in advance to reduce wait time at bus loading/ unloading.

GROUP 5

KEY POINTS

1. No Bike lane on 125th street.
2. No turning lane on 125th street.
3. Need loading/ unloading zone along the corridor.
4. Introduce a shared curb lane: dedicated bus lane at peak hours; loading at different hours; parking the rest of the day.
5. Enforcement of street use regulation on 125th street is essential.
6. Introduce sequenced signaling to improve traffic flow.
7. Consider eliminating neckdowns as they impede traffic flow.
8. Introduce better signage along the corridor, especially by the Triborough Bridge area.

NOTES

Traffic
Traffic on 125th street is currently thru-traffic and not local.
Trucks back up on 124th street and 3rd Avenue by Pathmark. Recycling collection at Pathmark should be moved further along to avoid congestion.
No yellow taxis above 110th street (two different worlds) but only car service sometimes parked on crosswalks

Signage
Signage towards Triborough Bridge is confusing and causes traffic flow to slow down.

Vendors
Vendors add congestion on sidewalks. We should explore relationship between BID and vendors: need to find a regulatory system to deal with vendors in the public space of the street.

Shared Curb Lane
Introduce the idea of multi-use lanes: eliminate parking on one side of the street at designated hours to allow for dedicated bus lane and / or loading zone.
Consider designating areas for loading and unloading at specific times of the day. Introduce time limit on parking (i.e. 8 am -10 pm, excluding 3-5.30 pm).

Street Character
Respect different character of North and South side of the street: big box on one side, local mom and pop's stores on other side.

Enforcement
Consider enforcement model used Downtown Manhattan to avoid issue of double parking (equipment to fine cars should be updated as the one used in Tribeca.)

Turn Lanes
Eliminate turn lanes.

Bike Lane
Exclude bike lanes from 125th street.