

**First Avenue/Second Avenue Select Bus Service
Community Advisory Committee Meeting 2 Summary**
Wednesday, September 23, 6:00 pm-8:00 pm
Manhattan Borough President's Office
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10007

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.

II. PRESENTATIONS

David Woloch, NYCDOT's Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs, gave a presentation about the New York bus camera enforcement bill and issued handouts to the participants that explained the bill in detail. NYCDOT Director of Transit Development Joseph Barr explained the environmental review process and reviewed the project timeline, followed by a brief summary of the CAC's Tour of Fordham Road SBS Corridor in June 2009, given by Lou Sepersky from the Community Board 6 Transportation Committee. Ted Orosz, the director of Long-Range Bus Planning for NYCT, then gave a general overview of the process of choosing the SBS station locations for this corridor.

III. BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Attendees were asked to break into three groups (**downtown** – South Ferry to 14th Street; **midtown** – 14th Street to 57th Street; and **uptown** – 67th Street to 125th Street) to discuss the locations of SBS stations along First and Second Avenues. Attendees chose which group to attend, according to their respective jurisdictions or interests. Prior to the discussions, NYCDOT/NYCT representatives provided detailed information about each of the proposed station locations. Large maps exhibiting the proposed stations were made available for attendees to mark up. Representatives from HSH facilitated each group discussion.

Following are key points discussed for each station location, starting with the most southern station and working north. For the 14th Street Stations, comments from multiple breakout groups have been combined into one set of comments.

South Ferry

- Concerns were expressed about how buses would move in the South Ferry area. Another attendee explained that buses would actually enter the South Ferry Plaza to turn around.

Wall Street

- Concerns were expressed about potential conflicts with taxis servicing new hotels within close proximity to this stop. As a solution, it was suggested that taxis could approach these hotels from Pearl Street instead of Water Street.
- A Downtown Alliance representative explained that the organization is working on a Water Street pedestrian and traffic improvement study.

Fulton Street

- Attendees thought that the close distance of the Fulton Street and Wall Street stops made sense because of the density of passenger demand in the area during business hours.
- Concerns were expressed about potential conflicts with taxis servicing tourists in the area during the evenings and on weekends.

Oliver Street

- Concerns were expressed about the close proximity of the SBS stop to Chatham Square, which was described as a “traffic hot spot” that should be avoided. As such, the routing along Madison Street made sense to attendees.
- Participants thought that a stop in front of the community center would be convenient for its patrons.
- Concerns were expressed about the limited turning radius at the intersection of Pike and Madison Streets and about the narrow width of Madison Street. In addition, the heavy pedestrian traffic and the presence of a bicycle lane on Allen Street/Pike Street could affect the efficient operations of the SBS.

Grand Street

- It was noted that retail along Allen Street in this area often encroaches onto the sidewalk.
- Participants thought that the Oliver Street and Grand Street stops were too far apart. A stop in between those two might be desirable.
- Concerns were expressed about potential conflicts with trucks servicing the wholesale businesses along Allen Street, south of Grand Street. It was noted that trucks often double/triple park during the morning rush hours.
- Traffic was noted to be more congested on the northbound side of Allen Street, and suggestions were made to relocate the stop to Broome Street (one block north of Grand Street). It was noted, however, that there is a garage entrance on that block.

Houston Street

- A participant advised the team of the potential conflicts with funeral attendees at the RG Ortiz’s Funeral Home between 1st and 2nd Avenues.
- Concerns were expressed about the long distance between the SBS stops and the F train.
- A suggestion was made to relocate the stop to the southeast corner of Allen Street. However, it was noted that there would be conflicts with the taxis servicing the Hotel East Houston on that same block.
- Pedestrian safety was a concern at the intersection of Houston Street and First Avenue.

14th Street/1st Avenue

- Participants were concerned about the volume of local buses that service this stop, the volume of transit users, and how coordination between SBS and local service will be handled. Bus bunching was also noted as a major issue, particularly below 14th Street because buses can only cross the intersection one at a time.
- A suggestion was made to relocate the SBS stop to the south side of the block, but it was noted that the L-train stop precludes this option.

14th Street/2nd Avenue

- Participants were satisfied with the proposed location of this station.
- Participants inquired whether the entrance to the 14th Street station on the 2nd Avenue subway will have any effect on SBS.

23rd Street/1st Avenue

- There was a suggestion to place the SBS station on the far side of 23rd Street before the curb cut, because the proposed location (far side of 24th Street past the curb cut) appears to be too far and may be inconvenient for riders transferring to the local buses.
- A participant questioned whether any projections have been made regarding the volume of transfers at this location.
- An inquiry was made regarding the need for longer SBS stations and whether bus bunching is an anticipated issue.

23rd Street/2nd Avenue

- Participants were satisfied with the proposed location of this station.

Participants expressed a strong desire for a stop at 28th Street for better access to the “Hospital Corridor” along 1st and 2nd Avenues. It was suggested that more current ridership analyses be done to justify station locations, particularly because there might be sufficient ridership to justify adding a station at 28th Street.

34th Street/1st Avenue

- It was suggested that more current ridership analyses be done to justify this station location. Huh

34th Street/2nd Avenue

- Participants were satisfied with the proposed location of this station. They thought that the station would satisfy customers wanting to access NYU Medical Center.

42nd Street/1st Avenue

- A participant suggested that NYCDOT contact the United Nations (UN) to obtain the location of the main access ways for their proposed satellite building to be built on the Robert Moses Playground.
- Based on a participant’s observation of current M15 users, many people tend to get off at the 42nd/43rd Street stop, hence it may make sense to locate the SBS stop on the far side of 42nd Street to better serve UN employees.
- It was agreed that it makes sense to keep the proposed station location, but should consider relocating the stop once the UN building is constructed and becomes a major ridership generator.
- One participant inquired whether there was ample space at the proposed location to fit both local and SBS buses. In response, it was noted that the space is adequate.

42nd Street/2nd Avenue

- Participants were satisfied with the proposed location of this station, but questioned the reason for splitting the local stop.

Participants questioned the reason for eliminating the 50th street station. In response, it was noted that short runs, traffic issues, and decreased ridership were the main reason for its removal. Lou Sepersky requested that NYCDOT provide him with existing and projected ridership on the bus lines over 4-5 years.

57th Street/1st Avenue

- Concerns were voiced about the safety of passengers having to cross 57th Street to transfer between the local and SBS at this accident-prone intersection. Participants asked that NYCDOT reassess this configuration.

57th Street/2nd Avenue

- Participants were satisfied with the proposed location of this station, but suggested some coordination with the Second Avenue Subway project should the 57th Street station access affect this SBS stop.

67th Street/1st Avenue

- It was noted that the dedicated bus lane would encourage transit usage because buses offer better mobility than cars.
- Several suggestions were made to relocate the local stop to one of the following locations:
 - Northeast corner of 67th Street and 1st Avenue. However, it was noted that this location would conflict with the medical facilities’ operations.
 - Nearside of 67th Street. However, this would require riders to walk a block in order to transfer from the crosstown bus to the local M15. One participant thought that this location is a better option because it provides more room should bus bunching occur.

- o Between 66th and 67th Streets. This was noted as a possibly ideal location as it would be located in front of a new building that has a recessed entrance, providing more sidewalk space for the local bus stop.
- Concerns were expressed about bunching of the local buses.

67th Street Station/2nd Avenue

- A participant mentioned that there are plans to place a subway entrance at 69th Street, which would make a local stop at 69th Street more appropriate.

79th Street/1st Avenue

- A Community Board 8 representative expressed safety concerns for passengers required to cross 79th Street to transfer between SBS and local services. To address this issue, a suggestion was made to place the SBS stop between 79th and 80th and the local stop between 80th and 81st.

78th Street Station/2nd Avenue

- Participants preferred placing the SBS stop between 78th and 79th Streets and noted the importance of placing the stop closer to 79th Street rather than maintaining an even distance between the stations.
- A suggestion was made to fit the local stop on the same block as the SBS stop. If this is not possible, then it should be moved one block south

86th Street/1st Avenue

- Participants questioned the need for separate shelters for SBS and local buses if stops are located on the same block. They also requested clarification regarding the length of each stop.
- Some CAC members discussed the importance of overall consistency when placing the SBS stop in front of the local stop. One possibility could be siting the SBS station on the northern end of the block, which would result in the SBS stop incorporating both large street trees as opposed to one tree with the local and one with the SBS stop (when the SBS is located below the local). SBS encourages people to load through the back doors; putting the SBS stop on the northern end of the block would inhibit efficient loading given the large trees.
- Several suggestions were made regarding relocating stops:
 - o Move SBS stop between 85th and 86th
 - o Move SBS stop between 87th and 88th Streets; this however would generate a relatively long transfer to the crosstown bus.
 - o Move the local stop farside of 87th Street.

86th Street Station/2nd Avenue

- Ted Orosz noted that the 86th Street Station would be at 88th Street for the foreseeable future due to the Second Avenue Subway construction
- Participants reiterated their preference of having the local and SBS stops straddle 86th Street.
- A suggestion was made to place the SBS stop south of 86th Street.
- A participant questioned why utilities were problematic at this location, particularly because the proposed stop would be located at the far end of the crosswalk rather than before the traffic light. Ted Orosz (NYCT) explained that once the subway construction is completed, a curb bulb close 86th Street would affect many utilities at an exorbitant cost.

96th Street/1st Avenue

- Concerns were expressed about placing the SBS stop south of the local stop. A suggestion was made to relocate the local stop to the northern half of the 96th-97th block to accommodate transfers to the 97th Street crosstown bus.

96th Street Station/2nd Avenue

- Questions arose about the type of facilities that would be provided, given that the stop will be temporary (due to Second Avenue Subway construction). It was noted that the station would be equipped with a shelter and amenities available at permanent stops.

106th Street/1st Avenue

- Participants questioned the reason for separating the local and SBS stops at this location. It was noted that trees obstructed the northern half of the 105th -106th Street block. A suggestion was made to relocate the local stop north of 106th Street, particularly because there is adequate sidewalk spacing between 106th and 107th Streets.

106th Street Station/2nd Avenue

- Participants noted that the planter boxes currently located at the proposed stop belonged to Tito's Restaurant, which is now closed, so they should not impede the establishment of the SBS bus stop.

116th Street/1st Avenue

- Participants were satisfied with the proposed location of this station.

116th Street/2nd Avenue

- Concerns were expressed about whether there is sufficient space at this location for both SBS and local buses.
- Participants noted that the driveway on the block was inactive as the business is no longer operational.
- Concerns were expressed about SBS buses getting stuck behind local buses if they are using the same lane.

125th Street

- Concerns were expressed about pedestrian safety in the area and the need for crosswalks.

IV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

At the conclusion of the meeting, all participants were asked to regroup and Arnie Bloch of HSH facilitated questions, which were answered by Joseph Barr 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):

Bus Lane Enforcement

Q: Will cameras be stationary or mounted on buses?

A: If cameras are used, they will most likely initially be stationary along the street and will possibly be mounted on the buses in the future.

Environmental Review/Project Timeline

Q: Do any segments of the SBS environmental review overlap with 2nd Avenue subway construction from 68th Street-96th Street?

A: The SBS project will take into account the environmental review for the 2nd Avenue subway, but the two reviews are completely separate.

Q: Was the project start-up date delayed? At the last CAC meeting, it was noted as July 2009?

A: The new projected start-up date for SBS service is at the beginning of September 2010. DOT is committed to this timeline.

Q: What is meant by "bike facility design"?

A: DOT is very interested in addressing bicycle transit within the SBS project. The issue will be further discussed at the next CAC meeting.

General Overview of Station Locations

Q: Will SBS eliminate the local bus?

A: No, only the limited bus service will be eliminated.

Q: Why is the color of the SBS route line different in the downtown area on the station map?

A: The color of the line is different because there will be no designated bus lane south of Houston Street.

Q: Is it right to assume that people with limited mobility will prefer local service instead of SBS?

A: SBS would be easier for disabled people to board, but will make fewer stops.

Q: Are the ticket machines at SBS stops the only place you can buy tickets?

A: Yes, the machines serve as a “validator” rather than a ticket vending machine. They will issue a receipt to be taken on board the bus, which also indicates the direction in which one is traveling.

Q: Is it more important to place SBS stations at crosstown bus stops than at subway stops?

A: Yes, the project team believes SBS passengers will be more likely to transfer to a crosstown bus line than to the new subway line.

General Questions

Q: Will there be multiple open houses for each community board?

A: This is a possibility, but the decision has not yet been made.

C: Consider conducting a consolidated meeting with Community Boards 3 and 6 to present the SBS station locations. Also many of the community board representatives urged DOT to present to their Transportation Committees in November.

C: The CAC should be expanded to include more business owners along the corridor.

A: The planning process for Fordham Road SBS successfully took into account input from business owners. NYCDOT feels this is important for 1st/2nd Avenue SBS as well.

Q: What is the purpose of the open house?

A: The purpose of the open house is to get input from the general public, transit riders, and business owners about the project.

Q: Is it possible to run the M15 Limited to stop at prospective SBS stops in order to test ridership?

A: DOT wants to be able to provide the best possible improvements in service, not just Limited service. Several meeting participants objected to this suggestion.

C: SBS payment validation machines along 1st and 2nd Avenues would seem like an expensive intermediate measure, especially with smart card technology in the near future.

A: 100% deployment of Smart card technology with the abandonment of the MetroCard system likely would not occur for another ten years in New York City.

V. KEY OBSERVATIONS

- CAC members expressed a strong interest in having community board presentations to discuss station locations. However, conducting an October meeting may not be possible as the agendas may be already full.
- There was some misunderstanding about the concept of BRT/SBS, especially the issue of off-board fare collection.
- In the breakout discussions, the technical representatives were helpful in clarifying station-specific issues. The maps were somewhat difficult for some to understand. Some participants suggested that

labeling businesses and providing photographs would improve understanding of the maps. Also, many CAC members requested electronic copies of station location maps.