

Manhattan Bus Study

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

Summary of April 30, 2013 Intercity Bus Stops Workshop

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Prepared for:

NYC Department of Transportation

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Summary

On Tuesday, April 30, 2013, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) held a public workshop to gather public input on Intercity Bus Stop siting criteria at the Gold Ballroom of the Hotel Pennsylvania, 401 Seventh Avenue. There were 32 attendees.

The meeting was held in a workshop format with a rolling start. At each table, participants were given a presentation on the specifics of the new law granting NYCDOT the authority to regulate bus stops for operators that provide unsubsidized, interstate bus service and wanted to use local streets as their pick-up and drop-off location.

After the presentation, each group of attendees participated in an activity to explore potential criteria for establishing stop locations within their neighborhoods. After the facilitator showed the participants examples of what could be stop location criteria, they were charged with using an example set of city blocks to help develop a list of eight stop criteria.

A copy of the presentation can be downloaded at: <http://www.nyc.gov/intercitybuses>

Discussion

The following summary includes the discussions that took place at the six workshop tables.

I. Stop Location Criteria Proposed

- Schools, especially elementary and middle schools should be avoided for stop locations. (Three tables)
- Clearance is needed around subway entrances, newsstands and street furniture. (Three tables)
- Stops would be okay in front of locations with ground floor retail and residences on the upper floors. (Three tables)
- Transit hubs with large pedestrian volumes should be avoided. (Two Tables)
- Stops should not overlap sidewalk cafes. (Two Tables)
- Stops should not be next to parks. (Two Tables)
- Hospitals should be avoided for stop locations. Other groups felt stops were okay near hospitals, but with a buffer around the entrance.
- Select Bus Service lanes should not be obstructed.
- Stops may be acceptable near Houses of Worship depending on the schedule and level of activity at the House of Worship.



- Stops should not be near residential buildings.
- Stops in front of office buildings are okay. Another group felt that as long as there was no ground floor retail space, bus stops are okay in front of office buildings.
- Stops on curbs that are not actively used, such as along a blank wall or parking garage, are preferable.
- Supportive of bus stops in commercial districts if the operator has storefront where passengers can wait off-street.
- Do not move CitiBike stations to locate buses.
- Regarding merchant's loading zones, participants stated bus stops shouldn't occur there. Some suggested bus companies to consult with local businesses to curtail disruption to their operations.

II. Comments during the presentation

- The legislation calls for a consultation between the NYCDOT and Community Boards to provide permits for intercity buses. Participants stated that Community Boards receive applications for permits and have 45 days to provide an opinion. They said that the process did not feel like a consultation. CB3 has already received six (6) applications for permits. The representative from CB 3 gave an example of an application that would require elimination of a loading and unloading zone. Allowing an intercity bus stop there would impact business negatively. Participants wanted to know what the criteria are behind such a decision. They noted that DOT currently does not provide criteria to the public.
- Some participants dislike the procedure of open-ended booking of tickets, as it allows an inordinate number of travellers to crowd the sidewalks during boarding. Participants suggested having a limit on the number of passengers.

III. Comments during the model block activity

- One participant wanted NYCDOT to have stricter regulations for the queue of passengers on the sidewalk. She suggested using a rope or a device that limits the dimension where the queue forms on the sidewalk. She stated the queue shouldn't be in front of a store.
- Participants were concerned that passengers could use storefronts as shelters. A participant stated that no bus stop should be placed near a sidewalk café. (Two tables)
- Participants felt that street width should not be a factor; land use should be the deciding factor. (Three tables)



- Some participants felt it was worse to put a stop in front of a large residential building rather than a townhouse since more people live in the apartment building. (Two tables)
- Participants from Community Boards would like help from NYCDOT in their evaluation of applications. (Two tables)
- Participants suggested that the city determine where stops can be and tell buses where to go rather than the other way around. (Three tables)
- Bus operators would like to see more outreach to their industry.
- One participant suggested the intercity bus stop should be behind an MTA bus stop in the direction of traffic when the public and intercity bus stops are concurrent.
- Noise, idling and pollution are a few of the negative impacts intercity buses create in the city, participants mentioned. Participants mentioned that idling during loading and unloading of passengers contributed to contamination and suggested the use of an automatic shut off system for buses.
- Another issue was the time slots allocated for bus companies in particular bus stops. They noted bus companies operate in a particular spot for what they think is a long period of time. A participant noted that the reason for such a long time is that buses are often delayed. Participants complained that some bus companies even double-parked and idle in the area.
- Regarding permits, participants noted they want a clear interpretation of the permit to avoid gray areas. They want permits to be visible on the bus. They also want buses to be clearly branded with companies' logos. This would ensure only the company awarded the permit is utilizing it. (Two tables)
- A participant stated she preferred that bus companies only sold tickets on the bus or through the web, but never on the streets.
- On the subject of trees, participants were concerned with damages to trees near stops. Some suggested the companies pay for tree guards to avoid brushing on or destroying branches. Others preferred bus companies simply maintain all trees in their bus stop completely. If one tree is destroyed, a new one of the same age should replace it, they said.
- Participants also noted bus stops should be spaced out.
- The participants also wanted bus drivers to use efficient use of curb space. (Three tables)



- Participants noted the issue of sharing bus stops. Companies could share a bus stop. A CB3 representative reported two applications for permits for concurrent spaces in a street that would eliminate an unloading/loading zone for local merchants. He suggested sharing that spot. If sharing occurs, it should be monitored.
- Participants also wondered about the number of buses allowed in one stop. NYCDOT should explain how it would prevent the overlap of buses, they argued. One participant reiterated she didn't want intercity buses in downtown and suggested a terminal to be created for them.
- The participants liked the idea of residents documenting violations. (Two tables)
- A participant felt there was an inconsistency in the way sidewalk space is allocated. A tax-paying restaurant might not be able to have a sidewalk café, but space can be allocated to buses.

IV. Questions and Answers

Q: How will stops with DOT permission letters issued before the new law will be "grandfathered in". Will they not have to have their applications reviewed by NYCDOT?

A: Existing stops will be grandfathered in for up to three years, if a location does not meet health and safety criteria then DOT is not required to renew those locations.

Q: Will "mom and pop"-type buses or commuter "jitney" buses would be included in the legislation pertaining to intercity buses?

A: As noted above, all unsubsidized bus service between New York and another state is subject to the new regulations.

Q: Enforcement is also a concern. How will NYCDOT enforce the guidelines? And what agency – NYCDOT/ NYPD – would intercede in case of a violation?

A: NYPD will be the enforcement agency for violations.

Q: What impact will current Community Board decisions would have on future stop locations?

A: Community Boards will have a 45-day consultation period to provide comments on each proposed stop location.

Q: What criteria does NYCDOT include as part of a technical evaluation for public safety in the applications for permits?

A: The intent of this public workshop was to inform the criteria that DOT will use in the permit process. Criteria will be based on public health and safety.



- Q: *Is there a process for the Community Boards to appeal NYCDOT's decisions on stop locations?* (Two tables)
- A: The 45-day consultation period will allow Community Boards to offer input. There is no provision for community boards to appeal decisions.