

Traffic and Transportation Committee Meeting

September 10th, 2015

Committee Members Present - Chair, Yahaira Alonzo, Asst. Chair, Wanda Garcia, Mary Anderson, Anita Barberis, James Berlin, Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, and Martin Restituyo.

Community Board Members: Richard Lewis and Maria Luna.

Excused – Elizabeth Lorris-Ritter and Terriell Peters.

Public – Residents of Washington Heights/Inwood area, Nina Haiman (DOT), Josh Orzeck (DOT), Preston Johnson (DOT), Julio Batista (New York Columbia/Presbyterian), Patrick Burka (New York Columbia/Presbyterian).

Traffic and Transportation

1. DOT application on new revocable consent to install and maintain sidewalk planters at 650 West 168th Street (Columbia Presbyterian Hospital) presentation by Patrick Burka, Vice President for capital projects for Columbia Presbyterian. Application to install planters on the south-side of 168th Street between Fort Washington and Broadway in an effort to upgrade streetscape.

The new 13 planters are:

- Precast concrete
- Tinted
- 3 feet wide, 3 feet tall, 6 feet long.

Sidewalk is not levelled so the University will in parallel with the enhancing the streetscape is upgrade the sidewalk by replacing the concrete slabs and add paver stones along the sidewalk. The 13 planters will be spread throughout the entire south-side of 168th Street between Fort Washington and Broadway. Black Building, Physicians and Surgeons, Alumni Auditorium, Pick up and drop off area for the Vanderbilt building and the Ambulance bay area.

The sidewalk is in varying array of condition, so CU will replace the concrete. There is chipping and swelling, and so forth. The boxes are similar to the color of the concrete. The paving stones will be placed the first 5 feet coming in off the curb. The paving stones will blend with the concrete.

The planters will not obstruct nor divert the traffic flow. The planters will not change the flow of east to west pedestrian sidewalk.

The installation of the planters will take about 1 week. The sidewalk work will take about 6 to 8 weeks. And CU Presbyterian would like to finish the project before the winter.

The DOT has approved this plan. And CU Presbyterian sees this as an ongoing amenity.

The sidewalk plan has already been approved by Land-Use.

Resolution in support of Columbia University's installation, maintenance and use of sidewalk for planters at 650 W. 168th Street.

Committee Vote- 6: 0:1

Public Vote: 6:0:0

2. Bike Lanes on Seaman Avenue from 218th Street to Beak Street: Josh Orzeck of the DOT presented. There had been bike lanes on Seaman Avenue before but those lanes no longer met current specifications since the upgrade. The upgrade consists of making bike lanes at least 5 feet wide, the previous lanes were 4 feet wide. 4 feet wide lanes are no longer acceptable. The plan proposed does meet current specifications. Because of the widening of the bike lanes, there will be one 5 feet wide bike lane going north; and there will be a shared bike lane on the southbound lane.

The designated 5 feet wide bike lane will be placed on the northbound side so as to give more room to those cycling north because cycling north is a little tougher, cyclists struggle and need a little more room.

There is a similar plan put in place on Fort Washington Avenue on 165th Street south lane heading towards Broadway.

Narrow bike lanes are directing cyclists to ride too close to park cars. This increases the risk of getting hit by an opening door and the cyclist falling into on coming traffic. The change was made so that cyclists can have safer lanes than to substandard bike lanes. DOT cannot build bike lanes less than 5 feet wide. It is not the law, but it is the new standard.

The car lanes traveling north have 11 feet wide lane; and 5 feet for cyclists, and 8 feet for parked car. The middle line of the whole Seaman lane will be moved from the middle.

Seaman Avenue will remain the standard width lane. DOT does not feel like Seaman Avenue needs an additional traffic lane due to traffic. However, the DOT is not prepared to address the issue of tolls or using the streets as a shortcut. DOT has installed a slow zone, and speed bumps, and signs at gateways. This may discourage some, but may not discourage all from skimping the tolls.

Committee concerns:

- Speed bumps and potholes along Seaman Avenue. This makes a ride very uncomfortable. Therefore, people are less inclined to use the bike lanes given the condition of the street.
- Speed bump between Cummings and Dyckman makes no sense, especially for a cyclist, due to the incline (uphill) of the street.
- Shared bike lanes very confusing for both cyclists and drivers. Shared bike lanes are not better. It's almost a sham, not better than a regular street. Ideally cars should not be going in to the bike lane area, but they do.

Public Concerns:

- How does the DOT chose which streets get bike lanes? *Seaman seems impractical for bike lanes. DOT: Bike lanes are about making connections throughout the neighborhoods. Choosing streets which the Community Board expressed the need for such facility.*
- There was concern over safety for cyclists because of putting just one bike lane on Seaman. Danger already exists on Seaman because the avenue curbs, so having just one bike lane will increase that danger.
- The issue of toll shopping. Toll on Henry Hudson is \$3.00; so cars will get off the Dyckman exit in order to avoid the toll. This creates more traffic for Seaman Avenue.

3. Mid-block crosswalk on Ft. Washington Ave. between W.165th Street and W.168th Street.

Julio Batista recognized that there is an issue of pedestrian safety in this area. Josh Orzeck from the DOT clarified that there has been a request, and the DOT is going to conduct a study, but DOT is not ready to make a presentation because they have no information. DOT nor the hospital were ready to present on this topic.

4. DOT discussion on St. Nicholas Avenue: Presenters Nina Haiman and Preston Johnson both from DOT.

There were 2 walk-throughs (the first one was in May, the second in early September) of St. Nicholas Avenue conducted in order to get a better understanding of the traffic, pedestrian, and safety issues concerning St. Nicholas Avenue. Community board members and community residents were invited and participated in both walk-throughs.

The proposed changes will be implemented on St. Nicholas Avenue from 169th Street through 193rd Street. St. Nicholas Avenue will have bike lanes on both sides. The expansion of bike lines on St. Nicholas Avenue will make useful connections for people on bicycles, and it will also be in line with Vision Zero because St. Nicholas has a high volume of crashes. There is a strong need to reduce pedestrian fatalities.

St. Nicholas is a street that has a high number of crashes. The corridor is on the top 3% in Manhattan of the number of people killed or severely injured at certain intersections. It is a 60 feet wide street with no bike lanes, poor signal timing, and pretty moderate traffic volume.

	Total Injuries	Severe Injuries	Fatalities	KSI
Pedestrian	141	18	0	0
Bicyclist	29	2	0	2
Motor Vehicle Occupant	234	5	0	5
Total	404	25	0	25

KSI = Killed/Severely Injured

This project would address these issues. It is a traffic combing, Vision Zero, and expansion of bike lanes project.

Proposals:

- Create a designated turn left lane: This will make left turns safer by reducing accidents of left turn and rear end collisions.
- Have one moving lane on each direction. This would reduce speeding.
- Create a painted medium.
- Bike lanes on each side of the street.
- Wider parking lanes.
- Have safer pedestrian crossings.

DOT has implemented similar measures throughout the City and there has been a reduction in crashes with injuries. Benefits usually go to drivers and motor vehicle occupants because they have to drive in a predictable manner thus getting into fewer crashes. This is also beneficial to pedestrians and cyclists.

There is a double-parking issue in the area and DOT is going to work with the community in order to create loading zones. The placing and regulations of loading zones will be determined after face-to-face consultations with business owners and careful review of the needs of the businesses. DOT goes business to business and speaks with individual owners of establishment, and asks pertinent questions about timing of their deliveries and how long deliveries take. This is done so that there aren't loading zones that lasts 10 hours, which will be excessive or to make loading zones during days and times in which deliveries do not take place. Loading Zones will create a safe and legal space.

Adequate information will be dispersed throughout the community. And it will be bilingual.

DOT would like to implement changes in the spring of 2016.

Committee Concerns:

- Loading Zones must be placed strategically.
- Give people in the area adequate notice of the changes and also in bilingual. These changes are going to shock the residents in this area.
- Accommodate buses. Moving traffic will be reduced to one moving lane. St. Nicholas has a lot of buses. Will there be bus lanes? *No bus lane.*
- Comparing of one neighborhood to another is irrelevant. And so are the numbers because it is insufficient information. No pedestrian accident numbers.
- How was the number of moving traffic taken into account in this plan? *The studies conducted showed that St. Nicholas has moderate moving traffic, and this number can be accommodated by one single thru lane with turn base. If this was 800 to 1,000 moving traffic, we would not be proposing this project.*
- Key Food on 172nd Street also has a loading zone. Trucks are on the loading zone and bus stop and beyond the bus stop. How is this project going to address this?

- How binding will this resolution be? What happens if this plan doesn't work? *After a complete set of data is gathered (about 1 year worth of data), the DOT would come back and present the data and re-visit the plan if there is a need to do that.*
- Any studies about unintended consequences as a result of implementation of a project? *Crash data, travel time, and amount of speeding. So if one of the metrics isn't working it will be addressed.*
- This is a 25 block project. It is significant. *We are willing to tweak the project after the collection of data.*
- A resolution that requires a 2 step process. 1st is the preliminary design. 2nd step will include getting the data from the DOT – regarding loading zones, double-parking.

Public Concerns:

- A lot of vehicles – motorcycles, cars, trucks – that speed up St. Nicholas Avenue. If this plan calms traffic, this is great.
- Bus situation: Buses making turns is a real problem. So perhaps this will be better because there will be one lane for moving and no turns.
- 193rd Street & Ft. Gorge Hill has a lot of traffic going up to St. Nicholas, there are 2 major buses on the corner of St. Nicholas, and there is also a major supermarket there with lots of trucks parked on St. Nicholas for loading and unloading. Cars can't get through and now there is also going to make run for a bike lane.
- Fine Fare has a loading zone. And they use the entire street for loading.
- Concern about the family day care centers on the west side of St. Nicholas. Children go to Wallenberg Playground and must cross St. Nicholas Avenue to get there. Any kind of reduction in lane of traffic will make it safer and easier for children in the area.
- A lot of taxis on St. Nicholas. Picking up and dropping off. Turning St. Nicholas into 1 lane of traffic with a traffic lane is not going to work.
- The project does not look appropriate for St. Nicholas. There is a need for 2 traffic lanes on each direction.
- Parking along St. Nicholas is tough.

Enforcement Issues:

- Lots of double parking violations, and nothing is being done about it.
- Abuse of loading zones, and nothing is being done about it.

Additional Requests from the Community Board:

- Come back to the community board with precise details of loading zones. How many, where, and for how long?

Design addresses:

- Reduction of accidents.
- Streamline the flow of traffic.
- Creates a bike lane.
- Larger buffer for pedestrians to move around.

Design Does Not Address:

- Double Parking problems.
- Loading zones problems.

Resolution in support of the project. And the DOT will report on the loading zones once the data has been collected. And the DOT will also report back after a year's worth of data collection and tweak the project if it needs some fixing.

Requesting the DOT come back to us with a plan for resolving the double-parking and loading zones.

Vote: 5:1:0; Public: 4:2:0