



## **Traffic & Transportation Committee, Manhattan CB12 – March 2019**

Committee Members Present: Nicholas Martinez (Interim Chair), James Berlin, Robin Cruz, Gerard Dengel, Bianca Guerrero, Danielle Jettoo, Bruce Robertson

Committee Members Absent: Mary Anderson

Board Members Present: Richard Lewis, Richard Allman, Steve Simon

Public Members Present: Omar Tejada

Public Members Absent: Edith Prentiss

Public Attendees: Jerry Culligan, Howard Johnson, Jon Greenfeld, Judith Desire, Lyle Blackwood (Community Coordinator, DOT), Vivian Duent, Sylvia Shapiro, Sandra Harris

### **1. Call to Order**

**Nick** introduced himself as the new interim chair for Traffic and Transportation and mentioned that he looked forward to working with everyone on the committee. After the introduction, each of the members of the committee presented themselves to the public and commenced the presentations.

### **2. Waterfront Alliance Presentation:**

**Maggie Flanagan** presented on the potential for a NYC Ferry stop in Inwood. She reviewed NYC Ferry services, site selection criteria, and WEDG (rating system for ferries that's similar to LEED). EDC's evaluation of Dyckman Marina showed that a ferry would save time for commuters going downtown but not going to Midtown, and that the water is deep enough in the area to accommodate a stop.

**Jim** suggested that replacing La Marina, which has caused many problems, with a parking lot for the ferry system could work. **Bianca** discouraged creating more space for private cars, asked how much public subsidy goes into 1 ferry ticket (the City subsidizes \$6+ per ticket, more than it subsidizes for other forms of transit). **Omar** encouraged the board to be open to any new modes of transportation, and asked if **Maggie's** team could determine how many residents stand to benefit and how the ferry could attract people to come uptown. **Danielle** noted that a route around Manhattan to Queens would be very helpful. **Robin Cruz** asked **Maggie** to return to us with some possible ferry routes.

**Maggie** emphasized that in order to secure a ferry stop, the community would need strong voices in support. To study further, Waterfront Alliance would need funding from elected officials or the Board.

**Jerry** (public) noted that La Marina is parkland and that a parking lot would be a magnet for Westchester residents to drop off their cars in Inwood. **Richard Allman** asked about models of economic development or retail around ferry stops. He stressed that a ferry stop should invest in uptown as much as it does downtown. **Nicholas** noted that an environment impact study would also be helpful. **Judith** asked about the Inwood Action Plan's \$22 million dollars of funding, and asked to clarify the \$6 subsidy.

### **3. Amsterdam Avenue Pedestrian Plaza – Yeshiva University**

**Jon Greenfeld** from Yeshiva University (YU) summarized his presentation from last month to create a pedestrian plaza near 186<sup>th</sup> Street and Amsterdam. Please refer to last month's minutes for more detail. Regarding Danielle's inquiry about signage that says the plazas are public space, Jon confirmed that such signage already exists in the 185<sup>th</sup> St. plaza and would exist in the new plaza as well. Regarding at-grade crossing for disabled people, he said he will ensure the plaza has multiple at-grade access points. Regarding community outreach, a YU student did door-to-door outreach. He spoke to 75 residents. There were 2 main concerns: residents want to make sure the plaza is for everyone and that it wouldn't block traffic concerns. John expects to do more outreach.



**Danielle** asked if it was a quantitative or qualitative survey (it was qualitative). **Jerry** asked if they have checked with Fire Department. **Jon** said since it is already closed to traffic, it wouldn't be an issue. **Gerard** stressed that for the sake of consistency, we should have a public hearing for this plaza sometime soon. **Jon** would like to do more door-to-door outreach before then. **Jim** proposed a public hearing held off YU premises to keep it neutral. **Omar** and **Robin** are very supportive of the proposal. **Bianca** is also supportive but noted that 75 comments is low.

**Jim** emphasized that the plaza will remain a City street i.e. everyone will have access to it no matter what. **He made a option for a public hearing – 7 committee members voted yes, 1 against, 0 abstained.** **Nick** will work with the office to figure out venue and time. **Lyle** (DOT) should coordinate with DOT regarding outreach. **Judith** asked that YU provide better pictures of the area. She and **Danielle** asked about how people could host events in the plaza space. **Lyle** (DOT), **Jon**, and **Sandra** explained that organizations would have to file a permit through the City. The permits cost \$25 and maintenance organizations would talk reach out to organizations to discuss maintenance and security. **Gerard** asked about what party carries liability if someone gets injured on the plaza. **Lyle** (DOT) explained that YU would, under the maintenance policy.

#### **4. Amtrak Billboard**

**Bruce** presented on the new billboard over the Amtrak railway near 155<sup>th</sup> and Riverside. He has a petition of 1,000 names of people who are upset about it. Mark Levine, Gale Brewer, and Espaillat have sent a letter to Amtrak. Bruce suggested that we could get the City to block connection to the power grid (the billboard would be illuminated) and noted that a Conrail billboard was blocked in the past.

**Nick** asked if it would create light pollution. **Bruce** said maybe and noted that billboards distract drivers. **Sylvia** noted that it is right outside of a historic district. She asked if there is caselaw about constructing things on the edge of such a district, and if Amtrak can do this as-of-right. **Joy** noted that Amtrak has preemptive exemption that allows construction over their land. She asked if there are any "specs" on the billboard, or any information on permits Amtrak has. Since it's an illuminated billboard, they would need construction, illumination, and electrical permits. **Gerard** asked for confirmation that it is indeed a historic district. **Jim** noted that Amtrak has right of way and that residents boycotted stores selling LG products. **Joy** and **Vivian** noted that the billboard is also visible from the park. **Bruce** said he could follow up with the head of the park conservancy. **Sylvia** asked about what Amtrak's timeframe is, and noted that the fastest way to prevent this thing is to get a preliminary injunction. **Marcel** asked why there's another billboard down near the Fairway on 125<sup>th</sup> St (outside our district).

**Bianca** asked if we could get Amtrak to come to a board meeting. **Richard Allman** emphasized that we should use our federal representatives (namely Senator Schumer) to address this issue. **Bruce made a motion** for a joint resolution. It was seconded. 8 committee members voted yes, 0 against. The non-committee board member present at the time voted 1 yes, 0 against, 0 abstained. The public votes 7 yes, 0 no. **Steve** showed up late with a draft resolution. The board to moved to adopted it with a few edits that Steve agreed to make. The committee votes 8 yes, 0 against; other board members voted 1 yes, 2 abstain; and the public votes 4 yes, 0 against.

#### **5. Governor & Mayor's 10-Point Plan**

**Bianca** presented on Gov. Cuomo and Mayor's 10-point framework for fixing and funding the subways. Details can be found here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/111-19/mayor-de-blasio-governor-cuomo-10-point-plan-transform-fund-mta>.

**Nick** thinks the framework is too ambitious. **Gerard** agrees that the plan is very ambitious and will need to be phased in. Some of it can start without the revenue-generating aspect. He thinks it is unfair for the City and State to toll residents who were displaced out of Manhattan into the outer boroughs. **Bianca** noted that the MTA has internal expertise that should be elevated, and that congestion pricing could be good thing, as less congestion means less cars and less greenhouse gas emissions. **Danielle** asked if the City and State are collaborating on this, and if the framework mentioned



bathrooms in subway stations or protecting parking outside of the central business district. The City and State are collaborating, and bathrooms and parking are not mentioned. **Judith** asked about if it included a fare increase. The recent fare increase is separate from this framework, and the framework explicitly says that the MTA should increase limit fare increases to 2% for inflation. She asked if this could go away with the next administration – Bianca was not sure. She asked if they mentioned construction for better accessibility – the framework does mention accessibility as a funding priority.

**Jim** noted that we will need a public hearing on congestion pricing, and that the issue for Washington Heights and Inwood will be parking. Residents from other places will park in our district and then use the trains to get downtown. **Omar** noted that Deputy Borough President Bonilla suggested that the Manhattan community boards unite in their stance for or against congestion pricing. **Jim** noted that this would be done through Richard Lewis talking to other chairs.

**Jerry** said a lot of the congestion pricing advocates point to London as an example of how it works well. He claimed that no one has studied what would happen in Manhattan if congestion pricing was allowed. He later said London is circular with many alternate routes and new transit construction, whereas NYC has limited transit. He felt that NYC is not thinking enough about consequences. **Bianca** noted that London and Singapore are the usual examples. The point of congestion pricing is to decrease cars: drivers will be hit, that's the point. Additionally, some studies on congestion pricing in NYC may exist. **Omar** noted that it's very expensive to afford a car in Singapore, and suggested that we look at the details of congestion pricing in other cities. **Gerard** said any study done on congestion pricing in NYC is theoretical and emphasized that this will move traffic to communities of modest means already dealing with air quality and other issues. The unintended consequences of congestion pricing means that the outer boroughs will be hit. **Joy** (public) noted that congestion pricing does not cover all of Manhattan and echoed Jim's point about people parking uptown to go downtown.

#### 6. OMB Preliminary Budget FY'20

**Nick** reviewed 6 items from the preliminary budget. He clarified that the item referring to repairs for the 155<sup>th</sup> street stop refers to the C train. **Steve** asked that we request more information on that item. Someone asked about Bushman steps. **Nick** noted that the comment from OMB was that Parks Department does not have enough funding to repair this, so the board should bring this item to our elected officials.

#### 7. Old Business

**Jim** noted that the traffic problem he brought up last month has not been abated, and issues continue to arise with the M4 and M5 buses.

#### 8. New Business

**Riverside Viaduct Project:** **Vivian** brought up the 3 year Riverside Drive viaduct project. Residents of the area had done a walking tour with Lyle (DOT representative). She requested that DOT be present and communicate more with the neighborhood. **Bruce** noted that many of our elected are aware of the issues with this project. He wants the new Manhattan Borough Commissioner to present to the board. **Jim** noted that we should give the Manhattan Borough Commissioner very clear instructions about what we want to hear about. **Jerry** said DOT promised residents of the neighborhood that they would do a presentation in the next 3 weeks. He brought up watermain projects happening uptown and cautioned against watermain work happening in the same area at the same time as viaduct construction. **Steve** said he can look into the watermain issue, and asked that the Viaduct be on the next agenda. He added later that DOT has a community liaison for this project (Valerie Torchon) that's based on Broadway and 158<sup>th</sup> St. **Jim** suggested that we do a walkthrough for the Riverside Drive area. **Gerard** said with so much happening in the viaduct project, residents and the board should ask for bimonthly updates on progress.

**Judith** mentioned that the viaduct project should maintain access to the 155<sup>th</sup> (or 158<sup>th</sup>) entrance to the Greenway. **Omar** agreed, and noted that it's in bad condition (downhill slope with lots of potholes). **Marcel** (public) mentioned that there's no protected bike lane going to the bridge at 158<sup>th</sup> and that there could be parking opportunities below the viaduct.



**Harlem River Drive:** **Danielle** asked if we could get an update from DOT regarding construction on Harlem River Drive, as there are many potholes and low visibility. It is very unsafe. **Steve** said we should take this issue to Ebenezer and ask him to follow up with DOT right way. **Jim** said Lyle (DOT) should speak to this issue next month. **Judith** (public) mentioned that the Harlem River Drive Greenway is also full of potholes and lacks light. This is under the Parks committee's jurisdiction. **Nick** said Chair Richard L. would talk to the Manhattan Borough Commissioner and he would talk to DOT about Harlem River Drive.

**Buses:** **Danielle** asked how many bus lanes are in our district.

**Events:** **Judith** (public) advertised a bike to work day event.

**9. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned by Nick at 9:30.