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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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December 22, 2017

Luis Sanchez
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
Department of Transportation
55 Water St. 9th Floor
New York, NY 10041

Dear Manhattan Borough Commissioner Sanchez:

At its Full Board meeting December 21, 2017, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

Resolution requesting a granite strip bicycle lane on Morton St. btw. West St. and Washington St. and a striped and painted bicycle lane continuing east on Morton beyond Washington on the asphalt pavement to Bleecker St. or one of the other connecting north-south streets.

Whereas Morton St., as a main thoroughfare from West St. eastward and one of the four exit points from the Hudson River Park (HRP) esplanade and bicycle path to the street in Community Board 2, Manhattan (CB2), is much used as a bicycle way, especially because it serves as a link between the HRP bicycle paths and the residential area to the east; and

Whereas the Belgian block surface on Morton St. btw. West and Washington Sts. is unsuitable for bicycles, and as a result, cyclists ride on the sidewalks there, which residents in the surrounding community report creates hazardous conditions for pedestrians, and are requesting a bike lane in the street bed; and

Whereas with the anticipated opening of the new middle school at 75 Morton St. in Sept. 2018, it is expected that sidewalk usage and bicycle traffic will increase considerably, including from students and their families, with bicycle access and sidewalk safety becoming more needed than ever in that area; and

Whereas it also has been requested that the proposed bike lane be continued on Morton St. (from that one block where Belgian blocks remain) with customary striping and paint on the asphalt pavement that extends beyond Washington St. to Bleecker or another connecting street to provide direct and safe bicycling access east and safe links to north and south bicycle lanes; and

Whereas there is no viable east/west street for a bicycle path nearby that proceeds in a southeast direction; and

Whereas Morton St. is 36 ft. in width, wide for a side street, that allows for retention of existing parking on both sides with the addition of a bike lane; and

Whereas the NYC Dept. of Transportation (DOT) has developed a new bikeway design to use in Belgian block streets and blend with their historical character that consists of a 2 1/2 -ft.-wide, 6-in.-deep granite strip inlaid into the existing paving blocks. This type of bikeway has been installed successfully on Varick St. btw. Canal and Laight Sts.; and

Whereas Morton St. btw. West and Washington Sts. is not in a designated historic district, but because its Belgian block street bed is a historic feature, CB2's Landmarks Committee was asked for input and agreed unanimously that the proposed granite strip bike lane would provide needed pedestrian safety there and had no objection to its installation, asking that efforts be made to blend the granite strip with the Belgian blocks so as to maintain historical character as much as possible, including elimination of inappropriate painted signage; and

Whereas this type of granite strip bike lane has already undergone extensive review and been approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission for use in historic districts such as DUMBO and Vinegar Hill in Brooklyn; and

Whereas historic photographs show long granite slabs being used with Belgian blocks in NYC streets in similar configurations to the proposed granite strip bike lane (source: *Toward Accessible Historic Streetscapes: A Study of New York City's Belgian Block Heritage*, Prepared for the Historic Districts Council, April 2017, Cover, pp. 13, 14 &15); and

Whereas the methodology for removing and replacing Belgian blocks individually in streets is flawed and results in irregularly laid configurations that are not only unattractive and historically incorrect, but also exceptionally dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists; and

Whereas as more and more bicycle lanes are created, with many extending into streets with Belgian blocks (both in and out of historic districts), and ADA requirements for adapting Belgian block streets to accommodate disabled access and pedestrian safety will call for historically appropriate adaptations, the requested granite strip bicycle lane can serve as a pilot to evaluate for future designs; and

Whereas bicyclists travel both west and east on Morton St. en route from or to the HRP;

Therefore be it resolved that CB2 requests that a granite strip bicycle lane, the same as (or similar to) the one already installed on Varick St. btw. Canal and Laight Sts. be installed on Morton St. btw. West St. and Washington St.; and

Be it further resolved that CB2 also requests that the bike lane be continued on Morton St. beyond Washington St. with customary striping and paint on the asphalt pavement to Bleecker St. or one of the other connecting streets, such as Hudson St. or 7th Ave. S. to provide safe and direct bicycling access east and safe links to north and south bicycle lanes; and

Be it further resolved that CB2 would appreciate that utmost care be given to the placement and use of the granite strip, so that it blends with the Belgian blocks to preserve as much historic integrity and character as possible; and

Be it further resolved that CB2 asks that no inappropriate painted signage be installed on Morton St. btw. West and Washington Sts., but if signage is necessary, that it is in keeping with the historical veracity of the Belgian blocks; and

Be it further resolved that CB2 urges that Belgian blocks be removed and replaced in an array that maintains alignment and consistency and includes the use of a specific process and infrastructure; and

Be it finally resolved that CB2 recommends that a two-way bicycle lane on Morton St. be considered.

Vote: Unanimous, with 34 Board Members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Terri Cude, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Shirley Secunda, Chair
Traffic & Transportation Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

TC/EM

c: Hon. Jerrold Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator
Hon. Deborah Glick, Assembly Member
Hon. Gale Brewer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, Council Member