



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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District Manager

March 3, 2011

William H. Daly
Chairperson, Mayor's Midtown Citizens Committee

New York, New York 10036

Dear Mr. Daly:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) applauds the Mayor's Midtown Citizens Committee (MMCC) for reactivating their Bus Subcommittee and issuing the "Tour and Charter Bus Parking Initiative" report. We support the major recommendations made in the report for both short term and long term improvements. We believe many of their proposals will reduce tour and charter bus idling, traffic congestion, illegal bus parking and idling and disruptive bus transit on residential streets in our neighborhood while enabling more visitors to midtown and the theatre district. Moreover, we feel by issuing the report and lending your voice calling for creative solutions to the tourist and charter bus parking problems, real action may occur.

For the past 15 years tourism increased significantly in midtown and has become a major industry in our city. The Mayor's office estimated that 48.7 million people visited New York in 2010, a record number. There were over 12 million tickets sold to Broadway shows earning over \$1 billion, also a record number. The Mayor's office projects an increase to 50 million tourists within the next two years. A substantial percentage of these visitors and Broadway goers are regional residents who use tour and charter buses to get to New York.

The report has several findings that mirror the visual and anecdotal information observed and noted by this Community Board during the last several years. First, given the current volumes of busses entering New York for day time trips, there is a shortage of approximately 130 tour & charter bus parking spaces, particularly from 10am to 7pm, when buses usually need a place to park while they wait for their passengers to enjoy matinee shows or sightseeing. Second, a high percentage of the existing 177 designated legal tourist tour and charter bus parking spots (mainly west of 10th and especially 11th Avenues) are used inappropriately by cars or delivery trucks causing many tour and charter buses to instead park in illegal spots. In fact the survey done for the report found that the bus operators paid an average of \$37/day in parking fines. Third, that survey found a substantial number of bus companies reported their drivers would drive around for two to six hours while waiting for the passenger's return or drive to and from New Jersey (where parking spaces are easier to find), causing increased pollution and traffic in our district. Fourth, the demand for tour and charter buses is likely to increase over the next few

years, particularly given the cancellation of the ARC project, which is expected to cause an increase of 1,703 buses entering Manhattan over the next 15 years.

In addition to the cancellation of ARC, the problem of tour and charter bus parking is likely to get worse as most of the existing 177 legal tour and charter bus spaces are located in rezoned areas of Hudson Yards, Western Rail Yards, Riverside and the likely rezoning in Clinton West. Tour & charter bus parking is typically not permitted next to residential uses, which these re-zonings encourage.

In the survey completed by the Citizens Committee, the companies ask for a parking garage conveniently located less than 15 minutes from their pick up location, where drivers can spend 3 to 8 hours comfortably, and rest before the return trip.

The MMCC's Bus Subcommittee proposes the following short term solutions, which we enthusiastically endorse:

- **Improve information and communication** by asking the Department of Transportation (DOT) to maintain a map of legal tourist tour and charter bus parking spots and improving phone and electronic information to drivers on traffic and parking availability;
- **Install meters for tour and charter bus parking spaces with a \$50/day charge.** Given the existing choices of an average of \$37/day/ticket and excessive driving, the Mayor's Midtown Citizen's Committee believes most tour and charter bus companies would welcome this initiative. The meter charge is estimated to collect \$1.5 million/year, which we would advocate be used for dedicated enforcement agents;
- **Create an "intelligent" parking system:** The Citizens Committee proposes a low-cost system of embedding electronic sensors in each designated tour and charter bus parking spaces that would feed information to enforcement on whether eligible or ineligible vehicles are parking there and to tour and charter bus drivers on available spots. This system would be relatively cheap to install (approximately \$36,000 for up to 250 spots) and maintain. The parking fees would likely more than pay for the system; and
- **Increase the number of legal tour and charter bus curbside parking spots:** In the short term it would be preferable to address some of the substantial unmet demand by additional legal on-street parking spaces, away from residential areas. Any potential new spots should be vetted with Community Boards in advance of placement to ensure that they are sufficiently removed from residences and /or do not create excessive tour & charter bus traffic through the primarily low rise residential streets of the Clinton Preservation and Chelsea residential districts.

We also support the long term recommendations, though feel they require additional vetting and discussion before any implementation:

- **The Port Authority should build a "consolidated garage"** as committed by the current Mayoral administration during the Hudson Yards Rezoning. This garage, currently being researched to be located at Gavin Plaza (West 39th to 40th Street, Tenth to Eleventh Avenue) should serve both Port Authority and private buses;
- **Develop two to three 40-60 private tour and charter bus garages:** The study points out that building a garage is relatively inexpensive, though identifying an appropriate site is difficult. In fact, the study recommends investigating four potential sites. Most of these sites raise substantial community concerns and we specifically do not endorse the reports mention of specific sites pending further discussion. –

- **Encourage partnerships with existing garages that can accommodate tour and charter bus parking:** We feel the idea of such partnerships is interesting and warrants further discussions that we intend to participate in. We again note that any such accommodation should include Community Board review and that this concept should encourage de- concentration (e.g. no more than a few spots at any garage) rather than concentration.

Again, we applaud the Mayor's Midtown Citizen's Committee for tackling this important issue and look forward to working with them toward implementing their exciting and creative recommendations.

Sincerely yours,



John Weis
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
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Jay Marcus
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