



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**JOHN WEIS**  
Chair

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District Manager

October 6, 2010

James Weinstein  
Executive Director  
NJ TRANSIT Headquarters  
1 Penn Plaza  
East Newark, NJ 07105

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

**RE NJ Transit Bus Drivers and Public Safety**

Dear Mr. Weinstein.

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) would like to bring to your attention matters of public safety caused by New Jersey Transit (NJT) bus drivers' behavior in our neighborhood, in the vicinity of the Port Authority Bus Terminal on the west side of Manhattan. The first concerns pedestrian conflicts and the second illegal idling.

We ask that you consider all measures that might contribute to resolving these issues, which put the health and safety of a growing residential population at risk. Such panoply of measures would include incentives, education, audits, but also new bus routes to the Port Authority if appropriate.

CB4 is on record as favoring mass transit commuting from New Jersey and acknowledges that NJT provides a mode of transportation beneficial to our city and to our neighborhood. The 2005 rezoning of the west side is bringing about conflicts in street usage that must now be addressed. Because until recently this area was a manufacturing zone, the continuous ribbon of NJT buses lined up daily on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue's east side, blocking intersections from 30<sup>th</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> Streets between 4 and 8:00 p. m., did not interfere with pedestrians. However the 2005 rezoning of Hudson Yards converted 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to a residential zone with large developments sprouting up everywhere.

CB4 has received formal complaints from some of the 2,000 residents of the large residential buildings newly built on both sides of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Streets.

**NJT bus drivers block pedestrian crossings.** With the buses' large footprint, a blocked crossing often means that the pedestrian cannot cross at all. See Illustration 1. As you know it is illegal to gridlock the intersection in New York City. What is less understood is that (1) it is illegal to engage in the intersection if there is not enough space to clear it and (2) both pedestrian crossings must be cleared as well as they are part of the intersection as defined by the law.

**NJT bus drivers do not yield to pedestrians** who have the right of way while the buses turn right onto 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. A recent pedestrian safety report published by New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) identified that most New York City pedestrian fatalities occur at intersections, but also notes that truck and bus drivers who hit pedestrians do so mostly while turning right as their visibility is limited. NJT buses should be equipped with special mirrors on the right side as recommended by the DOT.

**NJT bus drivers prohibit access to local bus stops:** Other residents have complained that the MTA bus drivers cannot discharge or pick up passengers on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m., because of the continuous flow of NJT buses blocks access to the bus stops. Local transit users are left stranded with no alternative transportation options at peak hours.

While constant training, testing and clear operational guidelines could address these issues, a more structural change to the bus queuing location would engineer the risks out : the queuing of NJT buses could be relocated to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 33<sup>rd</sup> street to 40<sup>th</sup> street. This would reduce from seven to one the gridlock and pedestrian conflict risks, remove all impediments to local MTA bus stops and put the buses in an essentially commercial/highway environment better suited to their operation.

**NJT buses drivers collectively idle for hours every day while parked.** New York City has strict non-idling laws that limit idling to 3 minutes maximum, and 1 minute in the proximity of a school. There are five large parking areas for NJT buses located on lots going from 37<sup>th</sup> to 38<sup>th</sup>, 38<sup>th</sup> to 39<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> Street, on 40<sup>th</sup> Street between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenues, and on 40<sup>th</sup> Street between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues. At around 5:00 p.m. every day, hundreds of buses fire up their engines at the same time as they prepare to leave the parking lots. While the few buses in the front rows leave immediately, the buses parked at the back of the lots leave 15 and sometimes 30 minutes later, thus collectively idling for hours every day. Strict directives should be given to the drivers or technology should be employed to notify them individually of their hours of departure from the parking.

CB4 is well aware that the Port Authority (PA) intends to build a Bus Garage that would eliminate these problems. While CB4 is a strong supporter of this garage, it will be a long time until it is funded and built. These matters of safety cannot wait.

We look forward to hearing from your staff about how you plan to address these safety issues. Please let us know as soon as possible, as our neighbors' lives are seriously impaired.

Sincerely,



John Weis  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Christine Berthet  
Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning Committee



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Transportation Planning Committee

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