

October 27, 2003

Hon. Robert Tierney  
Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Ninth floor, Municipal Building  
100 Center Street  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Columbus Circle IRT Station**

Dear Chair Tierney,

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed improvements and alterations to the Columbus Circle IRT Station, most of the designated part of which lies within the boundaries of the Board. Because of the scheduling of the hearing on this item for October 28<sup>th</sup>, this letter was adopted by the Executive Committee of the Board at its meeting on October 27<sup>th</sup> and is subject to ratification by the full Board at its regular meeting on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Board has received a summary presentation of the plan by the architect Richard Dattner at a public meeting sponsored by the Triboard Columbus Circle Task Force of Board Nos. 4, 5, and 7 on October 2, 2003, as well as communications from Adrienne Taub of the MTA. It is aware of parallel letters being sent by Board Nos. 5 and 7, participants with it in the Triboard Task Force.

We are glad to see that the current plan for the station includes adaptively reusing existing features of the station like the currently unused central platform at the IND level and recreating historic features like the former southern staircase of the southbound IRT station at 60<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway. These changes will improve the functioning of the station and reinforce its historic character. They are consistent with long-standing recommendations of the TriBoard Task Force and Board No. 4.

Board No. 4 has no objection in concept to the present application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for an Advisory Report endorsing the proposed alterations. These are designed to improve the functioning of the station in ways that the Board No. 4 has supported in concept for some time, while preserving the historic features of the designated walls and their historic covering to the maximum extent consistent with this improvement. The Board No. 4 nevertheless has a number of concerns about aspects of these alterations and believes on the basis of the

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information available that it is premature to give detailed approval at this time. The design is clearly a work in progress, and the architect has committed himself to returning for further presentations and discussions as the design advances.

Actually performing the proposed work of restoration will be tricky in many respects, since delicate objects like ceramic tiles will have to be removed and relocated. The recent history of alterations to historic IRT stations farther north on Broadway, which included destruction of historic features and expensive recreation of large parts of the stations, means that careful planning and supervision will be required for these largely admirable designs to become a reality. The Commission should not relax its oversight of this station.

Thus Board No. 4 supports at this time approval in concept by the Commission but urges continued review of details and construction. This station should be worthy of the historic past, in which this station was a showpiece celebrated in the publicity book, "The New York Subway," and of the future, in which Columbus Circle will have regained and enlarged its position as one of the major intersections of New York.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Walter Mankoff". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Walter Mankoff  
Chair

cc: Manhattan Community Nos. 5 & 7  
A. Taub, NYC Transit