



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND
Chair

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District Manager

July 28, 2008

Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan
Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10013

**Re: Implementation of Bike Path and Pedestrian Safety Improvements:
- Eighth Avenue from 14th Street to 23rd Street**

Dear Commissioner Sadik-Khan,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) is concerned about the Department of Transportation's proposed reconfiguration of the Eighth Avenue bicycle lane between West 14th Street and West 23rd Street. We request that the Department of Transportation (DOT) not implement the proposed changes until additional public outreach is undertaken and until and unless it is able to address community concerns.

The proposed reconfiguration would relocate the existing bicycle and buffer lanes to be adjacent to the curb, protected from the parked cars and travel lanes by flexible plastic bollards and raised landscaped pedestrian refuge islands at the corners. Similar to the current protected bicycle path on Ninth Avenue, DOT also proposes to create signalized left hand turn lanes from the Avenue onto the Streets, with pedestrian crossing times protected by red left turn arrows.

Our first and primary concern regards the need for more extensive outreach to the residential, business, and patron communities regarding this project. While the Community Board appreciates the efforts undertaken by DOT to date – especially its involvement in the May 1 pedestrian safety forum at Hudson Guild, the design changes it agreed to based on CB4 Transportation Committee input, and notification 6 months in advance of proposed installation - there is concern that the outreach has not been sufficient. Many residents and business have indicated they were unaware of the proposal. In addition, CB4 members felt there should be outreach to the LGBT community, who view the Eighth Avenue corridor as a major commercial center.

First and foremost, we thus request that DOT undertake additional resident, business, and patron (including the LGBT community) education and outreach and discussion. We see ourselves as partners in undertaking this outreach – it is our Community Board's obligation to involve and inform our community - and will work closely with you in facilitating this process.

While CB4 appreciates many of the positive features on the proposal, we remain uncertain of our support. There are several potential negative impacts that have already been identified:

- The potential effective reduction to only two moving traffic lanes in several locations along Eighth Avenue caused by left turn queuing back up during peak hours. It was noted that this was already occurring at several locations on the Ninth Avenue bicycle lane;
- The loss of parking spaces required to create the pedestrian refuge and left turn lane areas may reduce the number of retail businesses patrons. Related to this, there was also concern that the lost spaces would hurt the ability of area business to meet their delivery and loading/ unloading needs;
- The unique retail and community ambiance of the street (including for the LGBT community), that is furthered by easy visual links between the west and east side of the avenue, may be harmed by having the visual impact of the bicycle and lane and parked vehicles lane several feet from the curb;
- We appreciate that DOT has requested Community Board input on whether “no-left turn policies” might be appropriate for one or more the westbound streets between 14th and 23rd Street. However without full vehicle and vehicle turn counts and additional community outreach, we cannot properly provide guidance;
- Some community board members also expressed concern that the installation of the original bicycle path and the removal of one moving traffic lane has led to increased traffic delays and back-ups along Eighth Avenue that have already hurt the retail and neighborhood ambiance. The installation of this design, with the raised pedestrian refuge areas, will re-enforce this change before its affects have been fully studied.

Community Board 4 remains a supporter of alternative transportation modes, including bicycles, and appreciates the creativity and enthusiasm DOT has brought to this effort, particularly under its current leadership. However, we feel that proposed changes need to be fully vetted with the affected community to understand their effects and ensure their positive impact.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair
Manhattan
Community Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
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c.c.:

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