



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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District Manager

April 7, 2009

Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgione
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Re: Green Light for Broadway

Dear Ms. Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) supports New York City Department of Transportation's (DOT) efforts to improve pedestrian safety, increase pedestrian space and reduce vehicular congestion in midtown. However, such changes must not be at the expense of Hell's Kitchen residents who are already burdened with insufferable vehicular congestion. Specifically, CB4 requests that DOT work closely with the community as it implements its proposed changes in midtown along Broadway to also implement, in parallel, mitigation measures identified in the Clinton-Hell's Kitchen traffic study that relieve the traffic congestion along Ninth Avenue. This is particularly important given the DOT's expectation that some of the current Broadway traffic will use Ninth Avenue in the future.

The project proposes to close Broadway to vehicular traffic from 47th to 42nd Streets and from 35th to 33rd Streets and convert these areas to pedestrian plazas. In order to accommodate the rerouted traffic Seventh Avenue would be widened and the green light timing increased by 66%. The remaining sections of Broadway from 57th to 26th Streets would be reduced to two moving lanes. Cross street traffic would not change except for the west turn from Seventh Avenue to 45th Street, which would be barred. This project is entirely located in Community District 5. Therefore, CB4 will not comment on the project itself but rather on the aspects of the project that may negatively affect Community District 4.

For this project to be beneficial to all users, including neighboring residents, CB4 requests that DOT:

Perform an origin and destination analysis for the vehicles currently entering Broadway at 66th and 59th Streets, both currently and after the project is implemented.

Per the DOT, approximately 200 vehicles per peak hour which are currently traveling south on Broadway will have to find a new path to their destination, because Seventh Avenue widening and flow improvements will not accommodate them. It is well documented that when a major thoroughfare closes, the traffic has a tendency to dissipate because drivers alter their routes from the origin over a very wide area. An origin and destination analysis will inform what fraction of these vehicles may chose Ninth Avenue as an alternate route and what cross streets they may use to reach it. We request that this analysis be provided within one month and then repeated as the project is implemented.

Accelerate the implementation of relevant short terms recommendations included in the DOT's Hell's kitchen traffic study to alleviate congestion and improve safety on Ninth Avenue.

For the last 22 months, the DOT study team has gathered information with continuous community input and vetting. A list of short-term improvements has been produced including suggestions related to 42nd Street and Ninth Avenue, 41st Street and Ninth Avenue, truck routes, bus routes and signage. These suggestions would significantly improve the situation on Ninth Avenue for all users including residents. We request that the DOT review with the community the proposed short-term actions from the Hell's Kitchen study and select which ones to implement in priority to alleviate the anticipated congestion.

Provide for pedestrian safety measures at the western crossing of 47th Street and Broadway

While this intersection is in Community Board 5, it directly affects CB4 since 47th Street, west of this intersection, is a residential street with entrances to the P.S. 212 School. Once Broadway closes, all of the Broadway southbound traffic will turn west and conflict with pedestrians' walk time. A neck down should be installed at this location and the pedestrian crossing should be protected from turning cars by a dedicated right turn signal. The timing dedicated to turning cars should be as short as possible to dissuade drivers of using that route. One or two speed bumps could be installed on this long block and neither charter buses nor trucks should be allowed on this residential street.

Direct Lincoln Tunnel and Highway-bound traffic to 41st and 42nd Streets respectively at Seventh Avenue and bar the west turn from 7th Avenue onto 43rd Street

Similar to 45th Street, 43rd Street is a residential street further west and includes the Holy Cross School and its playground across the street, a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community at Manhattan Plaza and a mid-block park between Ninth and Tenth Avenues.

As 43rd Street will be the first opportunity for drivers to turn west from Seventh Avenue, it may encourage drivers to use this route to access the West Side Highway and the Lincoln Tunnel. Further, such turn will create a queue on Seventh Avenue, which will reduce the flow of vehicles. West 42nd Street should be used for reaching the West Side Highway and 41st Street for reaching the Lincoln Tunnel. In any case, no charter bus, shuttle bus or trucks should be allowed on 43rd Street.

During the presentation, many members of the community made constructive suggestions on the project itself, which we are including without recommendation for consideration of Community Board 5, which is copied on this correspondence.

- Keep the MTA bus stops as close as possible to other bus stops to facilitate transfers for handicapped and senior users. A number of bus stops have recently been moved with no regard for the ease of transfer between lines. Our population relies essentially on public transportation and the thoughtless relocation of these transfers is a real hardship on these users.
- Provide for a layover area or relocate the terminal for the City Sight bus operation located on Seventh Avenue. Without a layover area, these buses will obstruct one or even two lanes.
- Provide for a turning bay at 45th Street to facilitate access to the many theaters and related parking garages. If not, provide for a taxi stand and a bus standing area to let theater goers get off the charter buses, and provide for charter bus standing areas on Eighth Avenue at 45th Street.

- Many bicycle users have complained that the current placement of the bike lane on Broadway is not safe, since they have to share the path with pedestrians. A bicycle path separated from pedestrians is preferable.
- It is suggested that storm water absorbent asphalt be used on the pedestrian area.

CB4 supports the DOT in its endeavors to improve pedestrian safety, enlarge pedestrian space and reduce traffic congestion. However, the critical step of acquiring local expertise of the terrain from the community must be incorporated upfront in the DOT process to improve its chances of success. A two-week notice before implementation does not constitute a proper consultation, especially when DOT anticipates negative impacts and a DOT study is underway. We look forward to reviewing those proposed short-term actions from the Hell's Kitchen study the DOT will implement in priority to alleviate the anticipated congestion.

Sincerely,



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Manhattan Community Board 5