



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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COREY JOHNSON
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

October 4, 2013

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

Re: W. 41st Street and Ninth Avenue safety improvements

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

At its October full board meeting, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) applauded and approved the proposed redesign and signal light changes for the intersection of West 41st Street and Ninth Avenue in response. We feel this is an appropriate and well-conceived response to the many collisions that have occurred there, to our requests as part of the Hell's Kitchen Traffic Study, and especially to the collision in February 2013, that caused a second recent fatality.

However, CB4 asks that the Department of Transportation (DOT) research our questions related to the signage plan and come back to the transportation committee within two months from now, before implementation scheduled for the beginning of 2014.

The proposed configuration will provide a split phase signal on Ninth Avenue at W. 41st Street, with a red turn arrow stopping southbound turning vehicles to allow pedestrians to cross W. 41st street on the west side of Ninth Avenue "sans vehicle conflict" for 23 seconds and subsequently, a green turn arrow to allow vehicles to turn "sans pedestrian conflict". In addition bulb outs will be installed at the north and south sidewalk to accommodate more pedestrians and slow the turning cars. CB4 is very pleased with this proposal that seems to address the concerns we have expressed and will bring much needed space and safety to the pedestrians at this difficult intersection.

Today, there are two turning lanes (one dedicated and one shared) between W. 42nd and W. 41st Streets to feed this entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel, which is restricted to buses from 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. during weekdays. However, this restriction is poorly communicated and poorly enforced.

The DOT proposal for signal and traffic changes also includes dedicating two (instead of the current one) turning lanes between W. 41st and W. 42nd Street along Ninth Avenue and one left lane between W. 42nd and W. 44th Streets, to bus traffic during peak hour. This would help enhance the capacity of this segment, and reduce queuing at this entrance by redirecting cars and

trucks queuing for the Lincoln Tunnel to use the east side of Ninth Avenue until they are past W. 41st Street. Signage will help drivers to make the proper choice as soon as possible.

However, the devil is in the details and we ask that the DOT explore solutions to the following concerns and return to the transportation committee within the next two months for the community to review the final plan before installation:

- Can accessible (audible) and countdown pedestrian signals be installed at the modified intersection?
- In the morning, there is often back up at W. 41st Street and on Ninth Avenue because of trucks clogging the W. 41st Street entrance when it should be clear for buses leaving the Bus Terminal. Ninth Avenue is the major Lincoln Tunnel feeder used by vehicles leaving for New Jersey after matinee and evening Broadway theater performances. On the weekend, this entrance is overcrowded causing back ups up on Ninth Avenue. Why not restrict the W. 41st Street entrance to buses 24/7? It makes it much easier to create a habit for drivers, and it would simplify signage and enforcement.
- Daily back ups on Ninth Avenue usually starts at W. 46th Street or further north. Could the dedicated bus lane be expanded north to W. 46th Street?
- Will the dedicated bus lane be painted in red, as is the custom for new bus lanes? It would be self explanatory to cars and trucks.
- We appreciate you will not suspend highway signage in the neighborhood. It may make sense to suspend smaller signs to all traffic signals south of W. 46th Street, indicating, "Cars & trucks keep left". It may even be feasible to include such a message on the Variable Message Sign (VMS) at W. 41st Street.
- A residential building is near completion between W. 38th and 39th Streets and the ramp "C" signage you showed seems too large for a residential context. There is another VMS at the northwest corner of W. 39th Street and Ninth Avenue. Would it be possible to use it to show "Lincoln Tunnel Only" with two vertical arrows instead of adding another highway type sign on the block?
- It will be critical to install new signs on side streets that are feeding into Ninth Avenue at W. 45th, W. 43rd, and W. 42nd, enjoining cars and trucks and through traffic to keep left, using the east lanes of Ninth Avenue. Below W. 41st Street, it is common for drivers to turn in the left lanes and then try to enter the queues further south, blocking the flow of traffic on the avenue. The signs should indicate the path to the Lincoln tunnel as the right lanes or going straight. There is an old Lincoln Tunnel sign on the southeast corner of W. 39th Street that could be reused for that purpose or replaced.

Again, CB4 is delighted with DOT's proposal and the schedule of implementation. We are also pleased to hear that the W. 43rd Street and Ninth Avenue intersection will be equipped with a similar split phase signal in early 2014. These are major steps toward a better and safer Ninth

Avenue.

Sincerely yours,



Corey Johnson
Chair



Christine Berthet, Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus, Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee