



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**CHRISTINE BERTHET**  
Chair

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

January 9, 2014

James Weinstein  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Transit  
1 Penn Plaza East  
Newark, NJ 07105

**Re: New Jersey Transit Safety Concerns and Meeting Request**

Dear Executive Director 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 actions in our neighborhood and in the vicinity of the Port Authority Bus Terminal on the west side of Manhattan. Community Board 4 requests a meeting in the near future to discuss these concerns. 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, training, audits, and potentially new bus routes to the Port Authority.

CB4 made a similar request to NJT In a letter dated October 6, 2010. In this letter we requested the assistance of New Jersey Transit with correcting serious traffic conditions being caused by NJT busses in our community. The conditions have not changed and our community continues to struggle with safety and quality of life concerns caused by the improper operation of your buses. We feel the inaction is unusual and not appropriate for a major bus company. Therefore, CB4 would like to request a meeting with New Jersey Transit to address these concerns and discuss possible solutions.

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. We understand that until recently this area was a manufacturing zone and the continuous ribbon of NJT buses lined up daily on Tenth Avenue's east side, blocking intersections from West 30<sup>th</sup> to West 40<sup>th</sup> Streets between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p. m., did not interfere with a substantial number of pedestrians. However the 2005 rezoning of Hudson Yards converted Tenth Avenue to a residential zone with substantial residential development.

CB4 has received formal complaints from some of the 2,000 residents of the large residential buildings newly built on both sides of Tenth Avenue between West 37<sup>th</sup> and West 38<sup>th</sup> Streets. They report NJT buses frequently blocking 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 10th 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. There have also been several reports of NJT buses blocking bus stops – and more specifically, that passengers cannot board the M11 bus at the Tenth Avenue and West 37<sup>th</sup> Street bus stop between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. (high bus cueing hours) and should ensure training to ensure bus drivers understand the unique issues of driving in residential areas of New York City.

While constant training, testing and clear operational guidelines could begin to address these issues, a more structural change to the bus queuing location will be required. We have noted that at our request the queuing of some buses has been successfully relocated to Twelfth Avenue, however, a large number of your buses remain on Tenth Avenue. We thus propose that the queuing of all NJT buses be redirected to Twelfth Avenue from West 33<sup>rd</sup> Street to West 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. In addition two traffic agents that can enforce the gridlock laws are already posted at the intersection of West 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Tenth Avenue.

We would also like to discuss the severe idling problems related to NJT buses. New York City has strict 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 on Tenth Avenue going from West 37<sup>th</sup> to West 38<sup>th</sup>, and West 38<sup>th</sup> to West 39<sup>th</sup>, and West 39<sup>th</sup> to West 40<sup>th</sup> Streets, and on West 40<sup>th</sup> Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, and on West 40<sup>th</sup> Street between Tenth and Eleventh 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 and/or technology should be employed to notify them individually of their hours of departure from the parking.

CB4 actively supports the Port Authority (PA) efforts to build a new Bus Garage on the far west side or in Secaucus, NJ, which would mitigate these problems. However, building the garage is likely several years away and these matters of safety cannot wait.

We look forward to meeting with you in the near future, as well as hearing about your plans to address these safety issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christine Berthet", on a light grey rectangular background.

Christine Berthet  
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Marcus", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jay Marcus  
Co-Chair, Transportation  
Planning Committee

[signed 1/8/14]  
Ernest Modarelli  
Co-Chair, Transportation  
Planning Committee

CC: Port Authority Bus Terminal