

1 **Transportation Planning Committee**

**Item #: 9**

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3 Margaret Forgione  
4 Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
5 New York City Department of Transportation  
6 55 Water Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
7 New York, New York 10041  
8

9 **Re: Eighth and Ninth Avenue Curbside Protected Bicycle lane extensions**

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11 Dear Commissioner Forgione:

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13 Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) appreciates the continuing consultation with DOT  
14 on the extension of the Eighth and Ninth Avenue protected bicycle lane to West 58<sup>th</sup>  
15 Streets from West 34<sup>th</sup> Street (Eighth Avenue) and West 31<sup>st</sup> Street (Ninth Avenue),  
16 scheduled to begin construction in May, 2012. We continue to support the protected  
17 bicycle lanes, not only because it is an important part of a vision we share with DOT for a  
18 more bicycle friendly city and provides protected bicycle access to Central Park, but  
19 because protected bicycle paths have a proven record of decreasing pedestrian and  
20 bicycle accidents and improving pedestrian safety. It is also an important recognition that  
21 DOT understands the increased residential (and tourist) nature of the “midtown” areas of  
22 CB4 and the important need to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle needs along with those of  
23 vehicular traffic (which have historically been the higher city priority).  
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25 The improved safety features of protected bicycle lanes – specifically refuge areas on  
26 every other block that reduce pedestrian street crossing distances and the actual separated  
27 protection for bicycles - are particularly important given that, according to DOT, Eighth  
28 and Ninth Avenues between West 34<sup>th</sup> and West 59<sup>th</sup> Streets rank, respectively, in the 98<sup>th</sup>  
29 and 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles of the most dangerous streets in New York City. Since 2005 15  
30 pedestrians were killed on these avenues.  
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32 We are pleased that, along with the installation of the protected bicycle lane DOT will be  
33 expanding pedestrian spaces, resurfacing the avenues, renovating pedestrian ramps and,  
34 based on consultation with retail businesses, increasing the number Truck  
35 Loading/Unloading spaces particularly on the east and west sides of Ninth Avenue above  
36 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.  
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38 We are, however, concerned that most of the requests we made in our October 5, 2011  
39 letter to DOT were not taken in account. We are also disappointed that the typical reason  
40 offered for denying these requests was the affect on vehicular traffic flow – which are  
41 thus being prioritized over pedestrian and bicyclist safety.  
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43 The bicycle lane installation will start in May 2012 going north on Eighth Avenue from  
44 West 34<sup>th</sup> to West 58<sup>th</sup> Streets and then will proceed south from 58<sup>th</sup> to 33<sup>rd</sup> Streets on 9<sup>th</sup>  
45 Avenues.  
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47 Before describing our concerns, we first want to indicate that we are pleased that the  
48 following CB4 recommendations were included:

- 49 • Expanding Loading and unloading zones on Ninth Avenue above West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
50 and on Eighth Avenue at both West 35<sup>th</sup> and West 48<sup>th</sup> Streets, as well as  
51 additional areas on the streets near the corners of West 55<sup>th</sup> and West 56<sup>th</sup> Streets  
52 and Eighth Avenue. We also support the removal of the taxi stands on Eighth  
53 Avenue between West 52<sup>nd</sup> and West 53<sup>rd</sup> Streets and on Ninth Avenue between  
54 West 48<sup>th</sup> and West 49<sup>th</sup> Streets to enable this increased loading/unloading. We  
55 request DOT survey the area for another suitable location for the taxi stands for  
56 CB4 review.
- 57 • Expanding sidewalk spaces on the west side of Eighth Avenue between West 42<sup>nd</sup>  
58 and West 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets, the Northeast corner of Ninth Avenue and West 41<sup>st</sup> Street  
59 (on the street), and the Southwest corner of Eighth Avenue and West 57<sup>th</sup> Streets  
60 (on the avenue).
- 61 • Expanding Pedestrian crossing time on Ninth Avenue at W. 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Streets  
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63 However, we are concerned that several of our requests were not included:

- 65 • **Lack of Split Phases** – (*left turn lane signals that separates pedestrian crossing*  
66 *phase from turning vehicles phase*). Such pedestrian split phases were a staple of the  
67 first Ninth Avenue bike lane installation and have proven to be the best pedestrian  
68 safety feature protected bicycle lanes offer. DOT only plans to install split phases at  
69 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street, West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and West 57<sup>th</sup> Street on Ninth Avenue and West  
70 57<sup>th</sup> Street on Eighth Avenue. We had additionally requested West 37<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>,  
71 and 48<sup>th</sup> Streets and Eighth Avenue and West 38<sup>th</sup> and West 58<sup>th</sup> Streets and Ninth  
72 Avenue. The higher rate of pedestrian crashes at these intersections requires split  
73 phases. This remains our highest priority request and we will be carefully monitoring  
74 accident data at these intersections;
- 75 • **Timing of Parking Regulation changes and Bicycle corral installations:** We were  
76 concerned to hear that parking regulation changes on both Avenues will not be  
77 completed until spring 2013 due to the lack of meters. While we appreciate the need  
78 for revenue and agree that Truck Loading/Unloading zones should include meter  
79 charges, the impact on area businesses of the lost existing loading areas (76 spaces  
80 will be lost along Ninth Avenue to enable the turning lanes) will be immediate. If  
81 meters are not available, DOT should consider making the changes during the  
82 protected bicycle lane installation and allow “free” loading/unloading for six to nine  
83 months to area businesses to make up for the short term larger construction related  
84 loading/unloading losses (during the protected bicycle lane installation) and the  
85 permanent space losses.

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87 In addition, DOT has indicated the bicycle corrals will be installed in 2013. We feel  
88 the protected bicycle paths will lead to increased bicycle parking on already crowded  
89 sidewalks and that the corrals should be seen as a part of the protected lane  
90 installation. This will also reduce the installation related impacts. We are also  
91 concerned that DOT has indicated that several bicycle corrals will be co-located with

92 bicycle share spots, which we feel may reduce the hoped for reduced bicycle sidewalk  
93 parking impact of the proposed bicycle corral locations.  
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- 95 | ● **“Shared” bicycle/vehicle lanes between West 39<sup>th</sup> Street and West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street**  
96 **along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue:** At the October public hearing we had discussed several potential  
97 alternatives to improving bicyclist safety near the Port Authority. We are particularly  
98 concerned that DOT had told us the idea of moving the taxi pick-up from Eighth  
99 Avenue between West 40<sup>th</sup> and West 42<sup>nd</sup> to the South Side of West 41<sup>st</sup> Street  
100 between Eighth and Ninth Avenues was not viable because the Port Authority would  
101 not permit use of that area – and later turned that part of West 41<sup>st</sup> into a  
102 loading/unloading zone for Megabus. They also rejected our request for removing the  
103 “outside taxi zone” third lane left turn lane because of vehicle inconvenience.  
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105 We remain very concerned about the safety of this “shared” zone and feel that a  
106 major New York entry point, such as the Port Authority, would be better served by  
107 including the more pleasant experience of a protected bicycle lane than the continued  
108 dominance of vehicular traffic.  
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- 110 ● **Remove pedestrian barrier between West 42<sup>nd</sup> and West 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets on the west**  
111 **side of Eighth Avenue:** The current barrier, instead of protecting pedestrians, incites  
112 them to walk in the street. With the bike lane along the curb, this will increase the  
113 chances of dangerous bicycle- pedestrian conflicts on that block. It is also our  
114 observation that the barrier has become a storage space for all kinds of illegal  
115 furniture thus taking up valuable pedestrian space. Installing blocks similar to other  
116 plazas, would be a much more effective way to separate pedestrians from vehicles.  
117
- 118 ● **Remove the taxi layover area on Ninth Avenue between West 42<sup>nd</sup> and West 41<sup>st</sup>**  
119 **Streets.** The taxi brokerage company LOMO, which has since relocated, specifically  
120 requested this layover area. There is no reason to keep this layover area on a block  
121 that harbors five businesses and lacks any loading / unloading space. Further, another  
122 taxi layover area was recently created on West 39<sup>th</sup> Street at the south east corner of  
123 Ninth Avenue providing ample capacity.  
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125 We also had other recommendations at the most recent public hearing that we are  
126 pleased DOT has agreed to consider:  
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- 128 ● **Accessibility:** Installation of truncated domes on handicapped ramps and  
129 tactile and audible pedestrian signals at all “Split Phase” intersections. The  
130 latter is particularly important because the separate pedestrian and car  
131 turning phases is different that most intersections and can be confusing for  
132 the blind.
- 133 ● **Move the left turn signal from West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street onto Ninth Avenue to**  
134 **the end of the green traffic phase.** We feel this change will improve  
135 pedestrian safety at the high volume/high accident intersection.

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- **Move the left turn signal from West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street onto Eighth Avenue to the end of the green traffic phase.** We feel this change will improve pedestrian safety at the high volume/high accident intersection.
- **Consider a split phase at West 58<sup>th</sup> Street and Ninth Avenue,** since 58<sup>th</sup> Street is as wide as a two-way street and many taxis turn very fast at that problematic location.
- **North/South Crosswalks Repairs:** DOT has agreed to fix the potholed areas on the cross walks and at the street landing of the handicapped ramp for locations reported by CB4. We note that many of the street areas adjacent to handicapped ramps have an extra large numbers of potholes and wonder if there are issues related to the method of patching or drainage that are causing this. We ask that DOT investigate and respond.
- **Central Park Access signage:** DOT expects bicyclists to cross over to the east side of Eighth Avenue at West 58<sup>th</sup> Street. As noted by DOT this is not traditional bicyclist behavior. Extra signage along the enclosed bicycle lane south of West 58<sup>th</sup> Street and on the East side between West 58<sup>th</sup> and Central Park should be installed.
- **Signage, particularly along Eighth Avenue, in major hotels, and at high pedestrian volume crossing areas:** A high percentage of the pedestrians on these avenues, particularly Eighth Avenue near the Port Authority and Broadway theaters, are tourists. Signage indicating that bicycle lanes are not pedestrian lanes and to watch for moving bicycles while crossing would likely improves safety. We would be pleased in some of these signs also pointed to the nearest “bicycle share” location (bicycle share locations will be installed in the late 2012);
- **Post signs along the enclosed bicycle lane indicating the fine amount for blocking bicycle lanes:** Both public members and bicyclists have observed that existing protected bicycle lanes often have vehicles parking or standing. Change of vehicle driver behavior takes time, encouragement, education and enforcement. Signage that indicates the penalties for blocking bicycle lanes will increase motorist knowledge and, if similar to the reported affect of “honking penalty signs” will likely lead to some reduction of blockage;
- **Education and Enforcement along bicycle lane:** The Community Board continues to hear complaints from pedestrians near existing bicycle lanes that bicyclists frequently go the wrong way on the protected lanes, do not obey traffic lights or signs, and do not watch for pedestrians. We have also frequently heard the above-mentioned complaints of vehicles ignoring the protected bicycle paths. We appreciate that DOT provides education to area restaurant delivery staff and that the Police Department has increased enforcement after protected bicycle paths are installed. We note that the installation of a protected bicycle path along this more crowded area of midtown will create its own unique safety concerns – and must include aggressive enforcement and education to ensure the pedestrian, vehicle and bicyclist benefits.

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- **Increased communication with above ground floor commercial tenants:**

CB4 appreciates that DOT has done substantial outreach to retail level businesses – evidenced by the detailed staff’s discussion of several local retail business loading/unloading needs at the public hearing. We note that 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue north of West 34<sup>th</sup> Street has a substantial number of buildings with commercial tenants above the ground floor with loading and unloading needs. We appreciate DOT’s outreach to the Fashion Center as one way to reach these tenants. We also request that they contact the management companies of each of the commercial tenant buildings to ask their assistance in communicating with above ground tenants in advance of installation (and inform CB4 of any resulting requested parking regulation changes).

We appreciate that DOT returned to meet with CB4 this month to review our requests from October. However, given the number of requests that were not included in the final design we repeat our request from October that DOT return to the CB for review six months after installation. We further request, as per our October letter, that this include not just data from the Eighth and Ninth Avenue protected bicycle lanes, but from protected bicycle lanes citywide, particularly on the accident rates of “split phase” versus non-split phase turning intersections.

Cc:

