



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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Luis Sanchez
Acting Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 37th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Re: L train closure for repairs – 14th Street Surface Transportation Mitigation

Dear Commissioners Pendergast, Trottenberg and Sanchez,

Manhattan Community Board 4 would like to offer the following comments and recommendations in response to the recent vote by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to shut down the L train subway line between Bedford and 8th Avenue

for a year and a half, starting in January 2019 in order to repair the Canarsie tunnel with Federal Sandy Relief funds.

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) supports this planned 18-months closure and encourages the MTA and the DOT to study alternatives to transport commuters during that period: (1) connecting the L line to one of the other lines in Manhattan to maintain the cross Manhattan service (2) converting the Williamsburg bridge and 14th Street into a Transit Priority Corridor. A careful study of impact on adjacent residential streets and development of mitigation measures must be part of the final plan.

CB4 also urges the MTA to take advantage of the line closure to effect long needed station improvements on the West Side. We are asking the DOT and MTA to return to our committee to present the findings of their study as well as mitigation measures and improvements they propose.

Since 1990, ridership on the L has more than tripled and is one of the busiest lines: every weekday more than 225,000 commuters from neighborhoods across Brooklyn rely on the L train to get them into Manhattan. In Manhattan, more than 50,000 customers use the L each day for crosstown service.

In 2012, Super storm Sandy flooded with salt water the 92-year-old tubes all the way to the ceiling, damaging the Canarsie tunnel lining and vital infrastructure and systems. The magnitude of the work needed in the Canarsie Tunnel is too great for night and-weekend-only closure. The damage significantly shortened the useful life of the tubes inside the tunnel and while ad hoc repairs continue to be made, wholesale reconstruction must be done and the window to use the Sandy Recovery Federal funding is closing rapidly.

CB4 applauds the MTA on their alternative transportation plan:

- Subway: Under both scenarios, M/J/G trains get additional capacity and free out-of-system transfer would be provided at certain locations. Other options to add service are also being explored.
- The MTA has indicated ferry service is being considered between Williamsburg and 20th Street in Manhattan for the two-track closure scenario. Connecting bus service (M14 SBS, M23 SBS and M34 SBS) would be provided in Manhattan. The East River Ferry (which is not part of the MTA system) includes service between Williamsburg and 34th St and Wall Street, also. Bike Share stations are also being considered to increase service through biking.
- Buses: It is anticipated that in a full closure scenario, there would be an M14 SBS across 14th St, with some of those buses being extended to 20th St in order to connect to a ferry from Williamsburg. An M23 SBS and the M34 SBS would also be extended to connect to a new ferry. Additionally, there would be a bus service between Williamsburg and Manhattan via the Williamsburg Bridge. The

possibility for bus lanes on the Williamsburg Bridge or across 14th Street are being discussed with New York City's Department of Transportation and dedicated bus lanes will be strongly considered.

Be that as it may, we also suggest that MTA explore the possibility of connecting the L Line tracks in Manhattan to any one of the A,C,E,B,D,F,M,N,Q,R or W lines which would allow the trains to be serviced in another subway yard. While this would obviously be a difficult and expensive project, it would allow trains to provide cross-Manhattan service with needed access for inspection and maintenance. In turn this would provide mitigation for the impending 14th Street traffic problem as well as provide for future emergencies on the L line. The MTA staff at the transportation committee meeting said they would seriously explore this possibility and we urge that they do so.

CB4 also supports giving full priority to bus and bike services on the Williamsburg Bridge and the 14th Street corridor to facilitate the movement of commuters provided that a study of traffic diversion and mitigation measures supports the viability of such an option for an 18 month duration.

To accommodate the expected volume, we encourage the MTA to study the possibility of implementing double bus lanes in both directions and limit private car traffic as we believe the two may not be able to co-exist. Dedicated lanes should also be installed on the bridge and bike lanes should be given a high priority on the routes.

- However, in our district 15th to 23rd Streets are residential low-rise streets with a number of schools. These residential streets cannot become a highway for cross town traffic and trucks. For the plan to work it will be critical to evaluate how to plan deliveries and to divert private car traffic away from the corridor and from the adjacent residential streets; traffic calming devices will have to be implemented to prevent thru traffic from using those streets. This closure cannot put residents' safety at risk.

Additionally, as part of this plan the MTA should work with DOT and other appropriate agencies to consider adding west side ferry stops as soon as possible, in advance of the L train shut down. Ferry service has proven to be an efficient form of commuter transportation and service connecting the west side to Brooklyn and Queens seems appropriate considering the re-zonings and increased development that has occurred over the past ten years. West 15th Street, West Chelsea, Hudson Yards, 11th Avenue, the Javits Center, Piers 57 and 76 have all undergone major development projects making them destinations for commuters from all parts of the city. While this service should run up and down the west side, stops in Community District 4 should include Pier 57, Javits Center/Pier 76, and a pier around Clinton Cove.

We note that some improvements are proposed to the stations in Brooklyn and on the East side. The MTA will have unimpeded access to more than three route miles of track and six stations for 18 months. During that time, there will be no trains and no riders to contend with, a situation that would expedite repairs and improvements to the system.

The Regional Plan Association has studied needed improvements and we support their recommendations¹ for our district:

- All stations should be rehabilitated and brought to a state of good repair
- Make 6th and 8th Avenue stations ADA accessible
- Reopen the pedestrian underpass between 7th and 8th Avenues, a long standing request of CB4
- Increase capacity by
 - Rebuilding the 8th Avenue station in Manhattan which limits severely the number of trains run on the line: rebuild the L train's terminal, creating space for train storage and turning trains; reconfigure the transfer to 8th Avenue station/ IND line, with direct connections to the southern end of the 8th Avenue A, C and E platforms, provide a western ADA-accessible entrance to the street between 8th and 9th avenues
 - Improve 7th Avenue Station: Circulation: Improve corridor to 7th Avenue IRT station. Widen stairs from platform to PATH/IND transfer.

We look forward to working with MTA and DOT to review the detailed plan, the necessary local mitigation envisioned for the duration of the project, and the improvements proposed for the West side stations.

Sincerely,



Delores Rubin
Chair



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair, Transportation
Planning Committee



Ernest Modarelli
Co-Chair, Transportation
Planning Committee

CC Hon. Jerrold Nadler, House of Representatives
Hon. Carolyn Maloney, House of Representatives
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Brad Hoylman, State Senate
Hon. Deborah Glick, State Assembly
Hon. Richard Gottfried, State Assembly
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Veronica Vanterpool, Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Mike Replogle, Department of Transportation
Regional Plan Association
Bill Borrock, Council of Chelsea Block Associations

¹ <http://library.rpa.org/pdf/RPA-A-New-L-Train-for-New-Yorkers.pdf>