



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

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

July 21, 2010

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, New York 10013

RE: Proposed Eighth Avenue Enclosed Bicycle Path Extension – West 23rd Street to West 34th Street

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board #4 supports the proposal to extend the enclosed Eighth Avenue Bicycle Path from West 23rd Street north to West 34th Street along the west side of the Avenue. We offer this support, however, with a strong caveat – that DOT seriously consider installing separate left turn signals (with separate pedestrian crossing times) for traffic turning west off of 8th Avenue (at West 25th, West 29th and West 31st Street) after the 4 month evaluation period they have committed to after installation.

The DOT proposal would create an enclosed bicycle 6' bicycle path area adjacent to the sidewalk on the West side of 8th Avenue between West 23rd and West 34th Streets. The bicycle path would be buffered by a 5' striped zone, except at (to be created) left turn lanes beginning approximately 80' from the southwest corners of 8th Avenue and West 25th, 29th and 33rd Streets. These left hand turn lanes will be a combined vehicle and bicycle area and will include painted green bicyclist markings on the street to warn motorists. The proposal would keep the same number of vehicle travel lanes by reducing their width to 10' from the current 11' to 12', the east side parking lane from 12' to 10' and the bicycle path (formerly bicycle lane) from 8' to 6'. DOT has indicated that vehicle travel time and safety will not be impacted by the reduction to 10'. It would also include, at the Community Board request, an Access-A-Ride pick up area at a location to be decided with input from Penn South before installation.

Since our initial advocacy of a bicycle lane on 8th Avenue in 2005, Manhattan Community Board #4 has long supported an enclosed bicycle path along 8th Avenue throughout our Community Board – from West 14th Street to Central Park (with proper provisions for traffic adjacent to the Port Authority from West 40th to West 42nd Streets). We are excited to see that vision move another step forward with this DOT proposal.

We are also pleased that the process DOT has conducted in vetting this proposal included outreach to local businesses to address their truck loading and unloading concerns (and the inclusion of additional truck loading lanes on side streets to the west of 8th Avenue) and to the community board several months in advance of proposed installation. This is a welcome change from the process for the installation of the enclosed bicycle paths on both 8th and 9th Avenue from 14th Street to 23rd Street. We note that in the one month since DOT's meeting with the Transportation Committee two important changes were made to this proposal based on Committee recommendations – the first is the inclusion of cement pedestrian refuge areas (approximately 8' wide and 20' in length) at the northwest corners of 8th Avenue from West 23rd Street to West 33rd Streets and the Southwest corners of West 24th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 30th and 32nd Streets. The second is the above mentioned 4 month evaluation period during which the addition of left turn signals will be considered.

The creation of bicycle paths along 9th Avenue from West 14th to West 33rd Streets and on 8th Avenue from West 14th to West 23rd Streets has substantially reduced the number of both pedestrian and cyclist injuries along those routes, decreased bicycle use of sidewalks and been an important part of the changes that have lead to increased bicycle use in the city.

However our support is contingent on the following requests:

- 1) DOT work with the 10th precinct to ensure increased enforcement of both bicycle and vehicle violations along the bicycle path route (we note, with appreciation, that 10th Precinct summons to bicyclists more than doubled between 2008 and 2009).
- 2) DOT work with Transportation Alternatives to ensure active training for bicyclists in the area, including to businesses along the bicycle path corridor that include bicycle delivery (we note, with appreciation, that this had been done after the installation of other bicycle paths in our Community Board area).
- 3) In advance of installation, DOT meet with the Penn South Board and residents to decide on an appropriate location for Access-A-Ride parking.
- 4) Identify an additional off-avenue loading zone for the businesses that might be affected by bicycle path. We specifically note that one of the areas identified by DOT (along West 26th Street) is already a loading zone and additional areas may be required. We also request that DOT vet any proposed additional parking areas with the Community Board in advance of installation.
- 5) Provide a specific phased timeline for installation to the Transportation Committee of Community Board #4 and plan for notifying surrounding residents and businesses in September.
- 6) While moving ahead with their initial turning lane plan they should include:
 - a. Bollards attached to a continuous plaster median at the turning loans, in order to physically separate the turning lanes. We feel this may assist in slowing down turning lane drivers and thus present less danger to crossing pedestrian and bicyclists;
 - b. Turning lane signs should be installed in advance of the turning lanes to inform drivers;

- c. Since West 25th Street west of 8th Avenue is unusually wide and part of a NORC, we request that DOT install painted neck-downs and a couple of flexible bollards (similar to what was done on W. 26th and 9th Avenue) to slow down turning cars and provide more safe crossing space for pedestrians.

Most importantly, we strongly advocate that DOT install left-turn signals on Eighth Avenue at the southwest corners of West 25th, West 29th, West 31st and West 33rd Streets, including separate (north/south) pedestrian crossing times. We feel that this feature has been a major reason for the decline in pedestrian and bicycle injuries at other already installed bicycle path intersections. We note that 8th Avenue from West 23rd to West 34th Streets is adjacent to a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) and is in the top 10% for the number of pedestrian, bicyclist and vehicle accident related injuries in Manhattan. These safety issues far outweigh the stated DOT concern that the creation of the separate turning time/pedestrian crossing would increase west-bound vehicle travel time.

We will continue to advocate for these turn signals and pedestrian crossing times during the 4 month post-installation evaluation period and request that DOT provide statistics on pedestrian, vehicle and bicycle accidents and west bound vehicle travel time in this corridor at the end of the 4 month evaluation period for the Community Board to consider.

With the above very important caveat, we again support the DOT proposal for an extension of the enclosed bicycle path along 8th Avenue north to 34th Street and appreciate the steps taken by DOT staff to work more closely with both the Community Board and surrounding residential and business communities in their planning and implementation process.

Sincerely yours,



John Weis
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

Cc: 10th Precinct
Elected officials