

1 **Transportation Planning Committee**

**Item #: 4**

2  
3 December 5, 2012

4  
5 Ms. Margaret Forgione  
6 Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
7 New York City Department of Transportation  
8 59 Maiden Lane, 37<sup>th</sup> Floor  
9 New York, New York 10038

10  
11 **Re: Proposed Cross-town bike lanes in Midtown**

12  
13 Dear Commissioner Forgione:

14  
15 Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) appreciates being consulted regarding the proposed  
16 installation of crosstown bike lanes on W. 39<sup>th</sup> and W. 40<sup>th</sup> Streets between Eighth and Ninth  
17 Avenues, W. 43<sup>rd</sup>, 44<sup>th</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup>, 51<sup>st</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Streets between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson  
18 River Greenway and Twelfth Avenue between W. 51<sup>st</sup> and W. 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets. We understand that  
19 bike lanes have been installed on these same streets east of Eighth Avenue. With the debut of the  
20 Bike share program in the spring 2013, the city is anxious to complete the network of bike lanes  
21 in midtown with the objective of directing bicyclists on safe and marked roads.

22  
23 CB4 supports this objective and is very supportive of bike lanes in general and the safety it  
24 affords to all street users. However we request that DOT delay additional bicycle lanes in our  
25 district until installations of already approved lanes are completed and additional information we  
26 have requested regarding traffic and safety at certain intersections and, more broadly, regarding  
27 un-enclosed bicycle lanes is available. We also have serious safety concerns regarding some of  
28 the proposed routes and urge reconsideration and additional study. We request the DOT make a  
29 return presentation to inform the Community Board's final recommendation.

30  
31 During the last few years CB4 has approved extensions of both the Eighth and Ninth Avenue  
32 enclosed bicycle lanes. Our approval was predicated on several requests, many of which remain  
33 incomplete. The outstanding items on previous installations include: eight pedestrian refuges  
34 (NW 45<sup>th</sup> on Eighth Avenue, NE 33<sup>rd</sup>, SE 34<sup>th</sup>, NE 35<sup>th</sup>, SE 37<sup>th</sup>, SE 39<sup>th</sup>, SE 42<sup>nd</sup> on Ninth  
35 Avenue), signals installations on Ninth Avenue at W. 57<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets, a pedestrian  
36 extension between W. 42<sup>nd</sup> and W. 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets on Eighth Avenue, and returning on Ninth  
37 Avenue above W. 41<sup>st</sup> Street to non-metered parking after 7:00 p.m.

38  
39 In addition, CB4 had also requested and DOT committed to study a split phase signal at W. 25<sup>th</sup>  
40 Street and Eighth Avenue. This study is long overdue. CB4's request for installation of split  
41 phases at several locations of the Eighth and Ninth Avenue enclosed bicycle lanes was denied  
42 (W.29<sup>th</sup>, W37<sup>th</sup>, W.43<sup>rd</sup>, W.49<sup>th</sup> Streets and Eighth Avenue and W. 38<sup>th</sup> and W. 50<sup>th</sup> Streets and  
43 Ninth Avenue). Our concerns about these locations included higher vehicular turn volumes, and  
44 higher accident rates. These concerns are increased for proposed midtown unenclosed bicycle  
45 lanes on streets (versus Avenues) by the higher volume of taxi and truck double parking (likely

46 translated to blocking any unenclosed bicycle lanes post-installation), and parking garage curb  
47 cuts.

48  
49 We also note that the recently installed enclosed bicycle lanes on Ninth Avenue between W. 35<sup>th</sup>  
50 and W. 37<sup>th</sup> Streets already have large patches where the green paint on the lanes has already  
51 faded or disappeared.

52  
53 Thus, to summarize, before additional installations in CB4 are undertaken we request:

- 54
- 55 • Completion of the construction of the enclosed bicycle lanes, including the installation of the
  - 56 pedestrian refuges, a pedestrian extension, paint and signals,
  - 57 • Returning Ninth Avenue above W. 41<sup>st</sup> Street to non-metered parking after 7:00 p.m.,
  - 58 • Publication of the study of the split phase signal at Eighth Avenue and W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street, and
  - 59 • An analysis of the safety of unclosed bicycle lanes on Streets (pre- and post- implementation),
  - 60 including the W. 29<sup>th</sup> and W. 30<sup>th</sup> Street bicycle lanes installed a year ago and on bicycle “mixed
  - 61 lanes” (where bicyclists share a vehicle turning lane).

62  
63 We also have specific concerns about some of the proposed locations and request reconsideration  
64 and additional study, including of our suggested replacement routes,

65  
66A. **W. 40<sup>th</sup> Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues.** There are few streets less safe for  
67 biking. This Street has a large bay on the north side for buses to enter the Port Authority Bus  
68 Terminal. There are hundreds of such buses entering each day, coming either from the west or  
69 turning from 9th Avenue. The south side has four large hotels with limousines, cabs and buses  
70 pulling in and out at all hours of the day. The street is also very heavily trafficked, being an exit  
71 from the Lincoln Tunnel. The intersection at 8th avenue is a location where there is no protected  
72 bike lane, right in the midst of the taxi loading and unloading zone for the Port Authority.

73B. **W. 39<sup>th</sup> Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues** is heavily travelled with buses trucks  
74 and cars going to the Lincoln Tunnel. The street ends at Eleventh Avenue and does not connect  
75 to the greenway.

76C. **W. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street between Eighth and Twelfth Avenues** presents some challenges: There are  
77 four parking garages, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, three on the south side and one on the  
78 north side of the street. Many New Jersey and airport vans and the M34A use this block for  
79 layover. Holy Cross School's signalized pedestrian crossing is in the middle of this block. It is  
80 used twelve (12) times a day to get children to the playground. The Manhattan plaza complex,  
81 between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, is home to a very large contingent of frail seniors who cross  
82 the street or the avenue at a very slow pace. W. 43rd Street converts, between Tenth and  
83 Eleventh Avenues, into a two-way street to accommodate the movements of fire trucks from  
84 FDNY Rescue 1 located at 530 W. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, on the south side of the street. There are three  
85 active driveways into the UPS building, between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues, on the north  
86 side of the street and the Atelier parking lot entrance on the south side of the street. We also note  
87 that W. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street does not go through all the way to the East side.

88D. **W. 48<sup>th</sup> Street** is not appropriate for a bike lane in the long term or in the foreseeable future  
89 since it is being torn up for the better part of the next five (5) years while the pipes for the water  
90 tunnel are being laid. In addition it is used by commuter traffic from the West Side Highway to  
91 access Midtown, by Tour and Charter buses as a gateway to theatres, Radio City Music Hall,

92 Rockefeller Center, museums, and by Engine No. 54 as a “Fire Lane”. W. 48<sup>th</sup> Street is home to  
93 two Schools, PS 212 and PPAS, hence school bus double park and two hotels attract taxis and  
94 black cars double parking (it should be noted that two more hotels are about to open on this  
95 cross-town street).

96E. **Twelfth Avenue between W. 51<sup>st</sup> and W. 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets.** The location of a bicycle lane along  
97 the West Side Highway raises particular concerns for the safety of bicyclist crossing over in front  
98 of four lanes of highway traffic. We need to review the exact layout of the lane in order to form  
99 an opinion.

100  
101 To ensure the maximum safety for all street users, we request that W. 38<sup>th</sup> Street be substituted to  
102 W. 40<sup>th</sup> Street and W. 50<sup>th</sup> or W. 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets be substituted to W. 48<sup>th</sup> Street. We also suggest  
103 that you consider substituting W. 37<sup>th</sup> Street to W. 39<sup>th</sup> Street and W. 45<sup>th</sup> Street to W. 43<sup>rd</sup>  
104 Streets.

105  
106 As indicated above, CB4 is very supportive of bike lanes but we are concerned about the level of  
107 safety these cross-town unenclosed bicycle lanes provide to the bicyclists, especially with the  
108 bike share launch around the corner. Bike share users will expect and require a much higher level  
109 of safety and protection than the current bike lane users and the selection of cross town routes  
110 and treatments should reflect such.

111  
112 We also continue to hear testimony from seniors and others complaining about bicyclists who  
113 pass red lights. Increased education and enforcement needs to be an active part of any bicycle  
114 lane expansion and ensuring bicyclists understand that similar to vehicles, pedestrians always  
115 have the right of way.

116  
117 We look forward to continuing dialogue on the above and appreciate your communication and  
118 outreach.

119  
120 Sincerely,

121  
122 CJ/CB/JM

123  
124 cc: Local electeds

125  
126  
127  
128  
129  
130  
131