

January 17, 2014

Honorable Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 35th Floor
New York, New York 10038

Dear Borough Commissioner Forgione:

On behalf of Manhattan Community Board 7, we write with heavy hearts about the traffic deaths that occurred over the past week along the 96th Street corridor on the Upper West Side. As you know, two people lost their lives in tragic traffic fatalities this past weekend - one at 96th and Broadway, and one at 97th and West End Avenue. We have been working as a community for many years to improve safety and mitigate the hazardous traffic conditions that have often imperiled pedestrians along this corridor.

These tragedies underscore the need for action, and the importance of the pedestrian safety study that was conducted by CB7 and submitted to DOT in December 2013. We are referring to the Nelson/Nygaard study which contains many recommendations for safety in this incredibly busy corridor. While the study envisions many long-term improvements, we believe after meeting with members of the community and our board that there are several actions that can be taken immediately to help to prevent further tragedies, and we urge you to implement them as quickly as possible.

These include:

96th St and Broadway intersection –

1. Install a signalized and striped median-to-median pedestrian crossing of 96th Street at Broadway. It does not appear possible to successfully discourage this pedestrian movement, and it needs to be safely allowed and controlled. The “Walk” period can be coordinated with a phase for straight ahead north and south vehicular travel on Broadway (no left hand turns) providing safe north to south pedestrian crossing. In fact, this median-to-median crossing may prove to be safer than crossing 96th Street at the edges of Broadway where vehicles are permitted to make right hand turns. Additional signage to educate the public about the need to observe the “Walk/Don’t Walk” signals may also be needed. For quicker action, a striping with a Barnes dance of 12-15 seconds could provide safe crossing until the pedestrian signals for the crossing can be installed.

2. Change the traffic light pattern at the 96th/Broadway intersection. *Problem:* Many motorists on 96th Street (either direction) attempt to speed across the Broadway intersection when they see a yellow light as they approach either the eastern or western sides of the intersection. Currently, signals allow both vehicles and pedestrians to start the north and south crossing of 96th Street before this late east-west crossing traffic has fully cleared the Broadway intersection. *1st possible solution:* Have the light on the OTHER side turn red when the first one turns yellow which will take away the need to race through the intersection. *2nd Possible solution:* Allow more time between the beginning of the Yellow/Red phase for Eastbound/Westbound traffic and the start of the Green/Walk phase for North/South bound vehicular and pedestrian travel.

3. Immediately inspect the pedestrian crossing on the east side of Broadway at 96th Street. The pedestrian crossing on the east side of Broadway at 96th Street remains a problem of uncertainty for pedestrians and left turning drivers. When southbound Broadway traffic has its dedicated left turn, the pedestrian crossing screen tells pedestrians not to walk. But often there is a delay before the left turning traffic approaches the crossing. Pedestrians just do not believe that the “Don’t Walk” sign is correct. Turning traffic needs to be alerted to possible pedestrians at that point, and pedestrians need to be better

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alerted to the possible approach of traffic coming from the left. Partial solution: A second signalized pedestrian box below the "Don't Walk" box – in red letters – "DON'T WALK - Traffic from Left" - when the left-turn phase is active.

4. Explore the Nelson/Nygaard recommendation to eliminate left-hand-turns at Broadway and 96th Street. We ask DOT to investigate this proposal and what it will mean for surrounding streets and travel to the Henry Hudson Parkway and the Central Park transverse roads.

97th St and West End Avenue intersection and area -

1. Change the signal light pattern along 97th Street. Many motorists, if they travel fast enough, can make all the lights along 97th Street from Columbus Avenue to Riverside Drive. This creates a speedway, which can be lethal. Changing the timing of the lights so that vehicles cannot speed and successfully make the next light will save lives.

2. Change the signal light pattern along West End Avenue. Motorists, if they travel fast enough and make the light for a left hand turn from 97th Street can then make the green light at West End Avenue and 96th Street for a quick right to the highway. Additionally, southbound travel on West End Avenue can continue all the way into the low 90s if a vehicle goes fairly quickly and just makes the light at 98th Street. This encourages a speedway in the high 90s along WEA. Changing the timing of the lights so that speeding is not encouraged in this fashion will save lives.

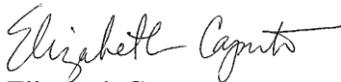
3. Take immediate action to slow and guide traffic making left turns from West 97th Street onto West End Avenue -
Eliminate the northbound dedicated left turn lane on WEA at 97th Street - It is often empty and encourages left turning vehicles to 'shortcut' the left turn instead of slowing to make the turn. Design and install a well-marked island at this location which would require slower turns by left turning vehicles, and install so that buses can still make the required turn. *Install bulb-outs at 97th Street and West End Avenue* to both shorten the pedestrian crossing of WEA and require vehicles traveling westbound on 97th Street turning left onto WEA (southbound) to travel farther into the intersection before turning into the crosswalk.

4. Install "No Left-Turn" signs, effective from 7AM-10AM, for eastbound 95th Street traffic at West End Avenue. This will take pressure off the large number of school children entering P.S. 75 during these hours.

In addition, **CB7 is aware of the visual clutter that surrounds the intersection of Broadway and 96th Street, which often obscures motorists' views of pedestrians.** CB7 will take appropriate steps to make sure this clutter is removed and we ask the DOT, elected officials and other stakeholders to help us in this effort.

We respectfully request the opportunity to meet with you in the next week to discuss these recommendations, and to draw up a timeline for their implementation. Many thanks, and we look forward to working with DOT and members of our Upper West Side community, along with our local elected officials on these and other matters of pedestrian safety so that tragedies such as the two that took place this past weekend never occur again.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Caputo

Chair

Cc:

Honorable Scott M. Stringer, NYC Comptroller

Honorable Gale A Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Honorable Mark D. Levine, Council Member, District 7

Honorable Helen Rosenthal, Council Member, District 6