

**Community Board 9M
16-18 Old Broadway
New York City, NY 10027**

May Uniformed Services / Transportation Committee Meeting

Date: May 7, 2015

Time: 6:30 PM

Location: Board Office

The meeting was called to order by co-chairs C Thompson [CT] and T Kovaleff [TK] at 6:30. CT, PL, PJ, TK, AT, JA, and MW were in attendance. A listing of Public members and representatives is attached

A quorum being present, the agenda and minutes were adopted UNAM

Discussion of Traffic Safety on Bway from 135-153 Streets

N. Heyman of DOT introduced Jessy Mintz-Roth and A Posner who were working on the project. They led us through a slide presentation which should be attached as part of the record.

Reports

DA Office: L Ginat

Announced that she had been appointed director of the new Harlem Office
Introduced J Aranja [from Washington Hgts] who will be on the staff

Others in attendance: D. Howard for BP, L Linnino for Councilperson M Levine, R Slon for St Lukes

PSA6: Officer Cheatham Had to leave, but left Stats

26th Pct: Officer Harper

Robberies up and gave picture of suspect.

There have been a rash of Burglaries in Morningside Gardens as perpetrators have used a crowbar to break open flimsy front door locks.

Moving violations are up over 30%

There will be a community crime forum 5/14 at Salem United Methodist Church and will host a job forum on 5/23 at 527 W 125 Street.

30 Pct: Community Affairs Officer Castro

Provided stats. There has been an uptick in crimes.

We made a significant arrest during an inprogress crime; this has provided good leads.

5/14: 144th Street, Amsterdam to Bway beautification

5/22: West Harlem Empowerment, closing the street for the kids. There will be Rock Climbing.

5/30: St Nicholas 141-145: There will be a multicultural Enjoyment street fair.

Manhattan North: Officer Rijo

Provided stats

Why the crime rise: summer

Youth Police Academy: starts 7/7 and lasts for six weeks, open to kids 10-16, distrib applications which must be completed by 5/29

Old Business

CT reported that a compromise was reached with the DOT on the Riverside Corridor 116 to 135 wherein the lanes of the viaduct would be reduced southbound, but not northbound. And if there were increased conjection during the morning rush hour, it would be undone.

TK went over the reso he would draft

The committee voted 4-1-2 with AT and MW stating they would provide statements to be appended to the minutes.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15

Respectfully submitted

Theodore Kovaleff

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DRAFT letter

We thank the DOT for its study of the Riverside Corridor from 116th to 135th Street. Community Board9M has carefully considered the proposals and wants to share the results of our deliberations with you.

1. Making the corner of Riverside Drive and 116th Street perpendicular. CB9M supports this proposal
2. Placing a sidewalk on the east edge of the triangle at the south end of Claremont Avenue: CB9M supports this proposal
3. CB9M continues to support installing angle parking on the south side of 120th Street between Riverside and Bway with sidewalk extensions on the SE corners of Riverside and Claremont Avenues as opposed to the DOT proposal for this little traversed area.
4. Delineating pedestrian crossing spaces along the Drive: CB9M supports this proposal
5. Redesigning the 135th and Riverside Drive intersection allowing for there to be a one lane southbound and two lane northbound treatment of the viaduct traffic and delineating pedestrian crossing areas. CB9M supports this proposal

We understand that if the southbound traffic backs up too much during the rush hour, DOT will return the traffic pattern to two lanes southbound on the viaduct..

Attendance

Other CB Members

None

NYC Agency Reps

26 Pct: J Harper, G Morales, PO Clifford

30 Pct: Det Almonte; PO Castro

PSA 6: G Cheatham

DOT: N Heyman; J Mintz-Roth, A Posner

Manhattan North: Det Rijo

DANY: J J Aranjó

MBPO: D Howard

St Lukes: R Son, J Slon

Fortune Society: V Jackson

Response to Letter of Support for DOT Proposal
re. Viaduct, 120th st. and 116th st.

As members of the Uniformed Services/Safety and Transportation Committee (USST) who abstained rather than voting in favor of the Letter of Support for this proposal, we feel it is important to explain the reasons for our abstention.

It is our position that the DOT proposal as it stands is a strong proposal worthy of full support from our board. Because of this, we certainly support the implementation of any part of that plan and would not want a 'no' vote to block the DOT from implementing good pieces of the proposal. Thus, the letter of support before you today, while not supporting the full plan, does at least offer a reduction in lanes in the south bound direction on the viaduct, which we support. However, we believe that a reduction in lanes from two to one in BOTH directions is a much stronger and more sensible plan, as well as being more representative of the needs and desires of our community.

The objections cited by members of the committee to reducing the two northbound lanes to one lane are as follows:

*Traffic during rush hour will increase leading to increased asthma rates

Our observation based on lane reductions in other parts of our city is that, rather than there being an overall increase in traffic, there is actually a gradual reduction or rebalancing of traffic. We can look at West End Ave., Morningside Ave. and the Central Park Drives and notice that, rather than there being an overall increase in traffic, drivers have either chosen a different mode of travel or a different route.

It is our belief that, by reducing the number of lanes, we are helping move Manhattan in a different direction, designing a city in which it will be easier to use alternative and less polluting forms of transportation which, over time, will actually lead to a DROP in asthma rates. Our goal should be to encourage people to get out of their cars where possible, encouraging them to use other forms of transportation better adapted to life in a compact city like Manhattan.

Finally, we note the following:

“During the ban on nonessential vehicles during the heavy snowstorm of February 1961, air pollution dropped 66 per cent.” (*New York Times*, March 13, 1961.

Clearly, if fewer people drive, pollution will drop, along with asthma rates.

*Traffic speeds should be addressed using enforcement - traffic cops

The Executive Officer of the 26th Precinct, Michael McManus, has stated in a letter to Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgione that,

“the 26th Precinct, along with many other precincts in the city, does not have the manpower available to regularly monitor the speed of vehicles on this road and issue summonses to violators. Although more resources may be dedicated to addressing this particular issue in the coming months, we must utilize all of the tools at our disposal in order to encourage drivers to drive at a responsible speed and to ensure the safety of motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.”

Clearly, more and better enforcement would be helpful, but it is also expensive. We could be saving money by using techniques to alter roads such that they offer a more permanent and virtually expense free way of slowing drivers down, while also offering safer crossings for pedestrians and bike infrastructure for safer cycling. We can save money both by reducing crashes and by freeing up our police officers to focus on other issues in our community.

*People are going ‘only’ 36 miles per hour on average - just 6 miles over the current speed limit, and bikers are the ones running red lights.

It is important to acknowledge that cyclists are breaking the law, particularly on Riverside Drive. However, there have been no fatalities due to crashes with a cyclist. Instead, in the roughly 5 year period from 2008 to 2012, there have been 71 injuries, of which 3 were pedestrians and 5 were cyclists. 20 of these injuries were severe. A severe injury is life altering. This corridor is considered a High Crash Corridor, ranking in the top third of Manhattan corridors.

Moreover, at our May meeting, Renee Slon, who does community outreach for St. Luke’s, reported that on the day of our meeting three

pedestrians had been brought in to St. Luke's with injuries due to car crashes in our community. This is typical and unacceptable.

Rather than citing cyclists who are running red lights as a reason NOT to reduce the number of lanes on the Riverside Viaduct, we need to both reduce the lanes AND create a campaign aimed at educating ALL users of this dangerous corridor on how to drive, cycle and walk safely, responsibly and respectfully.

In addition, Martin Wallace has been conducting speed studies using a radar gun and can assure you that he has measured cars going at speeds upwards of 50 miles an hour, and that is in an area about 10 blocks south of the viaduct. Further, the DOT has stated that the speed limit of this corridor will be reduced to 25 MPH as soon as the lane reduction to the viaduct is complete. This will mean that a person going 36 MPH will actually get stopped. Currently drivers going at this speed are not given a summons because it is not over the 10 MPH window above the speed limit that is allowed by the NYPD.

*More and more people are driving and that's not going to change.

This is simply an opinion and not a reason for us to object to the sensible modifications being proposed by the DOT for this road and elsewhere in our community. Consider that, in Manhattan, while there are about 1.6 million people living on the island, only about 20% of these own a car (NYS DMV Vehicle Registrations On File 2013). And yet, over 35% of the area of Manhattan is dedicated to roads.

We believe that we must take an assertive stance for a reduction in reliance on cars as a mode of transportation in order to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. We are unwilling to accommodate unsafe drivers in the name of giving them quick passage THROUGH our neighborhoods, putting our residents at risk. Riverside Drive consists primarily of residences and parks and playgrounds. Why are we continuing to allow drivers to treat it as a thruway, driving at speeds of up to 50 MPH, running red lights and, in some cases, injuring and killing others? We have the right to limit how people pass through our neighborhoods and, in fact, as representatives of our community it is our duty to make sure that we are balancing the needs of all the members of our community. The clear majority of our community does NOT own a car and our actions as a community board need to reflect that fact.

*The statistics on fatalities and crashes being provided by the DOT are neither consistent nor accurate.

While this may or may not be true, one of the chairs of our committee, Carolyn Thompson, is requesting that the Traffic Safety Sergeants from the 26th and 30th precincts provide their own statistics each month so that we have a way of comparing the data. In addition, Renee Slon, from St. Luke's, will be providing a regular update on crash-related injuries and deaths. Using these three sources of information, we will hopefully have a more clear idea of how often crashes are taking place on our roads and why.

To sum up, the situation is clear: Too many people are getting injured and killed due to unsafe drivers, and too many people feel unsafe crossing the streets in their neighborhoods because of unsafe conditions on roads there. We have a mandate from the city, in the form of Vision Zero, to find ways to get the number of crash related injuries and fatalities down to ZERO by 2034.

The DOT has demonstrated a number of proven techniques for traffic calming already throughout the five boroughs of NYC. We believe that this proposal offers some very simple and effective ways to make the corridor of Riverside Drive from the viaduct down to 116th street safer, and we believe that supporting anything less than the complete plan creates an unnecessary delay in implementing the kinds of improvements that will vastly increase the quality of life for everyone who lives in this neighborhood.

The real compromise today needs to come from drivers who, until recently, have been receiving special treatment and an unfair share of the total resources that are meant to be shared by the whole community. By supporting a reduction in the number of lanes in both directions on the viaduct, we are sending the message that the safety and quality of life of pedestrians, cyclists, and residents of the neighborhood takes precedence over the needs of drivers passing through the neighborhood, while still offering a safe way to pass through for those who continue to drive.

Signed: Martin Wallace and James Archer
Members, Uniform Services/Safety/Transportation Committee of CB9