

Brooklyn Community Board 9
890 Nostrand Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11225

Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2024

Chair: Ethan Norville; Vice Chair: Felice Robertson; Secretary: Paco Abraham

Attendance (Board Members): Ethan Norville; Felice Robertson; Benny Rosenberger

Attendance (Community Resident Members): Paco Abraham; Andrew Magnus; Valerie Fleming; Jeffrey Grannum;

Absent (Board Members): Yaakov Pearson; Raphaella Godoy

Absent (Community Resident Members): Calista DeJesus

Guests: Nick Carey, Director, School Safety, NYC DOT; Katelyn Graham, Project Manager, NYC DOT; Suki Cheong, CB9; Theresa Westerdahl, CB9;

I. Welcome/Greetings

- a.** Meeting is called to order at 7:09 pm, 11/13/24
- b.** Chairperson Norville gave an overview of the agenda, noted the previously heard community comments about potential new bike lanes in the neighborhood, and recapped the Transportation Committee's previously decided proposal for changes it requests DOT make to the [existing project on Brooklyn & Kingston Avenues](#), as presented in June 2024.
 - i.** Transportation Committee Resolutions requested the following
 1. On Brooklyn Ave and Kingston Ave between Empire Blvd and Lefferts Ave, new bike lanes must be standard design (paint only) or omitted in favor of a wide parking lane. The committee recommends no protected bike lanes here.
 2. Safer passage when crossing protected bike lanes in two ways
 - a.** Reduce width of bike lane where possible to expand the buffer space between bike lane and curb pedestrians more space to exit vehicles and enhance child safety.
 - b.** On protected bike lanes, install rumble strips to discourage cyclists from speeding around schools and places of interest.
 3. Re-evaluate the anticipated parking loss of ~54 parking spots and:
 - a.** Minimize the loss by only daylighting corners and removing vehicle parking directly adjacent to schools and significant places of interest;
 - b.** Use art and street furniture in newly daylight spaces so that where parking is removed, pedestrians get a benefit as a result
 - ii.** Committee welcomes continued feedback on the DOT proposal and our committee's follow-up request via online feedback form for those who cannot make the in-person forums.
 1. feedback form link: <https://forms.gle/iwZ8vzZe1E3HUx8A7>

II. Public Feedback Session (7:00-8:30)

- a. Ongoing comments from dozens of residents about the plan, both its specifics and general concerns. Commentary included....
- i. Resident asked for clarification about how to expand the buffer space. Chairperson Norville explains bike lane width could be reduced wherever possible.
 - ii. Resident urged DOT to keep Kingston to two moving lanes out of fear of traffic backups. Said there is abundant double parking now and the only way traffic can ever flow now is because of the two lanes.
 - iii. A resident contended that the protected bike lane concept is a flawed design from the get-go.
 - iv. A resident spoke very forcefully in favor of the plan as presented. Said he's lived in the area since 1984 and wants his kids to be able to bike around the city rather than see CBs quibbling about the preservation of free parking. He did not want the city to prioritize public storage of private vehicles.
 - v. A resident on Fenimore St noted her wife was hit by a car in front of her home and gave her the impression now that a painted bike lane on the block would not be a good idea. She feared for the safety of kids at a daycare on the block and was flummoxed that she'd been unsuccessful in getting a speed hump on the block for years.
 - vi. A visitor noted that she lives in CB14 but works in CB9 and bikes here daily. She admitted to sometimes cycling on the sidewalks here out of fear of safety because she does not see any dedicated infrastructure for riders. She urged a big-picture mindset change and noted how many other cities have changed city designs for the better.
 - vii. A resident commented that he didn't feel this was a safety project. He has 4 daughters attending the school on Brooklyn & Lefferts. He noted the intense backups on Parkside Avenue ever since the protected bike lane was added. He feared narrowing Kingston's width because it is a feeder up from the hospitals and the street has large buildings with many residences.
 - viii. A resident living at Brooklyn & Lefferts Avenues spoke in favor of the protected bike lanes. He wants to see the city increase options for mobility. His partner witnessed a child hit by a motorist at Brooklyn & Lefferts and said this corner needs some attention.
 - ix. A man who noted he's driven schools buses since 2016 has concerns. He said cyclists tend to not stop for signs and that bike lanes would be better installed after more rider regulation and enforcement.
 - x. A resident on Fenimore questioned why there is a proposal for a bike lane across Fenimore & Rutland streets because they do not connect to Prospect Park directly. She argued that there is 24-7 double parking and neither is not wide enough for a lane. She continued that if a painted lane were made it would then potentially become a barrier-protected lane and take more space from motorists. She said if the plan goes in she and residents will sue DOT.
 - xi. Another resident notes that there are bad drivers and bad bike riders and even bad pedestrians who blindly walk into the street. He urged a focus on safety for all.
 - xii. Another resident said she's been living here since the 1950's and the Orthodox community has large families so they can't all be on bicycles for all their mobility needs and wants DOT to consider those who cannot bike.
 - xiii. A born and raised Crown Heights resident noted there was a man and his son run down by a car on Brooklyn Avenue 6 years ago and nothing has been done to the road since. He argued that traffic calming is a good idea and would make things safer for everyone.

- xiv. Former CB Chairman Jacob Goldstein noted his opposition to the plan and remarked that in his many decades leading the CB, the city had previously suggested a bike lane on Kingston Avenue but he shot it down as a bad idea.
- xv. Another resident worried that narrowing Brooklyn and Kingston would add more traffic to the other nearby streets on NY Avenue and Empire Blvd. He also asked what plan DOT has to keep protected bike lanes clear of snow because he doesn't usually see protected bike lanes cleared out. He felt the city has an agenda to push bike lanes down the community's throat.
- xvi. Valerie Fleming offered questions asking about data and a larger, more comprehensive plan. What is the 5-year plan as we give up our streets to more things like zip cars, Citi bikes, etc.? What are the stats?
 - 1. in reply, Nick Carey, Director, of School Safety, noted that he did the research we requested in previous meetings and had updates.
 - a. The bicycle risk index he said noted that overwhelmingly, as cycling has grown, the risk for each cyclist has dropped. He also said things were likely even safer than data showed because the definition of a bike has changed over the years with advent of e-bikes etc.
 - b. Committee asked for newer data than a 2007-2017 summary showing protected bike lanes offered a 21% reduction in injuries. He said to be statistically relevant, the data has to look at the corridor 3 years before and after a change, so this study actually included #s through 2020. And after that, Covid had an enormous change on the reliability of data, so this study is indeed most current one to use.
 - c. A final question asked what time frame they used for stats in the presentation and he clarified it was #s from 2019-2023, which was the most recent data of a 5-year block they had to use.
- xvii. Another resident who drives a school bus said that since the Bedford protected lane went in recently, a 20-minute trip up to Flushing Ave now takes 35 minutes. He said the traffic accumulates when there are mergers and feared when he dropped school kids.
- xviii. Theresa Westerdahl reminded DOT that she wants the bike lane on Empire Blvd to continue to Prospect Park rather than its current terminus at Bedford Avenue. She also said the future will have many more deliveries via cargo bike and worried they'll take up all the room in bike lanes. She also noted she's made bike rack requests and they've gone unfulfilled for years.
- xix. Another resident said he strongly supports the bike lane plan, that we need alternatives to driving, and that helping some people not drive will help make it more efficient for others to remain on the road. He noted the infamous 26-lane highway in Houston which is gridlocked despite its size and said he feared we're chasing a mirage.
- xx. A resident of Fenimore warned DOT that if the project gets done, she'll be on the news for fighting it.
- xxi. Another resident debated if Citi bikes were being used. She felt the ones at Rochester and Utica sat empty and were not being used. (*Citi bike data shows the Rochester/ Carroll St station gets 22 uses a day and the Utica/ Carroll St station gets 21 uses per day*).
- xxii. A visitor from CB14 who works in CB9 pointed out that the commonality she hears in all the concerns raised was really about double parking more than anything and wanted the city to address that instead.

- xxiii. Hector Robinson urged that this issue is really a matter of balance and that the city should instead really understand the community. He believed decisions were being made by special interests and not the community's needs.
- xxiv. Chairperson Norville thanked everyone for the collective feedback and assured the crowd it was all recorded and will be added to the summaries we give to DOT. Further feedback can be sent directly to the CB online. <https://forms.gle/iwZ8vzZe1E3HUx8A7>

III. Business Session – New Business

- a. Incorporating Bike Lane Feedback
 - i. New comments will be included in committee discussions
- b. Clove Rd. Curb Cut Authorization and Comment, if required
 - i. Residents of Malbone Street (36 condos, all of Jewish families with many kids) presented a range of concerns about the request by the local developer of 975 Nostrand Avenue for a new curb cut on Clove Road at Malbone Street, rather than the original plan for a curb cut on Nostrand Avenue. Worries included...
 - 1. They want more time given for community feedback rather than the short 10-day period, which fell during Jewish holidays and noticed was just put on a few street poles.
 - 2. They disputed the data in the original site surveys and felt it calculated low pedestrian numbers during religious holidays.
 - 3. Overall, the street is entirely neglected. It doesn't have consistent sidewalks, street signs, etc. There was once a claim it had archeological merit, but research found nothing more than some old Coke bottles.
 - 4. There is some confusion about the agreement That DOT gave to Karl Cohen in 2020 to close some of the streets and allow for it to become a pedestrian plaza adjacent to his property at the corner of Montgomery and Clove Road.
 - 5. They worry about an excess of vehicle traffic coming onto the currently low-traffic Malbone Street because of the new parking garage which can house 193 vehicles.
 - 6. The ideal would be for the curb cut to be on Nostrand, and barring that option... if it is on Clove Road, it should be farther north than Malbone Street. They do not want to give a variance allowing it to be 0 feet away from Malbone, and prefer the 50 feet as is typical of DOT guidelines.
 - ii. Chairman Norville suggested we have a narrow window of time to offer any input and felt it would be wise to voice a CB opinion and push the developer to improve the street greatly.
 - 1. Residents asked to reduce the ability of new vehicle traffic to flow onto Malbone and feel that a gooseneck design - a concrete sidewalk extension on Malbone that blocked cars from entering the new garage - would be ideal in this bad situation.
 - 2. Karl Cohen, owner of 967 Nostrand Avenue property, spoke up and said he was listening but still very much wanted to see the pedestrian plaza he had previously discussed with DOT become a reality. He noted That stretch of Clove Road is where the War of Brooklyn was fought and he wanted to have monuments there and keep historic cobblestones. He said the plaza he had gotten approval for was supposed to be for emergency vehicles only, not passenger vehicles.
 - iii. MOTION - Benny Rosenberger made a motion to disapprove the developer's request for a variance, excepting the following conditions.

1. The developer adds a neckdown/ sidewalk extension on the Northeast corner of Malbone Street and Clove Road, with sufficient barrier (curb height, boulders, planters, etc.) to prevent motor vehicles from driving atop the sidewalk to access the new garage across the street.
2. The developer adds signage where appropriate on Malbone to ensure drivers are made aware there is no entry to the garage across the way.
 - a. additional DOT adds proper signage on nearby streets such as Empire Blvd to ensure motorists are made aware the only entrance to the garage would be from Clove Road
3. Developers meet DOT's criteria for repairing the intersections affected at Malbone and Clove Road as well as Empire Blvd and Clove Road.
 - a. This includes more than a reconstruction of existing subpar sidewalks, and instead is the full construction of new sidewalks on the east and west sides of the street
 - b. This also includes proper traffic management for the irregular intersection at Empire and Clove Road and may include a new traffic light to ensure safety for drivers and pedestrians at the crossing.
4. DOT should inform the community board as to the current status of the previously approved pedestrian plaza adjacent to Carl Kohen's property and if vehicle access includes restrictions that may affect the incoming development on this site.
5. MOTION seconded by Paco Abraham. **Motion passed by unanimous consent**

IV. Adjourn

- a. MOTION - Ethan Norville made a motion to adjourn at 10:08 pm. Felice Robertson seconded the motion. **Motion passed by unanimous consent**