



The City of New York

## Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills  
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

**Michael Budabin** Chairperson / **Joseph Marziliano** District Manager

To: All Board Members

From: Victor Dadras, Committee Chair

Date: March 24, 2023

Re: Various Traffic Requests and School Safety Issues

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On Thursday, March 23, 2023, the CB11 Transportation Committee met via Zoom to review and discuss several issues, requests and hear a presentation from DOT regarding safety improvements along Northern Blvd. east of 223 Street.

### **Committee Members**

Victor Dadras, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair and Committee Chair

Henry Euler, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair

Paul DiBenedetto

Eileen Miller

Christina Scherer

Jena Lanzetta

Stephan Popa

John Kelly

Rob Liatto

Joan Garippa

Benjamin Turner

### **Non-Committee Board Member**

Fleur Martino

### **CB11 Staff**

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager

Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator

### **Guests**

Albert Silvestri, Deputy Queens Borough Commissioner, NYC DOT

Joe Li, Project Manager, Traffic Engineering and Planning Division, NYC DOT

Joseph Patti, Borough Planner, NYC DOT

Mr. Dadras began the meeting by reviewing the agenda items. He then introduced Albert Silvestri, Deputy Queens Borough Commissioner, NYC DOT. Mr. Silvestri introduced his colleagues, Joe Li and Joseph Patti. Mr. Li screen shared a PowerPoint presentation regarding proposed safety improvements at seven locations on Northern Blvd. between 223 Street and Little Neck Parkway. The first one Mr. Li spoke about was eastbound Northern Blvd. (NB) at the southbound entrance to the Cross Island Parkway (CIP). They are proposing painted curb extensions to help shorten the pedestrian crossing distance and slow down the speed of vehicles turning onto the CIP. The next is for the traffic exiting the northbound CIP onto NB. They are going to refurbish all the markings such as crosswalks, stop bars etc. At the CIP northbound

entrance ramp, they will be replacing the jersey barrier with a pedestrian refuge island allowing greater visibility for pedestrians. At NB and Douglaston Parkway, they are planning on installing a hardened center line to lower turning speeds. They will also adjust signal timing at this intersection allowing greater lead time for pedestrians. On NB at 244 and 245 Streets, they plan on installing the pedestrian refuge islands due to the number of people crossing near Divine Wisdom Academy. The last intersection discussed was NB and Little Neck Parkway. They are proposing hardened center lines for the eastbound, westbound, and northbound approaches. There will be painted curb extensions at the southwest corner of the intersection. For further details, please visit the following link: [nyc.gov/dotprojects#northern-blvd](https://nyc.gov/dotprojects#northern-blvd).

Mr. Euler asked what the cost of these improvements will be and if there are any plans to extend similar changes west to Bayside and Auburndale. Mr. Li said they are open to any suggestions. Mr. Silvestri said this work is done in-house with funds from their operating budget. This is not a capital project. Mr. Dadras asked when this would be done. Mr. Li said as soon as they receive CB11's support, the work will be placed on their schedule and will hopefully be done by the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024. Per Mr. Silvestri, markings and signage can be done quicker; concrete work needs more time. Mr. Popa asked if there will be anything installed in addition to paint at the curb extensions. Mr. Li said there will be bollards as well. Mr. DiBenedetto asked what the southbound CIP entrance east of 223 Street will look like; will it just be paint? Mr. Li said there will be paint and delineators; they would like to add concrete, however, there are catch basins at this location. This type of installation would require a capital project and take a much longer time. Mr. Kelly expressed his thanks for these proposed treatments. He reported that the hardline installed at Bell Blvd and 48 Avenue last year is destroyed. He also commented that the bollards that were installed at Hollis Court Blvd. and 47 Avenue do not extend the entirety. In addition, vehicles are always parked in the "No Standing" area that was established. Mr. Kelly stated a 74-year-old pedestrian was killed at this location a few weeks ago. He asked if something more than plastic bollards could be installed. Perhaps a capital project could be done in the future. Mr. Kelly also asked if Douglaston Parkway and NB was going to be a Barnes Dance intersection with the re-timing of the signals. Mr. Li said yes. Mr. Kelly also feels that the placement of the bollards will encourage vehicles to turn into the crosswalk. Mr. Li said this intersection is a bit tricky; the existence of the bike lane limits where they can install the bollards. Mr. Kelly asked if the crosswalk could be moved slightly to the east. Mr. Li said according to DOT standards, they cannot move the crosswalk. Mr. Silvestri stated that there is not enough room for a pedestrian refuge island. Mr. Silvestri also stated they need funds for a capital project; it is a long-term goal. Mr. Dadras requested that Evelyn Mallo, CM Paladino's office, who was present, convey these concerns and the need for funding to the Councilmember. Mr. Kelly asked if there are plans to make improvements at Hollis Court Blvd. and 47 Avenue. Mr. Silvestri said yes, they are already looking into it; many improvements had been done; however, the entire design is being reviewed. Mrs. Miller asked for clarification regarding the replacement of the jersey barrier near the northbound CIP entrance. The two tapered jersey barriers will be replaced with a concrete pedestrian island where pedestrians can wait to cross. The jersey barriers for the bike lane will not be removed. Mr. Turner reiterated what Mr. Kelly stated. Bollards are better than nothing, but more robust protection is needed. Ms. Martino thinks trees and/or plantings should be added. She also requested more cameras and enhanced lighting near the CIP ramps. Mr. Silvestri said they can ask streetlighting to survey for additional lights. However, he said they are limited with the number of cameras they can deploy. They are currently at the limit they are allowed as per the State Legislature. Mr. Liatto asked if the hardened lines could be installed as a perimeter around the painted curb extensions. Mr. Silvestri said it is DOT's

belief that if they are installed at or near a crosswalk, they can become a trip hazard. He also said they would trap trash and become a maintenance issue.

Mr. Popa made a motion to approve the improvements on Northern Blvd. between 223 Street and Little Neck Parkway as presented by NYC DOT. Mrs. Miller seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

The next topic discussed was the Accessibility and Open Stroller Pilot Program for the Q12 bus. The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) representative regarding this proposal was not present at the meeting. At present, a commuter must fold a stroller to ride the bus. Mr. Popa explained that the MTA is piloting a program for open strollers to be taken onto the bus and stored by the foldable seats that are used by handicapped riders. If a disabled person boards the bus, this space needs to be yielded to them. The possibility of bicycles on buses was also discussed. Mr. Kelly stated that the MTA has advised him that this is only a possibility on a small number of bus routes (where there are no bicycle lanes). Mr. Dadras said the committee will follow up regarding this issue.

Next topic discussed was warning signs and improving the placement of stop signs on the bicycle lane on NB in the vicinity of the CIP. The issue was given to CB11 by Michael Feiner, President, Bayside Hills Civic Association. Mr. Marziliano screen-shared and read the request into the record. It was the consensus of the Committee that the earlier presentation by DOT addressed Mr. Feiner's request.

The next item discussed was a request from Ralph Ruiz, Chair, Douglas Manor Association's Streets Committee, requesting additional streetlighting at Bayview Avenue and Shore Road. Mr. Marziliano again screen-shared and read the request into the record which alleged criminal activity. Discussion ensued regarding the time it would take a feasibility study to determine if additional lights are required. Mr. Marziliano stated it would be better referred to NYPD if there is illegal activity taking place at this location. The type of lighting to be installed was discussed being this is a landmarked location. In addition, Mr. Ruiz requested Bayview Avenue be converted to a one-way operation between Shore Road and West Drive. Mr. Kelly agrees the request should go the NYPD.

Mr. Kelly made a motion to request the conversion of Bayview Avenue to a one-way operation and the installation of additional streetlighting. Mr. Popa seconded the motion. Mr. DiBenedetto said if we want to pass the request to along, that is fine, but he does not feel CB11 should make it a recommendation. Mr. Dadras agreed with Mr. DiBenedetto. He also feels it is more of a public safety issue. Mrs. Miller asked about the Landmarks Preservation connection. Mr. Dadras replied that will come into play when (if) they need to decide what type of streetlighting will be installed. Ms. Scherer agrees with Mr. DiBenedetto and feels that this is an NYPD issue not DOT. She stated NYPD should inspect and investigate. Ms. Lanzetta also agrees with Mr. DiBenedetto and thinks otherwise, CB11 would be overstepping. Mrs. Garippa added that years ago, if a similar request was made, a letter requesting a feasibility study would be sent to DOT. An amendment was proposed by Paul DiBenedetto to instead forward the request along to DOT and notify the NYPD of the request without making a formal recommendation. The amendment was accepted by Mr. Kelly and Mr. Popa. A voice vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

An overnight truck parking survey was discussed next. Mr. Marziliano again screen-shared the email and read it into the record. Mr. Marziliano stated that the survey is closed but the City continues to look for resident's opinions. He also said that there is a new NYPD bureau dealing with quality-of-life issues. Although they are not publicizing it, they are slowly phasing out the NCO program. There are several areas near major thoroughfares where drivers store their tractor trailers. This impedes visibility and creates a dangerous condition for pedestrians, other motorists and vehicles. Mr. Liatto said that he has seen "No Parking Overnight" on Francis Lewis Blvd. near St. Francis Preparatory H.S. implemented. Mr. Marziliano said that is something CB11 could request at problem locations. They can then be ticketed; however, the tow truck for these vehicles is not always available and there is not always space to store them once they are towed. Mr. Marziliano is looking into identifying local, commercial lots that can house these towed vehicles. Ms. Martino commented that the residents in the area of 210 Street and Horace Harding have been inundated with truck parking day and night. Mrs. Miller said, ultimately, the issue is about money; drivers do not want to pay to park these vehicles. Mr. Dadras asked what the CB can do. Mr. Marziliano said a letter can be written to the Mayor stating that CB11 would like to see some sort of City-based legislation regarding this matter. Ms. Mallo stated the Councilmember's office is in contact with the 111<sup>th</sup> Precinct regarding locations where this occurs. Mr. Marziliano suggested sending a letter to the Mayor's office. Mr. Dadras asked that a letter be drafted and distributed to the Committee.

Mr. Dadras introduced the ongoing topic of school safety. Mrs. Miller updated the report that she previously gave to the Committee in October of 2022. She stated that the Panel for Education Policy approved \$43M to outfit the City's school buildings with door locks, cameras, and buzzers. Double-parking at morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times remains a problem. The schools need more safety agents; Mrs. Miller suggested moving this item up on CB11's Capital and Expense Priority List. Mrs. Miller suggested staggering times, using different exits, and enabling school safety agents to issue tickets. Mr. DiBenedetto stated that he feels that the people who know these issues best are the crossing guards; CB11 should work with them and the NYPD. Mr. Kelly talked about the procedure of the NYPD to check the perimeters of the schools. He stated they pass with their lights flashing then go around the block. They ticket some of the motorists that remain on their second pass around the block.

Mr. Kelly made a motion to continue these inspections but to ticket motorists the first time they see the double parking. Ms. Lanzetta seconded the motion. Some schools have parent volunteers that assist in getting the children into school but not all have the parent resources. Mrs. Miller said a couple of schools have teachers, even the principal, guiding children into school as well. She also said some schools have complained about the more aggressive ticketing. However, the safety of the children is paramount. Mr. Dadras said he is not sure if telling NYPD how to enforce is a good idea. Mr. Dadras agrees with Mr. Kelly about the dangerous condition around schools. However, he thinks we should motion to "strengthen enforcement". In addition, Mr. Dadras said he is working with M.S. 67 regarding a "safe routes to school" program. He is working with the eighth graders on pedestrian, bus, and bicycle routes, drop off and street safety. Mr. Marziliano feels this is an issue to discuss with the 111<sup>th</sup> Precinct. He is not sure the Transportation Committee is the appropriate committee for this; it should be the Public Safety Committee. Mr. Kelly said this is a traffic issue. Mr. DiBenedetto agrees that this is a public safety issue. He did say, however, that we should ask for continued police presence, not necessarily more enforcement. Ms. Lanzetta said she thought that is what Mr. Kelly meant in his motion, which is why she seconded it. Mr. Kelly agreed to rephrase the motion. Mr. Turner stated that the condition around schools causes stress for everyone. This behavior should not be

tolerated. He feels that asking the 111<sup>th</sup> Precinct to ticket more aggressively is reasonable. Ms. Martino thinks this should be brought to the Public Safety Committee as well. Mr. Marziliano explained the sequence of what will occur if we write a letter. We usually have a conversation with the precinct before we write letters because some agencies handle correspondence from elected officials and community boards differently. He suggested that this issue be addressed at CB11's Public Safety Committee meeting on March 28, 2023. Mr. Kelly requested Mr. Marziliano ask the 111<sup>th</sup> Precinct personnel how they are addressing this situation and to consider asking them to ticket motorists on their first pass around a school instead of the second time as this procedure does not produce the desired result of no double parking. Considering this, Mr. Kelly withdrew his motion. Ms. Lanzetta seconded. Mr. Kelly and Mr. Dadras asked for an update regarding the meeting with 111<sup>th</sup> Precinct personnel. ***[The NYPD were unable to attend the Public Safety Meeting on March 28, 2023, but had already been aware of this issue and forwarded the letter attached to this report to all schools in the district informing parents that they plan to step up enforcement and issue summonses without warning].***

Mr. Dadras introduced the topic of the most dangerous intersections in the district. Mr. Turner screen-shared his screen. He showed a list of some of the more dangerous intersections in CB11 using data from the Crash Mapper website. The data shown was from February 2018 through February 2023. There have been over 2,000 car crashes in CB11 resulting in 3,205 injuries and 20 fatalities. Some of the more dangerous intersections are Northern Blvd. and 223 Street, Bell and Northern Blvds., Francis Lewis and Northern Blvds. Francis Lewis Blvd. and Crocheron Avenue, Francis Lewis Blvd. and 32 Avenue and Utopia Parkway and Underhill Avenue. Mr. Turner explained how to use the Crash Mapper site. Mr. Dadras stated that this is a great restarting point for the Committee's commitment to safer streets. He asked committee members to email locations of concern to him.

Lastly, Mr. Dadras discussed bicycle infrastructure Phase I. He wants to ensure that this begins to be implemented by the late Spring or early Summer as DOT has indicated. He wants to see proposed locations in Phase II which would be Douglaston and Little Neck. Mr. Kelly said it should include Bell Blvd. south of the Long Island Expressway, the Oakland Gardens area.

Mr. Dadras said this Committee will meet monthly in April, May, and June 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted 3-27-23*