

# **34<sup>th</sup> Street Project**

## **Community Advisory Committee Meeting #4 Summary**

Monday, March 14, 2011, 6 – 8 PM  
Hotel New Yorker, Gramercy Park Suite  
481 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY

### **I. INTRODUCTIONS**

New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan opened the meeting by welcoming the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members. She explained the need for improvements on 34<sup>th</sup> Street, described the project process to date, and provided a brief overview of the preliminary plans for the 34<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer thanked the project team, businesses, and stakeholders for their collaborative efforts in advancing the project. He reiterated the project process and encouraged the continued involvement of the CAC. Councilmember Dan Garodnick reaffirmed the need for improved and efficient flows of traffic, buses, and pedestrians on 34<sup>th</sup> Street and applauded NYCDOT for responding to the community concerns by amending the previous plans for the corridor. Councilmember Rosie Mendez also noted the need for the project and reiterated the need for NYCDOT to continue to work with community. Bruce Schaller, Deputy Commissioner of NYCDOT then thanked the CAC members for their attendance and their feedback to date. He reviewed the meeting agenda and briefly introduced the general overview of the project plan. A detailed description of the project plan can be found on the project's website: [www.nyc.gov/brt](http://www.nyc.gov/brt).

### **II. PRESENTATIONS**

Eric Beaton, Director of Transit Development of NYCDOT thanked the CAC members for their attendance and their participation to date. He explained the project needs and goals, highlighted key input received from the community, described the community outreach efforts to date and reviewed the project schedule. He then introduced Will Carry, NYCDOT's Project Manager of the 34<sup>th</sup> Street Project. Mr. Carry provided an overview of improvements to be made on 34<sup>th</sup> Street in 2011, including the introduction of off board fare collection on the M16 and M34 bus routes and additional bus lane camera enforcement. He described the general proposed design for the corridor to be implemented in 2012, which includes offset bus lanes, bus bulbs and sidewalk extensions, and expanded loading zones. He then described in detail the proposed design for sample block segments of the corridor. Following this discussion he listed the benefits of the project. Attendees were then asked to breakout into tables (divided by corridor segments: Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) Drive to Third Avenue, Third Avenue to Madison Avenue, Madison Avenue to Ninth Avenue, and Ninth Avenue to Twelfth Avenue) for discussions on the preliminary designs of the corridor on a block-by-block basis. After the breakout session, Mr. Carry concluded the presentation by describing the next steps, which include upcoming public meetings on March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>; conducting a comprehensive traffic analysis, the results of which will be presented in the Fall 2011; releasing the draft Environmental Assessment in late 2011/early 2012; and conducting a CAC meeting in late Spring 2012. Following that, he facilitated a question-and-answer session.

### **III. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS**

Attendees were asked to divide themselves into four groups to discuss the proposed preliminary designs and their concerns on a block-by-block basis. Each group was assigned a facilitator and note taker from the project team. Large sets of maps for each block within each segment of the corridor were provided and displayed on an easel near each table. Attendees were encouraged to mark up the maps with markers

and/or post-it notes. Comment sheets were made available to participants to fill out at the meeting or submit subsequent to the meeting.

The following is a summary of the comments that were raised and discussed within the groups, as recorded by note takers at each table. Italicized text illustrates responses from project staff given at the meeting.

### **FDR Drive to Third Avenue**

Following are comments offered concerning the proposed designs for blocks between the FDR Drive and Third Avenue.

- FDR Drive to First Avenue
  - Provide signage, preferably gantry signs to indicate where vehicles can enter the bus lane and make a right turn.
  - Improve pedestrian access between the west side of FDR service road and the ferry terminal and the park.
  - Clarify how people leaving the NYU medical building will be able to travel westbound. *NYCDOT will coordinate with the NYU Medical Center.*
  - Consider the inclusion of accessible pedestrian signals (APS), an audible feature for the blind and visually impaired, particularly at intersections where the signal is prioritized.
  
- First to Second Avenue
  - Point out the location of the M16 bus stop in this segment. *The stop is planned to be located on Second Avenue at 34<sup>th</sup> Street.*
  - With all the traffic, bicycle, and other activities occurring in this area, it appears that much coordination would be needed in terms of signalization. Explain how this plan will all come together. *A comprehensive traffic analysis is being conducted to analyze the effects of the proposed plan. The results of this analysis will be presented to the CAC in the Fall of 2011.*
  - 300 East 34<sup>th</sup> Street has significant activities occurring in front of the building and requires a loading zone there. *This location is currently No Standing Anytime; DOT staff are exploring several options, including a commercial loading zone around the corner on Second Avenue.*
  - Participants discussed the trade-offs between an eastbound left turn lane at First Avenue and loading on the south curb between First and Second Avenues. Some participants expressed that the loading zone was more important.
  - Consider installing shelters for patients in front of 323 34<sup>th</sup> Street building, as well as designating a curbside parking area for ambulettes.
  - Clarify how access to parking garages would work under the proposed plan. *Under the proposed plan, access to all parking garages and active curb cuts will be maintained.*
  - Curb extensions need to be ADA accessible. *All proposed curb extensions and bus bulbs will be ADA accessible.*
  - Consider installing lagging turns instead of leading turns at areas where turns are allowed.
  - Consider providing training/informational program for the sight and mobility impaired on the project.
  - Include the visually impaired community, including Pedestrians for Accessible and Safe Streets (PASS), in project discussions.

- Second to Third Avenues
  - Clarify plans for traffic traveling to/from the Queens-Midtown Tunnel (QMT). Consider single lanes each for left and right turns. *NYCDOT is coordinating the design approach to the QMT with MTA Bridges and Tunnels.*
  - Clarify whether Traffic Signal Priority (TSP) is being considered for buses. *TSP may be installed at certain intersection.*
  - It appears that the proposed plans would displace traffic and reduce capacity on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. *DOT believes that the proposed plan will be able to accommodate the existing volume of traffic on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. The agency will conduct a comprehensive traffic analysis of the proposed plan in the Spring and Summer of 2011. The results of this analysis will be presented to the CAC in the fall of 2011.*
  - Would cars be encouraged to use 34<sup>th</sup> Street as a through route river to river? *This movement would not be encouraged. Cars crossing from river to river have several route options, including 34<sup>th</sup> Street.*
  - Expound on the implementation schedule. Which end of the corridor will work commence? *The details of the construction plan would be determined later in the design process.*

### **Third to Madison Avenues**

Following are comments offered concerning the proposed designs for blocks between Third and Madison Avenues.

- Third to Lexington Avenues
  - Clarify whether the existing rule allowing for expeditious pick-up/drop-offs to occur in the bus lane will remain in effect under the new design, particularly in front of the residential buildings. *Yes, bus lane rules will remain the same.*
  - Concerned that there are no parking and loading zones in front of 155 E. 34<sup>th</sup> Street building under the proposed plan.
  - Explain the new parking regulations for new parking areas along 34<sup>th</sup> Street. *DOT will propose curb regulations to meet the needs of the buildings on each block. The regulations will be developed in consultation with the CAC and the public.*
  - It appears that the existing bus stop on Lexington Avenue would be eliminated. *At the third CAC meeting, held on January 18, 2011, it was presented that the existing bus stops on Third Avenue and Lexington Avenue would be consolidated in order to provide expanded loading zones on these blocks and to meet MTA New York City Transit's stop spacing guidelines. The blocks between Fifth Avenue and Third Avenue are only half as long as the typical blocks on 34<sup>th</sup> Street.*
- Lexington to Park Avenue
  - Concerned about the lack of loading space at the 34<sup>th</sup> Street service entrance for 7 Park Avenue. Participants suggested that the right-turn lane could potentially be in effect only during rush hours. *There is currently a commercial loading zone around the corner on Park Avenue.*
  - Confirm if specialized traffic signals will be used to prevent cars in the turn lanes from backing up or creating congestion in the bus lane? *Yes, where appropriate.*
  - Under the proposed plan, would new traffic regulations be introduced (e.g. restricting turns unto Park Avenue)? *No major changes to traffic regulations are anticipated.*

- Park to Madison Avenue
  - Participants expressed concerns that there is no bus stop at Madison Avenue. *At the third CAC meeting, held on January 18, 2011, it was presented that the existing bus stops on Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue would be consolidated in order to provide expanded loading zones on these blocks and to meet MTA New York City Transit’s stop spacing guidelines. The blocks between Fifth Avenue and Third Avenue are only half as long as the typical blocks on 34<sup>th</sup> Street.*

Participants also offered the following general comments for this section:

- Explain how deliveries would be made, as there are no loading zones on the north side of 34<sup>th</sup> Street between Park and Third Avenues. *Deliveries on the north side of the street can be accommodated around the corner or during non-peak hours (7pm-7am weekdays, extended hours on weekends), as is currently the case.*

### **Madison to Ninth Avenues**

Following are comments offered concerning the proposed designs for blocks between Madison and Ninth Avenues.

- Madison to Fifth Avenue
  - The 34<sup>th</sup> Street Partnership concurs with the decision to place the loading zone on the south side of the street, as there is a high level of activity at the retail stores.
- Fifth to Sixth Avenue
  - Point out the location of the bus stop on this block. *A bus stop is proposed at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue in front of the CUNY Graduate Center.*
  - A representative of the Empire State Building (ESB) expressed approval of the design changes in front of the ESB.
  - Consider opening up 33<sup>rd</sup> Street westbound all the way through.
  - A participant expressed concerns about potential conflicts between express buses making a right turn off of 34<sup>th</sup> Street (using the bus lane to do so), pedestrians crossing the intersection, and operations of SBS buses.
  - If express buses are permitted to use both the bus lane and general traffic lane, there will be less room for cars.
  - Consider placing bus lanes in the median and designate curb lanes for general traffic. *The limited width of 34<sup>th</sup> Street makes a median busway design infeasible. There would not be adequate space on either side the busway to allow for the safe passage of vehicles and loading activity at the curb.*
  - Consider placing loading zones on both sides of the street.
  - Clarify whether taxis would be able to pick-up/drop-off in the curbside bus lane on the north side of the street. *Expeditious pick-up and drop-up of passengers would be legal from the curbside bus lane, as is the case today.*
  - Indicate the areas where lane shifts occur along the corridor. *These locations were identified on the maps: Eighth Avenue, Madison Avenue, and Lexington Avenue.*
- Sixth to Seventh Avenue
  - Will the mid-block light remain and will buses observe the light? *Yes.*
  - Indicate where the fare collection machines will be placed. *Generally, the machines will be located at each bus stop. The precise location of the machines will be determined as the design moves forward.*

- There are no street obstructions on this segment in front of Macys.
- Clarify if there would be any added structures, potential pedestrian impediments on the south side of the street. *A bus shelter may be added here on the existing sidewalk, subject to whether it could accommodate daily or special events conditions.*
- Seventh to Eighth Avenue
  - Talk about the plan's impact on the LIRR entrance on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. *A bus bulb will be installed at this location, one of the busiest corners in Midtown, in order to improve pedestrian circulation and access to the LIRR entrance.*
  - Explain why the express bus stop on the north side near Eighth Avenue is not at the intersection. *The 34<sup>th</sup> Street/Eighth Avenue intersection has heavy right turn movements and vehicles will need to use the section of the bus lane to make the turn.*
  - NYCDOT should approach the NYPD about the vendor selling designer handbags at the entrance of the Long Island Railroad. He is obstructive and threatening to users of the entrance. The 34<sup>th</sup> Street Partnership has made previous complaints, but was told that the vendor is legally there.
  - Clarify whether the plan will impact driveway entrances. *Access to all parking garages and active curb cuts would be maintained under the proposed plan.*
  - The raised curb extension at the south east corner of 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Eighth Avenue will provide more space for pedestrians, as will the widened crosswalk.
- Eighth to Ninth Avenue
  - Participants were approving of the proposed plan.

### **Ninth to Twelfth Avenues**

Following are comments offered concerning the proposed designs for blocks between Ninth and Twelfth Avenues.

- Ninth to Tenth Avenue
  - Ninth Avenue is a better location for a bus bulb because of the higher pedestrian volume there.
  - A participant expressed concerns about potential conflicts between vehicles making a right turn onto Ninth Avenue off of 34<sup>th</sup> Street and pedestrians crossing the intersection.
  - Consider placing a westbound bus bulb on this block. A shorter version of the bus bulb would fit here.
  - The right turn lane onto Dyer Avenue from 34<sup>th</sup> Street is not long enough to accommodate the high volume of vehicles making that turn. Traffic tends to build up there, especially during non-traditional peak hours (e.g., on Sunday evenings). Lengthening this lane would however conflict with the loading needs in front of 365 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street. NYCDOT should discuss closing this entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.
  - Consider replacing the Dyer Avenue stop, as it is more convenient for residents of 433 and 455 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, especially for the elderly.
  - Consider placing more curb extensions on this block.
- Tenth to Eleventh Avenue
  - Explain why there are two westbound bus stops located on this block. *DOT is considering several station location options for the stops on this block.*

- There is a large amount of commercial activities on this block at 509, 510, and 516 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street. More loading space is needed. *If the traffic analysis indicates that Hudson Yards Boulevard would attract little traffic, it may be possible to eliminate the right turn bay on the north side of the street, increasing loading space in front of 509 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street.*
  - Consider modifying the street configuration to accommodate the parking and loading needs for 509 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, an industrial building with a parking garage on the ground floor. The proposed plan eliminates the existing curb cut (entrance to the parking garage) and appears to require vehicles exiting the garage to make a right turn onto the proposed Hudson Yards Boulevard. These plans would gravely affect the businesses of the garage. *The concept drawings are preliminary. The plan presented indicates what the street could look like once the 509 property and the surface parking lot on the corner are redeveloped as part of Hudson Yards. The curb cuts will be maintained and no curb extensions will be built in front of the existing building. Vehicles exiting the garage will not be forced to make a right turn onto Hudson Yards Boulevard. They will be able to cross the right-turn only lane and go west on 34<sup>th</sup> Street.*
  - A participant pointed out that road-level curb extensions defined by paint and planters present a challenge to the persons with vision impairments and requested that tactile warning strips be installed between vehicular and pedestrian space, even when the pedestrian space is on the roadway. *All proposed bus bulbs will be ADA compliant and will be permanent sidewalk extensions, not painted areas.*
- Eleventh to Twelfth Avenue
    - A westbound bus stop should be placed on this block for people going to the Jacob Javits Convention Center.
    - Consider extending the bus lane to Twelfth Avenue, instead of ending it on the previous block.
    - There are too many non-transit buses that use the south side curb space.

#### IV. QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

The following is a summary of general questions, comments, and answers (shown in italicized font) that were raised and discussed during the roundtable sessions as well as the general question-and answer session following the presentation. Italicized text illustrates responses from project staff.

- Many participants expressed support for the plans as proposed.
- A participant commented that the needs of visually-impaired persons should be incorporated into the plan. Signal phasing changes, relocation of crosswalks, and other streetscape modifications pose a challenge to the blind and visually impaired. It is important to communicate these proposed changes beforehand. Consider installing Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), an audible feature for the blind and visually impaired, particularly at intersections where the signal is prioritized.
- CAC members wanted to understand the overall operations of transit along the corridor, including:
  - The types of SBS buses to be used. *NYCT is considering using three-door, low-floor buses or standard 40 foot transit buses.*
  - Types of amenities to be added to the bus stations and their specific locations. *Amenities will include well-lit Cemusa shelters, benches, and fare collection machines, though not*

*every stop is expected to have enough sidewalk space to accommodate a shelter. Where there is a bus bulb, these features will all be placed on the bulb.*

- *The dimensions of the curb extensions. Curb extensions will be about 8 to 9 feet wide and about 70 to 140 feet in length.*
  - *The types of buses that would be permitted to use the bus lane. Interstate and other buses will be able to use both the bus lane and general purpose lane.*
  - *The number of shelters placed at each bus stop. Zero to two, depending on the number of boardings per day and existing sidewalk conditions.*
  - *Consider conducting an educational campaign regarding use of the bus lane, especially for taxi drivers. NYCDOT is working with the Taxi and Limousine Commission and the Police Department regarding bus lane regulations.*
  - *What is the allowable time frame for vehicles to load/unload in a bus lane? Will bus lane camera tickets be issued automatically, regardless of how long someone is loading in the bus lane? Expedient pick-up and drop-off of passengers are permitted. NYCDOT/NYCT personnel will use discretion upon reviewing the video feed and determine whether to issue a summons.*
  - *How will idling buses between Eighth and Ninth Avenues be dealt with? NYCDOT will address this issue as part of the larger issues with intercity buses in midtown.*
  - *Enforcement of the bus lane is an issue, particularly between First and Second Avenue where vehicles park in the bus lane. NYPD officers and bus lane cameras would be used to enforce bus lane rules.*
  - *Conflicts with buses and right-turning vehicles are a concern, as vehicles would need to cross the bus lane in order to make the turn. Pedestrian volumes could further complicate things. All modes of transportation need to be able to move efficiently. Vehicles will be able to merge into the bus lane mid-block prior to turning. Ample signage will be provided. There will also be ongoing educational efforts regarding use of the bus lane.*
  - *Will right turn exclusive signals be considered? A signalization plan is being developed.*
  - *Designs, operations, and locations of the fare collection machines.*
  - *Hours of operation for the bus lane and frequency of the SBS bus. The offset bus lanes would be in operation 24 hours and the curbside bus lane would operate 7AM to 7PM on weekdays, as is the existing condition. Buses would be scheduled to operate approximately every five minutes, or as needed to meet demand.*
- *When will a resolution be made whether to open up 33<sup>rd</sup> Street to westbound through traffic? Traffic studies are underway to consider that.*
  - *Will the maps presented tonight be available to the public? They are posted on the NYCDOT website ([www.nyc.gov/brt](http://www.nyc.gov/brt)).*
  - *Has signage to direct pedestrians and drivers been considered? Where would they be placed? A range of signage approaches will be used.*

## **V. ADJOURNMENT**

The CAC Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.