

BUS SERVICE ON 125th STREET

Summary of September 19, 2012 Public Workshop

November 27, 2012

Prepared for:

NYC Department of Transportation

Prepared by:

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I. Introduction

The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) and MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) conducted a Public Workshop on September 19, 2012 to hear about the critical issues impacting bus movement on 125th Street and to identify possible solutions to improve the speed and reliability of buses. Pedestrian and general traffic concerns were also discussed.

Public Workshop Date, Location, and Time:

- Wednesday, September 19, 2012
The Alhambra Ballroom of NY
2116 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard
New York, NY 10027
6 – 8 PM

Sponsorship: This workshop was sponsored by the following elected officials and community boards:

- Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
- United States Representative Charles Rangel
- City Council Member Inez Dickens
- City Council Member Robert Jackson
- City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito
- State Senator Adriano Espaillat
- State Senator Bill Perkins
- State Senator José Serrano
- State Assembly Member Daniel O’Donnell
- State Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez
- State Assembly Member Keith Wright
- Manhattan Community Board 9
- Manhattan Community Board 10
- Manhattan Community Board 11

Advertisements: The project team produced a bilingual English/Spanish meeting flyer, which was sent electronically to Community Boards, elected officials, community organizations, businesses, educational institutions, senior centers, local NYCHA tenant representatives, and other community institutions, who were asked to distribute them to their constituents/members. The flyer was also sent to NYCHA property managers who were requested to post the flyer in their properties. The event was also advertised by each of the workshop cosponsors. Meeting notices were posted in NYCT buses operating along 125th Street, and distributed to businesses on 125th. DOT, NYCT and individual cosponsors also advertised the event using Facebook and Twitter.

Attendees: A total of 96 individuals attended the Public Meeting, including representatives from businesses, Community Boards, community organizations, elected officials, local media, senior centers, tenant associations, residents, and other interested citizens.



Following is a breakdown of representation:

- Elected Officials
 - State Senator William Perkins
 - City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito

- Staff Representatives of Elected Officials:
 - Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez
 - Assembly Member Keith L. T. Wright
 - City Council Member Inez E. Dickens
 - City Council Member Robert Jackson
 - Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer
 - State Senator Adriano Espaillat
 - State Senator William Perkins

- Manhattan Community Boards:
 - Community Boards 9, 10, and 11

- Community, Business and Advocacy Organizations:
 - 125th Street Business Improvement District
 - AK Houses
 - A Taste of Seafood
 - City College / University Transportation Research Center (UTRC)
 - DDM Development
 - Disabled In Action
 - General Grant Houses Residents Association
 - Harlem Community Development Corporation
 - Harlem River Park Task Force
 - HILC
 - Independence Residents Inc.
 - Morningside Gardens Coop
 - Mother Clara Hale Community Task Force
 - Mt. Morris Park Community Improvement Association
 - Preserve Harlem's Legacy
 - Sinergia
 - Straphangers Campaign
 - Transportation Alternatives
 - Tri-State Transportation Campaign
 - TWU Local 100
 - WE ACT for Environmental Justice



- Media
 - Morningside Heights Magazine
 - Columbia School of Journalism (student)

Format: The meeting followed a workshop format. Attendees were seated at tables in the order of their arrival to the meeting. Each table was assigned a facilitator from the project team who provided project background information and engaged the attendees in discussions pertaining to critical issues impacting bus movement on 125th Street. Following this, the facilitator discussed elements that have been used on other corridors around the City to improve the speed and reliability of bus service and could be applied to 125th Street. Corridor maps were provided at each table for attendees to mark up with markers, sticky dots, and/or post-it notes to note existing conditions along the corridor. A note-taker was assigned to each table to record the discussions. Comment sheets were made available to participants to fill out at the meeting or to submit subsequent to the meeting.

II. Summary of Comments

General Comments

The following is a summary of general comments that participants raised and discussed.

- **Bus operations**
 - Bus bunching is an issue. It occurs often on the M60 (during the AM peak period) and is most evident on 125th Street at Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, Frederick Douglass Boulevard, Madison and Lexington Avenues.
 - The M103 duplicates route of other buses on 125th Street and contributes to the congestions.
 - Buses are unreliable.
 - M100 and M101 buses operate rather infrequently.
 - M60 is unreliable, service is slow and unpredictable.
 - Location of stops between Amsterdam and Morningside Avenues are inconvenient for Grant House residents. Consider reinstating stop at 123rd Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Residents feel unsafe walking to the recently relocated stop at 125th Street/Amsterdam Avenue.
 - Passengers going to LaGuardia Airport clog up the aisles with luggage making boarding difficult.
 - Adequate signage is needed instructing out-of-town passengers on how to access the M60 bus.
 - Many people, especially Grant house residents (between Morningside and Amsterdam Avenues) use the M60 for local service.



- Buses do not arrive frequently enough.
- Buses are often delayed by:
 - Red lights
 - Traffic congestion
 - Between Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard and St. Nicholas Avenue (particularly a problem for the M60 bus).
 - Rush hour traffic at the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge slows the buses.
 - Vehicles turning off of and onto 125th Street restrict traffic flow and delay buses.
 - Long dwell times at bus stops and passenger behavior
 - Passengers tend to disembark buses through the front doors delaying those who are trying to board.
 - Disorderly conduct and slow movement of passengers boarding and disembarking the bus (cited on the M35).
 - Slow boarding/disembarking of disabled/wheelchair and elderly passengers delay buses at stops (particularly a problem on the M2 around Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard).
 - Many riders and drivers do not follow proper protocol for accommodating and boarding disabled riders.
 - Bus riders do not move to the back of the bus to allow other riders to board efficiently throughout the route.
 - Double parking
 - Delivery trucks obstruct bus stops preventing drivers from accessing the curb and sometimes box buses in at stops.
 - Taxis double-park around the Metro-North Railroad station at Park Avenue although there is a dedicated taxi stand lane there.
 - High volume of tour buses at the Apollo Theater.
 - Overcrowding at stops
 - Multiple buses service each bus stop.
 - Buses ahead of schedule will idle at stops.
 - Buses are not able to get around each other at stops.
- Bus operators can be rude and insensitive to disabled passengers.
- Connecting to bus routes operating on 125th Street from the M15 is an inconvenience. The stops are too far apart.
- Route scheduling is not well coordinated with high-demand afternoon travel times, such as when students get out of school. Shift changes for drivers seem to conflict with high-demand periods for students.



- Buses become especially congested when there are issues with the subway. More bus service is needed during such times.
- Articulated buses are too big to operate on 125th Street.
- Concerned about the cleanliness of the buses.
- Concern that bus ridership does not seem as high as the numbers presented would suggest.
- **Pedestrian Issues**
 - Patrons of the Manhattan Psychiatric Center, and the Charles Gay and Clarke Thomas homeless facilities on Wards Island disembark the M35 bus at 125th Street and Lexington Avenue. They hang around the immediate vicinity all day, creating excessive congestion. They panhandle and disturb the public at this busy intersection.
 - Long lines of people in front of the Department of Motor Vehicles (159 E. 125th Street, between Lexington and Third Avenues) sometimes interfere with pedestrian flow.
 - High pedestrian volumes at the intersection of 125th Street and Lexington and Park Avenues, between Malcolm X Boulevard and Fifth Avenues, and near the Grant Houses between Morningside Avenue and Broadway.
 - Sidewalk is congested with vendors, obstructing pedestrian flow.
 - Pedestrian safety is of great concern.
 - There has been an increase in pedestrian injuries and fatalities in recent years.
 - Pedestrians have been struck by vehicles making illegal U-turns and by vehicles making left turns.
 - Signals change too quickly, not enough time for the disabled.
 - Attendees feel unsafe as pedestrians crossing at the following intersections/locations on 125th Street due to long crossing distances, inadequate signal timing, and left/right-turning vehicles:
 - Broadway
 - Amsterdam Avenue
 - Morningside Avenue
 - St. Nicholas Avenue
 - Malcolm X Boulevard
 - Lexington Avenue
 - Second Avenue



- **Traffic Operations**

- Congestion is a significant problem along 125th Street.
 - Heavy traffic congestion occurs often between Third and Eighth Avenues
 - Congestion is a significant problem between Fifth and Second Avenues, traveling eastbound towards the bridge.
 - Blocking the box is an issue.
 - Tour buses and inter-city carriers cause congestion and take up curb space.
- The traffic lights at the intersection of 125th Street and Third Avenue are not properly sequenced and therefore result in backs ups.
- There are many delays due to turning cars.

- **Parking**

- It is difficult to find on-street parking east of Fifth Avenue, since spaces are occupied by residential vehicles for long periods of time. Patrons of establishments along this area are forced to double-park.
- Angle parking for FDNY personnel at 125th Street/Morningside consumes road space and sidewalk space, makes the street narrower, and creates delays.
- There is a high volume of parking activity on 125th Street during the PM peak period, mainly elderly and disabled individuals patronizing stores, who need to park near their destinations.
- There are police parking issues at Third Avenue and 125th Street.
- Double parking is an issue throughout the corridor, especially at the following locations:
 - Between St. Nicholas Avenue and Malcolm X Boulevard.
 - At the Pathmark supermarket between Lexington and Third Avenues.



- **Solutions Suggested By Attendees**

- Attendees were interested in the Select Bus Service elements, similar to M15 on First and Second Avenues that were presented, and were also interested in having a Limited service on some of the bus routes. Some attendees suggested the following items:
 - The M60 should only make stops at the subway stations.
 - Assign dedicated bus lanes.
 - Consider painted bus lanes
 - Consider physically separated lanes.
 - Commercial loading zones and evening parking for residents would be needed. Others felt that parking access is generally important for types of vehicles.
 - Enforcement of the bus lane would be critical.
 - More than one travel lane is necessary on this heavily traveled corridor.
 - Implement off-board fare collection.
 - Enforcement would be important to prevent fare evasion. Some attendees expressed concern riders would evade fare payment, and requested data on fare-beating on existing SBS lines. Some attendees however voiced that NYPD enforcement activities are already a major issue on 125th Street and that bus lane enforcement could result in more opportunity for conflict with officers.
 - Machines need to be protected from the elements.
 - Provide real-time information system.
 - Consider both visual display and audio system at each stop.
 - An attendee voiced that MTA BusTime does not address congestion, but mainly improves the rider experience, allowing passengers to plan their trips more efficiently.
 - Construct pedestrian islands at major intersections.
 - Operate articulated buses given the high volume of bus users on the corridor. Two attendees however expressed concern that bus frequency would decrease with the introduction of higher capacity buses.
 - Install Transit Signal Priority, but community education on how the signals work would be necessary.
- Install shelters at stops along 125th Street and improve lighting, particularly at Amsterdam Avenue.
- Install pedestrian countdown signals at intersections.
- Install mid-block signalized crosswalks.
- Review current parking regulations to ensure compatibility with new/changing land uses.
- Prohibit parking during rush hour.
- Eliminate curbside parking, especially near bus stops.



- Provide metered parking along the corridor.
- Provide commercial loading zones along the corridor.
- Provide designated tour bus stops near 125th Street to minimize tour bus loading and unloading on 125th Street.
- Designate areas for taxis to pick up/drop off customers.
- Consider operating some of the bus routes on 124th or 126th Street to alleviate congestion, including the inter-city carrier buses.
- Enact left-turn restrictions.
- MTA needs to coordinate with facilities on Wards Island to create a bus schedule that better serves M35 bus riders and provides more bus service at critical times to/from the facilities.
- Manage demand for bus service and transfers for passengers transferring to bus routes on 125th Street.
- Provide Traffic Enforcement Officers to direct traffic at significantly congested intersections, such as Third Avenue.
- Extensive outreach, especially targeted to seniors, must be done to discuss the pros and cons of any elements that would be implemented.
- Any changes to bus service introduced should not affect curbside access, particularly for the vendors along 125th Street.
- East 125th Street Development Parcel (between Second and Third Avenues), once project is completed, will increase the number of private vehicles, delivery trucks and overall traffic on 125th Street.
- Advertisements on buses operating on 125th Street should highlight local businesses and attractions.
- Attendees seemed to feel that information presented at the meeting was helpful and the round table discussions were productive.