



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR, FIVE AND SIX

January 15, 2016

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10038

RE: Select Bus Service M23|23rd St. Crosstown

Dear Ms. Forgione,

On Tuesday October 13, 2015, the Department of Transportation (DOT) introduced a new plan to create a Select Bus Service (SBS) corridor on 23rd Street river to river, an initiative we applaud. This meeting was the very first step in a comprehensive process of community consultations that the DOT intends to undertake next year.

DOT asked our Community Boards to write letters to them containing our communities' requests – if there were any - even before DOT/MTA makes an introductory presentation to our respective transportation committees.

Manhattan Community Boards 4, 5 and 6 formed a Tri-Board working group to coordinate discussion of ideas and issues affecting the three community boards located on the M23 route. This is especially productive because we all have had previous experience planning the 34th St. SBS bus routes, and CB6 has additional experience on the First and Second Avenue M15-SBS route corridors.

We understand that as currently planned the SBS transit corridor for the full length of 23th St. would include:

- Painted bus lanes (like 34th Street) off set from loading lane
- Boarding bulb out sidewalks for commuter comfort
- Off-board fare collection
- All-door simultaneous boarding
- Bus shelters including “real-time” arrival signs
- Signal priority for transit vehicles
- Camera-enforced lanes

While everyone agrees that the SBS service on 1st and 2nd Avenues is working quite well, our collective experience with the Crosstown SBS M34, that most closely resembles the future M23 - is less positive:

- Painted lanes are abused by drivers and crossed by cars reaching the turning lanes. Turning lanes are used for parking, causing turning vehicles to block the bus lane.
- The paying stations do not accept credit cards, which forces seniors go down the subway stairs to buy a card or exclude any of the 52 million visitors to New York and many workers.
- The only other option is coins - not cash, which is very inconvenient.
- The fare machines occupy a large portion of the sidewalk and force the customers to have their back to the street, which feels unsafe.
- Local stops were removed or placed in inconvenient locations for connections
- 3 hour loading zones are not geared toward the typical 30 minutes delivery format and cause a lot of double parking.
- The parking regulations for taxis pickup and discharge are not clearly posted, causing many taxis to receive summons and avoid the corridor, a hardship for businesses and residents.

We request that DOT explore multiple designs that should address the following needs:

- A speedier and easier travel.
 - Fully protected bus lanes: the need for turning lanes is indeed an obstacle to protecting the bus lanes as currently configured on the M34. We encourage you to explore the design adopted by many cities: center-running protected lanes as an alternative. It is worth noting that the 23rd Street Trolley operated from 1872 to 1936 in the center of the street. Consideration should be given to utilizing modern trolleys running on rails, having narrower, longer bodies than buses and better fitted for a two way street.
 - Maintain local bus stops and provide convenient transfers at all intersections having an uptown or downtown bus route, bus stops or a subway station entrance. This would require restoration of the bus stop at the SW corner of E. 23rd St. & 5th Ave.
 - Provide an optimal connection to the East River Ferry and improve the layover on the East side.
- A better experience for riders and pedestrians:
 - Offer a credit card payment system to attract more riders
 - Install Fare machines closer to the curb with the user interface facing the sidewalk
- Access for All:
 - Recognize that 23rd St. is also home to institutions for especially vulnerable people with special needs (e.g. United Cerebral Palsy and PS 347-School for Deaf) – and invite them to participate in the planning process from the outset, along with other potentially affected parties.
 - Expand implementation of accessible pedestrian signals (for the blind) corridor-wide.
- Improve goods and passengers deliveries:

- Implement sophisticated, variable parking rates and periods to reduce double parking by truly freeing space for deliveries.
- Post regulations for passenger pickup and discharge.
- Perform extensive commercial outreach:
 - As we have learned each business is different and understanding how to accommodate their operation is critical to the success. We hope DOT will engage in a robust commercial outreach to ensure the businesses are properly served.

We applaud DOT for initiating this new project and we encourage you to bring New York City into the 21st Century. We thank you for considering our suggestions.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Co-chair, Transportation
Planning Committee
Community Board 4



Ernest Modarelli
Co-chair, Transportation
Planning Committee
Community Board 4



Alan Miles
Chair, Transportation Committee
Community Board 5



Sandra Mckee
Chair, Transportation Committee
Community Board 6

Cc Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
 Councilmember Corey Johnson
 Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
 Senator Brad Hoylman