



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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October 5, 2011

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10041

RE: Eight and Ninth Avenues Complete Street Extension

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) appreciates being consulted regarding the proposed extension of protected bike lanes with installation of pedestrian refuges, turning bays, mixing zones and some split phase signals on Eighth and Ninth Avenues from West 34th and West 31st Streets, respectively, up to west 59th Street. The first phase of the extension (West 34th/31st to 42nd Streets on both avenues) is slated for April 2012, while the second phase (42nd to 58th Streets on both avenues) is planned for the fall of 2012. These segments are very dangerous and street users will benefit from the safety features built in those installations

CB4 supports this proposal subject to the incorporation of several features outlined below that will increase pedestrian safety. CB4 requests that the Department of Transportation (DOT) make a follow up presentation incorporating these changes to CB4 in January 2012, before moving forward with the installation.

According to DOT, Eighth and Ninth Avenues between W. 34th and W. 59th Streets rank, respectively, in the 98th and 95th percentile of most dangerous streets in New York City. Since 2005, 14 pedestrians and one motorist were killed on these avenues. The installation of protected bicycle lanes including several dedicated turning lanes and split phase signals below West 34th Street in CD4 have produced annual reductions in street user injuries of 35% to 58%¹ depending on the segments.

In the proposed extension DOT will install pedestrian refuges at both corners of each intersection (except for turn lanes), 32 on Ninth Avenue and 30 on Eighth Avenue, with the proper features to accommodate persons with disabilities. Split-phase

¹ DOT, statistics collected during 24 months after installation

signals² will be installed at turn lanes on Ninth Avenue at three intersections (W. 57th, 42nd, 34th Streets) and one will be installed on Eighth Avenue (W. 57th Street). The pedestrian crossings on side streets and on the avenues will be resurfaced as needed.

To make space for refuges and turning lanes, on Ninth Avenue, 76 commercial parking spaces (36%) will be removed. Most of those spaces are currently available for limited period of the day. The regulations at the remaining 133 spaces will be enhanced to provide full day availability for businesses to load and unload, as needed. On Eighth Avenue 50 commercial parking spaces (24%) will be removed. DOT will survey each business on both avenues to evaluate their loading and parking needs and will customize the regulations accordingly. The number of travel lanes will remain the same on both Avenues, with their widths reduced from 12' to 10' to enable the bicycle lane and pedestrian island installations.

The protected bike lanes would be installed on the east side of Ninth Avenue and the west side of Eight Avenue, where it will replace the existing Eighth Avenue non-protected bike lane. The bicycle lanes will be adjacent to the curb, protected by a floating parking lane. On Eight Avenue, between 40th and 42nd street, the configuration in front of the Port Authority Bus Terminal will remain with one lane of taxis at the curb and the next lane, protected by bollards being widened to provide for a safer mixing zone.

Community Board #4 shares the goal of extending the enclosed bicycle lanes to West 59th Street due to several anticipated benefits:

- The anticipated decreased in pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities;
- The reduction in Avenue crossing distances for pedestrians from 75 feet to 40 feet and the resulting increased safety on the corners with pedestrian refuges;
- The anticipated decrease in illegal bicycle usage of sidewalks, which has been found in the area of other installations of protected bicycle lane;
- The traffic calming effect from landscaping on pedestrian refuge areas;
- The improved traffic flow from installation of the dedicated turn lanes;
- The improved connections between North and South Manhattan, including Central park, for bicycling, a healthy and inexpensive commuting option;

However, CB4 support to the above installations is subject to the following requests being incorporated in the project:

- Add split phases in locations well known for being dangerous to pedestrians and retain Lead Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) at existing locations.
 - Install split phases at the following locations:
 - W. 37th Street and 8th Avenue where the turning volume of vehicles going to the tunnel, as well as the pedestrians volumes are very large.
 - W. 43rd Street and Eight Avenue, a school street (one of the most dangerous to walk to school in New York City)
 - W. 49th Street and Eight Avenue, where a fatality occurred a few years ago
 - W. 38th Street and 9th Avenue, where there are a substantial number of vehicles turning left at high speed from the tunnel and a fatality occurred three years ago.
 - W. 58th and 9th, adjacent to Roosevelt hospital and Fordham University, where pedestrian and vehicles conflict often because of the presence of a hotel on the block.
 - Install other LPIs, split phases and signal changes as recommended by the DOT Hell's Kitchen study.
 - Increase pedestrian crossing time of 9th Avenue at 40th Street, where a pre-K school is located and children cross the avenue twice daily.

² A split phase signal allows pedestrians to cross the side streets without any conflict with turning vehicles. Turning cars from the Avenue onto the streets have a red light while pedestrians cross.

- Though it is not part of the proposed bicycle path extension area, we repeat an urgent request for turning signal/split phase installation at two locations on the existing protected bicycle path:
 - W. 25th and W. 29th Streets and Eighth Avenues. These intersections were due to be completed as part of the last bike lane installation. These intersections are dangerous, they are located adjacent to a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC); we have received a petition signed by 1,000 residents urgently requesting this change.
- Enlarge sidewalks on Eighth Avenue from 34th to 40th Streets and from 42nd to 48th Streets and remove all pedestrian barriers above 42nd Street. If DOT would like to try this on a trial basis, markings on the ground and flexible bollards could be a good first step. It should be noted that this has been a long-standing request from CB4. The “pedlock” on the west side of Eighth Avenue has been thoroughly documented in the course of the various rezoning, with pedestrian service levels of D³. As a result, today pedestrians use the bicycle lanes to walk from 34th to 48th streets as a matter of course, especially at rush hour with commuters in a hurry to catch a bus or a train. The safety of a protected bike lane adjacent to the curb will entice many more pedestrians to use the lane and will result in increased pedestrian/cycle conflicts or, as occurred on Broadway south of West 42nd Street, very limited bicycle use. .
- Engage the NYPD, jointly with DOT for a real campaign of enforcement against cyclists who do not respect the rules of the road: run red lights, go the wrong way, do not yield to pedestrians, and/or ride on the sidewalk. Businesses who do not equip their bikes with identifications and proper equipment or do not train their personnel, should also receive summonses.
We look forward to a meeting with DOT and the Precincts involved to review the program, how the outreach will be done and how much personnel will be allocated to these tasks. We also request that bicycle ticketing information be posted on the NYPD website.

We also request that pedestrian education be undertaken at the major residential buildings on the avenues.

- Provide for bicycle racks/corrals located on the floating parking lanes, to remove excessive bike parking from the sidewalks. CB4 intends to make recommendations for locations for these bicycle racks/corrals in the next few months.
- Present to CB4 well before implementation (December 2011 or January 2012) the revised plan, based on the above comments as well as the detailed parking regulation plan and the list of businesses consulted. Several merchants voiced concern at the Transportation Committee hearing on this proposal. We cannot approve any proposal that does not include the specific recommended parking regulation changes design to best meet their needs.
- Six months after installation, present to the community board statistics related to safety, parking compliance and speed on each segment, and adjust any outstanding issue remaining with the lanes.

The above concerns are a high priority for Community Board 4 and need addressing before DOT returns with the revised proposal. There are several other ideas we have discussed and would like DOT to consider and respond to in their updated proposal:

- In the mixing zones, continue the green bike path stripe up to the pedestrian crossing to remind drivers of the presence of a bicycle, as it is currently done in the split phase turn lanes. We feel this warrants consideration in this

³ LOS D: Pedestrian Space > 15-24 ft²/p, Flow Rate > 10-15 p/min/ft At LOS D, freedom to select individual walking speed and to bypass other pedestrians is restricted. Crossing or reverse-flow movements face a high probability of conflict, requiring frequent changes in speed and position. The LOS provides reasonably fluid flow, but friction and interaction between pedestrians is likely.

corridor because of the high volumes of turning trucks and buses, which often have limited visibility of smaller vehicles;

- Add a reflective strip around the pedestrian islands to improve vehicles and pedestrian view of their location;
- On Eight Avenue, the blocks between 40th and 42nd Streets remain very dangerous to bicyclists. We ask that DOT explore creative ways to normalize these blocks, for example explore the relocation of the Port Authority taxi stand to West 41st Street.
- On Eighth Avenue, the on-street markings identifying a bicycle lane could be more frequent to remind pedestrians not to step onto that lane.
- On Ninth Avenue, at the intersection with 42nd Street, install countdown pedestrian signals at this dangerous south crossing. CB4 is on record for asking that the south turn signal for westbound vehicles become a lagging signal and a split phase.
- On the east side of Ninth Avenue, at 41st Street, the pedestrian crossing is excessively wide. The DOT study of Hell's Kitchen has identified the opportunity to expand the sidewalk and reduce the crossing time. Markings on the ground and flexible bollards would be a good first step in that direction.

CB4 welcome the constructive and open exchange with DOT on these installations. We do want to make sure the installations deliver the maximum safety for all street users. We look forward to a presentation of final findings and design well before each of the installation phases of the lanes.

Sincerely yours,



Corey Johnson
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
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Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
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