



CITY OF NEW YORK

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8/7, 2013

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

Re: Comments on the Final Draft of the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Traffic Study

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

The two-year Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Traffic Study for the area from West 29th Street to West 55th Street, and from Eighth Avenue to the Hudson River was undertaken in 2007 by the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) with funds from the Federal Government, with the goals of improving safety, mobility, and the quality of life for all street users (pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists). The report presents recommended improvement measures based on analysis of existing and projected future conditions, as well as community input and feedback.

CB4 is very pleased by the productive collaboration between the DOT and the community, the early implementation of safety measures and the excellent recommendations contained in the study to resolve complex system-wide problems. We believe such measures will make a meaningful difference to the quality of life in our neighborhood. **However the study is far from complete.** The study has been plagued by considerable delays and its resources sometimes diverted to other projects. A number of items are still being investigated and it is not clear how resources and funding would be prioritized in the absence of a study. Shortchanging its scope is also not an option at a time when the far West Side Development is ramping up.

CB4 requests that the study remain active and the report considered interim until DOT reviews with the Steering Committee and provides final recommendations and implementation dates for the following outstanding items:

- Improve traffic flow with Signage for Ninth Avenue approaching Ramp C and West 41st Street
- Improving Pedestrian safety by analyzing intersections with high pedestrian crashes and fatalities (16), and sidewalks with excessive pedestrian crowding (29)
- Improving bus service and relief of congestion with alternative configurations of Eleventh Avenue north of West 44th Street and associated signage
- Relieving West 42nd Street and Ninth Avenue congestion by establishing a PM peak

period contra-flow bus lane on Dyer Avenue

- Commitment from NYPD or the Port Authority to provide resources on a permanent basis to post at West 37th and West 41st Streets.

We also note that the proposed conversion of 11th Avenue to two-way south of West 37th Street (to be installed in 2014) was not in the scope of the study or the solutions reviewed by the Steering Committee or CB4. It is urgent that this proposal be vetted by CB4 and that its schedule does not take precedence over higher priorities in the study related to safety.

Detailed Comments:

CB4 is very grateful that several short-term improvements for the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Study have already been implemented and others are planned for next year. These include:

Already Implemented

- Crosswalks with setback stop bars. (Eighth Avenue, at West 30th, 31st and 34th Streets, Ninth Avenue, at West 31st, 34th, 38th and 40th Streets, Tenth Avenue and West 42nd Street, Dyer Avenue and West 34th Street)
- Don't Block the Box signage. (Ninth Avenue, at West 42nd, 43rd and 44th Streets)
- Bike lanes on Eighth and Ninth Avenues and cross streets.
- Relocated bus layover areas and expanded bus stops. (West 43rd Street and Ninth Avenue, West of Tenth Avenue and SE corner of West 42nd Street and Ninth Avenue).
- Signal timing changes, including six leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs), moving the westbound turn arrow at West bound West 42nd Street and Ninth Avenue from leading to trailing, increased time by 30% to cross wide avenues, offset changes to improve progression, and "feathering" of green time for 9th Avenue north of West 42nd Street to reduce congestion.
- Curb extension at South East corner of West 41st Street and Ninth Avenue.
- Split phase for bikes at major intersections (3)

The draft final report proposes the following implementation schedules for studied improvements:

2013

- The "Canoe" project (Ramp C expansion and greening at West 36th Street and Ninth Avenue.
- A turn prohibition at West 37th Street and Ninth Avenue to reduce congestion on Ninth Avenue
- A turn prohibition at West 36th Street and Dyer Avenue to reduce congestion on West 36th Street and on incoming Lincoln Tunnel traffic
- Select Bus Service (SBS) for West 34th Street with bulb outs for bus stops with barred turns at Ninth and Eighth Avenues

2014

- Split phase and other measures (bulb outs, bus lanes and signage) for West 41st Street on Ninth Avenue
- Split phase at West 43rd Street and Ninth Avenue on West 43rd Street.

- Conversion of Eleventh Avenue to two-way south of West 37th Street

However a number of key measures are not finalized and neither their implementation schedule proposed in the following categories:

Pedestrian Safety

With a stated objective to improve Pedestrian safety, DOT must propose measures for the other 16 high crash/high fatality locations beyond the four key intersections that the study addresses, for which the community had requested the installation of, split phases. The report should also list the 29 sidewalks overcrowded at PM peak hours and propose mitigation.

- Page 7 and 18 – While the intersection of 8th Avenue and West 42nd Street is acknowledged as the most dangerous for pedestrians, no mitigation is proposed. At a minimum the turning arrow for eastbound vehicles should be moved from leading to trailing similar to Ninth Avenue/West 42nd Street intersection, with a long term goal of a Barnes Dance or a split phase for eastbound vehicles turning north.
- Page 70 - The chart shows the feasibility of split phases for a few locations. While it is useful, this chart should include the feasibility of split phases for the 16 high crash and fatality locations. It would be helpful if it indicated if the turn lane is the avenue or the street and how it relates to the crashes circumstances.
- Page 78 – We request an implementation plan for those split phases or other traffic calming measures deems feasible before Fiscal Year 2017.
- Page 78 – “PM peak period contra-flow bus lane on Dyer Avenue is still be investigated, implementation uncertain”. This is a key component of improving both the traffic flow on Ninth Avenue and pedestrian safety at that intersection. Changing the flow of the 120 buses that turn there at peak hours is a prerequisite to installing a full split phase to protect the south pedestrian crossing. It would also remove the bottleneck on the avenue and ease the backups, which currently reach up to West 50th Street.
- Page 39 – 60 – on the West 42nd Street South crossing the south turn arrow has already been moved from leading to trailing in the green phase.

Ramp C – West 37st Street

- Page 49 – Clarify if the West 36th Street Turn Ban is to implemented concurrently with the Canoe in 2013
- Page 78 –Clarify if the signage for Ninth Avenue approaching Ramp C will be implemented in 2014 with the installation of Ramp C and West 37th Streets

West 41st Street

As previously requested by CB4, weekend peak hours must be included in the cars/trucks turn ban at West 41st Street. A permanent ban would be vastly preferable.

- Page 10 and 16 - On weekends the tunnel traffic outbound is intense from visitors, Broadway Matinees and the fact that only three lanes are Jersey bound. We had requested a permanent west turn ban for cars and trucks that would have simplified education and signage. Alternatively, at a minimum, the proposed West 41st Street turn ban should be expanded to start at 3 PM and include the PM peak weekend hours

- As indicated further in the study, the signage should reflect that trucks are banned at all times from using this entrance to the Tunnel (left from Dyer on to West 41st Street)

Eleventh Avenue

The changes above West 44th Street should replicate other successful treatments to tunnel approaches in other part of the city and be implemented in 2014. The newly proposed changes below West 37th Street have not been reviewed and need vetting by CB4.

- Page 64 and 66: the proposal is to increase the number of southbound lanes on Eleventh Avenue from three to four between West 48th and West 44th Streets. South of West 44th Street, there are seven southbound lanes feeding the Lincoln Tunnel (seven lanes transform into two parking and five moving lanes at non-peak hours). This proposal does not adequately address the conditions on the ground.

The Steering Committee and CB4 are on record to request that the seven lanes width (five moving and two parking) be extended from West 44th Street all the way to West 57th Street to cause Lincoln Tunnel traffic not to back up as severely as it does, particularly as the rezoning on the East side of Eleventh Avenue generates more residential development. A new bus route service is starting there that will be severely impaired by the low number of lanes.

This section of Eleventh Avenue, which is a feeder to the Lincoln tunnel, is not comparable to West End Avenue or York Avenue as suggested in the report but rather to the sections of second and third Avenues that are located in midtown at tunnel entrances.

- Page 66 - Will the increase in lanes north of West 44th Street be implemented in 2014 at the same time as the changes south of West 34th Street?
- Page 63- Neither the Steering Committee or CB4 have ever been consulted on the proposed change to make Eleventh Avenue two ways between West 34th and West 23rd Street. Considering the volume of northbound traffic between West 34th and West 40th streets, there is considerable concern that removing a lane of traffic will push more truck volume to Tenth Avenue at PM peak hours. We request a presentation of this proposal, specifically including truck usage information, as soon as possible.

Buses and Transit

The report should acknowledge the need for a long-term regional solution – a new bus terminal and a bus garage- for the various kinds of buses that clog the streets and pollute the air of this neighborhood.

- Page 56 – 57 - DOT committed to not build the SBS 34 north curb extension west of Dyer Avenue and to relocate the stop to west of Ninth Avenue (based on the outcome of a Dyer avenue closure test with NYPD). This test should be scheduled to start as soon as the West 36th Street no-turn signage is implemented.
- Page 31 – NYPD operation 8/42 which cleared illegal buses needs to be repeated on a regular basis since the old chaos has returned to West 42nd Street, and a new law now requires that all long distance buses obtain a permit to operate a stop on New York city streets.
- Page 26 – The study should acknowledge that, with the bus terminal at capacity, a number of bus operations are spilling over in the streets aggravating the congestion and

- idling in the neighborhood, with many of these buses using residential street for detours.
- In addition to the north side, the south side of West 42nd Street is also occupied by airport buses and jitneys, which obstruct the M42 bus lane.
 - Page 25 – 26 - the M20 and M104 are only on Eighth Avenue. A new bus line is planned on 11th Avenue to start in 4Q 2013
 - Page 30 - The Grayline layover was relocated to West 38th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues

As real estate development is rapidly changing the nature of this area - a result of the 2005, 2009 and 2011 rezoning of the west side - we cannot afford to shortchange this study of how best to adjust the 50 years old infrastructure to the new and approaching realities. The current configuration has become obsolete in the face of changed land and street use, excessive volumes and changed patterns. It is critical that DOT be thorough and completes promptly all the aspects of this extremely valuable study. We look forward to work with the DOT to review the outstanding items as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson
Chair



Christine Berthet, Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus, Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

CC: Congressman Jerrold Nadler
Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
NYC Council Member Gale Brewer
NYS Senator Brad Hoylman
NYS Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
New York Metropolitan Transportation Council