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**The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8
Transportation Committee**
Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2016, 6: 30 PM
Church of the Holy Trinity
316 East 88th Street, Draesal Hall

Minutes

Present: Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, James Clynes, Daniel Dornbaum, A. Scott Falk, Andrew Kalloch, Craig Lader, Sharon Pope, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, David Rosenstein, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Marco Tamayo, Charles Warren, Hedi White; Devin Gould (Public Member), Jordan Wouk (Public Member)

Absent (Excused): David Menegon

The Meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM. Councilmember Ben Kallos spoke in favor of the East 79th Street Neighborhood Association's request to ban left turns from northbound York Avenue onto 79th Street, and also spoke on the topic of the bicycle lanes in DOT's Second Avenue plan.

Co-Chair Scott Falk announced that Community Board 8 will sponsor a free Bike New York "Street Skills 101" bicycle safety class in February.

1. Discussion of possible elimination of left turn and split signal phase for northbound traffic on York Avenue at 79th Street.

The Committee revisited an item of old business. In 2009, without prior notification to CB8, DOT changed the traffic signals at the intersection of 79th Street & York Avenue to add a "trailing" (delayed) left-turn signal arrow for northbound traffic turning west onto 79th Street; there is no corresponding dedicated left-turn lane.

At the December 2009 full-board meeting, by a unanimous vote of 33-0-0, CB8 passed the following resolution to restore the signals (or to change the trailing left-turn signal to a leading left-turn signal):

WHEREAS, DOT has installed a "trailing left turn" signal for northbound traffic on York Avenue at 79th Street, and

WHEREAS, a significant number of local residents have expressed concern that this change has created a dangerous situation for pedestrians attempting to cross York Avenue at 79th Street, and

WHEREAS, this change was not requested by Community Board 8M nor is Community Board 8M aware of any previous problems or complaints that would have necessitated such a left turn signal at this intersection,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8M requests that DOT restore the traffic signals at the intersection of 79th Street and York Avenue to their prior condition, with no left turn signal for northbound traffic, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if DOT can establish that there is a significant benefit to having a left turn signal for northbound traffic, the signal should be changed to a “leading left turn”.

Since that time, no changes have been made to the traffic signals at this intersection, but there have been many complaints from the community about dangerous pedestrian conditions resulting from the left-turn signal.

Betty Cooper Wallerstein of the East 79th Street Neighborhood Association explained to the Committee about the specific dangers at this corner, and asked the Committee to support her association’s resolution that would eliminate the left-turn signal and would also ban northbound vehicles from turning left (west) onto 79th Street. Mrs. Wallerstein pointed out that this is a rare location where there is a left-turn arrow without a dedicated lane for left-turning traffic; she also mentioned that there was once a “Barnes Dance” at this location (a pattern where all motor vehicles stop simultaneously to allow for pedestrians to cross in all directions).

Several residents expressed concerns that it is only a matter of time before someone gets killed crossing at this street, although some expressed concerns about the effect that a left-turn ban might have on traffic.

DOT Manhattan Deputy Commissioner Nina Haiman of DOT was asked if she could explain why the signals had been changed to the current pattern. Ms. Haiman said she had not been briefed on the specifics of this intersection, but that left turns contribute to crashes; a Barnes Dance would not be possible at this intersection, but it might be possible to do a left-turn ban in order to reduce conflicts and improve safety.

The Committee passed the following motion by a unanimous vote:

WHEREAS Community Board 8 wishes to improve safety at the intersection of 79th Street & York Avenue,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 urges the Department of Transportation to eliminate the dedicated left-turn arrow for northbound traffic on York Avenue, and to restore the pedestrian crossing signals at that intersection to typical operation.

Approved: 16 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, plus 2 Public Members voting Yes.

Yes: Birnbaum, Bores, Clynes, Dornbaum, Falk, Kalloch, Lader, Pope, Popper, Price, Rosenstein, Rudder, Schneider, Tamayo, Warren, White; Gould (Public Member), Wouk (Public Member)

2. A request for a new Revocable Consent to install a snowmelt system and fenced-in area at 132 East 73rd Street. *(Requested by DOT, Division of Franchises, Concessions and Consents)*

The applicant was not present, so this item will be laid over until the Committee’s next meeting on February 3.

3. A request for a new Revocable Consent to install a snowmelt system at 785 Madison Avenue. *(Requested by DOT, Division of Franchises, Concessions and Consents)*

Tom Grabski of Hubb NYC appeared on behalf of applicant 785 Madison Trevi LLC to present a petition to install an electrical snowmelt system in the sidewalk at 785 Madison Avenue, which will be maintained from a vault located beneath the sidewalk and accessed from inside the applicant’s property.

A member of the Committee expressed concerns about energy usage; Mr. Grabski stated that the system turns on only when the temperature is below 39° F and when sensors detect moisture. Some CB8 members also expressed opposition to snowmelt systems in general, while other CB8 members spoke in favor of these systems for sidewalk maintenance.

After further discussion, the following resolution was passed:

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 approves the request by 785 Madison Trevi LLC for a revocable consent to install a snowmelt system at 785 Madison Avenue.

Approved: 13 yes, 3 no, 0 abstain, plus Public Members voting 1 Yes & 1 No.

Yes: Birnbaum, Bores, Clynes, Dornbaum, Falk, Kalloch, Lader, Pope, Popper, Schneider, Tamayo, Warren, White; Gould (Public Member)

No: Price, Rosenstein, Rudder; Wouk (Public Member)

4. A request for a new Revocable Consent to install planters at 785 Fifth Avenue. *(Requested by DOT, Division of Franchises, Concessions and Consents)*

Priscilla Torress appeared on behalf of Fifth Avenue and 60th Street Corp., which is applying for a new revocable consent to install planters in front of 785 Fifth Avenue for the purpose of beautification. The sidewalk is 22 feet wide, and the planters are roughly 36” square at the top with a height of 24”, to be placed 2’ back from the curb as per DOT regulations.

These planters would be situated in line with the planters that CB8 recently approved for the Sherry Netherland (next door at 781 Fifth Avenue), but they would not be of the same design.

After further discussion, the Committee passed the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 approves the request by Fifth Avenue and 60th Street Corp. for a revocable consent to install planters at 785 Fifth Avenue.

Approved: 15 yes, 1 no, 0 abstain, plus 2 Public Members voting Yes.

Yes: Birnbaum, Bores, Clynes, Dornbaum, Falk, Kalloch, Lader, Popper, Price, Rosenstein, Rudder, Schneider, Tamayo, Warren, White; Gould (Public Member), Wouk (Public Member)

No: Pope

5. A presentation by DOT regarding safety and mobility improvements on Second Avenue from 59th to 96th Streets.

Patrick Kennedy, a project manager for DOT’s bicycle program, presented DOT’s plans for the surface restoration of Second Avenue after the completion of Second Avenue Subway construction. Other DOT representatives present to answer questions were Manhattan Deputy Commissioner Nina Haiman and Ted Wright of the Traffic Division.

DOT intends to make Second Avenue a “Complete Street,” with bus lanes and bike lanes, similar to changes implemented on First Avenue over the previous six years. There are two main design segments:

1. From 68th to 72nd Street*: Complete street with a bus lane, 3 general travel lanes, floating parking lane with pedestrian refuge islands, and a protected bike lane, with dedicated left-turn bays at major two-way intersections (96th, 86th, 79th, & 72nd), and “mixing zones” for other left-turn intersections.

*(*From 70th to 69th, a sidewalk entrance to the new subway station requires a wider sidewalk, which will result in the elimination of the floating parking on this block, so the bike lane will be buffered but not protected on that one block.)*

2. From 59th to 68th Street: “Transitional design” without protected bicycle lanes or pedestrian islands. This section has a bus lane, 3 general travel lanes, and two “shared lanes” for bikes and general traffic. The leftmost shared lane will be used for parking during off-peak hours only.

Key points from DOT’s presentation include the following:

- Second Avenue is a Vision Zero priority corridor, and 79th & 2nd is a priority intersection.
- Second Avenue will have a Bus-Only lane during the enforced hours of 7-10 AM & 2-7 PM weekdays, the same as 1st Avenue, with southbound M15-SBS stops located between 96th & 95th, 87th & 86th, 79th & 78th, and 68th & 67th Streets.
- The current Second Avenue has a disorganized roadway, disproportionate in scale to the neighborhood, with long pedestrian-crossing distances and no safe bike facility.
- The proposed complete-street design expands the bike network, continues the bus lane, calms and organizes traffic, reduces crossing distances, protects cyclists, and will reduce crashes & injuries for all street users (including people in cars, on bikes, and on foot).
- A protected bike lane already exists north of 105th Street, south of 59th Street is a bike route, and there is currently a gap in the city’s bicycle network between those streets.
- Citi Bike will expand above 86th Street this spring. There have already been 219,000 bike share trips (as of Nov. 2015) on the UES. Cycling counts in NYC have tripled in the past 8 years.

Several residents and Committee members expressed concerns about the lack of a protected bike lane below 68th Street, and the relative dangers of shared lanes compared to protected paths. DOT said they are looking to find additional safety improvements in the section of Second Avenue below 68th Street and in particular near the Queensboro Bridge, but that these improvements will not be part of the current project.

Other residents raised concerns about unsafe cycling behavior. DOT said that NYPD handles most enforcement (excluding some commercial cyclist enforcement), but DOT can address some of the issues with education and design.

Multiple people asked DOT to be sure to include adequate loading zones and commercial parking, to avoid the double-parking problems that have been prevalent on First Avenue.

The Committee thanked DOT for its presentation but did not feel it was necessary to pass a resolution on the issue.

6. Old Business.

There was no new business.

7. New Business.

There was no new business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
A. Scott Falk & Charles Warren, Co-Chairs