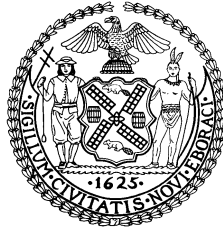


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## The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

### Transportation Committee

Wednesday, February 4, 2015, 6: 30 PM  
Ramaz School, 125 E. 85th St., Auditorium

### Minutes

*Present:* Michele Birnbaum, Sarah Chu, A. Scott Falk, Alison Kopf, Craig Lader, Rita Popper, David Rosenstein, Judith Schneider, M. Barry Schneider, Debra Teitelbaum, Elaine Walsh, Charles Warren, Hedi White; David Menegon (Public Member)

*Absent (Excused):* Lori Bores, Lorance Hockert

*Absent (Unexcused):* Jonathan Horn, Timothy Yeo

The Meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM, when the co-chairs announced that a public workshop would be held on February 12 to discuss bikeshare station locations for the Upper East Side.

### **1. A discussion of Select Bus Service for East 86th Street.**

Returning for a follow-up after their initial October 2014 presentation, NYC's Dept. of Transportation (DOT) and New York City Transit (NYCT) jointly presented an update on Select Bus Service (SBS) for the M86 bus route.

The presentation included the following information:

- Where SBS has launched in NYC, bus speeds, ridership, and reliability have increased, along with customer satisfaction and street safety (reduction in crashes).
- Elements of Select Bus Service can include:
  - Improved fare collection
  - Bus lanes (not planned on E. 86th St.)
  - Transit signal priority ("queue jump" considered for E. 84th St. Transverse exit)
  - Real-time passenger information screens (planned for 2015)
  - Improved station amenities (bus bulbs at Lex. & 3rd)
  - Pedestrian safety improvements (neckdowns at Park, Lex., & 3rd)
  - Recommend implementing commercial loading zones on E. 86th where needed
- "Why SBS on 86th St.?"
  - Most passengers per mile of *any* bus route in all of NYC
  - Carries over 25,000 passengers daily
  - Crucial connection to 6 subway lines and 12 bus routes

- CB support of fare machines and streetscape improvements
- Only two stop changes are being considered:
  1. Possible removal of Central Park Precinct stop on Transverse road.
  2. Possible combination of 92nd & 90th St. westbound stops into a single stop at 91st St.
- Traffic analysis conclusions:
  - Existing double parking for loading/deliveries blocks travel lanes for long periods.
  - Articulated M86 buses do not reach the curb at every stop.
  - SBS fare collection will dramatically speed dwell time at stops.
  - Current conditions lead to lanes blocked for much longer than they would be with M86-SBS bus bulbs.
  - Traffic movement on E. 86th St. is not adversely affected by proposed bus bulbs since motorists are typically able to clear the upcoming intersection in the same signal cycle.
- Next Steps/Schedule:
  - Winter 2015: Refine bus priority elements
  - Spring 2015: Install fare machines & other SBS elements; upgrade M86 to SBS route
  - Summer/Fall 2015: DDC Streetscape construction to begin

In addition to the PowerPoint presentation, DOT also showed animated simulations of their traffic analysis data (with and without the proposed bus bulbs), and discussed such community concerns as the impacts of the Marine Transfer Station and Second Avenue Subway construction. DOT also said that they will look at tweaking signal timing that hasn't been revisited in years.

Members of the public expressed a variety of opinions and concerns. Many spoke in favor of the off-board fare collection, and there were comments both against and in favor of the bus bulbs. There was some skepticism about DOT's traffic analysis conclusions, to which DOT replied: "We've done a lot of analysis that says traffic will be no worse than it is today, and that safety will be better". DOT also stated that the bus bulbs accomplish different goals than the off-board fare collection

Elaine Walsh, president of the East 86th Street Association (and member of CB8), gave a recap of the streetscape plan's history and stated that the Association does not support the bus bulbs.

Other CB8 members spoke about kiosk placement, the comparability of 86th St. and these SBS plans to the SBS implementation on 34th St., possible retention of the stops being considered for elimination/combination, and the possibility of launching the M86-SBS without the bus bulbs. There were also some committee comments in support of the bus bulbs, and in support of dealing with commercial loading zones. In addition, a committee member suggested looking at possible left-turn bans at choke points.

*Note: The minutes of prior meetings on this topic are appended to the end of this meeting's minutes.*

## **2. Update on the East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge. (Joint item with Parks Committee)**

Ali Mallick and Bharat Parekh of NYC Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) returned to present more details regarding plans for the construction of the new East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge. This presentation gave more details regarding the fencing as well as the

design for the proposed switchback ADA-accessible ramp access from the cul de sac at 81st Street to John Finley Walk and the new bridge.

CB8's December resolution (excluding two pages of Whereas clauses) concluded as follows:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan wants NYC Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) to relocate the new ADA-accessible ramp onto John Finley Walk, from its currently planned location on East 81st Street to one block north at East 82nd Street; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan wants DDC to use clear/transparent materials for all fences for this project, including the fence at the southern end of John Finley Walk and the fences lining the 452-foot esplanade ramp, even if such fencing material must be obtained from new, alternate vendors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan ask DDC to work closely with the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation to coordinate DDC's capital construction project with the planned esplanade infrastructure repairs, and to work with Parks & Recreation to bring irrigation to the Esplanade as part of this bridge project.

Although DDC honored their commitment to create a small working group with the Community Board and some area residents on Dec. 17, 2014, residents of the 82nd Street cul de sac block were unintentionally excluded from the working group meeting (through no fault of DDC). Residents of these buildings were given the opportunity to speak at this evening's Committee meeting, and expressed a variety of concerns and complaints, including that CB8's December resolution definitively called for moving the ADA-accessible ramp to 82nd Street without proper notice to and input from these residents.

Committee co-chair A. Scott Falk apologized for the exclusion of these residents from the December meetings, explained the Board's reasons for wanting to explore relocation of the ADA ramp, and stated CB8's commitment to properly include representatives from these buildings in discussions going forward.

Some residents expressed a desire to relocate the long esplanade ramp north, to land on John Finley Walk at 82nd Street or further north, which could both reduce the visual impact of the new bridge and might also allow for reconsideration of the specific requirements for ADA access to John Finley Walk based on proximity to the project location.

There was discussion of whether to rescind the December resolution, but ultimately the Committee instead passed the following resolution by a unanimous vote:

WHEREAS NYC Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) has entered into a contract to replace the East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge (project ID HBPED100M); and

WHEREAS the New York City Charter requires Public Design Commission approval before a bridge can be erected, but PDC has not yet approved this project; and

WHEREAS this project consists of three main components:

1. An ADA-accessible ramp onto John Finley Walk, to be constructed on East 81st Street
2. The replacement of the pedestrian bridge over the FDR Drive at East 81st Street

3. A new 452-foot ramp from the pedestrian bridge down to the lower esplanade level; and

WHEREAS on October 17, 2012, Community Board 8 Manhattan (CB8M) passed a resolution that “urges the DOT and the DDC to make further changes to the 81st Street pedestrian bridge so that it blends into the surrounding neighborhood in a better way and to ameliorate the impact of the eight foot high fence facing the buildings in the area” (by a vote of 39 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention, 1 not voting for cause); and

WHEREAS DDC did not effectively respond to repeated requests from CB8M to come back to the Transportation Committee with further updates and modifications to the project design prior to awarding the construction contract; and

WHEREAS DDC has repeatedly affirmed their willingness to “tweak” the design in conjunction with CB8M to address community concerns, and to convene a small working group including CB8M and area residents; and

WHEREAS relocating the 452-foot esplanade ramp to connect to John Finley Walk at a point north of 81st Street might address both practical and aesthetic concerns about this project; and

WHEREAS CB8M is committed to working with the residents of the East 82nd Street cul de sac and other area residents on any alterations to the current bridge design that could negatively affect them; and

WHEREAS the current view south from the end of John Finley Walk at 81st Street will be negatively impacted by the 8-foot-high fence required for new construction in close proximity to a highway; and

WHEREAS DDC has repeatedly expressed the intention for an “open” design to minimize visual impact and maximize sightlines; and

WHEREAS the community is concerned that the planned 1” x 1” stainless steel mesh fencing will impact sightlines and invoke the look of a prison yard; and

WHEREAS CB8M believes clear fencing materials will be more appropriate and more aesthetically pleasing, and passed a resolution on 12/17/14 that CB8M “wants DDC to use clear/transparent materials for all fences for this project, including the fence at the southern end of John Finley Walk and the fences lining the 452-foot esplanade ramp, even if such fencing material must be obtained from new, alternate vendors” (by a vote of 38 yes, 1 no, 0 abstention, 0 not voting for cause);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan asks the Public Design Commission to withhold approval of the East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge while CB8M and DDC, DOT and Parks work in cooperation with residents of the surrounding area to address community concerns regarding the design of the bridge; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan urges the Dept. of Design & Construction not to proceed with construction of the new East 81st Street

Pedestrian Bridge prior to receiving PDC approval, and urges DDC, DOT and Parks to be prepared to rethink many elements of the existing design.

*Approved: 11 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, 0 not voting for cause, plus 1 Public Member voting Yes.*

*Yes: Birnbaum, Chu, Falk, Kopf, Lader, Popper, Rosenstein, J. Schneider, M.B. Schneider, Teitelbaum, Warren; Menegon (Public Member)*

### **3. Old Business.**

There was no old business.

### **4. New Business.**

There was no new business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Scott Falk and Charles Warren, Co-Chairs

## Excerpted from 10/3/12 CB8 Transportation Committee Minutes

### 3. Discussion of the 86th Street Streetscape Improvements

NYC DOT gave an update on the East 86th Street Streetscape Improvement Project, which they have been working on for several years with the East 86th Street Association. The basic elements of this project include replacing the curbs on 86th Street between Park and Second Avenues with granite curbs and expanding the size of tree pits and installing a few additional tree pits where possible (to be maintained by the E. 86th St. Assoc.). Future improvements will include benches, bus racks, and trash receptacles.

To reduce the cost of these improvements, this project will incorporate some elements from other existing programs that are already funded:

- Safety improvements for routes to priority schools and bus improvements will allow the installation of “neckdowns” that increase space and reduce distances for pedestrians waiting to cross streets. School-safety neckdowns are planned for the NW & SW corners of 84th & Madison and the SW corner of 85th & Madison, plus the NW & SE corners of 86th & Park.
- New “bus bulb” sidewalk extensions will extend the sidewalk into the curbside no-standing lane at certain locations on East 86th Street to provide more space for pedestrians waiting at bus stops, and allow buses to stop without needing to pull over. These bus bulbs can also serve as neckdowns at some locations.

After some discussion about the bus bulbs and how off-board fare collection on the M86 route might speed the buses and improve traffic flow on 86th Street, the committee passed the following resolution by a vote of 11 yes, 1 no, 0 abstentions:

**WHEREAS** CB8M welcomes the East 86th Street streetscape improvements presented by the Department of Transportation,

**WHEREAS** DOT’s plans include the installation of bus bulbs along East 86th Street that will provide space for riders waiting for the M86 buses,

**WHEREAS** off-board fare collection would reduce the amount of time the M86 buses spend loading passengers boarding at these stops, and thus speed traffic on East 86th Street,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that CB8M requests that DOT and New York City Transit launch Select Bus Service–style off-board fare collection on the M86 bus route.

*Approved: 11 Yes, 1 No, 0 Abstentions*

*Yes: Blayney, Falk, Hockert, Horn, Price, B. Schneider, J. Schneider, Simon, Slater, Warren, White*

*No: Birnbaum*

The committee also requested that DOT come back to the committee when launching their Wayfinding System Signage program, so that CB8M can suggest locations for inclusion in the program, including this area.

**At the 10/17/12 full board, a substitute motion that would have delayed the bus bulbs FAILED by a vote of 14 in favor, 22 opposed, and 4 abstentions. The board then APPROVED the original motion by a vote of 31 in favor, 6 opposed, and 2 abstentions.**

## **1. Presentation on the East 86th Street Safety and Streetscape Improvements.**

The East 86th Street Streetscape Improvement Project was most recently before the Committee in October 2012, when NYC's Dept. of Transportation (DOT) presented an update on this project, which DOT had already been working on for several years with the East 86th Street Association. Here is a brief summary from the Oct. 2012 minutes:

*The basic elements of this project as presented in 2012 included replacing the curbs on 86th Street between Park and Second Avenues with granite curbs and expanding the size of tree pits and installing a few additional tree pits where possible (to be maintained by the E. 86th St. Assoc.), with additional improvements to include benches, bus racks, and trash receptacles.*

*To reduce the cost of these improvements, this project was to incorporate some elements from other existing programs that are already funded:*

- *Safety improvements for routes to priority schools and bus improvements will allow the installation of "neckdowns" that increase space and reduce distances for pedestrians waiting to cross streets.*
- *New "bus bulb" sidewalk extensions will extend the sidewalk into the curbside no-standing lane at certain locations on East 86th Street to provide more space for pedestrians waiting at bus stops, and allow buses to stop without needing to pull over. These bus bulbs can also serve as neckdowns at some locations.*

*The Committee passed a resolution requesting "Select Bus Service--style off-board fare collection" on the M86 route, which the full board also passed. The Committee also requested the DOT present information on the Wayfinding System Signage program at a future date, for possible inclusion in this area.*

There were two presentations under this agenda item:

- A. New York City Transit (NYCT) and DOT jointly presented on Select Bus Service (SBS) on East 86th Street.
- B. Design consultants to the Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) presented the capital construction project.

The Committee was unaware that there would be a full SBS presentation and had not properly posted this topic as an agenda item for this meeting. As a result, the Committee co-chairs stated that there would not be a vote this month on the M86-SBS plan.

### **1A. M86-SBS Presentation:**

First, NYCT and DOT jointly presented on Select Bus Service on East 86th Street. In 2009, DOT and NYCT identified the M86 as a potential phase II candidate for Select Bus Service. Some of the specifics of the M86 include:

- It is a heavily-used route with slow trips.
- The M86 has the highest number of passengers per mile of any NYCT bus route.
- The M86 is the second busiest crosstown route, with more than 25,000 passengers per day.
- It provides crucial connections to 6 subway lines and 12 bus routes.

NYCT noted that they have no plans to change the route of the M86.

DOT presented a preliminary timeline for the proposed SBS project:

1. Fall 2014: Data collection & analysis
2. Fall/Winter 2014: Conceptual design (includes CB input)
3. Early 2015: Develop corridor plan (includes refining detail with CBs)
4. Mid 2015: Implementation

### **1B. East 86th Street Capital Construction Project:**

DDC's project design consultants then presented the E. 86th St. capital construction project, which includes the following sub-projects:

1. Select Bus Service bus bulbs & neckdowns
2. School safety neckdowns
3. Streetscape improvements
4. Water main replacement

The capital project includes the following bus bulbs and neckdowns:

- Bus bulbs:
  - NW corner of E. 86th St. & Lexington Ave.
  - SE corner of E. 86th St. & Lexington Ave.
  - NW corner of E. 86th St. & Third Ave.
  - SE corner of E. 86th St. & Third Ave.
- Neckdowns (SBS project):
  - NE corner of E. 86th St. & Lexington Ave.
  - SW corner of E. 86th St. & Third Ave.
  - NW corner of E. 86th St. & Third Ave. (currently a “painted” neckdown)
- Neckdowns (school safety project):
  - NW corner of E. 86th St. & Park Ave.
  - SE corner of E. 86th St. & Park Ave.
  - SW corner of E. 85th St. & Madison Ave.
  - NW corner of E. 84th St. & Madison Ave.
  - SW corner of E. 84th St. & Madison Ave.

The streetscape improvements project includes the following:

- Sidewalk & curb replacement
- NYC standard tree guards (three-sided)
- Expanded tree pits with granite pavers
- New trees, shrubs, and bulbs
- NYC standard waste receptacles
- CityRack bicycle racks
- CityBench benches

Construction is scheduled for June 2015 to June 2016, at an estimated cost of \$7.5 million.

There were many questions, comments, and concerns raised by both members of the public and CB8 members. One particular concern was in reaction to a discrepancy between the two presentations regarding the intersection of 86th Street and Park Avenue: The DDC presentation accurately showed neckdowns planned for two corners of that intersection, but the SBS presentation incorrectly showed bus bulbs instead (although there is no M86 bus stop at Park).

A few people asked for a real traffic study of East 86th Street, mentioning both the planned 91st Street Marine Transfer Station and the potential effects of the bus bulbs and neckdowns; the presenters noted that they will be including the MTS in their traffic analysis for the SBS project. Several people were concerned about the bus bulbs leading to traffic delays because the buses would not be pulling over to a parking lane for loading, although the loading itself should be faster. One person noted that buses currently can take two full traffic-light cycles to load at certain hours.

Some residents expressed concerns that Select Bus Service could mean eliminated stops. NYCT indicated that they had no plans to change the existing route nor any stops currently proposed for elimination, and noted that this route would not have limited vs. local stops. However, they did note that it would be possible that they could propose to combine two stops if there were two stops very close to each other and/or a lack of space for installing the fare machines at one location.

Some CB8 board members who are also active in the East 86th Street Association noted that the streetscape beautification project had originated with the Association, but that other elements were folded into and perhaps given precedence over the beautification project. The East 86th Street Association fully endorses the beautification elements of the capital project, but there are elements they do not endorse, particularly in relation



to the traffic flow. Two items of the beautification project about which they did raise concerns are the color of the sidewalk and ensuring that all street lights remain in the Bishop's Crook style.

Some other comments and questions from the public and the Committee included:

- A Committee member noted that there is always a learning curve associated with SBS.
- There were some concerns about difficulty stepping on and off the buses at the middle and rear doors. NYCT noted that the bus bulbs should allow for level or near-level boarding, and that all M86-SBS buses would be "low-floor" buses.
- There were examples given of M15-SBS bus stops and/or bus bulbs where the fare machines were not situated well, or where the new expanded tree pits interfered with the flow of pedestrians.
- Several people expressed concern about replacing the blinking SBS lights that were eliminated in 2012. An NYCT liaison said he would convey the Committee's request to see an example of the blinking signage proposed as a replacement for these lights.
- Because the Lexington Avenue subway entrances near the NW and SW corners of 86th Street are both north of the corner, a resident suggested that it might be helpful to widen the crosswalk between those two entrances to improve pedestrian access and eliminate conflicts between cars and pedestrians.
- After a Committee member said that DOT was imposing this on the community, a Committee co-chair noted that CB8 passed a resolution in October 2012 asking for "Select Bus Service–Style off-board fare collection," and CB7 passed a compatible resolution in September 2013. *(Note: At the 10/1 committee meeting, it was incorrectly stated that the CB8 resolution regarding off-board fare collection had passed unanimously. Further research revealed that the correct tally was 32 yes, 6 no, and 2 abstentions.)*
- NYCT could not provide specific figures about the results of launching Select Bus Service on 34th St, but they were able to increase the number of daily bus trips due to speed improvements. *(Per a follow-up report posted on their website 9 months after the 34th Street SBS launch, overall travel time decreased by 10% and dwell time by 35%, ridership increased, customer satisfaction polled at 95%, and they were able to add roughly 150 additional trips per week with the same number of buses and drivers.)*

In 2013, CB7 passed a resolution requesting "off-board payment technology" on the M86 route similar to the Oct. 2012 CB8 resolution.

The Committee passed unanimously the following resolution regarding the streetscape improvements:

WHEREAS the East 86th Street Association several years ago initiated a project to beautify the streetscape of East 86th Street; and

WHEREAS the NYC Dept. of Transportation and Dept. of Design & Construction have presented a project that includes the following elements to beautify the streetscape:

- Granite sidewalk & curb replacement
- NYC standard tree guards (three-sided)
- Expanded tree pits with granite pavers
- New trees, shrubs, and bulbs
- NYC standard waste receptacles
- CityRack bicycle racks
- CityBench benches; and

WHEREAS several city and state elected officials have provided funding for this project over the years;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan approves the streetscape beautification project, namely:

- Granite sidewalk & curb replacement
- NYC standard tree guards (three-sided)
- Expanded tree pits with granite pavers
- New trees, shrubs, and bulbs
- NYC standard waste receptacles

- CityRack bicycle racks
- CityBench benches

*Approved: 12 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, 0 not voting for cause, plus 2 Public Member Yes votes.*

*Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Clynes, Falk, Hockert, Lader, Popper, Price, Seawright, Slater, Walsh, Warren*

*Yes (Public Members): Dillon, Menegon*

We will come back to the SBS project at a future date, when this item can be properly posted. Some CB8 members suggest that we should discuss the current state of the M86 route at that time, and that this future meeting should be held closer to 86th Street.