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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

Transportation Committee

Wednesday, May 7, 2014

MSK-Rockefeller Research Laboratories
430 East 67th Street (First-York) Room 103
6:30 PM

Minutes

Present: Lowell Barton, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, A. Scott Falk, Lorence Hockert, Craig Lader, Rita Popper, Abraham Salcedo, Judith Schneider, Barry Schneider, Cos Spagnoletti, Jared Stone, Charles Warren, Hedi White, Timothy Yeo; Michael Dillon (Public Member)

Absent (Excused): Jonathan Horn

Absent (Unexcused): Rebecca Seawright, David Menegon (Public Member)

The Meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM.

Near the top of the meeting, Councilmember Ben Kallos spoke about his Livable Streets Initiative survey, sent to 60,000 homes in his district, seeking information about the following topics:

- Dangerous intersections
- Pot holes
- Corners that are not properly accessible
- Suggested locations for bus shelters, City Benches, and City Rack bike racks

He also discussed some other transportation issues in our district, including the Vision Zero initiative, the death of pedestrian Kelly Gordon near York Avenue & 84th Street, and the westbound M79 stop at Lexington Avenue (*see also agenda item 1D*).

1. New York City Transit Bus and Subway Service review:

Marcus Book, Assistant Director of Government & Community Relations for New York City Transit (NYCT) brought some of his colleagues to help answer questions from residents and the Committee about transit service within Community Board 8.

A. Delays on the Lexington Avenue 4/5/6 subway lines

Questions about the Lexington Avenue lines were answered by Michael Barich, Asst. Chief Transportation Officer for the Rail Control Center on West 44th Street, which handles delays and incidents on the various subway lines. The Committee asked about increases in delays or delay alerts, gaps in headways, and overcrowded trains that cannot accommodate all of the riders waiting on the platform to board.

Mr. Barich explained that the 4, 5, & 6 trains are currently operating at full capacity for the existing signal system, which makes crowding unavoidable at times; no additional trains can be added on these lines while still keeping trains at least two signal blocks apart for safety reasons. He also reported that there has been a rise in the number of sick and injured passenger incidents on the Lexington lines (e.g., seizures), perhaps resulting from an overall increase in ridership. The duration of these incidents is not controllable, because they are not permitted to move or remove the sick or injured passengers, but there has been some improvement in the

dispatch time and in EMT arrival times. Because the lines are at capacity, these incidents can cause wider problems with the schedule than on other, more resilient lines.

Other subway topics discussed included the following:

- Local and express trains often just miss allowing a connection across the platform.
- Countdown clocks on the platform can reduce passenger frustration.
- Is it possible to have countdown clocks outside station entrances?
- NYC Transit could perhaps make it easier for developers to provide elevators/escalators for subway access during new building construction (e.g., at 86th & Lex., where an elevator was not installed on the SE corner, but where new construction is expected on the NE corner).
- “Step-aside boxes” at the platform edge are going to be redone at certain stations, including Grand Central, 51st, & 59th Street, along with automated messages asking passengers on the platform to step aside to allow riders to get off the train before boarding.

B. Service on the M31 bus line (including scheduling and accessibility)

Several members of both the public and the Community Board complained about issues with the M31 bus line, particularly regarding bunching, unreliability, and excess headways. Patrick Bambury of NYCT Road Operations reported that the M31 is scheduled for 5.5 minutes between buses in the morning, and 10 minutes between buses at midday, although several people present reported that 20- to 45-minute waits are common on this line. Some people gave specific examples of dates and times where they experienced excessive waits for the M31.

It was noted that the M31 serves a hospital corridor and a neighborhood with an aging population, but that the specific buses used on this route are often the old buses with rear loading of wheelchairs, which can cause delays both for loading/unloading a wheelchair passenger and also due to the difficulty for some passengers in navigating the higher steps to enter the bus in front. It was suggested that this route would benefit from low-floor buses that allow wheelchair users to enter more quickly through the front door. It was also suggested that consideration be given to having some M31 buses operate on a shorter route to help reduce the time between buses on this congested route.

Following some discussion, the Committee passed the following unanimous resolution:

WHEREAS the M31 bus route serves the Upper East Side, which has an aging population, and in particular serves the hospital corridor known as “Bed Pan Alley,” with such institutions as NY-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and Hospital for Special Surgery; and
WHEREAS the newer low-floor buses with front-door wheelchair access allow for much quicker loading of passengers in wheelchairs; and
WHEREAS the low-floor buses are also easier to board for children, the elderly, and riders with impaired mobility; and
WHEREAS reduced boarding time improves service reliability and decreases headways between buses;
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan asks New York City Transit to use predominantly low-floor buses with front-door wheelchair ramps on the M31.

Approved: 14 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Bores, Falk, Lader, Popper, Salcedo, J. Schneider, M. B. Schneider, Spagnoletti, Stone, Warren, White, Yeo

Public Member Votes: 1 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon

There was some discussion of what factors are used to determine schedules, and Buckley Yung of NYCT’s operations planning division explained that Transit determines the maximum load point (the busiest stop), and schedules buses based on serving that stop adequately. Rider counts are done through a combination of fares paid and body counts.

In response to a question about the possibility of dedicated bus lanes, Mr. Yung mentioned that Mayor de Blasio has set a target of 20 new Select Bus Service routes, and that DOT will be integral to identifying and

implementing those routes. The Committee reminded NYCT about the unanimous resolutions from both CB8 & CB7 in support of a possible M86 Select Bus Service route.

C. Request for the MetroCard Bus or Van to park at 91st Street & Second Avenue

Committee Member Rita Popper presented a request to add a new MetroCard bus/van location near the corner of East 91st Street and Second Avenue, at the base of the closed play street. NYCT noted that requests for a temporary location can be faxed to 646-252-5022, detailing the location, name of requesting organization, and estimates of how many people might want to use this location. Per Marcus Book, the Community Board can send a resolution to request a new permanent stop to be added, but NYCT does not really have the equipment to add new stops. When the Committee chairs mentioned that the new stop could be accommodated by relocating some of the other stops within this neighborhood, NYCT seemed more receptive.

The Committee then passed the following unanimous resolution:

WHEREAS none of the current MetroCard Bus and Van locations for the Upper East Side and Yorkville are on Second Avenue, and
WHEREAS many seniors live near the intersection of East 91st Street & Second Avenue, and
WHEREAS the Carnegie Hill MetroCard Bus location at 90th Street & Lexington Avenue is up a very steep hill that is difficult for some residents to navigate, and
WHEREAS no additional equipment would be required to redeploy the MetroCard Bus or Van from other scheduled stops at the Upper East Side, Yorkville, or Carnegie Hill locations,
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests that New York City Transit add East 91st Street & Second Avenue to the list of locations within CB8 at which the MetroCard Bus and/or Van is regularly scheduled.

Approved: 15 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Bores, Falk, Hockert, Lader, Popper, Salcedo, J. Schneider, M. B. Schneider, Spagnoletti, Stone, Warren, White, Yeo

Public Member Votes: 1 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon

D. General review of transit service within Community Board 8

Many residents complained about the lack of a Westbound M79 bus stop at Lexington Avenue, despite the apparent completion of construction of the new building at 135 East 79th Street, on the former site of the Hunter College School of Social Work. This issue was also raised by Councilmember Ben Kallos earlier in the meeting.

NYCT and DOT reported that, although it appeared that construction may be complete, the contractor has requested renewal of the construction zone no-parking permits through June; generally, the contractor is supposed to request restoration of the bus stop once the construction is complete. In addition, there are some utility construction permits ongoing at this location as well, and that work is not yet clear of the bus stop location that has been temporarily removed. Josh Orzeck of DOT indicated he would look into the situation and get back to the Board.

Several people noted that there seem to be non-construction vehicles parking in front of the new building, in the former M79 bus stop; the Committee said that this can be brought to the attention of the 19th Precinct for enforcement if these are not construction-related vehicles.

Other transit items discussed included:

- Future fare-collection technology
- The lack of an M15-SBS station at 72nd Street
- The lack of purple lights or another compensatory measure to replace the blue SBS lights that were eliminated a couple of years ago
- The difficulty in being able to choose to board the M15 local instead of the M15-SBS at 67th Street due to the stops being across the street from each other

2. A discussion of the Jersey Barrier artwork placed at the bicycle path on First Avenue between 59th and 60th Streets. (Joint item with Landmarks Committee)

Responding to the Board's request from 2013 to present to a joint meeting of the Transportation and Landmarks Committees a "contextually appropriate design" for the Jersey barrier fence next to the two-way bike path beneath the Queensboro Bridge on First Avenue between 59th & 60th Streets, DOT had Urshula Barbour and Paul Carlos of Pure + Applied Graphic Design present two options for the proposed mural inspired by the Guastavino tiles beneath the Bridge. The Board Members unanimously preferred the two-color option featuring blue and gold colors that echo the Queensboro Bridge tiles.

DOT noted that these murals are generally installed for about one year, and then a new artist's design can be installed. DOT retains a gallon of latex exterior-grade paint in each of the mural's colors for any necessary touch-ups, graffiti removal, etc.

Following some discussion, the following Committee Recommendation in support of the proposed artwork passed unanimously:

WHEREAS Community Board 8 passed a resolution on May 22, 2013, approving the installation of a Jersey barrier fence-protected two-way bicycle path on First Avenue between 59th & 60th Street, beneath the Queensboro Bridge; and

WHEREAS CB8's resolution asked DOT to propose a contextually appropriate design to be painted on the barrier beneath the Queensboro Bridge, and present the design to a joint meeting of CB8M's Landmarks and Transportation Committees for approval; and

WHEREAS DOT's proposed Guastavino Tile mural is contextually appropriate; and

WHEREAS DOT plans to paint the mural on Saturday, May 17, 2014;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan approves the two-color mural design for the Jersey barrier fence next to the two-way bike path beneath the Queensboro Bridge on First Avenue between 59th & 60th Streets, to be painted on both sides of the fence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CB8 asks DOT to return at an appropriate time for approval of future mural designs for this location.

Approved: 14 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Bores, Falk, Lader, Popper, Salcedo, J. Schneider, M. B. Schneider, Spagnoletti, Stone, Warren, White, Yeo

Public Member Votes: 1 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon

3. A request for a "No Parking Zone" in front of 130 East 82nd Street.

Rebecca Harary, Executive Director of the Moise Safra Community Center now being constructed at 130 East 82nd Street, presented a request for a No Parking zone in front of the building's entry. The building is expected to open late in 2015, and will also house a synagogue. The Committee suggested that MSCC should postpone their request until closer to the opening of the building.

Ms. Harary and another representative from MSCC also reported on the large cranes that will require street closures at certain times during their construction, but they are already obtaining the necessary permits from NYC DOT.

4. A discussion of the parking issues at the Caedmon School at 416 East 80th Street.

The Committee invited a representative from the Caedmon School to this meeting to discuss ongoing issues relating to double parking in front of the school. The school's director of finance, Simon Prosser, reaffirmed the school's desire to be a good neighbor, and reported that the school provides a security guard during afternoon pickup times, but not during morning drop-off. The Committee has had reports that some parents double park in front of the school during pickup and/or drop-off, and there can be sidewalk congestion due to strollers.

Mr. Prosser said that the school tries to keep traffic flowing, but that there may be "a few bad eggs"; however, he planned to send a letter to parents to let them know about the Board's complaints. The Committee mentioned that if the problems did not resolve themselves, the 19th Precinct may be asked to have a ticketing blitz on this block during pickup and/or drop-off times.

5. Old Business

A. Update on request to change the parking on East 63rd Street between York & First Avenues from No Standing, 7AM to Midnight, all days to No Standing, 7AM to 7PM, except Sundays. (Requested by Ms. Siskind, resident) presented to the committee February 5, 2014; resolution passed.

Around the beginning of January 2014, NYC DOT changed the parking regulations on the southern curb of East 63rd Street, reportedly in conjunction with the nighttime closure of the outer Queensbound lane on the Queensboro Bridge. The prior regulation had been *No Standing, 7 AM to 7 PM, Except Sundays*; the new regulation is *No Standing, 7 AM to Midnight, All Days*.

At the Committee's February 5 meeting, in response to complaints from residents, Josh Orzeck of DOT indicated that they hoped to be able to restore the prior regulations, but were waiting to finalize their observations of the traffic on this block. The Board passed a unanimous resolution urging DOT to restore the previous regulations.

Subsequently, DOT instead kept the regulations along the southern curb as *No Standing, 7 AM to Midnight*, but relaxed the northern curb's regulations to allow parking after 7 PM (now signed for *Truck Loading, 7 AM to 7 PM, except Sundays*, in place of the previous *Truck Loading, 7 AM to Midnight*). Although this did restore some parking between 7 PM and midnight, residents expressed several concerns, including the following:

- The northern curb has hydrants and garages, leaving fewer evening parking spaces than the southern curb had.
- The northern curb leads to a right-turn onto First Avenue, while the southern curb carries traffic that doesn't turn.
- Keeping the southern curb clear allows for speeding down this block.

A member of the public suggested swapping the regulations for the southern and northern curbs, namely moving all truck loading to the southern curb, and allowing parking after 7 PM on the southern curb instead of the northern curb. The Committee then passed the following unanimous resolution:

WHEREAS New York City Department of Transportation has recently changed the parking regulations on both sides of East 63rd Street, between York and First Avenues; and

WHEREAS the change in the nighttime traffic pattern on the Queensboro Bridge does not appear to have caused a noticeable increase in traffic on East 63rd Street sufficient to require additional parking restrictions between 7 PM and Midnight; and

WHEREAS the elimination of parking on the southern curb in the evening and allows cars to speed down this block; and

WHEREAS the swapping of regulations between the northern and southern curbs would provide more truck loading spaces in the daytime and more parking spaces in the evening;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 Manhattan strongly urges NYC DOT to reverse the parking regulations on the southern and northern curbs of East 63rd Street, between York and First Avenue, as follows:

- Change the southern curb regulations to *Truck Loading, 7 AM to 7 PM, Except Sunday*; and
- Change the northern curb regulations to *No Standing, 7 AM to Midnight, All Days*.

Approved: 12 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Falk, Lader, Popper, Salcedo, J. Schneider, Spagnoletti, Stone, Warren, White, Yeo

Public Member Votes: 1 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon

B. Update on the East 60th Street and Third Avenue intersection.

Josh Orzeck of DOT reported that the revised plans for the intersection of 60th Street & Third Avenue should be implemented within the coming month. Following CB8's January 2014 resolution in support of the initial proposal, DOT incorporated additional changes based on the board's feedback, including relocating one of the painted neckdowns from the SW corner to the SE corner of the intersection. In addition, the East Midtown Partnership has agreed to be maintain the neckdowns and sidewalk extension, including sweeping, shoveling, and plantings. DOT is continuing to look at the block of 60th Street between Second and Third Avenues, and at the intersection of 60th & Second along with the Queensboro Bridge exit, as requested.

6. New Business

There were four items of new business.

A. Vision Zero forums.

The co-chairs reported that there would be three upcoming forums and workshops regarding Vision Zero:

- CB8 Public Safety Forum, 6:30 PM on 5/22 at Lenox Hill Hospital
- NYC Vision Zero Pedestrian Safety Workshop (Manhattan South), Weds. 6/11, 6:30-8:30, Our Lady of Pompei (Lower Level), 25 Carmine Street
- NYC Vision Zero Pedestrian Safety Workshop (Manhattan North), Mon. 6/16, 6:30-8:30, Alhambra Ballroom, 2116 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd.

B. Planting the pedestrian refuge islands on First Avenue.

After learning about Council Member Kallos's May 15 forum about adopting and planting the tree/flower beds in the new pedestrian refuges on First Avenue, a member of the Committee asked whether trees can obstruct visibility and create safety issues in these locations. Council Member Kallos's staffer Anthony Scattaglia reported that DOT provides a list of specific refuge locations where trees are not approved, and that only certain varieties of trees may be planted in these refuge islands, both of which avoid the concerns being raised here.

C. Wheel Guards for Trucks and Buses.

The Committee will add to the June agenda a discussion of pending legislation to require wheel guards on trucks and/or buses.

D. Milling and Resurfacing 79th Street.

Josh Orzeck reported that, although most of the repaving work in the district will happen no sooner than July, DOT is bumping up the schedule to repave East 79th Street between Lexington Avenue and FDR Drive. Milling should begin within the next few weeks.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Scott Falk and Charles Warren, Co-Chairs