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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

Joint Meeting of the Small Business, Transportation, and Street Life Committees

Lenox Hill Hospital
131 East 76th Street (Lexington-Park)
Einhorn Auditorium
Wednesday, January 25, 2017

Present: Michelle Birnbaum, Matthew Bondy, Sarah Chu, Jim Clynes, Daniel Dornbaum, Scott Falk, Craig Lader, Glen Pandolfino, Tricia Shimamura, and Cos Spagnoletti.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35p

1. Discussion regarding impact of Citibike on Small Businesses

Although no small business owners attended the meeting, we were informed of several complaints regarding Citibike impacting small business in the neighborhood.

Liz Patrick, vice president of the East 72th Street Association, spoke of her efforts to canvass the neighborhood's Citibike stations and noted that there are seven within her association's vicinity. She noted two docking stations (south side of 74th & 1st and Third Avenue between 70th & 71st) that drew the following complaints from business owners—1) that delivery trucks cannot park in bus lanes and have to therefore do so on side streets, thereby causing double parking, and; 2) that the gap created between the docking stations and the curb, for which businesses are responsible to keep clean and sweep 18 inches from the curb, prevents street cleaners from coming through and puts the onus on small businesses to clean the trash, leaves and other debris that accumulates at these stations.

Indeed, a nail salon, Shynn Boutique, has felt threatened with enforcement from DSNY for not maintaining the gap between the curb and the Citibike station in front of their establishment. The committee feels this is unfair and that Citibike should police the cleanliness of its own stations.

Another business, Primrose Florist, felt that having the station prevents people from parking in front, hurting business. Several car owners spoke of the parking that has been removed to accommodate Citibike stations, and several news organizations (e.g., Fox and NY1) have done stories airing after our meeting noting that approximately 300 parking spots have been removed from the Upper East Side to accommodate Citibike.

We were made aware on one complaint regarding the length of a rack directly affecting Antonucci Cafe. CM Kallos wrote a letter to DOT asking for assistance and there being no response, Sarah Chu again shared the letter with Suchetra Chatergoon of DOT and emphasized that Mr. Antonucci, the owner of Antonucci Cafe has been waiting for a response for 2 years. His request seems minimal and we hope that DOT can accommodate it.

We encourage the Board to note the tremendous effort made by our fellow Board Member, Craig Lader, in analyzing the Citibike data in our neighborhood, and urge you to review this fascinating data, which is annexed hereto, and shows trips both within the neighborhood and from outside of the neighborhood into it, as well as the frequency of trips to and from each station. Notably, it appears from Craig's analysis that the docking station at 81st x 3rd in front of Mr. Antonucci's establishment is NOT among the most trafficked stations and likely doesn't require a 90 ft. rack.

Several car owners were in attendance and spoke of how important transient parking is for the promotion and success of small businesses; that it was created for the very purpose of supporting small business, and; that Citibike docking stations have had the effect of preventing those who would ordinarily park briefly in front of an establishment from patronizing it. After the meeting, Matt Bondy received a telephone call from an attorney representing 11 storefronts along one block face in the 70's on Third Avenue that are in litigation over the impact of Citibike on their respective businesses.

On the other hand, we heard from people who utilize Citibike who spoke of how Citibike has had the effect of taking them from their nuclear neighborhood to the neighborhood at large resulting in their patronage of small businesses that they may not have otherwise gone to were it not for Citibike.

The evening also included a discussion of the length of the racks which impact parking, loading, and especially accessibility for people with limited mobility, particularly outside of the ground floor doctor's offices that are prevalent in our community. It was decided that this joint meeting was akin to a forum to discuss Citibike's impact on small business and that any action items, such as requesting that the length of Citibike docking stations be limited to forty feet or that breaks or sectioning within docking stations be made to accommodate entrances etc., should be addressed by the Transportation committee.

The committees did, however, determine that we should request a District Citibike liaison from DOT. DOT has moved bike stations or put gaps between docking stations to facilitate the streetscape or at the request of schools and other community members. While some of the attendees commended DOT for its community based planning mechanism to site docking stations, the overwhelming feedback is that DOT doesn't respond to individual problems (like Mr. Antonucci's) and hasn't been communicative/transparent about the changes it has made since the community planning process (increasing size of racks, changing locations). Tricia Shimamura suggested, and we agree, that a liaison with a dedicated responsibility to respond to community feedback would assist small business owners and better fit the Citibike racks to the functions of the UES streetscape.

We also discussed the prospect of a community clean-up day and asking Citibike and the City to use existing and future technology (i.e., "Apps," Link NYC mapping capabilities, and GPS) to support small businesses. This is a giveback that Citibike and NYC can make to compensate the community for the lost street, sidewalk, and parking space and the burden placed on small businesses.

Citibike emails and otherwise communicates with its annual subscribers. Email notifications between Citibike and annual subscribers offering information on local establishments and discounts in the neighborhood, and using Citibike key fobs received by annual subscribers to facilitate those discounted transactions can promote both Citibike and small business. Businesses could sign up for tweets, texts, or emails to be sent from Citibike to Citibike users and offer promotions and discounts to bring in business from Citibike riders.

We also believe that it would be a good idea to require that prior to receiving a ticket to ride or an annual membership, that Citibike include a brief questionnaire for its members to determine what they use the bikes for (shopping, visiting friends, commuting, how far they generally go, etc.) to assist in gathering data that would inform future docking station placement and support small businesses.

The City should also explore the use of LINK NYC kiosks at Citibike docking stations to notify users of local establishments and encourage exploration of small businesses at particular terminal destinations, i.e., restaurants, shopping, etc.

The Committee members agreed to summarize these concerns and recommendations in a letter for the DOT.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm

Respectfully submitted, Sarah Chu and Matthew Bondy, Small Business Committee Co-Chairs, Scott Falk, Transportation Committee Co-Chair, and Jim Clynes, Community Board 8 Chair.