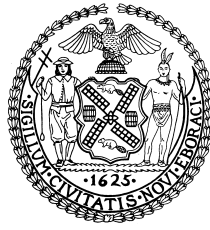


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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Transportation Committee
Wednesday May 6, 2020, 6:30 PM
Conducted Remotely on Zoom**

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee chair to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Minutes

Present: Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Taina Borrero, Alida Camp, Rebecca Dangoor, Felice Farber, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Valerie Mason, Sharon Pope-Marshall, Rita Popper, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Tricia Shimamura, Marco Tamayo, Charles Warren, Jack Zimmerman, Peter Borock (public member) Jordan Wouk (public member)

Absent (Excused): Lowell Barton

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 3: Potential short-term bike/pedestrian safety improvements across the Queensboro Bridge in response to COVID-19

Item 4: Temporary suspension of the \$2.50 congestion fee assessed on yellow taxis in Manhattan south of 96th Street

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

Item 1: DOT and NYCT Briefings: COVID-19 Impacts

New York City Transit Update

Marcus Book, New York City Transit Assistant Director -Government and Community Relations, provided an update on how New York City Transit is addressing Covid-19 in its operations. Mr. Book described the devastating impacts the virus has had on its staff, with many employees getting sick and even dying.

Mr. Book described the efforts to ensure staff and passenger safety is being addressed. Masks are required for passengers and staff. Equipment and infrastructure is being deep-cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis; this is being done in conjunction with the new overnight shutdown of the subways. Mr. Book also described how stations are kept secured and safe during the shutdown hours, how the homeless population is being assisted, and how passengers would be able to be served by alternative modes, such as buses and for-hire vehicles, between 1AM and 5AM while trains are out of service. Mr. Book said he would forward a suggestion made by a Board member to consider banning food and drink in the system in the future to promote cleanliness.

In light of service challenges and to keep staff and passengers safe, NYCT is still encouraging those who aren't essential workers or who do not have to travel to stay home. Due to the high number of employees who have been unable to report to work because of the virus, and given that ridership has declined by 92%, NYCT has had to reduce service; they are running as much service as they are able to, while ensuring that passengers can practice social distancing on board buses and trains. Rear-door boarding has been instituted on buses to allow drivers to be separated from passengers; this also has resulted in the temporary suspension of fare payment on most buses (except on Select Bus Service Routes). While NYCT is receiving some federal funding to make up for lost revenues (both due to ridership decline and rear-door bus boarding), it is too early to know the long-term budgetary impacts of this crisis.

New York City Department of Transportation Update

Colleen Chattergoon, NYCDOT Community Coordinator, also discussed the severe impact that Covid-19 has had on its staff, with at least 7 employees having passed away. Non-essential workers are working remotely. Inspectors and the Borough Engineer continue to report to work and address issues as they arise. She noted that budget impacts due to Covid-19 are inevitable, and that the NYCDOT Capital division are reviewing project lists; the outcome of these reviews will be discussed with Community Boards in the coming months.

NYCDOT has taken various actions to help communities throughout the Covid-19 outbreak. Hundreds of parking permits have been issued to health-care workers, and in certain locations commercial loading zone parking spaces have been converted to placard parking spaces for front-line workers. NYCDOT is working with community boards as they implement their Open Streets program, which aims to provide space for pedestrians to walk in a safe and socially distant manner. The program was introduced within CB8 on East End Avenue between 83rd and 89th Streets on May 2nd. During these hours, through-traffic is prohibited, local deliveries, pick-ups/drop-offs, necessary city service vehicles, utility vehicles and emergency vehicles are permitted, but must limit their speeds to 5 MPH. Thus, it operates more like a shared street rather than a closed street.

Ms. Chattergoon noted that the Manhattan Borough office has received feedback expressing opposition about Community Board 8 Manhattan's April 2020 resolution requesting Park Avenue be included in the Open Streets program; one Board member further elaborated on this opposition. Several members reiterated support for the CB8 resolution, highlighting the inability to walk along streets or parks within CB8 in a socially distant manner due to crowding, and noting that the Open Streets program restricts the types of streets that are eligible for the program to streets like Park Ave. that are not truck routes or ambulance corridors. NYCDOT indicated that discussions with CB8 will continue regarding this matter, possibly as an item on the June Transportation Committee agenda.

Item 2: Presentation by Revel - New Service north of 65th Street

Carol Antunez and Lauren Vrines of Revel provided an overview of their scooter service and their introduction within Community District 8. In response to Covid-19, Revel expanded their service area to accommodate health care workers and first responders accessing various major hospitals, including Manhattan north of 65th street, and began offering free rides to health care workers throughout the crisis.

Revel provides fully-electric dockless mopeds to subscribers via their mobile app, which allows users to locate and unlock the vehicle. The mopeds are street-legal, and not permitted to be used on highways, bike lanes or sidewalks; users must obey all motor vehicle laws as they would if they drove a car or motorcycle. They also have a license plate. They are able to park on the curbside similar to a motorcycle, but only require 3-feet of dead space. In accordance with New York State law for such vehicles, Revel scooters have a top speed of 29MPH, and each scooter contains 2 helmets of different sizes to fit any user safely. The company offers daily lessons at their Brooklyn headquarters and occasional pop-up lessons in neighborhoods across the City. Users must have a valid driver's license and be at least 21 years of age; all users are automatically covered by third-party insurance. The scooters are \$1 to lock, and costs \$0.31 a

minute to operate; passengers on public assistance can participate in a program that offers those eligible a 40% discount. The mobile apps allow the company to track the vehicles and service them when the batteries are running low.

Revel has indicated they wish to return to a future 2020 CB8 Transportation Meeting to provide a status update and to obtain community feedback, and will be invited to participate upon their request.

Item 3: A discussion regarding potential short-term bike/pedestrian safety improvements across the Queensboro Bridge in response to COVID-19

In January 2020, Community Board 8 Manhattan passed a resolution requesting that NYCDOT conduct a study of a proposal promoted by the Manhattan Borough President's office to eliminate vehicular traffic on the south outer roadway of the Queensboro Bridge and convert the roadway to a dedicated ADA accessible pedestrian pathway or bike route. While the original resolution was intended to address long-term needs, the Covid-19 outbreak has sparked interest in a short-term approach to providing such improved bike/pedestrian access to address difficulties faced by cyclists and pedestrians to follow social distancing guidelines on the shared bike/pedestrian path on the north outer roadway. There also is concern regarding anticipated changes in travel behaviors such as potential avoidance of subways and buses that would further generate bike and pedestrian activity between Long Island City and Manhattan via the Queensboro Bridge while Covid-19 is present in New York City and impacting travel behaviors.

Earlier in the meeting NYCDOT Community Coordinator Colleen Chattergoon indicated that NYCDOT is currently unable to expedite the long-term request to provide additional bike/pedestrian accommodations on the south outer roadway since it requires the bridge deck replacement project to be completed. However, she did note that she would bring this request to the attention of DOT officials and emphasize that this discussion is focusing on a short-term approach that would not result in significant capital work and be able to be removed once the Covid-19 crisis passes and prior to the bridge deck replacement project commencement.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; Community Board 8 has expressed support for NYCDOT providing improved bike and pedestrian access on the Queensboro Bridge and studying a long-term conversion of the south outer roadway to an ADA-accessible pedestrian or bike pathway; and

WHEREAS; the Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in significant reductions in vehicular traffic and increased capacity on roadways in New York City; and

WHEREAS; in addition to the constrained shared bike/pedestrian facilities on the Queensboro Bridge north outer roadway that present safety hazards for users, the existing space does not provide users with ample ability to follow social distancing guidelines to limit the spread of Covid-19; and

WHEREAS; changes in travel patterns and behaviors driven by reluctance to use public transportation during the Covid-19 outbreak are likely to result in increased demand for safe and efficient bike and pedestrian access between Queens and Manhattan; and

WHEREAS; New York City DOT has demonstrated flexibility to implement short-term solutions to address public health needs during times of crisis that do not require significant capital expenditures and are temporary in nature; and

WHEREAS; the Mayor has committed to a goal of opening up to 100 miles of streets to allow pedestrians and cyclists to practice adequate social distancing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests the New York City Department of Transportation develop an implementable short-term approach to providing additional bike and pedestrian access on the Queensboro Bridge, either via the south outer roadway or any other portion of the bridge roadway that DOT would achieve Community Board 8's access and safety objectives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any short-term bike-pedestrian improvements to the Queensboro Bridge remain in place until capacity limitations on public transportation related to the Covid-19 public health crisis are lifted.

Yes (17+2): Bores, Borrero, Camp, Dangoor, Farber, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Mason, Pope-Marshall, Popper, Rudder, Schneider, Shimamura, Tamayo, Warren, Zimmerman, Borock (public member) Wouk (public member)

No (1): Birnbaum

Item 4: Discussion regarding a temporary suspension of the \$2.50 congestion fee assessed on yellow taxis in Manhattan south of 96th Street

In December 2019, Community Board 8 Manhattan passed a resolution requesting the permanent elimination of the \$2.50 congestion fee assessed on yellow taxis in Manhattan south of 96th Street, as it was viewed as especially burdensome on vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, seniors, and commuters who travel during certain off-peak hours when public transportation may not be a viable mobility option. The resolution also highlighted the plight of taxi drivers who have faced immense struggles trying to survive at a time when faced with intense competition from private transportation network companies and declining medallion values.

The Covid-19 outbreak has exacerbated the concerns highlighted in the Community Board 8 resolution. Traditionally vulnerable populations have among the worst outcomes among those afflicted with Covid-19, and are safer avoiding public transportation until the virus is no longer a threat. Along with these vulnerable groups, the general public has also faced reductions in public transportation service that have resulted in more limited options for accessing health care needs, jobs and services, and is currently being directed to avoid public transportation whenever possible.

Given these factors, along with the evolving economic crisis that is resulting in massive job losses and people becoming more cost-sensitive when deciding how to spend money, the \$2.50 congestion fee on Yellow Taxis is seen as a potential barrier for the mobility of CB8 residents and visitors while lives are upended during the Covid-19 outbreak, a temporary suspension was viewed as an action that should be taken.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; Community Board 8 Manhattan has expressed support for a permanent elimination of the \$2.50 congestion fee on Yellow Taxis south of 96th Street, and

WHEREAS; the Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in significant changes to travel behaviors and decision-making due to health and economic factors;

WHEREAS; at-risk populations have exhibited especially poor outcomes upon contracting Covid-19, and thus in certain instances are directed to avoid public transportation; and

WHEREAS; the Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in significant reductions to public transportation service for the general public, making access to jobs, services and health-care more challenging, especially during overnight hours when the subway system is closed for cleaning; and

WHEREAS; the \$2.50 congestion fee on yellow taxis during an economic crisis is especially burdensome to vulnerable low-income populations, including many seniors residing in Manhattan Community District 8; and

WHEREAS; the \$2.50 congestion fee on Yellow Taxis is antithetical at a time when congestion is not occurring and social distancing guidelines discourage the use of subways and buses; and

WHEREAS; safe and efficient mobility must be preserved for all residents and visitors of Community District 8 without additional cost barriers that are regressive in nature to persons with limited ability to absorb such costs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED; that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests the temporary suspension of the \$2.50 congestion fee on Yellow Taxis south of 96th Street in Manhattan

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; that the \$2.50 fee remain suspended until public health experts in New York State declare public transportation use to be safe for at-risk populations.

Yes (16+1): Birnbaum, Bores, Borrero, Camp, Dangoor, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Mason, Popper, Rudder, Schneider, Shimamura, Tamayo, Warren, Zimmerman, Wouk (public member)

No (1): Pope-Marshall

Abstain (1+1): Farber, Borock (public member)

Items 5 and 6: Old and New Business

There was no old or new business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Charles Warren & Craig Lader, Co-Chairs