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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Transportation Committee
Wednesday July 1, 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: Gayle Baron, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Alida Camp, Brian Correia, Rebecca Dangoor, Felice Farber, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Valerie Mason, Rita Popper, Elizabeth Rose, Barry Schneider, Tricia Shimamura, Cos Spagnoletti, Marco Tamayo, Charles Warren, Jack Zimmerman, Peter Borock (public member) Jordan Wouk (public member)

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 3: Cherokee Place Parking Regulations

Item 5: Open Street Request: 82nd Street between York Ave. and 1st Ave. (Saturdays)

Item 6: NYC Better Bus Action Plan

Item 8: Queensboro Bridge Outer Roadway Bike Lane – Letter of Support

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM.

Item 1: NYCDOT's Open Restaurant Program - Continuing Discussion and Initial Feedback (Joint Item with Small Business and Street Life Committees)

As part of Phase 2 of New York City's Covid-19 reopening that began on June 22nd, New York City rolled out "Open Restaurants", allowing restaurants to utilize sidewalk and curb space in front of their facilities for outdoor dining. The program, which is run by NYCDOT, specifies siting and design requirements that aim to ensure the safety of diners and maintain pedestrian flow on sidewalks; it also requires bike lanes, bus stops/lanes and fire hydrants remain clear. The program requires restaurants to apply through NYCDOT, and then to self-certify that they meet the requirements of the program.

During June, prior to when details of the NYCDOT Open Restaurants Program were announced, CB8M passed a resolution expressing support for restaurants to obtain rapid approvals and access to expanded curb space and street space. With the program having been in effect for just over a week at the time of the meeting, participants provided initial feedback on the program. Many of the comments dealt with the prevalence of groups of patrons ordering alcoholic beverages for take-out, and then congregating and drinking on the sidewalk or in front of restaurants. NYCDOT indicated that any complaints should be submitted to 311 so it gets the attention of agencies responsible for oversight of the specific issues being observed; they also indicated that they have been primarily focused on matters related to physical set-up

of outdoor dining as it relates to street safety, since that is what is under their jurisdiction. This issue about public alcohol consumption will be further addressed by CB8's Street Life committee.

There were also comments regarding the ability of restaurants on 1st and 2nd Avenues being more limited in their ability to set up tables due to the bike lane and bus lanes and potential alternative spaces that restaurants may be able to use. NYCDOT indicated that they are looking into various options to further expand outdoor dining, but doing so in an open space in a school yard is not an option, and it is inevitable that there will be some businesses that will not be able to be accommodated by the Open Restaurants due to licensing issues and other potential legal issues.

Item 2: Temporary Bike Lanes in Response to Increased Biking Resulting From Covid-19

Since the Covid-19 outbreak began in March, New York City DOT has been introducing temporary bike lanes across the 5 boroughs to accommodate the increased biking that has been taking place, which has partially been driven by people who are currently avoiding public transportation. The original intent of this item was to solicit interest in potential temporary bike lanes within Community District 8; in the days leading up to the meeting, NYCDOT announced that they would be installing temporary bike lanes on 61st and 62nd Streets between 2nd Avenue and 5th Avenue. The ensuing discussion focused entirely on these incoming bike lanes, and there was no substantive discussion regarding other potential corridors where temporary bike lanes may be desired. NYCDOT indicated there are no current discussions about other lanes within Community District 8, aside from continuing discussions about biking along the Central Park Transverses.

Kimberly Rancourt, NYCDOT Director of Special Projects, and Ted Wright, NYCDOT Director of Bikeway and Greenway Programs, provided preliminary details on the temporary bike lanes on 61st and 62nd Streets that are expected to be in place in late July. The purpose of the lanes will be to provide a safe connection to and from the Queensboro Bridge, where biking has increased over 20% with approximately 8,000 daily bike crossings between 8AM and 8PM. The bike lanes will be similar to others recently installed that have been set up, in which orange construction barrels provide separation between the bike lane and other uses of the roadway; signs indicating the presence of the bike lane will be placed on the barrels. Other details are currently being finalized, as there are varied roadway widths and curb regulations that will impact the final set-up of the lanes, such as which side of the street they will be situated. Parking may be impacted on some blocks.

There were questions raised by the public regarding whether the bike lane would be placed on the north or south sides of the street, and whether restaurants that have expanded their outdoor seating through the Open Restaurant program will be able to maintain their additional space; NYCDOT indicated they will make every effort to not impact seating for any restaurant that has already filed their Open Restaurant request, and that may result in the bike lane shifting sides on specific blocks.

NYCDOT indicated that these temporary lanes are intended to be a precursor to permanent bike lanes along 61st and 62nd Streets; they committed to returning to CB8 to present detailed plans and designs of any future permanent lanes prior to any capital construction projects being finalized and implemented.

Item 3: A Request to Change Parking Regulations on Cherokee Place from No Parking to No Standing

A constituent residing on East 78th Street between York Ave. and the FDR Drive has observed on multiple occasions fire trucks unable to turn from Cherokee Place onto 78th Street. There currently is alternate side parking on the west side of Cherokee Place, and no parking signage on the east side; when cars are illegally parked in the no parking lane near the 78th Street intersection, trucks do not have sufficient clearance to make the turning movement onto East 78th Street due to the narrow width of Cherokee Place (24' in width, compared to 30' for a typical side street). The constituent provided photographic evidence of vehicles frequently parked in the no parking zone, often displaying placards that

in many instances may be counterfeit, and requested parking regulations be more stringent and become “no standing” to prevent any vehicles from parking on the east side of the street.

In addition to various comments that parking placard abuse should be again discussed at a future meeting, there was general agreement that action was necessary to address the challenges for large vehicles turning on and off Cherokee Place, but there were concerns that a “no standing” regulation for the entirety of the street would adversely impact persons who legitimately used the no parking space, such as those with disabled person parking permits. Seeking to accommodate these concerns, the agreed upon approach was to create daylighting at the intersection by converting the equivalent of 2 parking spaces to No Standing at the 77th and 78th intersections.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; Cherokee Place is a narrow street connecting 77th Street and 78th Streets between York Avenue and the FDR Drive; and

WHEREAS; Cherokee Place exhibits “no parking” signage on its east side, as the street is too narrow to allow parking on both sides of the street; and

WHEREAS; Vehicles have frequently been observed parking in the “no parking” zone of Cherokee Place, resulting in the roadway lacking sufficient width for larger vehicles to easily traverse the street; and

WHEREAS; Emergency vehicles have been observed being unable to make turning movements from Cherokee Place onto East 78th Street when cars are parked in the no parking zone;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED; that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests New York City Department of Transportation change the existing “no parking” regulations of Cherokee Place to provide 2 car lengths of “no standing” at East 78th Street and two additional car lengths of “no standing” at East 77th Street.

Yes (16+1): Baron, Birnbaum, Bores, Camp, Correia, Dangoor, Farber, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Popper, Schneider, Spagnoletti, Shimamura, Warren, Zimmerman, Wouk (Public Member)

No (3+1): Mason, Rose, Tamayo, Borock (Public Member)

Abstain (0): None

Item 4: Play Street Request - 76th Street between York Ave. and the FDR Drive (requested by The Town School and Lycee Francais de New York)

The Town School and Lycee Francais de New York, both located on East 76th Street between York Ave. and the FDR Drive, submitted a joint application to participate in NYCDOT’s Play Street program that would result in street closures between 9:00AM and 2:45PM on school days while Covid-19 social distancing guidelines are necessary. As each school is reconfiguring indoor spaces such as gymnasiums and cafeterias into classrooms for social distancing purposes, students will be left with insufficient space to be able to safely get developmentally appropriate physical activity and social time together. Each school emphasized that the play street would only be utilized if and when school is in session.

In accordance with NYCDOT Play Street policies, the proposed East 76th Street play street would be staffed at all times by a school crossing guard, and allow the passage of emergency vehicles. Barricades would be put in place by the schools each morning and removed at the conclusion of the school day. The proposal specified that the play street would begin east of the entrance to the garage on the north side of the street located in the base of the Promenade residential tower and extend to the cul-de-sac adjacent to

the FDR Drive. To minimize the inconvenience to residents along the block, they have committed to keeping clear of the service entrance and parking garage of the Pavilion residential tower, and maintaining access to the front entrance to the John Jay House (520 East 76th Street). They are requesting that residents of the Promenade Condominium (530 East 76th Street) use their 75th Street entrance during Play Street hours, but committed to opening 76th Street to allow any residents who are young children or medically compromised to use the main building entrance. The schools would bear all responsibility and costs related to the cleaning and maintenance of the Play Street. Parking would not be affected; vehicles needing to exit a parking space would be able to do so, even during Play Street hours.

In response to comments raised by residents of the block, the school representatives were amenable to reducing the extent of the Play Street begin east of the John Jay House rather than in front of the building.

Many residents of East 76th Street expressed opposition to the application. Concerns largely centered on the impacts of limiting access and the inconvenience and confusion it would cause, especially for residents with limited mobility; residents of the Promenade were especially concerned whether first responders would be able to quickly clear the play street of children to provide services when every second of delay is critical, and the narrowness of their 75th Street entrance. Questions were also raised as to why John Jay Park was not an acceptable alternative, and the appropriateness of private schools using public space for their benefit at the expense of the general public.

A motion to support the application was defeated; the vote tally was as follows:

Yes (7+1): Bores, Farber, Freeland, Lader, Schneider, Warren, Zimmerman, Wouk (Public Member)

No (11+1): Baron, Birnbaum, Camp, Correia, Dangoor, Lamorte, Mason, Popper, Rose, Shimamura, Tamayo, Borock (Public Member)

Abstain (0): None

Item 5: New Open Street Requests

At the June 2020 CB8 Transportation Committee meeting, a member requested that if there were going to be additional Open Streets implemented on the Upper East Side, it should be chosen from the following list of streets and that a maximum of one street be selected:

74th Street between 1st Avenue and 5th Avenue
78th Street between York Avenue and 5th Avenue
80th Street between York Avenue and 5th Avenue
87th Street between East End Avenue and 5th Avenue
88th Street between Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue
89th Street between 1st Avenue and Lexington Avenue
90th Street between East End Avenue and 5th Avenue
91st Street between York Avenue and 5th Avenue
93rd Street between 1st Avenue and 5th Avenue

The member who provided this list indicated their belief that Community Board members should share the inconveniences of open streets that some people may believe exist, and thus chose the above streets from those where Community Board members reside. Discussion of these streets was limited, as not all of the streets listed would be eligible for the Open Streets program, and it was lacking geographic diversity. As a result, no action was taken on these streets.

Separately, the Board office received requests for 82nd Street between York Avenue and 1st Avenue to be an open street on Saturdays during the hours of operation of the Greenmarket. This was viewed favorably by the Committee, as the perception is that additional space would be beneficial to promoting social distancing while pedestrian activity is especially high on this block. In addition, there was discussion of

extending this proposed open street east to East End Avenue and along East End Avenue between 82nd and 83rd Street, which would provide a continuous linkage to the existing Open Street along East End Avenue between 83rd and 89th Streets. Due to concerns that limited vehicular access on 82nd Street would result in increased traffic on 80th Street using it as the route to access the southbound FDR Drive, this extended open streets proposal was not further discussed.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; New York City has established an Open Streets program which aims to provide expanded space for people to safely be outside for walking and other physical activity by prohibiting vehicular use during certain times of the day; and

WHEREAS; the 82nd Street St. Stephen's Greenmarket operates on Saturdays from 9:00AM to 2:30PM; and

WHEREAS; the popularity of the Greenmarket results in crowded conditions that make social distancing challenging at times; and

WHEREAS; Community Board 8 has received requests for 82nd Street to become an Open Street during the hours of the Greenmarket

WHEREAS; East End Avenue between 83rd and 89th Streets has been functioning well as an open street since May 2020; and Community Board 8 has supported expansion of the Open Street Program;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED; that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests the inclusion of 82nd Street between York Avenue and 1st Avenue in the New York City Department of Transportation Open Streets Program on Saturdays during the hours of operation of the Greenmarket.

Yes (16+1): Baron, Birnbaum, Bores, Camp, Correia, Dangoor, Farber, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Popper, Schneider, Spagnoletti, Shimamura, Warren, Zimmerman, Wouk (Public Member)

No (3+1): Mason, Rose, Tamayo, Borock (Public Member)

Abstain (0): None

Item 6: NYC Better Bus Action Plan - Discussion of Proposed Budget Cuts

In 2019, New York City announced its "Better Bus Action Plan", which included projects and strategies that aimed to improve bus service across New York City. The Plan highlighted a series of approaches, including dedicated bus lanes, signal prioritization, bus stop safety and accessibility improvements, and traffic flow improvement strategies, including upgrading 96th Street to a select bus service corridor.

With the reduced tax revenues being obtained by New York City as a result of Covid-19, it was announced that funding for the Better Bus Action Plan would be cut significantly. In response, a group of city and state elected officials, including Borough President Gale Brewer, Council Members Ben Kallos and Keith Powers, and State Assembly Member Dan Quart, wrote Mayor De Blasio a letter urging New York City against these budget cuts amounting to \$8.4 million across FY 2020 and 2021.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; the Better Bus Action Plan was announced by New York City Department of Transportation in 2019, which included a series of projects and strategies to improve bus service that included upgrades to the 96th Street bus corridor;

WHEREAS; as average bus speeds have become slower in New York City in recent years, bus ridership has been on a steady decline; and

WHEREAS; New York City has announced significant budget cuts to the Better Bus Action Plan that would halt critical projects that would improve bus service; and

WHEREAS; A letter urging the reversal of these budget cuts has been sent by a large group of elected officials to Mayor De Blasio;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED; that Community Board 8 Manhattan supports the elected officials letter dated June 10, 2020 that urges New York City to fully fund the Better Bus Action Plan and to continue investing in the New York City Bus network

Yes (13+2): Bores, Correia, Dangoor, Farber, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Popper, Schneider, Spagnoletti, Shimamura, Warren, Zimmerman, Borock (Public Member), Wouk (Public Member)

No (1): Birnbaum

Abstain (1): Mason

Item 7: NYCDOT Updates

There were no additional NYCDOT updates beyond those regarding other agenda items.

Item 8: New Business

A board member received a request from the organization Transportation Alternatives to sign on to a letter in support of DOT prioritizing the conversion of the south outer roadway of the Queensboro Bridge to exclusive Bike or Pedestrian use, which CB8 has supported implementing on a temporary short-term basis due to Covid-19 and studying as a potential long-term approach. The letter has been signed by various elected officials and Community Boards. CB8's Chair indicated a preference that a separate letter be sent from CB8 rather than signing onto the letter, which was supported by members by the following vote:

Yes (14+1): Bores, Camp, Correia, Dangoor, Farber, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Popper, Schneider, Spagnoletti, Shimamura, Warren, Zimmerman, Borock (Public Member)

No (1): Birnbaum

Item 9: Old Business

Following up on the June 2020 discussion regarding the same issue, a member revisited the matter of the deteriorated condition of 91st Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues (James Cagney Place). One of the Committee Chairs spoke with NYCDOT officials, who claimed it is not under their jurisdiction to fix the issue, and thus suggested working with elected officials to obtain the funding needed to make the repairs, as no city agency is currently taking responsibility for doing so. It was decided that CB8 would try to work with New York City Government stakeholders to formulate a solution; if that strategy is unsuccessful, CB8 would work with elected officials to write a joint letter that declares that New York City is responsible for finding the money for the repairs.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 11:02 PM.

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