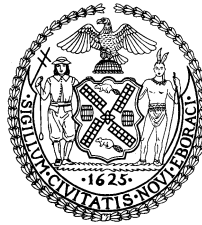


Alida Camp
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District Manager



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The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8
Transportation Committee
Wednesday December 2, 2020, 6:30 PM
Conducted Remotely on Zoom

Minutes

Present: Lowell Barton, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Alida Camp, Rebecca Dangoor, Felice Farber, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Valerie Mason, Rita Popper, Barry Schneider, Tricia Shimamura, Cos Spagnoletti, Lynne Strong-Shinozaki, Marco Tamayo, Charles Warren, Jack Zimmerman, Peter Borock (public member), Jordan Wouk (public member)

Absent (Excused): None

Resolution for Approval: Item 2 (unanimous)

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

Item 1: New York City Transit Presentation – 68th Street Subway Station – ADA Access Project

Marcus Book, New York City Transit Assistant Director - Government and Community Relations, along with Rich Wetherbee of STV, Inc., Nandina Sengupta of Urbahn & Dewberry and Jeremy Parnes, New York City Transit Director – Station Planning, presented an update on the planning process for the 68th Street Subway Station ADA Access Project. The project was approved by the Federal Transit Administration in July 2016 following the completion of the environmental review process with a Finding of No Significant Impact determination. The project is fully-funded as part of the MTA Capital Plan.

The project has previously been presented to Community Board 8 Manhattan in 2012 and 2016, and has undergone significant modifications, including elimination of a proposed subway entrance on the southeast corner of Lexington Ave./69th St that generated significant community opposition, and changes to the proposed elevator locations due to significant engineering challenges at the Hunter College East building on the southeast corner of Lexington Ave./68th Street. MTA is currently reevaluating the environmental impacts of the project to incorporate changes since 2016, and is preparing to submit the reevaluation to the FTA for review with a proposed finding of no new or more significant impacts than those identified in 2016.

The current proposal features the following components:

- On 68th Street by the northeast corner of Lexington Ave., an ADA compliant elevator will connect the street level and the station mezzanine. The existing stairwell will be reconfigured and widened, and shifted slightly closer to 68th Street. The sidewalk will be expanded by creating a bump-out on 68th Street, replacing the current 3 or 4 police vehicle parking spaces.
- Previously proposed changes at the southeast corner of Lexington Ave./68th Street are no longer planned, as structural concerns resulted in the relocation of the elevator to the north side of the intersection. There are continuing discussions between the MTA and Hunter College regarding potential widening of this stairwell and continued efforts to overcome any engineering barriers that now exist.

- A new stairwell serving the southbound platform on 69th Street at the northwest corner of Lexington Ave, and a small sidewalk bump-out on 69th street to facilitate pedestrian activity. This is unchanged from the 2016 plan.
- A new stairwell serving the northbound platform located midblock on Lexington Ave. between 68th and 69th Streets in a previous commercial space in the Imperial House building. This is unchanged from the 2016 plan.
- A reconstructed stairwell on 68th Street at the northwest corner of Lexington Ave.
- There will be two ADA compliant elevators between the station mezzanine and platform levels, one serving northbound trains and one serving southbound trains. The existing staircases inside the station between the mezzanine and platforms will be rehabilitated. The stairwells connecting to street level that are being improved will also require work on the mezzanine level.

The next steps of the process are for the design work for the street-level elevator to be completed before approvals are obtained from various local and federal agencies. This will be conducted as a design-build project, with a 36 month construction schedule. It is anticipated that the construction contract will be awarded in June 2021. The more intensive street-level work is projected to begin in October 2021 and end in July 2023. Station-level work is expected to last until about June 2024. The construction is not expected to result in any long-term closures to the station, though there may be sporadic evening/weekend closures to facilitate construction activities.

The presentation was well-received by the Committee, though a few areas of concern were raised. The main concern regarded the elimination of the widening of the stairwell at the southeast corner of 68th Street/Lexington Ave., and the prospects that the MTA and Hunter College could come to a resolution that would enable that stairwell to be upgraded. Some meeting participants were concerned about safety in regard to the reconfigured stairwell at the northeast corner of 68th Street/Lexington Ave. and the proximity to a nearby garage entrance within 10 feet of where passengers will exit from the stairwell. There were also a few comments related to the sidewalk bump-out on 6th Street, and how it may impact bus operations, the location of the bus stop and traffic on 68th Street with its reduced width.

Item 2: Roosevelt Island Bridge - Bike Safety Issues*

* Joint Item with Roosevelt Island Committee

Several residents of Roosevelt Island brought to the attention of the Transportation Committee the issue of slippery cycling conditions on the Roosevelt Island Bridge. The bridge deck features flexible bollards that separate general traffic lanes from the lane used by cyclists, and has an open metal surface that is slippery when wet and even during dry weather conditions.

The bridge, which is maintained by NYCDOT, is a vertical lift bridge which must be raised at times to allow marine traffic to pass through. When the slippery conditions were first brought to the attention of NYCDOT, they were unable to immediately address the issue as they had to prioritize improvements to the lift to ensure it was operating properly and reliably. With those improvements now complete, residents and cyclists are requesting action by NYCDOT to address the slippery and bumpy conditions of the metal surface. Discussions are also being held with the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) to address other bike-related infrastructure needs, including a separate bike ramp connecting the bridge deck with the Roosevelt Island street level, a bike path on the east side of Roosevelt Island, and a fully connected bikeway throughout the entire island that fills in gaps where steam tunnels on the west side of the island don't currently allow for a bike lane to be constructed. NYCDOT Senior Borough Planner and CB8 Liaison indicated she would bring this matter to the attention of the Borough Commissioner. The office of Council Member Ben Kallos is also working on this issue and looking into bike-friendly materials that could be utilized.

WHEREAS, The Roosevelt Island Bridge is a movable lift bridge maintained by New York City Department of Transportation with a metal grating surface, and

WHEREAS, The Roosevelt Island Bridge has plastic bollards separating general traffic from cyclists to enhance safety, and

WHEREAS, despite efforts to protect cyclists, the metal grating surface is very bumpy and slippery, both during wet and dry conditions; and

WHEREAS, there are extensive bike networks on Roosevelt Island and on the other side of the Bridge in Queens that promote safe cycling; and

WHEREAS, the Roosevelt Island Bridge provides the only roadway access to and from Roosevelt Island for bikes; and

WHEREAS, some cyclists choose to walk their bikes over the Roosevelt Island Bridge to avoid biking on the slippery and bumpy surfaces; and

WHEREAS, New York City Department of Transportation has recently prioritized and completed other critical improvements to the Roosevelt Island Bridge to ensure that the lift function operates properly and reliably; and

WHEREAS, there are bike-friendly surfaces that have been installed on similar vertical lift bridges; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests that the New York City Department of Transportation address the bike safety issues of the Roosevelt Island Bridge by installing appropriate bike-friendly materials that can be used to improve or replace the existing metal-grating surface that is unsafe for cyclists.

Yes (18+2): Barton, Birnbaum, Bores, Camp, Dangoor, Farber, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Mason, Popper, Schneider, Shimamura, Spagnoletti, Strong-Shinozaki, Tamayo, Warren, Zimmerman, Borock (public member), Wouk (public member)

No (0): None

Item 3: A Request to temporarily co-name Second Avenue between 81st and 82nd Streets “Dairy Row”

A neighborhood resident interested in attracting customers to businesses on the Upper East Side brought to the attention of the Transportation Committee a suggestion to brand 2nd Avenue in the low 80s as “Dairy Row”, as the block between 81st and 82nd Streets features six businesses that specialize in or prominently feature frozen desserts. Any changes to signage, either temporary or permanent, would typically be considered by Community Boards, but also must be formally requested and recommended by the local City Council Member, even if temporary. Although CB8 has traditionally not taken up such requests, the unique nature of the pandemic and the struggles that restaurants are having due to indoor dining restrictions in addition to the temporary nature of the action were viewed as reasons to make an exception and discuss the proposal.

While committee was very sympathetic to the businesses on this stretch of 2nd Avenue, and there was support among some members for the suggested co-naming, it was outweighed by significant opposition to formal action from some members, especially due to concerns that spotlighting a small subset of businesses in an official capacity would unfairly exclude other businesses in a broader geographic area for no reason other than where a business is located. Some members had various suggestions for marketing businesses in a manner that did not involve changes to street names, including using lighting to project “dairy row” on the sidewalk, developing a unique selling propositions for Community District 8, and a “CB8 Zooms” public affairs program highlighting all dairy stores on the Upper East Side.

Item 4: Updates from the New York City Department of Transportation

Colleen Chattergoon, NYCDOT Senior Planner and Liaison to CB8, provided the following updates:

- There have been no complaints received from within Community District 8 since the open storefronts program was initiated
- In response to a past question and suggestion regarding the type of paint used for crosswalk markings following resurfacings, NYCDOT does not use high-contrast markings that are used by other agencies.
- Defective city benches along 72nd Street will be removed.

Item 5: Old Business

- There were no new updates from NYCDOT on the broken pavers on East 91st Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues (James Cagney Place). A member advised that upcoming community events scheduled to take place on James Cagney Place will not be taking place due to insurance being cancelled because of the ongoing unsafe conditions resulting from the broken pavers.
- In response to a question regarding the status of the March 2020 CB8 resolution regarding safe and direct routes for pedestrians, cyclists and others through Central Park, NYCDOT indicated that they are currently working on addressing the matter, and that they will present to Community Board 8 when a proposal is available.
- Residents and business interests of the lower 60s once again expressed their frustrations and issues with the new temporary bike lanes installed on East 61st and 62nd Streets. They described increased traffic congestion along the corridors and especially near the Queensboro Bridge, along with parking challenges, reduced access to buildings for passenger pick-ups and drop-offs, safety concerns and overall deterioration of quality of life. Although NYCDOT recognizes the existence of these issues, and is considering modifications to the bike lanes near the Queensboro Bridge as further planning occurs in anticipation for permanent crosstown bike lanes in the lower East 60s, Community Board 8's Transportation Committee plans revisiting this issue in more detail at its January 2021 meeting due to the immediate need to address this topic.
- Some CB8 members highlighted how the proliferation of recently constructed outdoor dining spaces have been constructed in ways that may violate the design guidelines spelled out in the NYCDOT open restaurants program. From a public health perspective, some spaces appear to be mostly enclosed without sufficient airflow, while others appear to violate capacity limits. From a physical standpoint, some spaces don't allow for sufficient width for pedestrian crossings or require pedestrians to walk under canopies. Ms. Chattergoon indicated that NYCDOT and other agencies are conducting regular inspections, and anyone concerned about specific restaurant spaces should report their concerns to the CB8 office or NYCDOT so inspections can be ordered; CB8 District Manager Will Brightbill noted that he has fielded complaints that have resulted in inspections that confirmed violations. It was noted that outdoor dining spaces must have two sides unenclosed, and that an outdoor space with 3 sides enclosed are treated as "indoor spaces" that must adhere to indoor dining capacity restraints.

Item 6: New Business

A constituent raised the idea of a longer-term continuation of the current open street configuration of East End Avenue, and indicated he is working with the Carl Schurz Conservancy to determine a potential approach that could incorporate traffic calming measures.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:28PM.

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