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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Transportation Committee
Wednesday, October 12, 2022 6:30 PM
Conducted Remotely on Zoom

Minutes

Present: Mohit Aggerwal, Lori Bores, Michele Birnbaum, Rebecca Dangoor, Billy Freeland, Sahar Husain, Paul Krikler, Craig Lader, Valerie Mason, John McClement, John Phillips, Barbara Rudder, Judy Schneider, Cos Spagnoletti, Russell Squire, Stephanie Reckler (public member)

Absent (Excused): Rebecca Lamorte, Rita Popper, Charles Warren, Peter Borock (public member)

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 1: 3rd Avenue Complete Street Redesign – Bus, Bike and Pedestrian Improvements

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

Item 1: NYCDOT Presentation - Proposed 3rd Avenue Complete Street design with bike, bus, and pedestrian improvements, from East 59th Street to East 96th Street

Nick Carey, Lead Engineer for New York City Department of Transportation's Bike Unit, presented a proposal for a complete street design for 3rd Avenue from East 59th Street to East 96th Street featuring bike, bus and pedestrian improvements. He was joined by Kimberly Rancourt, NYCDOT's Manhattan Borough Director of Special Projects. Mr. Carey explained that there has been significant interest across the entirety of the 3rd Avenue corridor to install bus, bike and pedestrian upgrades, as it was identified in the 2021 NYC Streets Plan as a pedestrian and cycling priority roadway and is also a Vision Zero priority corridor; it also follows the September 2022 CB8M resolution passed in support of NYCDOT installing protected bike lanes.

Unlike most Manhattan avenues, 3rd Avenue is 70' wide, and currently has 5 moving lanes of traffic within Community District 8 along with parking lanes on each curbside, providing excess capacity that contributes to speeding and higher levels of crashes, and no dedicated space for cyclists or buses. The width makes crossing the street a challenge for those who walk slower or have mobility challenges, and contributes to a dangerous pedestrian environment that resulted in 7 fatalities (6 pedestrian and 1 cyclist) and 37 severe injuries between 2016 and 2020; this is the motivating factor for the Community District 8 segment being proposed to be the first portion of 3rd Avenue across Manhattan to be improved. Double parking is also an ongoing challenge, though commercial parking regulations were recently changed in the spring of 2022 to try to improve conditions. 3rd Avenue is also a major bus corridor, with over 150 buses operating during the peak period and 50,000 riders across all of the routes that operate along it. Bus speeds are very slow, averaging just over 5 MPH. Currently, there are more than 1,700 cyclists using 3rd Avenue in the vicinity of 86th Street daily, riding in general traffic lanes with no bike lane currently in place.

The proposal calls for the current left-most general traffic lane to be converted into an 8' wide parking protected bike lane, with the right-most moving lane to be converted into a bus lane. These actions would provide safer dedicated space for cyclists, improve bus speeds and operations, and help calm traffic to improve safety for all users. NYCDOT performed a detailed traffic analysis that confirmed that 3 travel lanes can accommodate current peak period vehicle volumes, and shouldn't result in increased congestion. Painted pedestrian islands serving as a buffer between the floating parking lane and bike lane will reduce the crossing length by 20' at over 60

crosswalks along the corridor. At most intersections with lower traffic volumes where left turns can be made from 3rd Avenue, offset crossings will be installed, which serve to improve the visibility of pedestrians and cyclists for turning vehicles; the pedestrian islands used to create offset crossings will result in the loss of 1 to 2 parking spaces at each of those intersections. At busier intersections, such as at the major crosstown streets with 2-way traffic, there will be dedicated left turn lanes with dedicated left turn signal phases (known as a split phase signal), in which cyclists and pedestrians will have a green signal at which time turning motor vehicles will have a red signal. To accommodate these split phase signals and the turn lanes, it would require the removal of 4 to 5 parking spaces per intersection. The specific streets in which split phases will be installed are still being finalized. In a few yet-to-be determined locations with high traffic volumes, possibly at 96th Street, right turn lanes will be installed; these treatments would result in about 6 parking spaces being removed at each intersection.

Mr. Carey showed data highlighting how the presence of protected bike lanes serves to calm traffic and provides significant safety benefits to all road users. Crashes with injuries on NYC roadways with protected crossings fell by 15%, as did motor vehicle occupant injuries; pedestrian injuries fell by 21%. The safety benefits for seniors was even more pronounced; NYCDOT recently issued a report titled Pedestrian Safety and Older New Yorkers, which included findings showing that there was a 39% decrease in the number of seniors killed or sustaining serious injuries when a roadway had a protected bike lane, and a 22% decrease in overall injuries; non-seniors also saw a 24% decrease of persons killed or severely injured, and a 9% overall decrease in injuries. Cyclists saw a 34% reduction in crash risk, with some streets achieving a 60% decrease. Protected bike lanes also have resulted in an increase in bike volumes by 50%.

The project is expected to be implemented in 2023; NYCDOT hopes to continue to work with stakeholders on related efforts along 3rd Avenue both north of 96th Street and south of 59th Street as they look to improve the entirety of the roadway in Manhattan.

Following a statement made on behalf of Council Member Keith Powers expressing strong support for the proposal, there were about 40 speakers from the public who expressed near-universal support for the installation of a protected bike lane, bus lane and pedestrian improvement, and spoke of the urgency to get these features installed as quickly as possible. There was a sizable portion of speakers who expressed their disappointment that the plan presented wasn't more ambitious in providing more of a greenway proposal that further prioritized pedestrian space and passive space with benches or trees. Others wished that the plan had included a bi-directional bike lane, which NYCDOT said would not be impossible but wasn't ideal for 3rd Avenue for numerous reasons. Some speakers wished to see better protected pedestrian islands and offset crossings rather than merely painted islands with perhaps plastic bollards. NYCDOT indicated that the proposal's design provides future opportunities to consider some of these ideas in the longer-term future if the near-term changes result in the improvements that they aim to achieve. Multiple speakers also spoke of the need for enforcement of the bus lane.

There were multiple speakers who noted that there are serious issues with double parking and commercial truck warehousing activities, and expressed concern that the issue would be more pronounced after 2 moving lanes are removed. NYCDOT noted that the recent changes to commercial parking regulations on 3rd Avenue were intended to address these concerns, and that they will be assessing their impacts and be able to further modify them if necessary once the road changes are performed; it may also be the case that drivers are more likely to double park on wider streets because they think that their actions won't impact safety or traffic flow.

CB8 Board Members also were mostly supportive of the proposal, especially the expected safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and the specter of faster and more reliable bus service. Many of the same comments made by the public were emulated by Board members, including some who hope this is only the first step in transforming 3rd Avenue, and others expressing their concerns regarding ongoing double parking and illegal truck unloading. A few speakers expressed skepticism that the plan would not result in more congestion, or would generate the safety improvements for pedestrians that the plan anticipates will occur without more protection than just painted areas at certain intersections such as at 72nd Street, and that the success of protected bike lanes is dependent on users obeying laws and practicing safe cycling. One speaker was frustrated that that NYCDOT didn't have more specific data to back up the claims being made regarding anticipated improvements to safety or bus speeds. One speaker suggested that signal priority be provided to buses to also help speed buses, and asked about the past practice of a middle lane dedicated to buses and emergency vehicles. There were requests for more

outreach to residents and businesses along the corridor, especially small businesses that may rely more on people parking, and that the project account for other construction projects taking place along 3rd Avenue. A few speakers also were unsure whether the intent was to slow traffic by adding congestion, though NYCDOT explained that it is roadway geometry that achieves this and that the intent is not to create traffic.

The following resolution was then put forward by Community Board 8:

WHEREAS; Third Avenue traverses Community District 8 between 59th and 96th Streets; and

WHEREAS; Third Avenue is 70' wide, accommodating 5 moving lanes of general traffic and 2 parking lanes; and

WHEREAS; there is excess capacity on Third Avenue that promotes vehicular speeding; and

WHEREAS; Third Avenue has a very high incidence rate of pedestrians killed and injured ;

WHEREAS; Third Avenue doesn't feature a bike lane, yet still is a busy bike corridor that is unsafe for cyclists; and

WHEREAS; Third Avenue is a heavily utilized bus corridor, with over 150 buses operating during each peak period; and

WHEREAS; Bus speeds on Third Avenue bus routes are among the slowest in Manhattan; and

WHEREAS; Third Avenue's design is a relic of now outdated best practices and in need of a redesign that prioritizes safety for all users; and

WHEREAS; Community Board 8 has called for an expanded network of protected bike lanes following a series of recent cyclist fatalities; and

WHEREAS; NYCDOT has committed to transforming Manhattan's entire Third Avenue Corridor to prioritize safety of pedestrians and cyclists; and

WHEREAS; the poor safety record of Third Avenue in Community District 8 has resulted in NYCDOT proposing its segment to be the first to be improved; and

WHEREAS; NYCDOT data indicates that there are far fewer severe injuries to pedestrians when protected bike lanes are present, with seniors seeing the largest amount of benefits;

WHEREAS; NYCDOT's proposal for a complete street design would include a protected bike lane; and

WHEREAS; the proposed Third Avenue redesign would create a dedicated bus lane that would provide faster and more reliable service throughout Community District 8; and

WHEREAS; the presence of sidewalk islands and the reduction of general traffic lanes would significantly shorten the crossing length for pedestrians; and

WHEREAS; NYCDOT traffic analysis indicates that there will still be sufficient vehicular capacity even after 2 lanes of traffic are converted to bus and bike lanes; and

WHEREAS; Community Board 8 considers the safety of users of its transportation network to be paramount;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 Manhattan supports the plan presented by NYCDOT to implement a Third Avenue complete street design with bus, bike and pedestrian improvements between East 59th and East 96th Streets.

Yes (13+1): Aggerwal, Bores, Dangoor, Freeland, Husain, Krikler, Lader, McClement, Phillips, Rudder, Schneider, Spagnoletti, Squire, Reckler (public member)

No (1): Birnbaum

Abstain (1): Mason

Item 2: Follow-Up Discussion regarding Allen Stevenson School's use of East 78th Street between Lexington and Park Avenues under NYCDOT's Open Streets Program

In September 2022, the full board of CB8 unanimously passed a Transportation Committee resolution requesting that NYCDOT look into concerns raised by the residents and businesses on 78th Street between Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue in regards to the Allen Stevenson School's participation in NYCDOT's Open Street program, and that NYCDOT work with the residents and the Allen Stevenson School to make changes to the manner in which it is currently operating. This was in response to many constituents, including residents, doctors with offices on the block, patients, and others who described how the open street was having a significant impact on access, mobility and quality of life, and various ways in which Allen Stevenson School was not complying with the policies of NYCDOT's Open Streets Program.

Duncan Lyon (Head of Allen Stevenson School) and Chris Acerbo (Allen Stevenson School Security Director) addressed the Committee and constituents to respond to the concerns raised. They emphasized that they want to be good neighbors, acknowledging that they have been engaging in discussions with their neighbors to try to respond to their concerns. They spoke of the importance of their open street for programmatic purposes and to support AM drop offs and PM pickups of students, but also expressed willingness to be flexible and work with residents and stakeholders to ensure that those who needed to gain access to homes and businesses would be able to do so, and place signage on the street to make clear that access should not be denied to persons visiting doctors' offices. They are open to discussing further changes, including the possibility of limiting their open street activities to the space directly in front of their building.

Neighbors of the Allen Stevenson School also spoke at the meeting, and continued to express their frustration with the situation and their request to have the open street revoked; while they appreciated the outreach and responsiveness of Allen Stevenson School, they felt the actions were too little too late and still resulted in significant inconveniences and potential safety threats, including cyclists trying to get through and pedestrians that must negotiate their way around kids playing and balls being thrown.

NYCDOT indicated that they have no recollection of an open street being revoked in the midst of a school year. In response to a question by a CB8 member, school officials acknowledged that they were expecting to gain approval to begin utilizing a new rooftop play area, but also separated the manner in which it would be used from their reasons why they want to continue utilizing the open street that was provided for the school year.

A proposed resolution to request that NYCDOT revoke the Open Street permit granted to the Allen Stevenson School once the rooftop play area was completed and authorized for use was tabled by the Committee, as members wished to provide representatives from Allen Stevenson School, its neighbors, and NYCDOT an opportunity to further engage in discussion to try to find common ground to address the issues that the community has raised regarding the open street.

The vote on the motion to table was as follows:

Yes (7+1): Aggerwal, Husain, Lader, Mason, Phillips, Schneider, Spagnoletti, Squire

No (4): Birnbaum, Bores, Dangoor, Reckler

This matter will be the first item of business at the November 2022 Transportation Committee meeting. Residents of the block who have had issues accessing the street were encouraged to contact the CB8 office.

Item 3: Discussion Regarding How to Address Parking Placard Abuse

This item was deferred until November due to the length of the meeting.

Item 4: Proposed changes to parking regulations at the cul-de-sacs East of East End Avenue from No Parking to No Standing

This item was deferred until November due to the length of the meeting.

Item 5: NYCDOT Updates

There were no additional updates provided by NYCDOT.

Item 6: Old and New Business

There was no old or new business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55PM.

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