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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Transportation Committee
Wednesday, April 12, 2023 6:30 PM
Conducted Remotely on Zoom

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee co-chairs 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.

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 2: 18 East 73rd Street Revocable Consent

Minutes

Present: Mohit Agrawal, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Lorraine Brown, Rebecca Dangoor, Billy Freeland, Sahar Husain, Paul Krikler, Craig Lader, Valerie Mason, John McClement, Rita Popper, Judy Schneider, Cos Spagnoletti, Charles Warren, Peter Borock (public member), Stephanie Reckler (public member), Barry Schneider (Parks & Waterfront Committee Public Member)

Absent (Excused): Rebecca Lamorte, Sharon Pope-Marshall

Item 1: Presentation by Central Park Conservancy on the Central Park Drives Study. The Central Park Conservancy, in partnership with the NYC Department of Transportation and NYC Parks, announced a multi-year, community-informed study of the Park's Drives to increase safety and mobility in Central Park (Joint item with Parks & Waterfront Committee)

David Stolenstall, Vice President of Government Relations, Policy & Community Affairs for the Central Park Conservancy, joined by Sarah Pearson from NYC Parks and Colleen Chattergoon from NYDDOT, presented an overview of the Central Park Drives Study being sponsored by the Central Park Conservancy and performed by the consulting firm Sam Schwartz. The study is focusing on safety and mobility on the Central Park Drive six-mile loop, along with other roads and pathways encompassing Central Park. The three goals of the Study are: 1) to improve safety through intelligent design interventions, outreach & education, improved signage and other strategies; 2) to improve mobility & accessibility in, around and across the Park through potential changes on transverse roads, perimeter roads, and in-park pathways, and 3) to maintain the character of the Park.

Mr. Stolenstall provided a brief history of the Central Park roadways, which were originally designed before cars were invented. While cars and bikes have shared the roadways since roads were paved in 1912, cars were officially banned in 2018, but roadway striping and signals that were car-oriented remain. Further complicating issues regarding safety are the relatively recent introduction of e-bikes and e-scooters into the mix, along with heavy use of park roads by pedestrians, and other passive users amounting to 42 million annual visitors to Central Park.

The road is lengthy and winding, and has 69 at-grade pedestrian crossings serving 15 park entrances that feed into the Drive. The challenges of the Drive are many – crossing on foot is difficult, lanes don't serve to segregate uses, signals are widely ignored, crosstown biking is difficult with only one authorized footpath north of the Reservoir allowing bikes, enforcement is limited, pedicabs/horse carriages are prolific, and emergency/authorized vehicles still use the roads. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact on the use of the road, as there are

more people during more times of the day, along with more commuting through the Park being performed using more methods of urban mobility.

The Study team has been collecting various datasets regarding usage and safety. Mr. Stolenshall displayed maps depicting incidents by location which indicated fewer serious incidents in the southern half of the park, which was attributed to larger crowds contributing to slower speeds of users. The exception was at 72nd Street on the East Side of the Park, which contained the most dangerous intersection in the park in part due to poor roadway geometry. There was also a higher concentration of more serious incidents in the northern half of the park due to more hills and smaller crowds that didn't serve to calm traffic. It was also acknowledged that roadway lighting has not done its job in preventing incidents.

As the study progresses, the team will be keeping all options on the table to address the goals and issues identified, including improving signage, roadway and crosswalk striping, surface materials and treatments, cross-park mobility, lighting, signalization, and implementing traffic calming measures. They are also looking at enforcement, education and other policies.

The study will include extensive community outreach, including with all stakeholder Community Boards and an online survey that has already generated over 8,000 responses and more than 1,500 feedback emails. The survey will be active until at least early June, and now includes a map where users can identify specific location-based concerns. There is expected to be an in-person open house in the Summer, and a draft report is expected in late 2022 or early 2023 along with a return visit to stakeholder Community Boards. The study is currently budgeted for \$250,000, but the final cost is to-be-determined. Following the Study's completion, implementation and funding of improvements will be the responsibility of Mayor Adams' administration.

Comments and feedback from meeting attendees focused on both safety and mobility issues, and ensuring that crossing the Park Drive can be performed more safely on-foot. There was discussion regarding the need to improve crosstown biking and opportunities to provide protection for bikes along transverses, which Mr. Stolenshall said is being considered in a manner that shouldn't interfere with bus operations; there was also mention of future studies of bike amenities along 5th Avenue that NYCDOT would be performing and the Central Park Conservancy's belief that a 5th Avenue bike lane would be useful as it relates to bike traffic inside the Park. There was much discussion about improved enforcement to deal with speeding bikes and ignorance of traffic signals, and how to manage different electric mobility modes such as e-bikes; it was suggested that members of the Central Park Police Precinct be included in future meetings on this topic. Some speakers were concerned that pro-bike advocacy groups would have a disproportionately loud voice in the process. There was also acknowledgement that Central Park isn't truly accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities, and that this study is focused on improving accessibility to internal locations and incorporating audible pedestrian signals. Unclear and insufficient signage was also highlighted.

Item 2: PUBLIC HEARING: Revocable consent application to construct, maintain and use proposed snowmelt system, and fenced-in area, including planters, irrigation conduits, trash enclosure and storage at 18 East 73rd Street

Valerie Campbell of Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP, along with Architect Paul Portell, presented on behalf of the owners of a townhouse at 18 East 73rd Street a revocable consent application to construct, maintain and use a proposed snowmelt system and fenced-in area, including planters, irrigation conduits, trash enclosure and storage. Updates to the façade of the building went through the landmarks process in 2013, and received a certificate of appropriateness.

The house is a single-family row house, and is a contributing building in Upper East Side Historic District. Most nearby buildings have areaways, which 18 East 73rd Street had until it was removed as part of a 2013 renovation; this application is seeking to reclaim that space and convert it back into a gated areaway similar to what had existed in the past. It would not encroach onto the sidewalk beyond that of nearby buildings. The gate would be designed in the same style as the existing window guards, and the trash enclosure would be designed to match the

railings. The metal gate is 3' high, and extends 4'9" from the property line into the sidewalk within the public right-of-way, and would result in 5'2" of minimum clearance adjacent to the existing sidewalk tree pit.

The electric radiant snow melt system will be embedded within the sidewalk, with irrigation tubes accessible from the cellar of the home; it would encompass an area of about 10' by 5'. All maintenance and operations would be performed from within the building, and there is no intention of having to tear up the sidewalk to perform maintenance.

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

WHEREAS; the owners of the townhouse at 18 East 73rd Street have applied for a revocable consent to construct, maintain and use a proposed snowmelt system, and fenced-in area, including planters, irrigation conduits, trash enclosure and storage;

WHEREAS; the building contained an enclosed areaway until 2013, and is proposed to be restored as part of this project; and

WHEREAS; the areaway will extend 4' 9" from the property line, and is proposed to provide a minimum of 5'2" of sidewalk clearance remaining at its narrowest point across from an existing tree pit; and

WHEREAS; the proposed snow melt system is an electric radiant system that will be embedded within the sidewalk with all maintenance and operations to be performed from within the building's cellar;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 approves the Revocable consent application to construct, maintain and use proposed snowmelt system, and fenced-in area, including planters, irrigation conduits, trash enclosure and storage at 18 East 73rd Street.

Yes (12+1): Agrawal, Bores, Brown, Dangoor, Husain, Krikler, Lader, Mason, McClement, Popper, Schneider, Spagnoletti, Borock (public member),

No (2): Birnbaum, Reckler (public member)

Abstain (0): None

Not Voting for Cause (1): Warren

Item 3: Public Discussion: Spring 2023 Open Streets (CB 8 Spring 2023 Applications)

- A. Hunter College Campus Schools (EAST 95th STREET from PARK AVENUE to MADISON AVENUE) 10:30AM to 1:00 PM M-F
- B. Saint David's School (EAST 89th STREET from 5th AVENUE to MADISON AVENUE) 10AM to 2PM M-F
- C. The Nightingale Bamford School (EAST 92nd STREET from 5th AVENUE to MADISON AVENUE) 9:00AM to 2:30PM M-F
- D. The Dalton School (EAST 91st STREET from PARK AVENUE to MADISON AVENUE) 10:30AM to 2:00PM M-F
- E. PS 6 (EAST 82nd STREET from MADISON AVENUE to PARK AVENUE) 8AM to 3PM M-F
- F. The Spence School (EAST 93rd STREET from PARK AVENUE to MADISON AVENUE) 8AM to 3PM M-F

Community Board 8's District Office received a series of six applications from local schools for Open Streets. The start date for the applications were in April 2023 for Hunter College Campus, Saint David's School and PS6, while the remaining applications would be effective at the beginning of the 2023/24 school year; all would remain

effective through June 28, 2024. Each open street application is for school days only during the week; hours varied among schools.

In response to these applications, there were no objections raised; one member had concerns about the length of the open street for schools where it was in effect for most or all of the school day, but it was indicated that there have been no complaints received about any open street except for the one associated with the Allen Stevenson School that the Committee had addressed across multiple meetings in the Fall of 2022. It was requested that NYCDOT provide an update on the Allen Stevenson School, as it was last reported that they were still awaiting approval to use their rooftop space for recess rather than the open street that was in use.

It was determined that no action was needed on this item following the discussion.

Item 4: Public Discussion: DOT Proposed Permanent Open Streets Program

The City of New York has announced proposed amendments to NYCDOT's Traffic Rules relating to its permanent Open Streets Program, and has scheduled a public hearing for April 26th. The Committee felt it should review the proposed rules and provide feedback. The proposed rules would amend the definition of an Open Street to add language defining a "shared street", and add a section that would codify the permanent program's specific requirements, processes and operational characteristics. It describes the application and evaluation processes, operation and management requirements, and rules of conduct.

The Committee had numerous concerns regarding the rules. The process would enable NYCDOT to provide approval before informing Community Boards of proposed open streets, which was viewed as problematic. Also troublesome is the extent to which NYCDOT is empowered to make decisions regarding Open Streets, as the rules include a broadened definition of who can apply in regards to community partners (i.e non-profits, block associations, merchant groups, civic associations), a low threshold needed for an organization to propose an open street without sufficient outreach to local stakeholders, the breadth of the permitted activities and hours of operations that would be allowed, and the barriers in place to rescind an open street designation. There were also concerns related to the specificity of the proposed rules of conduct. Some members expressed opposition to the Open Streets program due to the disruption that they cause for some users, while others expressed support for the program. There were also questions about how the Open Streets program would impact street fairs. Objections were also raised to the proposed allowance of sponsorship of Open Streets.

A member put forward a resolution to disapprove the Permanent Open Street program and the proposed rules. The motion failed by a vote of 4 yes, 8 no, as follows:

Yes (4): Birnbaum, Brown, Mason, Reckler (public member)

No (8): Agrawal, Bores, Dangoor, Krikler, Lader, Popper, Schneider, Warren.

A motion was then made to allow the Committee to develop recommendations to be presented to the Full Board on April 19th in regards to permanent rules for the Open Streets Program. The motion carried unanimously, and will be developed by Chuck Warren, Michele Birnbaum and Valerie Mason.

Item 5: NYCDOT Updates

There were no updates provided by NYCDOT.

Item 6: Old and New Business

A public member asked when the Lenox Hill Hospital/Northwell representatives will come before the Committee to discuss issues related to their proposed expansion. The District Manager indicated that they won't be ready to do so until the Fall at earliest.

A member asked that NYCDOT provide information about the Summer Streets program in advance of the event dates to allow the Community Board to provide feedback.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:54 PM.

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