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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Transportation Committee**
Wednesday, September 3, 2025 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 resolution is discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Resolutions to be voted on:

Item 1: NYC Ferry Network Optimization

Minutes:

Present: Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Sebastian Hallum Clarke, DJ Falkson, Paul Krikler, Craig Lader, John McClement, Sharon Pope-Marshall, Judy Schneider, Todd Stein, Charles Warren

Absent (excused): Valerie Mason

Absent (unexcused): John Philips

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 35

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM.

Item 1: MTA New York City Transit Presentation on Proposed Service Changes to the "F" and "M" Trains

Staff from MTA New York City Transit (NYCT), represented by Director of Railroad Planning Alan Foster and Assistant Director of Government & Community Relations Ruby Benitez, presented a plan to replace "F" trains with "M" trains between 57th Street/6th Avenue and Roosevelt Avenue in Queens on weekdays between 6:00 AM and 9:30 PM. These changes would affect 8 stations, including Roosevelt Island and 63rd Street/Lexington Avenue stations. There will be no changes during overnight and weekend periods, when the "F" trains will continue to operate as they do today.

Mr. Foster stated that the changes are warranted to simplify operations on numerous routes that converge in the area around Queens Plaza, where trains on the "E", "F", "M", and "R" lines need to switch between tracks. As a result of this crisscrossing, any delay on one line can result in delays on all four lines. The plan Mr. Foster presented would reduce the amount of tracks being shared between lines; the "E" train will share track with 2 lines (down from 3), the "M" train will share a track with 3 lines (down from 4), and thus isolate any delays on the local tracks/routes from those on the express tracks/routes. He referenced the track replacement project that recently took place in 2023/2024, when the "F" train was rerouted, during which the subway system experienced more reliable running times, faster trips, and better peak-hour on-time performance; for reference, about 15-20% of trains are currently delayed during the PM peak hours at Queens Plaza.

From an operations perspective, the change would mean that Roosevelt Island and 63rd Street would be served by local "M" train service rather than express "F" train service on weekdays. Passengers would continue to have direct service eastbound into Queens to Forest Hills and would gain one-seat rides to intermediate stops that aren't served by express trains. This would result in lengthier trips for those passengers who are currently using the "F"

train to get to and from express stops. For Manhattan-bound service, direct local service to all stops along the 6th Avenue Line between 57th Street and Essex Street would continue to be available. The “M” train terminates at Essex Street, except for overnight service when it terminates at Metropolitan Avenue. The “F” train during the impacted hours will operate along the 53rd Street line alongside the “E” train.

Mr. Foster explained that the “M” train currently runs less frequently than the “F” train, but that there will be added “M” service in AM and PM Peak hours as part of this plan. The “F” train is currently running every 4 minutes during these times, resulting in an average wait time of 2 minutes for passengers. The “M” train with added service will operate every 6 minutes, equivalent to an average wait time of 3 minutes. Overall, it is projected that the changes will result in net travel time savings, benefiting 2.5x more customers than those who will experience longer trips; 2% of affected passengers will see a four-plus-minute increase in travel times.

Mr. Foster emphasized that although the “M” train runs less frequently, one major benefit of the change will be a significant reduction in overcrowding. The peak loads on “F” trains now occur at Roosevelt Island, and that results in many instances of people being unable to board due to the trains being too crowded. Reliability is easier to maintain when trains aren’t overcrowded, which causes the trains to not be able to pull out of stations.

Ms. Benitez stated that the changes will be communicated through all channels that are used by NYCT for significant service changes, including new maps, look-ahead posters, handouts/brochures at the 8 stations affected, website/digital messaging, on-train announcements, signage, and customer ambassadors in the field.

Ms. Benitez also noted that there have been significant upgrades to the Roosevelt Island station that were completed recently, including a station deep cleaning, painting of over 10,000 square feet of surfaces, new LED light fixtures, graffiti removal, replacement of ceiling slats, new tiling, and improved stair treads. In August 2025, safety barriers were installed, and work to replace the front door of the station and install an automatic door was about to occur.

Most of the comments and questions related to concerns about the increase in travel time that some speakers said they would be subjected to, and the confusing nature of having Roosevelt Island and 63rd Street stations served by the “M” train during certain hours, and the “F” train at other times. Especially around the time when the overnight period is about to begin, one speaker even suggested that implementation be delayed. Some speakers also indicated these changes would benefit them, either because of the new direct service to local stations that weren’t previously available, or from the prospects of improved reliability and seating capacity.

It was explained that there is a major ongoing project to upgrade communications on these lines (known as “CBTC”, or Communications Based Train Control), and that the work prevents the “M” train from being able to operate overnights and weekends. In response to these concerns, it was emphasized that the project has been thoroughly planned and has been in the works for decades, and that there are benefits to the majority of passengers and across the system, and that Roosevelt Island passengers especially will benefit from increased capacity. While the timeline for completing the CBTC project was not stated, there could be opportunities to revisit the concept of running “M” trains during all dayparts once it is completed.

Item 2: NYCEDC Presentation: 2025 NYC Ferry Network Optimization and Proposed Changes on Soundview Route serving East 90th Street

Staff from the New York City Economic Development Corp (NYCEDC), represented by Assistant Vice President Tara Das and Transportation Planner Nina Verzosa, presented their 2025 NYC Ferry Network Optimization plan. NYCEDC began this effort in 2024, issued a draft proposal in spring 2025, and conducted public outreach in the second half of July and throughout August 2025. Although they closed the comment period as of September 1st, NYCEDC agreed to conduct outreach in September with Community Boards and accept feedback in advance of a final vote by the NYCEDC Board of Directors at the end of September and route implementation this coming winter.

Ms. Das explained that this optimization planning effort was the first such project since NYC Ferry was introduced in 2017. Since then, new routes and stops have been added, with ridership growing to the extent that the system is becoming constrained, experiencing overcrowding and reliability challenges, prompting a review of its operations. Ms. Das explained that the proposed optimization would implement comprehensive changes that would provide better interborough connections. This would make it easier to get to Midtown Manhattan, speeding up commutes by reducing the number of stops on certain routes and making more seats available. It would also make operations more efficient by combining routes and reducing the number of vessels that are running with few or no passengers, and reducing the subsidy per rider. Many of these changes will result in major modifications to the East River Route and St. George Route. According to NYCEDC, the network changes will mean that all routes will have boats operating at least every 45 minutes during peak hours, 60% of passengers will save time, and every route will have direct access to key terminals. The East River Route, which is the most constrained in the system, will experience 46% more trips at no added cost, which will address the overcrowding issues on the route.

Regarding routes serving East 90th Street landing in Community District 8, there are significant changes being proposed to the Soundview Route, while there are no proposed changes to the Astoria Route. The Optimization Plan calls for the Soundview Route, which currently serves Throggs Neck, Soundview, East 90th St., East 34th Street, Stuyvesant Cove, and Wall Street, to be combined with the Rockaway Route. Ms. Das stated that there is little ridership on weekday mornings north of East 90th Street, and combining the Soundview and Rockaway routes would open up new markets and provide new one-seat rides to Sunset Park and Rockaway. Service levels would remain mostly unchanged for current Soundview passengers, but would result in increased service for Rockaway passengers.

Among those who commented, most speakers reacted positively towards the proposal and appreciated the idea of having direct access from East 90th Street to the stops currently served by the Rockaway route that now require a transfer. One of the Co-Chairs expressed opposition to the proposal, highlighting concerns that this proposal doesn't include any increase in service. Expressing that this will have an adverse impact on current passengers who use the East 90th Street landing and now face frequent overcrowding, unable to board vessels that have reached their capacity, as often happens during the summer weekends. It was also concerning that the new combined route would take two hours to travel from start to finish, as longer transit routes are most susceptible to poor on-time performance and reliability. It was suggested that combining the Rockaway and Astoria routes would be a more viable alternative approach, since there is less overcrowding, and it would not be as long as Soundview/Rockaway and thus not be as prone to delays. It was also noted that the NYCEDC public outreach process didn't include the issuance of an existing conditions report, excluding the public Q&A portion from the public presentation that was posted on the NYCEDC website, and originally didn't include Community Boards.

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

WHEREAS; NYC Ferry, operated by the New York City Economic Development Corp., has served Community District 8 Manhattan since 2017 with service at the East 90th Street Landing since 2017; and

WHEREAS; two NYC Ferry routes operate at East 90th Street - Soundview and Astoria; and

WHEREAS; since its introduction, NYC Ferry has expanded its route network and grown its ridership, resulting in operational challenges across its route network; and

WHEREAS; the New York City Economic Development Corp. has proposed a NYC Ferry Network Optimization Plan that would go into effect in winter 2025; and

WHEREAS; the Optimization Plan proposes combining the existing Soundview route serving East 90th Street with the existing Rockaway route; and

WHEREAS; the combined Soundview/Rockaway route would provide a one-seat ride for East 90th Street passengers to access Sunset Park and Rockaway Beach; and

WHEREAS; the Optimization Plan proposes other network improvements on other routes that are projected to improve travel options and connectivity, increase capacity, and speed up travel times, benefiting the majority of NYC Ferry Passengers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 Manhattan supports the NYCEDC 2025 NYC Ferry Network Optimization and Proposed changes on the Soundview Route serving East 90th Street.

Yes (10): Birnbaum, Bores, Hallum Clarke, Falkson, Krikler, McClement, Pope-Marshall, Schneider, Stein, Warren

No (1): Lader

Abstain (0): None

Item 3: NYCDOT Updates

Rafael Escano, NYCDOT liaison to CB8M, didn't have any formal updates.

Item 4: Old Business

- A public attendee asked about the removal of a travel lane resulting from the installation of a bike lane on 62nd Street at the foot of the upper-level exit of the Queensboro Bridge, and whether NYCDOT has responded to an inquiry from Council Member Julie Menin's office about installing a concrete barrier that would allow the travel lane to be reinstated. One of the Committee Co-Chairs provided some history of the changes that have occurred on East 62nd Street and noted that the north side of the street is No Standing except Sundays, and suggested that NYCDOT should look at whether the No Standing should be in place at all times.
- A public attendee described a situation in which she claimed that her car was towed from a parking space on Park Avenue at an earlier time than was posted in preparation for the NYCDOT Summer Streets program. She noted that this had never been an issue in the past.
- A member of the Committee raised objections to the NYCDOT Summer Street program, saying it was a disruption to residents. In response, two comments from the discussion expressed support for the Summer Streets program.
- A public attendee expressed frustration that NYCDOT has rejected CB8M's request to restore parking regulations on Lexington Avenue that would allow for regular street cleaning.
- A member of the public asked about the timing for the paving of East 84th and 85th Streets, noting it had been about 4 weeks since the roads were milled. Mr. Escano said it would occur in the week of September 8th. There was further discussion about how this length of time is too long between milling and paving.
- A committee member raised concerns about enclosed sidewalk cafes that don't conform to NYCDOT rules.

Item 5: New Business

- A CB8M member asked Mr. Escano about the removal of the security barriers that had been in place for many years on the south side of the intersection of Second Avenue and East 63rd Street. It was noted that this action took place without anyone being notified and that the removal of the barrier would have adverse impacts on pedestrian safety. Mr. Escano said he would look into the matter to determine what happened.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 PM.

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