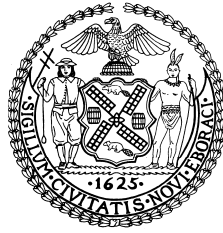


Nicholas Viest
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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

Transportation Committee

Wednesday, March 6, 2013
New York Blood Center
310 East 67th Street (Auditorium)
New York, NY
6:30pm

Minutes

Present: Michele Birnbaum, Molly Blayney, Lori Bores, Barbara Chocky, Cory Evans, A. Scott Falk, Larry Hockert, Rita Popper, & Charles Warren; Michael Dillon (Public Member) & David Menegon (Public Member)

Excused: Helene Simon

The Meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM by Co-Chairs Charles Warren & A. Scott Falk.

1. DOT School Safety Division to give a presentation on Safe Routes to Schools for three of our Priority Schools: Ramaz Lower School-125 East 85th Street, Park Avenue Christian Church Day School-1010 Park Avenue and St. Joseph's School-404 East 87th Street.

DOT consultant Joe Menzer presented preliminary plans for three schools located within CB8M that are priority schools under Phase 2 of DOT's Safe Routes to Schools initiative, which is designed to reduce pedestrian injuries near schools. Each priority school gets an individualized planning study to determine potential safety improvements.

The potential improvements around the three CB8M priority schools (Ramaz Lower School, Park Ave. Christian Day School, and St. Joseph's School) include several curb extensions, also known as "neckdowns," which are designed to reduce crossing distances, increase pedestrian visibility, decrease sidewalk overcrowding, and calm traffic. Preliminary plans also call for the installation of concrete bus pads at certain bus stops, which can prevent degrading asphalt caused by the weight of the buses.

The current timeline for Phase 2 of the Safe Route to Schools project calls for design work to continue until summer 2014, at which time the work will be put out for bids, with construction to begin in summer 2015. The Committee voted unanimously to support the project.

WHEREAS the New York City Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to Schools initiative is designed to increase safety within a 700-foot radius of local schools; and

WHEREAS having safer routes to and from schools aims to decrease injuries not just for students, but for the entire community; and

WHEREAS Phase 1 of NYC DOT's Safe Routes to Schools improved safety in the area around 135 schools; and

WHEREAS Phase 2 of the program includes three priority schools within Community District 8: Ramaz Lower School, Park Ave. Christian Day School, and St. Joseph's School; and

WHEREAS potential street improvements under this project include several neckdowns and some concrete bus pads; and

WHEREAS neckdowns reduce crossing distances, increase pedestrian visibility, decrease sidewalk overcrowding, and calm traffic; and concrete bus pads prevent degrading asphalt;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8M supports NYC DOT's Safe Routes to Schools program, and asks DOT to return in 2014 to present their final plans for the area around these three priority schools.

Approved: 9 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Birnbaum, Blayney, Bores, Chocky, Evans, Falk, Hockert, Popper, Warren

Public Member Votes: 2 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon, Menegon

2. A request for a new Revocable Consent to install an electric snowmelt system at 21 East 70th Street.

The applicant was in attendance, but had not brought a copy of any schematics or construction plans. The Committee being unable to properly evaluate the application, this item was laid over until a future meeting.

3. Continuing discussion re: locations for audible pedestrian crossing signals.

The committee continued its ongoing discussion regarding audible pedestrian crossing signals (APS) and possible locations for their installation. There had been some concern from the public at the January committee meeting about possible noise pollution from installing additional signals, but since then the board received a large amount of positive comments from the public and from elected officials in support of installing more APS on the Upper East Side.

Representatives of Pedestrians for Accessible & Safe Streets (PASS) and other members of the disabled and/or visually impaired communities attended the meeting and provided additional information on how these devices work: The APS emits a tone to allow a visually impaired pedestrian to locate the signal, but is silenced once the button is pushed; when the walk signal turns on, the APS button vibrates and a sound will play to indicate that the walk signal is on, but the sound and vibration stop when the walk signal turns off. Properly installed APS should not cause noise pollution, because they are designed to be heard only when a pedestrian is within 12 feet or less of the signal, and the device has sensors to adjust to the level of ambient sound.

Members of the public with visual impairments testified about how the devices assist them in getting around, and explained some of the challenges they face in navigating city streets. They also reported some types of locations where APS may be particularly useful (e.g., where there are split phases or Barnes dance intersections; where there is a leading pedestrian interval; anywhere DOT erects a sign instructing pedestrians to wait for the light to change).

The Committee debated whether to prescribe specific locations for APS in a resolution, or to issue a resolution in support of APS without weighing in on locations. After extended discussion, the Committee passed the following unanimous resolution:

WHEREAS Accessible Pedestrian Signals are specifically designed to adjust to ambient sound and to be audible only to a distance of 12 feet,

WHEREAS each corner has its own resonance and vibration that fluctuates both day and night, whereby this ambient sound adjustment prevents excess noise pollution,

WHEREAS eleven members of the public testified in support of Accessible Pedestrian Signals at the January 15 Community Board 8M Full Board meeting,

WHEREAS the United States Census Bureau estimates that more than 7% of residents of Community Board 8M have disabilities, and nearly 24% of residents 65 years of age and older have disabilities (*Source: NYC Dept. of City Planning, Dec. 2012*),

WHEREAS those community members with disabilities, including the visually impaired and those traveling by wheelchairs, deserve the same safety assurances and independence as all members of our community,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Community Board 8 Manhattan strongly requests that NYC DOT without delay install additional Accessible Pedestrian Signals on the Upper East Side, with the most current technology, in consultation with constituent groups such as the PASS Coalition to choose locations for these signals; and that DOT report back to CB8M on the APS locations identified;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Community Board 8M urges the New York City Council to increase the number of APS required to be installed annually from the current mandate of 25 per year (per Local Law 21 of 2012).

Approved: 9 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Birnbaum, Blayney, Bores, Chocky, Evans, Falk, Hockert, Popper, Warren

Public Member Votes: 2 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon, Menegon

4. Old Business

There was brief discussion of the increase in compliance among restaurant delivery cyclists with the rules for commercial bicycling, such as wearing vests bearing the name of the employer, since the introduction of DOT's enforcement and education program.

5. New Business

A committee member reported that East 84th Street is in disrepair from Fifth to Park Avenues. Josh Orzeck from DOT confirmed that this is scheduled to be addressed soon.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Scott Falk and Charles Warren, Co-Chairs