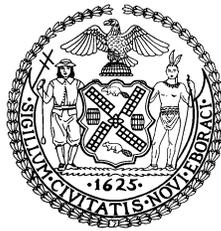


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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

Transportation Committee

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

MSK-Rockefeller Research Laboratories

430 East 67th Street, Auditorium

6:30 PM

Minutes

Present: Lowell Barton, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, A. Scott Falk, Jonathan Horn, Craig Lader, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, David Rosenstein, Barbara Rudder, Judith Schneider, Barry Schneider, Jared Stone, Charles Warren, Hedi White, Timothy Yeo

Absent (Excused): Lorance Hockert, Michael Dillon (Public Member)

Absent (Unexcused): Rebecca Seawright, David Menegon (Public Member)

The Meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM. The co-chairs noted that two items that had originally been on the agenda for this Meeting were not in fact scheduled to be discussed: the East 86th Street capital project, and the request for a neckdown at Third Avenue & E. 62nd Street.

1. A request to permanently close East 91st Street between Second and Third Avenues to vehicular traffic (joint with Parks Committee).

The brick-paved, bench-lined block of East 91st Street between Second and Third Avenues has been closed to vehicular traffic since the 1970s, during the redevelopment of the former Ruppert Brewery site, but the status of the block has never been made official. As part of Community Board 8's broader initiative for more open space, the Transportation and Parks Committees are jointly examining the Board's options to try to keep this block closed permanently, whether through demapping or some other method. It was noted that the community is losing nearby open space with the closure of Ruppert Playground.

Board member David Rosenstein presented some of the history of this block, including the relevant history of Ruppert Park, which adjoins this pedestrian street and was originally owned and managed by the City's Department of Housing Preservation & Development. The park was privately maintained for approximately two decades, but was shuttered after those maintenance agreements expired. Eventually the City's Dept. of Parks & Recreation (Parks) renovated and took ownership of Ruppert Park in 1997. Although Ruppert Park became official public parkland, this adjacent block is not protected as permanently and officially closed to traffic. In order to preserve this block as open space, what are the best options?

Demapping has been mentioned as perhaps the best option, and the hardest to reverse. Designating the street as a pedestrian plaza is another option, but that generally requires a reliable maintenance partner. In Brooklyn, Parks filed a ULURP application (jointly with the Open Space Alliance of N. Brooklyn) to de-map a section of Union Avenue and incorporate that space into McCarren Park.

Public comments were strongly in support of preserving this block as open space. Some members of the public expressed concern about whether the 91st Street Marine Transfer Station would lead the City to try to open this street to truck traffic. People noted that this block draws a diverse group of users of all ages, including many students and senior citizens, and asked what it would take to get Parks to take over this park-like space.

It was noted that several years ago, two of the Transportation Committee's members had co-chaired a CB8 Task Force about preserving this block. The Task Force had reached the conclusion that the best option would be for the City to de-map the street, but someone had to be responsible for its maintenance—preferably or typically an adjacent property owner (such as Parks). At the time the Task Force met, the City was in a budget crisis and so Parks would not consider taking over the street, but the situation may be different now. Perhaps existing maintenance funds could be transferred from Transportation's annual budget to Parks if ownership of this street were transferred to Parks. It was then noted that Transportation does not do much maintenance of this block, other than maintaining the cobra-head streetlights; the square-head street lights are maintained by RY Management, the trash collection is handled by the adjacent buildings, and the street does not need much repair or plowing.

There was a suggestion made that, as an alternative to Parks maintaining the block out of the Parks budget, perhaps The Related Companies would be willing to provide some funds for maintenance as a community give-back for the loss of the former Ruppert Playground.

Multiple Committee members noted that there is also a bicycle path on this block, but that there have been "few, if any" complaints and problems. Although de-mapping might lead to some concerns about the future of the bike path, this shouldn't be an insurmountable obstacle, and the Committee would like to preserve the bike route on this block.

A Committee member asked whether CB8 could serve as the applicant for an application to de-map a street, if Parks doesn't take the lead enthusiastically. Another Committee member suggested that another option besides de-mapping could be to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding between the City agencies involved, although such an MOU may be easier to reverse than de-mapping.

The Committee decided not to dictate the means of preserving the street in its resolution, but simply to express the desired outcome. The Committee then passed the following resolution by a unanimous vote:

WHEREAS East 91st Street between Second and Third Avenues has been closed to vehicular traffic for approximately four decades; and

WHEREAS this street serves as an oasis for New Yorkers of all ages, in a district that currently boasts less than half an acre of open space per thousand residents; and

WHEREAS The Related Companies closed nearby Ruppert Playground three years ago, further decreasing open space in this area;

WHEREAS the closure of this street has not been made official and therefore is at risk of reversal in the future; and

WHEREAS this street does not require extensive maintenance; and

WHEREAS the East 91st Street bicycle route includes a bicycle path on this block;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, in order to assure the permanent preservation of East 91st Street between Second and Third Avenues as public open space, Community Board 8 Manhattan urges our elected officials and the City of New York, particularly DOT and Parks, to seek the best way to permanently close this block to vehicular traffic, through de-mapping or via some other legal means that they determine; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests that the East 91st Street bicycle path be retained, regardless of whether the street is de-mapped.

Approved: 16 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, 0 not voting for cause.

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Bores, Falk, Horn, Lader, Popper, Price, Rosenstein, Rudder, J. Schneider, M. B. Schneider, Stone, Warren, White, Yeo

2. A request for a new Revocable Consent to install a fenced-in area, accessible ramp and steps at 112-114 East 73rd Street (*Requested by DOT, Franchises, Concessions and Consents*).

Jennifer Sage of Sage & Coombe Architects appeared on behalf of the Buckley School with an application for a revocable consent to install a fenced-in ADA-accessible ramp in front of the School's new Arts & Sciences classroom building, which is being created out of two existing townhouses at 112 and 114 East 73rd Street (between Park & Lexington Avenues). The ramp would be set between steps on either side, which will lead to the two entrances to the renovated building. The building's new fence would match the adjoining fence line of 116 E. 73rd St. to the east, and will be set back slightly from the fence line of 110 E. 73rd Street to the west, to accommodate the suggestion of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to unify that portion of their block. The school plans to replace an existing tree pit with a flush tree pit in order to maximize sidewalk space. The Committee asked the school to expand the size of the flush tree pit in accordance with the City's new standards.

The architect responded to suggestions for a wheelchair lift instead of a ramp by saying that the ramp is consistent with their desire for a more "quiet" entryway, and noted that the Buckley School does not even post signage in front of their school buildings. In addition, the school wants wheelchair users to be able to use the same entrance as everyone else.

The Committee passed the following Resolution to approve the application by a vote of 10 Yes, 3 No, and 1 Abstention:

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan approves the applicant's request for a revocable consent to install a fenced-in area, accessible ramp, and stairs at 112-114 East 73rd Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues, provided that the applicant expands the tree pit that will be made flush with the sidewalk.

Approved: 10 Yes, 3 No, 1 Abstentions

Yes: Barton, Bores, Falk, Horn, Lader, Rosenstein, Rudder, J. Schneider, M. B. Schneider, Stone, Warren, White

No: Birnbaum, Popper, Rosenstein

Abstain: Yeo

3. Continued discussion of a request for a neckdown at the intersection of Third Avenue and East 62nd Street to prevent illegal truck traffic.

This item has been laid over to the October 1 Transportation Committee meeting; however, a few members of the public were present specifically for this item, and the Committee briefly explained the history of our February 2014 Resolution, and DOT's response that they would only consider such a request if it were for the express purpose of pedestrian safety. The Committee will discuss whether a revised Resolution is in order.

4. A request to address nightly noise issues from the repairs on the Queensboro Bridge.

The Community Board has received several noise complaints as a result of recent repair operations on the Queensboro Bridge. Josh Orzeck of DOT reported that the roadway work causing the bulk of congestion and noise complaints was being done on the portion of the bridge closest to the Second Avenue entrance, which has been completed. Ongoing repairs are now being conducted further onto the bridge, which should eliminate the majority of problems that prompted the complaints. At the same time, DDC has just begun overnight work on Second Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets, for the DEP 58th Street Water Main project, but DDC will be providing traffic control agents during their construction work.

A resident asked whether DOT could change the signal timing at 60th Street and Second Avenue to resolve recurring issues of gridlock that results from southbound drivers running the red light on Second Avenue as other drivers begin to exit the bridge. The Committee co-chairs noted that this should be looked at as part of the current DOT review of safety at that intersection.

5. A discussion regarding DOT permits and street obstruction at 57 East 90th Street location.

Lo van der Valk of Carnegie Hill neighbors provided an update on the conditions in front of 57 East 90th Street, which has been under construction for four years. The project manager for the site has said he will try to reduce the project footprint on the street, but the project is finally nearing completion. Due to the lateness of the invitation, no building representative was able to attend this meeting, but the project manager said they would come to a future meeting if the problem was not resolved satisfactorily. The Committee discussed whether the City should create escalating costs for building permit renewals, to provide incentives for property owners to conclude such projects in a more timely fashion.

6. Old Business.

The Committee discussed the following items of Old Business:

- **Neckdown at 86th St. & Third Ave.:** A Board member expressed concerns about the safety of the painted neckdown at the NW corner of 86th St. & Third Ave., and wondered if perhaps this should be made permanent. The Co-Chairs noted that the 86th Street Capital Project (to be presented in October) will replace this painted neckdown with a concrete curb extension.
- **M31 Buses:** Follow-up to the May discussion of the M31 bus, including CB8's successful request that New York City Transit replace the older buses with new low-floor equipment that is easier to board. Perhaps the Committee should consider a similar request for the M66 bus, which also serves many of the same institutions as the M31 bus. In addition, the Committee might follow up on a suggestion to have some of the M31 buses terminate at or near 57th & 1st.

- **Off-Board Fare Collection on the M86:** NYCT has confirmed that they intend to honor the request of both CB7 and CB8 for SBS-style off-board fare collection on the M86 bus, perhaps as soon as Spring 2015.
- **Select Bus Service blinking lights:** NYCT has reported that they have a plan to replace the long-absent and much-missed blinking blue Select Bus Service lights with a blinking destination sign, tentatively expected to launch by the spring. Concern has been expressed about how visible this might be to people with visual impairment, some of whom found the former blue lights extremely helpful. The Committee expressed interest in seeing a demonstration or video of the proposed new signage.

7. New Business.

There were several items of New Business discussed:

- A resident suggested that DOT should eliminate the pedestrian crosswalk between the SW and SE corners at 61st & Second Ave. by installing barrier fences, similar to the intersection of 63rd & Second Ave., in order to allow more vehicles to turn south onto Second Avenue. This suggestion received both positive and negative reactions, including a note that such restrictions may not be consistent with the current administration's policies.
- A resident made a complaint regarding sanitation collection on East 92nd Street, and was referred to the CB8 office.
- A member of the public complained about the curb regulation in front of 346 & 348 East 62nd Street (west of 1st Avenue), which is posted for "No Standing Except Authorized Vehicles — Doctors Vehicles Only." *Note: DOT followed up and determined that this parking regulation will be removed; they are currently determining the appropriate new regulation for this location.*
- There was a concern about the pedestrian safety to the northern end of the Metropolitan Museum, crossing by the 84th Street Transverse Road exit from Central Park, following the conclusion of Museum construction. The Committee said they would take a look at this location.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
A. Scott Falk and Charles Warren, Co-Chairs