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The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8
Transportation Committee

Wednesday, December 5, 2014

Christ Church

524 Park Avenue, Phillips Hall

6:30 PM

Minutes

Present: Lowell Barton, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, James Clynes, A. Scott Falk, Lawrence Hockert, Craig Lader, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder, Judith Schneider, Barry Schneider, Cos Spagnoletti, Charles Warren, Hedi White, Timothy Yeo; *Absent (Excused):* Jonathan Horn; Michael Dillon, David Menegon (Public Members)

The Meeting was called to order at 6:38 PM.

1. Update on the East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge. *(Joint item with Parks Committee)*

Ali Mallick and Bharat Parekh of NYC Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) gave a presentation of plans for the construction of a new East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge, with the old bridge and esplanade stairs being demolished and replaced. DDC noted that the existing bridge is the second-lowest rated bridge in New York City, with the Brooklyn Bridge rated the worst.

The project consists of three main components:

1. An ADA-accessible ramp onto John Finley Walk, to be constructed on East 81st Street
2. The replacement of the pedestrian bridge over the FDR Drive at East 81st Street
3. A new 452-foot ramp from the pedestrian bridge down to the lower esplanade level

The new bridge and ramp will have fencing with 1" x 1" stainless steel mesh, with a height of 8' where the bridge is adjacent to the FDR Drive and/or the East River. DDC reported that the project has been approved by the Public Design Commission, although CB8M is still seeking confirmation of this; some area residents stated that they could not find any record of PDC approval.

DDC reported that the contract has been awarded to Primer Construction at a cost of approximately \$11.89 million. The contract was registered in mid-November, and notice to proceed was issued on Nov. 24. Construction is expected to begin around March or April 2015, but cannot begin until the contractor meets the following conditions:

- A field office must be set up.

- Most of the shop drawings must be approved.
- Most of the materials must be fabricated.

The contractor wants a field office close to the construction site, which could be either a storefront office or a 24' x 56' back-to-back double trailer. Proposed locations for the field office include:

1. East 80th Street cul-de-sac
2. East 82nd Street & East End Avenue
3. East 84th Street cul-de-sac
4. "Dead space" near the bridge itself

DDC says they will work with the community and the Community Board to tweak the designs to address concerns.

Area residents Charles Whitman and Naomi Altschul presented an alternate proposal from the community to relocate both the ADA ramp and the 452-foot ramp to East 82nd Street. The residents of 45 East End Avenue have expressed many concerns about the planned ADA ramp near their building, which they expect to negatively impact both their service entrance on East 81st Street and the cul-de-sac itself. Their proposal to relocate the long ramp that replaces the existing esplanade staircase is intended to reduce the visual impact of the bridge, and to preserve an additional usable block of the East River Esplanade's lower level (south of 81st Street).

Several residents and Community Board members expressed multiple concerns, with many expressing a desire to use clear fencing materials in place of the proposed stainless steel mesh. In addition, several people expressed a desire to relocate the ADA ramp from East 81st Street to East 82nd Street, which currently has a non-compliant metal ramp across a shorter staircase onto the John Finley Walk promenade.

The Committee unanimously passed the following Resolution:

WHEREAS the East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge has structural deficiencies and is the second- lowest-rated bridge in New York City; and

WHEREAS NYC Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) has entered into a contract to replace this bridge (project ID HBPED100M); and

WHEREAS this project consists of three main components:

1. An ADA-accessible ramp onto John Finley Walk, to be constructed on East 81st Street
 2. The replacement of the pedestrian bridge over the FDR Drive at East 81st Street
 3. A new 452-foot ramp from the pedestrian bridge down to the lower esplanade level;
- and

WHEREAS this project is located on the East River Esplanade and within a residential area; and

WHEREAS the community is unhappy with the current design; and

WHEREAS at the December 3, 2014, CB8M Transportation Committee meeting, DDC repeatedly affirmed their willingness to tweak the design in conjunction with

CB8M to address community concerns, and to meet with a small working group from CB8M and area residents prior to the January 7, 2015, Transportation Committee meeting; and

WHEREAS the planned ADA-accessible ramp on East 81st Street will negatively impact the residents of that block; and

WHEREAS there currently exists a short set of stairs on East 82nd Street with a non-compliant metal ramp; and

WHEREAS the current staircase from East 81st Street onto John Finley walk covers a greater vertical distance than the current staircase on East 82nd Street, and thus would require a greater ramp distance for ADA compliance; and

WHEREAS relocating the ADA-accessible ramp one block north, from East 81st Street to East 82nd Street, could still provide proximate ADA access to John Finley Walk and the replacement pedestrian bridge, while reducing the impact on area residents;

WHEREAS on October 17, 2012, CB8M passed a resolution that “urges the DOT and the DDC to make further changes to the 81st Street pedestrian bridge so that it blends into the surrounding neighborhood in a better way and to ameliorate the impact of the eight foot high fence facing the buildings in the area” (by a vote of 39 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention, 1 not voting for cause); and

WHEREAS DDC did not effectively respond to repeated requests from Community Board 8 Manhattan (CB8M) to come back to the Transportation Committee with further updates and modifications to the project design; and

WHEREAS DDC did not notify CB8M before apparently obtaining Public Design Commission approval of this project; and

WHEREAS the current view south from the end of John Finley Walk at 81st Street will be negatively impacted by the 8-foot-high fence required for new construction in close proximity to a highway; and

WHEREAS DDC has repeatedly expressed the intention for an “open” design to minimize visual impact and maximize sightlines; and

WHEREAS DDC is planning to use a 1” x 1” stainless steel mesh fencing material; and

WHEREAS the community is concerned that the mesh fencing will impact sightlines and invoke the look of a prison yard; and

WHEREAS Community Board 8 Manhattan believes clear fencing materials will be more appropriate and more aesthetically pleasing; and

WHEREAS DDC was unaware of the Dept. of Parks and Recreation’s plans for capital repairs to the East River Esplanade in the area surrounding the project location; and

WHEREAS there is no irrigation along the lower portion of the East River Esplanade, south of 81st Street; and

WHEREAS the plantings that Parks and DDC have planned beneath the new 452-foot ramp cannot be maintained properly without water; and

WHEREAS there is a need for irrigation at other locations along the East River Esplanade;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan wants NYC Dept. of Design & Construction (DDC) to relocate the new ADA-accessible ramp onto John Finley Walk, from its currently planned location on East 81st Street to one block north at East 82nd Street; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan wants DDC to use clear/transparent materials for all fences for this project, including the fence at the southern end of John Finley Walk and the fences lining the 452-foot esplanade ramp, even if such fencing material must be obtained from new, alternate vendors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan ask DDC to work closely with the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation to coordinate DDC's capital construction project with the planned esplanade infrastructure repairs, and to work with Parks & Recreation to bring irrigation to the Esplanade as part of this bridge project.

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

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Bores, Clynes, Falk, Hockert, Lader, Popper, Price, Rudder, J. Schneider, B. Schneider, Spagnoletti, Warren, White, Yeo

DDC agreed to return for the Committee's January 2015 meeting and to present the ADA ramp designs at that time, but they asked to convene a small working group meeting to take place in the interim with some representatives of CB8M, a few area residents, and the East 79th Street Association to discuss some of the community concerns.

2. A presentation from Asphalt Green regarding the entrance ramp for the MTS. (Joint item with Environment and Sanitation Committee)

Carol Tweedy, who recently retired as Executive Director of Asphalt Green after 20 years, now serves as the organization's Senior Advisor. She reiterated that all players involved in the community around the 91st Street Marine Transfer Station (MTS) remain inalterably opposed to the project, but that the reality is this project is under construction, and therefore Asphalt Green has formed a coalition with residents of the Stanley Isaacs and Holmes Towers as well as Pledge 2 Protect, and has engaged a number of consultants on how to eliminate some of the dangers that the MTS poses to the surrounding communities. Their recommendations can be found at the following website: zerovision.nyc

If the project is going to proceed regardless of the opposition, the coalition proposes to move the entrance ramp for the MTS approximately one block north, from East 91st Street to either 92nd Street or "92nd and a half," to run behind Asphalt Green. This relocation would move the truck traffic to an intersection with substantially fewer pedestrians, and substantially

reduces all of the following: the length of non-designated truck routes, the number of locations where trucks will turn, and the number of crosswalks these trucks will cross.

The current MTS plans are projected to add 100,000 to 150,000 new trucks turns annually, in an area with 1 million pedestrians (400,000 children and 600,000 adults). Trucks approaching the MTS would travel 5,500 feet of non-designated truck routes, crossing through 24 pedestrian crosswalks and making 8 turns. Moving the ramp north might reduce these numbers to 2,900 feet of non-designated truck routes, 7 crosswalks, and 3 turns. In addition, there are approximately 50% fewer pedestrians crossing York Avenue at 92nd Street than at 91st Street.

The coalition is asking the city agencies to move the access ramp one block north, to conduct a traffic study of the area between 79th & 96th Streets from Second Avenue to the East River in order to identify the safest and fairest alternate truck routes, and to address other community concerns relating to safety. They are seeking support from Community Board 8M for the proposal and for the “Community Bill of Rights.”

WHEREAS construction has started on the East 91st Street Marine Transfer Station project; and

WHEREAS Community Board 8 Manhattan remains unequivocally opposed to the Marine Transfer Station project; and

WHEREAS Asphalt Green, Pledge 2 Protect, and residents of the Stanley Isaacs and Holmes Tower also oppose the Marine Transfer Station, but have formed a coalition to explore mitigation of some the dangers that the project faces;

WHEREAS the Marine Transfer Station is expected to bring 150 NYC Dept. of Sanitation garbage trucks and an unknown number of private garbage trucks to the project site daily, traversing 5,500 feet of non-designated truck routes in a residential area; and

WHEREAS garbage trucks are responsible for a sizable percentage of truck-related crashes in New York City; and

WHEREAS truck turns pose a danger to pedestrians; and

WHEREAS there are one million pedestrians who use the crosswalks in the areas between 86th Street & 92nd Street annually, including 400,000 children; and

WHEREAS approximately half as many pedestrians cross York Avenue at 92nd Street as compared to 91st Street; and

WHEREAS relocating the entrance ramp for the Marine Transfer Station approximately one block north could mitigate some of the pedestrian safety issues and avoid having trucks pass through the middle of Asphalt Green; and

WHEREAS the Asphalt Green coalition is requesting a traffic study to identify the safest and fairest alternate truck routes; and

WHEREAS New York City's Sanitation Commissioner has expressed a willingness to discuss relocating the ramp, but has not postponed demolition of the existing ramp while that discussion proceeds;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan continues to oppose the East 91st Street Marine Transfer Station, but nonetheless gives full support to the Asphalt Green coalition's efforts to find a better solution should the MTS project go forward; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan urges the NYC Department of Sanitation and the NYC Department of Design & Construction to halt demolition on the existing ramp until the proposal for relocating the ramp has been fully explored.

Approved: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain, 1 not voting for cause.

*Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Bores, Clynes, Falk, Hockert, Lader, Popper, Rudder,
J. Schneider, B. Schneider, Spagnoletti, White, Yeo*

Not Voting For Cause: Warren

The Environment & Sanitation Committee co-chairs will be sending a letter to DSNY and DDC regarding monitoring of PM2.5 emissions.

3. A request for a new Revocable Consent to install a fenced-in area and steps at 112 East 96th Street.

The petitioner did not appear before the Transportation Committee meeting. The Committee will notify DOT of this.

4. A request for a bus bulb or sidewalk extension in front of the Ukrainian Institute at 2 East 79th Street.

Betty Cooper Wallerstein of the East 79th Street Association asked the Committee to discuss the sidewalks surrounding the Ukrainian Institute of America (UIA) at 2 E. 79th Street, which are very narrow and in need of some repairs. At our meeting on November 6, 2013, during a discussion of the intersection of E. 79th St. & Fifth Avenue, there had been a suggestion to consider a sidewalk extension of bus bulb in front of 2 E. 79th St. for the Eastbound M79 bus stop.

Dr. Daniel Swistel, president and board chairman of the UIA, reported that they are in fact going through a very lengthy permitting process for a new sidewalk, which has been complicated by their location on the landmark "Cook block," a unique location with heightened restrictions. Their sidewalk project is currently on hold due to construction of a building to their south, but their initial application for a cement sidewalk instead of bluestone was denied, so they will be required to install a bluestone sidewalk. Any sidewalk extension would presumably require landmarks approval and would need to be bluestone instead of concrete and have a granite curb instead of the standard steel curb.

The UIA would be required to maintain and shovel any sidewalk extension, which they don't necessarily oppose (despite the extra manpower), but they are concerned about both the aesthetic issues due to the Cook block restrictions and an adverse effect on the Institute's loading and unloading of artwork. The UIA is hoping they will be able to proceed with

sidewalk construction in Spring 2015, or by Summer 2015 at the latest. Dr. Swistel also noted that garbage from the construction project to their south gets placed in front of their service entrance on 79th Street, due to restrictions on placing garbage on the Fifth Avenue side. The Committee decided to take no action at this time, given the new information, but would continue to review the bus situation.

5. Old Business.

There was no old business.

6. New Business.

There was no new business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.

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