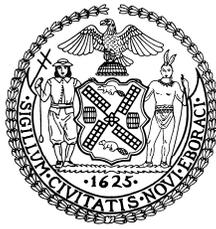


Nicholas Viest
Chair

Latha Thompson
District Manager



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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

December 22, 2014

Feniosky Peña-Mora
Commissioner
NYC Department of Design and Construction
30-30 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101

Re: Update on the East 81st Street Pedestrian Bridge

Dear Commissioner Pena-Mora:

At the December 17, 2014 Full Board meeting, the board passed the following resolution of **approval** by a vote of 38 in favor, 1 opposed, 0 abstentions and 0 not voting for cause:

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 asked 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.

Please advise this office of any action taken regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Viest
Chair

A. Scott Falk and Charles Warren
Co-Chairs, Transportation Committee

cc: Honorable Bill de Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York
Honorable Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Honorable Carolyn Maloney, 14th Congressional District Representative
Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 26th Senatorial District
Honorable Dan Quart, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District
Honorable Ben Kallos, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
Honorable Daniel Garodnick, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District
William Castro, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreations
Margaret Forgione, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Department of Transportation