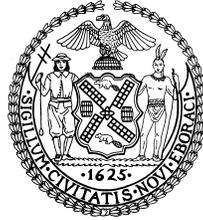


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**The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8
Transportation Committee**
Wednesday December 4 2019, 6:30 PM
New York Blood Center - Auditorium

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee chair to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.

Minutes:

Present: Lowell Barton, Michele Birnbaum, Lori Bores, Rebecca Dangoor, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Rita Popper, Barry Schneider, Charles Warren, Jordan Wouk (public member)

Absent (Excused): Tricia Shimamura

Absent (Unexcused): Valerie Mason, Peter Borock (public member),

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 1 – Approval

Item 2 – Unanimous Approval

Item 5 – Approval

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 PM.

Item 1: Request for a Change of Weekday Parking Regulations on East 63rd Street between Lexington and Park Avenues from Metered Commercial Parking to Alternate Side Parking

Phyllis Stoller, on behalf of the East 63rd Park-Lex Neighborhood Association, presented a request for the parking regulations on the block of East 63rd Street between Lexington and Park Avenues to be changed to alternate side parking. Ms. Stoller described conditions on the block, highlighting the accumulation of food and beverage debris, and how the block is vulnerable to garbage due to heavy pedestrian activity associated with the subway entrance on the east side of the block, the proliferation of nearby take-out restaurants, and illegally parked taxis during shift changes. The request for a change in regulations was intended to allow street cleaning to occur, as street cleaners do not service the street with the current regulations in place. The changes would only apply to the north side of the street, as parking is prohibited at all times on the south side.

There was debate among Committee members regarding the best approach to addressing the issues discussed; some members supported the proposal as presented; others believed that the situation was reminiscent of the request made in November 2019 by residents of East 64th Street between 3rd Avenue and Lexington Avenue, which resulted in a CB8 resolution requesting DOT expeditiously review parking and land use across the entirety of the street between Central Park and the East River.

A member proposed a resolution supporting the original proposal to change parking regulations to alternate side parking, along with two metered parking spaces at each end of the block. This resolution failed by a vote of 4 yes (Birnbaum, Dangoor, Freeland, Lamorte), 5 no (Barton, Lader, Popper, Schneider, Warren) and 1 abstention (Wouk). Following this vote, another member proposed the following resolution modeled after the approach used for East 63rd Street:

WHEREAS, there is an existing Commercial Metered Parking from 7AM to 7PM Except Sundays regulation on the north side of East 63th Street between Lexington and Park Avenues, and

WHEREAS, the East 63rd Park-Lex Neighborhood Association is requesting changes to allow street cleaning on the block to mitigate food and beverage debris that regularly accumulates on this block; and

WHEREAS, illegally parked taxis and lack of traffic enforcement exacerbate the issue of garbage accumulating on the block, along with heavy pedestrian activity associated with Lexington Avenue and subway entrances;

WHEREAS, the impacts of potential changes to parking on East 63rd Street between Lexington and Park Avenues could potentially have adverse impacts on neighboring blocks if done in an uncoordinated manner;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests that New York City Department of Transportation evaluate parking regulations based on a holistic approach that considers existing parking needs and land use across the entirety of East 63rd Street between 5th Avenue and York Avenue, and report back with recommendations to CB8 in an expeditious manner.

Yes (9): Lowell Barton, Rebecca Dangoor, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Rita Popper, Barry Schneider, Charles Warren, Jordan Wouk (public member)

No (1): Michele Birnbaum

Item 2: A Request for a No Parking Zone in Front of 130 East 82nd Street (Moise Safra Center)

Karen Razak, Director of Engagement at Moise Safra Center located at 130 East 82nd Street, described a request to change parking regulations in front of their building to No Parking Anytime. The building has been under construction for over 5 years, during which time temporary no parking restrictions were in effect.

Ms. Razak indicated that there is a Jewish synagogue located within the facility, with daily and weekly services taking place. No Parking Zones are typically provided in front of houses of worship for safety purposes. It was determined that the building has approximately 65 feet of frontage, which equates to about 3 parking spaces that would be affected.

Although there was no opposition expressed, it was noted that the Safra Center may only have posted one meeting notice near their building. Jenna Klaus, Council Member Keith Powers' liaison to CB8, noted there is neighborhood support for the requested change, as the Councilman held a meeting with neighbors and Safra Center staff. Given this support and the outreach that was conducted, the committee moved forward with the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Moise Safra Center located at 130 East 82nd Street is requesting a change of parking regulations in front of their building to No Parking Anytime; and

WHEREAS, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue is located within the Moise Safra Center; and

WHEREAS, no parking regulations are typically posted in front of religious institutions; and

WHEREAS, neighbors of the Moise Safra Center have expressed support for the requested No Parking regulations;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 Manhattan requests that New York City Department of Transportation change parking regulations along the frontage of Moise Safra Center at 130 East 82nd Street to No Parking Anytime, resulting in the elimination of 3 parking spaces.

Yes (10): Lowell Barton, Michele Birnbaum, Rebecca Dangoor, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Rita Popper, Barry Schneider, Charles Warren, Jordan Wouk (public member)

No (0): None

Item 3: Discussion of Bike Lane Offset Crossings

This item is a follow-up to a previous discussion at the July 2019 meeting regarding this topic; offset crossings are a new intersection design that NYCDOT has rolled out at select intersections with bike lanes across New York City that average less than 120 turning movements per hour.

Currently, intersections on roads with protected bike lanes, such as 1st and 2nd Avenues, feature “mixing zones” where vehicles enter dedicated left turn lanes that converge with the bike lanes. Offset crossings eliminate the dedicated turning lane, and flexible bollards are installed to require turning vehicles to have to make a sharper and slower turn; the turning lane is replaced with a clear space so bikers can see cars approaching the intersection. A 2-page handout was distributed containing information from the NYCDOT Publication *Cycling at a Crossroads – The Design Future of New York City Intersections* that visually depicted offset crossings, and how they contrast with existing “mixing zones” that are in place in CB8 along 1st and 2nd Avenues.

NYCDOT Manhattan Deputy Borough Commissioner Jennifer Sta. Ines provided further context and answered questions regarding the status of NYCDOT efforts to convert certain mixing zone intersections with offset crossings. The benefit of this approach from a cyclist standpoint is that they feel safer in intersections with offset crossings due to the improved visibility and the reduced risk of being sideswiped by a turning vehicle; there may also be pedestrian safety improvements related to this design. The potential downside is that the removal of the turn lane may result in the turning vehicle blocking others behind it in the left-most general traffic lane of the avenue.

Ms. Sta. Ines explained that offset crossings are being installed at select intersections across New York City; since offset crossings require some pavement treatments, they are being installed following other bike infrastructure construction projects or cyclical resurfacing projects. To date, no offset crossings have been installed in CB8, and although none are anticipated to be installed in the near-term, NYCDOT would welcome a list of priority intersections for potential future implementation. As offset crossings are a new design being used by NYCDOT, its impacts are being analyzed to determine if the perceived benefits reported by cyclists are confirmed with hard data.

There was a group of cyclists in attendance who expressed enthusiastic support for installing offset crossings at some intersections within CB8; some committee members were also supportive, while others were concerned about how these lanes would impact general traffic movement, and wished for a more formal presentation from NYCDOT. The Committee ultimately agreed that NYCDOT should come back with a formal presentation from a member of the bike group, and they have been invited to present at the next Transportation Committee meeting.

Item 4: Discussion of Neighborhood Loading Zone Program – Joint Item with Small Business Committee

This item is a follow-up to a December 2018 Transportation Committee discussion regarding opportunities to provide dedicated curbside space for e-commerce deliveries and loading and unloading of for-hire vehicle passengers. Since that time, NYCDOT has initiated a Neighborhood Loading Zone Demonstration Program, which is currently being piloted in select neighborhoods, including the Upper West Side and Chelsea. Based on past interest expressed by CB8's Transportation Committee in addressing persistent issues of double parking, NYCDOT was invited to provide an overview of this program, which was developed to address double parking and aims to reduce double parking on narrow residential streets by providing space at the curb for activities such as package deliveries by commercial vehicles, taxi and car service pick-up and drop-off, and active loading and unloading of personal vehicles.

NYCDOT Manhattan Deputy Borough Commissioner Jennifer Sta. Ines answered questions and addressed the status of the program. She indicated that the zones that have been developed include a very small percentage of parking spaces that have been converted to such loading zones, and revert back to general parking during evenings and overnights. She also reiterated that this program is geared toward addressing residential blocks rather than commercial corridors, and the loading zones are intended for expeditious loading/unloading, which is understood to be less than 30 minutes in duration. Ms. Sta. Ines noted that there are no plans to expand the program until the performance and impacts of the initial demonstration zones have been assessed, and that NYCDOT will report back to CB8 upon determining the future of the program and potential expansion plans, if any.

Item 5: Discussion of the \$2.50 Congestion Fee Assessed on Yellow Cabs in Manhattan South of 96th Street

Following constituent and member comments at recent CB8 Full Board meetings regarding the \$2.50 congestion fee assessed on Yellow Cabs in Manhattan south of 96th Street, the Transportation Committee held this discussion to consider the merits of this policy.

The \$2.50 fee is a component of the New York State budget passed in March 2018, which also includes a \$2.75 fee on other non-shared for-hire rides such as those provided by transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft, and a \$0.75 fee on TNC shared rides such as those provided by Via, UberPool and Lyft Line. These fees went into effect in February 2019, and are separate from the legislation that authorized congestion pricing for any vehicle entering the congestion zone below 60th Street that will go into effect in 2021, though both share the same objectives in regards to providing dedicated funding to support transit improvement for MTA agencies such as New York City Transit subways and buses.

Although one member expressed support for the fee based on its intent to fund transit improvements and discourage use of vehicles that contribute to congestion, the \$2.50 fee was viewed in a negative light by most Committee members for a myriad of reasons:

- The fee appears to unfairly target CB8 residents, since the zone in which the fee is in effect extends to 96th Street, as opposed to the zone below 60th Street in which a congestion fee will be imposed on all vehicles;
- The fee unfairly targets seniors and individuals who lack access to or struggle to use smart phones apps needed to request Uber/Lyft/Via rides; these individuals tend to be more prevalent in CB8 than many other areas of New York City;
- The fee presents a burden to persons with mobility challenges who struggle to use public transportation due to lack of accessibility at many subway stations and bus service that can be slow and unreliable and may not be operating during certain dayparts; there is also less oversight of TNC companies making wheelchair accessible vehicles available to passengers requiring them;
- The \$2.50 fee is most severely felt by residents who must use taxis rather than those who choose to do so;
- The fee can be perceived as a "pink tax" that discriminates against women who for safety reasons may prefer to use a Yellow Taxi, especially late at night

- There has been widespread reporting of the struggles of taxi drivers, who have been faced with declining incomes, medallions that have lost their value, and increased stress that has resulted in mental health decline and even death by suicide of those most severely affected;
- The use of Yellow Taxis, regulated by the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission, should be encouraged rather than being burdened with a fee that creates a disincentive to use them;
- The fee on Yellow Taxis being nearly in parity with the fee applicable to rides provided by TNC services effectively levels the playing field at a time where Yellow Taxi availability, usage and mileage traveled by vehicles (including “cruising” mileage where vehicles are unoccupied by passengers) has been dwarfed by Uber and Lyft. According to recent studies, this influx of TNC vehicles has had a significant impact on congestion in Manhattan. TNC vehicles are maxed out at an 80,000 vehicle cap (compared to 13,587 Yellow Taxi medallions), and are reported to be cruising 41% of the time. Cruising by TNCs now exceeds cruising by Yellow Taxis, and total cruising by all for hire vehicles has more than doubled since 2013. This also contributes to air quality degradation and congestion.

The outcome of this discussion was the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the 2018-19 New York State Budget law included congestion fees assessed on for-hire vehicles in Manhattan south of 96th Street amounting to \$2.50 for Yellow Taxis, \$2.75 for non-shared rides provided by Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) and \$0.75 for shared rides provided by TNCs; and

WHEREAS, congestion fees assessed on rides in for-hire vehicles in Manhattan South of 96th Street went into effect in February 2019;

WHEREAS, Yellow Taxis are a critical component of New York City’s transportation network, and serve as a lifeline for residents with mobility challenges that are unable to easily use subways and buses due to lack of ADA access, unreliable service and limited service hours; and

WHEREAS, there are no elevators at Lexington Ave. Subway Stations at 68th, 77, and 96th Streets, and only 1 elevator serving the uptown local platform at 86th Street;

WHEREAS, large numbers of seniors reside and utilize services in Community District 8 Manhattan, many of whom may not own smart phones or may not be technology savvy and thus are unable to use TNC services; Yellow Taxis can be hailed on-street and do not require access to or the ability to use smart phones to request rides;

WHEREAS, Community District Eight’s hospitals and medical offices are a major trip generator for taxis, serving population groups that are particularly sensitive to the \$2.50 congestion fee;

WHEREAS, the Congestion Fee on Yellow Taxis South of 96th Street is not congruent with the congestion zone that will go into effect in 2021 south of 60th Street, and therefore appears to target certain neighborhoods such as those in Community District 8; and

WHEREAS, the Congestion Fee on Yellow Taxis south of 96th Street is only marginally lower than fees assessed on rides provided by TNC operators, creating a disincentive to use a city-regulated transportation service; and

WHEREAS, TNC vehicles have inundated Manhattan with 80,000 vehicles compared to only 13,587 yellow taxis, and have been found to be a major contributor to congestion and reduced vehicular speeds; and

WHEREAS, cruising of for-hire vehicles has more than doubled since 2018, and has been significantly impacted by TNC vehicles that cruise without passengers 41% of the time, impacting congestion and air quality; and

WHEREAS, yellow taxi drivers have struggled with stress and mental health challenges as they have struggled to compete with TNC services and medallion values have rapidly declined; and

WHEREAS, the \$2.50 is a burdensome fee for persons living on limited incomes that have no other viable transportation options for certain trips, and can be viewed by certain groups as a pink tax that most severely affects women who choose to use taxis at night for safety reasons;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Community Board 8 Manhattan calls for the New York State Assembly, Senate and Governor to implement laws that eliminate the \$2.50 fee assessed on Yellow Taxis in Manhattan South of 96th Street.

Yes (7): Lowell Barton, Lori Bores, Rebecca Dangoor, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Rita Popper, Jordan Wouk (public member)

No (1): Billy Freeland

Abstain (1): Michele Birnbaum

Item 6: Updates from the New York City Department of Transportation

There were no updates provided by NYCDOT Staff.

Item 7: Old Business

There was no old business.

Item 8: New Business

A committee member advised that he observed US Postal Service vehicles illegally parking in the 2nd Avenue bus lane certain days between 7AM and 10AM. It was recommended that a letter from the Chair of Community Board 8 be sent to the Post Office Manager to convey the board's concerns.

A member of the public noted that the roadway surface on 91st Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues (which is closed to vehicular traffic) is in poor condition. DOT staff advised that they are aware of the issue and conducted a site visit; the issue appears to be caused by some type of leak, which is being assessed by both NYCDEP and outside engineers.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50PM.

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