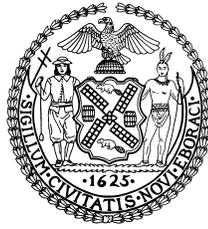


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**The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8
Transportation Committee
Wednesday January 8, 20, 6:30 PM
New York Blood Center - Auditorium**

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, Alida Camp, Rebecca Dangoor, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Valerie Mason, Sharon Pope-Marshall, Rita Popper, Barry Schneider, Tricia Shimamura, Charles Warren, Jack Zimmerman, Peter Borock (public member),

Absent (Excused): Rebecca Lamorte

Absent (Unexcused): Jordan Wouk (public member)

Resolutions for Approval:

Item 1: Offset Crossings

Item 3: 59th Street Bridge – Request for NYCDOT to Study Converting Outer Roadway from Vehicular Use to Bike/Pedestrian Use

***Item 4: Congestion Pricing – Request for Manhattan Representation on the Traffic Mobility Review Board Representation**

**unanimous*

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM.

Item 1: Presentation by NYC Dept. of Transportation regarding Bike Lane Offset Crossings

Carl Sundstrum, Sr. Program Analyst with NYCDOT's Office of Street Improvement Programs, presented an overview of the way that NYCDOT conducts its planning, design and evaluation of its protected bike lanes. He described various treatments that are used by NYCDOT, how they are perceived by cyclists and drivers of cars in terms of comfort, safety, and understanding how they function, and how the data is used to assess actual safety.

The two common designs that have primarily been used by NYCDOT at intersections with protected bike lanes are split phase and mixing zones; split phase refers to the signal progression which dedicates a portion of the signal cycle for turning bikes, while mixing zones refer to a break in the protected bike lane to allow a vehicular turning lane to be provided. Along 1st and 2nd Avenues, mixing zones are prevalent, with split phases at certain intersections with higher volumes of left-turning vehicles.

Protected bike lanes have resulted in a 30% decrease in crashes compared to the period prior to installation; these rates are similar in both split-phase and mixing zone locations, though the number of crashes has dropped more significantly where split-phase intersections were implemented since they were installed at intersections that had a history of more crashes.

Offset crossings are a newer design that is beginning to be introduced by NYCDOT in response to cyclists reporting their discomfort with mixing zones, as vehicles approaching from behind and the break in the protected bike lane where the turning lane is situated puts cyclists in an uneasy and unsafe situation. The design of offset crossings is meant to reduce this discomfort by eliminating the mixing zone and adding treatments, pedestrian islands and speed bumps that increase visibility of cyclists to drivers and force vehicles to make wider turns at slower speeds. The design was intended to be intuitive, safe and comfortable for all users; preliminary assessments based on intercept surveys of cyclists show that there is a much greater sense of comfort at offset crossing intersections compared to mixing zones. Offset crossings also help with “daylighting”, allowing drivers, cyclists and pedestrians approaching intersections to be more visible to each other; the elimination of the dedicated turning lane also would allow some of the roadway to be reclaimed for other uses, such as parking, Citi Bike, among others.

Given the positive responses and assessment of the offset crossing design, it is now NYCDOT’s default design for protected bike lane intersections, and NYCDOT will be gradually be replacing mixing zones with offset crossings as roadways are repaved, sooner if there are construction projects scheduled to occur prior to the 5-year cyclical repaving schedules. NYCDOT did not have specific information available on hand regarding the paving cycles of 1st and 2nd avenues, and promised to provide the dates to the Board office. NYCDOT continues to assess safety of bike lanes, and will not hesitate to convert intersections that have specific safety issues to offset crossings when necessary; this is the case at 1st Avenue at 61st Street.

Among members of the public who commented, the vast majority were cyclists who strongly supported the conversion of mixing zones to offset crossings, viewing them as much safer and a better design and hoping to see them installed as soon as possible. Board members had continuing concerns that there is a lack of education regarding bike laws and bike lane usage, that bike lanes and inappropriate behaviors are not sufficiently enforced, and that pedestrian safety must be better spotlighted when considering construction or changes to bike infrastructure. One member noted there isn’t enough data available to quantify the impacts of offset crossings on the road network and from a safety standpoint for both cyclists and pedestrians; one member highlighted that some Citi Bike stations are placed in locations that encourage users to ride bikes the wrong way on the street to access the nearby bike lane. A comment was made indicating that the offset crossing pedestrian island should be raised rather than painted as is currently being done.

Additionally, a few members questioned the philosophy of NYCDOT gradually converting intersections to offset crossings if there may be immediate safety benefits, and that waiting for cyclical recycling contradicts the intent of Vision Zero. In response, the following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; 1st and 2nd Avenues within CB8 have protected bike lanes in which the majority of intersections have mixing zones; and

WHEREAS; NYCDOT is now featuring offset crossings as its standard intersection design for new protected bike lanes and converting existing mixing zones with offset crossings in conjunction with cyclical repaving; and

WHEREAS; Offset crossings are perceived as being a more comfortable and amenable design for cyclists than mixing zones, and may also increase visibility of pedestrians; and

WHEREAS; perceived and actual safety upgrades to the transportation network should be implemented in an expeditious fashion and not be put on hold until other scheduled construction work is to commence;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 requests that NYCDOT accelerate the installation of upgraded bike turning zones and conversion to offset crossings along 1st and 2nd Avenues, except in locations where NYCDOT determines they are not feasible.

Yes (12+1): Barton, Bores, Camp, Dangoor, Freeland, Lader, Mason, Pope-Marshall, Popper, Schneider, Warren, Zimmerman, Borock (public member)

No (0): None

Abstain (2): Birnbaum, Shimamura

Item 2: Discussion of congestion on Lexington Ave. at 78th Street related to construction of 148 East 78th Street

This item was in response to complaints regarding traffic congestion along Lexington Avenue in the upper 70s, which was voiced to CB8 following the implementation of the Lexington Avenue bus lane in the fall of 2019. The culprit appeared to be construction at 148 Lexington Avenue on the southeast corner at 78th Street, where demolition and construction related activity has required the left parking lane and left general traffic lane to be blocked. This has resulted in only one general traffic lane alongside the new bus lane, along with a parking lane on the west side of Lexington Avenue. The construction-related lane blockages is expected to continue into 2021, when construction of the new residential building is scheduled to be completed.

Colleen Chattergoon, NYCDOT's liaison to CB8, reported that the west curbside across from the construction site was changed to a no stopping anytime zone for the duration of the project, but at some point in time the temporary signage was removed or stolen. The signage will be replaced, which would allow two general traffic lanes to be maintained alongside the bus lane. She explained that this is an operations issue, and that it was the responsibility of the developer to ensure the no standing zone signage was in place. NYCDOT has inspectors available 24 hours a day, and any future incidents of non-compliance regarding the site's construction operations or the no stopping zone associated with the site should be reported immediately to NYCDOT. Committee members expressed frustration that the permitting process is not threatened by negligence such as this occurrence, and that there are so many instances in which construction overtakes roadway right-of-way meant for use by pedestrians, bikes and cars. It was noted that this issue, and the costs and potential monetization of these activities, is being assessed by a transportation fellow working on behalf of CB8.

Item 3: Discussion of a proposal to convert the South Outer Roadway of the Queensboro Bridge to an ADA Accessible Pedestrian Path

This proposal is to close the south outer roadway of the Queensboro Bridge, which would allow one outer roadway to be dedicated to bike traffic and the other dedicated to pedestrian traffic and be ADA compliant. This item was brought to CB8's attention by the office of Borough President Gale Brewer in the form of a letter to NYCDOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg. The letter, which included CB8 as a recipient, expressed strong support for this concept; the concept is also supported by Councilman Ben Kallos. In response to a request to Borough President's office to present the proposal, staff suggested Bike New York conduct the presentation role in formulating the concept,

Jon Orcutt, Bike New York's Communications Director, described the existing conditions and why the concept was developed. He described the current conditions on north outer roadway, which provides a non-ADA accessible 4-foot wide pedestrian path, which is separated from a 6-foot wide bikeway with serving bi-directional bike traffic. The bikeway is substandard compared to current design standards of 12-feet, or an absolute minimum of 8 feet in the most constrained conditions. The current narrow width, combined with increasing usage and fast bike speeds caused by the steep decline along some segments of the bridge, create safety hazards for both cyclists and pedestrians. Bike New York also believes that recent declines in vehicular activity on the bridge (down 8.5% between 2006 and 2016) and increased bike activity (up 35% between 2012 and 2017, now over 5,000 bikes per weekday) are expected to

continue in the coming years, especially considering the growing employment market of Long Island City and the often overcrowded conditions on the 7 Train. These factors, according to Bike New York, would support the proposed conversion of the lane from vehicular use to a non-motorized use, which would result in a total of 8 vehicular lanes.

Mr. Orcutt emphasized that this is conceptual only, and that the intent of the presentation was not to propose details but to demonstrate how this proposal is potentially feasible pending further analysis and design work. NYCDOT has indicated that they will conduct a study of “different lane scenarios” to determine if permanently closing the south outer roadway and converting it to a pedestrian path would be feasible. Upcoming rehabilitation of the upper road deck may also provide an opportunity for NYCDOT to collect relevant data and perform analysis; Colleen Chattergoon of NYCDOT noted that CB8 will be briefed in detail on this upcoming project in February. If this concept were to move forward, it would not do so until after the bridge rehabilitation project is completed, at the earliest.

Questions and comments posed in response to presentation touched on whether discussion of this item is premature without any preliminary data analysis being performed, and without any sense of how traffic conditions on bridge approaches within and just outside CB8 may be impacted, especially with congestion pricing on the horizon potentially causing drivers to change their behaviors. There were also comments from those who had firsthand experience as cyclists and pedestrians who used the current north outer roadway amenities and felt very unsafe and fearful of being hurt by speeding bikes on the narrow pathways; it was also suggested that interim solutions to address these existing safety concerns be looked into. The ensuing recommendation was to request that NYCDOT not only perform assessments of vehicular traffic to determine if closing the outer roadway to vehicular traffic could work on a permanent basis, but to also study whether converting it to bike/pedestrian uses would be feasible operationally and if there are any shorter-term actions that can be performed to address existing safety issues as soon as possible.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; the north outer roadway of the Queensboro Bridge is currently a dual bicycle and pedestrian pathway that provides a substandard 6 total feet of space for bicycles traveling in both directions; and

WHEREAS; current design standards for 2-way bikeways call for 8-feet in width; and

WHEREAS; the existing pedestrian lane does not meet the standards mandated under the Americans with Disabilities Act; and

WHEREAS; pedestrian space on the bridge is limited to 4-feet in width, which creates a sense of danger for pedestrians sharing the roadway with faster moving bicycles; and

WHEREAS; existing safety issues on the bike/pedestrian roadway require immediate attention to reduce risks to persons currently using the bridge to walk or bike; and

WHEREAS; the upcoming rehabilitation of the upper roadway will result in operational changes on the bridge and provide opportunities to assess impacts of changes to the road network; and

WHEREAS; vehicular traffic has declined in recent years on the Queensboro Bridge; and

WHEREAS; increased development and employment activity in Long Island City has resulted in significant increases in bicycle trips across the Queensboro Bridge; and

WHEREAS; the upcoming introduction of congestion pricing may further result in decreased vehicular traffic and may encourage more bicycling between Manhattan and Queens; and

WHEREAS; eliminating vehicular traffic on the south outer roadway of the Queensboro bridge would allow bicyclists and pedestrians to each have a dedicated roadway that would meet current design guidelines, including ADA requirements for pedestrians;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 requests that NYCDOT conduct a study of the proposal to eliminate vehicular traffic on the south outer roadway of the Queensboro Bridge and convert it to a dedicated ADA accessible pedestrian walkway or bicycle route; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Board 8 requests that NYCDOT complete this study as soon as possible, and conduct it in conjunction with the soon to commence project to rehabilitate the upper roadway of the Queensboro Bridge; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NYCDOT assess opportunities to provide safer and improved pedestrian amenities on the Queensboro bridge that can be implemented in a short-term timeframe prior to any potential future closure of the south outer roadway to vehicular traffic.

Yes (11+1): Barton, Bores, Camp, Dangoor, Freeland, Lader, Pope-Marshall, Popper, Warren, Zimmerman, Borouk (public member)

No (0): None

Abstain (3): Birnbaum, Mason, Schneider

Item 4: Discussion of Community District 8 Preparation for Implementation of Congestion Pricing south of 60th Street

The upcoming introduction of congestion pricing for vehicles traveling on Manhattan roads below 60th street, which per state law may begin as early as January 1, 2021, is less than a year away. With the boundary of the congestion zone located within the boundaries of CB8, and with the policies that will dictate how congestion pricing will be administered yet to be determined, CB8 members and constituents have many questions and concerns that they believe need to be communicated to local and state elected officials and agencies to get a sense of how they may be impacted by the implementation of congestion pricing and what preparations are being made in regards to CB8's road network and transit services.

The following is a list of questions and concerns raised by both CB8 members and constituents in attendance, which will be included in a letter from the Board to all local and state elected officials and stakeholder agencies:

- Will the decision making process be done in a transparent fashion? Or will decisions be made behind closed doors?
- Will there be public input opportunities from local residents and constituents?
- Will there be local representation on the Traffic Mobility Review Board, which is the state panel that will be determining the policies regarding fees, exemptions, offsets against other tolls paid, and discounts? The Board is expected to be comprised of one person appointed by the Mayor, one representing the Long Island Railroad Service Area, one representing the Metro North Service Area, and the remainder appointed by the Governor. The Board will be making recommendations to the MTA board, which has the ultimate decision making power in regard to policy and implementation.
- Will drivers who cross 60th Street to access the outbound upper level of the Queensboro Bridge via 57th Street or the eastbound outer roadway via 59th Street be charged the congestion fee? If fees are assessed in those instances but not for vehicles accessing the lower level via 60th Street or southbound 2nd Avenue, will that result in significant changes in driver behavior and result in increased traffic volumes along 2nd Avenue in the 60s?

- What are the expected changes in traffic volumes and conditions on roadways within CB8, especially in areas near the congestion zone boundary? Will this necessitate any changes to the traffic network, including signal timing, lane restrictions, or other strategies?
- Is NYCDOT considering changing parking regulations within CB8, especially along streets in the 60s just before the congestion zone boundary?
- Will NYC Transit be introducing additional bus and subway service, as was done in other cities that implemented congestion pricing, to accommodate persons who switch from driving to transit in order to avoid paying the congestion fee?
- How is the upcoming rehabilitation of the Queensboro Bridge upper roadway expected to impact traffic on the East Side, and how is congestion pricing expected to further impact conditions?
- Are any governmental agencies going to be investigating parking availability and whether garages near the zone are acting in good faith or engaging in price gouging?
- Will there be new physical infrastructure that will need to be mounted and installed to read EZ passes or photograph license plates, such as cameras? If so, what will its design be, and what are the locations in which it will be installed?
- Can a simple but good map be produced that depicts how congestion pricing will work, similar to the map that was provided by Sam Schwartz in a past Congestion Pricing Proposal?

In addition to the above questions, Paul Goebel, a Transportation Analyst for the office of Borough President Gale Brewer, referenced a recent report published by her office offering several case studies of cities with residential parking permits. Other comments included how congestion pricing will impact business owners who conduct business and perform deliveries on both sides of the congestion zone, as well as business improvement districts that will be bisected by the congestion zone boundary.

There was widespread concern regarding the lack of local representation on the Traffic Mobility Review Board; it was especially disheartening to CB8 members that it seems as though there won't be any representation on the Board among anyone representing any part of Manhattan. CB8 Chair Alida Camp stated that she will be writing a letter to be shared with other Manhattan Community Boards asking that they get behind her proposal that there be two Manhattan representatives on the review board – one from within the zone, one from north of the zone.

A member recommended that a Congestion Pricing Task Force be formed, similar to the 2nd Avenue Subway Task Force, which would be focused solely on working with stakeholders on issues regarding its implementation and impacts within CB8. There was support for such a Task Force, though there was disagreement as to whether it should be a CB8 Task Force exclusively or if it should be extended to include CB7, which shares some of the same issues as a community on the border of the zone.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS; State law will allow congestion pricing to go into effect for vehicles operating on roadways south of 60th Street as early as January 1, 2021; and

WHEREAS; no policy decisions regarding the implementation of congestion pricing have been made to date; and

WHEREAS; no city or state agency has presented a plan that describes preparations for implementation of congestion pricing, including any required infrastructure implementation or anticipated changes to roadway and transit operations or parking regulations; and

WHEREAS; Community Board 8 Manhattan is especially concerned that city and state governmental entities are very unprepared for the introduction of congestion pricing; and

WHEREAS; the Traffic Review Mobility Board will be responsible for developing policies regarding fees, fee offsets, exemptions and discounts; and

WHEREAS; the Traffic Review Mobility Board is to be comprised of six members, all of whom have yet to be appointed; and

WHEREAS; it is absolutely critical that the Traffic Review Mobility Board operate in a transparent manner, be representative of all types of communities that will be uniquely impacted by the policies that it formulates;

WHEREAS; the impacts of congestion pricing will be especially significant across Manhattan, with separate issues and likely impacts for communities north and south of the congestion zone boundary;

WHEREAS; it is in the best interest of all communities affected by congestion pricing that all essential policies and preparations are well thought out and carefully implemented to avoid a transportation network breakdown upon implementation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 requests that there be two representatives from Manhattan appointed to the Traffic Review Mobility Board – one from above 60th Street, one from below 60th Street.

Yes (13+1): Birnbaum Bores, Camp, Dangoor, Freeland, Lader, Mason, Pope-Marshall, Popper, Schneider, Warren, Zimmerman, Borouk (public member)

No (0): None

Item 5: Updates from the NYC Department of Transportation

Colleen Chattergoon, NYCDOT Liaison to CB8, provided the following updates:

- NYCDOT is working on various safety improvement projects within CB8; pre-meetings regarding these projects will be held with representatives from CB8 and elected officials.
- NYCDOT will be briefing the Transportation Committee in February on the plans for the reconstruction of the upper bridge deck of the Queensboro Bridge;

CB8 Co-Chair Craig Lader advised that CB8 had received letters from NYCDOT indicating that they had implemented the requested ambulette parking in front of 309 East 94th Street and a weekday daytime no standing zone on East 90th Street by Asphalt Green’s 555 East 90th Street entrance. NYCDOT indicated that although the East 90th Street request was for the hours of 8AM to 5PM, the timeframe for the signage installed was 7AM to 7PM to maintain consistency with parking restrictions made elsewhere for similar reasons.

A member also revisited comments made in the past regarding Citi Benches in which the paint is peeling. The complaints originally involved benches on 72nd Street; other members noted this condition is prevalent at many benches across CB8. Ms. Chattergoon suggested that CB8 write a letter to the NYCDOT Borough Commissioner stating our belief that the benches are defective and noting examples of benches in which they are peeling.

A member noted that the bench on the east side of 79th Street and 3rd Avenue is not sturdy and in need of repair.

Items 6 and 7: Old and New Business

A member of the public requested an update on the East Side Access Project. The effort, which will provide Long Island Railroad Access to Grand Central Terminal, will utilize the 63rd Street tunnel, and does have construction impacts on the East 60s.

A board member requested that representatives from Fairway be invited to a future meeting to discuss loading and unloading activities in front of their storefront in the street and on the sidewalk, which has been a persistent issue since the store opened in 2011.

A member of the public acknowledged the death of a pediatrician who was killed while riding his bike commuting between his Upper West Side residence and his medical practice located in CB8 along the 96th Street Transverse. The speaker highlighted the need for safe crosstown bike and pedestrian crossings to and through Central Park.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 PM.

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