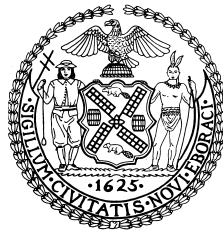


Nicholas Viest
Chair

Latha Thompson
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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

Transportation Committee

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

MSK-Rockefeller Research Laboratories

430 East 67th Street (First-York) Room RRL-103

New York, NY

6:30pm

Minutes

Present: Lowell Barton, Michele Birnbaum, Jeffrey Escobar, A. Scott Falk, Lorance Hockert, Jonathan Horn, Rita Popper, H. Barry Schneider, Judith Schneider, Teri Slater, Charles Warren, & Hedi White; Michael Dillon (Public Member) & David Menegon (Public Member)

Excused: Lori Ann Bores, Helene Simon

The Meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM by Co-Chairs Charles Warren & A. Scott Falk.

1. A request to restore the X90 Express Bus.

This item was added to the agenda in response to an April 8 letter from Assemblymember Micah Kellner to NYC Transit requesting the restoration of the X90 Express Bus, which was eliminated during the 2010 service cuts. Ethel Sussman of Council Member Jessica Lappin's office attended the Committee meeting and expressed the Council Member's support for the request.

In June 2010, the MTA made several cuts to transit service, including the elimination of the X90 Express Bus from Yorkville to Lower Manhattan. The X90 operated only during peak morning and evening hours and was ridden by approximately 620 daily commuters, many of whom were displaced onto the M15-SBS and the Lexington Avenue subway line.

Marcus Book of NYC Transit mentioned that Transit has been receiving various requests for service restorations after recent news of an operating surplus, and that Transit may propose some restorations in their upcoming budget in July. The Committee passed the following resolution in support of the restoration of the X90:

WHEREAS New York City Transit eliminated the X90 Express Bus during the so-called Domsday Service Cuts of 2010, and

WHEREAS the X90 Express Bus carried hundreds of CB8M commuters daily between Yorkville and Lower Manhattan, and

WHEREAS the alternate routes to and from Lower Manhattan include the M15-SBS and Lexington Avenue subway line, which are already overcrowded during the peak hours when the X90 was formerly in operation, and thus negatively impacting more riders than those displaced by the service elimination, and

WHEREAS New York City Transit will soon be proposing potential service changes in their upcoming budget,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Community Board 8 Manhattan calls upon New York City Transit to restore the X90 Express Bus.

Approved: 11 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Escobar, Falk, Horn, Popper, B. Schneider, J. Schneider, Slater, Warren, White

Public Member Votes: 2 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon, Menegon

2. A discussion of the reduction in MTA MetroCard bus and van service.

Council Member Lappin's office had questioned the ongoing temporary service reduction in our area for the MetroCard Vans, which sell and refill MetroCards. Affected locations in our district include 72nd & York, 79th & York, and 79th & Third; MetroCard Bus service within our area has not been reduced.

Marcus Book of NYC Transit explained that there was reduced availability of the buses and vans as a direct result of Hurricane Sandy: Some Mobile Sales vehicles are being used extensively to sell MetroCards to riders on the Rockaway Peninsula for temporary shuttle service, until such service is restored in the coming months. NYC Transit made the decision to temporarily reduce service in Manhattan because of the accessibility of and the number of sites in the borough, as compared to the other boroughs.

The Committee inquired as to whether the service reductions could be rotated, rather than having reductions in the same locations each month, in the interest of fairness, and Mr. Book said he would look into that.

3. A request to close the sidewalk in front of 312-318 East 95th Street to install the Con Ed vaults.

Trevor Day School is in the process of constructing a new building at 312-318 East 95th Street to house its Upper School. This construction includes the installation of four sidewalk vaults to house transformers and electrical equipment, necessitating the full closure of the sidewalk in front of the site for a period of 8 to 12 weeks, currently anticipated for July to September 2013. This sidewalk closure will require pedestrians to use the north sidewalk between First and Second Avenues except for local access to the buildings on the south side of the block.

Representatives from the school noted that their contractors will be installing the vaults with grilles, and therefore maintaining control of the timing, rather than waiting for ConEd to do this installation. The transformers will be located about 10 feet below the sidewalk, and will not be located near the building entrances to discourage people from standing above the vaults. They also noted that the new building will use geothermal and solar power. There were no objections to this request.

4. Continuing discussion of the Queensboro Bridge Bike Connections.

Alan Ma from NYC DOT's Bicycle Program made a presentation on the updates to DOT's proposal to improve bicycle connections to the Queensboro Bridge (QBB) and complete the construction-related gap in the First Avenue bike lane/bike path (as a result of DEP's now-completed 59th Street Water Main project).

To recap the previous presentation from the April 3 meeting:

There currently exists an enhanced shared bicycle lane on First Avenue that terminates at East 56th Street, and a protected bike path north of East 61st Street; there is no path or lane on First Avenue between 56th and 61st Streets. The QBB bike path leaves cyclists at the SW corner of First Avenue and E. 60th St., in this gap in the bicycle network; the current route that cyclists are supposed to take to reach Second Avenue is to ride up First Avenue to 61st Street, then ride over to Second Avenue and past the mouth of the QBB.

DOT proposes to add the following in the area around the bridge:

- an enhanced shared lane on First Ave. between E. 56th & E. 59th St. (extends enhanced shared lane three blocks north of its current termination)
- a two-way protected bike path on First Ave. between E. 59th & E. 60th St., beneath the QBB
- a one-way protected bike path on First Ave. between E. 60th & E. 61st St. (extends protected bike path one block south, and adds two new concrete pedestrian refuge islands)
- shared bicycle lanes in each direction on East 59th Street between First and Second Ave.
- an enhanced shared lane on Second Ave. between E. 59th and 58th St. (extends enhanced shared lane one block north of its current start)

DOT indicated that the project benefits were as follows:

- increased safety for all roadway users
- better continuity of the bicycle network
- safe connection from QBB to downtown bike routes
- shorter pedestrian crossings & greener streets, due to planted pedestrian refuge islands

The Committee had laid this item over to our May 1 meeting for continued discussion and asked DOT to take a closer look at the specifics of their proposal for the NW corner of 59th St. & First Ave.

The updated proposal incorporates a split phase at the intersection of 59th Street & First Avenue, which currently has two phases and a leading pedestrian interval (LPI). Under the revised proposal, this intersection will now have the following three phases:

1. Cars traveling north on First Avenue have a green light, but cars waiting to turn left onto 59th Street will have a red light. Pedestrians will have the Walk signal to cross 59th Street (north/south), and cyclists traveling south on First Avenue will have a bicycle traffic signal allowing them to turn right onto 59th while yielding to pedestrians.
2. Pedestrians at the NW & SW corners will have a Don't Walk signal, and south-bound cyclists will have a red light. Cars turning left on 59th Street and cars going north up First Avenue will all have a green light. Pedestrians on the NE & SE corners will still have the Walk signal to cross 59th Street.
3. There will be a green light for cars on 59th Street, and red lights for cars and cyclists on First Avenue. Pedestrians will be able to cross First Avenue (east/west).

With the new split phase, there should be no time when pedestrians, cyclists, and cars are simultaneously moving in the vicinity of the western crosswalk on 59th Street, which was a point of great concern at the previous meeting.

Hayes Lord, director of DOT's Bicycles Program, discussed DOT's new Street Safety Manager (SSM) program and said they would deploy SSMs to the Upper East Side in the coming months.

The Committee passed the following resolution by a vote of 11 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention (with 2 public member Yes votes):

WHEREAS NYC DOT proposes to close the gap in the First Avenue bicycle lanes and to improve bike network connections between the Queensboro Bridge and the Second Avenue bike route, and

WHEREAS DOT proposes to extend the northbound protected First Avenue bicycle path one block south from its current start at 61st Street, adding two pedestrian refuge islands (at 60th & 61st), and

WHEREAS DOT proposes to install a protected two-way bicycle path for the single block of First Avenue between 59th & 60th, underneath the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge, and

WHEREAS DOT proposes to add shared bicycle lanes in both directions along East 59th Street between First & Second Avenues, and

WHEREAS DOT proposes to extend the existing enhanced shared bicycle lanes within Community Board 6 on both First & Second Avenues up to 59th Street, and

WHEREAS the proposal will allow bicyclists to more safely travel from the Queensboro Bridge to the Second Avenue bicycle route, and

WHEREAS the proposal causes no reduction in through traffic lanes on First Avenue, and

WHEREAS the proposal for the intersection of East 59th Street & First Avenue has been revised following community board input to involve three signal phases as follows:

1. Green for cars traveling north on First Ave., but Red for cars waiting to turn left onto 59th St. Pedestrians will have the Walk signal to cross 59th Street (north/south), and cyclists traveling south on First Avenue will have a bicycle traffic signal allowing them to turn right onto 59th while yielding to pedestrians.
2. Green for cars turning left on 59th Street & cars going north up First Ave. Pedestrians at the NW & SW corners will have a Don't Walk signal, and south-bound cyclists will have a red light. Pedestrians on the NE & SE corners will still have the Walk signal to cross 59th Street.
3. Green for cars on 59th Street, and Red for cars and cyclists on First Ave. Pedestrians will be able to cross First Avenue (east/west).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8M approves the proposed Queensboro Bridge Bicycle Connections project with the following additional recommendations:

1. Accessible Pedestrian Signals should be installed at the intersection of East 59th Street and First Avenue, for pedestrians crossing in all directions, prior to the implementation of other changes at this location.
2. Dedicated bicycle signal-heads should be used on the traffic signals for south-bound cyclists at the intersection of 59th & First, with a yellow and/or blinking green signal during Phase 1 to indicate that the cyclists is permitted to turn carefully onto 59th Street, and with a steady red signal during Phases 2 and 3, when the cyclist must stop and wait.
3. Signage should be placed at the NW and SW corners to alert pedestrians to WATCH FOR TURNING BIKES, and a YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS sign should be added on 59th Street just before turning cyclists reach the pedestrian crosswalk.
4. Dedicated traffic safety enforcement should be added for the first three months after the changes are implemented.
5. DOT should examine the feasibility of a delayed green light in Signal Phase 3 for cars traveling west on East 59th St., with a leading green light for eastbound traffic, which might allow bicyclists turning left from 59th St. onto First Avenue to clear the intersection before the westbound cars begin to move.
6. DOT should propose a contextually appropriate design to be painted on the barriers beneath the Queensboro Bridge, and present the design to a joint meeting of CB8M's Landmarks and Transportation Committees for approval.

Approved: 11 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention

Yes: Barton, Birnbaum, Escobar, Falk, Hockert, Horn, Popper, B. Schneider, J. Schneider, Warren, White

Abstain: Slater

Public Member Votes: 2 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions

Yes: Dillon, Menegon

5. Old Business

There were several items raised under Old Business:

- Should the board have a policy calling upon DOT to incorporate Accessible Pedestrian Signals whenever they make a safety improvement or other traffic change that isn't being presented to the Board for approval, if such change creates a non-standard traffic pattern? This will be added to the June Committee agenda for discussion and a possible vote.
- It was reported that the DOT website now posts a required Safety Training course for delivery cyclists & a handbook for businesses employing commercial bicyclists.
- There was some debate over the appropriate method for counting and reporting public member votes, which will be referred to the Rules/Bylaws Committee for review.

6. New Business

There were several items raised under New Business:

- A Committee member mentioned that she has seen seating removed at certain bus stops. It has since been learned that some of the older shelters are being retired, and testing at some of those locations has indicated that these may not be suitable sites for the new shelters, but the DOT's Citybench program may allow for replacement of the lost seating.
- We will add to the June or July agenda a discussion of the feasibility of reversing the flow of FDR Drive traffic on East 71st and East 73rd Streets.
- We will add to the June or July agenda a discussion regarding enforcement of Failure to Yield traffic laws.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Scott Falk and Charles Warren, Co-Chairs