



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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LOWELL D. KERN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

January 7, 2020

Ed Pincar
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 37th Fl.
New York, NY 10037

Andy Byford
President
Metropolitan Transit Authority
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

William T. Morris
Chief of Transportation
New York Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

Re: Transit & Truck Priority Pilot Project

Dear Commissioner Pincar, President Byford and Chief Morris,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) thanks the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) and the MTA for presenting the first of multiple reports on the operation of the M14 Transit and Truck Priority corridor (TTP) and its impact on bus riders and on the side streets. This study¹ is performed by an independent transportation engineering firm - Sam Schwartz Consulting – for the duration of the 18 months busway pilot - as was committed by the city.

At its January 2nd Full Board meeting, by a vote of 37 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, MCB4 requests a number of adjustments enumerated below either to provide missing information or to reduce the impact of the project on specific side

¹ <http://samschwartz.com/14th-st-busway/>

streets. We are pleased that DOT expressed its commitment to implementing mitigation measures and adjustments.

Overall, MCB4 is pleased that the early results show 22% improvement in travel time westbound at peak hours, and 36% eastbound – or approximately 5.3 minutes and a 24% increase in ridership during week days. The impact on side streets vary widely, but are generally less acute than anticipated.

MCB4 received voluminous and detailed correspondence from affected residents and block associations. Community stakeholders also attended our December 2019 Transportation Committee meeting. Some of the comments were very positive, while many highlighted specific problems that need addressing.

The 14th Street TTP Pilot Project, also known as the “busway,” was implemented by the New York City Department of Transportation in October 2019, aiming to improve M14 A/D Select Bus Service operations, safety on this Vision Zero Priority Corridor, and its importance as a truck route. From 6 AM–10 PM, only buses, trucks, and emergency vehicles are allowed to drive on 14th Street from Third Avenue to Eighth Avenue heading westbound, and Ninth Avenue to Third Avenue heading eastbound. All other vehicles are allowed to drive on 14th Street for local trips and garage access but must make the next available right turn off of 14th Street. All left turns are restricted off of the TTP corridor, except for MTA buses at certain intersections. Updates to the curb regulations along the TTP corridor were implemented to prioritize drop-off and pick-up activity and commercial loading. Additional elements of the pilot include new pedestrian space around Union Square, painted curb extensions to shorten pedestrian crossings, and bus boarding platforms, which are in the process of being installed as of December 2019.

Survey Methodology

We request that you increase the measurements to adequately capture the problems reported by the neighbors and expand the outreach to the community

- The bus-mounted enforcement cameras will be activated this month. Currently, there are up to 16 traffic agents. There were reports of increased illegal vehicular activity when agents are removed. We ask that measurement be taken with and without traffic agents. This is particularly important for the vehicular traffic on 14th Street.
- Vehicle travel times and vehicle speeds on the side streets should be measured block by block, instead of the whole corridor. Land use and other conditions on each block can significantly affect the results.
- Vehicle volumes on side streets should be measured for each block, not just one or two blocks.
- In addition, measurements in the PM are not enough. The community is complaining of congestion and honking on certain blocks in the AM, after 8 PM and on the weekends.

- Turning volumes must be studied for the impacted side streets and the avenues. If the volumes increased, then turning movements increased as well, and these are the most dangerous locations for pedestrians (30% of all pedestrian fatalities in New York City occur at left turns).
- Residents complained of many firetrucks being stuck in the congestion. Will there be a study of FDNY response times in the area, especially for those trucks using 17th Street?
- The bus journey travel time is not a meaningful index and needs to be broken down to isolate bunching and timeliness indices that are typically tracked by MTA.
- The community reported that no one reached out to them. We are pleased to learn that a survey² is now available as part of a larger public outreach program that is starting now.

Bus Operation

- We understand that bus bunching - although improved - is still a serious concern on the westbound leg. What will be the remedies?
- Users complained that the schedule of buses on First and Second Avenues are not properly adjusted to offer a prompt transfer to the M14.
- We continue to regret that the Pilot does not include a testing of level boarding that would be beneficial to our neighbors with disabilities and to the riders by reducing boarding time.

Pedestrian Safety

- On Sixth Avenue, above West 14th Street, construction projects have narrowed the pedestrian paths on both sides of the avenue forcing pedestrians to walk in the street. We request measurements of the pedestrian congestion and a widening of these walking lanes.

Parking / Loading

- Deliveries are still impeded at Seventh Avenue between West 14th and West 15th Streets (Vermeer). We request that the regulation be changed to “No Parking” to allow for deliveries.
- Persons with disabilities complain that yellow taxis refuse to pick up and drop off on the corridor, even though it is allowed. Further communication to the industry would help.
- The Spanish Benevolent Society, known as “La Nacional,” located at 239 West 14th Street has frequent events and deliveries; the vehicles servicing their business receive

² <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9W5CKP2>

numerous summonses. The current regulation should be revised to allow pick up and deliveries.

Side Street Congestion

- The Sixth Avenue turn onto West 15th Street is dangerous. In August 2019, a driver hit two pedestrians in the western West 15th street crosswalk, resulting in one death and one injury. MCB4 has already requested a split phase at this intersection. We request that a fully protected signal be installed posthaste.
- On West 15th Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenue, there is honking, more buses and more trucks than usual. Signage and enforcement for honking, trucks and buses would be beneficial. We suggest that cameras be installed on the block to enforce the rules.
- Crossing West 15th Street on the east side of Seventh Avenue seems dangerous when crossing with children. Could a neck down be installed to shorten the distance?
- On West 16th Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues there is frequent congestion after 8 PM and on the weekends. MCB4 requests specific measurements be taken on this block at these hours and that solutions be proposed.
- On West 16th Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, there is increased traffic week-days in the AM. It seems to be caused by cars turning onto Sixth Avenue and blocking the single lane of traffic. MCB4 had requested a turn lane at that location with a split LPI. We are asking that DOT install such as soon as possible.
- On Seventh Avenue, the intersection with West 16th Street is often gridlocked. We suggest that the amount of signal green time on Seventh Avenue be reduced, without augmenting the green time on West 16th Street.
- On Ninth Avenue the turn-off volumes are significant. You indicated you would research and address this issue.

DOT also indicated they are reviewing the western end of the route to see the feasibility of implementing some changes to the spacing of the bus stops.

Many aspects of the plan seem to be working, but these problems need to be resolved for the pilot to be considered successful. We appreciate your prompt attention to these issues.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Dale Corvino
Co-chair
Transportation Planning Committee

Cc: Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Deborah Glick, New York State Assembly
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker of the City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Bob Gormley, Manhattan Community Board 2
Wally Rubin, Manhattan Community Board 2
Jesus Perez, Manhattan Community Board 6