

Delores Rubin
Chair

Jesse R. Bodine
District Manager

November 14, 2017

Luis Sanchez
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 37th Floor
New York, NY 10037

Marisa Lago
Chair
City Planning Commission
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Re: Pedestrian Congestion and Sidewalk Capacity Study

Dear Borough Commissioner Sanchez and Chair Lago,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) requests that the Department of Transportation (DOT) undertake – with all other appropriate agencies - a study of pedestrian congestion and sidewalk capacity use in our district, on Eighth and Ninth Avenues, and the side streets from Eighth to Tenth Avenues, from 34th to 57th Streets. MCB4, at its November 1st Full Board meeting, voted in support of this request with a vote of 34 in favor, 1 opposed, 0 abstention, and 0 present but not eligible to vote.

Manhattan Community District 4 has one of the highest walking populations in the city with major commuting hubs, such as the Port Authority and Penn Station, new residential and commercial developments and increases in tourists with luggage and street vendors, blocking pedestrian flow.

With the rezoning of Hudson Yards and Eleventh Avenue to accommodate over 120,000 workers and tens of thousands of residents, as well as the construction of 6,000 hotel rooms just east of Ninth Avenue, sidewalk demand has grown significantly and will continue to explode, while street obstructions proliferate and continuously reduce the already insufficient sidewalk capacity.

When originally installed, sidewalks were designed to serve six-story high buildings. Now some of the same sidewalks must serve 15- to 40-story high skyscrapers. On Ninth Avenue, sidewalks were further reduced in the 50's to make space for additional car lanes to service the Lincoln Tunnel, while on Eighth Avenue the subway necessitated ventilation and large grates were installed on the sidewalk.

This increase in population, along with recent legal decisions, and certain city agencies' relaxed enforcement create a situation where a majority of the sidewalk is obstructed during the day by collections of furniture, accessories and business activities. At night starting at 5 p.m., mounds of garbage overwhelm the side streets and sometimes the avenues.

The DOT and other relevant agencies should examine the safety and transportation impacts our over-congested sidewalks are having on our neighborhood. Just like the recent congestion plan the Mayor announced for drivers, the study should identify solutions, which can be implemented in the short, medium, and long term to eliminate pedestrian congestion and prioritize the increase in mobility.

Through a combination of innovative design and enforcement, the City must devise solutions to address this mounting problem that directly affects pedestrians' safety and mobility in our neighborhood.


Sincerely,



Delores Rubin
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning
Committee



Yoni Bokser
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning
Committee

cc: Hon. Jerry Nadler, U.S. Congress
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President