



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**LOWELL D. KERN**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

August 3, 2020

Polly Trottenberg  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Transportation  
55 Water Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10041

**Re: Sidewalk Extension Maintenance Requirements**

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) requests that the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) reexamine its practice of requiring a maintenance partner and insurance for the installation of temporary curb extensions. This practice limits opportunities to install pedestrian safety features in our district and indirectly contributes to avoidable pedestrian deaths and injuries. At its July 22<sup>nd</sup> Full Board meeting, MCB4 voted by 47 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote to ask that the requirement be removed.

MCB4 has sponsored an engineering study of four intersections where residents and seniors would greatly benefit from a temporary curb extension. One is adjacent to a NYCHA complex where a young boy was killed, one is at a corner where two seniors were killed, the other two are nearby large residential complexes with many seniors in affordable apartments.

According to the NYC DOT Street Design Manual<sup>1</sup>, a “curb extension” is an expansion of the curb line into the lane of the roadway adjacent to the curb (typically a parking lane) for a portion of a block either at a corner or mid-block. A “temporary curb extension” works the same way but it is created by using paint and flexible bollards instead of building a sidewalk. This allows to deploy this feature expeditiously at low cost, without relocating catch basins or other utilities.

The manual describes the numerous benefits of curb extensions (also known as neckdowns). They can enhance pedestrian safety by reducing crossing distances, relieve sidewalk crowding, slow turning vehicles, emphasize pedestrian right-of-way, and discourage truck turns onto streets

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<sup>1</sup> Street Design Manual P84. [https://www.nycstreetdesign.info/sites/default/files/2020-03/FULL-MANUAL\\_SDM\\_v3\\_2020.pdf](https://www.nycstreetdesign.info/sites/default/files/2020-03/FULL-MANUAL_SDM_v3_2020.pdf)

with No Truck regulations.

With so many benefits, this cost-effective strategy is applicable to many locations. Yet, to install a temporary sidewalk extension in the street bed, DOT requires a contract with a maintenance partner. This maintenance partner must have insurance and agree to take on specific duties, including sweeping, snow removal, and watering of any planters. Finding such partners can be a long, drawn-out process.

The Manual elsewhere states, “Where feasible and if there is a maintenance partner, design planted areas within curb extension so as to capture storm water according to current standards.” This seems to indicate that the presence of a maintenance partner is not a prerequisite across the board. We note that there is no such prerequisite to paint a bike lane, a pedestrian crossing, or stripe an area for parking. Every winter, mounds of snow accumulate where the sidewalk meets the pedestrian crossing. Why are there extraordinary requirements when pedestrian safety is concerned?

As a result, installations occur mainly in Business Improvements Districts (BID) that have the financial wherewithal to assume the costs. BIDs cover a very small portion of our district, and largely cover commercial areas. Temporary curb extensions should be installed at every applicable intersection in our neighborhood. Without changing the requirement of a maintenance partner and insurance, it will be impossible to make our streets safer in a uniform, systemic manner.

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. Richard Gottfried, NYS Assembly  
Hon. Linda B. Rosenthal, NYS Assembly  
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, NYC Council  
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, NYC Council, Chairman, Council Transportation Committee  
Ed Pincar, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Department of Transportation