



**Lowell D. Kern**  
Chair

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CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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June 8, 2021

Ed Pincar  
Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
NYC Department of Transportation  
59 Maiden Lane, 37<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10038

**Re: Eighth Avenue Extension (31<sup>st</sup> to 38<sup>th</sup> Streets)**

Dear Borough Commissioner Pincar,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) at its June 2<sup>nd</sup> Full Board meeting, by a vote of 45 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible, supports the extension of the Eighth Avenue pedestrian zone, from West 38<sup>th</sup> to West 31<sup>st</sup> Street. However, we oppose the installation of a mixing zone at the corner of Eighth Avenue and West 35<sup>th</sup> Street, where a crash resulting in a severe injury took place. We ask you to revise the design and provide the same level of safety as proposed for the other intersections on the corridor. We also recommend that the bike-share station to be located on the west side of Eighth Avenue between West 33<sup>rd</sup> and West 34<sup>th</sup> Streets not exceed 100-ft in length to allow ambulances access to CityMD.

This portion of Eighth Avenue is a key corridor bringing pedestrians to both Penn Station and Port Authority, and to major subway hubs (Times Square and 34<sup>th</sup> Street). 85% of the users of Eighth Avenue walk, but only 30% of the space is available to them. Pedestrian congestion is such that one can often observe people walking in the bike lanes or in traffic lanes. There were 148 injuries, seven severe injuries, and one fatality in the last five years.

The sidewalk extension projects undertaken in 2017 and 2019 from West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to West 38<sup>th</sup> Streets were well received and very successful.

The general configuration will be similar to the earlier projects with the added benefit of retaining the pedestrian refuges and trees on the avenue. On the west side, a 19-ft painted sidewalk extension will be added to the 15-ft sidewalk, the existing pedestrian refuges will remain with trees, with bike corrals or bike share stations adjacent to the refuges, a bike lane with parking or vertical lane divider to protect cyclists; left turn lanes with split phase signals to

separate pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles and two vehicular moving lanes. We are particularly pleased that split phase signals will be installed at all intersections (except one) as this corridor is a vision zero corridor.

However, we are dismayed that an “old style” mixing zone is being proposed at the corner of Eighth Avenue and West 35<sup>th</sup> Street where a pedestrian was severely injured. This type of intersection when installed now includes a much safer design and all previous mixing zones are being retrofitted to this new safer design. As proposed, it will lead to conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, and require a high level of alertness from all users to avoid crashes. Since this design would be the exception on this stretch, we fear that street users will assume this signal is consistent with the others and will be less vigilant than required. This could be very dangerous.

Apparently, a hotel loading zone on the south portion of the block limits the length of the turning lane to 100-ft. We should not have to choose between business and safety, and if we do, safety should come first. Here are some suggestions:

- The hotel loading zone appears to be three times longer than the current one. It could be moved closer to the south and shortened to elongate the turning lane.
- It appears that there is a full length of turning lane, albeit some of it is narrow.
- A sign and appropriate GPS communication could be implemented at West 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Eighth Avenue directing traffic to use this entrance to the tunnel in order to reduce the turning volume at West 35<sup>th</sup> Street.

Other suggestions were made to improve upon the proposed design of the mixing zones as shown:

- Extend the striped green segment from the full green to the pedestrian crossing
- Install a split LPI signal with a blinking yellow arrow
- Install a buffer between the bike lane and the vehicles and a bump at the corner of the pedestrian crossing and the bike lane as is the new standard.

In the long term, we are also concerned that such enhanced capacity for pedestrians will be taken over by open restaurants, thus eliminating the progress made. Already, three such establishments have taken over pedestrians’ extension between West 38<sup>th</sup> and West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, forcing pedestrians to detour. It is imperative that sidewalk extensions do not count as a sidewalk space in the permanent version of the law being discussed.

MCB4 is delighted that bike parking will be installed in the roadway adjacent to the pedestrian refuges. We encourage you to consider various alternatives, including enclosed, locked bike parking. We also urge you to accelerate the installation of the third phase, north of West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, and the ultimate conversion to permanent sidewalks and raised bike lanes through a capital project.

We request that every effort be made to install a split phase at West 35<sup>th</sup> Street, make the intersection as safe as possible and take the risk to inconvenience a few drivers, rather than risking pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



Christine Berthet  
Co-chair  
Transportation Planning Committee



Dale Corvino  
Co-chair  
Transportation Planning Committee