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MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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July 7, 2021

Hon. Andrew Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Holly Leicht
Executive Vice President
Real Estate Development and Planning
Empire State Development
633 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Re: High Line Extension

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) thanks the Empire State Development (ESD) for their proposal to extend the High Line at Tenth Avenue to the East then the North. Although some aspects of the proposal are attractive, we cannot support¹ it until critical features providing safety and enhancements to the pedestrian experience on the ground—as described below—are included in the project.

The project intends to create a continuous path from Penn Station, through Moynihan Train Hall and Manhattan West to Hudson Yards and the High Line Park. The High Line would be extended eastward from Tenth Avenue on West 30th Street with a purpose-built section abutting the north of the spur, providing the traditional park experience and a 9-ft wide pedestrian right of

¹ This letter was approved unanimously at the June 28th Executive Committee meeting and is subject to ratification at the July 28th Full Board meeting.

way. This section would in turn connect to Manhattan West with a north-south bridge above Dyer Avenue with a 12-ft wide pedestrian right of way; as proposed there would be no green scaping on this portion, due to the lack of light. Both sections are on Port Authority property. On the ground below, a pedestrian crossing would join the northeast corner of Dyer Avenue to the southwestern end of the pedestrian island that currently separates the western portion of Dyer Avenue and West 30th Street.

This project will transform Dyer Avenue/West 30th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, a stretch where the volume of pedestrians has increased dramatically with the opening of Hudson Yards. Yet the State plans to spend in excess of \$50 million to create an elevated park for the people above while ignoring crucial safety and quality of life issues for the people below.

This area is a maze of highway entrances, irregular street geometry, missing sidewalks, loading docks, high line pillars that obstruct drivers' views, and a poorly lit intersection under the High Line. These many challenges have been the focus of our community for years. As early as 2016, MCB4 and individual developers petitioned² NYC DOT to help mitigate the lack of safe pedestrian facilities and the hostile environment for commuters. In 2017, a newly formed Business Improvement District, Hudson Yards Hell's Kitchen Alliance, commissioned a streetscape and traffic study³ to evaluate possible improvements to pedestrian safety. In 2019, the Hell's Kitchen South Coalition (HKSC), made up of residents and stakeholders created a plan⁴ to address the serious challenges faced by the community of Hell's Kitchen South related to the Lincoln Tunnel entrances including this area.

Unfortunately, the State did not consult any of the stakeholders in order to come up with this plan.

The critical features to be included are as follows:

- We request that ESD incorporate the following safety features in the project as soon as feasible. We understand that further traffic counts may be required. MCB4 requests that ESD formally commit to completing the implementation of these features within 30 months:
 - Close the Dyer Avenue entrance at Tenth Avenue and relocate the two lanes of Dyer Avenue (from Tenth to Dyer North), to 30th Street. Today the complexity of the turning movements precludes the installation of split phase signals that would

² https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/downloads/pdf/november_2016/14_trans_letter_to_dot_re_30th_street_and_10th_avenue_pedestrian_safetywith_attachment.pdf

³ <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/03/14-TRANS-Letter-to-DOT-RE-HYHK-BID-request-for-support.pdf>

⁴ https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/04/hksc_neighborhood_plan_20190531-compressed.pdf

protect the east pedestrian crossing on Tenth Avenue from Lincoln Tunnel-bound drivers, who commonly speed to enter the highway ramp. Further, the pillars of the High Line obstruct drivers' visibility. We are pleased to note that the pillars proposed to support the new High Line extension on West 30th Street do not preclude our request.

- Create a typical city (square) intersection at Dyer Avenue and West 30th Street with four pedestrian crossings. Currently, there is no mid-block (north-south) crossing at West 30th Street, a very long block. With active Post Office loading docks on the southwest section of West 30th Street, many pedestrians may need to cross the street to reach a safer sidewalk. The property on the south side of the street is being developed for office use resulting in a growing volume of pedestrians on the ground.
- We request that the following features be incorporated in the project immediately:
 - Install architectural lighting under the High Line starting at the west side of Tenth Avenue, through the length of the extension. The new bridge will reduce natural light and generally create quality of life issues below. The lighting should be appropriate for pedestrians and be visually interesting from the street.
 - Install plantings and improvements on the island and along the pedestrian path below the High Line extension.
 - Install an interim, removable 5-ft or 6-ft tall beautification barrier at the southern boundary of the Port Authority property from Dyer to Ninth Avenue, a space that until recently was used for construction staging and is currently used as parking.

As the Port Authority Bus Terminal Replacement project proceeds over the next 10 years, the northern sidewalk of West 30th Street from Dyer to Ninth Avenue, will be dedicated to commuter bus operations; it is critical that more pedestrian right of way be provided for workers who access office buildings at ground level. We request that the southern sidewalk from Ninth to Dyer Avenue be widened with interim materials by removing a parking lane.

MCB4 believes that for this project to be transformative, it must cure long standing safety and new quality of life issues on this complex block. We look forward to working with ESD to address those issues and advance the project.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Dale Corvino
Co-chair
Transportation Planning Committee

CC: Rick Cotton, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
Ed Pincar, NYC DOT