

**JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

May 17, 2022

Thomas Foley  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Design & Construction  
30-30 Thomson Avenue  
Long Island City, NY 11101

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

**Re: Ninth Avenue Roadway Reconstruction Project**

Dear Commissioner DDC and Manhattan Borough Commissioner Pincar,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) thanks the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) for collaborating in upgrading Ninth Avenue while completing reconstruction. The project addresses longstanding requests from MCB4: the project will return to pedestrians the sidewalk space that had been taken away in the 1930s to facilitate the Lincoln Tunnel traffic. It will also improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists at every left turn on the avenue.

The project will last from May 1<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. We enthusiastically support these projects that MCB4 requested during MCB4's May 4<sup>th</sup> Full Board meeting, with a vote of 39 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible. However, we ask you to address the concerns listed below, and in particular the impact on our small businesses:

Unfortunately, at a time when our district is barely recovering from COVID, thirty-four (34) open dining sheds will be removed to allow the project to proceed. A number of restaurant owners testified that this timing will deprive them of much needed revenue. They were told that the project had already been delayed last year in order to give the owners time to recover from

CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

424 West 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite #580  
New York, NY 10001

tel: 212-736-4536  
[www.nyc.gov/mcb4](http://www.nyc.gov/mcb4)

the pandemic. DOT indicated that the current open restaurant agreement with the city specifies that in case of roadwork/utility work, the sheds must be removed without notice. According to DDC, delaying the work by even two months could jeopardize its completion and push further disruption into next year. It was also noted that doing the work block-by-block was not a viable option due to the impact on the traffic flow.

- We ask that DDC make every possible effort to communicate with the businesses that will be affected by the construction. It is critical that DDC notify the businesses every two weeks of any upcoming work that will be noisy, generate dust, and prevent businesses from receiving deliveries.

## **Project Description**

### **West 50<sup>th</sup> to West 59<sup>th</sup> Streets – Water Main project area**

- Reconstruct Ninth Avenue from West 51<sup>st</sup> to West 54<sup>th</sup> and West 55<sup>th</sup> to West 56<sup>th</sup> Streets (the balance of the blocks between West 51<sup>st</sup> and West 59<sup>th</sup> Streets were completed last year). This includes removal and replacement of concrete road base and new ConEd electrical conduits and feeders
- Install four new concrete pedestrian islands and relocate 14 previously existing ones
- Add 75% of pedestrian space to the eastern sidewalk with a painted sidewalk extension
- Shorten crossing distance on five side streets with painted bulb-outs
- Relocate the parking protected bike lane
- Replace five mixing zones with offset crossing<sup>1</sup>, a safer option for cyclists and pedestrians at left turn intersections
- Eliminate one travel lane while maintaining parking lanes on both sides. Open Restaurants will not be permitted to use the sidewalk extensions

### **West 36<sup>th</sup> to West 48<sup>th</sup> Streets**

- Repave Ninth Avenue bike lane
- Replace six mixing zones with offset crossings and painted islands

## **Concerns**

- The West 50<sup>th</sup> – West 59<sup>th</sup> project is likely to face delays, in which case the markings would not be installed due to cold weather, leaving us with no clearly-marked bike lane for another winter. We ask that you start the reconstruction and installation with the eastern side, where the markings and paint are critical.
- The eastern parking lane between West 50<sup>th</sup> and West 59<sup>th</sup> Streets sees little use. This leaves the cyclists more exposed to traffic than intended. We ask that you install jersey barriers or flexible bollards along that stretch of the bike lanes as protection for bikes instead of relying on parked cars.

---

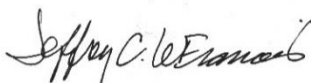
<sup>1</sup> Offset crossings separate vehicular traffic from bike traffic with a large buffer. In order to turn into a side street, the driver has to make a sharp turn left. This results in slower turning movements and gives drivers a better visibility of approaching cyclists.

- In spite of the existing signal, West 57<sup>th</sup> Street and Ninth Avenue is a dangerous intersection: in the last five years there were 15 crashes, with 17 injuries (4 cyclists and 7 pedestrians). The westbound traffic making a south turn onto Ninth Avenue conflicts with pedestrians using the south crossing on Ninth Avenue. Especially with the addition of two very large residential buildings further west on the corridor the opening of a hotel at the southwest corner, we request the installation of a split phase signal with a red arrow on westbound West 57<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Will the reconstruction restore a 6-inch curb on each side of the avenue?
- All along the bike lane and at the pedestrian ramps, there is frequent ponding. Will the reconstruction take special measures to cure these problems especially between West 46<sup>th</sup> and West 35<sup>th</sup> Street?
- On the segment from West 34<sup>th</sup> to West 50<sup>th</sup> Streets, will you address all potholes and damage along the curb?
- On Eighth Avenue, cyclists often use the sidewalk extensions instead of the bike lane. On Ninth Avenue will you install closer spaced bollards since there will not be any planters? Could you employ materials and/or methods to limit this encroachment?
- There used to be trees planted on each of the pedestrian refuges before the water main replacement project displaced them. Now that the refuges are relocated further away from the water main, we ask that trees be planted in each of the pedestrian refuges. (We understand that the Department of Environmental Protection is responsible for this new limitation).
- Trucks and buses often turn left at the intersection of West 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Ninth Avenue. Could this island be built in concrete?
- You indicated that restaurant sheds will not be permitted on painted sidewalk extensions, which is excellent news. Could you further clarify how the painted extensions will figure into the measurements for sidewalk cafes?

A number of members were surprised and disappointed that a protected bus lane was not installed on the reconstructed portion of the Avenue. This long-standing request needs to remain a high priority in DOT's future plans for the Avenue.

Thank you for undertaking this project. We are looking forward to the DOT getting back to us as soon as possible with these answers.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey LeFrancois  
Chair  
Manhattan Community  
Board 4



Christine Berthet  
Co-chair  
Transportation Planning  
Committee



Dale Corvino  
Co-chair  
Transportation Planning  
Committee

Cc: Colleen Chattergoon, Senior Borough Planner, DOT  
Jeffrey Margolies, Executive Director of Communications & Policy, DDC