

JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

424 West 33rd Street, Suite #580
New York, NY 10001

tel: 212-736-4536
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

January 13, 2023

Melodie Bryant
Pamela Wolf
200 West 21/22/23/24 Streets Block Association
Sent via Email

Re: West 22nd Street Open Street Recommendations

Dear Ms. Bryant, Ms. Wolf & Mr. Lunke,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4), by a vote of 32 in favor, 6 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 5 present but not eligible, requests that starting on January 15, 2023, the operation of the Limited Local Access Open Streets on West 22nd Street (between Seventh and Eighth Avenues) be changed as follows:

- Hours of operations should be changed to 10AM to 4PM. Volunteers will stow the barricades when not in use.
- The barricades should be installed further away from the crossing and form a chicane so that vehicles are slowed down but there is no need to open and close the barricades.
- The street should be activated with public programming at least once a week.

In order to keep street users safe during the hours of the Open Street, those residents who drive should strictly respect the 5 MPH speed limit and refrain from driving through the block.

The “Open Street” program was initiated during the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020. In May 2021, the New York City Council passed legislation to make Open Streets a permanent program of the New York City Department of Transportation. As part of an equity agenda, the goal of the program is to transform NYC streets into public space open to all. While MCB4 offered a large number of residential streets as potential candidates, DOT approved the request for the West 22nd Street application from the block association. Today there are 28.2 miles of Open Streets in New

York City, over 430 City blocks.

A “Limited Local Access” Open Street is designated for pedestrian and cyclist use and enjoyment. Local vehicle access is allowed for limited use. Drivers are advised to be extremely cautious and to drive 5 MPH or slower on the Open Streets. No through traffic is permitted while Open Streets are in effect. Permitted uses include parking (all regulations apply), picking up/dropping off, local deliveries, emergency vehicles, Access-A-Ride, utility vehicles, and city service vehicles.

The West 22nd Street Open Street is currently active every day between 8a.m. and 8p.m. seven days a week. It is protected by a movable light-weight barricade to prevent thru traffic as do most of the Open Streets in the City. Volunteers set up and take down the barricade daily and close it when it is left open. The West 22nd Street Block Association, representing 150 members, supports the Open Street.

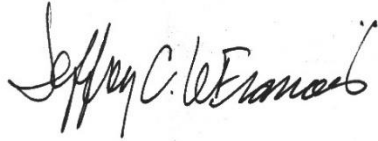
At its December meeting, the Transportation Planning Committee heard testimony from both proponents and opponents of the Open Streets. The proponents indicated how beneficial the Open Street is for people who do not commute to work by car or taxis (85.6% in zip code 10011)¹ to stroll and enjoy quiet and improved air quality, without any activation needed. Cyclists enjoy a safe passage on this block. Residents with health concerns and/or disabilities expressed their support. The Open Street alleviates problems of pedestrian flow on this block, which has very narrow sidewalks. This Open Street prevents this narrow residential street from becoming a spillover eastbound through-street now that West 23rd Street has dedicated bus lanes. Operators of emergency, post office, and sanitation vehicles were quoted to appreciate the absence of backed-up traffic on the block because it makes their jobs easier.

The focus of the opposition was the barricade and the overall impact on those who drive through and/or live, work, and have businesses in the community. With current arrangement, drivers must get out of their cars to open and then close the barriers again. While they do so, their cars block the pedestrian crossing; at times, two or three cars queue up on Eighth Avenue. (The recommended configuration will end this inconvenience while prompting drivers to slow down). Many asserted that it’s the wrong street for the Open Street program since it’s one of the few (eastbound) river-to-river crossings in the area. Some taxi and ride-share drivers refuse to enter the street even though they are permitted to do so. A parking garage operator located on the street reported that the barricade has negatively affected his business. Opponents also pointed to the lack of public programming and street activation. A petition entitled “HELP STOP THE CLOSING OF West 22nd St – NYC” with 240 signatories in the 10011 zip code (from West 4th to West 23rd Streets, 6th to 12th Avenues) was submitted.

¹ 2021: ACS 5-year Estimates – www.Censusreporter.org

We are hopeful that the required adjustments will reduce frictions between neighbors and accommodate the needs of most stakeholders.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey LeFrancois
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-chair
Transportation Planning
Committee



Dale Corvino
Co-chair
Transportation Planning
Committee

CC: Ed Pincar, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYCDOT