

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

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Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

May 16, 2023

Keith Kerman  
NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services  
One Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Municipal Fleet Safety and Emissions**

Dear Mr. Kerman,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4), at its May 3<sup>rd</sup> Full Board meeting by a vote of 32 in favor, 5 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible, applauds the Department of Citywide Administrative Services' (DCAS) exceptional efforts to electrify the city fleet and make it safer. We urge you to accelerate your initiatives to make the fleet smaller in numbers and in size of vehicle, make the vehicles even safer and focus on a fast-charging infrastructure deployed in facilities that do not encroach on public space.

The 28,500-vehicles City fleet includes 191 vehicle types and serves 50 agencies, with police, sanitation, and fire departments the biggest. 20,000 of them are already operated on alternate fuel. The objective is to reduce greenhouse and fuel by 50% by 2025 and transition to an all-electric fleet for most models by 2035, with emergency and specialized vehicles converted by 2040. These efforts are described in the "Clean Fleet Transition Plan<sup>1</sup>" just published by DCAS. A bill has been introduced in the council to codify these objectives into law.

**Reduction in vehicles size and numbers:**

Reduction in the number of vehicles is the best solution to reduce emissions. Over the last year the fleet was reduced by 822 vehicles or a 3% decline.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dcas/downloads/pdf/fleet/clean-fleet-transition-plan-october-2022.pdf>

- Considering the reduction in headcounts the City is experiencing, we hope a proportional reduction in vehicles will occur specially to compensate for the fleet increase experienced during the DiBlasio era. We are also pleased by the use of shared vehicles.

Large vehicles consume more and are more dangerous because they are heavier. We have observed a significant increase in the size of vehicles over recent years and a correlated increase in pedestrian fatalities in the City. Much more needs to be done to limit the use of SUVs.

- US manufacturers are abandoning the traditional sedan market in favor of SUVs, so it may be time to return to the Bloomberg era's approach when vehicles were sourced from foreign companies that manufactured in the US.
- It would also be good to explore lighter vehicles for NYPD traffic and a more generalized use of electric motorcycles similar to those the Highway Traffic enforcement officers use.
- Other countries have started to use smaller fire trucks, an example we may want to follow.
- We also expect that the City will follow the example of the private sector in using electric cargo bikes instead of cars or trucks whenever possible.

#### **Increase in vehicle safety for the general population:**

We were delighted to hear that you are installing truck side guards and are testing intelligent speed assistance in the city fleet. The transition to electric trucks will provide more "high-vision" vehicles with fewer blind spots. We are also pleased to hear that DCAS is installing surround cameras on trucks.

- We urge you to explore installing pedestrian detection systems in all vehicles. These systems are already widely available. In our dense urban context, injuries and deaths of pedestrians by turning vehicles represent over 30% of all crashes.
- Detection of cyclists riding alongside trucks and buses would also be welcome, directly or as a prerequisite to contracts (carting, school buses, all contractors etc.) or long-distance bus permits. These are great investments in safety that will pay dividends in reduced insurance and settlement costs.

#### **Reduction in vehicle emissions:**

We applaud your plans and efforts toward the electrification of all vehicles, with the understanding that a number of them are specialized and large vehicles for which there is no technical solution yet. Today, the City operates over 4,000 electric vehicles. Adding electric vehicles at the current rate of 1,000 annually will achieve the stated objectives.

As expected, the installation of the charging infrastructure trails the acquisition of vehicles. We were pleased to hear that 20 Level 3 chargers were already installed in our district, most of them at the sanitation garage.

- We are very much in favor on focusing all the investments on Level 3 chargers that are much faster and close to replicating the gas station experience. The level 2 chargers are

an option appropriate to individual garages and parking lots and not well adapted to uses in District

- We urge you to equip EMS stations with chargers in priority, as their vehicles currently idle for long periods of time and the resulting diesel fumes have been a serious health issue for our community on West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

Your plan to make some fast chargers accessible to the public is much appreciated.

We are also encouraged to see that the level 3 charging stations are being installed on government property and not on public space. This is consistent with the strategy proposed in the just published PlaNYC: “to ensure that every New Yorker is no more than 2.5 miles from an electric vehicle fast charging hub by 2035”.

- We generally do not support the installation of chargers on sidewalks in our district, due to high pedestrian volumes and already narrow clearances. MCB4 would like to note our concern of restricted sidewalk usage for those in our district including tourists, commuters, seniors, and physically challenged users, especially when so many obstructions are already blocking pedestrian space. In addition, we are wary that curbside charger installations will limit options for other current and future street improvements projects such as sidewalk expansion, dedicated bus lanes and bike lanes.

Finally, around NYPD precincts and Special operations—of which there are five in our district—sidewalk chargers would exacerbate the current encroachment on sidewalks, which is already severe and problematic.

- Future consideration of adding any charging capacity in our district must take into account the insufficient sidewalk capacity as highlighted in DOT's own NYC Pedestrian Mobility Plan<sup>2</sup>. Any proposed station on public areas should be vetted by our community.

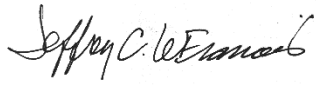
While the focus of the meeting was on fleet electrification, we were also pleased to learn that solar/electric light towers are replacing generator-operated light towers in the city’s inventory. We would like DCAS to provide guidance on the proper disposition of these light towers to the various departments it serves.

Thank you.

Sincerely

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/pedestrian-mobility.shtml>



Jeffrey LeFrancois  
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Manhattan Community Board 4



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