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MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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December 31, 2024

Marie Therese Dominguez, Esq.
Commissioner
NYS Department of Transportation
Hunter Point Plaza
47-40 21st Street
Long Island City, NY 11101

Re: Goals for the Route 9A Mobility and Safety Improvement Study

Dear Commissioner Dominguez,

At its December 4, 2024 meeting by a vote of 42 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, Manhattan Community Board 4 (“MCB4”) requests the New York State Department of Transportation (“NYSDOT”) to consider the following goals for its upcoming Route 9A Mobility and Safety Improvement Study (the “Study”).

MCB4 understands that the Study — whose primary goals include understanding the current and future needs of the Route 9A corridor, and evaluating “environmental, natural resource, cultural, and community needs” — is in its preliminary phase of gathering comments on the existing condition and future visions of the corridor.

MCB4’s goals for the study include:

- Improving safety and convenience for pedestrians and cyclists crossing to and from the park;
- Reducing congestion and increase capacity of the Greenway;
- Rebalancing throughput between the highway and city streets that terminate there;

- Rationalizing circulation and signage to service residents and motorists alike; and
- Addressing the antiquated interface between the Cruise Terminal and the highway.

MCB4 has long sought to improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience along Manhattan’s west side and establish a tighter connection between the Hudson River Park and the district. As we have previously stated, “[w]ith significant residential growth in our district (+27%) in the last 10 years, addressing conflicts and improving transportation options” along the Route 9A West Side Highway and the Hudson River Park, “is urgent.”¹

Accordingly, MCB4 is thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the re-imagining of this public space. MCB4 requests that it is continuously consulted and updated as the NYSDOT moves through each phase of the Study. As MCB4 was only marginally included in the previous study, we ask that our district receive utmost attention.

With changes in New York City over the next fifty years to include improved mass transit and additional alternatives to cars, MCB4 asks that the Study consider what transformation of Route 9A could look like. The MCB4 Transportation Planning Committee, in a brainstorming session, considered some ideas for the Study. Although MCB4 is not currently endorsing any of the following proposals, these ideas are meant to encourage the NYSDOT to think “big” and creatively.

Some examples include: (a) Making Route 9A more akin to an avenue instead of a highway, including by removing the median and integrating Route 9A into Manhattan West; (b) Installing a dedicated bus lane, which can also be used by emergency vehicles; (c) Installing a light-rail in the middle lane; (d) Installing a lane dedicated to micro mobility, such as for e-bikes; (e) Redesigning how pedestrians cross Route 9A, including bridges above-ground or tunnels underground; (f) Improving the environmental resiliency of the Hudson River Park and Route 9A; (g) Putting all of Route 9A underground; (h) Redesigning intersections with the significant cross-streets by studying traffic patterns in and around the cross-streets; (i) Developing strategies to have cyclists stop for pedestrians on the Hudson River Greenway, including by installing traffic signals and automatic crossing gates that lower; (j) Updating the signal timing to allow pedestrians more time to cross all of the lanes of Route 9A; (k) Expanding capacity for vehicles to access the Cruise Ship Terminals; (l) Improving the nighttime visibility for pedestrians; and (m) Capturing the energy of moving vehicles and the bikes to provide power to nearby infrastructure.

¹ November 14, 2024 Letter to the NYSDOT: <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2024/11/23-TPC-Letter-to-NYSDOT-re-Study-of-Route-9A.pdf>

We also encourage you to share near-term recommendations that could be started or implemented as soon as possible to improve safety on the corridor for all users, without the delay of a 2-year study.

We look forward to continuing to partner with you and providing feedback throughout each phase of the study.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jesse Greenwald
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

Cc: Hon. Brad Hoylman, NYS Senator
Hon. Tony Simone, NYS Assembly Member
Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President