



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

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Acting District Manager

July 17, 2026

Danielle Zuckerman  
Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
NYC Department of Transportation  
59 Maiden Lane 37<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10038

**Re: Public E-Bike Charging Program**

Dear Commissioner Zuckerman,

At the June 3, 2026 meeting of Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4), by a vote of 40 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible, MCB4 writes to follow up on our letter of March 12, 2025, regarding the Department of Transportation's (DOT) battery swapping and charging cabinet initiative. We continue to applaud DOT's efforts to address the serious public safety crisis posed by lithium-ion battery fires. As we noted previously, "In 2024, lithium-ion batteries caused 279 fires and 6 deaths. 34 New Yorkers perished in battery-related blazes in the last five years." Providing access to safe, publicly accessible charging and battery-swapping infrastructure is an important part of the solution. However, having reviewed DOT's May 2026 presentation on proposed Manhattan sites, including those in MCB4's district, we oppose the proposed locations. We urge DOT to work with us to address these issues before moving forward with installation.

MCB4 opposes installing any e-vehicle charging stations on the public right of way and asks that they be placed in designated private areas, such as at gas stations or in garages. We are aware of at least two petrol stations on 10th and 11th Avenues, as well as an outdoor parking area on 9th Avenue with existing electric charging infrastructure already in place. These sites offer the space, power access, and vehicular context that these cabinets require, without impinging on the

pedestrian environment. Gas stations and parking facilities are exactly the kind of private-area locations DOT should be pursuing.

Given that the primary beneficiaries of this program are the delivery platforms — DoorDash, Grubhub, and similar companies — whose business models depend entirely on the labor of workers using these e-bikes, we believe those platforms should be required to cover both the cost of installation and the ongoing cost of operation, including subsidizing worker access so that the service is free at the point of use.

We understand that DOT plans to enter into a contract with one or two private vendors to supply and operate the seven-foot-tall cabinets, with electrical hookups funded through a \$3 million grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Each cabinet can serve approximately 100 workers per day, with batteries requiring roughly two hours to charge and workers receiving two fresh batteries plus unlimited swaps for a \$75 monthly subscription. These are useful and well-designed features — but only if the program is structured so that workers are actually incentivized to use it, and only if the cabinets are placed where they do not create new conflicts on our streets and sidewalks.

MCB4's district is not an incidental participant in this program. The northern portion of Hell's Kitchen has the highest volume of deliveries in Manhattan — approximately 627,000 deliveries per year, double that of the Upper East Side and triple that of the Financial District. DOT's own pilot concluded that "location matters: hubs near commercial corridors and restaurant clusters were better used." Our district fits that description precisely, which is why it is critical that installations here be done right.

### General Concerns

As we stated in our March 2025 letter, "charging infrastructure for electric bikes must not be located where it encourages illegal riding on the sidewalk. This aggravates conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists, and makes pedestrians feel unsafe." We are deeply concerned that virtually all of the proposed sites in DOT's April 2026 presentation are located on the sidewalk.

Where traffic islands, concrete medians, or unused roadway space exist, those alternatives must be prioritized. Where parking lanes can accommodate these cabinets, DOT should actively pursue that option, especially where it creates daylighting at an intersection. The program's vendors, who are placing privately-operated cabinets on the public right-of-way at no procurement cost to the City, should be expected to absorb the additional cost of non-sidewalk installation where feasible.

Every proposed installation should be accompanied by a bike corral directly adjacent to the cabinet. Delivery workers will need somewhere to secure their bikes while swapping batteries; without a designated space, bikes will be left on the sidewalk or in the bike lane, creating

additional conflicts. This is particularly important on 9th and 10th Avenues where bike lane activity is already heavy.

We also would highlight that delivery workers are charged approximately \$75 per month to access the service. At that price point, many workers will continue charging batteries at home. For this infrastructure to meaningfully reduce fire risk, access must be free or nominal for workers. As indicated above, we believe the delivery platforms should be required to cover both the cost of installation and the ongoing cost of operation, including subsidizing worker access so that the service is free at the point of use.

As we said previously in a March 12, 2025 letter, this initiative presents an ideal opportunity for DOT, along with its private partners at Swobee and Popwheels, to implement a mandatory bike education application that the cyclists must engage in before they are allowed to swap their batteries. For example, as part of their ability to participate in the DOT's battery-swap program, Swobee and Popwheels should be required to create an app with a training video or tutorial for cyclists to watch and confirm understanding before they are able to access the battery lockers. We also ask that DOT clarify the maintenance obligations and enforcement mechanisms for program vendors, including the frequency of inspections and the penalties for graffiti, trash accumulation, and equipment failure. Likewise, DOT should ensure that there is not any advertising on these cabinets, and the space be used only to educate riders about the rules and their responsibility to follow them

Finally, we raise several unresolved safety questions that DOT must address before this program moves forward. Is there a risk that an incorrect connection can cause a fire or explosion? What technical safeguards will prevent dangerous misfits. We also ask who will serve as the insurance carrier for this program, and how liability for equipment-related incidents will be handled.

### **Site-Specific Concerns and Recommendations:**

*Site 22 — 9th Avenue at W. 55th Street (Southeast corner):* The 9th Avenue corridor, with its protected bike lane and extended “super sidewalk”, would require bikes to use the super sidewalk in order to reach the swapping tower; this would send the wrong message that doing so is acceptable. Phase 1 of the 9th Avenue Super Sidewalk has been a big success, but a chronic issue with the expanded pedestrian space is delivery cyclists using it as a contraflow bike lane. To make sure the new segments are successful, we should take lessons from that experience.

Adding a battery-swapping cabinet directly on the already-constrained sidewalk at this corner would worsen those conditions. Ninth Avenue is not an appropriate location for any sidewalk-mounted cabinet. We oppose this site as presented.

*Site 23 — 10th Avenue at W. 49th Street (Southwest corner):* This location is preferable to some of the alternatives, but we recommend relocating the cabinet around the corner to W. 49th Street

itself. This would allow for corner daylighting and, if designed thoughtfully, could accommodate the removal of a parking spot to create a proper roadway-based installation. This approach would serve users better and reduce sidewalk impact.

*Site 29 — 9th Avenue between W. 42nd and W. 43rd Streets (East block):* The 9th Avenue corridor between 42nd and 43rd Streets is a dense, heavily trafficked pedestrian and commercial area. The sidewalk at this location cannot accommodate a large charging cabinet without creating serious pedestrian hazards. We strongly oppose this site and urge DOT to remove it from consideration entirely.

*Site 30 — 10th Avenue at W. 38th Street (Northwest corner):* Rather than this corner, we recommend placing this cabinet adjacent to the existing bike corral in the roadway at the nearby 39th Street and 10th Avenue location. Co-locating the cabinet with an existing corral would serve users more effectively, reduce the footprint on the pedestrian environment, and leverage infrastructure that already exists for cyclists.

*Additional Recommendations:*

We note that 11th Avenue contains large, underutilized traffic islands that would be ideal for these installations. DOT should strongly consider 11th Avenue islands as primary candidates. These locations would keep the cabinets in a vehicular context, provide ample space, and potentially contribute to intersection daylighting.

We also recommend DOT explore the following locations:

SWC 56/11 on island  
SWC 50/11 on island  
SWC 44/11 on island

Sincerely,



Leslie Boghosian-Murphy  
Chair  
Manhattan  
Community Board 4



Christine Berthet  
Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning  
Committee



Jesse Greenwald  
Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning  
Committee

cc: Hon. Carl Wilson, NYC Council Member