



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**JOHN WEIS**  
Chair

**ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.**  
District Manager

April 6, 2011

Andy Lautenbacher  
Hess Corporation  
1 Hess Plaza  
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

**Re: PS 51 Construction**

Dear Mr. Lautenbacher:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) is writing to once again request your assistance to address an emergency situation that has arisen at the Public School (P.S.51) elementary school adjacent to the Hess Station located at 502 West 45<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY. We request that for the next two and one-half months (the remainder of the current school year) that Hess extend the closure of the two West 45<sup>th</sup> Street entrances/exits of the station to cover the entire school day. The closure from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. would thus ensure the safety of the 330 children who will use this sidewalk multiple times a day to go back and forth to their temporary playground east of Tenth Avenue.

Hess has been an important partner to the community and P.S.51 in addressing school and pedestrian safety issues and improving the streetscape. Specifically, we appreciate the substantial improvements and changes that were made as per our April 14, 2008 request and related discussions. Among the changes you instituted at that time was to close the West 45<sup>th</sup> Street exits for limited periods during the school day and to permanently post signage and install speed bumps at this site. We know you are in the process of making all these changes permanent, which the parents appreciate very much. However, the unprecedented construction on the block and the necessity to relocate the playground, present a new challenge.

As you are probably aware, the Hess Station runs the full block front on the west side of Tenth Avenue between West 44<sup>th</sup>-45<sup>th</sup> Streets. The balance of that city block is currently under construction to build a new public elementary school and approximately six residential buildings. Specifically, the proposed development will result in the addition of 1,210 residential units and the construction of a new 630 seat public school that will replace the existing P.S.51. The construction on the site is complicated, as the existing P.S.51 will remain in operation during the demolition and construction. The existing P.S.51 is located just west of the Amtrak railroad cut that backs onto the Hess property on West 45<sup>th</sup> Street.

During the construction period, the outdoor playground for P.S.51 will be closed and the children will use Matthews-Palmer Park, located east of P.S.51 on West 46<sup>th</sup> Street between Ninth and Tenth

Avenues, during the day. The use of Matthews-Palmer Park will require that the more than 330 elementary students pass by the existing West 45<sup>th</sup> Street exits/entrances to the Hess Station. Combined with arrival and departure from the school, each of these students, including very young children, will pass along the West 45<sup>th</sup> Street side of the Hess Station probably more than four times a day.

To permanently address the potential safety hazards, the developer has agreed to install a traffic light at the midblock of West 45<sup>th</sup> Street in front of P.S. 51 to allow the children to immediately cross to the north side of West 45<sup>th</sup> Street. It is also our understanding that the sidewalk of the south side of West 45<sup>th</sup> Street, west of the entrance of the school will eventually be closed due to the construction, beginning in July 2011.

CB4 strongly believes that the closing of West 45<sup>th</sup> Street exits/entrances from 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. is necessary for the remainder of the current school year to protect the safety and well being of the children

We are further requesting that barriers, such as construction or police barriers, be used to close those exits. Currently Hess employees hang chains across the exits/entrances when closed; however drivers often get out of their cars and unhook the chains if they want to exit on 45<sup>th</sup> Street. The construction or police barriers are heavier and more difficult to maneuver and less likely to be moved at will.

Thank you for your prompt attention and openness to working with this community.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



Sarah Desmond, Co-Chair  
Housing, Health & Human Services Committee

[signed 4/7/11]

Barbara Davis, Co- Chair  
Housing, Health & Human Services Committee

cc: Richard J. Lawlor, Vice President, Retail Marketing  
The Gotham Organization - Melissa Pianko  
P.S.51 - Nancy Sing-Bock  
P.S.51 - Parent Teacher Association, President - Katherine Consuelo Johnson  
NYC DOE - Micah Lasher  
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn  
NYS Senator Thomas K. Duane  
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried  
Congressman Jerrold Nadler  
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer