



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

330 West 42nd Street, 26th floor New York, NY 10036
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

JOHN WEIS
Chair

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

February 2, 2011

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, New York 10013

Re: Safety Improvements on W. 23rd Street and Seventh Avenue

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) supports the pedestrian safety improvements that the Department of Transportation (DOT) is proposing for the dangerous intersection of 23rd Street with 7th Avenue.

Seventh Avenue and 23rd Street is a high pedestrian crash location. Between 2004 and 2008 there were 55 injuries, or an average of 11 a year. This is one of the most dangerous intersections in Manhattan, with two fatalities since 2004.

The proposed changes are intended to reduce the length of pedestrian crossing on the avenue and protect the pedestrian crossings from pedestrian/vehicular conflicts:

- On Seventh Avenue, north of 23rd Street, an eastbound turn lane will be installed with an exclusive left turn signal and a pedestrian refuge that reduce the length of crossing on Seventh Avenue. Four parking spots will be removed.
- Pedestrians crossing 23rd Street on the east will have 40 seconds of exclusive crossing time instead of the nine seconds they presently have.
- On 23rd Street westbound, the existing restrictions on southbound turns (No Turn from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.) will be extended to the nighttime as well, – thus not permitting southbound left turns at any time - to avoid conflicts with pedestrians on the south crossing.
- On Seventh Avenue, south of 23rd Street, a sidewalk extension and pedestrian refuge will be installed on the east corner, to relieve pedestrian congestion caused by the subway exit and reduce the crossing distance on the avenue. Three commercial parking spots will be removed.
- Issues of traffic flow must be carefully considered: Lane widths will be adjusted so that Seventh Avenue's three lanes and a dedicated bus lane, north of 23rd Street, will flow into three lanes and a lane with a bus stop south of 23rd Street, and then four lanes of traffic south of the pedestrian refuge, on 23rd Street, and widen to five lanes at midblock. Statistics suggest that these lane widths are sufficient for existing traffic so that no delays are expected due to the new configuration. CB4 requests a simulation demonstration to show the engineering plan for the lane changes in contrast to the current configuration.

CB4 is pleased that DOT is making good on its commitment to make dangerous intersections safer for pedestrians. We support these changes provided they include the following suggestions:

- The eight pedestrian ramps should be brought up to current recommended standards for ADA compliance, with truncated domes. Such domes should also be installed where the pedestrian refuges meet the road.
- All crossings should be equipped with accessible pedestrian signals, as Lead Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) present particular challenges to blind pedestrians. Visions Services for the Blind Agency is located less than a block away from the intersection.
- High visibility zebra markings should be installed on the eastern pedestrian crossing at 23rd Street, similar to the other three crossings.
- Signs should be installed at Fifth and Sixth Avenues, to alert motorists of “no turn south” at Seventh and Ninth Avenues, and suggest alternate routes.

DOT should contact the surrounding businesses and residents, particularly near the North and Southeast corner in advance of installing the pedestrian refuge to let them know of the changes and construction schedule.

The Community Board looks upon the NYCDOT’s proposed changes at the intersection of 23rd Street and on the corner of 23rd Street and Seventh Avenue, to reduce injuries and fatalities. Such a pedestrian focused redesign is a refreshing approach to pedestrian safety and we whole-heartedly support the initiative.

Sincerely,



John Weis
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

CC: Mayor Bloomberg, C. Quinn, G. Brewer, T. Duane, R. Gottfried, L. Rosenthal, S. Stringer, B. De Blasio, R. Kelly, J. Sadik Kahn, J. Vacca, D. Gantt, S. Fuschillo