



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

COREY JOHNSON
Chair

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

July 27, 2011

Mr. David J. Burney, FAIA
Commissioner
New York City Department of Design & Construction
30-30 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, New York 11101

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

Dear Commissioners Burney and Forgione:

Re – Water Tunnel Connection Project - Reconstruction of 48th/ 49th Streets from Ninth to Tenth Avenues, and 48th/ 51st Streets from Ninth to Eighth Avenues.

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) has reviewed the plans for this project to connect the new water tunnel to local consumers, install new utilities in the streets, relocate existing utilities and reconstruct the streets. During the construction, expected to begin by the end of this year, three lanes of each street will be closed for two years (for a total project time of 4 years), while one lane will remain open.

Manhattan Community Board #4 has several concerns about the construction process, many of which have also been voiced by area residents and block associations. We would like to invite the Department of Design and Construction and the Department of Transportation to address these concerns at the CB4 Transportation Committee before work starts.

- The proposed construction will be disruptive and noisy and both the specific hours and proposed mitigation measures have not been fully provided or vetted by the community;
- The proposed redesigned sidewalk and streets does not meet with the Street Design Manual Published by the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) in May 2009;
- The proposed location of catch basins would not enable the installation corner bulb-outs, which are specified in CB4's Statement of District needs and contemplated to be recommended in the Lincoln Tunnel/9th Avenue renaissance report that DOT will issue later this year;
- The construction plan, at least as described to date, does not adequately address how deliveries, emergency vehicle and access-a-ride access will be handled when only one lane is available.
- The new water main would substantially affect the water pressure to the individual home buildings pipes. However, area residents have not been surveyed to find if their water pipes can handle the increase pressure. We are

particularly concerned about several affordable housing buildings on these blocks who may not have the resources to upgrade their building pipes.

- The streets involved harbor many brownstones and tenements, which are self maintained without managing agent or doorman. The uses are varied and intermingled with theaters, hotels, schools, social service residences, bars, restaurants, delis and other small businesses, a union headquarters, doctor's offices, a public park, and a community garden. The DDC team repeatedly talked about outreach to businesses but seems less aware of the need to outreach to the residents.

To address these issues, CB4 requests:

- **Survey on Transportation:** A survey of the residents of the affected blocks be undertaken to ascertain and prepare for any special transportation requirements of residents, especially the elderly, infirm or those with disabilities. This is critical as one lane of traffic on a major artery in midtown like West 48th Street could be backed up by sanitation pick-ups, UPS, business delivery or stalled vehicle.
- **Survey on Building Condition:** DDC should survey each building owner about the age, material and condition of their water pipes and advise them if upgrade is needed. They should also survey the condition of the building's foundation and material to ensure the construction vibrations will not affect building conditions;
- **Emergency Vehicles:** A plan explaining how, in the case of emergencies, police, fire or EMS vehicles will get to a location on a block with one-lane access;
- **Construction Task Force:** A construction task force be established, hosted by CB4 office, with representation of residents, businesses and institutions for each of the blocks involved, with monthly meeting to inform of upcoming activities and a 24x7 phone number to log complaints and address emergency issues. It should be established immediately upon selection of contractor(s) for this project. Representatives of DDC, DOT, DEP and the traffic enforcement division of the police department should be in attendance for the initial planning oriented meetings. The Construction task force should be consulted regarding construction hours;
- **Specifics on level of noise, dust, hours of work and duration** to be communicated to the Community Board and the block association and residents.
- **Catch Basin Locations:** The catch basins located in CD4 on the residential cross streets at the 14 intersections of the project, be located at least 20 ft. away from the intersections, to reduce the cost of future installation of neck downs, as recommended in the Street Design Manual and consistent with the expected recommendations of the DOT Lincoln Tunnel access/9th Avenue Renaissance report expected later this year.

The Street Design manual recommends that appropriate stakeholders be involved from inception and the projects should cure past issues and address future needs. Had DEP or DDC involved the community, they would have learned of future needs included in each of CB4's Statement of District Needs since 2009: "During any future roadway work, DOT should widen sidewalks within CD4 as much as possible, especially at corners to create "bulb-outs." Bulb-outs increase pedestrian safety by increasing the turning radius around corners, thus slowing motor vehicles. Bulb-outs also shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians. The pedestrians who use them welcome bulb-outs that were already created at various intersections in the 40." We expect DOT's soon to be completed Lincoln Tunnel Access study/9th Avenue Renaissance report due later this year to make specific recommendations for bulb-outs at the affected intersections.

This also reflects the recommendations of the Street Design Manual which specifies ¹that "all new projects that significantly impact public and private streets should follow these guidelines: {...} Pedestrian crossing distances should be minimized in all locations utilizing the above methods and other treatments, such as curb extensions (neck downs) and medians." Before any sidewalk redesign is finalized, DDC should discuss the potential for bulb-outs on these blocks.

¹ P45 and 46

- **Street Signage:** DOT should prepare a street signage plan and provide it to the Community Board for review in advance of beginning the project. Clear and distinct signage to re-direct non-essential traffic to alternate routes to midtown should be positioned on Tenth Avenue and West 48th Street. We are particularly want to ensure that buses are rerouted to major arteries (Avenues and West 42nd or 59th Streets), rather than narrower streets.

We feel these above steps are necessary before the project begins and look forward to working with DOT, DEC and DDC to ensure this project is constructed in a manner that minimizes both neighborhood and individual building disruption and enables streets and sidewalk consistent with current practices and Community District needs.

Sincerely yours,



Corey Johnson
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

cc: Local elected officials
Manhattan Community Board 5

