



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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District Manager

November 3, 2010

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

Re: Pedestrian Safety Report

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) applauds the Department of Transportation publication of The New York City Pedestrian Safety Study and Action Plan, New York City Department of Transportation: August 2010¹.

CB4 is requesting that 9th Avenue, from 57th to 31st Street be prioritized as a high crash corridor to be addressed in 2011. Over 500 injuries and six pedestrian deaths occurred in vehicular crashes since 2001 on this stretch of Ninth Avenue.

In addition, the intersections of 42nd Street and Eighth and Ninth Avenues, respectively ranked first and second in the city in DOT's recently released 20 most dangerous intersections for pedestrians. The intersection of 23rd Street and Seventh Avenue, another ranked high for danger, should be addressed as well.

While DOT's federally funded Transportation Study of Clinton/Hells Kitchen will issue recommendations in early 2011, the study is already lasting twice as long as originally anticipated. Such fundamental safety improvements cannot wait for the larger study to be completed.

We applaud all the recommendations made in the report. The following suggestions would further the effectiveness of the programs DOT is planning:

Slow Speed zones (20 mph in school zone). We applaud such an initiative that significantly reduces fatalities in case of a crash. We would like to see it implemented around all schools in Clinton and Chelsea.

Safe Street for seniors: We are delighted that the consultants are studying Chelsea and Clinton. We look forward to the prompt implementation of their recommendations.

¹ http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/nyc_ped_safety_study_action_plan.pdf

Pedestrian Countdown (reduce crashes, pedestrians find them easier to understand than other signal types):

- On the West Side highway, one of the corridors for implementation, many residents and seniors are afraid to cross the highway to go to the park, because the crossing time allotted to pedestrians is too short. We encourage the DOT to combine pedestrian countdowns with on-demand crossing time.
- We strongly encourage DOT to install Accessible Pedestrian Signals simultaneously with the new countdown devices, as the American with Disability Act mandates that all improvements to the right of way be made accessible at the time of upgrade.
- It would be unfortunate if these devices imply that the pedestrian is to blame when a driver does not yield if the countdown is close to zero.

Left Turn Day Lighting: (removing curbside parking spaces at the approach of a left turn to improve visibility). The report indicates that 27 % of crashes that kill or seriously injure (KSI) pedestrians involved failure to yield. Left turning pedestrian KSI crashes outnumber right turning crashes 3 to 1.

- Large phone booths contribute to obscuring the line of sight for all vehicles in addition to parked vehicles.
- The parking spaces that are subject to day lighting will need to be protected by flexible bollards. Currently many vehicles with placards ignore all parking regulations in our neighborhood.
- At many corners the few first spaces have been designated for truck loading and unloading spaces. If such locations were to be day-lighted, new spaces will need to be designated for loading/unloading
- CB4 is on record in asking that such day lighting space be converted into on street parking for bicycles and motorcycles since such vehicles do not obstruct the line of sight. By locating bicycle parking at the corner and on the street, instead of in the middle of the block on the sidewalk, cyclists will stop riding on the sidewalk between the corner and the bike racks.
- While day lighting is a good incremental step, providing exclusive signal phases first for pedestrians and then for turning cars will better protect pedestrians, especially in districts like ours where drivers are a few hundred feet from a New Jersey highway. Our experience shows that such signals also eliminates honking, a major quality of life improvement for the neighbors.

Targeted Enforcement – Failure to Yield: Such enforcement will require a complete retooling of NYPD’s Traffic Division from the current Mission “Move the traffic” to a new Mission “Enforce the Law and Protect the Pedestrian”.

- Today traffic agents are fully implementing their current mission. For example at 42nd Street and Ninth Avenue, traffic agents routinely :
 - Usher cars across the intersection well after the light has turned red, even if there is not congestion.
 - Encourage turning cars to occupy the middle of the intersection - and then usher them to turn into platoons of pedestrians in the crossing while pedestrians still have the right of way.
 - Encourage buses and trucks to turn even if there is not enough space and the vehicle obstructs the pedestrian crossing, causing gridlock. As a result pedestrians have to cross in the middle of the traffic.

- Failure to yield is ubiquitous and enforcing it will require a significant increase in manpower. Upgrading the status of traffic agents to allow them to enforce failure to yield – as was done for gridlock - would increase manpower as well as realign their mission.
- Until NYPD has achieved such retooling and increased resources, engineering solutions to provide exclusive phases for pedestrians and then for turning cars will be the most effective way to reduce failure to yield and increase pedestrian safety at left turns.

These suggestions from CB4 are based on the real experience of the members we represent and will help the conclusions of the Safety Plan and Action report be best realized. We want to encourage the NYCDOT for quick implementation for very traffic stressed communities like ours. Thank you for the work you have done and we look forward to further discussion.

Sincerely,



John Weis
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

Cc: Local Elected Officials