



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND

Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.

District Manager

October 11, 2007

Department of Transportation
Commissioner Janette Sadik-Kahn
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Re: Bicycle Lane along Ninth Avenue from 16th to 23rd Street

Dear Commissioner Sadik-Kahn ,

While Manhattan Community Board #4 is supportive of the city wide goal of increasing bicycle lanes and is quite supportive of the Ninth Avenue bike lane, we cannot be supportive of the process that was used for its installation. We are extremely concerned that the proposal seemed a done deal when it was presented to our Transportation Committee (a week before installation began), and then surprised and upset that it had been undertaken with little to no community input. We remain concerned that community input is still lacking, and community notification essentially nil.

In particular, we believe it is essential to reach out to the nearby schools, businesses and housing developments to work with the people who will be – and already are – most affected by the bike lane. At our October 3 full Board meeting, we heard from several area businesses, residents and parents of their concerns about the lack of notification or introduction of the intricacies of traffic changes in the area. Seniors and children alike are having difficulty crossing the street, businesses suddenly lost curbside parking space, and the number 11 bus was rerouted with no signage or notification to the community or bus riding public. Traffic was backed up to 42nd Street on the first workday of the installation, as no signage had been installed along 9th Avenue to notify the riding public of the changes in traffic patterns.

We strongly urge you to immediately begin working closely with all affected parties to reduce concern and confusion, to clarify crossing timing and to clearly identify appropriate loading and delivery zones for businesses. We also suggest adding signage to up 9th Avenue to advise drivers of the change in the traffic pattern. In addition, we request that the Department work with appropriate city agencies to enforce rules of the road for the bike riding public, including stopping at traffic lights, signaling turns and yielding right of way to pedestrians. Community Board 4 has received offers of assistance from Transportation Alternatives in this area, and we

suggest that the DOT also work with them and the police department to help educate the cycling public about their responsibilities.

At the same time, Community Board #4 is pleased that the Department of Transportation altered its plan presented at CB#4's Transportation Committee to have no vehicle left-turns onto 20th Street from Ninth Avenue. Given the presence of two schools on that street with parent drop-off and pick-up between Eight and Ninth Avenues and a police station between Eight and Seventh Avenues, the no-left turn would be problematic. We note that while it was not appropriate for this corner, we hope that the Department of Transportation will examine no-car turns at other low-auto/high pedestrian and bicycle intersections for community consideration.

Again, while we are supportive of the goals of this project, and in addition to our concerns about community notification and input, the Community Board makes the following requests:

- a. DOT investigate modifications to the bulb-out at 16th and Ninth Avenue to be made consistent with other left hand turning lanes in the bicycle path, while preserving the unique character created by the Parks Department landscaping. The existing landscaped bulb out design creates a visual hazard for turning cars, makes the bike lane (which would thus move out toward the traffic lanes along the bulb-out) less safe and awkward to link to its continuation between 15th and 16th street;
- b. Canvass area businesses to decide the best locations for truck loading/unloading;
- c. Move toward creating a raised and landscaped area for the entire bicycle buffer zone, not just at the intersections;
- d. Pedestrian refuge areas should be landscaped consistent with existing area planting;
- e. Though it is not currently part of the Bicycle Lane master plan, DOT should investigate installing a buffered bicycle lane north of 23rd Street on Ninth Avenue;
- f. The Police Department (with assistance from Transportation Alternatives, if possible) should conduct trainings and orientations for area businesses that have deliveries, area bicyclists, city-wide bicyclist clubs, and residents on bicycle safety and laws and should increase enforcement for the first several weeks following the installation.

Once again, Community Board #4 supports the inclusion of the bicycle lane on Ninth Avenue and hopes that many of the concepts included in this design – particularly the parking lane/loading zones that do not require vehicular crossing of the bike lane, electronic bicycle signals, raised pedestrian refuge areas, and left turn lanes and signals – be incorporated in future bicycle lanes. We do, however, urge that the Department allow for significantly more community input and notification *before* changes are made.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board No. 4



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning
Committee



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