



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.ManhattanCB4.org

J. LEE COMPTON
Chair

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

March 9, 2007

Mr. Anthony E. Shorris,
Executive Director,
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
225 Park Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10013

Re: Express Bus lane and Bus Garage.

Dear Mr. Shorris:

Manhattan Community Board 4 applauds the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's (PANYNJ) initiatives to optimize the Lincoln Tunnel's efficiency by increasing the number of passengers transported and the volume of goods carried at peak hours. Enhancing the capacity of the Lincoln Tunnel's exclusive bus lane (XBL) and adding a new bus garage on the New York side are two initiatives that the board supports whole heartedly; especially since the intent is to reduce the volume of cars and buses that currently choke our streets, endanger pedestrians' lives and contribute to the poor air quality in our neighborhoods.

Thus, Manhattan Community Board 4 supports both the XBL (operational option 2) capacity expansion and the construction of the Gavin Plaza bus garage. However, we request that the Port Authority expand its study to the areas mentioned below in close consultation with the Community Board 4 on the New York side.

XBL (operational option 2)

Community Board 4 supports the recommended operational alternative # 2, a new contra lane going east , which yields the best combination of reduced vehicular traffic/ low cost. We are in favor of allowing high occupancy vehicles and green vehicles to share that lane with commuter buses. However, in the morning, buses exiting the tunnel onto the streets frequently experience delays of 10 to 15 minutes (based on observations by commuters and residents) and gridlock avenues while waiting to enter the Port Authority Terminal. This calls for a study and a redesign of the bus lane exits onto the street grid so that improvements in travel time do not get lost in "taxiing to the gate". Idling diesel buses are unhealthy for the local residents and pedestrians walking along 9th Avenue. While the environmental impact in New Jersey is extensively studied (flood plains , endangered species) a study of impact on New York streets (including pedestrians) was supposed to be part of the analysis but is yet to be performed.

According to the report, the next step includes identifying afternoon impacts and how pricing options may relieve pressure in the general- purpose lanes. We suggest:

- Reopening 41st Street would immediately mitigate current bus overload in the streets, as requested in a recent letter to your office. The New York side is extremely congested in the evening peak hours and we urge the Port Authority to undertake a comprehensive study of the problem, encompassing cars trucks, jitney buses, charter buses, commuter buses and New Jersey buses before implementing a change in the morning.
- The report also evokes the possibility of using value pricing to reduce congestion in general-purpose lanes. We support this approach and suggest that neutral pricing for all crossings be implemented sooner rather than later. Currently the Hudson River crossings for cars are 30% under priced compared with East River crossings. The trucks crossing are significantly under-priced compared to the Verrazano Bridge and the Holland Tunnel is closed to most truck traffic putting a disproportionate traffic burden on the Lincoln Tunnel. We applaud the peak hour differential pricing and encourage you to consider an additional cost differential.

Galvin Plaza Bus Garage

The prerequisite to the XBL implementation -as presented to the board- is the creation of a new Parking Garage for New Jersey Commuter buses. Community Board 4 supports the creation of a new bus garage on Galvin Plaza, west of 10th Avenue. This option will maximize the number of buses (20% more than other option) parked and will guarantee that 100 % of the buses access the Lincoln Tunnel without using the street grid. These are “priceless” advantages to ensure transportation growth in a clear air, sustainable environment.

We are disappointed that the study does not address the accommodation of charter buses. Currently, our neighborhoods are overwhelmed with chartered buses parked in residential streets, while idling hours for their passengers. As tourism is a major growth industry for the city, and the Hudson Yards rezoning will increase the number of residential streets, this problem will worsen. The position of Community Board 4 is well documented. In March 2004, we wrote the following to the Mayor and Department of City Planning:

Consolidated Bus Parking Facility

A new consolidated bus parking facility is crucial to alleviating existing congestion and pollution problems and to improve safety in the area. The facility should have direct access to the ramp system of the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the Lincoln Tunnel so that hundreds of commuter buses would be taken off city streets.

The facility would serve not only Port Authority busing needs, but also other commuter and charter buses, customer vans and jitney services. Currently these commuter vans and charter buses layover on neighborhood streets, fouling the air and creating traffic havoc. Parking lots now used for layover bus parking will be prime sites for housing development or as parcels for the Hell's Kitchen Park South. A new bus facility, which was originally highlighted in your public presentations, has been reduced to a study and an outline on the map over the Lincoln Tunnel entrance on Tenth Avenue between 38th and 39th streets.

We recommend the City take the lead in developing the facility with Port Authority and make a major contribution of funding from the infrastructure financing. The elimination of Hudson Boulevard would free available funding for such a facility, and could allow for alternate siting west of Tenth Avenue between 39th and 40th streets.

Hudson

Yards Development could use a portion of the excess funds raised in the recent issuance of bonds to

forward this goal. The Port Authority and the city must join forces and seize the opportunity of expanding the scope of the bus garage project. We also recommend that the community be more involved with this project as we requested earlier. (See attached letter)

Finally, the report does not address in any way, the growing issue of jitney commuter vans. These small vans, while providing a valuable service (one van is better than 16 cars), park illegally in bus lanes in the vicinity of the bus terminal and are extremely polluting. It seems that the Port Authority's real estate holdings in the neighborhood could accommodate an orderly operation of these vans, so that they do not interfere with mass transit and public health.

Community Board 4 reiterates its support to both the XBL (operational option 2) capacity expansion and the construction of the Gavin Plaza bus garage. We request that the Port Authority expand its study to the areas mentioned above in close consultation with the Community Board 4 on the New York side.

Sincerely,



J. Lee Compton
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board No. 4



Jay Marcus
Chair
Transportation Planning
Committee



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning
Committee

Cc: Electeds

- Jon Orcutt, Tri State Transportation
- Margaret Forgione, DOT
- Mark Muriello, PANYNJ
- DCP - Amanda Burden, Erik Botsford, Dominick Answini
- Hudson Yards Development Corporation - Ann Weisbrod, President
- MBPO - Anthony Borelli, Demetria Collins