



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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May 12, 2008

Janet Sadik-Kahn  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Transportation

Howard H. Roberts, Jr.  
President  
MTA New York City Transit

**Re: Bus Rapid Transit 34<sup>th</sup> Street, New York**

Dear Ms. Sadik Khan and Mr. Roberts:

- Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) applauds Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) for joining forces to improve bus service reliability with the launch of Bus Select Service (also known as Bus Rapid Transit) and Enhanced Bus lanes. We support the project contingent on the implementation of the measures outlined below. While we are pleased that one of the first streets selected is 34<sup>th</sup> Street, we regret that once again, the community was not involved earlier in planning this change.

The project is intended to start in late May, 2008, with the re-pavement of 34<sup>th</sup> Street river to river and the re-allocation of lanes. The work will start on the east side before moving west into Community District 4.

- DOT will remove one lane, as the current lanes are too narrow on most of the length of the street. Three lanes will go westward and two lanes will go eastward except west of Ninth Avenue, where six lanes will remain.
- The lane adjacent to the curb in each direction will be painted red to signify that it is an exclusive bus lane. DOT will install overhead signage, similar to those on Madison Avenue. There will be no parking in the bus lanes during daytime from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. This parking policy is already in place on most of the street.

For the long-term, however, the project is less defined but more ambitious with more pedestrian space. This phase will be implemented in three to five years.

Upon review of the whole project, the board is concerned that there has been no targeted outreach to the immediate community at large and only last minute outreach to CB4. The implementation seems hasty. The following issues need to be addressed for the bus lane to be effective. We are commenting only on the impacts in Community District 4, which are those areas beginning in the middle of Eight Avenue and going west.

- At time the project was presented to CB4, DOT had not reached out to the local businesses to explain the plan and address any specific concerns they may have. We are pleased that the DOT held such a meeting on April 29, 2008; However, the limited attendance to this event calls for continued outreach.
- CB4 has noted that the sidewalks on 34<sup>th</sup> Street from Fifth to Ninth Avenues are overly crowded and will be getting much more so in the future, especially with the Hudson Yards, Moynihan Station and ARC projects. Thus, the western corners at Eighth Avenue are exceedingly crowded with a pedestrian Level of Service of E or worse. At this intersection 22 pedestrian/bicycle accidents occurred in the last five years resulting in 21 injuries and a death. Measures to improve pedestrian safety should take priority. For example, DOT should consider expanding the sidewalks on Eighth Avenue and increasing the signal timing to allow large crowds to cross. A Barnes Dance would be advisable at this intersection too.
- With only one lane for cars going eastward, wont the left turn on Eighth Avenue block the traffic? We suggest investigating the elimination of the left turn.
- 34<sup>th</sup> Street is the only through truck route in midtown coming and going to the Lincoln Tunnel. The Lincoln Tunnel carried over 7,500 trucks in 2005 versus 550 for the Holland Tunnel. Which streets will the trucks use instead? We suggest that DOT install signage at various points in the city to direct westbound trucks to 41<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- Dyer Avenue at 34<sup>th</sup> Street is a major egress route for the Lincoln Tunnel during the morning peak hours with frequent backups causing gridlock at 35<sup>th</sup> Street. It is a key entrance during the weekend. With only one lane going eastward, where will this volume go? The other egresses on 36<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets cannot accept more volume. We suggest that all traffic coming from the Lincoln Tunnel turn right to the west in the morning and that Jersey bound traffic on the weekend use the 33rd Street entrance. This would allow the two bus lanes to continue west of Ninth Avenue, while maintaining three moving lanes going west and one moving lane going east for cars. Removing that turn will ease the frequent gridlock at that intersection. We also strongly recommend implementing pedestrian safety improvements at the 34<sup>th</sup> Street/Dyer Avenue intersection including dedicated pedestrian crossing times in all directions. There is currently no pedestrian crossing on the east side of 34<sup>th</sup> Street at Dyer Avenue, but with no left turn allowed onto 34<sup>th</sup> Street from Dyer Avenue (as proposed) such a pedestrian crossing should be installed.
- The NYPD traffic task force officers park their official vehicles along the full block length of 34<sup>th</sup> Street from Eighth to Ninth Avenue (both north and south curbs). We appreciate that DOT is in discussion with the NYPD traffic task force, but feel a solution on where they will park in the future should be articulated in advance of project commencement.
- Manhattan Center Studio is a large ballroom/event space for concerts on the north side of 34<sup>th</sup> Street, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, closer to Eighth. At the DOT outreach meeting April 29<sup>th</sup>, they explained that their business uses the curb to load and unload large sound equipments at all hours of the day from tractor trailers. Loading/unloading regulations will need to be flexible enough to accommodate this particular activity.
- The bus stop for Washington bound long distance buses between Eighth and Ninth Avenues on the north side of 34<sup>th</sup> Street needs to be relocated. Such buses take much longer than a normal bus to discharge their passengers and their luggage.
- The M16 originates on Ninth Avenue at 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and is frequently delayed by the Lincoln Tunnel queues. A protected bus lane on Ninth Avenue or a modification of the M16 route is in order to ensure the full benefit of the 34<sup>th</sup> Street bus lane to the M16 users.

- The bus lanes must be protected by flexible bollards for the bus lane to be respected by the high proportion of visiting and commuting drivers who use this corridor and may not be familiar with dedicated bus lanes.

On the second phase, we applaud the creation of more pedestrian space and wish to see the pedestrian-only space extended up to and including Eighth Avenue. The impacts of the proposed ARC project on pedestrian congestion at this intersection will necessitate such a treatment.

CB4 supports the creation of bus lanes that do not overly rely on limited enforcement resources. To that effect, we request that before implementing the portion of the project located west of Eighth Avenue, DOT present a plan addressing the above issues. For without such a plan, and without flexible bollards to protect the lanes, we fear that drivers will ignore the painted lanes and the bus lane will be ineffective. We look forward to reviewing such a plan at a future Transportation Planning Committee meeting.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland  
Chair  
Manhattan  
Community Board 4



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Co-Chair  
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