



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

JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND
Chair

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

December 9, 2008

Myron Maurer
Senior Vice President
Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc.
Suite 470 The Merchandise Mart
Chicago, IL 60654

Ernesto Padron, Senior Project Manager
NYC Economic Development Corporation
110 William Street
New York, NY 10038

Re: Plan for Pier 92/94

Dear Mr. Maurer and Mr. Padron:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) thanks you for presenting your traffic plans for Pier 92/94 to the Waterfront & Parks Committee, along with members of the Transportation Planning Committee, on 13 November 2008. In our previous letter regarding Pier 92/94, we wrote the following regarding the traffic plan presented at our earlier meeting on 11 September:

The traffic scheme presented seems to address, as best it can, the traffic impacts that this use will have on the highway, the bike/walkway and the surrounding community. It appears that the planned re-routing of incoming and outgoing traffic will work well – and the use of the inside of Pier 92 for truck loading/unloading, as well as the onsite storage of empty cases, will help. Nonetheless, even with the best intentions of the developers, we fear that the effects of increased truck and taxi traffic will be felt by the neighborhood to the east, a community that is growing. The possibility of allowing at least some of the trucks to stay parked inside Pier 92 while shows are in progress should be explored, as that would reduce truck crossings over the bikeway. In addition, we encourage the use of shuttle busses for show visitors whenever possible to further reduce traffic. Finally, coordination with the adjacent passenger ship terminal, which will also generate significant traffic as this industry grows, will be important. The worst case situation - the loading in or out of a show at the same time as three large cruise ships are also loading – should be avoided as much as is possible.

The fact is that the residential population of the neighborhood just east of Pier 92 and 94, along with the use of park to the north and the use of the bike/walkway are all growing and will continue to grow into the near future. The use of Pier 92 and 94 as a newly expanded convention center, with the attendant increase in truck, car, taxi and black car traffic, will only exacerbate a traffic problem that is already intolerable on many streets in the area, as it is throughout

Community District 4. It will be extremely important that the developers of Pier 92/94 employ every measure possible to mitigate traffic impacts as this project is developed.

Following is a list of concerns and recommendations from our previous comments from the 11 September meeting as well as suggestions made by committee members at the 13 November meeting:

Revised traffic flow and signals

The revised traffic plan for both trucks and passenger vehicles does, indeed, improve the existing condition where, currently, all incoming and outgoing vehicles tend to converge at a single point in a cross-over pattern – creating a busy and dangerous situation for users of the bike path at that point. The new plan, with vehicles entering at the north end and exiting at the south, is clearly better. We suggest, however, that you install stop signs at the north crossover and signals on the south cross over, as well as a protected pedestrian crossings (push button, stop or raised area) on the plaza in front of the main entrances, so that a safer situation is provided for bicyclists and pedestrians. Without signals, we fear that an increase in traffic accidents involving collisions between vehicles and bicycles and pedestrians, already a problem, will be the result. Already there have been two deaths on the bike/walkway in recent years. Merchandise Mart Properties must do everything possible to ensure that such accidents do not occur as a result of this project.

Truck trips and on site empty box storage.

You illustrated how the storage on-site in Pier 92 of empty crates would reduce convention-related truck round-trips by 50% since it would no longer be necessary for trucks to haul away and, later, return empty crates. This is an important feature of your plan, given that overall traffic to and from the facility will increase over time as the now larger convention center begins to operate. But we need to be assured that this plan will not be abandoned in the future as pressures to use this area on Pier 92 for additional convention exhibit space increases. A Memorandum Of Understanding between Merchandise Mart, EDC and Community Board 4 should be implemented to memorialize this commitment.

A further improvement to that plan would be to allow at least a portion of empty trucks to also remain inside Pier 92 after unloading. This would reduce round trip truck traffic even further, an important consideration as the side streets in the neighborhood are already burdened by excessive traffic, and residential use in this area is planned to grow over the next several years.

Shuttle busses and pedestrian bridge

A suggestion from our previous letter was to consider the use of shuttle busses to help reduce the passenger traffic to and from the facility. Further, the construction of a pedestrian bridge between the facility and the adjacent DeWitt Clinton Park would be an important factor toward that same goal, as well as providing a safe and easy way for pedestrians to navigate what is currently a dangerous and busy crossing. Such a bridge would also, we believe, benefit the convention operation. We appreciate that the Merchandise Mart has committed to operate a shuttle bus service and has designed a possible landing for the pedestrian walkway within the project's footprint, complete with elevator. We urge the Merchandise Mart to help the community in its efforts with NYC and NYS officials to fund this bridge. In the short term, we ask that Merchandise Mart work with the DOT to change signal timings to allow a much longer crossing time for pedestrians.

Scheduling

The combination of a busy (especially on weekends) cruise ship port with a new enlarged convention center has the potential to create intensive traffic jams at the north end of the site despite all efforts. It will be extremely important that the Merchandise Mart coordinate closely with the cruise ship terminal operators to avoid simultaneous heavy usage to the degree possible – and to provide human traffic control agents as needed when, inevitably, such heavy usage occurs.

Northbound Traffic on 9A

One advantage you cited from the new traffic plan, which has traffic entering at the north end of the site and departing at the south end, is that it will allow northbound exiting traffic to make a left turn northbound on Route 9A, vs. having to enter the side streets to circle around in order to continue north, as is the current situation. We agree, as far as passengers vehicles are concerned – but the fact is that trucks are currently precluded from traveling north of 57th Street on 9A, so this advantage does not apply to trucks. There is some discussion from the Upper West Side Streets Renaissance, located in Manhattan Community Board 7 to the north, to permit trucks on 9A north of 57th Street. If this solution becomes viable, we urge Merchandise Mart to help in whatever way possible to achieve it, as it will, in fact, help reduce truck traffic on West 57th Street and throughout the residential upland streets as well as provide additional benefits to the Pier 92/94 project.

Submission of traffic numbers from Draft Environmental Assessment to CB 4

Traffic to and from the Pier 92/94 project, mixed with traffic to the Cruise Ship Terminal, is only a part of a much bigger picture. A number of large residential projects are in planning for the neighborhood, with more to come in the future. It will be important for Manhattan Community Board 4 to be able to study the traffic impacts as a whole. We understand that an Environmental Assessment has been prepared and at our 13 November meeting Merchandise Mart was asked that a copy of the traffic portion of that document be provided to CB4 in advance of its release date so that we could consider the impacts as part of the bigger neighborhood-wide picture.

(Note – the requested data will likely be delivered on Monday or Tuesday and, if so, the following sentence may be added: “As this letter was being prepared, we are in receipt of the requested traffic data and we thank you for responding positively on this request”)

Closing

Once again, thanks to the Pier 92/94 team for responding to our request for a meeting to discuss traffic issues with the combined Waterfront and Parks and Transportation Planning Committees. As you know, traffic is one the top three issues facing Manhattan Community Board No 4 and without the concerted efforts of all involved, including the developers whose projects increase traffic impacts, the problems, including the potential for accidents and fatalities as well as reduced air quality, caused by traffic, will only get worse, not better. As a new developer within our neighborhood, Manhattan Community Board 4 will expect you to do as much as possible to become part of the solution, as opposed to part of the problem, and we expect Merchandise Mart to live up to that challenge.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland, Chair Manhattan Community Board 4



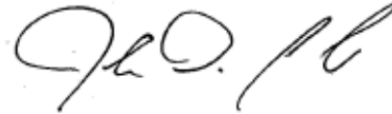
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Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus, Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Capt. John Doswell, Co-Chair
Waterfronts & Parks Committee



John D. Lamb, Co-Chair
Waterfront & Parks Committee

Cc:

Diana Taylor, Chair Hudson River Park Trust

Connie Fishman, President/CEO HRPT

Local city & state elected officials:

Quinn, Brewer, Gottfried, Glick, Rosenthal, Duane, Stringer, Nadler

Manhattan Community Board 7

Friends of Hudson River Park

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