



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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COREY JOHNSON
Chair

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

January 14, 2013

Joseph Lhota, Chairman and CEO
Metropolitan Transit Authority
347 Madison Avenue, 5th Floor
New York, New York 10017

Re: Dangerous MTA Metal Grates in Need of Repair

Dear Mr. Lhota:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) appreciates the number of subway grates on the west sidewalk of Eighth Avenue between W. 14th Street and W. 58th Street that have been replaced in the last year with a newer design that are more pedestrian friendly, including having smaller gaps (1/2" versus the old 3/4") between the steel strips within each panel. However, we are concerned about the substantial problems that the conversion to the new design and the continued difficulties subway grates create in many locations.

More specifically these concerns include:

- Several locations where the older (wider gap) subway grate panels are immediately adjacent to the newer (narrow gap) designed panels;
- Subway grate panels are often not level with the adjacent panels. This seems to particularly be the case where the newer installed panels are adjacent to the older design panels;
- The gaps between the subway grate panels can be larger than the 1/2" gap within the panel design and uneven between various adjacent panels;
- The subway grate panels are not level with the surrounding sidewalk; and
- Several locations where the panels seem to shake, where there are visible cracks in the steel portion of the grates or where wood boards are over the metal plates.

The following locations have gaps, leveling, wood covering or repair issues that create safety issue and should be addressed immediately:

- West side of Eighth Avenue, 35 feet south of W. 49th Street;
- West side of Eighth Avenue, 72 feet south of W. 26th Street;
- West side of Eighth Avenue, 56 feet north of W. 25th Street;
- West side of Eighth Avenue, 40 feet north of W. 24th Street; and
- West side of Eighth Avenue, 35 feet, 44 feet and 50 feet south of W. 18th Street.

We are also attaching a list of locations where the mix of older and newer panels or the unevenness between each panel and/or the sidewalk or the shakiness of the panel when walked on also needs addressing.

We request that the MTA provide a response to the above concerns and a timeline for installing the newer panel design along Eighth Avenue and in addressing the various repair issues. We also would like to request a schedule that the MTA uses to inspect, and repair when necessary, these panels.

In the longer term, while we appreciate the improvement of the narrower spaced newer design, subway grates remain an uncomfortable presence on most sidewalks which limits sidewalk capacity. As commuting and pedestrian traffic along Eighth Avenue continues to grow from the additional residential and commercial development and tourism in West Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen, making pedestrians feel at ease and safe in using all parts of the sidewalk becomes more urgent. We encourage the MTA to begin a public process to identify a design that will not hinder pedestrian use while preserving the required air, venting and light requirements for the subway system and that will enable less frequent maintenance and repair.

Sincerely



Corey Johnson
Chair



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

Cc: Times Square Alliance
Fashion BID

Please see attachment