



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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District Manager

February 6, 2013

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Re: New Wayfinding Signage

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

The New York City Department Transportation presented to Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) a new unified way finding signage system they plan to install throughout the city. This signage will replace the various systems that have been initiated by several Business Improvement Districts.

Five districts have been selected for early deployment, one in each borough. In Manhattan the district chosen coincide with the 34th Street and the Fashion BIDs.

CB4 applauds the overall design and most of the proposed sign elements, but opposes the placement of the signs on the sidewalk as well as the locations proposed for 8th Avenue between W. 35th Street and W. 42nd Street in the district.

The three types of signs range from 8.3 to 8.7 feet tall, with three different widths, with the smaller one being about one foot wide to minimize obstruction to the pedestrian flow. There is also a "fingerpost" similar to a parking sign with directive arrows on top. The signs indicate major directions on the top (i.e. "Chelsea, Flat Iron"), a map of streets and destinations within a five minute walk and a smaller map showing the district within the larger city context. Subway stations and major buildings of reference will be included. Generally no private business will be mentioned unless it is considered a major tourist destination or historic.

The signs will be installed adjacent to pre existing obstructions in the "furniture lane" (trees, phone booths, garbage cans, traffic signage, newsstands, bus stops) aligned with the deepest obstruction on the sidewalk. The signs will be implanted vertically in the cement with no protruding base and are ADA compliant.

Design and Content

CB4 applauds the design of the new signs, and especially the 5 to 15 minute walk radius indication – a system that has proven to significantly increase walking in cities that have adopted it. At the same time we question whether such signage is a priority considering the proliferation of smart phones and mapping applications, and whether the rapid rate of change in New York will render it obsolete.

We suggested that the following enhancements would be useful:

- Adding an indication of North, South, East and West
- Adding bus stops locations to make the above ground experience more seamless for pedestrians

We request that the content of the signage be validated with the Community Board before installation; for example in the Garment District a number of nonprofit theaters and artistic institutions could be mentioned and there should be arrows directing to the entrances to the Hudson River Park.

Locations and placement

While CB4 appreciates the very narrow profile of the smaller signs, we are still concerned about sidewalk cluttering, especially on Eighth Avenue, between W. 34th and W. 57th Streets, where the concentration of commuters, phone booths, street vendors, bike racks, news racks and the presence of the subway grates causes pedestrians to walk in the street and in the bike lanes. Even a narrow sign becomes a large obstacle when two or three people stand in front of it to consult the maps.

Thus, CB4 opposes adding any sign on Eighth Avenue and request that the signs be installed on the side streets instead. Most of the pedestrian traffic on Eighth Avenue is comprised of commuters who do not need signage but rather space. It is also not a good idea to mix tourist flows with commuter flows as they conflict with each other. Between W. 34th and W. 42nd streets there are 15 new hotels on the side streets, as well as subway exits where tourists could use directions.

Unless Eighth Avenue sidewalks are widened - as CB4 has requested many times - we request the following:

- Between W. 34th and W. 42nd Streets, Eighth and Ninth Avenues DOT should install the small signage on the side street, 20 ft. away from the corner, on W. 35th, W. 37th and W. 40th Streets, the system would benefit both tourists and subway riders. The same approach should be adopted for any future locations north of W. 42nd Street and for all installations adjacent to Ninth Avenue above W. 34th Street.
- At the Port Authority the signage should be installed inside the terminal as well as outside, along the building walls, and preferably on the W. 42nd, W. 41st and W. 40th Streets sides to not obstruct the enormous flow of commuters that use an already cluttered plaza on Eighth Avenue.
- We also request that signage be installed at the Jacob J. Javits convention center to direct pedestrian to the safest crossings of the Lincoln tunnel entrances (i.e., W. 37th, W. 38th streets that bridge over the tunnel) and continue on those streets between Ninth and Eleventh Avenues.

- We note that the signs will be positioned in the furniture lane in alignment with aligned with the pedestrian side of the largest obstruction instead of closest to the curb. This placement will cause users of the signs to further encroach on the pedestrian right of way. We request that in our district, all signs be aligned with the curbside boundary of the furnishing zone,
- CB4 has requested the removal of all phone booths on Eighth and Ninth Avenues and we are working with DoITT to incorporate this request in the new contract to be signed in 2014. Thus we request that no sign be placed adjacent to a phone booth on these corridors.

Generally for the overall system, we suggest that the signs should be integrated with other furniture, like bus stops, newsstands, street signs and lighting poles. Proximity to subway exits and parking meters is another possibility. We are pleased that the new signage will be integrated in the bike share station.

We also request that the way finding signage be installed at least 20 feet away of any intersection, because the latter tend to be excessively congested with platoons of pedestrians coming from two directions and waiting to cross. All signs should be aligned with the curbside boundary of the furnishing zone. Any future location of the way finding system should be presented to the board before installation.

CB4 supports this initiative and looks forward to working with DOT to implement these recommendations in advance of starting the project.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson
Chair



Christine Berthet, Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus, Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee