



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**COREY JOHNSON**  
Chair

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

August 6, 2013

Mr. Stanley Shor  
Assistant Commissioner  
New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication  
2 Metrotech Center, 4th Floor  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

Dear Mr. Shor:

Manhattan Community Board #4 looks forward to DoITT's release of a Request for Franchise's to install and manage the new payphone. We are excited that the newly designed payphones, which include enhanced features with a slender design (and include free 311 and 911 calls), will be replacing the existing antiquated booth installations. The public comment and review process of the potential design for these installations encouraged substantial participation and we are eager to see the results. We are also pleased that DoITT intends to install a fewer number of stations than currently exist. In a separate letter we outlined a plan for redistributing and reducing the number of phone installations within Community Board 4 while respecting DoITT's plan to have installations that enable a district wide Wi-Fi network (with each installation having a 200 foot radius of Wi-Fi capability). In this letter we want to make recommendation for payphone installation placement criteria.

First, we want to reinforce our previous recommendation that, along with new and innovative thinking on design should come new and innovative thinking on placement. More specifically, we recommend that DoITT not grandfather existing locations and adopt placement criteria similar to other street furniture such as newsstands, including procedures for Community Board review and input. We also encourage flexibility in design and placement, including on which direction the phone and features face (perpendicular or parallel to the curb), the height and placement of advertising panels that respects the pedestrian and window level experience of the booths and avoids visual and physical clutter, and the consideration of some locations on asphalt (rather than sidewalk) adjacent to other street based uses such as bicycle share or bicycle rack or benches on converted pedestrian plaza areas.

We strongly urge DoITT to review the rules adopted for Newsstands as a model for Phone Booth placement criteria. Among some of those rule criteria that we would support for phone booths include:

- Ensuring a minimum nine feet and six inches clear pedestrian path

- A minimum distance from the corner line (we suggest 25 feet), to avoid overcrowding and visual clutter near pedestrian crossings. This is particularly crucial given that increased pedestrian overcrowding at many corners during rush hour and the potential for driver viewing distractions while they are turning (a recent report indicated that 44% of pedestrian injuries occur while they are crossing while they have the “walk” sign).
- Consider placements near other street furniture, such as benches or bus stops, where the Wi-Fi services can be most useful, or trees or sign poles that already create restricted pedestrian paths.
- Trap doors, subway and Con Edison grates should be considered an obstruction to pedestrian paths when taking measurement. The reality is that many trap doors are open and used for business loading and unloading and most grates are designed in a way that cause pedestrians (particularly those in heels) to avoid them.
- There are some streets, those that score a “D” or worse that are already too overloaded with pedestrians to consider any additional blocking of pedestrian movement or obstructions to portions of the sidewalk and are thus typically too noisy and crowded with movement to be useful to any payphone user.
- A minimum of 15 feet between any payphone and subway stairs (except if on the back of the subway entrance), curb cut and/or entrance to a commercial or residential building with more than 16 stories.
- A minimum of five feet between a payphone and a tree pit, canopy, and street light
- A two foot clearance, in any direction, from ventilation or other grills, cellar doors, manholes, access plates, adjoining building vaults or transformer vaults, street signs, parking meters, newsstands, fixed litter baskets, valve boxes, and mail boxes.
- A one and one-half foot clearance is required from curbs, measured perpendicular to the curb-line.

We suggest that the newsstand approval process be adopted for the addition relocation and removal of phone booths, with the addition of

- An exception process in case there is community opposition, to be resolved by a city council vote, as is currently the case for Sidewalk Cafés.
- Relocations would be automatically approved, as long as the community has provided for a suitable new site within the community board boundary or as approved by another community board.
- Removal without relocation would be automatically approved provided they do not exceed 3% annually of the citywide inventory at the end of the preceding calendar year.

As always, we appreciate your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson  
Chair



Christine Berthet, Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus, Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning Committee

CC: Gail Brewer – Council Member