



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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DELORES RUBIN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

December 18, 2017

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Air Quality Concerns in Manhattan Community District 4

Dear Mayor De Blasio,

Members of Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) are alarmed at the poor air quality in our district and we know it is likely to get worse as we are facing increasing vehicular traffic. Carolyn (Cari) Olson of the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), at our October 12, 2017 Waterfront Parks and Environment Committee meeting, informed us that particulates in our district are among the worst in the city. Even so, we believe the data she presented is understated. In light of the clear absence of public policy to correct the situation in our district we ask, what are the immediate next steps to improve our air quality? At a minimum we believe there should be more frequent sampling at a greater number of locations within our district. But that is only data collection. We'd like to know what policies your administration will soon put in place to improve our air quality. At its December 6th Full Board meeting, MCB4, by a vote of 44 in favor, 1 oppose, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote, voted to approve the following recommendation.

The Methodology

Assistant Commissioner Olson informed us that NYC Community Air Survey (NYCCAS) is the largest air monitoring system in the US. The survey of air pollutants is used to understand neighborhood differences. We were informed that the survey is based on random sampling techniques to assure accurate overall information about the city's air. The survey is based on the placement of 90 monitors throughout the city. The sampling is performed four times per year to capture the climate and temperature differences in each of the four seasons. The randomization techniques taking into consideration population density and unique facilities like bus depots and ferry terminals led to the installation of a single monitor in Manhattan Community District 4 (CD4).

The Data

As presented, the data show a decline of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), nitrogen dioxide, nitric oxide and sulfur dioxide (winter average) with the latter showing the most precipitous decline as a result of the conversion of building heating equipment away from number six and four fuels. The most recent reading (annual average for 2015) of PM_{2.5}, “the most harmful air pollutant”¹ is 10.9 micrograms per cubic meter Annual Average 2015², higher than both the city and Manhattan average. The only community districts in the city showing higher readings were Manhattan CD5 (Fordham and University Heights) at 12.3 and Manhattan CD6 (Stuyvesant Town and Turtle Bay) at 11.2. Commissioner Olson’s presentation did include an estimate of the health burden from PM_{2.5} in our district, but she used data from 2009-2011 and we did not learn about the method of arriving at that data.

Need for Additional Sampling

We do not pretend to be experts on the techniques of sampling air emissions in our district. Nevertheless, we have some serious concerns.

As a district with three ferry terminals, a bus terminal, several on-street long distance and tour bus pickup and drop off points, the approaches to a major cross Hudson River tunnel and traffic in our streets that is often at a standstill, MCB4 believes the district should have additional sampling points as well as more frequent sampling moments. Additional sampling points and sampling moments would provide more robust results (and we believe they will indicate the problem is worse than the current data indicates).

The Port Authority has indicated an expectation of a 40% increase in bus traffic by 2040, which will also increase air emissions. Due to these changes, current sampling misstates the likely trend of air emissions, especially in years to come.

Needed Policy

Needed are:

- Much better environmental enforcement to prevent the idling of vehicles in our district,
- Some restrictions of vehicle entry to Midtown (congestion pricing or the like),
- Additional rail transportation (new Hudson River and East River rail tunnels and extension of the #7 Train to Secaucus),
- Redesign of the Port Authority Bus Terminal, either planned or existing, to contain bus exhausts, and
- Retrofitting of all buses to reduce their air emissions

We are sure this is not an inclusive list.

¹ Community Health Profiles 2015, Manhattan Community District 4: Clinton and Chelsea, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2015chp-mn4.pdf>, retrieved December 8, 2017, p5.

² The New York City Community Air Survey: Neighborhood Air Quality 2008-2015, Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, April 2017, p. 37.

Our Question

We therefore ask what comprehensive programs you are proposing and will soon implement to fix the serious air pollution problem in our district.

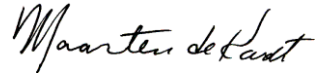
Sincerely,



Delores Rubin
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board 4



Lowell Kern
Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee



Maarten de Kadt
Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee

CC: Hon. Jerry Nadler, United States Congress
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council
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Vincent Sapienza, Commissioner, DEP
Rick Cotton, Port Authority