



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND

Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.

District Manager

March 13, 2008

Elliot Sander
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Re: No. 7 Subway Line Extension – Construction Activities

Dear Mr. Sander:

Manhattan Community Board 4 appreciates the presentation to its Transportation Committee on January 16, 2008, by Philip W. McGrade and Paul Matthews on the construction activities and their potential impacts of the No. 7 Train-line extension, as well as the further information provided at a follow-up meeting in February and the requested clarifications received on March 6, 2008.

This project will have significant impacts on the neighborhood and its residents and thus it is imperative that the MTA establish and maintain lines of communication and work closely with the community and Community Board 4.

In a separate letter, dated February 8, 2008, we voiced our concerns related to the project's financial implications and the elimination of a station shell at West 41st Street and Tenth Avenue. Now we are addressing only construction activities and their impacts on the community.

According to the presentation, the work under the initial contract will take approximately five years and will involve:

- Excavation by tunnel boring machine (TBM) of a 7,000 foot tunnel extension from 27th Street and Eleventh Avenue to 41st Street and Eighth Avenue;
- Three shafts for excavation, access and utilities, at Eleventh Avenue and 26th Street (Site A), Eleventh Avenue between 34th and 35th Streets (Site P), and Eleventh Avenue between 35th and 36th Streets (Site K);
- The creation of the cavern for the 34th Street Station;
- Linking the tunnel to the existing No. 7 train tunnel just west of Times Square;
- The creation of storage tracks from 34th to 26th Streets;

- One day of drilling at approximately 30 various scattered (and not yet determined) sites for borings and test pits;
- The use of ground freezing along Eleventh Avenue between 26th and 34th Streets.

There is a possibility of a contract add-on for the creation of a station shell at 41st Street and Tenth Avenue, and future contracts will include the installation of track, signal, and systems, construction of ventilation and systems facility buildings at Sites A and K and at Sites M (41st Street west of Tenth Avenue) and L (41st Street east of Tenth Avenue), and the construction of station entrances and finishes.

Each of these activities will have a significant impact on the flow of traffic, pedestrian access, and parking. We note specifically the following disruptions:

- The elimination of one lane of traffic and one side of the sidewalk on the western one-third of the blocks between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues on 25th, 26th, 34th, 35th and 36th Streets;
- The elimination of two lanes of traffic and the sidewalk on the west side of Eleventh Avenue between 26th and 29th Streets, and one lane of traffic and (effective in mid-April, 2008, through January 2010) the sidewalk on the east side of Eleventh Avenue between 25th and 26th Streets and 29th and 32nd Streets;
- The elimination of both parking lanes (and the reduction to one lane of traffic) for approximately a quarter of a block on West 41st Street just east of Eighth Avenue (and thus in Community Board No. 5) and the eastern-most traffic lane on Eighth Avenue through 2012. We urge the MTA to work closely with Community Board #5 on this proposed West 41st Street/8th Avenue disruption;

We have requested a firmer timeline for portions of the disruptions where the timeline is not yet known and will post them on the Community Board website when we receive them.

Many of the construction/tunneling related impacts remain unknown, including the specific sound and vibration affects of the work and tunneling on surrounding businesses and residents, the construction related impacts of overlapping future phases, and the relationship between the impacts of this project and those of other major public and private projects in development or planned. In light of these uncertainties we make the following preliminary recommendations:

- **Coordinate Construction with other Westside Major Infrastructure Projects.** Coordinate construction and impacts with the work proposed for the Access to the Region's Core project, Moynihan Station (particularly related to truck use/debris removal), Port Authority (particularly related to North Tower construction), the Third Water Tunnel (30th Street main site) and the Javits Center for traffic impact of major shows as well as its renovation/expansion project. We expect a follow-up briefing that would include a coordination plan;

- **Keep Local Owners and Tenants Informed of Surface Work.** Establish a monthly newsletter, as was successfully done for the Route 9A project, with planned construction schedule and progress to notify in writing the owners and tenants of all buildings along 25th and 26th Streets and 34th, 35th, and 36th Streets between Tenth and Eleventh Avenue of the plans and timelines for construction at those sites. When specific changes occur outside of the planned monthly schedule, issue specific written notices a minimum of two weeks in advance of starting such work. Such notices should include a description of the work to be done, the potential impacts and related mitigations, and a contact person and phone number to call for complaints or for more information. We would also request that the community board receive copies of these notices;

- **Keep Local Owners and Tenants Informed of Tunneling Work.** As indicated above, establish and distribute (both through mail and e-mail) a monthly newsletter with planned construction schedule and progress for tunneling to notify in writing the owners and tenants of all buildings along 25th and 26th Streets and 34th, 35th, and 36th Streets between Tenth and Eleventh Avenue of the plans and timelines for construction at those sites. Notify in writing the owners and tenants of buildings that are above and within a reasonable distance (to be defined based on projected TBM noise/vibration impacts) of the tunneling at least two weeks in advance of work commencement in that area. Such notice should, similar to the above, include the timeline and hours of the tunneling, the potential noise and vibrations, and a phone number and contact name for complaints and additional information. We would also request that the Community Board receive copies of these notices;

- **Manage Vehicular Traffic Impacts.** Sufficient personnel must be present to keep traffic moving and to watch for pedestrian safety during all hours of above ground operations. Traffic volumes on Eleventh Avenue fluctuate throughout the day, and are also affected by events at the Javits Convention Center. During the evening rush, trucks approach the Lincoln Tunnel by going west on 34th Street and north on Eleventh Avenue. Drivers will likely find the reduction to three (rather curvy) lanes on 11th Avenue below 31st Street to be confusing. The start up of this major change in traffic patterns in mid to late April should be phased in, scheduled, and staffed to minimize conflict with other traffic and to ensure minimal back-up during high use areas.

- **Ensure Pedestrian Safety.** Warnings/signage and crosswalks for the reduced pedestrian access must be fully accessible for the physically, visually, and hearing impaired. This should include sufficient signage/warnings at Tenth Avenue and 25th, 26th, 34th, 35th and 36th Streets when the sidewalk is closed further west on those blocks. We note in particular that activities at Site A will affect pedestrian access to the Starrett Lehigh and Terminal Stores buildings, and that activities at Site K will affect pedestrian access to the Javits Convention Center. Special attention must be paid to pedestrian crossing near these locations;

- **Provide Adequate Construction Site Security.** Ensure sites are safely secured including adequate fencing and security personnel. We would appreciate it if the designs and plans for security could be sent to the Community Board office for comment;

□ **Minimize use of Lincoln Tunnel for construction deliveries and tunneling debris removal.** We ask that the MTA seriously consider alternative means for transporting both construction materials and tunneling debris, including debris removal by barge and rail service. This would especially be the case when MTA coordinates its deliveries and debris removal with the other major projects cited above. Considering the extreme amount of such debris, truck container removal is contrary to PlaNYC. The impact of debris removal by truck will dramatically increase vehicular emissions, damage the already overloaded city streets and Lincoln Tunnel approach roadways, add to the frequency and increase the existing noise from Third Water Tunnel dumpster trucks, and impact Lincoln Tunnel traffic flow. When alternatives cannot be found, we request a specific truck routing plan from the various locations to and from the Lincoln Tunnel (or other access points) and the projected number of trucks, in a manner that avoids blocks with concentrations of residential buildings. We also request a plan for minimizing truck travel disruption of high trafficked corridors and times.

□ **Monitor Surface Vibrations.** MTA plans include doing studies on mitigating the impact to buildings that might be affected by drilling vibrations. The MTA has particularly focused on buildings that were listed as potential historic sites. We request they outreach, and monitor the impacts on *any* buildings that might be within 300 feet of the use of the TBM.

□ **No Night Work that can be heard or felt in residential buildings.** At the presentation it was stated that tunneling is currently scheduled to occur 24/7 once the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) is installed. If this work can be heard or felt above the surface, nighttime work is unacceptable, in terms of community impacts, and we request that the TBM not be used from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. when it is near residential buildings. This is particularly important along the 41st/42nd Street corridor between Eleventh and Eighth Avenues, near 24th Street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, where there are several residential buildings. This is also important when the tunneling is being done near other residential buildings near Eleventh Avenue including 544 West 35th Street, 545 West 34th Street, 534, 540 West 29th Streets and 5_____ West 36th Street.

□ **Consult with the community on design of stations, mechanical buildings and other amenities.** Confer with the community board on the design, landscaping, and amenities of the two station entrances planned for the West 34th Street stop and for the design of the ventilation systems before drafting the specifications. We understand the design of the station stops, surrounding landscaping, and amenities is being overseen by the Hudson Yards Development Corporation and the Parks Department and we are copying them on this letter.

We anticipate further communication with the MTA as construction and drilling begins at the two major sites and moves through the corridor. The board did not have full schedules as to the timeline for construction at the major sites or the corridors for the drilling at the

presentation. We request that the MTA inform the community board of that schedule and on any changes to the above plans

Again, we appreciate the briefing and follow-up clarifications and look forward to working closely with you to mitigate construction and tunneling impacts during the duration of this project.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair Manhattan Community Board 4

cc: Adrienne Taub-Cane, Assistant Director, MTA
Philip W. McGrade, PE Program Manager, MTA
Paul Matthews, Construction Manager, MTA
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Ann Weisbrod, President, Hudson Yards Development Corporation
Art Silber, Chief Manager, Access to the Region's Core, NJ Transit
Barbara Lampen, President, Convention Center Development Corporation
Area building owners and managers
Manhattan Community Board 5