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The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8
Transportation Committee
Monday July 9, 2018, 6:30 PM
Hunter College West Building Room 615

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee chair to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Manhattan Community Board 8.

Minutes

Present: Michele Birnbaum, Alida Camp, Billy Freeland, Craig Lader, Rebecca Lamorte, Valerie Mason, Barry Schneider, Tricia Shimamura, Russell Squire, Charles Warren, Peter Borock (public member)
Absent (Excused): Lori Bores, David Menegon, Rita Popper, Jordan Wouk (public member)
Absent (Unexcused): None

Resolutions for Approval:
***Item 1: New York City Transit Report – M31, M66, and M72 Bus Lines** (page 3)
**unanimous*

The meeting was called to order at 6:39 PM.

Item 1: New York City Transit Report – M31, M66 and M72 Bus Lines

Marcus Book, Assistant Director of Government Affairs for New York City Transit (NYCT), and Laura Azze-Singh, Principal Transportation Planner for NYCT, provided an update on the M31, M66, and M72 bus routes, which experienced service reductions in September 2017.

The September 2017 service cuts were based off of ridership data from 2015 and 2016, which indicated that the elimination of some trips would bring the routes into compliance with NYCT bus loading guidelines. Mr. Book and Ms. Azze-Singh explained the process followed by NYCT to determine how service level decisions are made, explaining that schedules are developed and regularly adjusted to ensure on-board passenger loads for each trip on each route are in line with agency guidelines. These loads are measured at the most crowded point on each trip; NYCT's guidelines call for standees during peak periods and up to a seated load during non-peak periods and on weekends.

Between May 2017 and May 2018, ridership has increased on the M66, but has decreased on the M72 and M31 (the M31 drop in ridership was likely the result of riders migrating to the 2nd Avenue Subway). However, the data indicated that running time (the actual amount of time it takes for a trip to complete its routes) has increased beyond acceptable levels, and some of the routes are now operating above capacity.

In early July 2018, new data compiled by NYCT became available, which indicated that some further adjustments will need to be made to bring these routes back into compliance with loading guidelines, as they are now being exceeded during certain dayparts in some instances. Thus, NYCT will be re-evaluating schedules later this year for potential further adjustments to the M31, M66 and M72, which would be implemented in 2018. NYCT also measures performance using an internal wait assessment metric (defined as the percentage of trips which arrive within 3 minutes of the scheduled time during peak periods and within 5 minutes during off-peak periods); this wait assessment indicated that the M31, M66 and M72 all performed better than the average Manhattan bus route.

Copies of MTA's new "Fast Forward" plan were distributed by NYCT. "Fast Forward" was issued under new NYCT President Andy Byford, highlighting various initiatives intended to improve and reimagine NYC's bus network. The plan includes a review of all bus routes as part of a system redesign initiative that could result in significant changes to routes and service frequencies; it also outlines how the use of technology and other tools will be used to reduce travel times and improve the on-board passenger experience. Manhattan bus routes are expected to undergo their review by 2021.

Members of the community in attendance and Transportation Committee members collectively expressed frustration with the service cuts. NYCT was urged to take action to both reverse the service reductions and address broader systemic factors contributing to long wait times, crowded buses, and unreliable service that are widely experienced on the M31, M66 and M72. Examples of vehicles blocking bus lanes, including by the US Postal Service, were also highlighted.

One area of focus was the hospital corridor served by these routes along York Avenue, which is going to experience additional ridership activity and potential traffic congestion once the Memorial Sloan Kettering outpatient center opens. The facility is expected to serve 1,300 patients daily and employ 1,600 people. NYCT staff indicated that there will be study done in the Fall of 2018 to address these issues.

Concerns were also raised about the integrity of the data used to determine ridership and the lack of data that has been made available that backs up the cuts to service that were made. NYCT advised that CB8 should make a formal written request for specific data sets regarding load factors, on-time performance and running times, and that most requests are accommodated.

There was also discussion about the lengthy process for NYCT to propose and implement service changes, and the need to make adjustments to the M31, M66 and M72 in a more immediate fashion than waiting until Spring 2019. One member asked if NYCT plans on installing automatic passenger counters (APCs) on buses, which would allow NYCT to collect daily ridership data on every trip on every bus route. APCs would eliminate the need to use staff to conduct counts manually, and would allow planners to have immediate access to data rather than having to wait months to collect and analyze ridership performance. This would enable NYCT to reduce the time it currently requires to propose and implement service adjustments needed to bring the system into compliance with loading guidelines. NYCT indicated there were various technology initiatives proposed under "Fast Forward", but would get back to us as to whether APCs were among those technology initiatives.

The following resolution was put forward by CB8:

WHEREAS service on the M31, M66 and M72 bus routes was reduced in September 2017; and

WHEREAS current NYCT data indicates that service cuts have resulted in instances where bus loading guidelines are being exceeded and running times have increased to the extent that they require further adjustment; and

WHEREAS fewer trips result in deteriorated bus service, including longer wait times, longer running times, and increased crowding on-board; and

WHEREAS MTA President Andy Byford's Fast Forward Plan emphasizes the need to operate buses faster and more reliably;

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 requests increased service on the M31, M66 and M72 bus routes.

Approved, 10 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstention, 0 Not Voting for Cause; plus 1Public Members voting Yes.

Yes (10+1): Birnbaum, Camp, Freeland, Lader, Lamorte, Mason, Schneider; Shimamura, Squire, Warren, Borock (public member),
No (1): None

Other bus-related matters
NYCT noted that following the introduction of Select Bus Service on 79th Street in 2017, ridership has been increasing steadily since February 2018. Considering that bus ridership across NYC has been declining consistently over recent years, growth on the M79 is an especially positive sign. NYCT has committed to returning to CB8 in the Fall of 2018 to provide a detailed review of the first year of operations on the M79 SBS.

NYCT advised that they have submitted the request made by CB8 to add an M15 bus stop at 60th St. @ 1st Avenue to NYC DOT. The stop should be implemented shortly, as DOT has 45 days to implement the request once they receive it.

Item 2: 121 East 60th Street - Public request for a change in parking for a Medical Facility

This item was tabled, as the applicant was not in attendance to discuss this request for a parking change.

Item 3: NYCDOT Presentation: Proposed 2nd Ave. Parking Protected/Curbside Buffered Bike Lane from 68th to 59th Streets

Ted Wright, NYC DOT Director of Bikes and Greenways, joined by Ed Pincar, NYC DOT Acting Manhattan Borough Commissioner, presented a proposal to add a bike lane on 2nd Avenue between 68th and 59th Streets, and to modify the intersection of 2nd Avenue between 60th and 59th Streets to allow bikes and pedestrians to cross the Queensboro Bridge entrance/exit intersection on the east side of the street. If built, it would fill in one of the largest gaps to the existing bike network in NYC and provide a continuous bike lane along 2nd Avenue from 125th Street to 43rd Street.

In developing its proposal, DOT aimed to enhance safety for cyclists and pedestrians without compromising vehicular traffic speeds, commercial truck loading, and parking needs. The proposal has two elements:

1. 2nd Avenue between 68th and 60th Streets: The proposal calls for a continuous 6-foot wide bike lane with a 3-foot buffer between 68th and 60th streets along the curbside on the east side of the street to replace the existing shared moving/bike lane. The far left moving lane would continue to carry vehicular traffic during peak periods (weekdays 7AM-10AM, 3PM-8PM), and then would be used as a parking/loading lane during off-peak hours, which would allow the bike lane to be protected from traffic during non-peak periods. Flexible barriers were not an option due to maintenance and snow removal conflicts. DOT stated there would be minimal impact to traffic capacity overall with no change to general traffic throughput on 2nd Avenue during the times of day with the highest traffic volumes.

2. Between 60th and 59th Streets at the Queensboro Bridge: DOT proposes a new bike/pedestrian island to be constructed at the intersection of 2nd Avenue and 59th within the 2nd Avenue right-of-way, which would be the landing spot for bikes and pedestrians during the 2nd stage of a 3-stage crossing. In the first phase, a southbound bike/pedestrian crossing would be added to allow crossing of 60th Street and the bridge exit, while vehicular traffic on 2nd Avenue has the green light. The second phase, during which time eastbound traffic on 59th Street has the green light cycle, would allow bikes and pedestrians to continue their southbound movement by crossing onto the new pedestrian island. The third stage would permit bikes and pedestrians to continue southbound on 2nd Avenue and to the existing sidewalk and bike lane during the southbound green cycle for 2nd Avenue.

   The proposal would result in no change to vehicular throughput on 2nd Avenue by the Queensboro Bridge; the new island would allow the 2 eastern southbound traffic lanes on 2nd Avenue used to access the entrance to the bridge to be separated from the remaining lanes of 2nd Avenue that continue southbound. Bike lanes at this complex intersection would be clearly demarcated, and separated from the pedestrian crosswalks and pathways. The new island would have bollards to provide extra protection from oncoming vehicles; curvature of the bike lane and a raised ramp will help to slow cyclists down as they enter the new island. There will be bike and pedestrian signals at each location within the three-stage crossing, but specific information on any signals to be installed were not described in the presentation; DOT's signals unit was not present to respond to requests for details on exactly how many and precise siting. Some details regarding how the bike and pedestrian lanes would be painted were still evolving.

DOT is also looking at options fill in gaps in the 2nd Avenue bike lane south of 43rd Street, and is working with CB6 to pursue that element and on the Queensboro Bridge element of the plan. Following Community Board action pending any further adjustments to the proposal and finalization of the proposal, DOT is looking at implementation in late 2018/early 2019.

As part of the presentation, DOT highlighted new data denoting the usage of bike lanes on 2nd Avenue in CB8 and between 52nd and 43rd Streets (which feature the same lane configurations and parking regulations as what is proposed between 68th and 59th Street). Speaking to the need for a continuous 2nd Avenue bike lane and impacts of the introduction of bike lanes, bike counts on 2nd Avenue at 86th Street have risen by 105% between 2015 and 2017 since the protected lane was introduced. 699,000 Citi Bike trips either started or ended in CB6 or CB8 in the 3rd quarter of 2017, and over 5,000 cyclists daily use the Queensboro Bridge bike lane.

To demonstrate the impact on vehicular traffic when bike lanes are implemented, DOT provided E-Z Pass data showing that since a bike lane was introduced on 2nd Avenue between 59th and 43rd Streets, there has been no significant change to vehicle speeds; in fact, vehicle speeds increased during certain dayparts, which is in contrast to overall vehicle speeds becoming slower across Midtown Manhattan during the same timeframe.

There were many comments provided in response to the presentation, some of which were technical questions about the details of the proposal, others being more general regarding safety and enforcement issues. Specific questions pertained to potential curb cuts and increased delineation between the bike and pedestrian crossings at the bridge intersection (which will be looked into), and whether there was consideration of moving the bike lane to the west side of 2nd Avenue to avoid the conflict with bridge (which DOT deemed not feasible). One member suggested a bike and pedestrian ramp over the Queensboro Bridge intersection as a long-term approach to consider, and questioned whether the proposed plan would provide enough protection for pedestrians from cyclists crossing the complex intersection. Another member expressed concern that the plan does not include improved access from 2nd Avenue to the Queensboro Bridge bike lane entrance on 60th Street, and those looking to access it will continue to use the partial unprotected bike lane between 1st and 2nd Avenues to connect to the 1st Avenue

bike lane up to 60th Street; DOT indicated that this will be studied in the future and recognizes the need to address this element.

A common theme among those who commented in support for the proposal was the need to improve safety at an intersection that is viewed by cyclists as very unsafe, and that the proposal goes a long way towards accomplishing that goal. A petition containing over 1,200 signatures was submitted by a representative from Transportation Alternatives in support of closing the 2nd Avenue Bike Lane Gap that is addressed by this proposal. Some supporters viewed the Queensboro Bridge component as complex and wondered how it would work operationally. Councilman Ben Kallos also spoke in support of building out the bike network on Second Avenue and connecting the bike lanes north and south of the Queensboro Bridge.

Among those in attendance who voiced opposition to the proposal, common themes included continuing concerns about cyclists not adhering to traffic signals, bikers traveling in the wrong direction, lack of enforcement by NYPD and lack of staff and resources available to conduct enforcement, fears of collisions between cyclists and pedestrians (including by some attendees who have been injured by cyclists) and ensuring that there is sufficient separation on the pedestrian island between cyclists and pedestrians. Some expressed the belief that cycling in NYC should require a license. Other points made related to the potential of increased congestion due to the removal of a moving lane of traffic during off-peak timeframes.

In response to safety concerns raised, DOT acknowledged that signage will need to be added to the proposal, and enforcement will need to be in place. Mr. Pincar noted that DOT has stepped up its educational efforts and outreach to address bike safety concerns citywide. He also noted that Mayor de Blasio addressed enforcement concerns at a recent town hall meeting co-sponsored by CB8, where he stated that he is tasking NYPD to address enforcement of bike laws. Earlier in the meeting, Councilman Ben Kallos also highlighted his office's educational initiatives to promote safe biking, including a partnership with Bike NY and programs targeting bike delivery men and women. He noted statistics showing the impacts of increased enforcement across the Upper East Side. In 2017 there were 15,000 moving violations issued in CB8 to motor vehicles, along with about 1,500 violations to cyclists. One CB8 member suggested creation of a dedicated unit for enforcing pedestrian safety, and budgetary resources to support it.

Based on the requests for additional information and the potential changes to the plan that may emanate from CB8 feedback and from a walk-through to be conducted with CB8 and CB6 (which was briefed on July 2nd on the proposal and decided to hold off on voting until after a walk-through was conducted), no action was taken. DOT is expected to return to CB8 in the fall of 2018 seeking approval of the final proposal, and is aiming to perform construction in late 2018. The precise cost of the proposal was not available, but was believed to be under $500,000, and would be funded through DOT's operations budget.

Item 4: NYCDOT Presentation: Proposed bike and shared lanes on 65th/66th Streets from 5th Ave to York Ave, and 84th/85th Streets from 5th Ave to East End Ave.

Ted Wright, NYC DOT Director of Bikes and Greenways, joined by Ed Pincar, NYC DOT Acting Manhattan Borough Commissioner, presented a preliminary proposal to implement crosstown bike lanes on 65th/66th Streets and 85th/86th Streets. DOT indicated that the purpose of the presentation was to present preliminary data regarding the implementation of painted bike lanes on 70th/71st Streets and 77th/78th Streets, and to begin a dialogue with the Community about the appetite for additional crosstown bike routes, particularly whether 65th/66th and 84th/85th Streets or other crosstown streets were preferred by the community for additional bike lanes. DOT intends to return to CB8 during the Fall of 2018 with a more detailed plan.

This proposal is the continuation of prior CB8 debates over crosstown bike lanes in 2015 and 2016. In November 2015, by a vote of 32 in Favor, 8 Opposed and 6 abstentions, CB8 approved a resolution requesting DOT "propose a network of crosstown bike lanes on the UES, to be implemented in the short-term", and for DOT to "propose a longer-term implementation of a network of crosstown bike lanes on the UES using the safest appropriate design". Following extensive debate over the course of three Transportation Committee meetings, a final Committee resolution supporting painted bike lanes on 70/71st, 77/78th and 84/85th Streets was brought to the full board, but no position was taken. During June and July of 2016, DOT implemented the proposed lanes on 70th/71st and 77th/78th Streets, but not on 84th/85th Streets.

The proposal for 84th and 85th streets is generally similar in nature to what was implemented on 70th/71st and 77th/78th Streets from an engineering and design perspective, and was developed with the intent to improve the safety of cyclists and all road users. The proposal on 65th and 66th Street differs slightly, as any block that has rush-hour parking rules would utilize sharrows (shared arrows denoting that vehicles and cyclists share the roadway) rather than a bike lane; this includes 65th St. between Madison and Lexington Avenues and between 3rd and 2nd Avenues, and 66th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues, 3rd and Lexington Avenues, and Park and Madison Avenues.

Regardless of whether lanes are dedicated or shared, they would only involve painted lane markings to delineate a bike lane that would provide a dedicated space for cyclists. No changes to roadway capacity would result, nor would there be any changes to parking, and the amount of area available for parking would not be any narrower than the current configuration. DOT noted that these streets were chosen for possible bike lanes due to the connectivity to the transverses through Central Park, and because they are already used frequently by cyclists.

DOT presented preliminary data from the NYPD crash database covering the first year of the crosstown bike lanes on 70th/71st and 77th/78th Streets. While generally data is analyzed over 3-year periods, and too much credence should not be placed on a single year of data, the first year of data for the crosstown bike lanes showed very significant improvements to safety as a result of the traffic calming resulting from bike lane implementation. There was a 46% reduction in total crashes, a 75% drop in motor vehicle occupant injuries, and a 54% decrease in pedestrian injuries. Although cycling injuries decreased only 8%, a decrease is noteworthy given significant increase in biking on the corridor after becoming a bike route with painted lanes. No complaints about bike lanes were registered by the office of Ben Kallos in regards to the crosstown bike lanes installed on 70/71 and 77/78, and DOT stated that they have not received many complaints.

Comments from the audience were largely focused on concerns about potential presence of bike lanes near the many schools along the proposed bike lanes and potential increases to congestion resulting from the presence of bike lanes. Many parents from schools on 84th Street were present, and worried about student safety and how lanes would work at times when the street is closed for student recess. School officials and neighborhood association representatives worried that bike lanes would attract more bikers and create added road congestion on streets where buses are present and truck traffic is an issue alongside other impediments such as existing bike infrastructure; the potential interference with first responders was also cited. Some people commented on the potential implications of promoting biking on streets filtering onto the Central Park Transverses. There were also numerous speakers opposed to any roadway space being provided to cyclists, believing the streets are meant to be used by vehicles and that bike lanes are not appropriate on any crosstown street. There were also some comments in support of the proposal and the general objectives described in the presentation pertaining to the need for additional painted crosstown bike lanes.

DOT reiterated over the course of the meeting on multiple occasions that they are committed to further dialogue and to meeting with potentially affected stakeholders individually to discuss the proposals. DOT responded to many of the comments with offers to engage further to help determine alternative streets in

which bike lanes may be more acceptable than 65th/66th/84th/85th. DOT also committed to providing 30 days of advance notice prior to the next set of meetings with the Community whether or not the current plan remains or changes significantly. That meeting with the Community Board will take place in the Fall of 2018, likely in September.

Item 5: Old and New Business.

There was no old or new business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Warren & Craig Lader, Co-Chairs