



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**COREY JOHNSON**  
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District Manager

March 13, 2013

Margaret Forgione  
Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
NYC Department of Transportation  
59 Maiden Lane, 37<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10038

**Re: Proposed Midtown Cross Town Bicycle Lanes**

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) supports, with some reservations, the proposed additional cross-town bicycle routes proposed for W. 38<sup>th</sup> and W. 39<sup>th</sup> Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues; W. 43<sup>rd</sup> and W. 44<sup>th</sup> Streets between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River Park and W. 54<sup>th</sup> and W. 55<sup>th</sup> Street between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River Park. CB4 opposes the proposed installation of bicycle routes on W. 48<sup>th</sup> and W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street and the related proposal to have a shared pedestrian/bicycle path on the sidewalk on the east side of Twelfth Avenue between W. 51<sup>st</sup> and W.52<sup>nd</sup> Streets.

We appreciate that NYC DOT returned to the Transportation Planning Committee of CB4 in February, 2013 to discuss their response to our letter of December 5, 2012 stating our concerns. These concerns were largely related to DOT moving forward on these bicycle lanes while there had been limited progress on other committed NYC DOT projects in the CB4 area. We are pleased that the concerns related to these delays were mostly addressed, including installation of bicycle corrals, eight additional pedestrian refuge areas on Eighth and Ninth Avenues, additional left turn signals at W. 57<sup>th</sup>, W. 42<sup>nd</sup> and W. 34<sup>th</sup> Streets and improvements to the west side of Eighth Avenue between W. 42<sup>nd</sup> and W. 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets, most of which are now in progress and/or will be installed by Fall 2013.

We also appreciate the data provided on safety statistics for current unenclosed, un-buffered cross town bicycle paths, though the results were too short term to be interpretable.

With the positive project reports, we felt we could consider the proposed cross-town bicycle paths. Many Committee and public members who testified had concerns that crosstown street locations were guided mostly by enabling, in the long-term, river to river bicycling, rather than a careful identification of the safest streets. There were also concerns related to the rush to install these lanes before better data is available about existing cross-town unenclosed mostly unbuffered bicycle and shared (between bicycle and vehicles) lane safety – a rush many felt timed to the Mayor's intended legacy than sound public policy or bicyclist safety.

However, even with the above concerns, the Committee voted, with the exception of W. 48<sup>th</sup> and W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street, to support the proposed bicycle/shared lane expansion as important elements of filling out the originally proposed Bicycle path blueprint, increasing public use of the Hudson River Park, and a likely safer alternative

than not have bicycle lanes, particularly with the arrival of bicycle share stations in midtown this spring. The Committee also felt that the creation of these bicycle/shared lanes is recognition of the substantial increase in bicyclists commuting and traveling and the need for city streets and moving vehicles to accommodate that use. We also note that none of the proposed bicycle/shared lane proposals include removing any traffic lanes and the only proposed parking regulations change is to remove one restriction on two blocks (along W. 55<sup>th</sup> Street), as detailed below.

We thus have the following comments to the proposed bicycle lane expansions in their proposed east/west pairings. These streets are proposed to have either a 5' wide unbuffered bicycle lane or a 13' wide "shared" lane meant for both bicycles and cars and with prominent street markings indicating the joint use.

1. **W. 39<sup>th</sup> and W. 40<sup>th</sup> Streets between Eighth and Ninth Avenues:** Both streets are crowded with Lincoln Tunnel busses, particularly during morning and late afternoon hours. W. 40<sup>th</sup> has a large bay for Buses entering the Port Authority. DOT is proposing a full bicycle lane for W. 39<sup>th</sup> Street and a shared bicycle/vehicle lane for W. 40<sup>th</sup> Street on the south side of the street (the bus ramp is on the north side). Both streets will tie into a shared lane to the east of Eighth Avenue. We remain concerned about a shared lane where occasional back up of buses loading into the Port Authority can cause other cross town vehicles to swerve between lanes (into the shared lane) to avoid being in the bus cue. We encourage increased shared-lane signage both just east and west of Eighth Avenue on W. 40<sup>th</sup> Street.
2. **W. 43<sup>rd</sup> and W. 44<sup>th</sup> Streets between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River Park:** W. 44<sup>th</sup> Street is proposed to be a bicycle lane from the Hudson River Park to Ninth Avenue and a shared lane from Ninth to Eighth Avenues. W. 43<sup>rd</sup> is proposed to be a bicycle lane from Eighth Avenue to Ninth Avenue and again from Eleventh Avenue to the Hudson River Park and a shared lane in-between, including crossing from the North Side to the South Side of the Street to the west of the fire station between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, which also enables the bicycle lane to avoid three active UPS driveways on the north side of street between Eleventh Avenue and the West Side Highway. Both streets' lanes convert to shared lanes to the east to Seventh and Sixth Avenues, respectively and then are bicycle lanes until they end at Grand Central Station.
3. **W. 54<sup>th</sup> and W. 55<sup>th</sup> Streets between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River Park:** W. 54<sup>th</sup> is proposed to be a shared lane from the Hudson River Park to Eleventh Avenue and then again from Ninth to Eighth Avenue and Bicycle Lane in between. W. 55<sup>th</sup> Street is proposed to be a bicycle lane from Eighth Avenue to Eleventh Avenue and then a shared lane from there to the Hudson River Park. We should note that West and East 55<sup>th</sup> Street is the only "lane" that east to west is mostly a "bicycle," rather than "shared" lane, for most of its route from the Hudson River Park to Sutton Place.

We note that DOT is proposing that the regulations on the south side of W. 55<sup>th</sup> between Eighth and Ninth and then from Tenth to Eleventh Avenues be changed to "No Parking 8am to 7pm" from "No Parking 8am to 7pm" AND "No Standing 8am to 9:30pm M-F." We propose that before DOT move forward with this change, that they investigate whether it would be feasible to instead create a buffered bicycle lane along the streets on these blocks. We propose that DOT return to the Transportation Planning Committee later this spring to discuss this issue, in conjunction with a posted public hearing.

While CB4 supports the above bicycle and shared lanes, we are opposed to the proposed bicycle lane for W. 48<sup>th</sup> Street west of Eighth Avenue and the bicycle/shared lanes for W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street west of Eighth Avenue leading to a proposed sidewalk shared pedestrian and bicycle path on the east side of Twelfth Avenue from W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street to W. 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets (and then cross over into the Hudson River Park at W. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street).

W. 48<sup>th</sup> between Ninth and Eleventh Avenues will be substantially blocked by digging and construction related activity for the next approximately 3-4 years by the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) Water Tunnel #3 project. As acknowledged by DOT, it would not be feasible to install a bicycle lane along these streets. Having bicycle lanes on W. 48<sup>th</sup> Street from Eighth to Ninth Avenues and then from Eleventh to Twelfth Avenues does not make any sense. We also note that W. 48<sup>th</sup> Street between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues has three active Fed Ex truck driveways on the North side and two active Verizon truck driveways on the South, plus a horse stable. Given the heavy truck entrances and exits on the block on both sides of the street, as well as the frequent turnover from the bus layover spaces on the street, we question the safety of using this block.

Moreover, even with the tunnel construction, the block between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues is rapidly changing. On the south side of this block two hotels are under construction. On the north side two new residential buildings are in construction. Construction of an eleven-story affordable residential building over the rail cut between W. 48<sup>th</sup> and W. 49<sup>th</sup> Streets is also envisioned upon the completion of the Water Tunnel Project. We propose DOT wait until all of the above construction, including the water tunnel is completed and then reconsider a potential bicycle lane at that point.

We also are opposed to using the Twelfth Avenue sidewalk between W. 51<sup>st</sup> and W. 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets as a shared bicycle and pedestrian path, which would be created by using W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street as a west-bound bicycle path toward the Hudson River Park (but with the Park entrance on W. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street not W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street). While DOT maintains there is limited current pedestrian use on that block, we anticipate as Hudson River Park activities increase and residential development between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues continues to grow, pedestrian traffic will increase. We understand, and very much support, the city's policy to encourage bicycle riding as a healthy transportation mode – but also feel that we should not discourage the more traditional New Yorker healthy transportation mode of walking by putting bicycles on sidewalks. Using sidewalks in Manhattan for bicycle riding is not a (bicycle) path the city should start down. The idea is all the more objectionable since this is not a wide sidewalk and is adjacent to a rapidly developing corridor to the east and an increasingly popular park to the west.

While we oppose the bicycle/shared paths proposed for W. 48<sup>th</sup> and W. 51<sup>st</sup> Streets, we support the other proposed midtown bicycle/shared paths proposed for W. 39<sup>th</sup> and W. 40<sup>th</sup>, W. 43<sup>rd</sup> and W. 44<sup>th</sup>, and W. 54<sup>th</sup> and W. 55<sup>th</sup> Streets, with the modifications recommended above and look forward to working with DOT toward their installation.

We also propose that two years after implementation of these bicycle/shared lanes the city return to CB4 to discuss the pedestrian, bicyclist and vehicular safety data on these streets and evaluate any potential changes.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson  
Chair



Christine Berthet  
Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus  
Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning Committee

cc: Colleen Chattergoon – DOT  
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn  
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer