



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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May 9, 2016

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

MTA New York City Transit  
Veronique Hakim  
President  
2 Broadway  
New York, NY 10004

**Re: M23 Select Bus Service Proposal**

Dear Ms. Forgione and Ms. Hakim,

Manhattan Community Board 4 appreciates being consulted during the design phase of the proposed Select Bus Service on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. We generally support the project with the recommendations enumerated below. It is our understanding that DOT and MTA will come back to the board to respond to our comments and propose a final design before implementing the new service during the summer.

Select Bus Service (SBS) is installed on nine routes in New York City including the M34A in Community District 4 (CD4) district. SBS Travel time is faster by up to 23% on Avenues, and a safer street design leads to up to 20% reduction in overall crashes.

The current M23 corridor serves 15,000 daily passengers, residents in areas far from the subway, and an additional 28 express buses. The line connects with 9 subway/rail lines and 14 bus routes. However buses on the current route are not moving during 51% of their travel time – they are either loading passengers at bus stops or stopped in traffic. In CD4 the segments between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues are the slowest, but not as slow as the segments from Broadway to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue where speeds of less than 4 mph affect the whole route.

DOT and MTA have engaged in an extensive public outreach at bus stops and through crowdsourcing, and surveyed all the businesses along the route.

While the M23 route will remain river to river, the SBS enhancements would be applied only from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10th Avenue where the current speed is particularly slow. On those segments the M23 SBS service would replace the current M23 and offer the following features:

- Camera enforced offset bus lanes for faster service and preserved loading area
- Fare Collection on sidewalk for faster boarding on all doors
- Better passenger stops with passenger information (bus shelter and bus clock)
- Safer pedestrian treatments
- Updated curb regulations for more efficient deliveries on the route

The specific design proposed in CD4 is as follows:

- From 10<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues, one offset exclusive bus lane going eastbound.
- Left turn restricted from eastbound 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to northbound 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue (not enough room to accommodate a turn bay). This is in addition to left turns already barred westbound on 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues and eastbound on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- From 8<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues, one offset exclusive bus lane (the traffic lane next to the parking lane) going eastbound and one curbside shared bus lane going westbound along the north side curb (street is too narrow to accommodate more lanes). The westbound shared bus lane will be open to traffic / deliveries 18 hours a day, except for 7-10 AM and 4- 7 PM peak hours
- From 7<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues, two offset exclusive bus lanes going eastbound and westbound.

#### **Historical Data:**

We are pleased to hear that cameras enforcement is in place on the 34<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and that approximately 550 summonses per month have been issued since the beginning of the program (2010).

Before the next presentation, CB4 requests that the statistics related to speed and safety on the 34<sup>th</sup> corridor before and after the installation of the SBS service be provided.

**Loading Regulations:** CB4 reviewed DOT's suggested changes in loading regulations and recommends the following based on DOT suggestions further amended by community comments:

- 10<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues
  - North curb: No standing at peak hours, otherwise metered commercial loading (18 hours a day)
  - North curb: 100' turning bay before 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue
  - South curb: no change
  - South curb: 100' turning bay before 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 9<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues
  - North curb: add a no standing restriction at peak hours – no change during week end and other periods (18 hours a day)
  - South curb: add a metered loading zone near 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue (replacing no parking)
- 8<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues

- North curb: extend no standing during peak hours to the full block and maintain metered loading regulation for the rest of the day (18 hours)
- North curb: 100' turning bay before 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- South curb: Restore metered loading for full day.
- South curb: 100' turning bay before 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 7<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues
  - North Curb – Loss of 15' of loading Close to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue
  - South Curb - Restore metered loading for full day.

CB4 also recommended that the maximum time allowed by the loading regulation be shortened from the current 3 hours to 1 hour. We believe the current regulation encourages parking instead of loading and contributes to the double-parking issues. We urge DOT to perform a pilot in our district and publish the results.

In the absence of bus loading sidewalk extensions that are the norm on 34<sup>th</sup> street – CB4 recommends that the bus stop area on the street along the curbside be painted in the same dark red paint as the bus lane, and be enforced by cameras to dissuade vehicles from parking there.

**Improved Bus Flow:** Our experience shows frequent vehicle back up from the right turns in the 34<sup>th</sup> Street bus lane. CB4 recommends that on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, a right turn bay be created for each intersection so that the cars turning and yielding to pedestrians not accumulate and obstruct the bus right of way. The vehicles would cross over the bus lane to the turn bay approximately 100' before the intersection.

The community also observed that there are often multiple buses laying over for extended period of times at the West side terminus. CB4 recommends that the MTA audit this location and correct this situation prior to implementation.

**Improved Safety:** As a result of most of the left turn movements being restricted on the corridor, many more eastbound vehicles are expected to make a left turn northbound at 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. CB4 requests that a turn bay and a split phase be installed with a red arrow and a trailing green arrow.

This area is teeming with visitors to the High line and to the Gallery district. It is critical that their safety not be compromised by the design of the corridor.

While CB4 is very pleased that all the key Vision Zero intersections are being addressed in this plan, the NYC Vision Zero report and action plan indicates that only 15% of the crashes occur at intersections. The blocks between 10<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue are all exceedingly long with 800' between crosswalks. The city has installed midblock crosswalks on many of the long blocks including between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. CB4 requests that DOT study midblock crashes on the corridor and install mid blocks pedestrian crossings on each block between 10<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues as warranted. Such crossings would be equipped of a stop sign that would help reduce speed in this mostly residential area.

**Improved Commuter experience:**

We were disappointed to hear that bus shelters and bus clocks will not be installed at each stop. We urge you to do so and/or to install city benches.

We continue to hear negative comments on the fare collection system. We were pleased to hear that the MTA has issued an RFP to convert to a contactless payment system that will accept credit cards as well.

In the interim we urge you to locate the payment appliances as close as possible to the curb with the user interface facing the buildings. This configuration uses much less space on sidewalks that are already too narrow for the volume of pedestrians and provides a much more comfortable experience for the users, especially wheelchair users that have a very tight space to maneuver to get their ticket.

Residents near the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue eastbound stop have experience large queues of commuters due in part to the presence of the highline and many new residential buildings one block west. There is no stop on that block which used to be dedicated to manufacturing. We ask MTA to consider installing an eastbound stop near the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue block to service this new population.

We support other boards in their opposition to remove the west bound stop at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Our Penn South citizens, of whom very many are seniors, were not pleased that in the name of improved service the west bound stop at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue will be removed, making the connection with the M5 very difficult. It seems that all the other planned enhancements should generate sufficient speed improvements that reduction in service is not necessary to achieve the goal.

CB4 appreciates being consulted and look forward to reviewing the final design including our suggestions.

Sincerely,



Delores Rubin  
Chair



Christine Berthet  
Co-Chair, Transportation  
Planning Committee



Ernest Modarelli  
Co-Chair, Transportation  
Planning Committee