

## CHEKPEDS COMMENTS on the NYMTC TIP 2008-2012 (Draft)

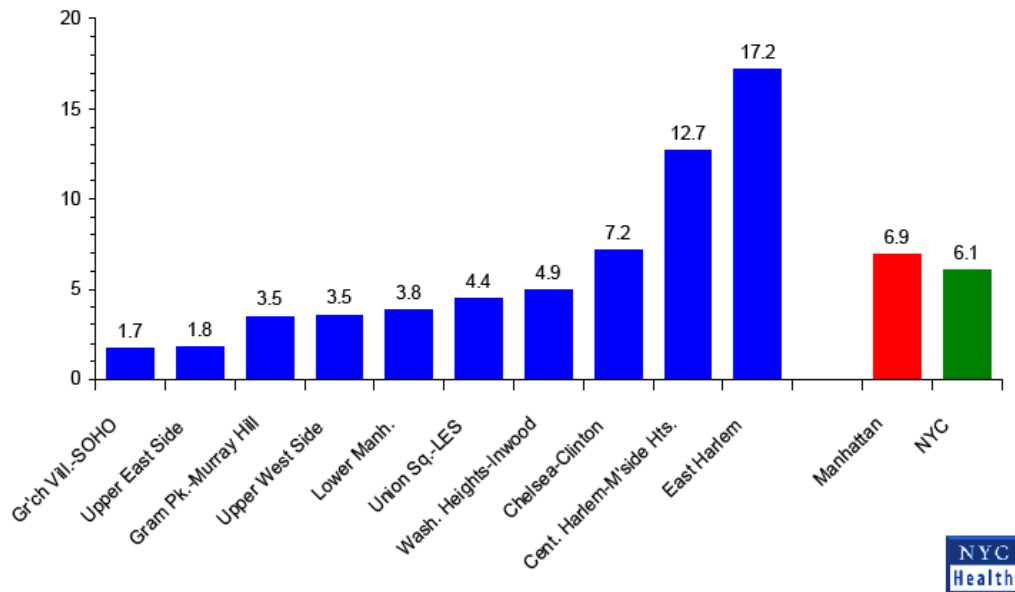
We would like to thank the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) for giving the public the opportunity to comment on the 2008-2012 Transportation Implementation plan (TIP).

A number of projects to improve clean air as well as commuter's mobility and safety in our neighborhood are long overdue. They should be included in the plan since we note that \$ 76 millions in funding remain unspent.

1. According to the 2006 Health Department report, CB4 has the second highest rate of asthma hospitalization for children under 15 in Manhattan. However there are no projects to address the clean air issues in this large area of midtown:

## Asthma Hospitalizations in Manhattan

*Hospitalization rate of children under age 15, per 1,000 population, by UHF neighborhood*



We request that the following projects be included in the FY 2008- 2012 TIP:

- Just as a Charter Bus garage is being planned in Lower Manhattan to house tourist buses, a Charter Bus Garage should be built to park the hundreds of buses and mini vans idling in our streets. These buses serve the Theater District and Times Square and to lesser extent daily commuters. With the expected increase in bus traffic, this problem will only become more acute. While the Port Authority is studying a new commuter bus garage in midtown, that study's funding and scope does not include a Charter bus garage.

- An aggressive program of clean diesel conversion of private buses (Charter commuter and commuter vans) should be initiated, modeled after the Hunts Point truck retrofit project. That project has allocated \$ 30 millions to retrofit 5,000 trucks. In our case, there are approximately 2,000 buses, and minivans.
  - Four new air measuring equipment towers should be installed on and around 9th Avenue, the Lincoln Tunnel entrances, The Port Authority bus entrances and the New Jersey bus parking lots.
2. The implementation of the new 34<sup>th</sup> Street New Jersey transit station for the ARC project has identified the widening of Eight Avenue sidewalks between 42<sup>nd</sup> street and 34<sup>th</sup> street as one of its required mitigation measures; however, ARC has no funding for it. Such a project should be included in the plan or prioritized as part of the midtown pedestrianization project.
  3. The recently concluded Truck Study identified 15th Street from Fifth Avenue to the West Side Highway as needing new signage. Another review is underway to identify reconstruction needs in light of a main waterline break, multiple Con Edison repairs and the potential risk of truck traffic damaging a main gas pipe in the street bed. If a reconstruction is necessary for residents' safety, funds must be reserved for such an undertaking.
  4. We are very pleased that a number of congestion relief and pedestrian safety studies are finally underway in our neighborhood: 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South as part of the Greater Gansevoort renewal, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Penn South, a senior community and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North as part of the Hells Kitchen /Lincoln tunnel study. As they will all conclude within the next two years, implementation funds should be blocked now as line items in the 2008-2012 TIP so that the projects do not languish five years waiting for the next TIP cycle. This is similar to the \$ 125 Millions in New York State funds blocked in the plan for future capital projects not yet identified.

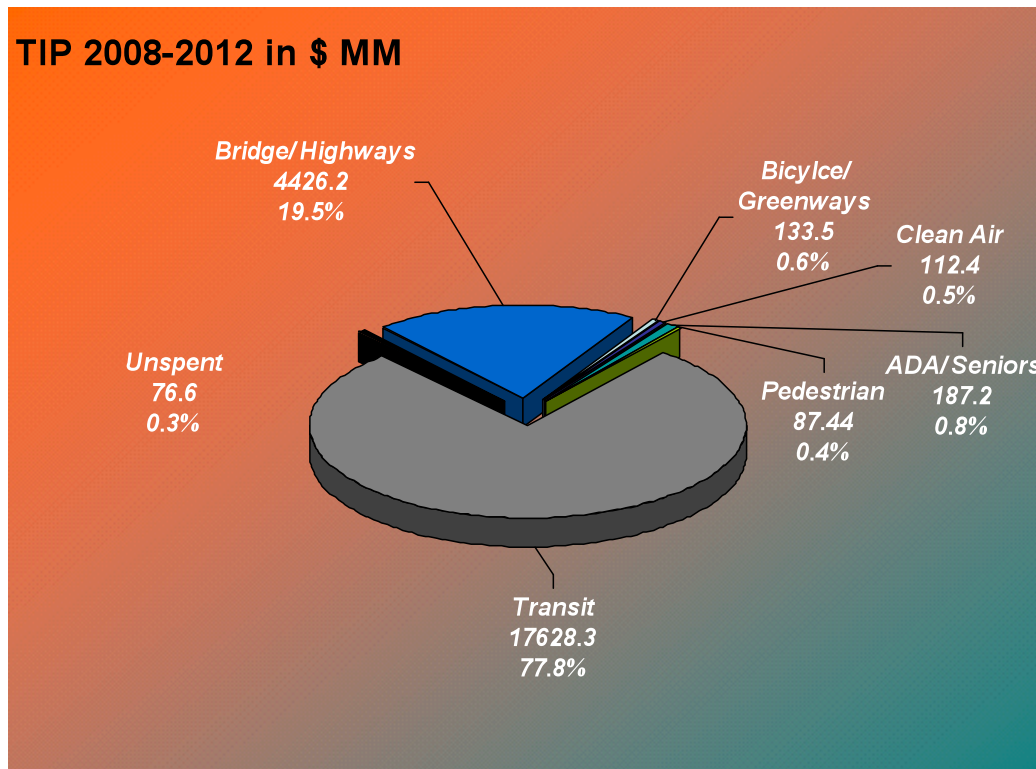
On the other hand, we object to spending \$ 101 millions to reinforce bridges on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 30 and 37<sup>th</sup> Street to facilitate the building of the West Side Stadium and the Javits Center. The West Side Stadium project is defunct and the Javits Center expansion is now occurring on the North rather than the South.

The timing of this project is a major issue as well, as it will interfere with the ARC construction, which is a priority for regional transportation and for congestion relief in our neighborhood. The ARC project plans to use one lane of traffic on this portion of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue for staging. In addition, its main excavation site will be located on 29<sup>th</sup> Street between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenues and the trucks will use 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue to evacuate the debris. Closing 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue during this construction would force hundreds of diesel trucks trips to use residential streets to reach the Lincoln Tunnel entrances.

We are disappointed that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has not shared their plans in the same level of details and in the same format. As the Port Authority greatly affects our neighborhood with its projects and the overwhelming presence of

diesel buses, we request that NYMTC obtain from the Port Authority and share with the public a detailed plan for the conversion of all buses (commuters and long distance) to clean air technology. The Port Authority must also provide a new parking scheme for the numerous commuter minivans, which idle and park illegally in city bus lanes. The car parking lot on the Port Authority roof presents a viable option to accommodate these vans.

On the overall TIP , while the amount of non transit \$ dedicated to Greenway and pedestrian friendly projects continue to increase , the New York city portion of the five-year transportation improvement plan still is overwhelmingly focused on the automobile.



**We recommend that the Pedestrian (including ADA) – Bicycle - Clean Air portion of the budget be increased from 2.3% to 11% of the budget.** Adopting the following suggestions would easily achieve this objective and align the TIP with NYC 2030’s goal of a congestion-free and transportation friendly New York City.

1. **Clean Air:** All Buses, BRT and other vehicles to be acquired during the plan should be “Hybrid Clean Air Technology”. None of the \$ 1.745 billion in purchases of buses and Para transit vehicles is marked as such. Beyond being clean, these buses are pedestrian friendly, silent with a lower profile on the road. They are also easier to access for handicapped customers.
2. **Pedestrian safety** deserves more urgency beyond the study undertaken in the plan. Transportation Alternatives has identified a finite number of intersections in New

York City that account for 50% of all fatalities and injuries. The \$ 25 million project to make those intersections safe should be included in the plan.

3. We also question the wisdom of retiming 1503 traffic lights in the city “thereby reducing traffic delays, fuel consumption and air pollution”. The air pollution benefits ought to be quantified, versus the corollary increased vehicles speed and the related reduction in pedestrian safety. A better use of funds may be to retime another 1503 traffic lights to provide exclusive phases for pedestrian crossings, therefore reducing the risk of death and injuries.
4. We found only one “park and ride” project (Staten Island) in New York city with funding of \$ 9.8 millions , while \$ 33 millions are allocated in pre 2008 funding on building/renovating **parking** lots in Manhattan. In contrast, the rest of the region will spend \$110 millions on Park and Ride projects, and no funds on downtown parking lots.
5. **Complete Streets:** All street, highway and bridge rebuilding, specially the ones leading into Manhattan, should include the creation of an HOV / Bus lane , a buffered bike lane, wider sidewalks, tree planting and ADA compliant pedestrian ramps. There is only \$ 5. 45 millions in the budget to leverage the capital projects for such purposes. A tenth of one percent, of the \$ 4.4 billions overall budget for Bridges and Highway seems an unduly low percentage considering the overall needs. A 5 % allotment would seem reasonable.

Finally, we question the appropriateness of including certain projects amounting to over \$20 Millions, in this Transportation Plan: graffiti removal, recycling infrastructure, the production of a documentary “America Rebuilds” and ADA vans dedicated to a private retirement Home.

We thank again NYMTC and its member agencies for the opportunity to comment on the plan.