



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

February 4, 2010

Ms. Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Commissioner
Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 37th Floor
New York, New York 10038

Re: Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Flow on Ninth Avenue

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) requests that the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT), along with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA), evaluate the feasibility of moving the Lincoln Tunnel center tube's access on Ninth Avenue from West 36th Street (Ramp C) to West 35th Street, 200 ft away. This analysis should be a part of the study of long-term solutions in DOT's "Hell's Kitchen Traffic Study". We believe that – if feasible- such a change would improve traffic flow, emergency services and pedestrian safety.

As early as March 2003,¹CB4 advocated that DOT / PA "reroute entry traffic south of the proposed commercial area [...] Ramp C (at West 36th Street) often backs up to the high west 40's. As a result, traffic exiting the Lincoln Tunnel is often blocked at West 40th and Ninth Avenue."

CB4 is on record (June 2007) in support of studying the "Ninth Avenue Renaissance report's recommendations including reduction of " congestion ...by relocating the Lincoln tunnel queuing to the west of Ninth Avenue" and provision of "more public space, ... two locations have been identified as possible public parks or plazas".

We are grateful that in 2009 the city committed to green the northern sidewalk of 36th Street from Ninth to Dyer Avenues and to improve pedestrian safety in the area. As part of this effort, CB4 has asked that the pedestrian crossing, which was removed in 2003, be reestablished on the west side of Ninth Avenue to cross Ramp C. Currently, southbound pedestrians can only access West 36th Street from the East side of Ninth Avenue.

In October 2009, the PA resurfaced Dyer Avenue between West 34th and West 36th Streets. The northbound turn from West 35th Street onto Dyer Avenue was also prohibited for the six weeks duration of the work, effectively closing the West 35th Street entrance to the center tube of the tunnel.

The PA reported to the DOT and the community that the elimination of an additional merging traffic point significantly improved the operation of the Lincoln tunnel's centre tube. It also reduced the volume into the centre tube, freeing up

¹ CB4 Letter to Amanda Burden , re DCP's "Preferred Direction" for Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards

capacity for the traffic entering the tunnel at West 30th Street in Chelsea. Therefore PA keeps this entrance closed at peak hours during the week, for the duration of the holiday peak traffic and continues to do so.

Building on this experience, we suggest that an incremental adjustment to the configuration, namely directing the traffic to West 35th Street instead of Ramp C will yield the same operational benefits, while improving greatly the situation on Ninth Avenue.

Moving the access point from West 36th to West 35th Street would benefit both residents and commuters:

- This change would permanently remove a merging traffic point at West 36th Street, easing the flow into the tunnel for cars on the Expressway originating on West 30th Street.
- The safe pedestrian access on the west side of Ninth Avenue would be restored
- The normal New York City street configuration with a narrow turning radius would be restored on Ninth Avenue and on West 35th Street.
- Using West 35th Street instead of Ramp C would allow nearly three times more cars to queue on the Dyer Avenue system, instead of Ninth Avenue, without adding volume to the center tube. This would have a beneficial impact on the response time of emergency and fire vehicles, which too often are delayed by gridlock on Ninth Avenue.
- The commuter cars idling while queuing, would do so on a commercial stretch (commercial building and a parking lot), instead of on Ninth Avenue between a green space and residential buildings.

CB4 reiterates its request that the DOT jointly with the PA study the feasibility of these recommendations as part of the federally funded "study of the Lincoln Tunnel accesses and their impact on pedestrian safety with a focus on Ninth Avenue".

Sincerely,



John Weis
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



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Co-Chair
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CC Bill Young, PANYNJ
Commissioner William Castro, NYCDPR
CB4 Elected Officials