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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD SIX
P.O. BOX 1672
NEW YORK, NY 10159-1672

Transportation Committee Meeting
Monday, May 7, 2018

Present: Sandra McKee (Chair), Gene Santoro (Vice-chair), Amelia Acosta, Andrew Gross, Molly Hollister, Joe Parrish, Matt Roberts, Lawrence Scheyer, Ann Seligman, Brian Van Nieuwenhoven, Ronnie White, Bob Cohen, James Wilson
Absent: Beatrice Disman, Kathleen Kelly, Ray Knowles
Guests: Anthony Lopez (City Parking); Lincoln Lopez (City Parking), Daniel White (Geto & DeMilly Inc), Daniel Schack (Sam Schwartz Engineering), Alison Evan (Friends Seminary), James Stone (NYU Langone), Ben Everett (NYU), Colleen Chattergoon (DOT), Ed Pincar (DOT), Ben Jacobs (Keith Powers), Michelle Mia, Stephen Grayson, Liam Farhi (DOT), Emily Weidenhof (DOT), Scott Williamson (DCP), Evan Moser (DCP), Bob Tuttle (DCP), Natalie Espinal (MBPO), Nathaniel Deische (NYU), Jim Snyder (NYU)

Sandy McKee called the meeting to order at 7pm.

The first item taken up was proposal by NYU Langone Medical Center to reconfigure 41st Street between 2nd Avenue and the Tunnel Extension (towards 3rd Avenue) from two-way to one-way and to change some of the parking regulations on the street. Their presentation is available from the board office and incorporated here by reference. NYU has started moving into a 25-story building at 222 East 41st St, which will eventually be the home base for 13 ambulatory care departments (no rehab or PT). It will include the MRIs which have been housed in trailers on E. 38th St. since super storm Sandy. NYU is requesting this change to facilitate patient pickup and dropoff.

Currently there are only 50 westbound cars per hour on this part of the street, the change would not affect the section of E. 41st St. west of the Tunnel Extension, which would remain two-way. Sam Schwartz Engineering did a traffic study and do not anticipate any change in the level of service for turns from or traffic flow on Second Ave.

There will be some change in parking. The most significant is a loss of 50' of commercial parking, down to 130' from 180'. Some diplomatic parking will be shifted, but there would be no net loss. The plan has been okayed by the NYPD, DOT, DSNY, MTA, and the FDNY, who has a house a block away.

However, there is also NYP (press) parking on the block, and WPIX is a big user of that parking, and has not been consulted. Also not consulted, and very concerned about the potential change, are the owners of the City Parking garage at 240 East 41st, whose customers will no longer be able to access them directly from Second Ave on 41st St. The NYU building also includes a garage, which would have both public and valet parking. There would be increased competition for them, and more difficult access for their customers. The super at the Vanderbilt condo on the block was also unaware of this change. Another concern is what impact this might have on 39th St. traffic.

The committee voted to set this issue aside and revisit it after additional community outreach had been done by NYU.

The second item was a "Shared Street" proposal by the NYC Dept. of Transportation, which would open E. 43rd St. between Lexington and 3rd Avenues to both cars and pedestrians. Emily from DOT first mentioned the typical improvements on 53rd from 3rd Ave to 7th Ave as part of the East Midtown rezoning. The shared street proposal would allow vehicles, but at a 5 mph maximum speed. Neckdowns and public seating would be added, which would be maintained by the Grand Central Partnership, which will also manage plantings. DOT also met with local businesses to learn about upcoming construction, garbage delivery, etc. They also did public outreach to understand how people currently use that street. Access-a-ride and church access will be maintained. An interim installation would start this summer, to be followed by monitoring and community workshops to determine final design.

There was also a question about why 43rd St, and not 44th, which gets significantly less traffic and is not the continuation of a street but requires a turn onto it from Lexington. The answer: yes, it could happen in the future and was also recommended by the governing group, but that group chose 43rd St first, by consensus. Council member Garodnick was in favor of this street. The city has earmarked \$12 million for 43rd St which cannot be transferred.

The committee was conflicted about safety issues. One member felt mixing pedestrian and vehicular traffic at any speed is inherently unsafe and will vote against it. DOT notes that white & yellow lines delineate who goes where, as well as fortified blocks & planters, which would protect against vehicular attacks on pedestrian areas. "Grand Central Terminal is an obvious target." Others thought this concern was unwarranted; terrorists could much more easily ride any number of crowded sidewalks nearby. The DOT stated that the configuration was based on the requirements of the NYPD counter terrorism division. The proposal blocks the sidewalks of 3rd and Lexington Avenues, both with heavy pedestrian use and the committee would like to review alternate options for these areas.

Other concerns included whether this space would attract a large homeless population, and loitering and drug use. Admittedly not the same issue, but perhaps related. Answer: Furniture would be removed at night, and there is significant social service outreach as well as paid NYPD details.

Another question was about the street surface and whether gravel would be hard to keep clean. The surface is epoxied, so not like loose gravel. Lighting, which will be considered more as the final design is reached.

Finally, DOT offered to host a site visit at a similar Flatiron plaza.

Item 3 was an application for a School Play Street on Rutherford Place from 15th to 16th Streets by Friends Seminary. They'd like to close this non-through street to traffic from 7am to 5pm on school days for the school year 2018-2019 (this is 170 days of the academic year). The school is currently doing major construction and the courtyard and gym they typically use are therefore unavailable. It would be used by a maximum of 36 students at a time, watched over by teachers and security guards. The barricades would be standard DOT removable barriers.

While these play streets are legally automatically renewed, Friends offered to come back to CB Six for renewal and feedback. They also agreed to not offset the lost parking by seeking additional teacher parking permits.

The idea has support from the Stuyvesant Park Neighborhood Association, the 13th Precinct, and the neighboring Jack & Jill pre-school, with whom they are planning to partner in using the space. They promise to also find other community groups with whom to share the space. Another suggestion (from the committee) was to host hazardous waste drop-off and recycling.

There was debate about the taking of public space for private use, though others mentioned that this is a common practice for both public and private schools in NYC.

The submission for the permit is due June 1 and the issue is time sensitive. The final proposal will be reviewed by the DOT, who will review traffic issues.

Gene will write the reso, which passed 8-2-1-0.

Chair's Report:

Six month closure of the 6 train 28th Street station this summer from July 16th until December 2018.

The safety upgrades that the DOT presented previously for the east river greenway have been updated and should happen this summer.

DOT to update the committee on what bus layover spaces from the board's resolution are getting implemented.

The review of the proposed Gramercy speed bumps will take approximately seven months.

The chair asked when the DOT will be painting the sidewalk that is used as part of the 1st Ave bike lane.

Following up on the loose plate at 38th and the FDR exit, this condition has generated fines, but it's state DOT not city jurisdiction, so the city DOT has less leverage.

Old Business: The creation of an L-Train Shutdown Task Force will have representation from CBs One through Six. They will have monthly meetings organized by the borough president's office. There will also be a rapid response team.

New Business

None

Meeting adjourned at 8:56.