

Joanna Oltman Smith
Brooklyn, NY

September 14, 2007

Janette Sadik-Khan
Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Ms. Khan:

Please direct your agency to improve the intolerable, dangerous conditions at the intersection of Union Street and 8th Avenue in Brooklyn. The traffic backs up down Union every weekday afternoon during the rush hours (4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. or so) and makes the SE corner impassable for pedestrians. Cars run the light and block the box on every single change of the signal, making the crosswalk unusable. I have lived on the corner for a year and witnessed at least eight accidents in that time. I am sure there have been many I did not see.

After months of calling 311 about the matter, I have seen zero improvement or enforcement of the traffic rules at this intersection. I have asked the 78th Precinct directly to patrol the intersection, but I have never seen a police presence on this corner.

I ask that the DOT see what can be done to ensure fewer accidents at this corner. Perhaps drivers would self-enforce more effectively if DOT painted the intersection with cross hashes (like at similarly busy intersections in Manhattan) to indicate where cars are not allowed to stop? Also, sterner warning signs about how blocking the box = points on your license would help. (There are currently “Keep Intersection Clear” signs but they are hard to see and don’t list any penalty.) I assume nothing more can be done to improve the

inadequacy of green signal time at Grand Army Plaza, which is the source of the back-up on my street. Please have your engineers take a look at what CAN be done so I can get across my street with my stroller, and not endanger my children.

Sincerely,

Joanna Oltman Smith

cc: Joseph Palmieri, DOT Brooklyn
Captain John Scolaro, 78th Precinct
Mayor Bloomberg

DOT Response 11/16/07

"Dear Ms. Smith:

This is in further response to your letter dated September 14, 2007, requesting signage stating to keep intersection clear at Union Street and 8th Avenue.

Our Borough Engineering Office has conducted an on site investigation. As a result there already exist "Keep Intersection Clear" signs posted for this location. The signs are clearly visible and no additional signs are warranted.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Very truly yours,
Joseph Palmieri
Brooklyn Borough Commissioner

Joanna Oltman Smith
Brooklyn, NY

November 25, 2007

Janette Sadik-Khan
Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Ms. Sadik-Khan:

I have waited patiently for two and a half months while the DOT “studies” the incredibly dangerous intersection outside my house with which my children and I must contend several times a day. Imagine my annoyance at receiving the enclosed response from Joseph Palmieri in which his engineers have determined something I already told them in my initial correspondence: Yes, there IS a “Keep Intersection Clear” sign. However, the traffic conditions at the intersection are SEVERE and these signs are INADEQUATE. Hundreds of drivers ignore them every day.

There needs to be a further DOT solution, be it traffic signal timing adjustments, signage with penalties clearly stated, and/or painting an obvious “box” in the intersection so drivers have a visual cue when they are blocking it. (Regular police department enforcement of traffic regulations would be helpful too. I still haven’t seen a ticket issued at this intersection.)

The Brooklyn Borough Engineering Office MUST re-examine the intersection to reduce obstructions to pedestrians and reduce vehicular accidents.

Sincerely,

Joanna Oltman Smith

cc: Joseph Palmieri, DOT Brooklyn
Captain John Scolaro, 78th Precinct
Mayor Bloomberg
Community Board 6, Transportation Committee

DOT response 2/13/2008

"Dear Ms. Smith:

This is in further response to your November 25, 2007 letter regarding traffic conditions on Union Street between 8th Avenue and Grand Army Plaza. I must apologize for the delay in responding.

Our Division of Signal Engineering has completed a series of inspections at the above location. As a result of their inspections, it was observed that on occasion, the eastbound traffic on Union Street spills back from Grand Army Plaza across 8th Avenue. In order to alleviate this condition, we recommend enforcement of the "No Standing 7-10AM/4-7PM Monday - Friday" regulations (on the south curb of Union Street) and the "Keep Intersection Clear sign facing eastbound Union Street.

By copy of this letter, we are requesting that the NYPD, whom is responsible for enforcement, to address potential enforcement issues at this location.

Therefore, due to the complex traffic signal operation at Grand Army Plaza, no timing changes are contemplated by the Department at this time.

I hope you find this information helpful. Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,
Joseph Palmieri
Borough Commissioner

cc: Captain John Scolaro, NYPD, 78th Precinct

Police Department Response 2/28/08

"Dear Miss Smith

I am writing to you regarding your email concerning the dangerous condition you reported at the intersection of Union Street and 8th Av. Sergeant Brown, of the 78th Precinct informed me that he had visited you and gotten the details of your complaint. He has subsequently referred the matter to the 78th Precinct Traffic Safety unit who will be conducting Traffic enforcement at various times, at this location in an effort to reduce/correct this spill-back condition which is occurring.

I would like to extend an invitation to attend our community council meetings held on the last Tuesday of every month at the 78th pct. Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. Please feel free to contact the 78th Precinct in the future should you have any additional concerns or complaints.

Sincerely,
Deputy Inspector John Argenziano
Commanding Officer
78th Precinct