



## **THE CASE FOR PROTECTED BIKE LANES ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Upper West Side of Manhattan is a bustling neighborhood filled with young families, a high concentration of senior citizens, and people of all ages in between. It is a shopping and restaurant mecca for scores of tourists and locals, and it is flanked by two of the city's loveliest parks, Central Park and Riverside Park. The architecture, the schools, and the history of this part of Manhattan rival all others. Because of all of these attractions and the fact that cycling is cheap, efficient, fun, and healthy, the Upper West Side, like most areas of the city, is experiencing a tremendous cycling boom.

While cycling is on the rise, many more people would choose a bicycle as their main mode of transportation if our streets were perceived as safe places to ride.

As things stand, many consider them unsafe, and rightly so. Due to increases in driving and cycling, among other factors, Upper West Side streets have become more crowded and less predictable, with cyclists, motor vehicles, and pedestrians constantly jockeying for space. This competition, and the fact that not everyone obeys the traffic laws, creates confusion and needlessly endangers everyone. To help address this problem, we propose installing protected bike lanes on the streets of the Upper West Side.

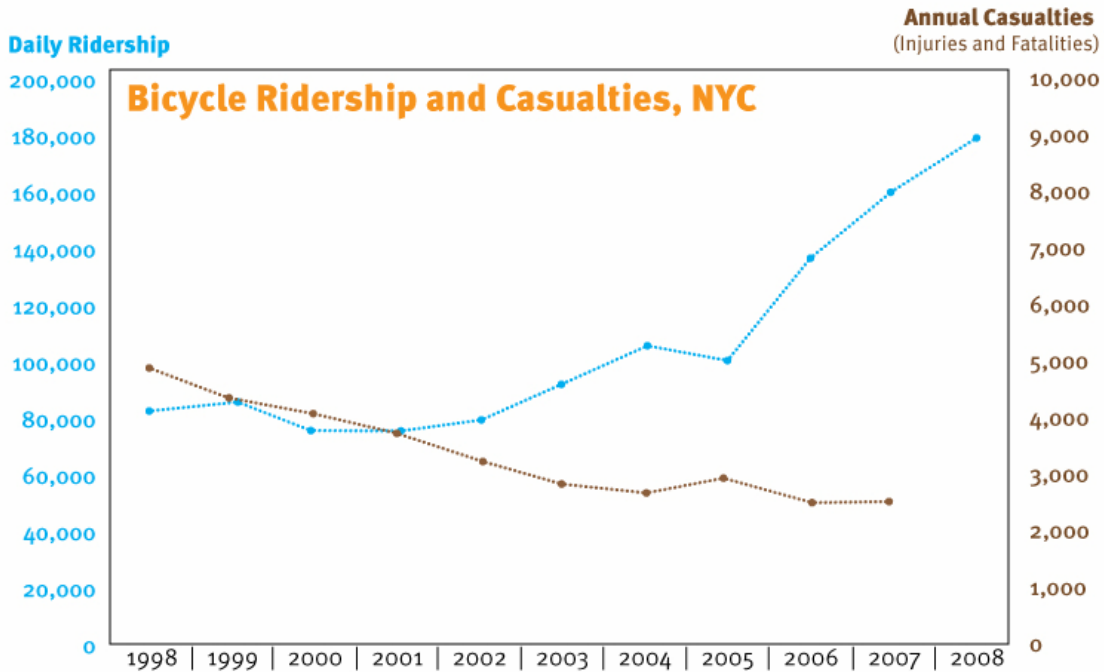
In other parts of Manhattan, these lanes have drastically reduced crash rates, injuries, and sidewalk cycling, while increasing the percentage of cyclists on the road. They have civilized the streets and standardized cyclist behavior. In addition to increasing safety for all, protected bike lanes demonstrate a neighborhood's commitment to encouraging clean, quiet, healthy transportation. For all of these reasons and more, we urge the community leaders of the Upper West Side and other decision makers to advocate in favor of protected bike lanes on the Upper West Side.

## WHAT ARE PROTECTED BIKE LANES?

Protected bike lanes are physically separated from motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Just as pedestrians have their own space – the sidewalk – protected bike lanes give cyclists *their* own space. The separation from other traffic can be achieved with a concrete buffer, a tree-lined path, a line of traffic cones or bollards, a parking lane, or a combination of these strategies. New York City’s new bike lanes in Chelsea (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues) and midtown Manhattan are successful examples of protected bike lanes.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PROTECTED BIKE LANES?

**Protected bike lanes make the streets and sidewalks safer for all users: cyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicle drivers.** We know that cycling becomes safer when there are more cyclists on New York City streets:



Better bicycling infrastructure offers real **gains in safety for other street users**, too. The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) views “each bike lane project as an opportunity to improve safety and operations for everyone along each corridor, leading to ‘complete street’ projects that calm traffic and reduce injuries for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists alike.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NYC Press release July 8, 2009, *Dot Completes Unprecedented Three-Year, 200-Mile Installation of Bike Lanes, Making City Streets Safer For All Users*, available at [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pr2009/pr09\\_030.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pr2009/pr09_030.shtml).

This approach seems to be working; in its first year, the pilot 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue protected bike lane boasted:

- a 36% reduction in pedestrian-related injuries;
- a 50% reduction in injuries from all crashes;
- a 41% reduction in the total number of crashes; and
- an 80% reduction in sidewalk cycling, all of which occurred despite
- a 57% increase in cycling traffic on that corridor.<sup>2</sup>

Protected bike lanes work as simple traffic calming devices that reduce the risk and severity of collisions, while increased cycling levels offer additional benefits in public health, better air quality and less noise pollution. The pilot 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue project was so successful that a proposal to upgrade the northbound 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue lane to a 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue-style protected lane was quickly approved by Community Board 4.

Physically separated bicycle lanes also appear to correct and standardize cyclist behavior. Transportation engineers at the University of Texas at Austin have noted that “bicyclists stop at intersections more often and obey general traffic rules better when roadways are marked to include them. **Bicyclists are also less likely to ride on sidewalks when on-street bike lanes exist.**”<sup>3</sup> According to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report released in August 2008,<sup>4</sup> 75 percent of cyclists reported using bicycle lanes at least some of the time they rode, 43% most or all of the time. In the NY/NJ region, the reported rate was even higher (51% most or all of the time). The more cyclists use dedicated lanes, the more predictable the traffic flow for drivers, pedestrians, and other cyclists, improving safety and reducing congestion for all street users.

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<sup>2</sup> Data summarized in sidebar, “The Verdict on NYC’s First Cycle-Track” at <http://www.transalt.org/files/newsroom/magazine/2008/fall/10-13.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Article, “Bike lanes prevent over-correction by drivers, bicyclists reducing danger for both even when sharing narrow roads” Sept. 18, 2006; <http://www.utexas.edu/news/2006/09/18/engineering/>. These engineers conducted a study that suggested bike lanes improve safety for bikes and auto drivers alike. Full study results at [http://www.utexas.edu/research/ctr/pdf\\_reports/0\\_5157\\_1.pdf](http://www.utexas.edu/research/ctr/pdf_reports/0_5157_1.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> “National Survey of Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior”, available at [http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.3d62007aac5298598fcb6010db a046a0/?javax.portlet.tpst=4670b93a0b088a006bc1d6b760008a0c\\_ws\\_MX&javax.portlet.prp\\_4670b93a0b088a006bc1d6b760008a0c\\_viewID=detail\\_view&itemID=545355f9ee1cb110VgnVCM1000002fd17898R CRD&overrideViewName=Article](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/template.MAXIMIZE/menuitem.3d62007aac5298598fcb6010db a046a0/?javax.portlet.tpst=4670b93a0b088a006bc1d6b760008a0c_ws_MX&javax.portlet.prp_4670b93a0b088a006bc1d6b760008a0c_viewID=detail_view&itemID=545355f9ee1cb110VgnVCM1000002fd17898R CRD&overrideViewName=Article)

## WHY DO WE NEED PROTECTED BIKE LANES ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE?

*Traffic deaths in New York City rival the homicide rate.*<sup>5</sup>

Upper West Side residents are disproportionately more likely to be severely injured or die under the wheels of a motor vehicle than from a violent criminal. The dozens of traffic-related deaths in our neighborhood each year are not just “accidents”; these are preventable deaths.

In 2006, New York City<sup>6</sup> released a report entitled *Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City, 1996-2005*. The report recognized that “bicycling as a means of transportation reduces road congestion and motor-vehicle related pollution. . . . Increasing bicycling in New York City has many potential health and environmental benefits. . . .” prompting “the City’s commitment to promote bicycle use and ensure a safe environment for bicyclists. . . .” The report contained ample support for the view that New York City streets pose serious safety hazards for the everyday cyclist, and observed that “dedicated bicycle paths or lanes may help reduce crashes with motor vehicles.” The data indicate that the intersection of **W. 96<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway was one of the most dangerous for cyclists in the entire city.**<sup>7</sup> Large vehicles such as trucks and buses were disproportionately responsible for cyclist deaths, suggesting that **safer biking infrastructure may be particularly important for intra-city truck routes.** Further, although there are many more lane-miles of local roads in New York City, more than half of fatal bicycle crashes occurred on large, four-lane roads (like Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues). According to ten-year crash data examined in the report, about 92% of fatal bike crashes involved collisions with motor vehicles.

Similar ten-year crash data is compiled at [www.crashstat.org](http://www.crashstat.org), where an interactive map shows the locations at which pedestrians and cyclists have suffered injuries or been killed in collisions with motor vehicles. According to this crash data, the most dangerous (crash-prone) corridors on the Upper West Side are, in order of injury rates and severity, Broadway, Amsterdam, and Columbus. West End Avenue and Central Park West also have significant injury and death rates for vulnerable street users, but nearly **three times as many crashes resulted in severe injury or death on Broadway** in the same time period. Columbus and Amsterdam were about two-thirds as crash prone as Broadway,

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Aborn, *Preventing Traffic Fatalities*, Huffington Post, August 4, 2009, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-aborn/preventing-traffic-fatali\\_b\\_250796.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-aborn/preventing-traffic-fatali_b_250796.html). Compare selected annual murder figures for 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> precincts, available at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) with the figures in note 4, below, for a more local perspective.

<sup>6</sup> Namely, New York City’s Departments of Transportation, Parks & Recreation, Health and Mental Hygiene, and Police. The report is available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/episrv/episrv-bike-report.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Although this report focused on cyclist injuries and deaths, that single intersection is in fact even more dangerous for pedestrians. From 1995 through 2005, at least 55 pedestrians were injured by motor vehicles in or near that intersection, compared to 35 cyclist injuries.

with high numbers of largely preventable traffic injuries and deaths.<sup>8</sup>

The Upper West Side Streets Renaissance Campaign conducted two online surveys in late 2007 and early 2008, one designed to capture general input about the Upper West Side streetscape from residents-at-large<sup>9</sup> and the other focused on Upper West Side cycling (“the UWS Cyclist Survey”)<sup>10</sup>. Respondents to both surveys expressed broad dissatisfaction with motor vehicle traffic on the Upper West Side and its negative effect on quality of life. More than 62% of respondents to the cycling survey indicated that concerns about traffic had discouraged them or family members who wanted to bicycle on the Upper West Side.<sup>11</sup> When asked to rank the relative severity of certain problems on Upper West Side Streets, **residents-at-large overwhelmingly rated pollution from general traffic congestion, volume of truck traffic, safe cycling road conditions, and availability of bike parking as their top concerns: these were ranked as “severe problems”**.<sup>12</sup>

A separate analysis of pedestrian traffic deaths between 2005 and 2007 identified Broadway and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue as tied for the dubious distinction of the deadliest roads in the city.<sup>13</sup> Amsterdam Avenue was rated the fifth most dangerous road in Manhattan. Thus, the Upper West Side contains two of the top five most dangerous thoroughfares in Manhattan. Not surprisingly, in the NHTSA study described above, 7% of pedestrians and 11% of bicyclists in the NY/NJ study region felt threatened for their personal safety

<sup>8</sup> Between 1995 and 2005, from 59<sup>th</sup> Street to 110<sup>th</sup> Street, motor vehicle collision resulted in the following injuries and deaths:

	Broadway	Amsterdam	Columbus	WEA	CPW
<b>Ped death</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
Ped injury	836	570	528	308	255
<b>Bike death</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Bike injury	395	214	197	138	191
Total incidents	1248	790	735	454	447

By contrast, one pedestrian died after a collision with a bicycle over the same period on the Upper West Side. *Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> More than 170 people have taken the general UWS resident survey to date, which can be found at: [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=r9\\_2bo9tdnnxd\\_2bNrIOOMCPew\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=r9_2bo9tdnnxd_2bNrIOOMCPew_3d_3d).

<sup>10</sup> The UWS Cyclist Survey is available at [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=K\\_2b73AtdrcekrG\\_2fy\\_2fg9\\_2fKtg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=K_2b73AtdrcekrG_2fy_2fg9_2fKtg_3d_3d). Sixty-seven respondents took the survey, about one third of whom described themselves as either novice riders or uncomfortable cycling in heavy traffic.

<sup>11</sup> In representative comments, cyclists repeatedly noted the “danger from automobiles: speeding, running red lights, blocking intersections, nuisance honking, opening doors into cyclists and pedestrians, intimidating cyclists and pedestrians, double parking”, commenting that “many drivers have no regard for the lives of cyclist[s].”

<sup>12</sup> Specifically, residents described as a “severe problem” the issues of truck traffic volume on residential streets (44%); adequate bicycle parking (45%); safe bicycling road conditions (46%); truck traffic volume on avenues (47%); and pollution from traffic congestion (50%).

<sup>13</sup> Tri-State Transportation Campaign study released October 2008, summary available at <http://www.tstc.org/reports/danger08/manhattan.pdf>.

on the most recent day they walked or rode outside, mostly because of auto traffic.<sup>14</sup> In a walking town like New York, simply stepping outside should not be considered risky.

The traffic situation is a public health issue, not a fact of life, and there are proven strategies to ameliorate it. Protected bike lanes offer pedestrians a buffer zone from this traffic in addition to creating safe, dedicated road space for cyclists. Studies show that safer cycling facilities make the streets safer for walkers and drivers, too. Their documented traffic calming effect is apparent in lower pedestrian injury rates, and their potential to improve air quality and noise pollution levels is obvious.

*We also need protected bike lanes because everyday cycling is on the rise.*

New York City cyclists need and deserve safe places to ride. In 2000, 11% of New York City residents walked or biked to work (compared to a 3% nationwide average).<sup>15</sup> Since that year, the ranks of everyday NYC cyclists have markedly increased. Bicycling is New York City's fastest-growing mode of transportation, with bike commuting growing 35% between 2007 and 2008 alone. There are now about 185,000 daily riders in New York City, a good portion of them riding to, from, and within the Upper West Side.

According to the UWS Cyclist Survey, cyclists are on our neighborhood streets for a variety of reasons: for exercise (81%), recreation/enjoyment (90%), to commute to work or school (54%), shop or run errands (48%), and out of environmental concerns (54%). A number of respondents indicated that they preferred cycling to using other modes of transit, either because it was the easiest way to reach their destination (61%), cheaper than paying for a taxi or mass transit (36%), or simply more reliable or efficient than other transport (56%). In this survey, **a dedicated, physically separated bike lane was the single most popular proposed streetscape improvement** with 78% of respondents saying this should be a **high priority**. Cyclists' second-highest priority was better enforcement of blocked bike lanes (74%), a problem that would be altogether averted with a well-designed protected lane. These lanes are described as "self-enforcing" because autos are physically diverted by the protective barrier; the opportunistic double-parker finds it impossible to block the bike lane.

Although New York City has added just over 200 new lane-miles of bike lanes since 2006,<sup>16</sup> Upper West Side streets have received only about 3.5 miles of them, all crosstown, in paired painted lanes on 77<sup>th</sup>, 78<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup>, 91<sup>st</sup>, and 106<sup>th</sup> Streets. The only north-south painted route is on the extreme east edge of the Upper West Side, a single narrow northbound lane on Central Park West. All of these lanes are beset by chronic driver disregard, as vehicles use them as passing lanes (particularly on 106<sup>th</sup> Street), loading/unloading zones, or simply places to double park.

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<sup>14</sup> Among those who felt personally threatened on their most recent outing, 62% of pedestrians and 88% of cyclists said the reason was drivers going too fast and too close to the person surveyed.

<sup>15</sup> *Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City, 1996-2005*, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> See note 1.

Meanwhile, new bike infrastructure that enhances the safety, comfort, and appearance of the local neighborhood is being installed all over the city. Chelsea led the way with two of the first dedicated on-street protected lanes, and many other communities are slated to benefit from similar improvements. Several projects should be of interest to CB7, since they are in directly adjoining neighborhoods: improvements to Midtown biking facilities on Broadway as far north as 57<sup>th</sup> Street, on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and new bike lanes slated for Harlem, along Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard. It is a great time for the Upper West Side to join the rest of the city in welcoming cyclists and providing safer streets for everyone.

## **WHERE SHOULD WE PUT PROTECTED BIKE LANES?**

One respondent in the UWS Cyclist Survey phrased the problem succinctly, complaining about “[o]verwhelming car and truck traffic on all on-street North-South routes, exacerbated by the extreme width of the roadways and the light-timing that encourages cars to reach speeds in excess of 40 mph.” Another respondent, one we believe represents hundreds of Upper West Siders, told us “I’m your classic ‘deterred’ cyclist. I have two kids and I’m unwilling to ride with them on city streets. I don’t need to bike for exercise. . . It’s just pleasurable and an easy way to get places. Wish it were safer.” Our city streets should serve as conduits for all users, regardless of their particular mode of transit. **Cyclists of all ages and abilities deserve safe road conditions to ride their bikes. Therefore, we need protected bike lanes on north/south corridors, on avenues that are currently unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians.**

The countless shops, restaurants, and theaters filling our major commercial avenues are a vibrant draw for the neighborhood, for people who arrive by foot, subway, bus, taxi, bike, or private car. Bikes are on our north-south roadways for the same myriad reasons that other people and vehicles are: that’s where all the action is. To relegate safety-conscious cyclists to minor crosstown routes, or to poorly-observed painted lanes along the fringes of the community, is to marginalize them, ultimately discouraging riding in the first place. As a community, and as a city, we should not accept street conditions that force cyclists to choose between risking life and limb for a trip to the store or remaining safely detached from the lifeblood of our community.

The ten-year crash data compiled at [www.crashstat.org](http://www.crashstat.org) (see note 8 above) supports prioritizing protected bike lanes for Broadway<sup>17</sup>, Amsterdam, and Columbus Avenues ahead of West End, Central Park West, or Riverside, or any particular crosstown route. Despite crash-prone clusters such as 71<sup>st</sup>/72<sup>nd</sup> and Broadway, or busy arterial cross streets

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<sup>17</sup> Respondents to the UWS Cyclist Survey far and away preferred Broadway for cycling improvements (38%), with Columbus Avenue running a distant second (16%). Moreover, Broadway is a “proposed” bike route in the city’s Bicycle Master Plan. This plan, issued in 1997 as part of New York City’s stated commitment to “making cycling part of the City’s transportation system,” is available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/bike/mp.shtml>.

like 96<sup>th</sup> Street, crosstown travel is simply not as perilous for cyclists and pedestrians as travel on these three major north/south avenues. These three Upper West Side avenues cry out for traffic calming measures like physically separated bike lanes, and they all have significant potential to connect with DOT bike projects further north and south. The conditions are right for a community push to make protected bike lanes a high priority.

## **WHO CARES ABOUT AND IS MOTIVATED BY THIS ISSUE?**

The Upper West Side community is engaged, excited, and informed about protected bike lanes. Nearly half of the respondents to the general resident survey thought the creation of a dedicated protected bike lane should be a high priority for the Upper West Side, even though only 5% of respondents reported regularly riding a bike here. More than 63% of the respondents in the UWS Cycling Survey said that they would “definitely ride more” if physically separated bike lanes were installed here. Eighty-five percent said that they would “strongly support” a physically-separated design like that used on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Chelsea, and 73% indicated the same level of support for a bike lane separated by parked cars; support for painted or painted-buffer bike lanes was lukewarm in comparison.<sup>18</sup>

Data gathered in the NHTSA survey indicated that 49% of cyclists in the New York/New Jersey area wanted to see changes in their community for bicycles, with 69% wanting more bike lanes and paths.

### ***Protected bike lanes enjoy broad community support***

—Dozens of Upper West Side Streets Renaissance members representing all walks of life, along with members of the Jewish environmental advocacy organization Hazon (representing 10,000 members on the Upper West Side of Manhattan), and members of the community at large have testified in person before CB7 and the Transportation Committee expressing support for protected bike lanes.

—Current and former elected officials are in favor of protected bike lanes on the Upper West Side. Councilmember Gale Brewer wrote a letter of support to the DOT in March 2009, declaring that protected bike lanes are “an idea whose time has come.” In June, Senator Tom Duane wrote a letter to CB7 expressing support for protected bike lanes and encouraging ongoing community input. In July 2009, former Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger urged the community board to support protected bike lanes, writing that “[i]t would be great to see Community Board 7 stand up for community, green transportation and public safety.”

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<sup>18</sup> Painted buffer lanes largely received the “I like the other options better” rating (55%) with 11% confessing they weren’t excited about that design; colored lanes (without reference to a physical barrier) received a 55% “strongly support” rating, but a third of the respondents said they liked other ideas better than using color to demarcate a bike lane.

—The UWS Cyclist Survey and the general resident survey conducted by the Upper West Side Streets Renaissance Campaign both indicated strong support for protected bike lanes on our streets. Although almost none of the respondents to the general resident survey were regular cyclists, about half of them nevertheless thought that a protected bike lane should be a “high priority.”

—The Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District strongly supports protected bike lanes and has worked tirelessly to advocate for such lanes on Columbus Avenue.

—In January 2009, a strong letter of support for such lanes was sent to the DOT from many local schools including Horace Mann, Fieldston, and Calhoun; the Coalition for a Livable West Side; the West 75<sup>th</sup> Street Block Association; and Henry’s Restaurant.

—Several members of the Upper West Side business community recently reiterated their support for protected bike lanes in a letter to the DOT. These businesses included large entities like the Columbus Avenue BID, Equinox Gyms, and Patagonia, as well as smaller local businesses.

—Several petitions have been delivered to the chairs of CB7’s Transportation Committee. These include an online petition with over 250 signatures<sup>19</sup> supporting protected bike lanes on the Upper West Side as part of a “virtuous circle where cars and bicyclists learn to slow down, follow the rules, and respect one another and pedestrians.” The same petition garnered 67 signatures in a single day on a single-block street fair organized by the 102<sup>nd</sup>/103<sup>rd</sup> Street Block Association. Hazon, a Jewish advocacy organization active on the Upper West Side, presented a similar petition in large poster-style format to the full Community Board 7 in June supporting protected bike lanes.

—This summer, educators from the Livable Streets Education Initiative worked with gifted 7<sup>th</sup> grade students at Mott Hall II on a community service project in which the students visualized their perfect urban streetscape designs. All of the students’ designs included visually appealing, safe streets complete with physically separated bike lanes, even where bike lanes were not part of the assignment.<sup>20</sup> At the end of the six-week program, the students wrote over a dozen letters to the DOT, CB7, and elected officials asking for their proposed changes to be considered.

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<sup>19</sup> View the petition at <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/protected-bicycle-lanes-on-the--Upper-West-Side> .

<sup>20</sup> To view the students’ photo simulations, visit <http://www.streetsblog.org/2009/07/09/seventh-graders-picture-a-safer-livelier-school-zone/> .

## WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS FOR INSTALLING PROTECTED BIKE LANES ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE?

Although protected bike lanes are new to our neighborhood, the DOT now has several years of experience with the latest design and their most likely impacts on the surrounding community. The recently updated DOT Street Design Manual<sup>21</sup> incorporates much of this experience, and the DOT continues to refine its process for addressing the concerns of local business owners and residents when designing protected lanes. In fact, the DOT has been remarkably flexible with these designs, taking local requirements and community preferences into account to develop more complete streets serving all users. A protected bike lane project would be an opportunity to address a number of problems with Upper West Side streets, from excessive speeds to turning conflicts to lack of visibility between pedestrians and cyclists and motor vehicles.

**Deliveries/Loading Zones:** With a protected bike lane, deliveries would largely occur in the same way they do now, with some potential improvements. For the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue pilot bike lane, the DOT was able to amend its original design to accommodate merchants' need for loading and unloading areas for deliveries, among other adjustments requested by the community. The 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue lane design incorporated lessons from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and included even more delivery zones. The resulting innovative street design means that deliveries on these corridors are more efficient than before, with fewer trucks cruising for available spots to unload or blocking lanes of moving traffic.

**Trucks:** The fact that a road is a truck route is all the more reason for a protected bike lane, since the lanes offer more protection for cyclists and pedestrians than a painted lane or no markings at all (the current state of affairs on the Upper West Side). In Chelsea, both 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues are truck routes, and there is no data to suggest that the truck route has been negatively impacted. Residents have clearly benefited from safety improvements due to protected bike lanes. The DOT is currently installing a protected bike lane on Allen Street in lower Manhattan, which is also a designated truck route.

**Buses:** Buses are typically routed on the right-hand side of a street, whereas the DOT has installed bike lanes on the left side whenever practicable. If protected bike lanes are installed along the Broadway median, or the left side of Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, there would be relatively little bus/bike interaction.

**“Loss” of Parking:** A street redesign incorporating a protected bike lane usually also includes treatments to enhance pedestrian safety (such as pedestrian refuges or curb extensions) and reduce turning conflicts between bikes and autos (such as dedicated turning bays). Strictly speaking, the parking spaces that are reallocated to form turning bays or loading zones are not necessary for a protected bike lane, but are part of a larger street redesign that creates a safer, more beautiful streetscape benefitting many more

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<sup>21</sup> Available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/streetdesignmanual.shtml> in sections.

people than the current design. In Chelsea, parking spots have been swapped to create turning bays, which, along with other DOT tools, work to streamline the traffic and create better traffic flow. Furthermore, as described above, the DOT has been very flexible in working with community members to identify site-specific design solutions, for instance, installing loading zones along side streets and creating overnight parking in the zones to minimize parking losses. Josh Benson, coordinator of the DOT's bike programs, said that during the DOT's public outreach on protected bike lanes in Chelsea, "[t]he public made it clear they preferred better mobility options (i.e. no removal of left turns for motor vehicles) over keeping the parking spaces."<sup>22</sup>

A recent study of parking on the Upper West Side<sup>23</sup> suggests that better management and enforcement of parking regulations would free up many more parking spaces in the area, offsetting any perceived "loss" of parking from a complete streets redesign. Muni Meters are a great tool for managing parking, increasing turnover during peak use periods and discouraging illegal meter feeding. A protected bike lane project presents an opportunity to address poor curbside management issues that are already problematic, potentially resulting in a net gain for everyone.

**Confusion:** As with any new road design element, drivers, cyclists and pedestrians may take some time to learn what they are expected to do. Learning safer behaviors, like looking for bikes whenever crossing a bike lane, cycling with the direction of traffic, or slowing down when turning at an intersection with a bulb-out, is beneficial for everyone. As drivers become accustomed to the new designs and see them in different parts of the city, the learning curve is less steep. DOT public information campaigns, such as the extensive educational effort in connection with the Green Light for Midtown, project, also helps ameliorate confusion. Installing protected bike lanes on the avenues of the Upper West Side is, by comparison, a very modest proposal.

## SUMMARY

The Upper West Side is a lovely place to live, work and play. With protected bike lanes on our streets, the Upper West Side would also be a safer and more civilized place to bike and walk. The traffic we see and experience on a daily basis is not an immutable fact of life; it could be mitigated by streetscape design changes that encourage healthier activities that are also better for the environment. The Upper West Side community is educated and enthusiastic about these changes and wants to bring home some of the livable streets changes that are happening in many surrounding neighborhoods.

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<sup>22</sup> *The Villager*, *New Protected Bicycle Lanes are Rolled out on Eighth Ave*, December 10-16, 2008, available at [http://www.thevillager.com/villger\\_293/newprotectedbi.html](http://www.thevillager.com/villger_293/newprotectedbi.html).

<sup>23</sup> *Transportation Alternatives*, *Driven to Excess*, June 2008, available at [http://transalt.org/files/newsroom/reports/driven\\_to\\_excess.pdf](http://transalt.org/files/newsroom/reports/driven_to_excess.pdf). During the study, some vehicles were observed parking at one hour metered spaces for twelve hours, without being ticketed.