



Community Board No. 2

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Joseph Conley
Chairman

Debra Markell Kleinert
District Manager

May 21, 2013

Transportation Committee Meeting

Attendance

Emilia Crotty
Donald McCallian
Santiago Vargas
Shampa Chanda

Sheila Lewandowski
Evan O'Neil
Al Volpe

Absentees

Joseph Conley, Chairperson
Mohammed Chowdhury Jewel

Reverend Joseph Jerome

Community Board 2 Staff

Debra Markell Kleinert, District Manager

DOT

Hilary Gietz
Rob Viola
Andrew Mason
Kim Lua

Wallace Murray
Kimberly Rancourt
Ted Wright

Guests

Claudia Chan
Nick Gulotta
Dina Ferraivolo

Shahir Erfan
Joseph Menzer

Ms. Markell Kleinert welcomed everyone to the Transportation Committee Meeting. She reported that Chairman Joseph Conley was unable to attend the meeting.

Revised Agenda

Department of Transportation

Presentation by DOT-Pulaski Bridge Bicycle Lanes-Hilary Gietz, DOT, introduced Wallace Murray, DOT Bike Program, who gave a presentation on the extension of the bike lanes on the Pulaski Bridge.

Mr. Murray gave a brief overview of the history of the Pulaski Bridge. He reported that in 2009, the DOT made improvements to the sidewalk path on the west side of the bridge to help cyclists and pedestrians understand which side of the path it was safe to be on. He stated that pedestrian and bike traffic is on the rise, and there is more traffic on the bridge for bicyclists and pedestrians to deal with. To improve this situation, the DOT has contracted a bridge engineering firm to conduct a feasibility study, and provide recommendations and design ideas as to what can be done to make safer conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Mr. Murray stated the following:

- The Pulaski Bridge has three lanes for traffic going in each direction for vehicles, and then the bicyclists and pedestrians share the sidewalk.

The DOT is looking to improve by these options:

- Take one travel lane on the southbound side (Queens to Brooklyn side) of the bridge and use that lane for bicycles.
- DOT will leave the sidewalk for pedestrians, which would create an effective barrier so that you would have southbound cars in two lanes of traffic, then the protective barrier, then one lane for bikes.
- The bridge has "leaves" that open and have been carefully engineered and designed with counter balances and electric components that operate them, and mechanical components that operate them. Placing a protective barrier to these components of the bridge adds weight and engineering technicalities to the bridge, they will be reviewed.

Therefore, experts are needed to assess the following:

- What type of barrier is needed to protect bicycles.
- How to secure the bridge surface.
- How much weight would be added to the bridge.
- What other engineering changes are needed to make the bridge operate successfully.

The present study and analysis is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2013, and the results evaluated at that time. Mr. Murray, DOT, will continue to provide updates to CB 2.

CB 2 will provide a letter of support.

Presentation by DOT/DDC-Priority Schools for Safe Routes at the Razi School-Queens Blvd. and 55th Street-

Joseph Menzer, RBA Group reported that this organization has been working with the DOT on this school safety program for over a decade, beginning in 2001. He stated that when the project began, the two groups looked at the over 1400 public and private elementary schools, and looked at the conditions around each of the 1400 schools, as they related to pedestrian safety.

Mr. Menzer reported that the study involved :

- Looking at a 700 foot radius around each of the schools. and at the actions of the intersections around each of the schools within the 700 foot radius.

An analysis was able to determine which of the schools had the highest rate of accidents at those intersections. A report was published in 2003 ranking each of the 1400 schools, the number one school being the one that had the highest accident rate.

Based on this report, the first 10% of the schools then went into a "Study Mode", taking each of these schools to try to assess why there was such a high accident rate at these schools. Upon examining this 10% of the schools, School Safety Reports were published and appear on the NYC DOT Website. There were recommendations made in these reports on how to correct some of the pedestrian issues that were noted at all of the school locations.

Mr. Menzer reported that all of the schools noted in the first phase of the study are under some form of construction. Thirty-five schools have been completed as of 2009. The remaining schools are in some form of design and construction, and hopefully will be completed over the next decade.

Mr. Menzer stated that currently, DOT has taken the next 10% list of the schools, and they are examining these schools in the hopes of correcting the circumstances that caused accidents. The Razi school, opened in 1995. It is located at Queens Blvd. and 55th and 56th Avenue, falls within this class of schools.

The scope of the work is pedestrian safety.

The data for the reports was compiled about 2 years ago, and the criteria for examining these accidents was that there needed to be a minimum of 250 students to be included in the program.

The period studied was 2007 to 2009. There were 65 vehicular and pedestrian accidents in this area during that time, almost all of them being on Queens Blvd. Seven pedestrian accidents and two school related accidents were among those statistics,

School related accidents are those accidents:

- Occurring between the hours of 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM,
- Only on school days, Monday through Friday when school is in session, and
- Only those pertaining to students between the ages of 5 years to 15 years.

Also taken into consideration in the study were how the children went to the school ; were they driven by parents, walking or taking the bus.

Mr. Menzer stated that after reviewing pedestrian accidents over and over again, that the majority of pedestrian accidents are not head on, but rather from turning and not seeing pedestrians, or pedestrians not seeing a turning vehicle.

Mr. Menzer stated that some of the improvements that the DOT will incorporating into its recommendations are:

- Installing a reduced speed zone in front of the school in the service road, which will slow traffic to 20 miles an hour.
- Use Count Down signals across the intersection.
- Use signs with instructions on how the count down signals work.
- Use heavy striping on the ground to narrow the moving lanes.

Mr. Menzer used slide projections to demonstrate the various aspects of the presentation.

A motion was made from the Transportation Committee to allow a letter of support for the DOT project to continue. The motion was seconded.

In Favor 4

Opposed 2

Abstention 0

Ms. Markell Kleinert stated that the motion for a letter of support to DOT will be carried.

Ms. Markell Kleinert thanked Mr. Menzer, and requested a copy of the presentation for CB 2.

Presentation by DOT-Vernon Blvd. Bicycle Lanes-

Ms. Markell Kleinert stated that this issue will need to be voted on by the Transportation Committee, as well as the full Community Board 2, at the June 6, 2013 Community Board 2 Meeting.

Ted Wright, NYC DOT, gave an overview of how the bicycle lanes will work. He used slides to explain the evolvement of the bicycle lanes in the Vernon Blvd. area.

Mr. Wright stated that this plan would be connecting the bicycle lanes to all of the parks in the area. He also stated that the "Queens Plaza Path" is increasing the access to the waterfront.

A Transportation Committee Member readdressed the bicycle issue regarding confusion of the signage coming over the Queensboro Bridge. Mr. Wright stated that he would look into this matter.

With regard to the Vernon Blvd. area itself, bicycle lanes were installed, and pedestrian crossings were created into the park.

Mr. Wright's presentation involved a breakdown of three different types of road beds with regard to;

- Waterfront context

- Parking, and the connection to the Pulaski Bridge.

One type devoted putting in a 2 way path within the park then putting a section on 49th Ave. adding parking spaces at the park area and connecting the Brooklyn/Queens area .

He stated that the DOT will be opening up this area, and increase access to it. They will install a path that will connect all of these areas and allow people to walk, jog and ride bicycles from area to area.

Mr. Wright provided information as to the DOT's specific plans with regard to the coordination of the bicycle lanes. There will be an area north of 44th Drive, south of Queensboro Bridge. He stated that there will be a one-way street, there will be no parking in this area, and there will be separating the bike lanes with a substantial 5 foot buffer and a flexible ballard.

He stated that there has been a large, 300%, increase in bicycle ridership. He stated that no parking is being added in CB 2.

Mr. Wright provided information on a bike map showing where the bike lane ends at 45th Rd.-and find ways to increase the connection and extend a path to the to 46th Avenue area.

A discussion followed regarding the removal of several parking spaces in order to create more area for bicyclists. This met with opposition, since this is a commercial area, and parking spots are always at a premium.

A request was made for Mr. Wright to research further to develop the possibilities of the issue of the parking spaces, and the possibility of the extension of the paths in the area, and present the results of this research at the next Transportation Committee Meeting.

However, after further discussion, it was determined that the Vernon Blvd. Bicycle Lanes Presentation would be made at the June 6, 2013 full Community Board 2 Regular Monthly Meeting.

Ms. Markell Kleinert requested a copy of the Presentation so that it can be circulated prior to the June 6, 2013 CB 2 Meeting.

Presentation by DOT-Pedestrian Safety Improvements at Thomson Avenue and 30th Street (La Guardia College)

Rob Viola, Community Office of Research Implementation and Safety at LaGuardia College, introduced himself, and stated that his office handles safety improvements throughout the city often focused on pedestrian safety and vehicular safety, as well.

Mr. Viola stated that requests were made from Community Board 2, Council Member Van Bramer's Office, and from LaGuardia College-Thomson Avenue and Van Dam Street- to examine the confusion regarding the intersection of Thomson and Skillman Avenue, to see how this intersection could be made safer. He stated that terrible student fatality in March 2013, when a vehicle heading eastbound and lost control of the vehicle, cut across three lanes of traffic, plowed into the sidewalk where there were many students waiting for the bus, and killed one of the students. This tragedy only highlighted the need for safety improvements.

Mr. Viola reported that this is a 6 lane roadway and traffic is moving fast which makes for a dangerous combination. The DOT met with LaGuardia College, and reported the following to make the area safe:

- Contracted a consultant to do an area wide study all around the school – LaGuardia College has already been expanding its facilities, and doing transportation study work. This new study will bring about major changes –and expanding the scope to look at safety throughout the area, as well.
- Implemented a new, more comprehensive study – which will involve network changes and pedestrian safety.

Thus far, there have been:

- Signal improvements,-Countdown signals down Thomson Avenue, and changing the timing of the walk signals.
- Operational sign improvements,
- Refurbishments at Thomson Ave. and Van Dam St., replacing some missing signs, and making some signs clearer.

Future improvements include refurbishments of the markings in the area.

Mr. Viola stated that to cut down on injuries in the Thomson/Skillman area, the DOT is proposing:

- The closure of the slip ramp with temporary materials, putting in some planters, closing the edges of the slip ramp off. LaGuardia College has agreed to maintain six planters in this area, creating a safer, more protective environment. In addition, perhaps placing guard rails or granite blocks would be possible. Granite blocks was the consensus of choice from the Transportation Committee.
- The banning of the eastbound Thomson to Skillman Avenue left turn.

Mr. Viola stated that his Community Office Group could revisit the left turns signal idea. However, this issue was examined, and it was determined that keeping the signal would impact the operation of the intersection too negatively because there is so much traffic and no time to spare. During a peak hour there are approximately 2300 vehicles in each direction, the heaviest in the morning, and with three lanes, you are basically at capacity.

Ms. Claudia Chan and Mr. Shahir Erfan, LaGuardia Community College, provided some suggestions, but stated that discussions were still going on, and no definite decision was made in this area, as yet.

Hilary Gietz, DOT, stated that the DOT would like to have a resolution on this as soon as possible, and not wait until September or October. She suggested that the Transportation Committee pass a motion to support the closure of the slip ramp, so that the DOT can move forward on it quickly.

Ms. Markell Kleinert stated that the Transportation Committee can vote, and then once they vote, it would then have to be presented to CB 2 Chairman, Joseph Conley.

It was stated that for the record, Council Member Van Bramer has seen this presentation.

A motion was made to support the closing of the slip ramp, but not the full implantation of the removal of the left turn change. The motion was seconded.

In favor 6

Opposed 0

Abstention 0

- Note: Ms. Gietz, DOT, stated that with respect to the closing of the slip ramp, the DOT would want the approval of the Transportation Committee and CB 2 because it requires the closing of a roadway. However with respect to the removal of the left turn change, Ms. Gietz stated that she did not believe that the approval of the Community Board was required, because it is something that the DOT is doing as a safety precaution.

Ms. Markell Kleinert thanked DOT for their presentations.

Department of Transportation-Issues

Ms. Markell Kleinert stated that the CB 2 Community has complained vehemently that trucks speeding, and issues with trucks enforcement would probably help on Skillman Avenue. Also noted that truck enforcement again is needed on 48th Avenue.

Discussion on specific Slow Zones for CB 2 and letter of support.

In the discussion, a wide variety of slow zones was presented—Northern Woodside/Sunnyside, Southern Sunnyside and Long Island City.

Information was presented to the Transportation Committee regarding recommendations on the slow zones. He stated that there were more options that they would like to consider, but fire hazard concerns and truck route considerations, etc., prevent them from doing so. This is a very complicated issue.

A motion was made to provide a letter of support to include all of the selected areas into slow zones. The motion was seconded.

In Favor 6

Opposed 0

Abstention 0

Ms. Markell Kleinert stated that the discussions on the remaining issues on the Agenda will be continued at the next Transportation Committee Meeting. Ms. Gietz, DOT, will provide updates where available.

Ms. Markell Kleinert thanked everyone for attending the Transportation Committee Meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

Joan Bergman/Debra Markell Kleinert