

Resolution in support of conducting a feasibility study of 7th Ave. in District 2 to determine whether it can be re-designed as a “Complete Street.”

Whereas the 7th Ave. corridor in District 2 from W. 14th St. to Canal St. presents a constant threat to pedestrians as well as to bicyclists, with its lengthy street crossings, its many irregular intersections, its high volumes of disordered vehicular traffic alternately speeding or bunching up, its arterial-like environment that fosters disregard for non-driving users of the street while also endangering motorists, and the noise and pollution that emanate from its traffic-clogged lanes and fill the air; and

Whereas the 7th Ave. S. segment of the District 2 corridor (from the W. 11th St./Greenwich Ave. intersection to the Carmine/Clarkson/Varick Sts. intersection) is particularly dangerous with its morass of complex and confusing intersections and oddly angled, unpredictable cross streets and street crossings (exemplified by such multi-limbed and/or uneven junctures as at Bleecker/Barrow, Bedford/Leroy, Carmine/Clarkson/Varick, Christopher/W. 4th, Morton, Bedford and Leroy Sts.), a mix that imperils everyone using the street but that is exceptionally treacherous in an area with a high concentration of all types of schools (preschool, elementary, secondary and specialty), senior centers, recreational facilities and libraries and an extensive population of children and elders navigating the area who are especially vulnerable to the dysfunctional street chaos; and

Whereas the 7th Ave. portion of the District 2 corridor (from W. 14th St. to the W. 11th St./Greenwich Ave. intersection) presents similar hazards such as wide pedestrian crossings, speeding vehicles, disordered traffic and lack of lanes to channel bicycles. Interest has been expressed by Districts 4 and 5 in looking at the possibility of redesigning 7th Ave. north of W. 14th St. to improve its safety and enhance its ambiance, presenting an opportunity to connect improvement of the 7th Ave. corridor in District 2 from its northern W. 14th St. border to above W. 14th St. for creation of a continuously safe and pleasantly ordered thoroughfare; and

Whereas the Varick St. section of District 2’s 7th Ave. corridor (from the Carmine/Clarkson/Varick Sts. intersection to Canal St.) is burdened by both cars and heavy truck and bus traffic, much of it on its way to the Holland Tunnel, causing backups, competing for lanes, overrunning crosswalks, and often ignoring stop lights, not only endangering pedestrians, but also creating a singularly unpleasant environment for all those using the street. The Hudson Square Connection Business Improvement District has created a plan that includes streetscape and traffic improvements on Varick St. from Houston to Canal that need to be looked at for coordinating them with the rest of District 2’s 7th Ave. corridor, and with a host of landscaping, materials and furnishing features that might provide a model for sprucing the other sections up; and

Whereas many community members came to share their concerns about the dangers of District 2’s 7th Ave. corridor and voiced their support for a Complete Street feasibility study to improve these conditions, including representatives from P.S. 41, the W. 13th St.-100 Block Association, the Central Village Block Association, the 7th Ave. S. Alliance, and the Bedford Barrow Commerce Block Association, and numerous letters of support were received from residents and local organizations, including the Community Education Council District 2, the Downing St. Playgroup Pre-School, Our Lady of Pompeii School, the Village Preschool Center, the Greenwich House Nursery School and Senior Center, and the Academy of St. Joseph, and a petition with over 300 signatures was received; and

Whereas many expressed their desire for not only safety improvements but also aesthetic improvements that would beautify the corridor; and

Whereas Complete Streets type redesigns, such as the kind that would be addressed in the requested study, including such improvements as pedestrian safety islands with landscaping, protected bicycle lanes, dedicated bus lanes, and traffic lights with leading pedestrian intervals or split phase timing have resulted in notable decreases in crashes and injuries on other NYC streets, such as Columbus, 1st, 2nd, 8th and 9th Aves. (e.g., 35% decrease in injuries to all street users on 8th Ave. and 58 % decrease on 9th Ave.: “Measuring the Street,” NYC Dept. of Transportation (DOT), 2012), and as of September 2014 (“Protected Bicycle Lanes in NYC” (DOT)) an aggregate safety increase is indicated, showing crashes with injuries reduced by 17% and pedestrian injuries down by 22%; while also reducing travel times, lowering speeding, lessening double parking, bettering sightlines, increasing foot traffic, pulling communities together, and improving retail sales; and

Whereas Community Board 2, Manhattan (CB2) strongly supports a comprehensive approach to betterment that looks at a corridor holistically to coordinate improvements so that they supplement and work smoothly in concert with each other rather than employing ad hoc approaches that often result in negative impacts to the rest of the corridor; and

Whereas a Complete Street design for District 2’s 7th Ave. corridor would be in keeping with Vision Zero’s goal for street designs that reduce traffic related fatalities and promote safer streets;

Therefore be it resolved that CB2 fully supports conducting a feasibility study for the full length of 7th Ave. in District 2, from W. 14th St. to Canal St. (and requests that this study be done) to determine whether it can be re-designed as a Complete Street in order to improve its safety as well as to aesthetically enhance its ambiance; and

Be it further resolved that CB2 asks that this study consider a wide variety of options for a truly Complete Street, including but not limited to pedestrian safety islands, landscaping, adequately sized and wide, visibly striped crosswalks, protected bike lanes, narrowed traffic lanes, traffic lights with leading pedestrian intervals or split phase timing, dedicated bus lanes, bus bulbs or other design features to assure curb pull-up and level low-floor bus boarding access, seating and signs at every bus stop, with a balance of commercial and individual parking as well as parking for bicycles, motorcycles and scooters in the street, medians, and widened sidewalks; and

Be it further resolved that CB2 requests that when aesthetically improving the look of this corridor is reviewed, that the landscaping, materials and furnishing features recommended in the Hudson Square Connection’s streetscape plan for Varick St. be examined and given consideration; and

Be it further resolved that CB2 asks DOT for close consultation with CB2 and its stakeholders as the requested study progresses; and

Be it finally resolved that CB2 asks that the requested study be completed within a six-month time frame in order to begin much-needed improvements as quickly as possible.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Community Board 2, Manhattan
Full board meeting
September 18, 2014