

(Pending Committee Approval)
Minutes of the Traffic & Transportation Committee Meeting
Bronx Community Board 8
April 20, 2022, 7pm via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm

Attendees

Committee:

Present: Debra Travis (Chair), Kelli Buford, Mary Ellen Gibbs (CCM), Christopher Calhoun, David Gellman, Edward Green

Absent: Georgia Santiago

Board Members: Marty Wolpoff, Rosemary Ginty, Sylvia Alexander

Elected Officials: none

City Agencies: none

Agenda

Approval of Minutes of Meeting of March 31, 2022

There was a discussion of the importance of noting that the whereas language to the Riverdale Avenue Resolution of March 31, 2022 was modified by the chair, in accordance with Board norms and Open Meetings Law guidelines, after the March 31, 2022 Traffic & Transportation committee meeting, but prior to the Full Board meeting on April 12, 2022 in order to make the resolution more clear. The March 31, 2022 committee minutes were adjusted to note there was a newer version of the resolution. The final version of the Riverdale Avenue Resolution presented at the Community Board 8, April 12, 2022 monthly board meeting read as follows:

RESOLUTION: Riverdale Avenue Resolution from March 31, 2022 – Final Board Version

WHEREAS, the Bronx Department of Transportation (DOT) presented on March 31st, 2022 to the Bronx Community Board 8 Traffic and Transportation Committee a street safety plan for Riverdale Avenue between West 254th Street and West 263rd Street (the city line), which would involve converting four travel lanes to two travel lanes with a left-turn center bay and bike lanes on each side of the street;

WHEREAS, in October, 2017, the North Riverdale Merchants Association presented its Streetscape Report of a similar design, which was rejected by Community Board 8 in December of 2017;

WHEREAS, In January 2018, Community Board 8 received notice from the Department of Transportation that “DOT does not have plans or studies underway to implement these conversions recommended in the Streetscape Report and DOT will take the Board’s comments into consideration as we review any future proposals.”;

WHEREAS, Bronx Community Board 8 was not involved with the planning process, nor was the public able to review this plan prior to the presentation;

WHEREAS, Riverdale Avenue is the main commercial and travel artery in North Riverdale and home to many businesses, including Skyview Shopping Center, many schools, including P. S. 81, St. Margaret of Cortona School, SAR High School, the College of Mount St. Vincent, two houses of worship, a post office, many co-op buildings and private residences, and six city bus lines including the Metro North Rail link;

WHEREAS, the Board has not received additional traffic studies as requested, and accident data provided is from 2015-2019 predating impacts of two speed cameras installed at P.S. 81 and St. Margaret of Cortona School;

WHEREAS, more than 200 people attended the March 31st, 2022 Traffic and Transportation meeting and the overwhelming majority were opposed to DOT’s plan and raised many issues about the adverse impacts of reducing four travel lanes to two travel lanes, severe traffic congestion due to six city buses, double parking during school drop-offs, school buses, and truck deliveries;

WHEREAS, the plan does not account for problematic merging of traffic at 254th Street, when cars exit Henry Hudson Parkway and Henry Hudson Service Road - and at 263rd Street, where city buses must turn around and often double park, - and traffic from Yonkers, which has four lanes that must merge with one travel lane going south;

WHEREAS, to improve safety, Bronx Community Board 8 has long endorsed Assembly Member Dinowitz’s request that DOT install left turn signals at 256th and 259th streets northbound and we urge that this be done first before making major changes to the Riverdale Avenue design;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Community Board 8 rejects DOT’s proposal as presented.

Committee Vote:

In Favor: Kelli Buford, Christopher Calhoun, Mary Ellen Gibbs (CCM), Edward Green, Georgia Santiago

Opposed: David Gellman, Debra Travis

Abstain: None

The March 31, 2022 minutes were approved as amended.

In Favor: Kelli Buford, Christopher Calhoun, Mary Ellen Gibbs (CCM), Edward Green, Debra Travis

Opposed: David Gellman

Chair's Report

Osvaly Jimenez did not re-apply to the Community Board and is therefore no longer on the committee.

As a follow-up to our Riverdale Avenue discussion in March, the Chair is submitting paving and pedestrian ramp requests for Riverdale Avenue and other streets in the immediate area so that all basic maintenance items are being addressed. She has reached out to the Main Streets Alliance to get any feedback on specific blocks that should be added to the list since they raised this as a concern at the meeting.

A reminder that we are in the prime time for requesting paving. Paving is generally done in the fall. Please submit any blocks that need attention to the community board 8 office.

All of the step streets on our budget priorities have been submitted to DOT and we are awaiting the results from their inspections

Finalization of Budget Priorities for FY24

The committee reviewed the budget priorities for FY24. There are many step street issues on the budget priorities list and they have been submitted to DOT for inspection. The committee will leave them on the list until they are informed by DOT as to which ones can be addressed through general maintenance.

Dan Padernacht read an email from former Bronx DOT Commissioner, Nivardo Lopez from 2020 on the planned work that NYC DOT has scheduled to rehabilitate the pedestrian walkway over the Henry Hudson Bridge at West 236th/West 235th Street. It is slated to be finished in 2024. Chair will follow-up to see if there is an update.

Regarding the capital budget item of the completion of the sidewalk on West 235th Street between Independence Avenue and Henry Hudson Parkway, Rosemary Ginty and Dan Padernacht said they had a letter from NYC DOT that stated that to replace the sidewalk would be a capital project and it should be included as a budget priority. Acting Borough Commissioner Keith Kalb had indicated that since sidewalk construction is generally billed back to the building that this item was not appropriate as a budget priority. The committee will continue to pursue the sidewalk be built as a matter of law since it should have been constructed when the building was constructed.

The committee approved the FY24 budget priorities unanimously.

Bailey Avenue – Committee Discussion of Next Steps

In 2021-2022, at the December, January and February committee meetings, the Traffic & Transportation Committee held discussions with the community due to concern about the high number of traffic injuries and crashes between 2017-2022 on Bailey Avenue between West 225th Street/Kingsbridge Road and Van Cortlandt Park. In December, we discussed the whole corridor from Van Cortlandt Park to Kingsbridge Road. Community members expressed their concerns that speeding, double-parked cars and turning cars at intersections made it unsafe for pedestrians. These conditions are further causing bikes and e-scooters to ride on the sidewalk. The intersections of Van Cortlandt Avenue South, West 238th Street, West 230th and West 225th were cited as the most dangerous. The intersections of 238th and Bailey Avenue and Van Cortlandt Avenue West and Bailey Avenue were determined to be the two highest priorities.

In January we focused on the intersection of Van Cortlandt Avenue South. Major points of concern for the community were: left turns from all directions, traffic flow that is unruly and leads to erratic behavior by drivers, no controlled stops from the slip lanes from the Deegan or from eastbound Van Cortlandt Ave South, pedestrian crosswalks are too wide and two difficult to navigate with turn traffic, and honking from backed up traffic on Bailey Avenue. We spoke to DOT and they do not have any active studies for unsafe conditions at this intersection. They have recently changed the timing of the traffic signal by increasing the green light duration for northbound Bailey Ave traffic which has improved the afternoon congestion according to the 50th Precinct.

At the January meeting the access to Van Cortlandt Park was also viewed by community members as very dangerous because it requires crossing the Deegan northbound on-ramp after vehicles are already up to speed and there is no crosswalk or sidewalk to the park or signage that pedestrians may be crossing. Van Cortlandt Park Alliance is interested in working with city and state DOT to improve this entrance. New York City DOT will pursue any concerns that are raised.

In February we focused on the intersection of West 238th Street and Bailey Avenue. Community members highlighted the following issues at this intersection that cause it to be dangerous at certain times of the day for pedestrians to cross:

- Turning cars failing to yield and cutting the turn
- Speeding cars
- Double parked cars particularly on Bailey Avenue and on West 238th Street east of the intersection
- Pedestrians jay-walking to run to the bus
- Traffic from the B.J's / rooftop parking lot on West 238th Street

At this meeting the committee discussed whether they should have a resolution requesting that DOT study all or a targeted area of Bailey Avenue. Half of the committee felt that they needed more specific details regarding the 153 crashes on Bailey Avenue between Van Cortlandt Park and Kingsbridge Road between March 2017 – March 2022, including 12 cyclists and 53 pedestrians. The committee requested to get more details or data on accidents and requested the accident reports so that they can investigate.

Old Business

Cost of Kappock and Palisade Reconstruction – A resident asked about the cost of the change to the roadway that was done at Kappock and Palisade Avenues. Keith Kalb was quoted as having said to residents of 2727 Palisade Avenue that the original work cost approximately \$650k and the revision cost \$250k. The revision has been substantially completed. The curb line has been cut back to align better with the catch basins. Permeable pavement was not approved by DEP. 2727 Palisade is waiting for a quote on the replacement of the curb in front of their building.

New Business

Adrian Avenue – Jodie Colon has received complaints from residents on Adrian Avenue in Marble Hill that they are witnessing traffic congestion due to new construction. Jodie has directed them to contact the board office. The committee will follow-up with the board office.

DOT Open Restaurants - A judge blocked the recent rule change that the city was pursuing to make the DOT Open Restaurant program permanent. DOT submitted an environmental assessment which contained a “negative declaration” essentially stating that they do not need to perform an Environmental Impact Statement because there will be no substantial impact from this change. Their stated basis for the lack of impact is that they would make rules that would mitigate against any impact. The judge noted that DOT has not made the rules yet and therefore was basing their neg dec on their “own omnipotence”. Our understanding is that DOT will either need to redo their Environmental Assessment or conduct an Environmental Impact Study. We will continue to follow this as it proceeds. The EAS has been posted online and can be viewed there.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28pm