

(Draft Minutes Pending Approval)
Traffic and Transportation Committee
Bronx Community Board 8
December 17, 2020

Meeting Conducted Via Zoom Video and Audio Conference

Committee Members Present:

Sylvia Alexander, Margaret Donato, David Gellman, Mary Ellen Gibbs, Ed Green (Vice Chair), Dan Padernacht (Chair) Georgia Santiago, Deb Travis (Vice Chair).

Committee Members Absent:

Eider Garcia, Ted Morris.

Chair Padernacht called the meeting to order at 7:05pm, took a roll call of Committee Members and introduced guests.

Street Racing on Local Streets in Community:

Chair Padernacht stated Ed Green (Chair of Public Safety Committee), Ciara Gannon, (District Manager), and himself met with Captain Girven of the 50th Precinct to discuss this issue. Discussion included:

- Racing and related noise are escalating.
- A related assault that occurred 2 weeks ago is currently being investigated.
- Police vehicles blocked and boxed in a reckless driver but the driver rammed into a police car, damaged the car and escaped. An investigation is pending.
- Highway 1 has committed to work with the 50th Precinct to aid in enforcement.
- BXC8 has 2 outstanding requests with BXDOT to install mobile speed cameras: Independence Ave (242nd St.-246th St.) and Riverdale Ave (230th St.-236th St.)

Report from Independence Avenue Working Group:

Deb Travis thanked working group members and presented their findings and recommendations.

Working Group Members: Michael Amabile, David Gellman, Mary Ellen Gibbs, Jordan Laks, Eugene Tomkiel, Debra Travis.

Working Group Priorities:

- Safety is focus
- Discourage reckless driving

- Using non-capital measures such as paint, flexible delineators and speed bumps
- Can be quickly implemented by DOT

Implementation Methods:

- Narrow the visual "drag strip"
- Eliminate donuts in intersections
- Provide safe routes for bicycles
- Safe crossings and sidewalks for seniors, children, families & disabled

Recommendations to Improve Safety:

- Bi-directional parking protected bike lane to narrow roadway and intersection
- Make 235th St. one-way Westbound with diagonal parking to recoup lost parking spaces
- Channel intersections with flexible delineators and road bumps to eliminate "donuts"
- Study for traffic light at 237th St. intersection
- Safer crossings

Bi-directional Protected Bike Lanes:

- W232nd St. to W235th St. - Diagonal & parallel flipped (Loss of 10 spaces due to driveways)
- W235th St. to W236th St. - Diagonal converted to parallel (Loss of 10 spaces on West side)
- W236th St. to W237th St. - No change
- W237th St. to W239th St. - Diagonal converted to parallel (Loss of 12 spaces on West side)
- W239th St. to W246th St. - No change
- Conversion of W235th St. to one-way Westbound with diagonal parking (Gain of 41 spaces)

(41 Parking Spaces Gained / 32 Parking Spaces Lost - (Parking Impacts: Net 9 spaces gained)

Bi-directional Protected Bike Lane Independence Ave - W235th St. to W239th St.

Bi-directional Protected Bike Lane Independence Ave at W232nd St.

Narrow intersections with flexible delineators & speed bumps.

Working Group met with School Principals of RKA, PS 24, Parents Associations of RKA & PS 24, Riverdale Temple, Riverdale Jewish Center. Notices were posted to neighborhood residents regarding the discussion at the December Traffic and Transportation Committee Meeting.

One of the main questions raised was: How would these changes effect traffic flow and drop off?

Nate (Guest), tenant at W239th St. & Independence Ave stated most of the donuts and racing occurs in the evening and is more of a noise disturbance issue than anything else that requires police presence at night.

Al (Guest), stated he has lived in the neighborhood for 13 years and has never parked on W235th St. because it's barren and prime for car break-ins, the lighting is poor, there's no buildings and he won't even walk his dog there.

Wendy Silver (Guest) agreed with Al's statement about not parking on W235th St. She stated narrowing Independence Ave could cause traffic to come to a standstill during rush hours, especially with the high volume of school traffic.

BXDOTC Nivardo Lopez stated once DOT receives an official request from BXC8 that has the widest amount of community support, DOT would study it and come back to BXC8 with a flushed-out plan. This would not happen until the Summer or Fall of 2021.

Deb Travis asked BXDOTC Lopez if there were some things that could be done more quickly. Lopez stated once BXC8 gave DOT indication of what the community wanted, they could begin a conversation as to what could be done more quickly and what would require more time.

BXDOTC Lopez stated street racing is a citywide problem and DOT & NYPD need to start "thinking outside the box" for solutions that combine street design and law enforcement.

Assemblyman Dinowitz stated he is not favorably disposed to bike lanes for the purpose of narrowing the road. He stated if the roadway was narrowed we would have a traffic disaster at the locations in question and it would be a huge imposition and a safety issue in the neighborhood. He doesn't think narrowing the road will discourage drag racers in the least because there is still going to be plenty of room for people to drag race. He stated it is crucial we don't lose any parking on Independence Ave, and W235th St. is not a good place to park because it's isolated and people might not feel safe and it will also be a considerable walking distance for the elderly or disabled. He stated making W235th St a one-way street could be good for other reasons, but will not effect drag racing.

Assemblyman Dinowitz suggested a roundabout at W235th St. & Independence Ave for traffic control. He stated about 90% of the tickets issued for speed cameras would probably go to local residents who would be very angry, so we really need to consider how practical speed-cameras would be at combatting drag racing.

Assemblyman Dinowitz suggested current speed bumps are not as bumpy as the previous ones, and if they were installed at the proper elevation and decline they would be more effective. He also suggested the streets could use more speed bumps and stated we should not go down the road of creating a huge controversy in the neighborhood over bike lanes when he doesn't believe they will even be effective.

Mike Forzano (Guest), stated he is blind and has difficulty crossing these streets as they are currently designed. He suggested adding audible pedestrian signals and stated he was almost hit by a car at Fieldston Road & Mosholu Ave.

Daniel (Guest) suggested a modified star-shaped roundabout to deter cars from doing donuts.

BXDOTC Lopez stated DOT has limited resources but the agency is trying to install audible pedestrian signals as quickly as possible. He stated DOT puts out a report every year about what APS have been installed and are on the calendar to be installed.

Vittorio Bugatti (Guest) suggested the city provide more resources to the 50th Precinct and have more laws to combat drag racing. He stated narrowing the streets would not be helpful.

Rosemary Ginty stated Independence Avenue is the service corridor from 232nd St. to 240th St. and there are 3 schools and a Jewish Center and every year there are numerous complaints about double and triple parking on Independence Ave. She stated garbage gets picked up, trucks line up to deliver food, and Amazon package deliveries are all part of the function of the wide street. Rosemary Ginty stated under narrower conditions if someone stops to park it will stop traffic for a long way and the street will no longer function to serve the community effectively. She stated no one will park on W235th St. because it is frightening at night.

Michelle Nagy Gauss (Guest) suggested "rumble strip" could be used as a cheap deterrent for drag racing because it could damage a car attempting to drive fast over it.

Report from Mosholu Avenue Working Group:

Chair Padernacht stated the Working Group met with BXDOT about the feasibility of different items and what could be done about certain intersections based on federal guidelines. Questions about data were asked to DOT and they stated they would get back to the Working Group and provide the data and come up with some alternatives for the intersection between Broadway and W254th St.

Chair Padernacht stated the Working Group hopes to have more information available at next months meeting.

BXCB8 Chair Laura Spalter stated the Riverdale Neighborhood House, Russian Mission, many private houses and 51 businesses could all be affected by proposed changes to Mosholu Ave. She stated she previously opposed bike lanes because she felt it would be a hardship for businesses and she feels even more strongly right now in the midst of a pandemic, when businesses are struggling to survive.

Concerned Citizen (Guest) stated the negative impact bike lanes have had on Broadway should be a good example of why we shouldn't want any more bike lanes.

Approval of Minutes:

June Traffic and Transportation minutes were approved unanimously.

September Traffic and Transportation minutes were approved.
1 Abstention: David Gellman

October Traffic and Transportation minutes were approved.
1 Abstention: David Gellman

No Outstanding Business

Chair Padernacht stated he received a request from a community resident to take a look at Sigma Place and Palisade Avenue for the possibility of installing a stop sign at the intersection. He encouraged T&T Committee Members to assess the area.

Committee Member David Gellman pointed out that this location was a block away from the Hebrew Home and they should be asked how they felt about a potential stop sign there.

Committee Member Georgia Santiago requested to be mailed a paper copy of the minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:41pm.

Dan Padernacht
Chair
Traffic & Transportation Committee

Minutes submitted by Committee Vice Chair Ed Green, pending approval.