

(Draft Minutes Pending Approval)

**Traffic and Transportation Committee
Bronx Community Board 8
January 21st, 2021**

Meeting Conducted Via Zoom Video / Audio Conference

Committee Members Present:

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

Committee Members Absent:

Joyce Campbell Priveterre
Eider Garcia

Committee Chair Padernacht called the meeting to order at 7:10pm, took an attendance roll-call of Committee Members and introduced guests.

Resident request for Stop sign at northwest corner of Sigma Place and Palisade Avenue for vehicles traveling southbound on Palisade Avenue.

Chair Padernacht adjourned the stop sign request at Sigma Place and Palisade Ave agenda item until February's meeting, stating he wanted to contact one more body in the area before bringing this issue before the committee.

Dark Sky Awareness presentation by local resident, in relation to street lighting in our community district.

Robin Schwartz from Dark Sky Awareness presented on street lighting: Lighting Shields, Dimmers, Motion Detectors, Low-Wattage, Timers, Tint and Height were discussed as possible alternatives.

Street Racing on local streets in community:

Chair Padernacht stated BXC88 received a report from the 50th Precinct Commanding Officer stating the 50th Precinct had not received any complaints about drag racing in our community in the last few weeks.

Report from Independence Avenue Working Group:

Committee Vice Chair Deb Travis shared a summary of the Working Group recommendations:

- Bi-Directional Parking Protected Bike Lane to Narrow Roadway and Intersection
- Make 235th One-Way Westbound w/diagonal Parking & Enhanced Crosswalk
- Channel Intersections with Flexible Delineators & Road Bumps
- Traffic Light at 237th Street Intersection
- Safer Crossings

ADA Accessible Ramps:

Guest James Fogel asked what exact locations would ADA ramps be needed. Committee Vice Chair Deb Travis stated the Working Group would do an audit of the area and pinpoint exact locations ADA ramps were needed.

BXDOTC Lopez stated the City is currently undertaking a project to upgrade or install ramps in all places ADA ramps are needed. He stated approximately 500,000 locations in NYC have been targeted for ADA ramps and they will be installed independently of any request discussed at this meeting.

Guest Tao Moran stated ADA ramps would result in loss of parking spaces. BXDOTC Lopez stated adding enhanced crosswalks, not ADA ramps, resulted in the loss of parking spaces.

Chair Padernacht asked the Committee if there were any objections to putting ADA ramps on Independence Ave. There were no objections.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals at Crosswalks:

Committee Vice Chair Deb Travis stated that 239th St. is the only intersection that needs an LPI.

Chair Padernacht asked the Committee if there were any objections to installing LPI's. There were no objections.

Request for a Traffic Light at W 237th St. & Independence Ave:

AM Dinowitz stated he requested a traffic light from DOT at this location and he believes BXC8 should also request it.

Guest Bernie Adler suggested installation of a roundabout (traffic circle) instead of a traffic light.

Committee Member David Gellman stated he was opposed to another traffic light located at such a short distance from the others.

Guest Jessica Haller stated she thought a roundabout would be a better idea than a traffic light.

Guest Jordan Aris stated he likes roundabouts but doesn't think it would be appropriate in this area. He stated it's a high volume traffic area and a roundabout would be ineffective.

Guest Len Daykin stated the sequencing of the traffic lights should be coordinated so traffic flow is consistent.

Guest Ellen Haney-Saligumba stated installing a roundabout would not be safe for all the students crossing the street that go to RKA and PS 24 Schools.

Guest Joyce Moran stated a traffic light would be fine but a traffic circle would not be a good idea because people don't know how to drive in them.

Chair Padernacht stated a permanent traffic circle (roundabout) would be a capital project.

BXDOTC Lopez stated the DOT had pedestrian safety concerns about traffic circles.

Guest Michael Spivak disputed Captain Melendez's claim that there haven't been any recent complaints about drag racing. He also stated if a traffic circle is installed motorcyclists will use it as a stunt prop for wheelies and racing tactics.

Guest Aryeh Jeselsohn stated traffic circles are dangerous for pedestrians because there is no way a pedestrian can anticipate if cars are turning towards them and there is lots of pedestrian traffic in this area.

Guest Donald Bluestone stated the area needs a traffic light but the lights need to be sequentially timed properly otherwise there will be significant traffic backup.

Community Committee Member Marry Ellen Gibbs stated she believes a roundabout would stop the doughnuts and the drag racing.

Guest Jodi Colon stated she would be concerned about truck traffic if a roundabout were installed.

Guest Yehouda Soffer stated he has almost been hit by cars at this intersection and a traffic circle is confusing and would make things even more dangerous.

Guest Mitch K. stated Police Officers need to set up a sting operation to stop the drag racers and confiscate their vehicles.

Guest Lesly Edmond stated he teaches at RKA School and approximately 1600 students a day come in and out of the area and a traffic light will back up traffic all the way to the highway. He stated the school has a crossing guard and approximately 30-40 kids cross the street at a time.

Guest Edward Eisman stated drivers that don't have good manners could result in someone getting hurt in a roundabout and he is in favor of the traffic light.

Committee Vice Chair Ed Green stated he is concerned a traffic light being installed could potentially result in traffic backup and this matter should be investigated further, but if the light did not cause traffic congestion he would support it. He also stated a traffic circle would be disorienting to motorists, cyclists and pedestrians and he strongly opposes it.

Committee Vice Chair Deb Travis stated she feels a traffic light would make cars stop and many cars currently make rolling stops and don't come to a complete stop at the stop sign.

Channel Intersections with Flexible Delineators & Road Bumps:

Guest Dani DeMars suggested speed bumps be made higher so drag racers will damage their cars if they speed over them.

Guest Erik Kollin suggested all the lines added to the street are a driving distraction and the spaciousness of Riverdale streets add to the attractiveness of the neighborhood and give it less of an urban feel.

BXCB8 Member Rosemary Ginty stated any unintended consequences need to be known before the T&T Committee commits to projects like this.

Guest Vittorio Bugatti suggested NYPD should have a task force to address this issue because it's a city wide problem and undercover cops should seize these vehicles. He stated reconfiguring the streets does not work.

Guest Joram Aris stated channelization would have a negative effect on parking and he is against an entire community being immobilized by street configuration because of a racing problem that mostly occurs in the middle of the night. He stated police enforcement is the solution.

Guest Ken Leibowitz stated statistics don't indicate there is any significant problem and the unintended consequences of these proposed changes could create problems where none exist.

Committee Member David Gellman stated channelization occurs in the intersection and does not effect parking.

Guest Becca asked if channelization created more parking spaces.

Committee Vice Chair Deb Travis stated channelization has no effect on parking spaces, serves to narrow the intersection and limits the area where cars do donuts.

Guest Doug Debow stated he moved to this area from Manhattan and street configuration was a poorly conceived idea that contributed to traffic congestion in Manhattan. He stated police enforcement would be the best solution to this problem.

Make 235th St. One-Way Westbound w/diagonal Parking & Enhanced Crosswalk:

AM Dinowitz stated adding parking on 235th Street is not a good substitute for removing parking on Independence Avenue.

Guest Tao Moran stated drag racing is a public safety issue, not a Traffic and Transportation issue. She also stated once these changes are made they usually have negative consequences and are never returned to the way they were before when things worked more effectively.

Guest Len Daykin stated diagonal parking would leave too narrow a lane for drivers and this idea is a prescription for a disaster.

Guest Joyce Moran stated 235th St. is a prime area for car brake-ins.

Guest Robin Weber stated she is against turning 235th St. into angled parking. She stated she watches cars struggling on this street because of congestion & flooding and creating angled parking would create a dangerous situation.

BXCB8 Member Rosemary Ginty stated a one-way street on 235th St. would disrupt traffic flow and doesn't make sense for the neighborhood.

Guest Frank Dwyer stated he likes the idea of angled parking and one-way traffic on W 235th.

Guest Paula stated the available parking spaces currently on 235th St. are not fully utilized.

Guest Donald Bluestone stated most of the solutions the Committee is exploring will cause more problems than the problem at hand and getting the police to do their job would be the best solution for the problem of drag racing.

Guest Tobias Shapiro stated making 235th St. a one-way Street limits access to the street and the area is dangerous to park in at night because it's so isolated and he's concerned about car break-ins and muggings.

Bi-Directional Parking Protected Bike Lane to Narrow Roadway and Intersection:

Guest Jeffrey Moerdler stated he represents a coalition of eight apartment buildings and it is their consensus that bike lanes and narrowing Independence Ave is a horrible idea that will make Independence Ave dramatically less safe and create a traffic nightmare.

AM Dinowitz stated bike lanes make no sense for Independence Ave and narrowing the street would cause traffic nightmares. He stated the community is so overwhelmingly against this idea he would suggest the Committee drop the idea tonight and be done with it. Guest Anita Ramasami Henriquez stated bike lanes make the neighborhood more dangerous for children.

Guest Bailey Beeken stated she believes there are a disproportionate amount of car drivers, as opposed to bike riders, and bike lanes do not reflect the desires or needs of the community's population.

Guest Jason Ehrenberg stated bike lanes are dangerous for pedestrians and will worsen traffic.

BXCB8 Member Rosemary Ginty stated section R7 is one of the densest populated areas in the community board and changing the functioning of this street would be disastrous.

Guest Danielle Liss stated he is against parking protected bike lanes and narrowing Independence Ave and he hopes any discussion of it from this committee will end tonight.

Guest Eugene Tomkiel stated cars drive too fast on Independence Ave and he believes narrowing the street would be a good thing even if it didn't include bike lanes.

Guest Brian Byrne stated he is a biker and when he gets off of Henry Hudson Parkway on his bike there is essentially nowhere safe to ride other than the sidewalk.

Guest Caroline Berman stated she represents the Riverdale Jewish Center and they want to state for the record they believe this proposal will have a negative impact on the community.

Guest Alessandra Cozzi stated Independence Ave being wide is a positive thing not a negative thing and narrowing the road is not a good idea.

Guest Dina Spindler of the Association of Riverdale Co-ops stated she represents many of the people in the community and they have reached out to her in large numbers and expressed outrage over the proposal to narrow Independence Ave.

BXCB8 Chair Laura Spalter stated Bronx Community Board 8 has received 111 letters regarding this proposal: 7 letters supporting it and 104 letters opposing it.

Guest Jack Marth stated cars harm pedestrians not bikes, people should not cast bikers in a negative light and we need protected bike lanes in our community.

Guest Michael Amabile stated he is a member of the working group and it has become clear to him the community does not support protected bike lanes and narrowing Independence Ave.

Guest Becca stated motorists kill pedestrians, not bikes, and demographics in this community are shifting and anyone who thinks they speak for everyone in the community is confused.

BXCB8 Member Eric Dinowitz stated the bike lane and narrowing the street proposal does not address the issue of speed racing and would have a negative effect on the elderly in our community.

Community Committee Member Mary Ellen Gibbs stated kids should ride their bikes to school and start exercising and she believes bike lanes are a great idea.

Guest Armenoush stated she is in favor of the bike lane proposal and people should educate themselves on the facts of what bike lanes do.

Guest Jeff Sklar stated he lives on Kappock St. and it was ruined by narrowing the street despite overwhelming community outrage against narrowing it.

Guest Craig Sachs stated he supports the proposal for safety reasons because cars kill a lot more people than bikes.

Chair Padernacht stated the committee has expressed favorable interest in ADA ramps and leading pedestrian intervals and this will be brought up at the February committee meeting for a possible vote.

Chair Padernacht stated during that meeting there would be discussion of the following topics:

- Possible traffic light request at W 237th St & Independence Ave
- Possible traffic traffic circle at W 237th St & Independence Ave.
- Possibility of channelization, speed bumps & lane delineation at W 237th St & Independence Ave intersection.

Chair Padernacht stated W 235th St. one-way traffic Westbound with angled parking on the street and the protected bike lane generated serious push back and a lot of negativity at

tonight's meeting. He suggested the Committee end any discussion of these topics tonight unless any committee members felt differently.

Committee Member David Gellman suggested the committee table the discussion until Spring because he believes there's a high probability drag racing will increase again in large numbers when weather gets warmer.

Chair Padernacht asked Committee members individually if tabling the issues in question was acceptable to them. Among the available Committee Members a majority consensus to table the items was reached.

Chair Padernacht stated the Committee would resume a line-by-line discussion on the 3 items agreed upon to discuss further during February's meeting. He stated the protected bike lane and W 235th St. one-way and angled parking would be indefinitely tabled and brought up again at a later date if any member of the Committee chose to do so. He also stated the community would have to be given a minimum 30-day notice if either of these items were to be discussed in Committee.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:18pm

Dan Padernacht
Chair
Traffic & Transportation Committee

Minutes submitted by Committee Vice Chair Ed Green to Chair Dan Padernacht for review.