

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2013 AT THE
RIVERDALE YM-YWHA, 5625 ARLINGTON AVENUE**

PRESENT	AFFILIATION
Daniel Padernacht	Cmte Chair, CB8
Sylvia Alexander	CB8
Bob Bender	CB8
Antony Creaney	CB8
Margaret Donato	CB8
Robert Fanuzzi	CB8
Anthony Fella	CB8
Beverly Fettman	CB8
Michael Heller	CB8
Maria Khury	CB8
Sergio Marquez	CB8
Karen Pesce	CB8
Robert Press	CB8
James Rather	CB8
Georgia Santiago	CB8
Laura Spalter	CB8
I. William Stone	CB8
Robert Spalter	Comm. Cmte Member
Walter Barrera	Goodman Management
Jenny V. Brito	Con Edison
Katherine Broihier	Kingsbridge BID
Christine Cummings	Con Edison
Thomas Durham	
Greg Gordon	TLC
Myrna Joyce	
Alex Marrero	In-Tech Academy
Karen Martin	TLC
Evelyn Oliver	Con Edison
Tamy Pate	
Mary Serrie	
R. Huntington	

This was a joint meeting with the Environment & Sanitation Committee so that Con Edison could present its Storm Fortification Project and High Pressure Gas line installation. The meeting was opened at 7:35 PM by T&T Chair Dan Padernacht.

Evelyn Oliver, Christine Cummings, and Jenny Brito appeared from Con Edison.

The presentation began with the Storm Fortification Project in which Con Ed has already begun in Community Board 8. Hurricane Sandy was mentioned as one reason to upgrade the system. Con Ed stated that there is one loop of electric current for parts of the area that produces outages at times. One aspect of this project is to split the one loop into two loops so that fewer

homes are affected by an outage. Also, new utility poles and switches are being installed which should be completed by January 2014. In addition, there will be two new electric vaults in the Riverdale Triangle which is comprised of the Riverdale Avenue, Kappock Street, Independence Avenue and Palisade Avenue area. There is one planned outage of three buildings in the area for 20–30 minutes and the occupants have all been notified according to Con Edison.

The presentation continued with the Oil to Gas conversion project in the Community Board. Ms. Cummings and Ms. Brito spoke of the New York City law requiring buildings to convert their heating fuel from #6 oil and #4 oil to the less pollutive #2 oil or to gas over the next couple of years. Many properties in our community board are opting to switch to gas and Con Edison will be putting in three miles of new high pressure gas lines in CB8 to handle this demand. The gas work is being expedited but Con Ed stated that it must operate in a safe work environment.

After the presentation, T&T Chair Dan Padernacht opened by stating that there are community concerns about the manner in which Con Ed has been notifying the residents in the construction zones and the community board as a whole. Con Ed stated that their notification could be better but they did send out 2,500 notices to the community on the impacts and street closings. A back-and-forth ensued between Chair Padernacht and Con Edison.

The Chair stated that notice the day before construction was not sufficient on a capital project. The Chair noted that this is not an emergency project but one in which encompassed months of planning. As such, notice the day before a street closing was not acceptable. The Chair asked that Con Edison notify the Community Board when plans are approved on a capital project and work with the Community Board closer to the construction period in order to increase notice to the community and try to mitigate the effect on the community. Con Edison agreed.

The Chair asked for a schedule of its construction. Con Ed stated that it had given the community board a list of streets which were part of the construction but it did not have a list of dates in which construction would commence. The Chair asked Con Ed about posting of signs regarding its work. Con Ed did not know if they could post signs. In addition, they stated that the workers and vehicles are from the contractor. Work is scheduled to be completed on this phase of the oil to gas conversion project by December 31, 2013.

Committee member Michael Heller asked about recently repaved streets being dug up. Mr. Heller stated that the Con Ed repairs of the torn-up streets and its surrounding area leads to potholes. Con Ed stated that it has supervisors monitoring restoration but cannot always control work done by its contractors. The Department of Transportation (DOT) expects proper restoration for up to 6 months after the work is done. Con Ed stated that they get violations from DOT if the work is not done right. Con Ed stated that if the committee members believe that the restoration work is not done properly on a job, they should contact the DOT.

Committee member Anthony Creany asked if the work on Sedgwick Avenue was related to the oil-to-gas conversions. Con Ed said that the work on Sedgwick Avenue dealt with preventive maintenance on its underground electric feeder lines, enclosed in gas cylinders, by Van Cortlandt Avenue West. In addition, Con Ed was working on a leak in the gas cylinder on Sedgwick Avenue between West 238th street and Giles Place. It is anticipated that Con Ed will be on Sedgwick Avenue for about a month.

Committee member Bob Bender asked if the North Riverdale blackouts are related to the fortification project. Con Ed stated that it was from transfers and switchovers.

T&T Vice-Chair Robert Press raised an issue with the oil-to-gas conversion work being done on West 238th Street between Riverdale Avenue and Waldo Avenue. Mr. Press stated that the contractor stopped all traffic between Riverdale Avenue and Fieldston Road and began diverting westbound traffic on West 238th Street into the opposite direction of the one-way Fieldston Road. Mr. Press stated that he took pictures of the scene which included the traffic diversion and asked the contractor not to send cars the wrong direction on Fieldston Road. Mr. Press stated that the contractor then complained about him and claimed that he was obstructing their work. Mr. Press stated that he was concerned about the safety of the scene and questioned the contractor's complaints.

Mr. Press then showed the committee photos of the West 238th Street construction work. He pointed out that the pictures showed the construction crews working around legally parked cars, a street closure and no signs or notices of the work. Mr. Press also stated that the roadway was not fully restored. Con Ed agreed that the road was not completed. Con Ed stated that they backfill first and then complete the roadway restoration when all the work is done. Con Ed stated that DOT has rules and gives Con Ed a stipulation of what is permissible with respect to street closures. Con Ed stated that with this particular permit, they were required to maintain one lane open for emergency vehicles. Further, Con Ed supervisors appear onsite to make sure that the stipulations by DOT are followed.

Chair Padernacht asked Con Ed for a copy of the DOT stipulations for their capital projects within the Community Board. After a pause among the representatives, the answer was no. Con Ed stated that the information within each stipulation is detailed and each project has several permits with a separate stipulation. Further, that Con Ed didn't have the manpower to send out the information because of the multitude of permits. Chair Padernacht stated that he was simply asking for a copy of the stipulation with DOT. The Chair stated that the committee was particularly concerned with the restrictions that DOT placed on Con Edison with respect to the traffic. Further, the committee was sophisticated enough to read through the detailed documents. The Chair asked if we could see the stipulation for the West 238th segment of the project. Con Ed refused. Chair Padernacht asked how many permits were pulled for West 238th Street. The representatives did not know the number.

Con Ed then stated that they did not know if the information was confidential. The Chair stated that, with a few exceptions, all contracts with a city agency are subject to the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). Further, that the stipulations could be requested from DOT or be subject to a FOIL request. The Chair then asked for other questions from committee members.

Committee member Maria Khury asked if Con Ed was doing any tree pruning. Con Ed stated that it was only pruning on Palisade Avenue.

Community Board 8 Chairman Bob Fanuzzi asked about oil-to-gas conversion work other than West 238th Street in the community board. Con Ed stated that several crews will be working in the board area. Con Ed stated that it is three miles of piping in difficult streets which often contain rock. Con Ed is increasing the number of crews but may not have this done until mid-January if there is no snow or blizzards.

Resident Tom Durham said that his building did a gas conversion and believes the onus for notification is on the customer. He said that the first glimpse of the project is the approval of permits from the Department of Buildings. He added that Riverdale is the first area to be done, then Kingsbridge and the Van Cortlandt area. The Chair asked Mr. Durham, from his

experience, approximately how many months came between the DOB permit approval and the Con Ed construction. The answer was several months.

B. Fanuzzi said that the board wants relevant information as to street closures and Con Ed said that it may be confidential.

A resident stated that he worked in the construction business and was familiar with DOT stipulations. He stated that the plans were not that detailed that the committee members would be confused and wondered why Con Edison wasn't turning over the plans. He also stated that the stipulations are usually on .pdf files which can be easily e-mailed to the committee.

Chair Padernacht stated once more that, with certain exceptions, the information is subject to FOIL (Freedom of Information Law). The Chair stated that we are asking Con Ed to be helpful. Con Ed maintained their refusal to turn over the stipulations.

The Joint meeting was over at 8:25pm and the Traffic and Transportation meeting resumed at 8:37pm after the Environment and Sanitation meeting concluded.

Two representatives from the Taxi & Limousine spoke about the new Green Outer Boro Taxi. There will be 18,000 permits issued over the next three years. 20% of the permits are to be wheelchair accessible. The first 6,000 permits were sold out. These Green Taxis can pick up street hails anywhere outside of Manhattan and above 96th street in Manhattan except airports. The fare is similar to Yellow Taxis.

The new Green Taxis have 90 days to comply with all requirements including the painting of the green color. A base station is required and the prices for the permits go up each year in the next two years. The Bronx has the most new Green Taxis as of now. These Green Taxis can sit by taxi stands set up outside of Manhattan. They have two numbers and two letters that identify them and keep the same plates as they had before.

Committee member Michael Heller presented transit improvement suggestions to the committee. These suggestions include:

- a. Improve #1 Train bus service connections through northbound put-ins available on the Bx 10, Bx 20 or Bx 7 at West 231st Street during the evening rush to bring large crowds up the hill faster from the #1 train on a standardized basis.
- b. Consider extending routes terminating at the city line on Riverdale Avenue to sensible turnaround locations in Yonkers. The u-turns in the middle of Riverdale Avenue can be dangerous and some extension, perhaps to Greystone Station or Downtown Yonkers, may be beneficial to commuters. There are a number of NYCTA and MTA Bus routes that go past the city line in other parts of the city already.
- c. Run some BxM18 and BxM2 west side trips down the Henry Hudson Parkway. The most western southbound lane is marked 'buses' so MTA Bridges must have something in mind. W. 232 Street and HHP service road would likely be the last stop possible to do this in either direction. Off-duty TA buses have been on the HHP. This would provide fast service to the west side.

- d. Per the Penn Station Access Study, promote plans to run select Metro North Hudson Line service down the Amtrak Empire Corridor into Penn Station. With a Bronx stop at Riverdale Station, some trains can divert at Spuyten Duyvil and travel down the west side. The line south of the swing bridge is not electrified, so diesel Poughkeepsie runs would be the likely first candidates. Riders up the line who wish to access Penn Station can transfer to infrequent Amtrak Yonkers stops to do this; Riverdale residents have no such opportunity. Bringing fast west side service to MTA commuters (on both sides of the city line) would be very popular.

Questions arose as to many of the suggestions and the committee discussed alternatives. It was suggested to invite Ms. Jackie Carter from the MTA to answer questions from the committee.

The committee then moved to a request from Assemblyman Dinowitz to investigate the banners that are appearing on city poles in the area. Kathleen Broihier of the Kingsbridge Business Improvement District (BID) said that the DOT allows for permits to certain entities such as the Kingsbridge BID and colleges. She renews her permits every three months, and it costs thousands of dollars. DOT gives out fines when the banners tear or rip. Banner permits do not go before the community board.

An application for a newsstand to be built on the southwest corner of West 231st Street and Broadway was put back in front of the committee from the previous meeting. This item was laid over from last month to find out more information about another vacant newsstand on the northwest corner of West 231st Street and Broadway. Chair Padernacht stated that he received an e-mail from the Board office that the applicant was away and is not able to appear at this meeting. Andrew Sandler of Council Member Koppell's office reported that the Department of Consumer Affairs has a tenant but Con Ed must first perform an electrical inspection since there was a fire in the newsstand during a rainstorm.

Ms. Broihier of the BID stated that the BID has removed graffiti that has covered the vacant newsstand on the northwest corner several times.

Michael Heller made a motion to lay this matter over which was subsequently withdrawn after discussion of the topic.

Maria Khury disclosed that she is a business owner in the area is a member of the Kingsbridge BID. She stated that there is graffiti on the vacant newsstand expressed concerns about the second newsstand winding up vacant.

Chair Padernacht stated that the traffic impact of the first newsstand has yet to be revealed as the newsstand approved close to two years ago is still not occupied.

A new motion to deny the application was approved with 7 in favor - Padernacht, Press, Fella, Creany, Bender, Santiago, 1 against - Stone and 4 abstentions - Alexander, Rather and Donato and Khury for cause.

The minutes of the October meeting were approved with all in favor except B. Bender who abstained .

Resident R. Haston of 2727 Palisade Avenue spoke against the proposed preferred route of the Hudson Greenway from the Henry Hudson Bridge to West 254th Street. He asked that the T&T committee look at the route and recommend changes. B. Bender spoke to the issue saying that access across the bridge cannot change and that the Parks Committee is looking at the proposed preferred route and will discuss it at the next meeting. Chair Padernacht said that both the Parks and Traffic and Transportation committees reviewed the preliminary plans last year and that he will discuss the matter at the next Executive Committee meeting for guidance as to whether the matter should be placed on the T & T agenda.

A resident of 3616 Henry Hudson Parkway looking to have parking removed for a loading zone in front of 3616 HHP. The committee laid the matter over to the next meeting.

Robert Press mentioned that "No U-turn signs need to be placed on Riverdale Avenue between West 235th and West 238th Street where many cars make illegal turns and has resulted in at least one accident. The chair said this would be discussed next month.

Board Member Beverly Fettman spoke about Access-a-Ride travelers able to make trips to Manhattan but not being able to take a reimbursed taxi back due to new regulations. She asked for a joint meeting with Aging to look into this further. The Chair agreed to take the matter to the Executive Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 PM.

Dan Padernacht, Chair
Traffic & Transportation Committee