

CB8 Traffic and Transportation Committee Meeting
October 17, 2017
St. Margaret of Cortona School
452 West 260th Street

Committee Members Present:

Dan Padernacht - Chair
Sylvia Alexander
Eric Dinowitz
Diomarys Escaño
Daniella Fuchs
David Gellman
Myra Joyce
Georgia Santiago
Laura Spalter
Herb Young

Committee Members Absent:

Eric Bell
Margaret Donato

Guests: Barbara Connolly, Sima Wolf, Robert Press, Maggie Sprinzeles, Jimmy O'Connor, Sandra Wright, John Evans, Bill Wiesman, Diedre Burk, Zahd Akuned, Damian McShane, Michael J. McBride*, Loraine Coyle, Farrah Rubin, Hanne Nielsen, Mae Eng, Giordana Avila, Susan Brenner, Dana Charlton, Ellen Ros, Mary Phelan Kavanagh, Hal Dorfman, Martin Beirne, Mary Ellen Nih--, Raye Barbieri, Pauline Calderon, Vivian Oleen, Dr. Jerry Wasserman, Ann Marie Woods, Peggy Hughes, Ann Henry, Marie Lynch, Jeanne Rivas, Roger Parson, Maija Kirby, Cathy Sullivan, Scott Wolfson, Annie Bernstein, Karen Meyer, Siobhan Hill, Liuhy Lopez, V. Shana--, Joel Chaiken, Sue Ellen O'Dell, Peter Ostrander, David Kornbluh, Joan Murray, Christine Murray, Peter Lee, Barbara Beirne, Bernadette O'Donnell, Gabrielle Rog, Gloria Santiago, Laurie Hogan, Robin Schwartz, Gary Wartels, Valerie Adelman, Arthur Heller, Steven Tu, D. Burke, Lisa Daub, Mike Sullivan, MaryAnn Schultz, Steven Chait, Debra May, Thomas Gilles, Rob Spalter, Elizabeth Thompson, Joanne Heyman, Joshua Stephenson, Audrey Malkin, Gloria Cohen, Kevin DeGroat, Esther Federman, Franklin & Sheree Felder, Maureen Kelly, John Forrell, Marge Cook, Tere McMaster, Allen Dillon, Brian Downey, Bill Casey, Brendan Fitzpatrick, James Willen

Chair Padernacht called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Padernacht introduced Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, David Kornbluh representing State Senator Jeffrey Klein, Joshua Stephenson representing Council Member Andy Cohen

Gary Wartels and Chris Rizzo of the North Riverdale Merchants Association (NRMA) presented an overview of the NRMA Streetscape proposal. They gave a brief history of the North Riverdale Merchants Association and stated that they received a \$100,000 NYSERDA grant. The

scope of the grant included re-envisioning Riverdale and Mosholu Avenues, including environmental updates, beautification, safety measures and economic development. They have contracted with an engineering firm who has completed many similar projects throughout NYS. There are three components to the proposal: immediate, mid term and long range. Mr. Wartels stated that this is a proposal, not ironclad, and they are open to revisions based on community concerns and comments.

PRESENTATION SLIDES ARE AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE

<http://www.riverdalebronx.nyc/>

At the end of the presentation, the speakers stated that NRMA would record each question presented and answer after the meeting. In addition, NRMA would accept questions online.

The proposal included new pedestrian crosswalks, pedestrian crossing countdown signals. NRMA has asked DOT to study the proposal and implement changes.

One other aspect of the NRMA Streetscape plan is the suggestion of a “Road Diet” on Riverdale Avenue from the City Line to West 254th Street. This is a proposal to reduce the number of travel lanes on Riverdale Avenue in this corridor so that there is only one traffic lane in each direction as opposed to the current two traffic lanes.

Assemblyman Dinowitz Spoke against narrowing the roadway one lane in each direction. He stated it would slow traffic too much and people will get stuck behind buses. In addition, he stated that since the speed limit on Riverdale Avenue was lowered, there have been less accidents.

Chair Padernacht thanked the NRMA for taking the time to conduct this study and for their hard work in trying to make the community a nicer place for our residents and merchants. Chair Padernacht stated that there was a lot of information in the plan to review and he would like to work with the NRMA, elected officials and DOT to implement those items in which all of the stakeholders agree would be beneficial to the community. Chair Padernacht remarked that there were some items of concern to the community raised at the meeting which may be taken up at a future Traffic and Transportation Meeting. Chair Padernacht stated that DOT was given the plan in advance of the Community Board and prior to community input and the Committee may wish to address specific items of concern to DOT.

A copy of the answers subsequently mailed to the Board are attached to these minutes.

Item #2 Controlled crosswalk at 259th street

Chair Padernacht stated that, for many years, the Traffic and Transportation Committee has asked DOT for a stop sign at West 259th Street and Netherland Avenue. Each time, the request has been rejected. In September 2017, DOT contacted Chair Padernacht to advise the Community Board that it made plans to place an “Enhanced Crosswalk” at this intersection. Chair Padernacht met Borough Commissioner Lopez onsite to review the proposal by DOT. An enhanced sidewalk is an uncontrolled intersection that removes parking spots for increased visibility to the intersection.

The original proposal removed numerous parking spots from West 259th Street which Chair Padernacht stated was a problem. Chair Padernacht also relayed to Commissioner Lopez that he could place the item on the Traffic Committee's October agenda so that DOT could present the proposal to the community. Commissioner Lopez stated that he wanted to make the changes right away.

A couple of weeks later, Chair Padernacht along with Board Chair R. Ginty, met at the site with several DOT officials. DOT had reduced the amount of parking spots removed from the original plan but were still removing some overnight parking that Chair Padernacht felt was unnecessary. Chair Padernacht again stated that he would place the item on the October agenda for the community to review and to have an opportunity to give feedback.

Chair Padernacht stated that DOT moved forward with the changes without first presenting to the community at large at a public meeting. Debra May, the principal of S.A.R. spoke at the meeting. She stated that she was happy that DOT made changes to the intersection but that the school had no interest in the removal of overnight parking and stood with the community to provide as much parking as possible for merchants and residents during the overnight hours.

Chair Padernacht indicated that Commissioner Lopez's predecessor almost always came to the Community Board prior to implementing any changes in the area including any alterations to traffic patterns, signals, signs, striping or roads in the community. This was done to give the community an opportunity to see what changes DOT sought to make and give the community an opportunity to comment prior to the changes being made.

Chair Padernacht remarked that this change in DOT policy was of concern. The T&T Committee then voted unanimously in favor of writing a letter to the DOT to make it known that the Traffic Committee requests that DOT present any proposals for changes to traffic patterns, signals, signs, striping or anything affecting the roadways in Community Board 8 to be brought to the Board in a reasonable time prior to implementation so that the community can have an opportunity to learn of the proposal and comment on the plan.

Minutes from the September 19, 2017 were unanimously approved pending 2 corrections
In favor of approval of amended minutes: Sylvia Alexander, Eric Dinowitz, Diomarys Escaño, Daniella Fuchs, David Gellman, Myra Joyce, Dan Padernacht, Georgia Santiago, Laura Spalter, Herb Young

**North Riverdale Merchant and Business Association
c/o Cora Hardware
5900 Riverdale Avenue
Riverdale, New York 10471**

October 31, 2017

Via E-mail (rosemary.ginty@gmail.com)

Rosemary Ginty
Bronx Community Board 8
5676 Riverdale Avenue
Riverdale, New York 10471

Re: Summary of Comments and Responses

Dear Ms. Ginty:

The Association thanks you and the traffic and transportation committee of Community Board 8 for the invitation to present the Riverdale Streetscape Report. As promised, the Association has summarized the comments received and responses in the attached report. This report will be added to the prior summary of public comments and responses included as Exhibit B to the July 2017 report, which is available at www.riverdalebronx.nyc. The October 17, 2017 meeting concludes the Association's approximately 30 presentations of the report. We look forward to diligently implementing the beautification ideas in the report and to working with DOT, the Mayor and community board in implementing the traffic safety ideas as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,

Board of the Business Association

cc: Dan Padernacht, Traffic and Transportation Committee
Councilman Andrew Cohen

October 17, 2017 Addendum to Exhibit B of Riverdale Streetscape Report¹

Comment Received at Traffic and Transportation Committee of Bx. Community Bd. 8

40. Did the Association get a permit for the new “Welcome to Riverdale Signs”? Speaker does not like welcome signs.

The Association carefully consulted with the NYC DOT about the signs. As temporary and minor installations, they do not require NYC Public Design Commission or other approvals. The Association loves the signs, has received overwhelming positive feedback and intends to install more on a temporary basis and always subject to DOT’s authority to move or remove the signs.

41. Will proposed crosswalks be located at new controlled intersections (i.e., with a stop sign or traffic light)? Another speaker stated that a cross walk at P.S. 81 would interfere with driveways or loading zones of cooperative buildings across the street.

DOT informed the Association that it almost always installs crosswalks only at controlled intersections. The Association defers to the DOT for all decision-making on this point. But the Association reiterates its request for new crosswalks at these locations.

With regard to conflicts between crosswalks and driveways, the Association defers to the DOT to address this issue in its analysis. But Riverdale Avenue in front of P.S. 81 is not safe or functional and a cross walk is one way to improve the conditions.

42. Several speakers and one elected officials criticized the Association’s request to DOT to study a road diet on Riverdale Avenue that would turn four lanes into two lanes in each direction, one turn lane and wider, safer parking lanes.

The Association reiterates its request to DOT to study a road diet on Riverdale Avenue. All engineering evidence from Vision Zero and the Report indicates that road diets are a very strong tool for saving lives, reducing accidents and improving traffic flow. To date, the Association has not received any facts that contradict this analysis.

Road diets work because they create wider and safer parking lanes that also serve to remove double-parked cars from moving traffic. They also provide a turn lane to remove left-turning vehicles from moving traffic. Buses use designated, wide bus loading zones. The current configuration of Riverdale Avenue is unsafe as it leaves double-parked cars and left-turning cars constantly located in moving traffic lanes. DOT should do further analysis.

43. Speed cameras are good enough to reduce speeding.

¹ The original exhibit B concludes with comment number 39. This addendum therefore begins with comments number 40.

VHB determined that most cars still speed on Riverdale Avenue. But it doesn't require engineering analysis to make this conclusion that vehicles (including city buses) are often racing down Riverdale Avenue. The Speed Cameras have been in place for a few years and have not solved the problem.

44. Speaker supports speed bumps on side streets.

The Association supports speed bumps and other traffic control measures for side streets.

45. College and other buses are illegally using West 261st Street and other side streets to reach Broadway.

This comment is beyond the scope of the Report but the Association asks DOT to study it.

46. Where can the public submit comments?

The Association has been soliciting comments on the report since publishing a draft in mid-2016. It has been collecting comments on the final Report at www.riverdalebronx.nyc since July 2017. The Association will not be producing further comment summaries.

47. The Association should not be asking DOT to do anything; only the community board should do that.

The Association, like any citizens group, is entitled to ask for action by government. In the case of the Report, the request is backed up by careful engineering analysis and over 30 meetings with stakeholders. The Association respects the role of the community board, which will review and issue an advisory vote on any traffic changes that DOT might propose.

48. Drivers will use side streets if there is a road diet.

VHB concluded that the time to travel Riverdale Avenue would remain the same and side streets would therefore not be a more attractive option to reach the Henry Hudson Parkway. This comment, which is raised often, is at odd with the facts. Nevertheless, DOT must study this issue before proposing any traffic improvements.

49. One speaker opposes bike lanes. Another speaker supports bike lanes.

The Association does not take a position on bike lanes and the Report does not propose one.

50. The Association should have spoken to experts.

The Association hired traffic engineers to prepare the traffic engineering sections of the Report and heavily consulted with NYC DOT data on other traffic improvements.

51. Community board member expressed opposition to removal of parking spaces without board input.

The Report does not suggest removal of parking spaces. If the DOT decides that the creation of cross walks or intersection safety requires the removal of 20-25 parking spaces (out of hundreds) will save lives and improve safety, the Association will support the DOT.

52. One speaker stated that the crosswalk at West 259th Street and SAR High School is a problem.

The Association supports the crosswalk and other safety improvements on Riverdale Avenue.

53. The connection from Skyview to West 261st Street is important.

The Association agrees.

54. Truck loading and unloading on West 259th Street is unsafe.

The Association agrees. Truck loading areas must be studied and Netherland Avenue behind the shopping center must be improved.

55. Do not bring DOT into the analysis because they bring a “cookie cutter” approach.

The Association disagrees. DOT, in consultation with the community board, the public and elected officials, is the right entity to make traffic planning decisions.

56. Focus on beautification; some store owners are not maintaining their stores.

The Association agrees that its most important task is beautification and that it must find ways to encourage owners of both residences and businesses to improve their property. Small and modest public investments in the streetscape will encourage private property owners to make improvements too.

57. The Report improperly excludes other sections of Riverdale.

The Association and the Report focus only on the two main commercial streets in zip code 10471, which includes all of Mosholu Avenue and Riverdale Avenue from West 254th Street to the City Line. The Association will happily support efforts by others to improve other areas of Riverdale and the Bronx.

58. Several speakers stated that they supported “90 percent” of the Report with the exception of the road diet.

The Association thanks its members and supporters (listed in exhibit C to the Report) and all those who have supported this effort. We look forward to implementing as much of the

Report as possible with both public and private support. The Association recognizes that the road diet is the controversial element of the Report, as it has been at first in all communities where DOT has successfully implemented it. But the Association defers to DOT to study this and all other possible methods to improve the appearance, safety and function of Riverdale Avenue.²

² As noted previously, the Report does not recommend changes to the basis configuration of Mosholu Avenue. It does however, ask for careful delineation of parking and travel lanes, new crosswalks and other basic improvements.