



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

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District Manager

October 26, 2009

Rep. Jerrold Nadler
201 Varick Street, Suite 669
New York, New York 10014

Dear Representative Nadler:

Re: New Charter Bus Garage and Bus Terminal Infrastructure

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) is writing to you to seek federal assistance in mitigating a serious environmental problem -- the explosive proliferation of on-street legal and illegal layover by both charter buses and bargain-priced long distance buses. We suggest that federal funds be allocated to acquire sites to build a new bus garage and a low cost bus terminal infrastructure. This effort will need to be made in conjunction with new federal regulation of interstate commerce as discussed (Please see attached)

Our community is a strong supporter of private mass transit, provided there is a framework to do so efficiently without impacting negatively the health of our district's residents and businesses.

Currently, 10,300,000 of Broadway tickets are sold annually to out-of-towners. The vast majority of the matinee theatergoers come by bus, resulting in over 200 buses parking on the streets on Wednesdays Saturdays and Sundays. When adding tour buses, which can be conservatively estimated at 100 a day, this amounts to more than 300 buses parked curbside in our neighborhood.

Further, we are aware of seven different low cost long distance bus companies: five small companies, and two subsidiary of large brands: Bolt Bus, a Greyhound subsidiary which operates no less than 82 round trips from our area on Fridays and 86 on Sundays and Megabus, a Coach USA subsidiary which operates no less than 61 trips on Fridays. The most common destination is Washington, DC or its suburbs. This is followed by Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Albany, Toronto and Richmond, VA.

The specific problems caused by the lack of layover areas for low cost and charter buses are many and obvious. Let us cite a few key ones.

- Layovers are taking place in undesirable locations. For example, one spot is on 7th Avenue between 26th and 27th Street along side of the Fashion Institute of Technology. Buses have parked outside of PS 33 on 9th Avenue and 16th Street. Charter buses park on 52nd Street along PS 111 and on 54th Street in front of a park. They also layover in MTA bus stops preventing access to the bus by disabled users and causing forcing buses to stop in the traffic lanes thus adding to the extreme traffic congestion in our district.
- In recent years, both Hudson Yards and the Western part of Chelsea were rezoned from mostly manufacturing to mixed use. As a result the supply of curb space where buses could layover without any impact to the adjacent residents and businesses is dwindling rapidly. Should the economy and the real estate resume their normal activity there will be NO curb left for these buses to layover.
- Because they layover at curb most of the time illegally, bus drivers idle in order to avoid getting summonses: they appear to be standing and leave as soon as a traffic agent appears, thus violate the non idling laws of New York city. This behavior contributes to the harmful pollution in a community already severely impacted with some of the highest asthma hospitalization rate in Manhattan, with extensive traffic congestion and a doubling of truck traffic in the last nine years.

The Hudson Yards rezoning included a commitment that a new Charter bus garage would be built by 2025. Based on the Plan NYC 2030 focus on Mass transit and healthy living and the President Obama's agenda of a smaller greenhouse gas contribution, we must take action now to meet these goals as well as find interim solutions.

Finding a solution to this massive problem is not easy. It will require serious exploration. It will probably be expensive. But it is essential that something be done. CB4 suggests a few steps in that direction:

- There is an urgent need to provide additional off-street terminal and layover (parking) for long distance buses and charter buses. Meeting the cost of acquiring space and constructing facilities probably requires federal assistance.
- An investigation of travelers' origins and destinations would suggest where terminals should be located in the city to minimize surface trips and relieve overtaxed areas like ours.
- In District 4, the following locations should be explored in combination for both interim and permanent solutions.
 - A combined facility with the proposed Port Authority garage over Galvin Plaza. This location was identified as a permanent solution in the Hudson yards rezoning.
 - The use of the space under the Hudson Boulevard to build a permanent bus garage. This area was originally slated to host a car garage. (This location would be directly connected to the # 7 subway)
 - Could the MTA Quill depot be enlarged to provide one or few additional floors of storage?
 - The interim use of the garages to be built under the western rail yards on MTA land. Once the platform is built there will be capacity for 1,600 cars although it may take 10 years to build the residences and offices that will use them. If properly designed at a

marginal cost increase, this garage could house a large number of buses. (This location would be connected to the # 7 subway)

- The use of Pier 76, currently partially occupied by a tow pound, as an interim solution.
- The parking lot across the intrepid museum.

CB4 is indeed very much in favor of bus usage instead of car usage as well as supports the expansion of Broadway driven tourism activity. CB4 hopes our elected officials share our concern over the growing problem our city and our community are facing. We need your help.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



John Weis
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

CC:

CB1, CB2, CB5, CB7

Elected officials

Department of Transportation, Port Authority, Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Deputy Mayor of Economic Development, Richard C. Lieber,

Councilmember John Liu

Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, Pauline Yu

CB4 Elected Officials