



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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November 7, 2012

Ms. Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 37th Floor
New York, New York 10038

Re: Gansevoort- Chelsea Triangle Permanent Design

Dear Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) supports the NYC Department of Transportation's (DOT) efforts to redesign Gansevoort Plaza - Chelsea Triangle to improve pedestrian access and bicyclist in order to create a more rational traffic pattern. We appreciate your outreach to MCB4 while still in the preliminary design phase of the project and providing us with traffic and accident data and analysis completed by DOT staff.

The study includes the area between Gansevoort Street to the South, West 16th Street to the North between 9th and Hudson Avenues. Since the initial 2006 interim redesign and 2009 enclosed bicycle lane installation this area has seen substantial changes and become a major both daytime and nighttime destination. The increased pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle traffic creates new safety, traffic (and related noise) issues.

There are several elements of DOT's initial proposal we find appealing and hope can be pursued. These include the extension of the Chelsea Triangle along West 14th Street approximately 8' further south and adding 6' wide bulb outs on both the south east and southwest corners of the Chelsea Triangle at West 14th Streets. Using pavers on the west branch of 9th Avenue, west of the Triangle will slow traffic and give a more pedestrian feel to this section. We also support the proposal, which we understand MCB2 endorses, to forbid right turns onto West 14th Street from Northbound 9th Avenue, since this will reduce the delays these turning vehicles cause to southbound traffic.

We are disappointed MCB4's long-term request to move the Triangle area further west to be an extension of the west side 9th Avenue sidewalk between West 14th and West 15th Street is deemed infeasible due to the extra traffic pattern and potential pedestrian safety issues created from having the right turns from Southbound 9th Avenue onto West 14th Street while the pedestrian crossing is further west.

In March 2009 MCB4 wrote:

"On a related issue, we propose that DOT consider restricting right turns from Ninth Avenue onto West 14th Street. We request volume counts to assist in informing this decision. We request that this be considered for several reasons:

- *Our observations show that most cars going south on Ninth Avenue access the West Side highway by turning right at West 15th Street. Most of the traffic turning west at 14th Street, travels to Washington Street and could reach the same destination by turning right further south on Hudson Street (Gansevoort, Jane, and Bethune Streets). Considering the current state of congestion on the dedicated turn lane west of the plaza, restricting the right turn should have a minimal impact, and,*
- *It is our understanding that the pedestrian conflict created by the vehicles turning right on West 14th Street was one of the reasons the DOT did not locate the Plaza next to the western sidewalk during this temporary phase. This change would eliminate that conflict."*

As DOT explores moving westbound traffic to West 15th Street (from West 14th Street) and removing north bound right turns we hope the traffic flow we suggested in 2009 can be investigated. We request that when DOT returns to CB4 before finalizing the design, they include a fuller analysis of the westbound movements at the west branch of 9th Avenue and 14th Street and explain more fully whether moving the Plaza area west may now be feasible.

There are several other recommendations we ask to be integrated into the new design:

- Plant as many trees and greenery on the Chelsea Triangle as feasible. In particular on the eastern side, a hedge or bushes should be installed to deter pedestrians from jaywalking. If possible include an area for community gardening.
- Create landscaping that can be maintained at very low cost – for example include automatic drip watering system to reduce on-going maintenance costs and consider including some fixed city benches, though maintaining a majority of space for movable chairs and tables;
- Convert the bicycle lane between West 14th and West 15th Street to a protected one, with a separate pedestrian North/South crossing time on 14th Street, from 9th Avenue left turning vehicles onto West 14th Street, as the DOT considers and removing 9th Avenue Northbound right turns. A few delivery spaces should be maintained for businesses.
- Consider a Split Phase or an LPI to make the west pedestrian crossing of 15th Street at 9th Avenue safer. As more traffic is directed to use this route to reach the highway, there will be significantly more pedestrian conflicts with the heavy pedestrian flow going to the rezoned and soon to be enlarged Chelsea Market, the Apple store and historic Gansevoort Plaza area. .
- Consider a Split Phase or an LPI to make the south pedestrian crossing of 9th Avenue at 16th Street safer. The increased popularity of Chelsea Market and this corridor of 9th Avenue make crossing and safety improvements crucial. We also anticipate increased traffic along West 16th Street related to the expansion of Chelsea Market.
- Improved signage north of West 17th Street to inform drivers of the fork ahead and their directional options just north of West 16th Street. The current signs close to the division point creates delays as cars seek to figure out which side to drive;
- Place no-honking signs along 9th Avenue near West 15th Street to encourage increased ticketing and enforcement;
- All intersections should include accessible audible street signals to enable handicapped accessibility;

Again, we appreciate the re-evaluation and proposed improvements for the permanent construction of Chelsea Triangle and Gansevoort Plaza and look forward to continued dialogue with DOT.

Sincerely yours,



Corey Johnson
Chair



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Cc: Gale Brewer
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