



New York City Department of Transportation
West Side Manhattan Transportation Study
Public Listening Session

Meeting Summary

Prepared by Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates and
Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

The New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) held a Public Listening Session at John Jay College on Monday, September 24, 2007. The meeting lasted for four hours and gave members of the public living on the Upper West Side from West 54th Street to West 86th Street from Central Park West to the West Side Highway an opportunity and a venue to air their concerns and offer their suggestions about the current transportation problems in their neighborhood. Sign-in and registration for the meeting began at 5:00 PM and the meeting started at approximately 6:20 PM. 198 members of the public attended and participated in this meeting. After a brief presentation made by NYCDOT and Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates' Principal Arnold Bloch, attendees were segmented into breakout groups for the purposes of discussion.

BREAKOUT GROUPS

The method of using breakout groups was implemented by the NYCDOT study team in order to facilitate a guided discussion on topic areas under NYCDOT jurisdictional control or indirect influence. There were five (5) topic areas listed below:

- Topic 1: Curb space along West Side streets is used for many purposes, among them parking for privately owned autos, deliveries and pick-ups, bus stops, curbs cuts, hydrants, other restricted uses, etc. There is a limited amount of space and, it seems, an unlimited number of people who want to use it. What are some of the problems with the way curb space is used now?
- Topic 2: Intersections on the West Side are very busy places...and sometimes dangerous. Turning vehicles, red light running, lots of pedestrians, bicyclists, trucks and buses. Everyone needs to move...and everyone has the right to do so safely. What safety concerns on the West Side should be addressed?
- Topic 3: We hear a lot about congestion these days, but people on the West Side have been living with it for years. People commute, go to school, go to restaurants and movies, have medical trips, etc. There seem to be many different rush hours. What are some of the specific congestion problems that West Siders face every day?

Topic 4: Many New Yorkers – and many West Siders in particular – don’t own autos, but use buses, subways, taxis and car services to travel each day (as well as walking and using bicycles). What are the travel challenges for those who don’t use their cars on the West Side but rely instead on their feet, public transportation, taxis and car services?

Topic 5: The West Side means so many different things to so many people – including its residents. Transportation plays an important role in how people measure their quality of life on the West Side. What are some of the quality of life concerns that West Siders face on their streets and sidewalks, acknowledging that they are at once residents of a vibrant and busy neighborhood, borough, city and region?

There were a total of four (4) breakout groups and they were broken up as detailed below:

| <i>Group</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Room Number</i> | <i>Attendance</i> | <i>Facilitators</i> | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Group A | Main Building | Room 610 | 36 participants | Arnold Bloch | Maura Fitzpatrick |
| Group B | Main Building | Room 630 | 42 participants | Chris Ryan | Tim Stroth |
| Group C | North Building | Room 2200 | 90 participants | Kathy Stein | George Paschalis |
| Group D | North Building | Room 2200.04 | 30 participants | Christie Marcella | Scott Giering |

Breakout Group Summary

The following pages highlight results of in-depth discussions that took place in each breakout group separated out by topic as listed above. Detailed listings of all comments made in these breakout groups are available upon request from NYC DOT’s Manhattan Borough Commission’s office (call: (212) 487-8341). Note that it was challenging to keep the discussions focused on the specific topic areas. In addition, there was overlap across the topic areas.

Topic 1: Curb Space Issues

The issue of curb space had to be explained in each breakout group and was not self-explanatory. Examples of street furniture, fire hydrants, sidewalk widths, benches, newspaper boxes, and the like were given to familiarize participants with the types of issues covered in this first topic area. Below are the issues that came up that were noteworthy.

Parking:

- Eliminate on-street parking
- Improve the enforcement of parking regulations
- Reduce parking on-street during rush hours
- Bicycle parking spaces needed
- Double parking
- Loading zones

Garbage collection:

- More frequent garbage collection

Sidewalks:

- Sidewalks are too cluttered
- Café seating outside of restaurants takes up too much space
- Allow for wider sidewalks for a variety of uses

Topic 2: Safety Issues

The issue of transportation safety drew in-depth discussions covering a wide range of transportation modes like pedestrians, bicyclists, parking, deliveries, and auto traffic. The issue of older adult residents in the Upper West Side neighborhoods also drew some concern.

Auto Speeding:

- Install speed humps
- Post more speed limit signs
- Speeding through intersections

Pedestrians:

- Not enough time for some pedestrians to cross the street
- Not enough time to cross the intersections, especially on Avenues
- Jaywalking, not crossing within sidewalks is dangerous
- Double parking cuts sightlines of pedestrians, dangerous crossing situations
- Possibility of creating an elderly resident district with special regulations

Bicycles:

- Danger when there are no bicycle lanes
- Bicycle lane on Central Park West should be between the parked cars and the sidewalk
- Separate bike lanes from traffic
- When drivers park in bike lanes, bikers must ride in auto lanes
- Bicycles should not be able to ride on sidewalks – violations should be enforced

Roads:

- Potholes are a big problem
- Illegal left turns
- Snow removal issues of timeliness and altering the curb line
- Drivers running stop signs on West 79th Street and Riverside Drive

Topic 3: Congestion Issues

The word congestion alone is timely and topical to the residents of the Upper West Side with the City's extensive study of the implementation of a possible Congestion Pricing system. Several groups mentioned concerns with Lincoln Tunnel traffic, West End Avenue traffic, and left turns.

Personal autos:

- Too many people driving alone
- Speed humps would reduce speeding on heavy residential streets

Transit improvements:

- Increase the bus traffic on 11th and 12th Avenues to remove drivers
- Peak travel time causes congestion on all transit (bus and subway), increase service

Congestion pricing:

- A majority of attendees indicated support for congestion pricing

Topic 4: Non-personal Automobile Travel Issues

Buses and taxis were two of the main travel problems cited in the topic area of non-personal automobile transportation issues. There is also growing concern over the safety and viability of the bicycle as a feasible alternative for travel for Upper West Side residents.

Taxis and Car Services:

- Taxis should allow ridesharing to reduce congestion
- Stagger the shift change for taxi drivers

Buses:

- Issues with the spacing of buses on the same route
- Buses should be sticking with the posted schedules
- Removal of bus stops
- Rerouting of the M72
- Pre-recorded bus announcements need improvement

Pedestrians:

- Accessible crosswalks
- Accessible pedestrian signals at signalized intersections

Topic 5: Quality of Life Concerns

The topic of quality of life was a category that became a “catch-all” of sorts covering topics ranging from construction to lighted bus shelters, noise and air pollution to the timing of buses. The theme throughout the quality of life topic area was how transportation related issues could better enhance the lives of the Upper West Side residents who participated.

Pollution:

- Noise pollution
- Air pollution
- Global warming

Construction:

- Scaffolding congests the sidewalks and makes them unsafe
- Construction trucks, double parking

Planning improvements:

- Create elder districts
- Create more open spaces

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

What follows is a summary of comments received to date by HSH. As the comments received were not attributed to one particular Topic among the five listed above, we have sorted them by subject matter.

Comments were submitted to the study team via:

- Comment sheets
- E-mails
- Letters
- Calls/e-mails to DOT via 311

For the purpose of this summary, we are not distinguishing comments by method received. We listed the items below if they were mentioned in more than two pieces of correspondence. The main themes identified in these comments are:

Buses:

- Extend M72 service back to West 66th Street and West End Avenue
- Long wait times for M57
- Buses need to pull up to the curb to pick up passengers – particularly the elderly
- Make buses quieter and less polluting

Transit:

- Platform overcrowding at West 72nd Street IRT

Enforcement:

- Enforce speed limits
- Double parking is a serious issue and restricts bus movement
- Need to be able to double park private cars to load/unload
- Trucks and buses should not be on West End Avenue
- Charter buses park illegally
- Post speed limit and no right on red signs
- Illegal parking in No Parking and No Standing areas

Pedestrians:

- Difficulty crossing major intersections, e.g. 9th Avenue and West 57th Street, Amsterdam Avenue and West 80th Street
- Pedestrians should have right-of-way when crossing. Turning vehicles ignore this.
- Have longer timed walk signals
- Pedestrian crowding is an issue on sidewalks on the Avenues in the study area

Safety:

- Speeding vehicles
- Vehicles crossing red lights
- Safety issues at West 66th Street between West End Avenue and Riverside Boulevard
- Introduce traffic calming measures such as speed humps
- Bicycles should not be allowed on sidewalks and their safety should be enforced.

Quality of life:

- Excessive noise and exhaust fumes
- Reduce street furniture

Street configuration:

- DOT should not have closed the West 72nd Street off-ramp
- Traffic backs up due to closing of ramp
- Increase in accidents due to ramp closing
- Safety improvements are needed at West 79th Street and the West Side Highway, and West 79th Street and Riverside Drive

Land Use:

- There is too much development
- New development includes garages which encourages driving

Trucks:

- Fresh Direct delivery truck double parking
- Delivery trucks clog roadways

Bicycles:

- Add more designated bike lanes

Signals:

- Change signal timing on West End Avenue to allow Lincoln Tower residents to turn onto the Avenue.

AREAS OF CONSENSUS

The subsequent sections will move away from the topic areas and will try to capture where there was group consensus, areas of disagreement, and interesting and noteworthy comments and suggestions. An interesting way to look at the information collected from the public listening session as well as from the written comments the DOT study team received is to cut across the topic areas and see what issues are on many people's minds. A large example of this is the West 72nd Street ramp closure from the West Side Highway. Other issues seemed to be brought up no matter what topic was being discussed like the issue of single-person occupancy personal automobiles. Below are some of the more noteworthy issues that came up throughout the meeting and throughout the submitted comments.

The West 72nd Street ramp issue:

The West 72nd Street Ramp Closure was raised at only one of the breakout groups. Several days after the public listening session roughly 70 comment sheets and emails were submitted on the topic of the West 72nd Street Ramp Closure alone.

Elderly Safety issues:

Several of the attendees at the public listening session are technically considered senior citizens and thus have unique transportation needs and frustrations. Many of them cited that it is difficult to cross the street during the permitted time at signalized intersections. A couple of the groups also talked about the creation of an elderly resident district with the possibility for special regulations when it comes to transportation issues.

Enforcement issues:

The issue of enforcement was brought up in relation to all transportation modes and problems in the Upper West Side at the meeting. Enforcement for parking regulations, bicycles on the sidewalks, bus lanes, taxi stands, buses idling, and running of red lights were all issues that seemed to be mentioned at least once in each of the four groups.

Congestion pricing:

While there was widespread support for congestion pricing in the breakout groups, only a couple of the written comments addressed this topic.

CONCLUSION

The meeting was a successful effort in connecting to a large community to hear its concerns. NYCDOT will now take this information, along with the detailed comments in the attachments and provide feedback to the community as to what steps NYCDOT will be taking to address some of these concerns and how this outreach effort informed the process.