



NEW YORK STATE SENATE



NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY



CITY OF NEW YORK

November 1, 2007

Janette Sadik-Khan
Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Re: DOT's York Avenue traffic study

Dear Commissioner Sadik-Khan:

We are writing to express a number of serious concerns relating to the Department of Transportation's (DOT) draft scope of the study to improve traffic conditions on York Avenue. While the study was originally requested by the community as a broad examination of options to improve traffic on York Avenue, the scope suggests that DOT is predisposed to the unpopular notion of converting York Avenue to one-way southbound operation.

The draft scope does not sufficiently examine existing traffic conditions on York Avenue, including: how the trucks will enter and exit the proposed Marine Transfer Station located at 91st Street and York Ave, how overall congestion in Manhattan impacts York Avenue traffic, how the proposal to implement congestion pricing would impact traffic on York Avenue, and how one-way conversion would affect New York City Transit's bus service on York Avenue and planned Bus Rapid Transit service on 1st and 2nd Avenues. Furthermore, the scope does not examine a number of possible changes to the roadway's physical condition to deter inappropriate thru-traffic during peak congestion times. A one-way conversion would essentially burden residents surrounding York Avenue with the responsibility of mitigating regional congestion issues and does not reflect the city's commitment to broadly address traffic issues in the form of congestion pricing.

When Manhattan Community Board 8 passed a resolution on June 25 calling on DOT to study options for traffic mitigation on the Avenue, it insisted, "that the study be completely open and free of bias, without preconceptions or solutions preordained." Yet DOT's "York Avenue Traffic Study Proposal" introducing the study suggests that the outcome may be predetermined. The document praises the concept of the Avenue running as a one-way street, and states that a major task of the study is to develop three different scenarios for converting York Avenue to one-way southbound operation, as well as the possible closure of entrances and exits to the FDR Drive.

York Avenue is a critical thoroughfare for the residents, businesses, and institutions of the far East Side, who rely on it as a route for both northbound and southbound travel.

Elimination of northbound lanes on York Avenue and the possible closure of the East 79th and East 73rd Streets' southbound entrances to FDR Drive could drastically and negatively impact the already limited and overcapacity means of transportation in this community. Mass transportation would also be impacted, with many bus routes needing to be rerouted including the M86, M79, M31, and X90 routes, which many residents use to commute each day to lower Manhattan. We are also concerned that this change would negatively impact the ability of hospital and FDR-bound emergency vehicles to travel to and from the large number of major medical institutions along York Avenue.

We are of course in support of any modeling to mitigate traffic congestion on York Avenue and commend DOT for responding to the community board's request for a traffic study. However, DOT must change its scope of study to examine more than just one-way conversion.


A meaningful York Avenue traffic study should examine the macro-level issues of how regional congestion affects York Avenue, consider the impacts of the Mayor's proposal to implement a congestion pricing charge for vehicles entering Manhattan below 86th Street, and explore physical roadway changes to deter thru-traffic. It should also include a study on the possibility of swapping the East 71st Street and East 73rd Street southbound entrances and exits off of the FDR Drive. Currently, the southbound entrance being located at East 73rd Street and the southbound exit at East 71st Street causes unnecessary traffic congestion on York Avenue. Swapping these entrances has potential to mitigate that problem. Additionally, DOT must study improved signal timing options, possibilities for working with New York Weill-Cornell, Memorial Sloan Kettering, the Hospital for Special Surgery, Rockefeller University, the Mary Manning Walsh Home and Sotheby's Auction House to mitigate the traffic associated with those institutions, and enhancing traffic enforcement to cut down on common violations, like blocking the box. Finally, DOT must analyze traffic use by vehicle class to determine what percentage of traffic is local, delivery, emergency vehicle, or thru-traffic diverted from the FDR. Such a study would be faithful to CB8's mandate and responsive to the needs of the York Avenue community.

We look forward to hearing from you about this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Very truly yours,



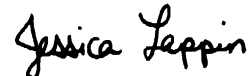
Micah Z. Kellner
Assembly Member



Scott M. Stringer
Borough President



Liz Krueger
State Senator



Jessica S. Lappin
Councilmember

MZK/phc

cc: David Liston, Chair Manhattan Community Board 8
M. Barry Schneider, Chair, Transportation Committee, Community Board 8
Chuck Warren, Chair, Transportation Committee, Community Board 8
Howard Roberts, President, NYC Transit
Douglas Currey, Regional Director, Region 11, NYS Department of Transportation