



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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DELORES RUBIN

Chair

Jesse Bodine

District Manager

July 6, 2017

Polly Trottenberg
Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
55 Water Street
New York, NY 10041

Re: Two cyclists killed by bus drivers in Chelsea

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg,

In the last three weeks the two cyclists' deaths involving bus drivers has saddened and shaken Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) in general and the people who bicycle in particular. We are asking you to meet with our community in the next three weeks to discuss the changes to street design and bus permitting/enforcement measures that can be taken to prevent such tragedies in the future. This letter will be ratified at the next full board meeting on Wednesday, July 26th. However, due to the severity of the multiple fatalities occurring within weeks of each other, CB4 believes action must be taken as soon as possible.

Based on all available public information, the bicyclists were following the rules of the road: one, a 36 year old father on a Citi bike, which had just dropped off his child at school, the other an 80 year old retired cobbler who lived in the neighborhood. Neither 26th nor 29th Streets are classified as truck routes and therefore buses are not permitted on these streets.

Since 2014, CB4 is on record for requesting that crosstown protected bike lanes be studied¹. Without crosstown protected bike lanes to connect to the network of north/south lanes, riders are in great danger on the cross streets due to the narrowness of the streets or the intense congestion on some of them. Neither painted bike lanes or sharrows are adequate to protect riders' lives since they allow for double parking and for drivers to overtake the lane. As we have written in previous letters, and given the high volume of crosstown bike traffic both in the northern and southern halves of our district, the community sees a need for several crosstown protected bike lanes in CD4. We ask that the Department of Transportation (DOT) attend September's CB4 Transportation Committee Meeting and discuss the options for protected bike lanes on side streets within CD4.

As you know, CB4 has long had a preference for locating long distance bus stops on the far west side, where the interaction of buses with bicyclist and pedestrians is minimized. With the # 7 subway station, it is a very attractive option. However, as recently as this month, the Bus Unit of DOT continues to assign bus stops at locations opposed by CB4 in the midst of heavy traffic and residential areas. These stops multiply the number of buses that traverse crowded streets and increase the chances of a crash. We continue to insist on all Long Distance bus stops to be located west of 11th Avenue.

CB4 has also looked at the safety records of the Bus companies to evaluate whether they should be permitted to operate in an environment as intense as Manhattan, where the crashes often result in injuries and fatalities. However, this does not seem to be a criterion the bus unit is relying upon to grant permits. It should be. In these particular cases where the drivers violated the law and killed cyclists, there should be a mechanism to terminate the permit.

CB4 has also received reports that bus stop permits are granted to one company who then subcontracts to others to operate buses at the permitted stop. Such a system makes the safety screening and education of drivers almost impossible. We recommend that stops be granted only to the companies that directly own the buses and employ the drivers, and that DOT & NYPD follow-up and enforce these regulations.

We appreciate DOT's willingness to collaborate with CB4 and acknowledge their many accomplishments. We understand the complexity of managing competing demands for street space, and the endless requests for bus stops. We think it is time to re-elevate the role of the Mayor's Vision Zero plan in the choices between more tourism and commerce versus safety.

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<http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb4/downloads/pdf/October%202014/10%20TRANS%20Letter%20to%20DOT%20re%20Crosstown%20Bike%20lane.pdf>

Sincerely,



Delores Rubin
Chair



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair, Transportation
Planning Committee



Yoni Bokser
Co-Chair, Transportation
Planning Committee

CC: Luis Sanchez, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, DOT
Hon. Jerry Nadler, U.S. Congress
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council
Hon. Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Colleen Chattergoon, NYC DOT