

Good Evening:

Let me begin with some T&T news: I am anxiously waiting to hear if NYC DOT Borough Commissioner Palmieri will attend a T&T Committee meeting or a CB 10 board meeting so that we may ascertain the correct procedure to request action on requests to change street signs in an expeditious manner. I have been unable to get a response to that question and the lack of a clear response from NYC DOT is disheartening and discouraging. There have been numerous requests for action by NYC DOT on signage that have not been responded to in a substantive manner. For example we have not received an answer about a 2007 request to remove the traffic signal at 76th and 10th. In 2008 the committee voted to ask the Board to authorize a follow up letter to the prior ones that asked for a traffic study of 65th Street between 6th Avenue and 16th Avenue. We have not received a satisfactory answer. It is a situation that our community cannot allow to continue.

The Traffic and Transportation Committee met in quorum on Wednesday December 10, 2008 at the District Office with Dena Libner, a representative from Councilperson Gentile's office, present. She delivered information about the proposed MTA transit cuts proposed by Richard Ravitch. Assembly person Hyer-Spencer's office is circulating petitions to oppose the service cuts including the elimination of B37 (Third Avenue) bus.

In the meeting Robert Cassara voiced a concern that NYS DOT has not given a clear answer about the proposed changes to the exit and entrance ramps of the Gowanus Expressway at 65th Street and Sixth Avenue. Although NYS DOT representatives have already completed traffic studies of the 65th Street interchange we do not know when or what will, in fact, be built there. The matter will be addressed at our next meeting.

We received an informational presentation from Pamela Mann a representative from Go21, a 501 c-4 organization, primarily funded by the railroad industry to promote grass root support for expanding intermodal train service. It is a non profit public interest organization which is seeking support from communities in the effort to increase funding for intermodal freight railroad service. If we can increase our use of modern freight rail service in an intermodal way we would enjoy great savings in energy consumption in the form of less fuel consumed. One intermodal train can carry the equivalent of hundreds of truck trailers. Since deregulation in 1980 freight rail service has increased in efficiency, volume and revenue. The group would like CB 10 to endorse and encourage resolutions from our citizens that support a policy to promote improvement in freight rail infrastructure. Specifically, Ms. Mann provided literature, position papers and proposed template letters to be mailed to our federal legislators in support of intermodal rail service. The major benefits of increased freight rail service would be to the environment, to the economy as well as to provide relief to our congested roads. The Committee found the information to be promising and we will make a future recommendation to the Board.

Steve Harrison pointed out that we should request an ethical opinion from City Hall to see if there is a conflict about CB 10 taking action at the behest of a compensated advocate. The matter will be reported on at our January meeting.

MTA. There was a vigorous discussion about the proposed MTA service cuts including the effects, possible benefits, and definite detriments. Steve Harrison opined that there was a suspicious similarity to some of the proposals coming from City Hall. The "new" proposed MTA cuts include draconian service cuts and tolls on the East River bridges while the Mayor's congestion pricing also called for tolls on the East River bridges. While it is true that the MTA is in financial distress and that the city must make cuts in some services, the subway and bus service of the MTA produce revenue for the city so each of the proposed MTA cuts also reduce revenue. The proposed cuts include elimination of all B37 service, elimination of weekend service on the B4, B16, B23 busses among other service cuts. The proposed cuts also include eliminating M train service to Bay Parkway, eliminating weekend express bus service on the X27 and X28 and increasing fares. The MTA **hopes** the cuts in service will result in a net savings of only approximately \$22,650,000. The Committee discussed the possible motivation to announce such deep cut proposals and concluded that this is a scare tactic to force New Yorkers to accept tolls on the East River crossings. If these tolls are put in place they will have a direct and disproportionate negative effect on Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights. It will bring about changes in commuting patterns so people will drive to neighborhoods, like those of CB 10, park r vehicles on the congested streets and then take the subway to avoid the new toll. The net effect will be to overburden trains, stations, buses and stops while placing a burden on any remaining parking in the affected area.

Our District Office has received dozens of complaint letters about bus service in Bayridge/Dyker Heights. Melissa Farley of the MTA informed the Board problems occur in the express bus service. The Board previously requested

MTA Chairperson Hemmerdinger and President Eliot Sandler to:

- 1- add staff and
- 2- add a new express bus line to serve Dyker Heights;

Now the Ravitch plan calls for elimination of service, fare increases and tolls. The Committee did not doubt the something must be done to correct the financial state of the MTA however the MTA has a tarnished reputation when dealing with the public. It does not release its information and its spending practices are Byzantine. It was caught keeping two sets of financial records in the past.

The need for increased mass transit has only increased in recent time which makes these proposed cuts even more difficult to fathom. The fiscal crisis that the MTA is experiencing calls for possible fare increases and a payroll tax especially if it is allocated specifically for the MTA. That makes sense. These threatened cuts are nothing short of extreme tactics to bully concerned citizens to accept whatever City Hall may decree. The citizens of our community must stand up and demand the service to which they are entitled.

My personal opinion is that any plan which includes East River bridge tolls would be bad for CB 10. I cannot understand why a responsible planner would recommend a cut in service and at the same time force drivers to stop change their route in a way that will cause an increase of vehicular traffic congestion (Battery Tunnel entrance and new toll plazas in Brooklyn). What

will occur at the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel? In the morning the majority of the vehicles on the Gowanus Expressway traveling east are able to use an HOV lane while Brooklyn express buses have an easy time accessing lower Manhattan via the tunnel. When there is no financial incentive for drivers to take the East River bridges then a great deal of vehicular traffic will divert to the tunnel. This will make it the worst option for traffic to enter Manhattan. The Committee unanimously voted to recommend a letter in opposition to the proposed cuts in MTA service. Jean Ryan pointed out that the proposed cuts to bus service would terribly impact disabled riders to whom the subway is not a viable alternative to the bus.

The Committee voted to ask the Board to send a letter to Mayor Bloomberg stating:

We denounce the proposed MTA service cuts and the imposition of East River bridge tolls and recommend that the community do everything in its power to fight such a short sighted and unfair plan.

The proposed MTA service cuts are particularly outrageous since there is no provision for disabled riders who cannot access the subway as an alternative to bus service therefore the proposed cuts should not be implemented .

DISCUSSION VOTE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Respectfully submitted


Brian Kieran