

Neighboring Streets 'Can't Handle' 14th St. Car Ban, Chelsea Residents Say



By [Maya Rajamani](#) | June 22, 2016 6:37pm

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Some have proposed turning 14th Street into a corridor for buses and bikes during the L train shutdown. [View Full Caption](#)
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CHELSEA — [Banning cars on 14th Street during the impending L train shutdown](#) would divert the corridor's congestion, pollution and noise to the surrounding streets, a group of Chelsea residents say.

At a block association meeting Tuesday evening, residents living on West 15th Street and the streets above it maintained a proposal to turn 14th Street into a

route for bikes and buses during the shutdown would place an unwanted burden on already-crowded residential blocks.

“In theory, I like the idea,” 100 West 16th Street Block Association chairman [Paul Groncki](#) said. “In practice, how is it going to affect the neighboring streets?”

“[Traffic is] just going to flow onto the side streets, and the side streets can’t handle it,” he added.

West 17th Street, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, has been shut down several times since a [fire broke out at an apartment building on the block in October](#), West 15th Street 100 and 200 Block Association President [Stanley Bulbach](#) noted.

During those closures, traffic piled up on West 15th Street, to the detriment of first responders trying to make their way through, he said.

“This community has no faith in City Hall and its ability to mitigate whatever plans come down the pipe,” he said.

[Christine Berthet](#), the co-chair of Community Board 4’s transportation committee, reassured attendees that the committee would be sending a letter to the MTA asking the agency to come back with a set of mitigation plans it would implement in the event of a temporary car ban.

“We are not going to accept that the streets from 15th to 23rd become the alternate route,” she said.

Traffic calming measures like speed bumps could discourage cars and trucks from coming down the neighboring streets, she added.

But some attendees raised concerns about statements made by politicians including [State Sen. Brad Hoylman](#), who [at a public meeting in May suggested the MTA look into the 14th Street car ban during and perhaps even after the L train shutdown](#).

Bulbach maintained news outlets gave the impression Hoylman was “cheering on” the closure plan, which a Hoylman representative at the meeting refuted.

“I just have to be clear, my boss does not have a position on what he wants to do [with regards to] 14th Street’s traffic,” Eli Szenes-Strauss, Hoylman’s deputy chief of staff, said.

A letter sent by elected officials including Hoylman and [Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer](#) to the MTA and the city’s [Department of Transportation](#) at the beginning of the month asked the agencies to seek public input as they moved forward and examine the effects of a 14th Street car ban on the surrounding streets, he noted.

“We understand that you’re defending your boss, but we’re worried about the mitigation,” one attendee responded. “[But] t’s going to be a huge problem when 14th Street is closed.”

A DOT spokeswoman on Wednesday said the agency “looks forward to working closely with the MTA on all possible transportation options,” in response to an inquiry about residents’ concerns.

The MTA, meanwhile, “remain[s] committed to all ideas and feedback from the public on the Canarsie Tube repairs and... continue[s] to meet with local officials in affected neighborhoods,” a spokeswoman said.

Toward the end of the meeting, many attendees continued to express discontent.

“We already have enough trouble with trucks on our block,” Groncki said.

“This is just going to get worse.”