

FINANCIAL DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
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New York City Council
Committee on Finance
and the
Committee on Transportation
Mayor's Preliminary FY18 Budget

Testimony by Paul Proulx, Board Member
Financial District Neighborhood Association

New York City Hall
City Council Chambers
New York, New York
Tuesday, March 28th, 2017 10:00 am

Thank you Council Members, Chair Rodriguez and Chair Ferreras-Copeland for holding this important public hearing today and inviting our testimony. My name is Paul Proulx and I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Financial District Neighborhood Association, a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that seeks to improve the quality of life in the Financial District in Manhattan's Community Board 1 (CB1).

Vehicular and pedestrian congestion is a major quality of life and safety issue for those that live, work and visit our neighborhood.

Lower Manhattan has retained its historic colonial street plan, rather than the traditional New York City grid. The colonial grid was designed at a time of dramatically lower density, and was not built to be flooded with cars, trucks and buses as we see today. Combined with approximately 15 million tourists annually, hundreds of thousands of workers and over 65,000 permanent residents, this makes mobility an inherent problem.

A Streetscape Study of Lower Manhattan prepared by the CB1 Community Planning Fellow, in May of 2016, cataloged a total of 3,039 sidewalk features on Financial District sidewalks, including benches, bike racks, fire hydrants, etc. – almost as many features as the streets of Seaport, Tribeca, and Battery Park City combined.

A Pedestrian Survey conducted by Community Board 1 in 2015 in conjunction with Pace University and the City College of New York shows that a most respondents identified “overcrowded sidewalks” and “overcrowded streets” as the top two serious problems in our district.

But the City of New York, Department of Transportation has no idea how many cars, trucks, or people make trips within Lower Manhattan on a given day. We need a benchmark study!

Vehicular congestion in Lower Manhattan is compounded by the sheer number of double-decker tour buses, personal vehicles and commuter buses that fill our streets. This congestion leads to critical issues such as emergency vehicles being impeded by blocked streets, resulting in a dangerous increase in response times. We have a major problem with placard parking, both legal and illegal. The City of New York parks entire fleets of cars on our downtown streets.

These and a multitude of other factors impede pedestrian mobility in Lower Manhattan. High density buildings stack garbage onto narrow sidewalks, commercial vehicles park on the sidewalk, outdated and cumbersome security infrastructure is scattered through the district, commercial delivery trucks, service vehicles, construction and sidewalk sheds all obstruct the sidewalk. These factors often dangerously force pedestrians into the street, leaving vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians in conflict over the same narrow, shared space. Recently a senior citizen was killed near the Staten Island Ferry and a Millennium High School student was struck by a taxi driver.

CB1 has repeatedly requested that the City take a proactive, holistic approach to managing traffic and pedestrian flow on the streets and sidewalks of Lower Manhattan, and to implement a framework for managed streets in Lower Manhattan. These improvements cannot be made without a benchmark study.

We understand that the NYC Department of Transportation completed the framework for just such a benchmark study in 2011, but now needs funding to update their numbers and incorporate garbage pickup and commercial freight delivery metrics into their analysis. We understand that less than \$1MM is required to complete this benchmark analysis, so that we can begin working toward a better and safer future.

We commend the Mayor and City Council for their funding commitments to Vision Zero. We thank our local delegation, including Council Member Chin, who have already requested that the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation complete such a study.

In connection with the Mayor's Preliminary FY18 Budget, we join Council Member Chin, and Borough President Brewer in requesting that this Council adopt a funding request for a **Lower Manhattan Pedestrian Traffic Safety & Mobility Study**.

We join with them and with CB1 and almost 840 of our Lower Manhattan neighbors who have signed our petition requesting a **Lower Manhattan Pedestrian Traffic Safety & Mobility Study**. The problems facing Lower Manhattan are unique, and should be managed uniquely, but we can't begin to offer solutions until we can measure the problem.

Thank you for your consideration.



February 14, 2017

Polly Trottenberg
Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10041

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg,

We write regarding pedestrian and vehicle mobility in Lower Manhattan. Since 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy, Lower Manhattan has bounced back and grown to become a thriving commercial district and residential community. In order to maintain this success, we must think critically about how the streetscape can support future growth. For this reason, we join the Financial District Neighborhood Association and Community Board 1 in requesting a comprehensive mobility study for Lower Manhattan to better understand how people and goods move throughout Lower Manhattan.

Lower Manhattan has experienced tremendous growth in the past 15 years. The residential population has more than doubled, and thousands of apartments are scheduled to be built over the next several years. In addition, Lower Manhattan's commercial sector is experiencing tremendous success. Over the next five years, research from Downtown Alliance projects businesses creating over 2.3 million square feet of new retail space and constructing nearly 4,000 hotel rooms, as well as leasing millions of square feet of office space. In addition, New York City has more tourists than ever before, with many popular sightseeing locations in Lower Manhattan.

Lower Manhattan's popularity inevitably increases pressure on the area's streetscape, the design of which remains a vestige of the city's earliest days. As a result, broad thinking and innovative solutions are required to ensure this community's growth for businesses and retailers, public transportation, emergency and private vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and all who depend on this thriving community.

We hope you are able to support this study. Should you have any further questions, please contact our offices.

Sincerely,

Daniel Squadron
State Senator

Yuh-Line Niou
Assemblymember

Jerrold Nadler
Congressmember

Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Deborah Glick
Assemblymember

Margaret Chin
Councilmember

Funding Request for Lower Manhattan Pedestrian Traffic Safety and Mobility Study

Manhattan Petition by Paul Proulx



With a street grid from the Dutch settlement and Colonial era, overlaid with modern residential high rises and a 24/7 live-work community, Lower Manhattan faces unique challenges from car, bus and truck traffic, garbage collection, and pedestrian and tourist flows. Manhattan's Community Board 1 has the fourth worst air quality of the City's 59 community boards and roughly 75 major construction projects currently taking place. Security infrastructure and enormous piles of trash bags and recycling crowd Lower Manhattan's narrow, congested sidewalks. We call on our elected officials to undertake a comprehensive survey and action plan to measure and mitigate these unique stressors on our neighborhood's quality of life and create a more livable, walkable Lower Manhattan.

Our request is consistent with the City's Vision Zero plan and is especially urgent after the recent tragic case of an MTA bus hitting and killing a woman near the Staten Island Ferry Terminal at State and Water streets in the Financial District on October 22, 2016. It is also consistent with the Manhattan Community Board 1 position: CB1 unanimously passed a resolution on June 28, 2016 requesting that the NYC Department of Transportation review the increased congestion due to the tripling of residential population since 9/11 and tripling of annual tourists to 15 million.

It is time for the City to take a proactive, holistic approach to managing traffic and pedestrian flow in the historic street grid of Lower Manhattan. We support CB1's request that the City dedicate funding for a modeling study to establish conditions on the street and sidewalk, and implement a framework

823 OF 1,000 NEEDED SIGNATURES



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Sign Petition →

Your letter will be emailed to: (see recipients)

LAST UPDATED 3/27/17

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THIS PETITION RECENTLY SIGNED

- BY:
- LOES W. OF MANHATTAN
 - NATALIA V. OF MANHATTAN
 - ELLEN C. OF MANHATTAN
 - ANTHONY M. OF MANHATTAN
 - KERI B. OF MANHATTAN

for managed streets and traffic improvements in Lower Manhattan. The problems facing Lower Manhattan are unique, and require unique solutions.

Please join us in requesting public funding to develop solutions for these problems.

For background, please see these links:

Continued Call for Funding for a Comprehensive Traffic and Street Mobility Study in Lower Manhattan – Manhattan’s Community Board 1, June 28, 2016 Resolution: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb1/downloads/pdf/Resolutions/16-06-28.pdf> (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb1/downloads/pdf/Resolutions/16-06-28.pdf>), pages 12-14/41

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2017 Executive Budget Hearing Transportation Testimony: http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb1/downloads/pdf/Testimonies/Exec%20Budget_T... (http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb1/downloads/pdf/Testimonies/Exec%20Budget_Transportation_5%2024%202016.pdf)

CBS Coverage of Pedestrian Death: <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2016/10/22/bus-driver-charged-after-dragging...> (<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2016/10/22/bus-driver-charged-after-dragging-woman/>)

This petition will be delivered to:


Manhattan Community Board 1, Council Member
Margaret Chin, Manhattan Borough President Gale
Brewer, Public Advocate Letitia James, NYS Senator
Squadron, Assembly Member Niou


▼ READ THE LETTER

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111 John Street (<https://www.transalt.org/about/map>), Suite 260
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