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December 7, 2009

Janette Sadik-Khan  
Commissioner  
New York City Department of Transportation  
55 Water Street  
New York, NY 10041

By Fax (212-442-7007) and U.S. Mail

Dear Commissioner Sadik-Khan:

As elected officials who represent communities on the East Side of Manhattan, we write in support of a true Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system and other improvements that would improve bus, pedestrian, and bicycle transportation in an area of the City that greatly needs it: First and Second Avenues.

Seventy-eight percent of residents who live along First and Second Avenues do not own cars. Yet they are underserved by public transportation. New York City's bus service is the slowest in the nation with an average speed of 7.5 miles per hour while the speed of the M15 bus on First and Second Avenues is even slower, averaging 5.6 miles per hour. Rather than providing a viable alternative to the 4/5/6 trains on Lexington Avenue, which operate on the busiest and most overcrowded subway corridor in the City, bus service on the Third Avenue/Lexington Line, the M101/2/3, was awarded the "Schleppie" in 2008 by the Straphangers' Campaign for proving to be the City's least reliable, as determined by MTA New York City Transit performance statistics on how well buses kept to scheduled times and intervals. Our communities deserve better.

While we recognize and appreciate the Department of Transportation (DOT) plans to improve travel time and convenience through Select Bus Service (SBS) on First and Second Avenues, we urge you to take the project further. True BRT can be faster and more reliable than traditional bus service or SBS, and far less expensive than comparable subway system upgrades. While we unequivocally support the full-build Second Avenue Subway, we understand that trains are not scheduled to operate on the line until at least 2016 and extending the new line below East 63rd Street, as part of Phase III of the project, will take even longer. As such, the Second Avenue Subway project does not obviate the need for efficient BRT. This is especially true for disabled individuals who use buses more than any other form of transportation in the City. A strong BRT program could be in place inexpensively by 2011.

We call on DOT to take advantage of this rare opportunity to overhaul street-level transit in a progressive and innovative manner that reaches well beyond SBS. DOT should institute changes to the First and Second Avenue route that include not only prepaid off-board fare collection, signal priority, and a dedicated rush-hour bus lane (all present in the Fordham Road SBS), but also a physically separated busway, a physically separated bikeway, level boarding, safer crossings for pedestrians, and real-time arrival information. It is our understanding that buses running via a true BRT system on the current M15 route from beginning to end would be approximately thirty-three percent faster, on average, than SBS buses on the same route.

Such a plan would elevate the City to even greater national and international prominence for sustainable urban development initiatives that innovate and endure, and we believe there would be substantial public support for BRT—significantly greater support than we expect the SBS plan to generate. With a sensible “complete street” design that keeps cyclists and pedestrians out of harm’s way, this project would also save lives.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Assemblymember Brian Kavanaugh’s office will follow up with your staff to arrange a meeting to discuss this project with you. We look forward to working with you to help create a progressive transit plan for Manhattan’s East Side for the benefit of all who live in, work in, visit, or just pass through our crowded, vibrant communities.

Sincerely,



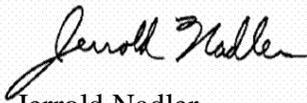
Brian Kavanaugh  
Assemblymember



Liz Krueger  
State Senator



Carolyn B. Maloney  
U.S. Congresswoman



Jerrold Nadler  
U.S. Representative



Nydia M. Velazquez  
U.S. Representative



Thomas K. Duane  
State Senator



Bill Perkins  
State Senator



José M. Serrano  
State Senator



Daniel Squadron  
State Senator



Jonathan L. Bing  
Assemblymember



Deborah J. Glick  
Assemblymember



Richard N. Gottfried  
Assemblymember



Micah Kellner  
Assemblymember



Adam Clayton Powell IV  
Assemblymember



Daniel R. Garodnick  
Council Member

Janette Sadik-Khan

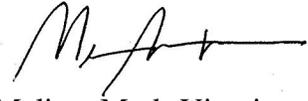
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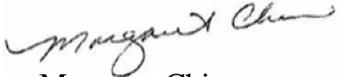
Alan J. Gerson  
Council Member



Jessica Lappin  
Council Member



Melissa Mark-Viverito  
Council Member



Margaret Chin  
Council Member-Elect

cc: Edward Skyler, Deputy Mayor for Operations, City of New York  
Jay H. Walder, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Metropolitan Transportation Authority