



**The NYC Council Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment
& Committee on Transportation
Oversight Hearing on Ensuring Pedestrian Safety
During Lower Manhattan Redevelopment**

**Testimony by Julie Menin, Chairperson
Manhattan Community Board One**

**Monday, April 19, 2010 at 11:00 a.m.
250 Broadway, 14th Floor Hearing Room**

Thank you, Council Member Chin, Council Member Vacca, and other Members of the Committees on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment and Transportation for convening this public hearing. I am Julie Menin, and I am here to testify today as Chairperson of Manhattan Community Board One (CB1).

Pedestrian safety is a significant issue in CB1 due to the large amount of construction underway in our district. On multiple occasions in the past several years, dangerous pieces of debris have fallen from buildings on our streets and open spaces. Several incidents have occurred in connection with the construction of the Goldman Sachs building in Battery Park City, most recently on November 28, 2009, when a sheet of glass fell, and on May 17, 2008 when a piece of metal fell on a ballfield just feet away from a child playing in a little league game. Recently many streets around City Hall were closed for a day on January 25, 2010 when turnbuckles were torn from high floors of the Beekman Tower site by high winds. On January 28, a piece of plywood flew from the Liberty Luxe building on North End Avenue and landed in the adjacent

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ice rink where children were skating. Most recently, on March 27, a poorly secured crane tipped over and fell against a commercial building at 80 Maiden Lane, sending pieces of cement falling to the ground and leading to street closure and evacuations of the nearby buildings.

CB1 has repeatedly asked sites to secure floors under construction with netting and take other needed steps to ensure that pedestrians are safe. Given the frequency of these incidents, we believe that sites in Lower Manhattan must be more vigilant.

We have also been concerned with the safety of pedestrian crossings. Our district includes a number of streets with major commercial and vehicular traffic including Canal Street, West Street, Broadway, and the entrances to Route 127A, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. West Street, formally known as Route 9A, has been a particular safety concern in our district. CB1 has regularly participated in Speaker Silver's West Street Safety Taskforce, has heard assessments by Sam Schwartz Engineering about pedestrian safety on West Street, and has passed resolutions related to pedestrian safety.

The at-grade crossings at West Street are particularly dangerous. West Street has up to eight lanes on any particular segment between Battery Place and Chambers Street, and supports a high volume of very fast moving traffic. Though some of its intersections are managed by the New York Police Department Traffic Division, these employees mainly keep traffic flowing and are not responsible for managing pedestrians. A Battery Park City resident was fatally struck by a drunk driver in February 2009, and we have heard numerous complaints of near-accidents involving pedestrians and vehicles ushered through red lights.

Though there are pedestrian bridges at Chambers Street, Vesey Street, Liberty Street and Rector Street, the elevators and escalators of these bridges are frequently out of service, forcing

those dependent on them – including vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities – to make at-grade crossings.

Students at five schools must cross West Street daily in both directions. While there is a pedestrian bridge at Chambers Street, southern Battery Park City is served only by the Rector Street Bridge, which was originally intended to be temporary. On October 27, 2009, CB1 passed a resolution calling for the City to reconsider funding a bridge in southern Battery Park City near West Thames Street in the coming fiscal year. The Battery Park City Authority had already hired a consultant to design the bridge, and CB1's Battery Park City Committee made comments on the initial designs, when the New York Office of Management and Budget (OMB) rejected the Battery Park City Authority's request to provide funds for the project.

During discussions over the temporary school rezoning in our district, CB1 heard numerous concerns expressed by parents regarding the safety of crossing West Street, Park Row, and Broadway. In a resolution passed unanimously by the full board on January 26, we urged the Department of Education, the Department of Transportation, and the Office of the Mayor to resolve all safety issues associated with these crossings so that they will no longer be an issue affecting the selection parents of schools for their children.

Finally, we feel that there are measures that can be taken to address pedestrian safety in Lower Manhattan in the short term. Pedestrian lines in a lot of areas, especially along Broadway at Fulton Street, John Street, Dey Street, Maiden Lane, and Church Street have faded to near invisibility during the winter months and due to the wear of ongoing construction. Repainting these lines would improve safety for pedestrians and vehicular traffic currently unable to see the pedestrian lines.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. Major redevelopment projects in Lower Manhattan will continue for many years to come. These will include the World Trade Center, and reconstruction of many of our most heavily used arterial roads, including Canal, Chambers, Fulton, and Hudson Streets. The City must do a better job of protecting pedestrians in coming years so that they are secure and confident as they navigate streets where these and other major projects are underway.