



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**New York City Council  
Fiscal Year 2017 Executive Budget Hearing  
Transportation**

**Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson  
Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY  
Tuesday, May 24 at 2:30PM**

Thank you Chairperson Rodriguez and members of the Transportation and Finance Committees for holding this important public hearing today and inviting our testimony. My name is Catherine McVay Hughes and I am Chairperson at Community Board 1 which includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as Ellis, Governors and Liberty Islands.

Vehicular and pedestrian congestion is a major quality of life and safety issue for those that live, work and visit our district. Our District has a major problem with placard parking, both legal and illegal, of all kinds. Vehicular congestion is compounded by the sheer number of double-decker tour buses, 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. The Port Authority's Vehicular Security Center will also open soon at the World Trade Center, which will contribute to the problem in that area.

Excessive construction still exists in our district's 1.5 sq mile with over 90 major public and private simultaneous construction projects, which also contributes to congestion. With the closing of the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center, and more recently the Lower Manhattan Department of Transportation office, there is no one left to oversee or coordinate the construction projects.

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 13 million tourists annually, hundreds of thousands of workers and over 65,000 permanent residents, this makes mobility an inherent problem. A Pedestrian Survey conducted by CB1 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Community Needs 2015 A Pedestrian Survey. Rep. Manhattan Community Board 1, n.d. Web.](#)

1 Centre Street, Room 2202 North, New York, NY 10007

Tel. (212) 669-7970 Fax (212) 669-7899

[man01@cb.nyc.gov](mailto:man01@cb.nyc.gov)

[www.nyc.gov/html/mancb1](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb1)

A CB1 report from May 2016 on Street Activity Permit (SAP) applications shows that between January 2015 and September 2016, there were 1,142 SAP applications ranging from film shoots, special events, parades and others. These applications do not include things like construction and sidewalk sheds. Another CB1 study conducted by Fund for the City of New York Community Planning Fellow from May 2016 containing a sidewalk feature inventory shows that our district has nearly 7,000 sidewalk features ranging from benches, bike racks, news boxes, pay phones and others.

A multitude of factors impede pedestrian mobility in Lower Manhattan. High density buildings stack garbage onto narrow sidewalks, vehicles park on the sidewalk, outdated and cumbersome security infrastructure is scattered through the district, commercial deliveries, 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. Certain projects dedicate personnel to street management, but this is sporadic, inconsistent and uncoordinated.

CB1 has repeatedly made budget requests for construction and traffic mitigation, and for a plan to improve the streetscape of Lower Manhattan for greater pedestrian flow. We believe it is time for the City to take a proactive, holistic approach to managing traffic and pedestrian flow in Lower Manhattan. CB1 requests that the City dedicate funding for a modeling study to establish the conditions on the street and sidewalk, and to implement a framework for managed streets in Lower Manhattan. The problems facing Lower Manhattan are unique, and should be managed uniquely.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.