



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Michael Budabin, Chair / Joseph Marziliano, District Manager

TO: All Board Members
FROM: Victor Dadras, Committee Chair
DATE: January 27, 2021
RE: Various issues

On Tuesday, January 26, 2021, a joint meeting of the CB11 Transportation Committee was held via Zoom teleconference regarding several issues.

Present

Michael Budabin, Board Chair
Christine Haider, 1st Vice Chair
Victor Dadras, 2nd Vice Chair and Committee Chair
Henry Euler, 3rd Vice Chair

Committee Members Albert Galatan, Rob Liatto, Mary Donahue, Allan Palzer, Christina Scherer, John Kelly, Joan Garippa, Eileen Miller, Stephan Popa, Akshar Patel

CB11 Staff

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager
Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator
Christina Coutinho, Community Associate

The meeting commenced with Mr. Dadras reviewing some of the work the Committee has done over the last year and will work on in the coming year. Safety and efficiency are of the utmost importance. He also spoke about NYC's Transportation/Parks bike (or greenway) workshop that several of the Transportation sub-committee members participated in. He stated that the CB11 sub-committee brought a lot of good discussion to the workshop. However, he does feel that, overall, there was a limited scope of ideas. Mr. Dadras advised that he, Mr. Budabin and Mr. Marziliano had a discussion with Al Silvestri, Deputy Queens Commissioner, Department of Transportation (DOT) and Craig Chin, Borough Planner, DOT, regarding the results of, and to better understand, CB11's requests to DOT. Mr. Silvestri advised that DOT is experiencing a backlog of approximately 12 months (up from six months). They are also facing budgetary limitations, as are all City agencies. Mr. Budabin suggested that the sub-committee's concerns be put into a draft letter that the entire Committee and full Board can review for support.

Mr. Dadras reviewed goals and objectives for 2021: the continuation of Open Streets and Open Restaurants. Pandemic restrictions will continue through 2021. In the hope that schools will resume regular schedules, regarding school safety, DOT needs to move forward with the issues at P.S. 98. Mr. Silvestri indicated DOT will be moving on that as well as the issues at P.S. 94. He also stated that they are starting to make some progress with issues at 53 Avenue and Luke Place (which is in the vicinity of several schools).

Mr. Marziliano screen-shared accident data regarding the District. There has been a 63% decrease in non-fatal accidents (2020 compared to 2019). However, there were five fatalities in 2020. There were only two in 2019. Mr. Marziliano stated that vehicular accidents consume a great deal of NYPD's resources in the CB11 district. Mr. Kelly inquired if the numbers given include the accidents that were responded to. Mr. Marziliano stated these numbers reflect reports to 911 only. Mr. Budabin feels that tracking should be done on a closer level. He would like monthly statistics. Having this information would indicate which streets were the most dangerous. We also need to know where the fatalities occurred. Mr. Dadras concurred with both points.

At this point, Mr. Turner was given the floor. He explained that when the streets of New York were designed, they were made to accommodate the highest number of vehicles possible. There is excess road capacity. There is a lack of family-friendly routes for cyclists and pedestrians. He would like to see a feasibility study for a complete street redesign on Utopia Parkway. There have been 283 accidents and one fatality. It was noted at the workshop that this street would be a natural route for a complete street with bicycle lanes because it connects with Little Bay Park to the north and Peck Park and the Brooklyn-Queens Greenway to the south. Mr. Turner stated that at least 100 students per day travel to school by bicycle as per Francis Lewis High School's principal. The Francis Lewis High School PTA supports a feasibility study. He, therefore, made a motion to request a complete street study on Utopia Parkway between the Long Island Expressway and 26 Avenue (portion that lies within the boundaries of CB11). Mr. Kelly seconded the motion. Mr. Dadras stated DOT officials said they will be conducting a study of Utopia Parkway. Mr. Marziliano explained that when this street was designed hundreds of years ago, it was when horses were the main mode of transportation. Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Haider feel that other Boards which Utopia Parkway runs through need to submit input. Mrs. Garippa stated we need to be specific with ONLY the section that is in CB11. Mr. Marziliano stated that CB8 has already requested a feasibility study regarding their portion of Utopia Parkway. Mrs. Haider feels the members need more information. Mr. Budabin stated that the entire Board will need to vote on this proposal and added that we need to get speed and accident data in advance of the consideration of the full Board. Mrs. Haider feels the members need more information. Mr. Turner reiterated the NYPD statistics he was given; he also screen-shared a petition that has 942 signatures. Mrs. Garippa opposes the word "feasibility" in the motion; it should be referred to as a safety study. Mr. Turner and Mr. Kelly have no objection to amending the motion accordingly. Mr. Euler inquired if residents from the area signed the petition. Mr. Turner said yes. A roll call vote was taken resulting in 14 in favor and 1 opposed. The motion passed. This issue will be taken up by the full Board at the March 2021 meeting.

Mr. Dadras recognized Mr. Liatto who spoke about the perimeter roads in the vicinity of Alley Pond Park in Oakland Gardens. Protected bicycle lanes that were installed south of 73 Avenue have narrowed the road considerably. There are no crosswalks for pedestrians for approximately 1.2 miles except for 230 Street and 67 Avenue, as this location is opposite P.S. 213. Previous reasons given were it is a bus route and there is no official entrance to the Park along this stretch of 230 Street. Mr. Liatto requested that CB11 reach out to DOT to again investigate the lack of crosswalks in this area. Mr. Dadras concurs. Mr. Budabin proposed this issue be addressed as a safety concern in the letter to DOT regarding the workshop. Mr. Liatto and Mr. Dadras agreed.

Mr. Dadras asked Mr. Euler, Mr. Kelly and Mrs. Donahue to update everyone regarding the issue of snow clearing and removal by the Dept. of Sanitation (DSNY). Mr. Euler stated that there was improvement during the last storm in Mr. Kelly's area. However, the problem persists in the Auburndale section of CB11 with snow being pushed onto the sidewalk and an issue with the malls. An email was sent to DSNY. The area supervisor apologized and stated he would go out during the next storm to ensure the snow doesn't get pushed onto the sidewalk. Mr. Euler is hoping that there will be an improvement the next time it snows. Mr. Kelly stated there was 100% improvement in his area after the last storm. Mrs. Donahue reported that a corner section of one of the malls was damaged by a plow. She also noted that every time personnel changes at DSNY, the issue with the snow plowing goes back to the way it was. Mr. Dadras stated the Committee will continue to advocate for support regarding this issue and said City Council representatives should be contacted. Mr. Kelly agrees the local Council representatives need to be contacted. Mrs. Haider asked if the issue with the mall was reported to the City. Mr. Marziliano said it was. He also suggested a "raise plow" sign at the location. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the sign and the exact location where it would be installed. Mrs. Donahue also suggested metal curb reinforcement be added. Mr. Marziliano advised that there is currently no City curb contract. Mrs. Haider made a motion to have a "raise plow" sign installed at the eastern end of the mall on westbound 46 Avenue between 194 and 195 Streets (approximately mid-way east of 194 Street). Mr. Euler seconded the motion. Further discussion ensued. Mrs. Haider amended the motion to write a letter to DOT and DSNY to resolve the issue of the malls in this area being damaged perhaps by using holster trucks in this vicinity. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Donahue also spoke about two area residents who would like the north/south streets in the area encompassed by Utopia Parkway and Francis Lewis Blvd. between Station Road and Northern Blvd. be converted to one-way operations except for 192 Street which should remain a two-way operation. Mr. Euler added that resident, Joan Jaworski, also would like to see 42 Avenue and Station Road converted to a one-way operation. Mr. Marziliano stated DOT will have to perform a study of the area and then it will go through the Community Board. He added that 51% of the residents on each block need to agree to the conversion. Mr. Dadras requested that locations and surveys be submitted to the Board.

Mr. Kelly was recognized to discuss a proposal to have dedicated bus lanes installed on Northern Blvd. and Union Turnpike. Mr. Kelly advised that MTA officials have said that ridership is down on buses and rails and fares will most likely be raised. The bus redesign plan is currently on hold. This proposal will increase the number of functional buses in service. He stated that there are more businesses than parking spots on Northern Blvd. and many employees of Northwell/LIJ and students of St. John's use public transportation so a bus lane on Union Turnpike would be quite helpful. Mr. Marziliano asked how this proposal would work. Mr. Kelly stated that presently, Northern Blvd. and Union Turnpike have a parking lane and two driving lanes in each direction (on most stretches of both roadways). Mr. Liatto stated that on Northern Blvd., there is "no parking" westbound from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. and eastbound from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. to facilitate rush hour traffic. Mr. Kelly made a motion to request DOT study Northern Blvd. and Union Turnpike for the implementation of a dedicated bus lane in sections that have two through lanes of traffic. Mr. Turner seconded the motion. Discussion ensued concerning only having one lane of through traffic on those arteries. Mrs. Garippa stated residents in her area of Little Neck are vehemently opposed to this idea. Mr. Popa had a concern about the flow of traffic as things normalize post-Covid. He suggested that a bus lane be reverted to a "regular" traffic lane at certain times of the day. He did add that a dedicated bus lane would help with social distancing

as there would be more buses per hour as they would operate closer to an “on time” schedule. Mrs. Haider requested more information about this proposal. Mr. Kelly stated that requesting the study will provide further information. The streets mentioned don’t operate as efficiently as they should. Mr. Turner stated there will always be backlash when proposals are made for change. He also stated that articulated buses can carry 100 people. That would reduce the number of vehicles greatly. Fears of loss of business have not been realized where similar changes have been made. Mr. Euler is concerned it may divert traffic onto residential side streets. Mr. Kelly amended his motion to say that DOT include how streets adjacent to where a dedicated bus lane was implemented were impacted by traffic. Mr. Turner agreed. A roll call vote was taken resulting in a tie of 7 yes and 7 no. Therefore, the motion did not pass.

Respectfully submitted 1/28/2021