Union Turnpike and Austin Street Safety Enhancements

Transportation Planning & Management - Freight Mobility Unit

Presentation to Queens Community Board 6 – 4/16/21
Project Overview

1. Background

2. Existing Conditions

3. Proposal

4. Next Steps
Background
Freight and Your Community

Project Motivation

• 95% of parcels in the Forest Hills area are associated with residential or commercial uses; local deliveries are an everyday necessity

• Rise of e-commerce and on demand delivery; 45% of New Yorker’s get at least one delivery/week – this number has grown as a result of the COVID19 pandemic

Change in Truck Trips to Forest Hills Area ( Compared to Pre-COVID Times) - 2020

Southbound approach of Austin St at Union Tpke

Union Tpke is an important truck route for east-west goods movements
Local and Through Truck Routes

**Key Differences**

- **Local Truck Route Network**
  Designated for trucks with an origin and destination within a borough. This includes trucks that are traveling to make a delivery, or for loading or servicing.

- **Through Truck Route Network**
  Primarily composed of major urban arterials and highways and must be used by trucks that have neither an origin or destination within the borough.

---

**When can trucks go off route?**

- **Allowed**
  To make a delivery off of a designated route

- **Not Allowed**
  To take a shortcut or avoid traffic
Freight Toolkit
How We Manage Freight

- Truck Safety
- Truck Route Management
- Street Improvement Projects
- Bridge Strikes, Outreach & Partnerships
- Neighborhood Loading Zones
- Truck Route Signage
Existing Conditions
Project Location

Background/History

- A better, more direct, connection is needed between Queens Blvd and westbound Union Tpke; the Union Tpke Service Road could provide that connection, but vehicles are currently forced to turn off at Austin St into a more residential area.

- Past Borough Commissioner Maura McCarthy previously expressed interest in improvements at this location.

- Intersection is awkwardly aligned; the potential for head-on collisions exists, illegal maneuvers are made by motorists from the Service Road, a ‘double right turn’ condition exists.

- Pedestrian walking across the intersection often cross via the U-turn space (no pedestrian ramps exist near the concrete island on the Austin St overpass).
Existing Issues

Safety Concerns

- Substandard pedestrian elements
- Illegal turns
- Not ADA accessible
- Right turn conflicts
1. Southbound right: 14%

2. U-Turn: 1%

3. Westbound: 76%

4. Westbound right (via Union Tpke): 5%

5. Westbound left (via Union Tpke Service Road; not legal): 2%

6. Westbound right (via Union Tpke Service Rd): 2%

Data collected during 4:30-5:30 PM (PM peak)
Current Routing for Vehicles via Queens Blvd to Union Tpke WB

Routing to Union Tpke via Queens Blvd

- Queens Blvd to 77th Rd via Kew Forest Lane
- Existing Westbound Routing from Queens Blvd to Union Tpke
- Queens Blvd
- 77th Av
- Kew Forest Lane
- 77th Rd
- Austin St
- 77th Av
- Kew Forest Ln
- Union Tpke

NYC Truck Routes
Existing Routing to Westbound Union Tpke
Existing Wayfinding for Reaching WB Union Tpke from Queens Blvd

Access to Union Tpke

Green wayfinding signs are posted for vehicles to follow for access to Union Tpke via local residential streets.

Most trucks cannot use the prescribed route to reach Union Tpke due to a posted restriction; the Union Tpke Service Road cannot be used to reach Union Tpke going west.

77th Rd and Kew Forest Ln

Queens Blvd Service Rd and 77th Av
Proposal
1. Cars queued up at the intersection often block the crosswalk due to the location of the stop bar.

2. Slip lane for U-turn maneuver is underutilized, pedestrian island is not ADA accessible (and narrow).

3. Double right turn condition exists, not legally possible to get from the Service Road to Union Tpke, cut-through traffic via Austin St likely (destined for Queens Blvd).
1. Bring intersection at Austin St SB and Union Tpke up to standard by:
   a. Aligning the crosswalk with the (expanded) concrete island
   b. Constructing new pedestrian ramps (ADA accessible)

2. Building out the existing concrete island (resulting in closure of the existing U-turn slip lane) to increase pedestrian space

3. Allow vehicles to access Union Tpke from the Service Road and restrict right turns from Union Tpke to Austin St to increase safety for all road users (concrete median to be extended out to facilitate the restriction by design)
Union Tpke and Austin St Overpass Location
Proposal Implementation Vision

Before

Union Tpke and Austin St (QN)

Willoughby Av and Emerson Av (BK)
Next Steps
Next Steps

Timeline

Spring – Summer 2021: Implementation

Late 2021 – Early 2022: Continue project monitoring

Wayfinding

• Route wayfinding – direct trucks and other vehicles to use Union Tpke instead of residential streets

Curb Access

• Maintain parking and school loading access

Partnerships & Continued Outreach

• Continued outreach
Thank You!

Questions?
Appendix
Alternatives for accessing Austin St from Union Tpke

38% of weekday trips via Austin St (NB) currently are destined for a portion of Queens Blvd; 14% are for local access to Austin St
## Existing Routing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coming from:</th>
<th>Going to:</th>
<th>WB Union Tpke (MR)</th>
<th>Austin St (at Kew Forest School)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WB Union Tpke (MR)</td>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>Continue through tunnel under Queens Blvd</td>
<td>Continue through tunnel under Queens Blvd &gt; Right turn onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB Queens Blvd</td>
<td>Trucks</td>
<td>Continue through tunnel under Queens Blvd</td>
<td>Continue through tunnel under Queens Blvd &gt; Right turn onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB Queens Blvd</td>
<td>Right on 77th Av &gt; Left on Kew Forest Ln &gt; Right on 77th Rd &gt; Left on Austin St &gt; Right on Union Tpke</td>
<td>No legal route for trucks over 33'</td>
<td>Right onto Union Tpke SR &gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB Queens Blvd</td>
<td>Right on Union Tpke SR &gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
<td>No legal route for trucks over 33'</td>
<td>Right onto Union Tpke SR &gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB Queens Blvd</td>
<td>Left on 77th Av &gt; Left on Kew Forest Ln &gt; Right on 77th Rd &gt; Left on Austin St &gt; Right on Union Tpke</td>
<td>No legal route for trucks over 33'</td>
<td>U-turn at 77th Av &gt; Right on Union Tpke SR &gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB Queens Blvd</td>
<td>U-turn at 77th Av &gt; Right on Union Tpke SR &gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Proposed Routing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coming from:</th>
<th>Going to:</th>
<th>WB Union Tpke (main line)</th>
<th>Austin St (at Kew Forest School)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>Trucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB Union Tpke (MR)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue through tunnel</td>
<td>Continue through tunnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>under Queens Blvd</td>
<td>under Queens Blvd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Right onto Queens Blvd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; U-turn at 77th Av</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Right on Union Tpke SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB Queens Blvd</td>
<td>Right on Union Tpke SR</td>
<td>Right on Union Tpke SR</td>
<td>Right onto Union Tpke SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Merge onto Union Tpke</td>
<td>&gt; Right on Union Tpke SR</td>
<td>&gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Merge onto Union Tpke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Right onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB Queens Blvd</td>
<td>U-turn at 77th Av</td>
<td>U-turn at 77th Av</td>
<td>U-turn at 77th Av</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Right on Union Tpke SR</td>
<td>&gt; Right on Union Tpke SR</td>
<td>&gt; Right on Union Tpke SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Merge onto Union Tpke</td>
<td>&gt; Merge onto Union Tpke</td>
<td>&gt; Right onto Austin St</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= same as existing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>