



**New York City  
Department of Transportation**

Office of the  
Lower Manhattan  
Borough Commissioner  
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New York, NY 10013

**Janette Sadik-Khan, Commissioner**

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May 1, 2009

Dominic Pisciotta, Board Chair  
Community Board 3, Manhattan  
59 East 4th Street  
New York, NY 10003

Dear Mr. Pisciotta:

I am writing in response to the resolutions passed by Community Board 3 relating to the planned Chatham Square/ Park Row Improvement project. Please allow me first to express my appreciation for the Board's leadership and commitment to dialogue with the City on this difficult project. By forming the Chatham Square Task Force, Community Board 3 provided the City team with a partner for constructive discussion about ways to improve our project and meet the community's needs. I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of District Manager Susan Stetzer, Transportation Chair David Crane and Chatham Square Task Force leader Thomas Yu, whose professionalism and dedication made this collaboration possible.

The entire project management team truly appreciates the effort that was put into the development of your proposed alternatives. We have therefore submitted each of them to a careful and comprehensive multi-agency review. Please allow us to respond to each of the resolutions individually.

**Resolution 1**

Chatham Square Task Force Resolution Number One contains seven articles. Our response to these articles can be found below.

**Article 1: Community Alternative Configuration**

The Chatham Square Task Force developed an alternative configuration which would allow motorists to travel northbound directly between St. James Place and East Broadway. There are indeed traffic benefits that could be realized with this connection. As a result of the Park Row closure, St. James Place now accommodates a significant increase in vehicles seeking to travel northbound, and some of these motorists are destined for East Broadway. However, our analysis shows that a larger portion of those detoured vehicles are destined for the Bowery and points north. The St. James Place to East Broadway connection would therefore not mitigate the negative impact of the Park Row closure as effectively as the direct connection between St. James Place and the Bowery that we are proposing.

The community proposal also has disadvantages that the City team's planned realignment does not. By carving a lane from the existing Kimlau Square, the community proposal would result in a net loss of open space and a further deterioration of the pedestrian realm. This action would not address the negative impacts on urban design and neighborhood character that were identified by the One Police Plaza EIS and must be included in any mitigation program. From a community perspective, it would also isolate the existing Kimlau Memorial

Arch and Lin Ze Xu statue on an island where they are less accessible to pedestrians, and reduce space for the American Legion's three annual gatherings. The City team's proposal, on the other hand, offers a new 27,000-square foot public open space that will be developed into a signature plaza for Chinatown. It also provides a larger and more appropriate space for the American Legion's regular gatherings, and places the Lin Ze Xu statue in its own plaza, surrounded by ornamental plantings, trees and benches.

Most importantly, however, the Task Force proposal fails to adequately address pedestrian safety – a major goal of the City's proposal and a critical concern of the community at large. While the City's proposal reduces crossing distances across the Bowery and improves visibility for pedestrians at several key locations in the square, the community alternative worsens pedestrian conditions by creating a new point of vehicle-pedestrian conflict at a location where visibility is compromised by a curve in the roadway. Ultimately, the Task Force alternative closely resembles the condition of Chatham Square prior to its reconfiguration in the late 1990s. The City proceeded with that reconfiguration in part to alleviate precisely these same pedestrian safety concerns.

### **Article 2: Oliver and St. James Place**

The Chatham Square Task Force requests that the City keep a fully signalized, protected crosswalk at the intersection of Oliver Street and St. James Place. DOT's traffic engineering units have reviewed this carefully and concluded that a fully signalized intersection at the intersection with Oliver Street is not feasible given the proposed configuration. We could not signalize the crosswalk being proposed without also signalizing both Oliver Street and the right turn slip roadway on the south side of the traffic island (that makes the right turn onto St. James Place). The plan already calls for a complex four phase signal linking the two newly created intersections. It would be extremely difficult to incorporate Oliver Street and the Worth Street slip lane into the overall signal operation - that is why the design calls for them to be "stop" controlled. Moreover, if a crosswalk were to be placed there, it would have to be timed in conjunction with the signal just north of it, meaning that vehicles would enter into conflict with those pedestrians during both phases, and this would likely cause gridlock conditions.

The existing crossing of St. James Place is less than ideal for pedestrians. We believe that its replacement will significantly improve conditions there, particularly for children and seniors. In the current alignment, vehicles coming from Worth Street or the Bowery seeking to travel southbound on St. James Place must turn around a blind corner and make a right turning movement that conflicts with the crosswalk at Oliver Street. Because of the Park Row closure, there are more vehicles making that movement than originally anticipated when the intersection was first configured. In the proposed reconfiguration, we will be replacing that intersection with a much safer one. We acknowledge that it will take a little longer to cross, but it will significantly improve pedestrian safety.

We should also note that we've replaced the direct crossing just one block to the south. At the request of the community, we recently installed a new crosswalk at the intersection of St. James Place at James Street, where schoolchildren can cross more safely.

### **Article 3: Additional Capacity on Eastbound Worth Street**

The Chatham Square Task Force recommends the addition of a second eastbound lane on Worth Street. This recommendation was very well received, given the significant improvement it would generate for traffic on Worth Street. Indeed, the original proposal for

Chatham Square included a second eastbound lane on Worth Street and a third southbound lane on the Bowery.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to build this configuration because of the existence of State-protected parkland in the intersection. The Board of Estimate approved the mapping of the 0.92-acre public place on August 26, 1960. A local law was adopted in May, 1961 by the City Council approving the mapping which discontinued the street lands so that the parcel could become part of the “park lands of the City.” Because this City-designated park parcel has been in existence for so many years, it now enjoys special protection under State statute. In order for this parkland to be eliminated, a special “parkland alienation” process would be needed. This process requires legislative approval at the State and City level.

The City identified the existence of this park parcel during the due diligence phase of the planning process in late 2007. At that time, the City team made inquiries to determine whether City and State elected officials would support a parkland alienation procedure. The City team did not receive support for this course of action. The team therefore developed an alternative intersection design and updated the One Police Plaza EIS documentation with a Technical Memorandum discussing this change.

Now that the City is ready to solicit bids for the construction of the project, it is simply too late to consider such a fundamental change to the design. We asked our infrastructure experts at the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) to evaluate whether this change could be made, and they informed us that it would necessitate another five to seven months of design time. More importantly, it would require a new alignment of the DEP water main, which would in turn impact the catch basin and private utility work that must be done to accommodate it. Put simply, there is no aspect of construction work that could be started until after the new alignment is completed. Due to our scheduling considerations, this is not an acceptable alternative.

#### **Article 4: “Barnes Dance” at the Worth/Bowery and Bowery/Division Intersections**

The Chatham Square Task Force requests an all-pedestrian phase (“Barnes Dance”) at the Worth/Bowery and Bowery/Division intersections. Due to the constraints of the Chatham Square intersection and the number of vehicles traversing the Worth/Bowery intersection, we have determined that the introduction of an all-pedestrian phase at this location would cause unacceptable delays to vehicles traveling on Worth Street and the Bowery. We agree with the calculation that you cited from traffic consultant Philip Habib stating that an all-pedestrian phase may have been possible if we were able to provide an additional eastbound lane on Worth Street and an additional southbound lane on the Bowery (assuming successful parkland alienation). Because this is no longer being considered, the “Barnes Dance” at the Worth/Bowery intersection would not be feasible. Nonetheless, additional adjustments to signal timing can be considered at any point in the future.

While not technically a “Barnes Dance,” the current signalization scheme for the Bowery/Division Street intersection already includes a signal phase where pedestrians can cross free of vehicle conflicts.

#### **Article 5: To-Scale Model for Articulated Bus Turning Movements**

The Chatham Square Task Force requests the City prepare a to-scale model where articulated buses could demonstrate their ability to maneuver the turn they will make from southbound Worth Street to westbound Worth Street and on to southbound Park Row. The

City team has asked experts in our agency, in the MTA, and those working with an outside traffic engineering firm to evaluate this.

Our agency experts have used the industry standard turning simulation software called “Auto-Turn” to test this movement, and shown that it works without any problem. This software allows us to perform a virtual turning test similar to the one that the Task Force requested.

We have also asked the MTA/New York City Transit to evaluate whether this movement – or any other – would create difficulty for their bus operations. They responded to us with the following:

- “Northbound M15 from Park Row to East Broadway will be improved with the relocation of the plaza”
- “There are no difficulties with the left or right-turning movements in either direction for articulated buses. The 60-foot articulated buses, although longer than the 40-foot standard buses, have a shorter turning radius than the standard-sized buses which allow them to make tight turns more easily. The new plaza design[s] do not present *any* tight turns for the Southbound 103.”

Finally, we asked Philip Habib and Associates to incorporate articulated buses into the micro-simulation traffic model that he prepared for the intersection. Mr. Habib reported that they posed no trouble for the traffic network.

#### **Article 6: Retention of Bus Stops at Catherine/East Broadway**

The Chatham Square Task Force requests that the City not eliminate M9/M15 bus stop at the southwest corner of Catherine Street and East Broadway. The City team has never intended or proposed the elimination of this bus stop. The current plan allows space for this bus stop.

#### **Article 7: Request for Comprehensive Traffic Calming in Chinatown**

The Chatham Square Task Force requests that the City proceed with a comprehensive traffic calming agenda in Chinatown, similar to what was implemented in Downtown Brooklyn. Fortunately, DOT has been focused on improving pedestrian and vehicle safety in Chinatown and the Lower East Side for some time, and there are many improvements to which we can refer. We will also be expanding existing programs to bring still more enhancements to the area.

Chinatown is the focus of comprehensive traffic calming measures to improve both mobility and safety—especially for pedestrians. We have made numerous, site-specific improvements throughout the neighborhood, particularly in the East Broadway area. Chinatown and the surrounding Lower East side neighborhood have also been selected as two of our senior pedestrian safety focus areas and significant safety improvements have already been implemented at key locations such as Chrystie and Forsyth Streets. In addition, several schools in Chinatown have already had or are slated for improvements as part of our comprehensive Safe Routes to Schools program.

Along the East Broadway corridor, we have installed a traffic signal and crosswalk at East Broadway mid-block between Catharine and Market Streets within the last 18 months, and installed pedestrian bulb-outs at the adjacent East Broadway intersections at Catharine and Market and at Market and Division near East Broadway. Pedestrian bulb-outs are extended

at crosswalks, which help reduce pedestrian crossing times and make pedestrians more visible to people in cars.

As part of our Safe Routes to Schools program, improvements are planned or in place through the Safe Routes to Schools program at P.S. 1 (on Henry Street), P.S. 42 (on Hester), P.S. 124 (on Division), I.S. 131 and Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem (on East Broadway), bringing safer crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, improved signs and signal timing around schools with some of the highest accident rates in the City.

Work has already begun to increase safety in a senior safety district on the Lower East Side, which also includes substantial parts of Chinatown. Additional swaths in the heart of Chinatown are already slated for traffic calming in another safety zone entirely located within the neighborhood, including the Bowery corridor from Canal Street to Chatham Square.

The Lower East Side and Chinatown were selected as senior safety areas owing to their high concentrations of senior pedestrian fatality and severe injury crashes. DOT has already installed pedestrian refuge islands to help seniors cross the street at key intersections, and we have retimed 43 pedestrian signals to account for seniors' slower walking pace. At 25 of those intersections, we added even more pedestrian crossing time to make it safer for seniors.

As part of the Lower East Side Senior Safety Area project, DOT has installed a Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) at Delancey and Essex Streets to give pedestrians a head start while crossing. Rutgers Street between Cherry and Madison Streets was targeted for safety enhancements, including a redesign of the roadway by installing a painted center median and planted pedestrian refuge islands to protect pedestrians and reduce crossing distance. Pedestrian and vehicular safety was improved at the intersection of Canal, Division, and Ludlow Streets by implementing the closure of eastbound Division Street between Ludlow and Canal Streets, restricting unnecessary one way access and adding additional pedestrian space.

Most Chinatown improvements will begin in 2010; however, there are some early action items that will be implemented this year, including retiming signals to accommodate slower walking speed in the area. We look forward to working with you as these important safety improvements are implemented. Likewise, we hope to engage the members of your Board in a dialogue about potential further enhancements.

## **Resolution 2**

Resolution 2 deals with the proposal to alienate parkland in order to allow for an improved intersection design. While this resolution is directed to the attention of the State elected officials, we do not believe that it is possible to proceed with an alienation procedure at this late stage in the project design process. The City team made a concerted effort to gain support for parkland alienation when such a process was still feasible, but was not successful.

### **Resolution 3**

Resolution 3 has three articles. Our response is as follows:

#### **Article 1**

The Chatham Square Task Force requests that DOT and its consultant team create a micro-assignment model to evaluate the impacts of Brooklyn Bridge traffic diversions in Lower Manhattan. We have considered three factors in determining a response to this request: (1) our confidence level in the Synchro traffic modeling already completed by traffic engineers working on the Brooklyn Bridge project; (2) the suitability of existing micro-simulation models for this purpose; (3) the feasibility of preparing a new micro-simulation model.

The Brooklyn Bridge project team tasked traffic consultant SIMCO Engineers with creating a Synchro-based traffic model to analyze impacts of Brooklyn Bridge detour traffic on key corridors and intersections in Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, Chinatown, and the Financial District. To meet this challenge, they have completed a detailed evaluation of the East River Bridges and their approaches on the Manhattan and Brooklyn sides, and analyzed intersections along Houston Street, Delancey Street, Canal Street, Worth Street, Chambers Street, St. James Place, Water Street, South Street, and West Street. Their approach has been exhaustive and their careful analysis has been the basis for our understanding of the potential conflict between the Brooklyn Bridge detours and the Chatham Square project. Our agency is highly confident in the results that we have received from SIMCO and in the integrity of their work. Moreover, we feel that their modeling efforts are fully sufficient and appropriate for the purpose of evaluating the impacts of the Brooklyn Bridge detours.

Nonetheless, we have given careful consideration to Community's request for an exhaustive micro-simulation model. Our first step was to determine whether existing micro-simulation models could be used for this purpose. The Canal Street area model (used by the CATS Study) covers an area bounded by Forsyth Street on the east, Spring Street on the north, the Holland Tunnel approach area on the west, and Franklin Street on the south. This model's catchment area does not adequately cover the area that would be impacted by the Brooklyn Bridge detours. We also examined the Lower Manhattan model, but the scope of this model does not extend north of Worth Street. As a result, neither of these models enables us to analyze the affected intersections, corridors and communities with the appropriate level of detail.

Finally, we evaluated whether it would be feasible to create a new micro-simulation model to cover the areas of Downtown Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, Chinatown, and Lower Manhattan that would be impacted by the Brooklyn Bridge detours. We spoke to several experts about how long it would take to perform data collection, calibration and validation. The consensus was that this effort would take well over a year and a half to complete. Given the project's current schedule, this is simply not a feasible alternative.

#### **Article 2**

The Chatham Square Task Force requests that DOT and elected officials reach out to the MTA to arrange for toll-free access on the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel (BBT) to help divert detoured traffic from the Manhattan Bridge and Chinatown. DOT is currently negotiating with the MTA on this matter.

#### **Article 3**

This article requests that DOT and its consultants present the results of their micro-assignment modeling to the community. Please see response to Article 1.

**Resolution 4**

Resolution 4 deals with a request for local hiring and apprenticeship. Unfortunately, the Board's proposal is not legally permissible under the terms of the City Charter. Giving preference to local workers in the manner the Board requests contravenes the City's requirement for competitive bidding and therefore cannot be considered. Local firms and local workers are certainly eligible to seek out the contract on the construction job and will be awarded the work if theirs is the lowest responsive bid. Further discussion on this matter should be referred to the City's Law Department, which advises all City agencies on these matters.

On behalf of the entire City project team, please allow me once again to thank the Board for its valuable input into this process. I look forward to working with your team on ways to mitigate construction and traffic impacts as this project moves from the planning and design phase into implementation.

Very truly yours,

Luis Sanchez, P.E.  
Lower Manhattan Borough Commissioner

c: Margaret Forgione, Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
Dino Ng, Assistant Commissioner for Infrastructure, Department of Design and Construction  
Seth Myers, Program Manager, Mayor's Office of Capital Project Development  
Pauline Yu, Community Liaison, Mayor's Office-Community Affairs Unit