

## **A Plan or An Imposition**

More than a few mention a concern that City Hall and its DOT push the plazas along Broadway and 34<sup>th</sup> Street not for any real long term benefit – but some perverse only in NYC moment – to create conditions – aka unthinkable levels of parking lot style traffic congestion to somehow make the public clamor for tolls (aka congestion pricing) to keep drivers out of Manhattan. Do not think for one moment, we oppose dedicated bus lanes making or city attractive for residents and those who come to work and visit here. Just as top-down planning drove PlaNYC, all appear that the plaza plans reflect top-down thinking with window dressing presentations that substitute (rather poorly) for real community engagement. That was the PlanNYC experience of this correspondent who was the recorder for two different breakout session who found none of his sound recommendations embraced by the breakout group and the full group reflected in the online “reports” later posted at NYC.gov.

[http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/manhattan/new\\_union\\_square\\_qoIwtgVh6YzOqh7U74K8AJ](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/manhattan/new_union_square_qoIwtgVh6YzOqh7U74K8AJ)



Updated: Tue., Apr. 27, 2010, 6:19 AM

## **New Union Square**

By CANDACE AMOS

*Last Updated:* 6:19 AM, April 27, 2010

*Posted:* 3:40 AM, April 27, 2010

The city last night unveiled its plans last to make Union Square more like Times Square by installing a pedestrian plaza and closing traffic lanes -- infuriating some area residents, who claim they'll see significantly more cars on their block.

The Department of Transportation spent more than an hour laying out its case at a community hearing, including plans to shut down Broadway between East 18th and 17th streets.

"You're taking the burden off of 17th Street and putting it on 18th Street," fumed area resident Roz Harris during the 30 minutes given for the public to speak.

The DOT would also add tables and chairs to East 17th Street between Broadway and Park Avenue South on the north side of the block.

A bicycle lane would be installed on the south side of the street.

"They should leave residential neighborhoods alone," said another irate local, Madeline Renee. "They are creating a big problem."

Other changes would include shutting down Union Square West between East 15th and 14th streets.

That angered Bill Abrahamson, who owns 1 Union Square West, a mix of business and residential units.

"I haven't heard anything about the economic impact," he said, noting the difficulty of getting deliveries to his tenants.

Officials said the changes would likely be in place by Labor Day, and could be reversed if the public is opposed.

The DOT said its plans would cut down on the number of pedestrians struck by cars and would add more green space to the neighborhood.

"I believe they were very thoughtful about this," said resident Noah Osnos.

<http://nyc.gov/html/dot/html/sidewalks/publicplaza.shtml>

<http://nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/currentproj.shtml>

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/sidewalks/pedestrian\\_projects.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/sidewalks/pedestrian_projects.shtml)

<http://nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/stratplan.shtml>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/23/nyregion/23street.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

The New York Times logo, featuring the text "The New York Times" in a stylized, serif font, enclosed in a rectangular border.

**[N.Y. / Region](#)**

April 22, 2010

**Plan for 34th St. Puts Buses and Feet First**

By **[MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM](#)**

From the city that has banned cars from broad swaths of Broadway and put [picnic tables in Times Square](#), here comes another great reshaping of New York's streetscape.

The Bloomberg administration is moving ahead with what amounts to a radical, river-to-river reimagining of another major corridor: 34th Street, the Midtown thoroughfare that is home to Macy's — and some of the city's most congested traffic.

Automobiles would be banned on the block between Fifth Avenue and Avenue of the Americas, creating a pedestrian plaza bookended by [Herald Square](#) and the [Empire State Building](#). The result would be a street effectively split in two.

On the west side of the pedestrian plaza, all car traffic would flow west, toward the Hudson River. On the east side, all car traffic would move east, toward the East River. Buses would still operate in both directions, and through the pedestrian plaza as well, but in dedicated lanes separated from passenger cars by a concrete barrier.

A public hearing on the plan was held on Wednesday, and officials from the Transportation Department met with business leaders last week. The intent is to create more space for pedestrians and to speed up bus trips on the street's crosstown routes, which are among the slowest in the city.

The plan was proposed in 2008 by the department, but the drive to put it into effect has recently accelerated. The city completed a study of the proposal in February, and is now preparing the environmental and design reviews.

The final design for the plaza and traffic changes is expected in fall 2011, with the street ready for use by the end of 2012. The redesign is expected to cost a minimum of \$30 million, and officials said they would continue to tweak the plan based on public reaction and in-house studies.

“It's going to improve the mobility along the corridor,” said [Janette Sadik-Khan](#), the city's transportation commissioner. “We expect the bus travel times to improve by up to 35 percent, which is something that up to 33,000 passengers that currently travel crosstown will appreciate.”

Ms. Sadik-Khan said a city study showed that only one in 10 people travel along 34th Street by car, including taxis; the rest walk or use mass transit. Faster buses would benefit “the majority of the people who are actually using the street,” she said.

With the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, tourist attractions like Macy's, and major transit hubs (including a ferry terminal and helipad), 34th Street has some of the highest transportation demands in the city — and it does not benefit from crosstown subway lines as 42nd Street does.

Officials have long viewed the street as a prime candidate for an experimental bus lane that would be separated from regular car traffic. Bus lanes would bisect the pedestrian plaza and carry tourist buses and some private lines as well as those operated by [New York City Transit](#). Buses would run in both directions along the entire length of 34th.

Transit buses using the lane would also benefit from other new initiatives: passengers will be

able to pay for bus tickets at sidewalk kiosks before boarding, and electronic devices on buses could signal traffic lights to remain green as the buses approach intersections.

Officials decided to make car traffic one-way to make it easier and safer, rather than requiring pedestrians to navigate across both east-west bus lanes and east-west car lanes.

It remains unclear how the plan might affect car traffic in the surrounding area.

As well as being a hub for commuters and tourist buses, 34th Street acts as a critical conduit for travelers who use the street to travel between the Lincoln Tunnel and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel. Drivers seeking a route across town might be forced onto nearby cross-streets; 36th Street is a popular eastbound approach to Queens, and 33rd and 35th Streets may be common westbound routes, traffic experts said.

Transit advocates were nearly universal in their praise of the program, saying it would encourage use of mass transit and make 34th more palatable to pedestrians.

And they noted that the pedestrian plazas in Times Square had allowed New Yorkers to acclimate to street designs that were once considered alien.

“Maybe three years ago, it was radical, but not today,” said Veronica Vanterpool, associate director of the [Tri-State Transportation Campaign](#), a nonprofit policy group that supports the plan.

People attending the hearing on Wednesday, however, said they had concerns that they feared would not be addressed by the city.

“It’s a project that seems a fait accompli,” said Iris Steinhardt, a Murray Hill resident who arrived at the public hearing with several residents of her building on East 34th Street.

Ms. Steinhardt is worried that the bus lanes, which abut the sidewalk, will destroy the loading zone in front of her building, making it hard to get deliveries. She said a flier about the plan posted in their building lobby was the first she had heard about it.

Dan Biederman, president of the 34th Street Partnership, a Herald Square business group, supports the plan for the most part, save for a few quibbles. But he has told his members to review the plan quickly.

“Please complain right now, or within the next few weeks,” Mr. Biederman said he told them. “This is not your father’s D.O.T. This agency says they do something and they do it.”

**Crain's**

Apr 23, 2010

### **34th Street proposal a bust for Garment Center**

**Businesses fear delivery delays if new plan to close off West 34th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues goes into effect.**

By **Adrienne Pasquarelli**

**Published:** April 23, 2010 - 1:57 pm

Businesses in the Garment District and nearby retailers are reeling from news of a city plan that would ban automobiles along the West 34th Street block between Fifth and Sixth avenues.

The plan, which would cost about \$30 million and be ready by 2012, would change that part of the street into a pedestrian plaza, similar to a recent park in Times Square. Buses would still run both east and west in the center. Traffic would be re-routed, leaving apparel factories and design showrooms in the Garment Center with potentially delayed deliveries and altered schedules.

The West 34th Street changes would be yet another blow for the garment district, which is currently figuring out how to deal with the relocation of Mercedes Benz Fashion Week from nearby Bryant Park uptown to Lincoln Center.

Ramdat Harihar, chief executive of R&C Apparel Corp., a factory on West 39th Street that manufactures clothing for designers such as Anna Sui and Nanette Lepore, said the plan will have a severe impact on his business. While Mr. Harihar receives deliveries one or two times a day, he said they will take 90 minutes in the future, instead of just 60.

“I know they want it to look similar to places in Europe, but New York City is New York City—we need the hustle and the bustle here,” he said. “It’s a good way of thinking, closing the street for pedestrians, but at the same time, business-wise, there is a lot of effect.”

Retailers in the area had mixed feelings about the proposed corridor changes. Department store Macy's, which already faces a pedestrian plaza in Herald Square, is still reviewing the proposal and declined to comment at this time, a spokeswoman said.

Desigual, a Barcelona-based clothing chain with a location in SoHo, opened on West 34th Street and Fifth Avenue two weeks ago. Migan Foster, manager for the outpost, said the proposal shouldn't affect his business because the sidewalks are already wide enough for pedestrians to linger in front of shops.

“It won't generate more walk-ins,” said Ms. Foster. “We have no problem with people coming in. I think it would be a waste [for other businesses].”

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Read and view this futuristic musing by the NY Times:

<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/04/28/everything-the-traffic-will-allow/>