

INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY, INC.

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Statement at March 21, 2019 Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer Hearing on Manhattan Congestion Pricing Plan

The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM) is a NYC-based non-profit concerned with reducing motor vehicular congestion and improving the livability of dense urban places.

IRUM has long supported congestion pricing as an important element of a comprehensive plan to reduce vehicle miles of travel in the crowded core of the Manhattan Central Business District. IRUM commends Borough President Gale Brewer for hosting this hearing and encouraging a broad discussion of strategies to reduce the adverse impacts of excessive car use in the heart of NYC.

IRUM began as an advocacy organization - Auto-Free New York - which was founded in 1990 nearly three decades ago. Auto-Free New York published its four-year Livable City plan for NYC in the centerfold of its *Auto-Free Press*:

<https://www.auto-free.org/4yrplan.html>

Over 5,000 copies of the plan were distributed on Earth Day 1990 at a street fair table in front of the Exxon Headquarters on a vehicle-free (even if only for one-day) 6h Avenue.

That plan described a set of 15 strategies that would package “carrots” like a vastly improved transit system, with more frequent bus and rail service and reduced or eliminated fares, combined with “sticks” - like cordon tolls and market-based curb parking fees.

The simplest and most effective way to reduce vehicular traffic on Manhattan’s congested streets is to simply close many of these streets to traffic. Initial steps, beginning with the Lindsay Administration in the 1970s, produced a few notable examples, like the Fulton Mall in Downtown Brooklyn. Subsequent Administrations have added several more segments.

With fewer cars in the core, an ambitious plan to develop a grid of auto-free streets (copy attached) could be advanced, starting with a river-to-river auto-free light rail boulevard on 42nd Street, long supported by the Borough President and other elected officials.

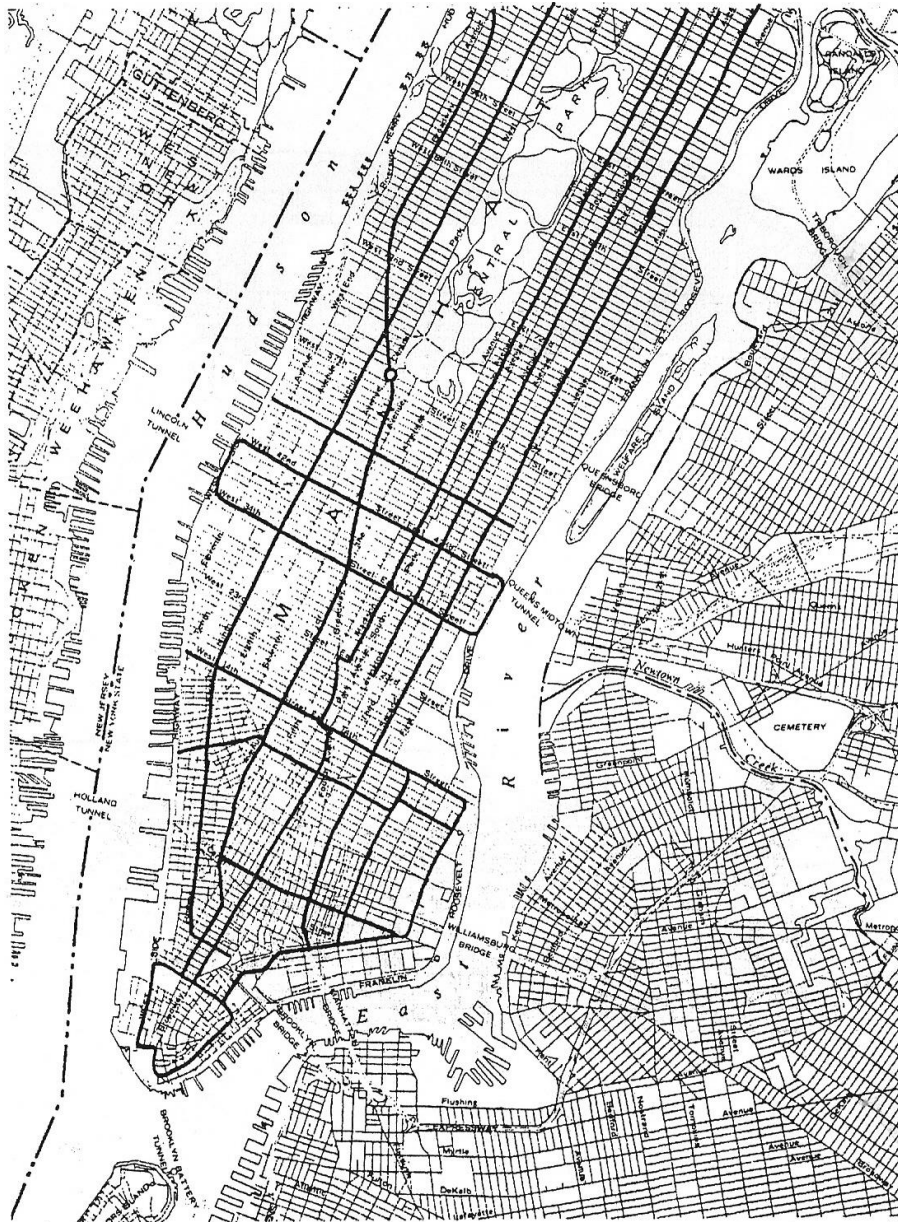
Missing is a coherent, comprehensive borough-wide street use plan.

IRUM urges Borough President Brewer to press NYCDOT and NYCDCP to prepare such a plan, focusing on the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD), that complements congestion pricing strategies now being advanced. This planning effort, with adequate public input, should produce a Street Use Plan that rationally allocates street space, the city's most valuable real estate, among competing users – pedestrians, transit riders, cyclists, truckers making deliveries, motorists and for-hire vehicle passengers. Such a planning effort was outlined in a November 13, 2009 letter to sent to NYCDOT by Manhattan CB5. (Copy attached).

The MBP should also urge NYC to partner with other regional entities to produce a coherent plan for modernizing and expanding the regional rail system serving the 22 million person NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area. A fresh opportunity to develop such a plan can spring from the recent commitment by the Governors of New York and New Jersey to help fund much needed new Hudson River passenger rail capacity. Planning for this rail tunnel should begin with a full release of detailed planning studies carried out by the 2003 Access to the Region's Core (ARC) Major Investment Study. Rail advocacy organizations in NY and NJ outlined such an effort during the 2013 centennial celebration for Grand Central Terminal (copy attached).

These planning initiatives should include a Manhattan CBD Cordon Toll, as a way to systematically reduce vehicle-miles of motor vehicle use in the core. A regional rail plan would show how the parts of the region outside the Manhattan CBD, including the five boroughs and the suburbs, can be better served by taking advantage of the extensive rail network that focuses on the Manhattan CBD.

IRUM urges the Borough President to champion these planning initiatives.



Light Rail/Pedestrian Street Grid for Manhattan

Starting with **vision42** - an auto-free light rail boulevard on 42nd Street – as a prototype, a whole grid of auto-free light rail streets would make sense in Manhattan, the nation’s most crowded urban place. The grid shown in this diagram, one of many possible options, includes the streets that have the greatest number of pedestrians and most of the busiest surface transit lines. In Lower Manhattan and in the Village additional auto-free streets, without light rail lines, would be desirable. Ninety percent of the 600 miles of streets in Manhattan would remain open to traffic to accommodate goods movement and essential car traffic. About 61 miles of light rail line are included in this plan, of which 51 miles would be in pedestrian-only streets. At \$200 million per mile, the grid would cost some twelve billion to construct, far less than the cost of completing the full-length 2nd Avenue Subway. Surface light rail transit provides a smooth, appealing ride in a self-enforcing path and with the permanence that reinforces new development. The grid would be part of a much broader transport plan – including congestion pricing, market-based curb parking, more frequent subway and regional rail service and integrated, reduced transit fares -- to improve the livability and economic vitality of NYC and the region.

George Haikalis, President, Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM)
geo@irum.org www.irum.org January 2, 2017



MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FIVE

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Vikki Barbero, *Chair*

Wally Rubin, *District Manager*

November 13, 2009

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 37th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Re: Implementing a Surface Transportation Plan Study for Midtown Manhattan.

Dear Manhattan Borough Commission Forgione:

The Manhattan Central Business District has the nation's largest concentration of commercial activities and is the primary economic engine for the greater metropolitan area. It is the focus of a subsurface rail transit system that is among the most extensive in the world. Nevertheless, Manhattan's streets are frequently overwhelmed with motor vehicles, and for many hours of the day, traffic congestion is severe. Pedestrians and surface transit in particular are negatively impacted, resulting in both substantial amounts of wasted time for vehicles and pedestrians as well as reductions in potential economic development.

A number of independent efforts have been attempted in order to improve the situation. Last year, for example, New York City tried to advance a congestion pricing plan that would have reduced vehicle-miles of travel in the core. New pilot programs aimed at reconfiguring street space to favor pedestrians, cyclists and buses also are being implemented. Missing, however, is a comprehensive plan for optimizing transportation, parking and pedestrian thoroughfares in the Central Business District.

This project that Community Board Five proposes, and which has appeared in a number of our recent District Needs Statements, is a comprehensive Surface Transportation Plan for the portion of the Manhattan Central Business District between 60th Street and 14th Street – the area overseen by our Community Board as well as Manhattan Community Boards Four and Six. The plan should include specific recommendations for optimizing the share of street space allocated to pedestrians, cyclists, cars, taxis, trucks and surface transit over this entire area.

Community Board Five would like to suggest that the planning effort incorporate some or all of the following: (i) assembling a data base of existing pedestrian and vehicular travel volumes; (ii) mapping the current allocation of street space for different categories of users; (iii) establishing a set of goals and objectives for the plan; (iv) devising alternative street space scenarios; (v) developing and deploying an analysis methodology for evaluating these scenarios at a "sketch plan" level of detail; (vi) consulting with stakeholders; and (vii) preparing a final set of recommendations. Alternative scenarios might focus on larger-scale changes in street space allocation -- like pedestrian-only street segments, dedicated transit lanes and protected bike lanes. It is important in any case that the evaluation of planning scenarios include consideration of district-wide impacts of broader city and regional proposals, such as congestion pricing and transit service enhancements. A project oversight committee could include representatives from both the NYC Department of Transportation, the NYC Department of City Planning, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the New York City Transit Authority division of Surface Transit, along with perhaps three representatives from the midtown Manhattan community boards, each of whom has been selected by the Executive Committee of his/her respective board.

We know that you share our concerns and hope that you will act on our suggestion. We look forward to assisting you in any way that we can to initiate the preparation of this vital project for midtown Manhattan.

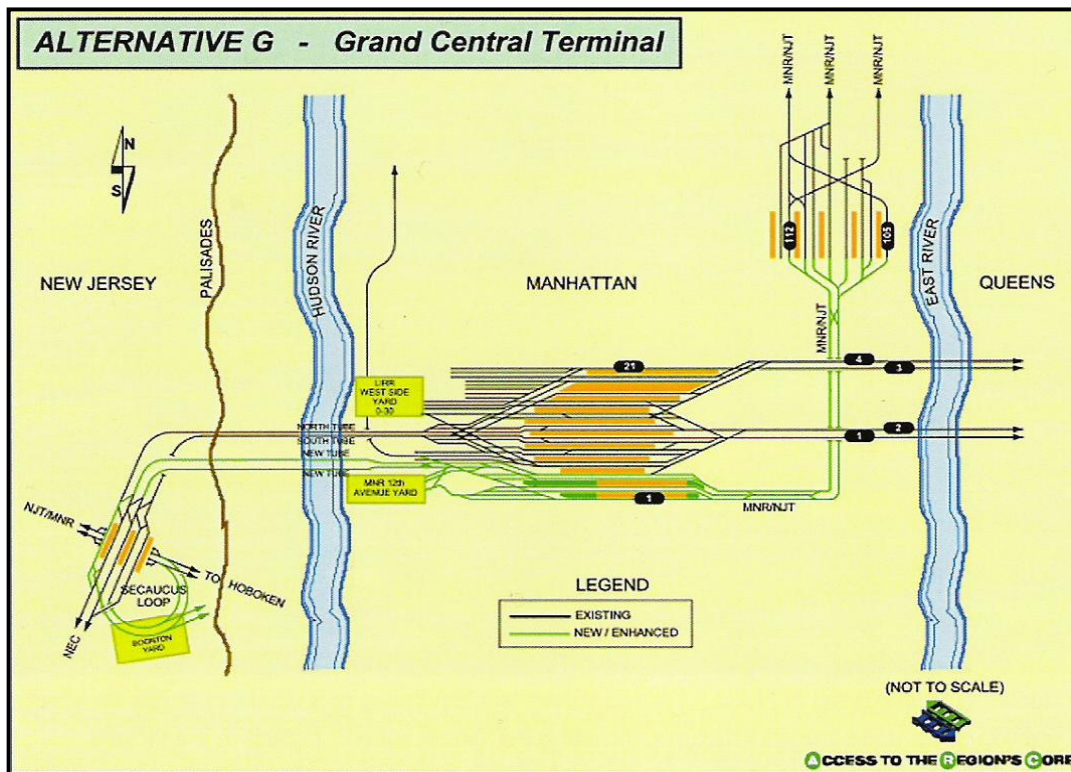
Sincerely,



Vikki Barbero
Chair

Thomas Miller
Chair, Transportation/Environment Committee

CC: Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
Hon. Thomas Duane
Hon. Liz Krueger
Hon. Richard Gottfried
Hon. Carolyn Maloney
Hon. Deborah Glick
Hon. Christine Quinn
Hon. Jonathan Bing
Hon. Rosie Mendez
Hon. Dan Garodnick
Hon. Gale Brewer
Howard H. Roberts, Jr., MTA NYC Transit



Next Step for Grand Central's Centennial Celebration: Making the Connection to Penn Station!

What better way to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the opening of the world's greatest railway station than to take the next step – restart planning for making the connection to Penn Station! Built by arch-rivals in the railway age, both stations were designed to be extended. Now, as planning moves forward for a much needed increase in Hudson River passenger rail capacity, it is important to advance a plan that takes advantage of these century-old investments. The new Hudson River rail tunnels should connect with existing platforms and tracks in Penn Station and then link to existing platforms and tracks in the Lower Level of Grand Central, producing a truly world-class railway system for the NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area. This plan (above), developed by Parsons Brinckerhoff, one of NYC's largest engineering firms, was found to be feasible and superior to other options considered in the 2003 cooperative planning study for new Trans-Hudson rail capacity – "Access to the Region's Core (ARC)" – led by NJ Transit, MTA and the Port Authority of NY & NJ.

With this connection, west of Hudson rail passengers could far more easily reach Manhattan's East Side with its extraordinary concentration of office space. Likewise, Bronx, Westchester and Connecticut passengers could gain better access to the growing developments in West Midtown and Amtrak intercity services. Boston-Washington Northeast Corridor trains could be routed through Manhattan's two major activity centers, greatly improving their attractiveness, especially when competing for air shuttle travelers. New York's Empire Corridor trains could be routed through both stations, continuing to points further south.

It is critical that state and federal transport agencies work together to advance an affordable and passenger-friendly plan that serves both regional and intercity travelers.

- Bruce Becker, President, Empire State Passengers Association, www.esparail.org
- David Peter Alan, Chairman, Lackawanna Coalition, www.lackawannacoalition.net
- Richard Rudolph, Chairman, Rail Users Network, www.railusers.net
- George Haikalis, President, Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc., www.irusm.org