

Transportation ALTERNATIVES

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Your Advocate for Bicycling, Walking and Sensible Transportation

96th St. and Broadway IRT Station Renovation Recommendations for Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety

Transportation Alternatives (T.A.) is encouraged that the MTA has proposed making the 96th Street/Broadway IRT station ADA compliant. Not only does the proposed station design provide long overdue accessibility to many of the most vulnerable populations in this part of the city, it creates an attractive open space, of which the city needs many more. In addition to the many new trees that will be planted, the benches and "park" space will be often used and enjoyed by the residents in the neighborhood. In the spirit of improving and maintaining Broadway's malls, this station will be a wonderful complement to the work that community members and civic organizations have accomplished over many years to give this part of Broadway its distinctive character.

According to MTA figures, this station sees approximately 100,000 average daily trips (34,000 entries doubled to account for the same riders who exit each day, and 30,000 transfers). Compared with hypothetical peak vehicular volumes generated from the NYCDOT's traffic study for the project, the number of people using public transit at the station outweighs the number of vehicles passing by on Broadway by 10,000-50,000. In addition, because the station will be handicapped accessible, it should be assumed that a large percentage of new users will be members of the disabled community. As per the ADA, any new facility that receives federal funding requires standards far beyond merely providing an elevator.

Given the traffic conditions in the proposal, T.A. is particularly concerned for the safety and wellbeing of the disabled community at the intersections of Broadway between 94th and 96th streets. This section of Broadway is currently one of the most dangerous series of intersections for pedestrians in the city. Broadway at 96th Street is particularly dangerous, with 27 crashes recorded between 1995-2001, and numerous complaints from the senior and disabled communities about the intersections' lack of safe conditions.

Because of the existing concerns, we recommend several traffic calming measures to prevent crashes and conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. These suggestions are made with particular attention to the most vulnerable populations, the same people that are being induced to use the new facility because of the re-design. If the subsequent safety minimums are not implemented at every intersection on Broadway between 94th and 96th streets, the number of injuries and fatalities could rise significantly as a result of the remodeling.

We recommend the following:

- All crosswalks should be striped to the maximum width possible, and should be "ladder" or "high visibility" striped crosswalks.
- All stop bars should be moved back at least five feet from the new crosswalks.
- All of the curbs at the crosswalks should be extended into the street between eight to ten feet, not only to accommodate the new users, but to limit the conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.
- All curb ramps should have ADA compliant design standards at a minimum, but ideally should be designed to accommodate at least two people in wheelchairs crossing simultaneously.

While these are the minimum safety requirements at crosswalks and curbs, T.A. is also very concerned about the proposed removal of up to nine feet of sidewalk space between 94th and 96th Street on each of the outer sidewalks. While the median will be widened and will increase the pedestrian space in the middle of the avenue, pedestrians traveling between streets for shopping or other purposes will still walk on the outer sidewalks, where the desire-lines indicate heavy foot traffic. Likewise, if the pedestrian level of service (LOS) is currently graded at A or B, this removal of sidewalk space will likely bring the pedestrian LOS to a grade C or worse.

T.A. requests that the DOT explain the methodology that went into the development of the current plan, particularly:

- How did the NYCDOT determine that sidewalk space must be removed rather than a vehicular lane of travel?
- Would NYCDOT consider narrowing vehicular lanes (many cities around the country have narrowed lanes to ten feet, even on arterial streets with high traffic volumes) to mitigate the narrowing of the sidewalks on either side of Broadway? If not, why?
- Would NYCDOT consider narrowing the sidewalks only on the west side of the street, where pedestrian LOS is better?

Finally, if it was determined that the expansion of the center median could only be accomplished by taking away nine feet of sidewalk space from the edges of Broadway between 96th and 94th Street, then T.A. would again insist on the above proposed traffic calming measures to ensure safer crossing.