



Coalition for a Livable West Side

Leading the fight for a better city environment.

Visit our Website livablenewyork.org

January /February 2003

Vol. 17 No. 1

ALERT

Two Major Issues - Connection of Riverside Boulevard to Riverside Drive at 72nd Street, The Threatened Closing of the Miller Highway Northbound Off-ramp at 72nd Street

The Connection and the Ramp

- Hudson Waterfront Associates (HWA)/Trump New World are obligated to connect Riverside Boulevard to Riverside Drive at West 72nd Street.
- Why ? Because in the 1992 City approval of Riverside South, that connection was the key to relieving traffic - from Trump's 5,700 apartments and 3,500 parking spaces - on West End Avenue
- In order to make that connection, HWA insists that the the northbound exit ramp from the Miller Highway at 72nd Street has to be closed (demolished.)
- No valid rationale has ever been offered by HWA as to why the north-bound exit ramp has to be closed.
- The Riverside South Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) states that "the closure of this ramp is not certain... Should this action not be possible, the project would have to be **redesigned**, and undergo a new review process."
- It appears that the EIS recognized that keeping the ramp open would entail a redesign of Riverside South. The closing of the ramp is *intertwined* with the design of Riverside South. The closing of the ramp has nothing to do with better transportation or traffic safety.

Why Closing The Off-ramp Is Dangerous

- Emergency vehicles use this ramp. Closing it will affect response times for emergency vehicles such as the West Side based Rescue 1 of FDNY - Fire Department New York.
- Traffic in the area is already a tremendous problem,. Closing the off-ramp will only push the problem to the north and to the south without regard for the impacts on Manhattan's Upper West Side
- It would dramatically **increase traffic on W. 79th Street and W. 96th Street and increase the danger to pedestrians.**
- It would exacerbate the existing problem with the M-79 bus lay-over stop at the 79th St. rotary, with its four ramps to the West Side Highway/Henry Hudson Parkway. (north and southbound traffic).

More Pedestrian Grief

see page 2

Position of Coalition and Councilmember Gail Brewer, Assemblymember Scott Stringer, State Senator Eric Schneiderman and Congressman Jerrold Nadler

On The Connection and the Ramp

- The Miller Highway Northbound off-ramp exit ramp at 72nd Street **must not be closed** and the **urgently needed connection** of Riverside Boulevard to Riverside Drive **must be made** now.
- The Department of Transportation (DOT) must do an Environmental Impact Statement that includes an assessment of the traffic, transport, safety and air quality impacts of the closing of the exit ramp, and
- HWA/Trump New World **must** submit a plan now to DOT that clearly shows the Riverside Boulevard-Riverside Drive connection , which includes the northbound exit ramp.

On The Connection and Building A

- The EIS states that if the ramp cannot be closed, "the project would have to be redesigned".
- If the construction of "A" (71st-72nd St.) - as designed - is the problem, then HWA must redesign "A" so that the vital connection of Riverside Boulevard to Riverside Drive can be made.
- HWA should not have received a building permit from the Department of Buildings (DOB) for "A" until the plan for the connection **with** the north-bound off-ramp, was approved by DOT.
- Representatives of our elected officials met with DOB on this issue but DOB insisted that they had nothing to do with transportation issues (i.e. the connection). Reality dictates otherwise
- The two city agencies -DOT & DOB- must work together on this issue for the welfare of the public. It is not too late!
- Parenthetically, how could DOB issue a building permit when the owners of the landmarked Chatsworth - 344 W. 72nd St. - filed a lawsuit against HWA/Trump New World claiming ownership of the 36-inch strip of land atop the retaining wall at the edge of the two properties? That case is expected to be heard in court in mid-January 2003.

We will keep you informed about these issues via our recorded phone number (212-580-9319) starting January 10, 2002. And via e-mail and fax. If you would like to receive updates via e-mail, please e-mail us at livablenewyork@erols.com. We do not share your e-mail address with anyone. All e-mail is sent as blind copy.

The West End Avenue (Improvement ?) Plan

The “West End Avenue Improvement Plan” (WIP) is part of The Restrictive Declaration (binding agreement between the City and Trump.)

The Plan

- The median from West 63rd to West 57th Street on West End Avenue, will be removed.
- West End Avenue from West 57th to West 70th Street , will become a six-lane roadway, three northbound lanes and three southbound lanes.
- Traffic signals from West 57th to West 70th Street will be modified.
- DOT will determine if parking on West End Avenue will be allowed during off-hours.

However, pedestrians - including many elderly residents in the area - have a very difficult time crossing West End Avenue now because of heavy traffic. This would exacerbate the situation.

This plan must be re-evaluated by DOT.

Send your letters to Coalition (PO Bx 230078, New York, NY 10023). We will gather them and have our elected representatives give them to the Commissioner of DOT.

You can also e-mail your letter to Coalition - livablennyork@erols.com

Restoration of the Gantry - 69th Street, Hudson River and “Possible Ferry Service” at West 69th St.

Trump's Riverside South Planning Corporation (RSPC), submitted an application for **\$2 million** for Federal transportation funds (taxpayers' money) to pay for Trump's obligation for the restoration of the gantry “as a visual amenity” and to remove the two southerly float bridges. Included in the application was an implied promise of a “possible ferry service.”

The RSPC application, sponsored by NYCDOT, stated that ferry service from West 69th Street to downtown would relieve passenger congestion at the 72nd Street subway. Between 500 to 1,000 people would supposedly use the ferry instead of the 72nd Street subway. No data to substantiate that claim was submitted nor was an economic viability study done.

Funds have been awarded. DOT will receive **\$1 million** in Federal funds for the restoration of the gantry (originally Trump's obligation) and the “possible ferry service” . DOT will have to pay all project costs *upfront*. It will be reimbursed from the Federal award.

Since only **\$1 million** was awarded for the **\$2 million** projected cost in the RSPC application, what will be cut? Who will determine that? How can the community become involved in that decision process? We will let you know.

Coalition believes the inclusion of a “possible ferry service” in the RSPC's application, was a **subterfuge** for obtaining the Federal funds for an improvement that was Trump's responsibility. (When previously asked what would happen if the Federal Funds were obtained and the gantry was fully stabilized but there was no ferry service, Mr. Bradley -Director, RSPC - said, “We would have a great public amenity - the gantry and pier.”)

In 1992, Trump made a commitment to stabilize the gantry (the former NY Central RR float bridge) at West 69th Street in Riverside South Park, as a visual amenity and remove the two southerly float bridges (portion of Pier “H”). He estimated the cost at \$650,000. But the final City agreement with Trump requires that he spend only \$250,000 for the stabilization, etc.

MTA Makes Temporary M-72 Change Permanent Breaks Promise to Community

When construction began on Building F (66th-67th St.) in Riverside South, the M-72 bus was re-routed and the West 66th and West End Avenue stop was “temporarily” eliminated.

But now the MTA says that it has permanently rerouted the M-72 bus, eliminating the West 66th St. and West 69th St. (WEA) stops. Why? The MTA says that it wants to better service the Riverside South development.

In November, Phyllis Gunther, Democratic District Leader and a member of Community Board 7 (CB7), submitted petitions containing 500 signatures - protesting the elimination of the stops - to a representative of the MTA at a CB7 Transportation Committee meeting.

The signatures were gathered in a short time by Ms. Gunther and residents in Lincoln Towers, Amsterdam Houses and 110 WEA. .

No one ever received a reply from the MTA.

To help reverse this arbitrary action., please write to:

Peter S. Kalikow, Chairman, MTA,
347 Madison Avenue, NY, NY 10017,
(212) 878-7000 (P), (212) 878-7264

cc:Lawrence G. Reuter, President,
MTA, 370 Jay St., Brooklyn, NY
11201; (718) 243-4321 (P)

cc: Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg,
City Hall, NY, NY 10007; (212) 788-
3000 (P), (212) 788-8123(F) or e-mail
:mayor@cityhall.nyc.gov



**Large Transportation Public Projects
Cost Grossly Underestimated**

The Journal of the American Planning Association studied the cost of 258 large public transportation projects from 1910-1998. Surprise! The economic forecasters and project promoters grossly underestimated costs, costing taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars



“Estimates are no more accurate now than they were 90 years ago perhaps because there is **no incentive to change**. Under-estimating the cost enhances a project’s approval.”

From: “Study Finds Steady Overruns in Public Projects.” Michael Wilson. NY Times. 7/11/02

Read This Story With Your Eye On a Proposed Fare Hike

In 1998, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s (MTA) leased 2 Broadway for 49 years to consolidate its operations. The landlord was to pay for renovating the neglected building. The cost - to the landlord - was estimated to be \$39 to \$55 million. A 41% difference! Anything above the \$55 million mark, would be paid for by a **loan from the MTA** to the developer. The loan would be paid back by reducing the rent paid by the MTA.

By May, 1992, the cost of renovating the 32-story building was more than \$400 million.

- Over \$155 million for the incomplete renovation;
- Outfitting the offices ballooned from an estimate of \$80 million to \$190 million.
- According to Peter Kalikow, Chairman, MTA, the fees for bond financing and other costs bring the current total for the project to about \$430 million.

From: Sweet Deal for M.T.A. Home Turns Sour, Beset by Cost Overruns and Indictments. Charles V. Bagli, N.Y. Times. 5/29/02

Taxpayers should not be burdened with debt created by fraudulent estimates. The estimates must be reasonably accurate.

The legislation that created Public Authorities must be changed by the State legislature to ensure that Public Authorities subject their “estimates” for proposed projects to the scrutiny of the State Comptroller’s office and/or independent auditors. Reports based on the completed audits must be shared with the public at well-advertised, open meetings, before any proposed project is approved.

**Bureau of Standards and Appeals To Decide On
Proposed 22-story Mixed-Use Building - W. 60th St. (WEA and Amsterdam Ave.)**

A new 22-story mixed-use building has been proposed by Touro College, for the north side of West 60th Street, between West End Avenue and Amsterdam Avenue - 223-228 West 60th Street.

The proposed 22-story mid-block building would contain the Touro College for Women and 101 luxury residential units.

Touro’s application was originally denied by the Department of Buildings (DOB) on October 22, 2002. The

college had asked DOB for variances for an increase in residential space, increase in the height of the building and a decrease in open space.

Touro College made a presentation at Community Board 7’s Land Use Committee for approval of its application to the Bureau of Standards and Appeals (BSA) - the next step after a DOB denial - for its requested variances. The CB7 committee voted to disapprove the application to BSA. Unfortunately, despite the CB7

disapproval and the DOB rejection, the Bureau of Standards and Appeals can approve Touro College’s application.

Variances are really a form of “spot zoning”. Rather than attempt to change zoning regulations, developers do an “end-run” by requesting and receiving variances. BSA is usually very compliant.

Will BSA block this “end-run” and deny the application? We will keep you informed.

Name _____ Address _____ Apt. _____
 City/State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Fax # _____

Send an e-mail to livablenewyork@erols.com so that we may update you in a more timely manner. All e-mail is sent as Blind Copy, so that neither your name nor e-mail address appears anywhere in the e-mail. We **never share** either our membership list nor our e-mail list with anyone!

Please make checks payable to: CALW, Inc. - Write Challenge Grant in lower left-hand corner of check.
 Mail to: **CAL W, Inc., P.O. Box 230078, New York, N.Y. 10023.** Contributions are tax deductible [section 501 c3]
 I wish to support the **Coalition for a Livable West Side's** efforts on behalf of the community . []
 My contribution is () \$500. () \$250. () \$200. () \$100. () \$75. () \$50. () \$25. () other
 Annual dues \$25. [] New member [] Renew - Year 2003 Dues [] Pre-pay Year 2004 Dues

If your company has a Matching Gift program, please apply on behalf of the Coalition. **We now can accept gifts of stock.** We have no paid staff. If your membership has expired (see label), please renew. If you are not a member, please join.

I can help with publicity. () I can distribute the Coalition newsletters, important flyers, etc. in my building. I need () copies.
 I can attend important meetings, hearings, etc. () I can help with _____

The Threat to West End Avenue Pedestrians - Volunteers Needed For Coalition Study

The Trump proposal to have the Department of Transportation approve the closing of the Miller Highway Northbound off-ramp (see page 1) and Trump's so-called West End Avenue Improvement Plan (see page 2), will make crossing West End Avenue an adventure for the brave and the young - and a peril to almost everyone else.

The West End Avenue Improvement Plan calls for changing in the timing of the traffic signals - more green time - on West End Avenue from West 57th to West 70th Street.

The Coalition for a Livable West Side **is seeking volunteers to monitor the existing signal system** (57th-70th Street). We have the signal/timing reports from 59th to 79th Streets from the N.Y.C. Department of Transportation (DOT). We have written to DOT requesting the signal/timing from W. 57th and West 58th Street.

We need: a person to head the "Timing" team and volunteers for the teams. Please e-mail your name, address and phone number to : livablenewyork@erols.com or call 580-9319. If you call, please indicate that you are volunteering for the West End Avenue Timing Project, leave your name, address and phone number.

Traffic And Pedestrian Safety - The 96th Street Corridor Traffic Study

At the request of the **Manhattan Borough President, C. Virginia Fields**, Sam Schwartz LLC conducted a traffic study of the West 95th to West 97th Street corridor on the West Side of Manhattan. Following are quotes from the report; "Traffic counts were taken and conditions were observed. Interviews and a walkthrough were conducted with community members and the New York Police Department and NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) and NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) were contacted. An analysis and an accompanying set of recommendations were prepared.

These are some of the principal findings and recommendations from this report. Other general and site-specific recommendations, based on observations and analysis are included within Section IV of the report. We are confident that by following these recommendations, safety and efficiency can be improved within the study area."

- The **95th/96th Street interchange** of the Henry Hudson Parkway is an anachronism, presenting safety problems for vehicles and pedestrians and gross inefficiencies for traffic. These effects multiply on surrounding local streets. We recommend a redesign of the interchange.
- **Riverside Drive, between 95th and 97th Streets** is poorly defined because there are no malls. We recommend channelization, new pavement markings, and possibly an extension of the adjacent malls. The intersections of Riverside Drive at 95th and 97th Streets are inefficient and potentially hazardous. We recommend improvements in signage and signalization .
- **W. 95th Street** - has a head-on traffic condition at Amsterdam Ave. We recommend the introduction of traffic signal arrows and improved signage. W. 95th Street is excessively wide between Riverside Drive and West End Ave., we recommend adding parking and traffic calming measures.
- **W. 97th Street - between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue** is excessively wide and we observed speeding and weaving. We recommend traffic calming measures such as neckdowns, and possibly the creation of a pedestrian -friendly greenway.
- **On Broadway**, left turns are prohibited from southbound lanes at 96th and 95th Streets from 7am - 7pm (except Sundays). We observed some vehicles making the turns anyway, and others making a u-turn at 94th Street instead. We recommend allowing the left turn for southbound (and possibly northbound) traffic by introducing turn arrows. Additionally, drivers turning on Broadway do not know whether to stop at the median or continue across. We recommend that "Stop Here on Red" signs be installed at all intersections from 94th to 97th Streets.
- **The M96 bus** is among the slowest in the city. . . We recommend turning the bus on West End Avenue instead of Broadway, and extending service to Riverside Drive. Signs and pavement markings throughout the study area are not adequately visible because of poor placement and are suffering from damage and inadequate reflectivity. We recommend the repair or replacement of all crosswalk markings and many signs and markings throughout the area .

The full report, "The 96th Street Corridor Traffic Study", will be available on Boro President C. Virginia Fields web site after January 12, 2003. Go to www.cvfieldsmbp.org