

# Moving Lower Manhattan

## By APA Metro Chapter Transportation Committee

The APA Metro Chapter's Transportation Committee has members in public transportation agencies, private firms and advocacy organizations based in the city and the region. Our committee members have reviewed your blueprint and participated in the May 23, 2002 public hearing at Pace University. We wish to provide comments related to the transportation issues of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and Lower Manhattan Development Corporation's "Draft Principles and Blueprint" for planning for Lower Manhattan, as well as the LMDC planning process to solicit ideas and opinions from the public.

The Committee supports the comments of the APA Chapter's Lower Manhattan Steering Committee and shares its concerns about the ambitious and accelerated agenda that the PA and the LMDC has before it. As the APA Steering Committee has stated, there must be a balance between the need for immediate solutions and the benefits of comprehensive, careful planning and development. The valuable airing of opinions and views at public meetings is no substitute for an iterative planning process where, in response to meaningful comments and concerns of the public and other interested parties, alternative plans are modified or rejected, new approaches explored, and new alternatives presented to the public. Pressure for immediate results should not be permitted to distort the need to educate all of the stakeholders and the public at large about the many technical, design, social and economic challenges that this rebuilding effort faces.

We believe that the announced condensed review process and the limited opportunity for detailed analysis and discussion may result in the public being heard at meetings but not included in deliberation and decision-making. These concerns are heightened in the transportation arena because so many of the early action items relate to the critical need to restore mass transit service and other immediate transportation priorities. It is difficult to anticipate long term planning options and to assure that time and resources for achieving preferred future alternatives are not compromised by these near-term actions.

The Transportation Committee offers, below, a series of principles and concepts that should be evaluated and incorporated in the plan for Lower Manhattan. Many of them are consistent with the Blueprint. What concerns us is whether they will be glossed over in the clamor and rush to rebuild.

While we wholeheartedly support expeditious development Downtown, we see an opportunity for the PA and the LMDC to achieve better results by creating a truly participatory and intelligent planning process. To fail in this will be to fall back into the NYC planning-as-usual mode at a time when the whole world is watching and the whole region, indeed the nation is offering to help the city.

We look forward to continuing to participate as your plans develop.

**Table of Contents**

Principles.....P. 3

Issues.....P. 3

Planning Process & Tools.....P. 4

Possible Projects.....P. 5

## ***I Principles***

**No Small Plans:** Transportation planning must encompass not only the World Trade Center site, but also city-wide and regional concerns. Restoring and expanding transportation infrastructure Downtown should support high density development.

**Resplendent:** Lower Manhattan requires transportation plans that are responsive, humanistic, and ecologically sustainable. The plan needs to unify the downtown area and maintain the prominence of New York as a world-class city.

**Inclusive:** Planning should be inclusive, serve all constituents and make maximum use of existing outreach efforts. It is important that transportation plans provide equal access to a variety of destinations for people of all income levels and insures the equitable distribution of resources.

**Future Oriented:** Transportation plans for Lower Manhattan should be part of a comprehensive plan with short- and long-term strategies for restoring and enhancing the area's status as a worldwide and regional economic engine. Many transportation projects may not be implemented in the near future. Those projects should be accommodated in elements that are built, much as the Department of City Planning has required easements in buildings along Second Avenue for the Second Avenue subway.

**Regionally Balanced:** The planning process for Lower Manhattan must be balanced with other pressing regional needs. To the extent that there are resources uniquely applicable to projects in Lower Manhattan, they should advance. But a comprehensive planning analysis should reconcile competing levels and locations for public investment in transportation infrastructure between downtown and the rest of the region. Similarly funds should not be moved from one entity to another without sound reasoning.

## ***II Issues***

**Water:** Water and its proximity to all of Lower Manhattan is one of the district's most valuable resources. Transportation plans should consider the 270- degree waterfront as both an intermodal possibility and a destination.



**Mixed Use Development:** There is an emerging consensus for more mixed use development that supports not supplants the FIRE sector including housing, retail and cultural sites. Transportation in the area should be developed to support these types of uses.

**Access:** The narrowness of downtown streets and volume of traffic creates pedestrian, transit and goods movement congestion. Comprehensive plans should develop routes and policies that rethink the best uses for each individual street in Lower Manhattan.

**Integration:** The transportation elements in Lower Manhattan have never been fully integrated. Plans should improve the ability to move from one system or mode to another and must include streetscapes.

**Security:** Security of the transportation system will be critical to restoring confidence in the safety of Lower Manhattan.

### ***III Planning Process & Tools***

**Coordination in New York:** The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) can be used to coordinate projects. Its current effort on Canal Street can be used as a model for multi-jurisdictional efforts.

**Coordination Across State Lines:** NYMTC and NJTPA, the two metropolitan planning organizations jointly plan through the Metropolitan Mobility Network. Such a framework could be used for bi-state questions to supplement the efforts of the Port Authority.

**Public outreach:** The LMDC should tap Imagine New York, the Civic Alliance and Rebuild Downtown Our Town for the results of their public outreach efforts. Moving forward, public participation efforts must be coordinated and adequately funded by LMDC but the potential exists to have groups other than LMDC run them.

**Impacts:** The Best Practice Model of NYMTC could be used to evaluate transportation project impacts. NEPA, SEQRA, CEQRA and ULURP should also be used where appropriate. While we support an expedited process, such a process should not compromise thoroughness.

**Existing Data:** Data from the following studies should be used - Access to the Region's Core, MTA Lower Manhattan Study, MTA Second Avenue Subway/MESA studies, MTA East River Crossing Studies, Baruch's analysis of curbside logistics, NYMTC's Canal Area Transportation Study, NYMTC's Regional Freight Plan Project, NYMTC's compilation of post September 11<sup>th</sup> travel changes, Port Authority's various studies of crossing and tolling, Urbanomic's WTC tenant survey, Department of City Planning's 1997 pedestrian study, and ESDC's 1997 Lower Manhattan Transportation Access Economic Benefits Study.

**Required Data:** Other data do not exist that are required for a meaningful plan. There needs to be an analysis of modal use and congestion of downtown streets and feeders, such as the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, with the goal of determining appropriate division among the various users – pedestrians, transit, goods movement, private automobiles. There also needs to be an analysis of the direction of traffic flows to see if streets could be redirected to improve flow. There needs to be a time-of-day study to determine the most efficient way of moving goods into and out of the area. Finally, there needs to be an analysis of on-street parking and its users to determine who should be given parking priorities.

## **IV Possible Projects**

The Committee was united around the series of principles and issues for LMDC to address. However, it was divided on the projects that would best achieve these goals. These conflicts can be resolved with a comprehensive analysis of the alternatives. The Committee's experience underscores the need for LMDC to pursue its mission with the highest standards of public participation, sophisticated research and professional planning analysis, especially when it comes to the largest, most expensive and potentially most beneficial projects.

### **Pedestrian**

While people use various transportation modes to get to Lower Manhattan, all experience the area on foot. Create the most walkable downtown in the country with car-free pedestrian experiences, full- or part-time corridors and small plazas throughout Lower Manhattan. Define pedestrian crossing corridors that draw surrounding communities into the WTC site.

1. Broadway should be redesigned to fulfill the Downtown Alliance's Streetscape Plan.
2. Restore Greenwich and Fulton Streets through the entire World Trade Center site for pedestrians and buses only.
3. Restore Dey and Cortlandt Streets for pedestrians only.
4. Create river-to-river streets.
5. More streets need to be made pedestrian-only. Streets could be regulated as such 24 hours/day or for more limited hours.
6. Well-designed security devices, such as bollards and planters, should be installed on streets instead of Jersey-barriers creating a more pleasant walking environment.
7. Streetscapes throughout Lower Manhattan should be visually improved with decorative paving.
8. Incorporate a secure bicycle environment into planning for Lower Manhattan that would include bicycle lockers, designating some streets for non-auto use while allowing bicycles and bicycle programs such as grab-and-go bicycles or pedi-cabs.
9. Develop a continuous pedestrian promenade and bikeway that links the Hudson and East River waterfronts.

### **Transit**

The majority of people arrive in Lower Manhattan by mass transit. Both the PATH and the subway were damaged and must be repaired. But the area requires more than an in-kind replacement. A more integrated rail system, better connections to the commuter rail and buses that flow more freely are necessary.

### **Subway**

1. The MTA subway system should be physically connected to PATH at a central station. The two systems' fares should be integrated.
2. The Second Avenue Subway, with or without its extensions to the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn, may be the linchpin to a viable Lower Manhattan. Mega-projects, such as expansion of LIRR and MNRR into the area are likely to compete with the Second

Avenue Subway for funding. Given limited resources, only the projects with the highest utility should move forward.

3. Given that most commuters emerging from PATH and the subways at the WTC walked South and East, LMDC should avoid the temptation to move the 1/9 subways further west. At the same time, Battery Park City and the World Financial Center are isolated. People movers, an automatic walkway, an extension to the E train into Battery Park City or better bus connections might integrate this area better.
4. Rebuild the South Ferry station to accommodate the entire length of the subway.

#### **Bus**

5. Connect Battery Park City with the rest of Manhattan insuring that bus service is not adversely affected.
6. Create river-to-river streets that buses can use. Opportunities for achieving this objective exist at Liberty, Fulton, and Vesey Streets.
7. Build an underground bus terminal that could accommodate the express, local and tour buses that now clog the streets, and promise to increase given the strong consensus for memorials and cultural uses.
8. Bus lanes on Trinity/Greenwich/Church and Broadway must be built and must be kept clear of other vehicles from 6am to 8pm. Presently over 1,000 buses use each of these streets during weekdays.



#### **Commuter Rail**

9. If LIRR can be brought directly into Lower Manhattan without limiting subway access, then it should be weighed against other multi-billion dollar transit expansion plans. Taking away the Fulton Street subway from its users is illogical and potentially harmful. However LIRR stations and transfers to subways in Brooklyn to the 2,3,4,5,N,R and M and at Penn Station to the 1,2,3,A,C and E should be enhanced.
10. Extending Metro North to Lower Manhattan is an intriguing option, although we have grave doubts about its feasibility, given prospective funding and the project's complexity and disruptiveness. Building Second Avenue, however, will free up capacity on the Lexington Avenue Line, so that connections between Grand Central and Lower Manhattan become more convenient. Absent the completion of the Second Avenue Subway, Metro-North service to Penn Station would be an improvement for Westchester, Connecticut and Putnam commuters to Lower Manhattan.
11. A central station – most likely the one that contains the PATH-subway connection – should also be built to accommodate Long Island Railroad and Metro-North Railroad should connections from those come into Lower Manhattan.

#### **Delivery vehicles**

All downtown businesses rely on truck deliveries and face some of the highest delivery costs in the country. Of all the private automotive users, trucks should have the highest priority on streets. However trucks also diminish the walkability of places and often cause congestion by parking on narrow streets.

1. Investigate the feasibility of scheduling truck loading/unloading on one or more pedestrian-only or bus-only corridors between 7PM and 6AM.

2. Explore pricing options as exist in Midtown to gain the most efficient use of precious curb space.
3. Explore rebuilding the World Trade Center so that trucks can deliver goods underground.

### Ferries

The excellent water access in Lower Manhattan means expanding ferry service to new and existing terminals may make sense. Short term and long term goals for ferries will vary substantially as the PATH and 1/9 subway services are brought back.

### Private automobiles

Unlike other modes, the private passenger automobile is the least necessary in Lower Manhattan. Plans should be developed that prevent cars from congesting bus lanes or clogging pedestrian streets. In part this must be done by insuring that other options are more appealing than the personal automobile for travel in Lower Manhattan.

1. Explore variable pricing policies for water crossings entering Lower Manhattan and for the streets themselves.
2. To accommodate private vehicles, the suppression of West Street might be advisable if the careful design of Fulton, Vesey and Liberty Streets could enhance circulation, view corridors and the pedestrian realm simultaneously. Consideration must be made that the idea to suppress the street was publicly rejected in the 1990s. If funding is not from a special source, this project might not rate well on a regional scale.
3. To the extent that new residential space is developed, parking should be restricted and alternatives such as car sharing should be explored.