

FLATBUSH WALK & TALK for Safe Streets



November 22, 2024

Dear Mayor Eric Adams, NYC DOT Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez and NYCT President Demetrius Crichlow,

On November 10, dozens of neighbors from across Flatbush, Councilmember Rita Joseph's team and representatives of local community organizations came together to walk along our streets and discuss the needs we have seen for street safety. Despite the varied perspectives and backgrounds of the people on the walk, two things were clear: there is a substantial need to improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and all users of our streets, and we have each been disappointed with the lack of priority and action from the city.



Alongside [1,388 residents](#) and our Flatbush community partners, we are writing to urge you to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and speed up buses in the neighborhood of Flatbush as soon as possible.

We recommend prioritizing the following changes within the next 12 months:

- Address both pedestrian and cyclist safety on Dorchester Road by
 - Adding all-way stop signs and daylighting.
 - Creating a westbound parking-protected bike lane, following the existing proposal in DOT's Brooklyn Community Board 14 (BKCB14) bike network plan, to reduce crossing distances and ensure safety for cyclists.
- Diligently implement the first two phases of the bike network plan originally presented to BKCB14 last year for implementation this year, and re-presented

this month with almost no work completed, so that further improvements may commence.

- As mentioned, immediately create a westbound parking-protected bike lane on Dorchester Road. Given the delayed timeline, and because Dorchester Road is the sole corridor identified by DOT as having adequate right-of-way to install a parking-protected bike lane by simply shifting the parking, doing it right the first time will both save time and money for DOT and save lives on this heavily-used corridor.
- Upgrade currently unprotected bike routes, which are perpetually blocked by deliveries and double parking, especially on Ocean Avenue.
- Speed up slow buses to ensure equitable access to NYC's most accessible mode of public transportation, including by continuing the B41 bus lane on Flatbush Avenue into the neighborhood of Flatbush.
- Continue partnership with Flatbush Development Corporation to support and fund the Newkirk Avenue Open Street.
- Coordinate with other agencies to create a plan for garbage collection and pickup along Cortelyou Road to ensure sidewalks are clear and accessible.

The intersections along Dorchester Rd, especially at Marlborough Rd, are a daily risk to all who cross it no matter what mode. As the walking group struggled to cross the street at Dorchester, many people noted the poor design of this wide street that lacks stop signs in a residential neighborhood, with one saying, "This is insane!" In the first three weeks of the 2023-2024 school year, three separate, preventable crashes occurred on Dorchester Rd. With additional traffic on Dorchester from improvements to the intersection of Cortelyou Rd and Coney Island Ave, traffic calming is even more urgent. In response to overwhelming community complaints for years about this particular intersection, Council Member Rita Joseph (CD40) and the **Ditmas Park West Neighborhood Association** hosted a walk-through with the Department of Transportation in March 2024. *DOT has also seen firsthand the no-daylight angle of oncoming speeding Dorchester traffic, the hill that increases speeds and reduces visibility, and how illegally parked cars impact visibility, yet residents are still waiting on changes.*



In June 2023 and November 2024, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) [presented to Brooklyn Community Board 14](#) (BKCB14) a proposal to improve the cycling infrastructure in Flatbush and Midwood. Community partner **Flatbush Food Co-op** noted that they have seen an uptick in customers by bike and do

not even have enough bike racks to support this traffic, and community partner **Artmageddon** noted that the majority of people attending the art and music festival walk or bike. CitiBike expansion has also popularized biking in this neighborhood, despite less than one percent of the streets having a protected bike lane. NYC DOT's plan to build a paint-only bike lane network in Flatbush does not meet the urgent need identified by their own agency back in 2017 when DOT identified Community District 14



as a Priority Bicycle District due to a high number of cyclists killed or seriously injured. Among all the participants with a variety of personal transportation preferences, none disagreed that protected lanes are crucially important to keep both cyclists and all other road users safe and should be the preferred option whenever feasible. *Despite the positive reception to the presented plans at both meetings, NYC DOT has not yet committed to adding protected bike lanes to the plan and the implementation of the*

proposed paint-only plan has been delayed multiple years.

Also, in January 2023, [DOT presented to BKCB14](#) on the importance of addressing bus speeds and street safety on the Flatbush Ave corridor, after a summer 2022 kickoff at the Flatbush Trees installation where Mayor Adams promised transformational change to the whole avenue. Two years later, DOT has moved forward with plans to add bus lanes in the section in downtown Brooklyn, but no major improvements have been planned, let alone implemented, for any part of Flatbush Ave south of Grand Army Plaza—despite DOT's own presentation noting that evening speeds are worst between Empire Blvd and Nostrand Ave. Nearby on Church Ave, there is an obvious impact at the end of the bike lane, not just bus speeds but in gridlock and effectiveness for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists. Community partner **Riders Alliance** noted the disparate impact of poor bus service: only 25% of NYC subway stations—and even fewer in this area—are accessible, making buses a lifeline. *Yet DOT has neither implemented nor proposed improvements to the rest of the bus network in the area, an essential transit mode in an area less well served by subway stations.*

Many neighbors along the walk noted how narrow sidewalks were, and noted trash constricting already narrow sidewalks even on a relatively quiet, cold Sunday afternoon. As community partner **Cortelyou Road Merchants Association** noted, commercial corridors without business improvement districts often struggle to get



sufficient trash pickup with even more limited resources. *We ask NYC DOT to coordinate with other agencies to create a plan for garbage collection and pickup along Cortelyou Road to ensure sidewalks are clear and accessible for all.*

In the words of the director of constituent services for community partner **Council Member Rita Joseph**, "The era of ignoring central Brooklyn and the south and east sides of Prospect Park has to be over." As a representative of **Flatbush Food Co-op** said in response to a question about their preferences for potential redesigns, "Any improvements are good with us!" The inattention has led to dire and deadly results. We call on Mayor Adams and NYC DOT to get stuff done by taking prompt action to improve the conditions of our streets and invest in the safety, public health and future of Flatbush.

We invite you to meet with us for a walkthrough so we can show you more neighbors' perspectives on how to improve safety for all and contribute to the prosperity in the neighborhood for businesses and residents.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Rita Joseph

Flatbush Streets for People

Cortelyou Road Merchants Association

Flatbush Development Corporation

Flatbush Food Co-op

The Artmageddon Collective

Riders Alliance

Transportation Alternatives

