

****PRESS CONFERENCE****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Comments from the Chair: Hon. Padmore John

Good Morning Everyone, thank you for being here...

Manhattan Community Board No. 9 (MCB9) called this press conference as we wanted to take this opportunity to express our condolences to the family of Erica Imbasciani. This was a tragedy borne out of the reckless actions of an individual that was under the influence of illegal narcotics. What's even more disturbing is that the individual tried to flee the scene, rather than render any assistance to the victim. These are not the attributes of a neighbor, nor a dedicated community. We have come to determine that the individual was not from West Harlem. We hope he has his day before a judge and jury of his peers and an appropriate judgement is passed down. While we are sure this will not appease the sorrow and sadness being felt by the Ms. Imbasciani's friends and family, it will go a long way towards ensuring that other individuals do not repeat the actions that lead up to this tragedy.

Some may say that the Department of Transportation (DOT) should immediately implement the controversial plan to change the streetscape and traffic flow on Amsterdam Avenue to "Improve Safety ". On that larger agenda of improving street safety, MCB9 has been in discussion with DOT on improving transit safety in West Harlem in general and specifically on Amsterdam Ave. 2 years ago, we engaged in discussions with DOT regarding changes on Broadway, and prior to that Riverside Drive. These changes included, the removal of 1 lane, adding turning bays, restricting parking in certain areas, and other alterations to increase safety and pedestrian traverse of the avenue. On Riverside Drive these changes resulted in increase in rush hour traffic on the South bound lane. These changes needs to be better researched--we have asked on numerous occasions for a health and asthma assessment to anticipate the effects of slower, idling traffic. Suggestions for traffic calming could include adjusting the traffic lights, by making the green light stage shorter it would in affect reduce the speed at which the vehicles travel.

In supporting the implementation of these changes, we requested changes to contentious turns and other mitigating factors that the Board felt was not in the best service of the community. Unfortunately, few of the recommendations suggested by the board were implemented. Currently, there is a similar ongoing discussion, with numerous presentations and press conferences extolling the benefit of the change that is proposed on Amsterdam Ave, with a similar removal of one lane and other factors.

As expressed in a recent resolution that passed, the Board unanimously supports safety improvement on the Amsterdam Ave corridor. We support the removal of a lane, the introduction of a bike lane, but also asked that the ongoing studies be conducted to address emission and pollution increase, that enforcement be accompanied by any changes and that DOT be receptive to changes based on ongoing reporting and feedback loops. In essence if the changes were not helpful that DOT be prepared to change them back.

But let us also be clear, the changes that would have been implemented via this new plan would not have had an impact on this tragedy. In demonstrating the importance of traffic safety, MCB9 created a taskforce with the sole purpose of identifying an equitable and holistic ways to improve safety on our streets. Therefore, the Board is adamant that this tragedy should not be used to force these measures on us without ensuring that there is sufficient and appropriate enforcement.

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Hon. Padmore John, Chair, Manhattan Community Board No. 9