



MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FIVE

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David M. Siesko, *Chair*

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January 16, 2009

Mr. Vaidila Kungys
NYC Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street – Room 1029
New York, New York 10013

Re: Grand Central Partnership Application to Participate in DOT Public Plaza Program

Dear Mr. Kungys:

Over one million office workers spend their business day in the Grand Central Terminal neighborhood, within the borders of which are more than 800 retailers, hotels and restaurants and the corporate headquarters of some of the world's largest corporations, including Pfizer, MetLife, Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase. The Grand Central Partnership (GCP) serves a vital function in the quality-of-life of this 70-block area of Midtown Manhattan, helping to ensure that the neighborhood looks its best and functions as one of New York's most exciting, cleanest and safest areas through an ambitious \$40 million capital improvement program, a broad tourism and visitor services program, business assistance initiatives, and various maintenance and public safety operations.

To further these commendable goals, the GCP has applied to the DOT Public Plaza Program to create a welcoming, green, sustainable and orderly streetscape initially on the existing southbound lanes of the Park Avenue Viaduct between East 42nd Street and East 41st Street. The Grand Central neighborhood is one of the world's densest commercial districts, with 70 million square feet of office space within the GCP Business Improvement District itself and millions of additional square feet located within adjacent commercial and residential neighborhoods. This extreme infill density has precluded the creation of any large-scale outdoor public plazas. The proposal that the GCP has submitted to the DOT seeks to remedy that absence.

The reclaimed public plaza that the GCP has proposed would provide a tranquil haven amidst the bustle of Midtown Manhattan. Recaptured roadway, dozens of newly planted trees and ample public seating would offer a much-needed green space and area of tranquility among the concrete expanses and office towers of this neighborhood. Staffed information kiosks and flower stalls, together with lush, well-manicured horticultural elements, including planting beds, tree pits and sidewalk planters, all would create a welcoming sense of community and serenity.

Programming activities at the proposed plaza may include small-scale musical and/or dance performances, the permanent or temporary display of public artwork, and events considered to be in the public interest, such as health-related informational displays. Seasonal activities could include a farmer's market during the warmer months, while in winter the plaza might host festive holiday events. The popular Pershing Square restaurant would continue to operate from its location at the center of the plaza as well as at a limited existing outdoor café. However, all of

these activities would be carefully organized and coordinated to ensure that the plaza serves its primary role as a venue for relaxation and respite.

Community Board Five strongly supports the creation of this public plaza and urges your acceptance of the GCP's application to develop and maintain this much-needed and vital project for our district. Please note however, that while Community Board Five supports the application as presented, we agree with the Grand Central Partnership that the GCP must return to Community Board Five in order to present the final plans of this public plaza for the Board's approval.

Sincerely,



David M. Siesko
Chair

Thomas Miller
Chair, Transportation/Environment Committee

Cc: Mayor Michael Bloomberg
Hon. Scott Stringer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Christine Quinn, NYC Council Speaker