

## Proposed Light Rail Transit Pedestrian Mall for 42nd Street Traffic Study — Key Findings

*— With recommended mitigation measures, experts conclude that closing 42nd Street to vehicles is feasible, and will offer very positive results for both pedestrians and surface transit —*

Sam Schwartz, PLLC, a highly regarded transportation planning and engineering firm founded by a former NYC traffic commissioner, conducted a traffic study to assess the consequences of closing of 42nd Street to motor vehicles. The firm assembled a database of traffic and pedestrian counts for a river-to-river cross-town corridor in Midtown Manhattan, extending from 37th Street to 47th Street. This ambitious effort, which has not been done in many years, produced an up-to-date inventory of current conditions in the corridor. Using City projections of new development, the firm estimated future conditions for 2010, the year that the light rail transit mall could be placed in service. The major findings of this study are as follows:

- ❖ **Closing 42nd Street to motor vehicle traffic is feasible. Only five percent of the corridor traffic is on 42nd Street.** Using accepted standard practices for mitigating traffic impacts, such as changes in signal timing, lane markings, and parking regulations, the relocated traffic can be accommodated on other streets.
- ❖ Most major buildings along 42nd Street already provide truck loading areas on 41st or 43rd Street, since ground floor space on 42nd Street is too valuable to use for this purpose. For ground floor retail activities, truck loading curbspace must be carefully reserved at the intersections with avenues. There will be more opportunities for allocating space there because vehicles will not be turning into an auto-free 42nd Street.
- ❖ Few curb cuts and parking garage entrances have been allowed on 42nd Street in the past because of its high pedestrian traffic. Options exist for reconfiguring access to the three parking garages that are served directly from 42nd Street. Alternate locations for taxi access to hotels and to Grand Central Terminal can be designated.
- ❖ Although the experience around the world has been that traffic in a corridor “shrinks” when street space for motor vehicles is withdrawn, the SSC traffic study used very conservative estimates of shrinkage and projected only a very modest shift from auto and taxi travel to the light rail line.
- ❖ While a few taxi users who are traveling between locations on 42nd Street are expected to shift to light rail, the vast majority of taxi users would not change modes. Most taxi passengers destined for buildings on 42nd Street would be dropped off at avenue entrances or rear entrances on the side streets. Empty taxis now using 42nd Street are expected to cruise on the avenues instead.
- ❖ Overall, the traffic impacts are surprisingly modest, while enhancement of the walking environment and the improvement of surface transit will be substantial.