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RECOMMENDATIONS RELEASED FOR CANAL STREET AREA SAFETY AND MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Canal Area Transportation Study (CATS) Concludes With Public Meetings

NEW YORK (January 19, 2011) – Canal Street in lower Manhattan is a shopping and dining destination for New Yorkers and out-of-town visitors alike. It is the gateway to Tribeca and SoHo, and a regional transportation link between Brooklyn and New Jersey. Canal Street is also home to thousands of residents and a bustling business community, and as such is a main street to the people who live and work in the area.

Myriad transportation and related pedestrian safety issues on and around Canal Street prompted the surrounding communities to request the use of federal funds to study ways to reduce congestion and improve safety and mobility in the area. The regional nature of the transportation system and the need for a multi-jurisdictional approach to resolving some of the complex issues led the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) to undertake the Canal Area Transportation Study (CATS). CATS identified significant transportation-related issues in the area from the East River to the Hudson River bounded by Houston Street to the north and Chambers Street to the south, and ultimately recommended a number of potential actions to address many of those issues. In addition to operational improvements recommended in the study, the New York City Department of Transportation will consider its findings as it plans for the pending reconstruction of Canal Street using funds from the Federal Highway Administration's World Trade Center Emergency Relief program.

CATS' final recommendations were released for public review in December 2010 and have been the subject of a series of public meetings. They include widening sidewalks; maintaining Canal Street as a two-way thoroughfare with left turn restrictions at selected intersections; high-occupancy-vehicle lanes on the Manhattan Bridge; continuing truck size restrictions in the Holland Tunnel as promulgated by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey; implementing a parking management plan and urban design framework plan for the area; and use of real-time motorist advisory signs at Brooklyn, New Jersey and Route 9A approaches to lower Manhattan to encourage diversions to alternate routes when Canal Street is most congested.

Additionally, several shorter-term recommendations that were developed earlier in the study have already been implemented, including repaving Canal Street and providing high visibility

crosswalks; retiming traffic signals and repairing and cleaning streetlights along Canal Street; addressing signage issues at the Holland Tunnel and Manhattan Bridge; exploring improvements to traffic enforcement; defining the transportation elements of the new triangle park near Varick Street; and defining short-term improvements along Allen Street.

The two-track Canal Area Transportation Study was managed by NYMTC staff and a Steering Committee comprised of relevant NYMTC member agencies including the New York City Departments of Transportation and City Planning, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, and the MTA. The CATS process was advised by a Stakeholders Committee that included representatives of area elected officials, businesses, not-for-profit and community and advocacy organizations. CATS was also advised by a community involvement program through the period of the study.

Nearly 120 potential actions were identified as a result of the CATS community involvement process and from the relevant agencies to improve mobility and safety for both vehicular traffic and pedestrians in the study area. Actions that were outside the jurisdictions of the participating agencies were not considered, including returning to two-way tolls on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge and implementing pricing measures, both of which would require legislative action. Several other possible actions were also considered but rejected following extensive modeling, primarily altering traffic regulations to create a one-way pair with Canal Street converted to eastbound-only lanes between the Avenue of the Americas and the Bowery, and Grand Street converted to westbound-only lanes between Chrystie Street and Avenue of the Americas. The assessment determined that the wider Canal Street sidewalks in the one-way alternative would be offset by the negative traffic impact of the one-way pair on both Grand Street and Spring Street.

The Canal Area Transportation Study was conducted in several phases. Track I, initiated in 2002, involved outreach to the community and the relevant agencies to identify significant short-term measures to improve safety, infrastructure and mobility in the study area. Track II was a regional, multi-modal transportation study initiated in 2005 to identify and develop medium- and long-term transportation improvements in the area. It included examining existing conditions in the study area, holding public meetings within the community as well as with a Stakeholders Committee, and developing and utilizing a detailed planning and technical analysis process to identify and screen potential actions to improve traffic, pedestrian and mobility conditions. Extensive data was collected from the study area as part of Track II, including traffic and pedestrian counts, travel time and delay information, aerial congestion mapping, an origin-destination survey, and accident data. At the request of the community and the participating agencies, Track II was supplemented to include more detailed traffic micro-simulations and an extensive survey of parking patterns.

The CATS Final Report for Public Review, including a Parking Management Plan, Urban Design Framework Plan and public presentations, is available at www.NYMTC.org.

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