

Closing 34th Street Means Chaos

An idea found “something less than admirable” – the New York Observer placed that label on the 34th Street [Transitway scheme](#) in an editorial today (Wednesday, March 2, 2011). We look forward to a serious discussion of the issues and a full [environmental review](#) which includes not just traffic but economic impacts.

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Opinion

Get Real, Sadik-Khan: Closing 34th Would Be Chaos

By The Editors

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Thirty-fourth Street happens to be among the most famous thoroughfares in Manhattan. It's in the heart of the midtown central business district, and it's home to health care institutions, university facilities, a major transit hub and a retail corridor that includes one of the city's most iconic stores, Macy's. From river to river, 34th Street moves cars, trucks, buses and pedestrians as efficiently and quickly as humanly possible in one of the world's most crowded pieces of real estate.

The city's transportation commissioner, Janette Sadik-Khan, apparently thinks 34th Street needs a makeover. She wants to close the street to all traffic except for buses between Fifth and Sixth avenues--the very heart of the street--and wants to reroute traffic on either side of the no-car zone. Traffic would flow to the east from Fifth Avenue, and to the west from Sixth.

The commissioner certainly likes to think out of the box, which is why we have bike lanes that few people use and a pedestrian mall that clogs traffic in and around Times Square. But while her creativity and energy are to be admired, this idea is something less than admirable.

Midtown will become a nightmare if this plan is approved. Having motorists stop driving into the city seems to be the commissioner's goal; instead, they'll simply avoid 34th Street, creating chaos on the narrow one-way streets between 23rd and 57th Streets. New Jersey-bound drivers will avoid the nearby approaches to the Lincoln Tunnel and will head downtown to the Holland Tunnel instead, creating more traffic woes on and near Canal Street.

Like it or not, Manhattan attracts people who use cars and trucks to get around. The transportation commissioner can't change that simple fact of life--although she's trying. The City Council and her boss, the mayor, need to have a serious discussion with her about real life in the Big Apple.

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