BUS PLAN COULD AXE NORWOOD ROUTES
Proposal part of MTA redesign, the first in decades

RIDERS LINE UP to board a Bx38 bus on the northbound side of Bainbridge Avenue between East 210th Street and East Gun Hill Road in Norwood, destination Co-op City.

By MICHAEL TURAY
The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and its proposed Bronx Bus Network redesign plan could affect several Norwood bus lines, a move unseen in decades, and which could affect thousands of riders.

The MTA’s draft plan to improve Bronx bus service released last month shows the Bx28 and the express BxM4, which run through Norwood, are expected to be rerouted, while the Bx38 would be eliminated altogether. In addition, the Bx30 will no longer travel to Norwood.

Under the plan, the Bx28 won’t run through Mosholu Parkway and Paul Avenue respectively, which would make the Bx10 the only alternative (continued on page 23)
EDITORIAL

Take Ownership of Your Parks

In the last few weeks, the Norwood News has been peppered with calls and personal accounts of the conditions at the neighborhoods nearby parks, namely Mosholu Parkway and Williamsbridge Oval Park. The parks are routinely utilized by nearly every member of the community. From mothers sitting on benches watching their children running through sprinklers, to residents staying fit as they do laps around the track. It’s all there.

Yet, despite this precious amenity that’s enriched the lives of many, a troubling aspect is rising two-fold. The first is the apparent neglect of Williamsbridge Oval Park this paper has seen in recent years. Overgrown weeds can be found on the northern end to the point where they’re overwhelming the concrete tiling. Also, there are broken concrete slabs.

Then there is the garbage. Mounds of it. Even before the July 4 holiday, which Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver conceded was a challenging day for the Parks Department given the heavy cleanup, Oval Park had already noticed elements of neglect. Household trash was piled high to the point where plastic shopping bags full of trash were left on the side of an overflowing drum.

Where is the Parks Department on this? This paper hasn’t tracked the comings and goings of the Parks Department’s personnel, but it appears they’re not coming around Oval Park as much. And when they are, according to residents we spoke to, half measures appear to be adopted.

As for Mosholu Parkway, it’s tempting to barbecue in open fields running parallel to a freeway under the auspices of the federal government, but consider the larger quality of life implication of the discarded trash left behind by partygoers during the summer weekends. There’s also the lack of porta restrooms on the parkway. Where are they going to relieve themselves? It’s easy to look the other way when visiting the neighborhood or unaware of the long-ranging effects.

Parties happen on the parkway to the detriment of some residents who have pleaded with the Police Department to enforce the “No Barbecue” rule. The local 52nd Precinct has publicly stated it has taken a more relaxed approach to its enforcement as a way of de-escalating any confrontations, part of a broader effort by the NYPD.

But what about ticketing? Is that a form of escalation? Could police officers enforce these matters without it going awry? Or has the practice of de-escalation resulted in a reduced quality of life around Mosholu Parkway?

(continued on page 16)

Letters To The Editor

Rent High. Pay Low.


Shavonda Lewis says $25,000 a year is not low-income. I haven’t done a study of every other area of this country, but in New York City that salary is definitely low.

There was a time when a reasonable rent was considered one week’s salary. A yearly salary of $25,000 comes out to $480.77 a week. If you find a place to live for $480.77 a month, it’s likely to be a cardboard box.

My apartment is part of the Amalgamated Housing Corporation Co-op, which is specifically made affordable for working people. My monthly carrying charge is $868.21 for a one-bedroom apartment. So someone making $25,000 a year would have difficulty affording it.

Much is made of raising the minimum wage to $15 an hour, which would amount to $31,200 a year. That would amount to $600 a week. You’re still unlikely to find an apartment for $600 a month.

So what’s really needed are jobs that actually pay good salaries. Not only is the rent too damn high, but pay is too damn low. The purpose of working for a living is to make a living.

Richard Warren
Van Cortlandt Village

Finding Affordable Apartments

I’m 68 years old, use a Rollator walker with a yellow lab service dog named Scarlett. I’ve read your local paper several times. Regarding the story in the Vol. 32 No. 12 edition of the Norwood News, June 6-19, 2019, “Officials Usher in the Kingsbridge Heights Residence, A Model of Integrated Housing”; Happy for residents who get apartments, but I can’t find one. Why? All by lottery! Why not first received, first served?

I need a one bedroom, not a studio, which is a box. I have three rooms worth of furniture in storage, no family. Live in a room in a house. Not accessible, etc. I’ll be homeless soon. Give me a mobility-disabled apartment, anywhere! So many agencies, but they don’t help you if no Medicaid or low income. Why? Worked for New York City Office of Comptroller for 30 years. Income not low/high enough. Make up your minds! So much discrimination based on income. Discriminated cause disabled.

Diana Valle
Parkchester
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This week we asked readers their thoughts on the city’s proposal to build borough-based jails, including one in Mott Haven, as a way of closing Rikers Island. The plan was recently rejected by the Bronx Borough President.

Why would they put a jail in the boroughs? Where will it be located? If they put the jail here or anywhere else, how will the relationship be between the jail and the residents? I wonder how it will impact the community and its children; for me that’s a problem. They bring the prisoners to the community, they will just be carried into the new jails. Yet they will build one in the Bronx. No good. And they won’t build one in Brooklyn, but probably not going to build one in Queens either. They’re not building one on Staten Island. They’re not building one on Rikers Island. Absolutely. Because what’s going to end up happening is they’re going to build the jail in the Bronx, but they’re already not building one on Staten Island. They’re probably not going to build one in Queens and they won’t build one in Brooklyn, but they will build one in the Bronx. No good.

Steve Pressman
Kingsbridge

What kind of idiot would come up with an idea like that? An idiot that’s running around Iowa trying to make himself President of the United States? People like that should be thrown in jail on Rikers Island. Absolutely. Because what’s going to happen is they’re going to build the jail in the Bronx, but they’re already not building one on Staten Island. They’re probably not going to build one in Queens and they won’t build one in Brooklyn, but they will build one in the Bronx. No good.

Ray Valle
Kingsbridge

I don’t think they should close Rikers Island. I think it should be maximum security for all these people with rap sheets who are arrested time and time again and they can’t rehabilitate them within the community, so they should keep it open for those types of criminals. I agree with the borough president; they shouldn’t put it there at all. He makes sense this time. And the governor said himself that the plan is not workable to close Rikers Island. Therefore they should keep it open.

Carol Roy
Bedford Park

I feel very conflicted about the proposal to build a prison in Mott Haven. I do not understand why they would choose a densely populated area such as Mott Haven to build a new prison. If they insist on building new prisons, why not choose areas with low population densities such as the outskirts of Hunts Point which is primarily industrial. Furthermore, I wonder if building new prisons will resolve any of the problems at Rikers or if the problems will just be carried into the new jails.

Alice M.
Allerton

Well, for once I’m actually in agreement with the borough president as I don’t believe that that site is appropriate based on all of the recommendations from all of the experts about closing Rikers. I’m against it because the location doesn’t meet the recommendations by the commission who’s been working hard on closing Rikers. The whole point is to have the jail as close as possible to the courthouse...the jail should go right next to the courthouse. There’s been recommendations on using the underutilized family courthouse and that’s actually where it should go, if the goal is to keep the jail close to the courthouse.

Ed Garcia Conde
Melrose
Raising Parental Awareness on Gangs in the Five-Two

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Within the big picture story of decades of downward crime rates, one aspect of street life that the NYPD continues to grapple with is the lure of gangs.

Responding to a growing concern over increased gang activity in the north Bronx neighborhoods, Deputy Inspector Thomas J. Alps, commanding officer of the 52nd Precinct, said “gangs are a big problem in the Five-Two.”

In an ongoing effort to counter gang life, and root it out of neighborhoods, the precinct invited members of the NYPD Bronx Gang Squad to a summit at the Bronx Library Center on July 3. The meeting included a slideshow and Q&A session informing parents, children, and residents what to look out for if they suspect their children are being roped into gang life. In some cases, children as young as 12 are being recruited.

Among the signs mentioned were a child consistently dressing in certain colors preferred by some gangs, a student suddenly struggling with schoolwork, and the use of certain social media phone apps to conceal private communications from parents.

The notorious Bloods, Crips, and Trinitarios gangs are among the most active groups in the Fordham and Bedford Park neighborhoods with the use of their individual colors, red, blue, and lime green, respectively.

There are, however, smaller groups of gangs throughout the north Bronx that stake claim to certain streets such as the gang Mosholu Money Over Bitches (MMOB) that was busted in April 2017 for operating a drug operation mostly on Knox and Gates places in Norwood.

As intense as gang rivalries can get, Sgt. Leo Nugent, who led the presentation, revealed that sometimes they do work together. “Bloods and Crips will work together if there’s money in it for both of them,” said Nugent. “After the crime, they go back to hating each other.”

Social media apps often serve as the tool of communication for gangs, according to Nugent. He highlighted messaging apps including Whisper, Skout, and Grindr, and even the dating app Tinder, as these frequently used. The use of emojis has also become a new shorthand for gangs to communicate their affiliation. One example in the slide presentation showed the emojis of a person in a wheelchair, a faucet with a glass of water, a non-descript person and the letter “P” to collectively signify “CRIP.”

Parents are cautioned to not look at any one sign as proof of gang involvement of a child but instead to see the whole spectrum of behavior as raising concern.

Helping kids stay away from gangs is not just a matter of constant supervision of their social media habits. The Gang Squad promotes Active, Communicate, Educate (ACE).

In general, parents are encouraged to take a more active role in their children’s lives if they hope to counter some of the allure of gang life. The Gang Squad reminds parents of the importance of having conversations with kids that include listening and offering praise.

Even when kids do the right things and reject joining a gang, recruitment efforts can rattle some families. One young man at the summit shared his story of (continued on page 16)
Monroe College Hacked

By DAVID CRUZ

Monroe College’s website and files are back up after it had been reportedly hacked, with hackers demanding $2 million worth of Bitcoin to undo the now-encrypted files.

The breach, first reported by the New York Daily News, is now being investigated by the NYPD. Monroe College, founded in 1933, has campuses in Fordham, Manhattan, and New Rochelle in Westchester County.

Officials at the school had turned to its Facebook account to alert students of the outage. In a letter from Marc Jerome, Monroe College president, he said the school is working “feverishly to bring everything back online, and we are working with the appropriate authorities to resolve the situation as quickly as possible.”

“In the meantime, Monroe continues to operate. We’re simply doing it the way college’s did before email and Internet, which results in more personal interaction,” Jerome wrote.

Sources told the Daily News that the breach had impacted the colleges’ network of campuses and facilities. Roughly 8,000 students currently attend the school.

The incident didn’t impact employee payroll records, according to Monroe College spokeswoman Jackie Ruegger.

Bronx Park Goes to the Dogs

By CHRISTY RAE AMMONS

PARKS COMMISSIONER MITCHELL Silver (5th from right), former Councilmember James Vacca (4th from right), Pelham Parkway Neighborhood Association president Edith Blitzer (3rd from right), and Councilmember Nathalia Fernandez (far right) cut the ribbon at the opening of the new Dog Run at Bronx River Park, and Councilmember Mark Gjonaj (4th from left) came out to show his support. The new Dog Run features separate areas for large and small dogs, natural boulders used as dog play elements, new benches, and a four-foot-tall perimeter chain link fence.

New Senior Residence in the Works Along Webster Avenue

By MICHAEL TURAY

The years-old rezoning of Webster Avenue could advance once again with the construction of a 12-story affordable housing senior residence near Bedford Park looming.

The property at 2850 Webster Ave., near Bedford Park Boulevard is expected to see a 189-unit property exclusively for seniors. The property was recently owned by the New York Botanical Garden before selling it to Douglaston Development. The units, once built, will have an average size of 499 square feet. The development group applied for permits that are still pending before the Buildings Department.

The building is expected to stand at 113 feet yielding 107,158 square feet. Douglaston Development has reconstructed multiple Bronx properties, including a 14-story senior living building at 3726 Henry Hudson Pkwy near Riverdale and a 12-story mixed-income development at 2605 Grand Concourse.

A work order for a new sprinkler, standpipe system, underground plumbing, and foundational work are also included. Among the features, the concrete-based structure will also include a cellar and a 30-foot-long rear yard. The address had previously been linked to a Kings Laundry and Clean City Laundromat, with neither being successful enough to stay in business.

The news continues the building boom happening on Webster Avenue between East Gun Hill and Fordham roads, which was rezoned in 2011.

BP Gas Station Robbed

By CHRISTY RAE AMMONS

Police are asking for help in identifying a man (pictured below) who robbed the BP gas station at 3059 Webster Ave. on June 6.

Around 7 a.m., a 30- to 40-year-old black man wearing a dark hoodie, dark pants, and glasses broke into a locked room behind the store. He took as much cash as he could before fleeing.

Anyone with information in regard to the identity of this man is asked to call the NYPD’s Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782).
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Stop Work Orders Issued at 2 of 4 New Norwood Projects

By SÍLE MOLONEY

NYC Health + Hospitals has confirmed that it plans to operate Jacobi Medical Center (Jacobi) and North Central Bronx Hospital (NCBH) under one license, subject to the approval of the state Department of Health (DOH). The news could make it easier for patients to be seen a lot faster, by cutting down wait times for patient transfers between the two publicly-funded hospitals.

“The license merger will streamline the transfer process between hospitals for patients and the credentialing process for our clinicians,” said John Doyle, spokesman for NYC Health + Hospitals, “In short, it allows us to better navigate some regulatory hurdles to better serve our patients and clinical staff.”

Jacobi is a 457-bed teaching hospital affiliated with the Albert Einstein College of Medicine (Einstein), located at 1400 Pelham Pkwy. S., four miles from NCBH, a 213-bed Einstein teaching site, sister facility of Jacobi, located at 3424 Kossuth Ave. and East 210th Street in Norwood. “It is important to note that there are no bed count, staff, or service reductions as part of this effort,” Doyle added.

On May 30, the NYC Health + Hospitals Board of Directors authorized its network to submit a Certificate of Need application to the state DOH in respect to the proposed merger. Though the wheels are in motion, the state DOH still has to approve the change to the operating license making the merger effective date still unknown.

Doyle confirmed that staff at the two hospitals have already been shared for the last 20 years but this latest effort to operate under one license will enhance the existing model by streamlining the staff credentialing process for new doctors and reducing wait times for patients.

This was confirmed in the merger application record provided by the state DOH which stated that the purpose of the merger is to further create a coordinated, highly integrated system with the objectives of improving quality, increasing access and lowering the costs of healthcare in the communities served by Jacobi and NCBH.

The merger won’t cost the network anything.

Logistically, Doyle said the change will enable hospital management to devote resources to support a planned service expansion at NCBH. The plan is to expand outpatient services and ambulatory surgery at NCBH, while trauma and other more complex procedures will be the focus at Jacobi.

The state DOH said that the Certificate of Need application, which is currently under review, would make NCBH a division of Jacobi and this would include the adoption of the name, “North Central Bronx Hospital, a Division of NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi.”
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A Bengali Women’s Empowerment Group Walks a Tightrope in Norwood

By SÍLE MOLONEY
Sanjana Khan and Ayesha Akhtar grew up just a block apart in Norwood. Both their families hail from the city of Sylhet in eastern Bangladesh on the Surma River. Yet, it took a Bronx narratives event last August at the Bronx Museum of the Arts for the two to finally meet. A month later, they founded Laal, a non-profit group supporting Bengali women in Norwood to live healthy, engaged, joyful lives.

The two women spent June 23 “womanning” the group’s table stand at the “Bangla Bazzar Street Fair,” happening at Decatur Avenue and East 204th Street. Together, with a few other volunteers, they were kept busy all day fielding questions and handing out questionnaires to local Bengali women.

“It’s our needs assessment because we’re planning our fall and spring programming and so, we really want to get to know what the women want,” said Akhtar, 29.

Khan, 28, senses the value in these surveys based on the responses she’s received. “One of my favorite questions for the women who have been here for 20-plus years is, if this had been happening 20 years ago, would this have helped them, and every single woman was like, I wish this existed 20 years ago!”

Laal means “red” in Bangla. The name, and its color, symbolizes the mark of menstruation, the alta (henna-like tattoo) Bengali women use to adorn themselves, the red saree Bengali women wear on their wedding day, the red bindi for which Bengali women are famous, and the red sun that is in the center of the Bangladeshi flag. The name serves as a reminder of the strength and resilience of Bengali women.

“There’s no women here,” Khan noted, referring specifically to the absence of Bengali women during the formal presentations and awards portion of the fair. “There’s no representation. As always.”

Over the years the Bengali population has increased in Norwood, carving a space for themselves that’s insular and part of the neighborhood’s transformative cultural fabric. U.S. Census estimates show the number of foreign-born Bangladeshis within Community District 7, which covers Bedford Park and Norwood, is 2,445, representing 4.2 percent of the district’s population. “This community is growing,” said Khan. “We’re huge!”

The figures fall in line with the overall Bangladeshi population of New York City, which grew 42 percent in just three years from 34,237 in 2008 to 48,677 in 2011, according to the Asian American Federation, a policy think tank group. About 20 percent of that population resides in the Bronx.

Barriers to Integration

The federation places Bangladeshis among the poorest of the city’s Asian ethnic groups, with one in three Bangladeshis living below the poverty line. Khan said that Bangladeshis are now arriving from more rural areas where the role of women is more traditional, largely dependent on men.

Specific issues faced by Bengali women in the states include inadequate command of the English language, despite some having lived in the U.S. for over 20 years, fear of travelling beyond the confines of their local community, partly due to a lack of understanding of the city’s bus and subway systems, accessing public information, and isolation, among others. Akhtar added that the way public information is usually obtained in the Bengali community is through word-of-mouth rather than from city agency websites.

According to Khan, these factors created additional challenges for a community already dealing with the effects of Islamophobia, and one which, Khan said, holds a certain level of distrust towards police. According to 2014 U.S. State Department estimates, 89.9 percent of the population of Bangladesh are Muslims.

All of these circumstances amplified the need for bottom-up support services tailored specifically to Bengali women to help them integrate into American society. It is here that Khan and Akhtar play a role through their work with Laal, delicately straddling the sensitive line between Bengali and American culture.

“We both went away for college, which is very rare,” said Akhtar. Referring to their respective alma maters, she said, “They are both very liberal arts schools, very away, and very removed from here.”

Yet, they say family roots brought them back home to Norwood. “We left but came back here in the Bronx, doing it for our communities. So yeah, we’re here,” said Khan. “We know exactly what we’re going into. We grew up in it.”

This story is part of a two-part series on Laal.
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FOURTH OF JULY LEAVES

By CHRISTY RAE AMMONS

Despite signs banning open flames at certain green spaces across the Bronx, every year on July 4, for at least five years, ashes, bottles, and leftover trash are found along Mosholu Parkway the day after the holiday. The grassy strip that’s lined with benches on either side is home to several dozen trees, which the Parks Department is mandated to protect from fires.

Yet despite several community meetings, and a history of complaints from Community Board 7 urging the Parks Department and NYPD to step up its ‘no barbecue’ enforcement ahead of the agency’s busiest time of the year, this year was no exception to the mess behind was apparent.

Barbecuing is not forbidden in all areas of the Bronx. Several parks, such as Van Cortlandt Park, have barbecue pits and designated areas to dispose of coals. As such, areas with no barbecue pits such as Mosholu Parkway are restricted from open-flame cookout, given how hot coals can jeopardize the health of trees. Hot coals had already become a problem for the Parks Department this year when trash containing hot coals was unknowingly dumped into a garbage truck compacting a fire.

State of Oval Park Roils Residents, Parks Dept. Responds

By DAVID CRUZ

The black bags were finally filled with trash. The grass trimmed. The overflowing trash bins cleared. The checkmarks made for a productive cleanup at Williamsbridge Oval Park.

Yet credit for the several cleanup jobs goes to the handful of volunteers living near the park. In the space of several months, the group has taken it upon itself to do the work of the agency, whose track record for reliable response to maintain the luster of the park was in a better state last year.

“I was told, ‘Well, I’m not doing that now,’” said Quaranta of the cleanup crews. In one instance, she was told by a crew member that they had to gather the clothes.

“Lunney did score a victory seeing DPR replace the worn-out American flag for a new one. But I have to gather the clothes.

As residents filed 14 complaints linked to park conditions with 311, Lunney spent the last few months haranguing the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) for consistent service of the park. “I emailed [Kavanagh] and contacted him several times and his office about broken items in the park, in the playground areas, the trash that’s everywhere. And I said, ‘We do have videotapes and photographs.’”

Lunney was told by a crew member that they had to gather the clothes.

Anthony Rivieccio, a longtime Bedford Park resident who’s raised the issue of illegal barbecues for years, took stock of the illegal barbecues around the area on July 4 as he’s done before. He found what he considered newer residents picnicking, partying, littering, barbecuing, and playing loud music for hours on end. He documented the barbecuing, sending the information to Ischia Bravo, Community Board 7’s district manager. Police were apparently called but Rivieccio said they never showed up.

“In the last three or four months, there has been a neighborhood push to be sure that this did not happen,” Rivieccio said. “About a month ago at the Parks Committee meeting in Community Board 7, 20 neighborhood residents showed up and complained about the conditions that some of our new neighbors were doing with the parkway.”

Barbara Stronczer, chair of Community Board 7’s Parks Committee, is on Rivieccio’s side, largely oppos-
A MESS AT LOCAL PARKS

ing the barbecuing at Mosholu Parkway. “[Mosholu Parkway] is not an official barbecue site. There are sites that the Parks Department lists for barbecuing,” said Stronczer. “You gotta realize it’s very close to people’s windows, too, and nobody wants that smoke blowing into your window when it’s this hot. And a lot of the people come and use the parkway and don’t clean up after themselves.

Referring to a meeting that occurred on June 26, Stronczer explained that residents pushed for a change before the holiday. “A whole crew of people came out from the north side of the parkway. They’re having terrible problems with litter after these parties, loud music to the point where people put speakers in the trees. And late at night they were still blasting the music.”

The aftermath from the parties was apparent even five days after the holiday, when crews from the Parks Department finally picked up the heaps of trash left behind. There was also an abundance of full garbage bags, including a bag of empty lighter fluid boxes and an empty box for a new grill resting beside trash cans where Bainbridge Avenue meets the parkway.

“Think it’s a shame,” John Lund, a Bronx resident sitting on a bench at Mosholu, told the Norwood News. “This is like a good part of the Bronx here. It’s a beautiful park and they should clean up that night, the next day.”

The garbage problem didn’t just extend beyond Mosholu Parkway. At Williamsbridge Oval Park, leftover fireworks were spotted at the edge of the northern entrance. Inside the park, heaps of trash spilled out of the trash drums. In some cases, the garbage had accumulated well before the July 4 festivities. There were also piles of ash and charcoal inside the park.

The Bronx Borough Parks commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa urged residents to pick up after themselves. “We ask the community to please take the garbage with them and to please be able to be respectful to our parks and our community. We try the best that we can to get to all sites as soon as we can.”

Parks commissioner Mitchell Silver explained that the agency is working on the problem, though conceding that July 4 is a busy day for barbecuing across the city. “Right now we know there are certain areas where barbecue is not permitted. We’re working with our Parks Enforcement Patrol and NYPD to make sure people understand the rules,” Silver told the Norwood News at an unrelated event on July 9. “But the Fourth of July is one of those days. All of our parks were overwhelmed. I can’t even begin to tell you how much refuse we had to pick up after the Fourth of July. It’s just one of those big, celebratory days that people come out, and barbecuing is synonymous with July 4.”

The Parks Department told the Norwood News in an email that a Parks Enforcement Patrol unit was posted at the parkway, yet barbecuing and partying still went on for over three hours on July 4.

The problem of illegal barbecues also extended beyond Norwood.

Roxanne Delgado, founder of Friends of Pelham Parkway, was outraged over the ongoing breaking of the rules that could put wildlife in danger across the Bronx. “It became the norm because of the lack of enforcement,” Delgado said. “In other parks, they have zero tolerance. They see a grill and boom, they’re out there. Because of that constant enforcement, it doesn’t happen there.”

Delgado was upset by the barbecuing because of the plumes of smoke, which could damage trees or people’s lungs. “You could bring everything else besides the grill,” she told the Norwood News. “It’s not fair. The parkway belongs to everyone.”

Editor’s Note: Anthony Rivieccio writes the Financial Focus column that appears on the Norwood News website.

A PORTABLE BARBECUE grill carton (pictured) is among the items found on July 8 along Mosholu Parkway.

A HAMMOCK CAN be spotted (pictured far right) during the July 4 celebrations along Mosholu Parkway.
Citi Bike to Expand in the Bronx

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The City Department of Transportation (DOT) announced the Phase 3 expansion of its Citi Bike initiative on July 16, which will bring bike sharing to various South Bronx neighborhoods including Mott Haven, Melrose, Port Morris, Highbridge, Claremont, Morrisania, Longwood, Concourse, and Mt. Eden in the next year. Community Board consultation will start this fall and stations will be installed in 2020. DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg confirmed that Citi Bike membership would be made available to SNAP recipients and NYCHA residents and that the city is also ensuring the program will be accessible to people with disabilities.

She also confirmed that, according to DOT estimates, New York City is currently the eighth largest bike share system in the world with around 14,000 bikes. “When we are done with this expansion, we will be at 40,000 bikes, she said, drawing applause from those gathered. “We will be the second or third largest bike system in the world.”

To mark the occasion, the Commissioner, elected officials, including Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., Lyft representatives and advocates took to the saddle to ride Citi Bikes down the Grand Concourse in the Bronx ahead of the open-air press conference which was held outside the Bronx County Courthouse.

Trottenberg confirmed that Citi Bike membership would be made available to SNAP recipients and NYCHA residents and that the city is also ensuring the program will be accessible to people with disabilities.

So-called bus boarding islands are proposed to be part of the bike lane. These boarding islands—already installed in states such as California—would be designed as ramps so that cyclists could still ride over them, encouraging them to slow their speed. Unlike curb cuts that allow buses to pick up or drop off passengers without disturbing the flow of traffic, buses will stop on the street, allowing for faster pickups and drop offs for riders.

The northbound bike lane would make connections to the Mosholu–Pelham and Bronx River Greenways, a system of bicycle paths that connect the parks in the Bronx and other boroughs. The DOT also hopes that the bike lanes will encourage residents to go out and exercise.

In 2017, there were 444 bicycle crashes involving motor vehicles in the city, resulting in 451 injuries and one fatality. The 52nd Precinct, covering a portion of Southern Boulevard, recorded 36 bike-related crashes and injuries.

The DOT has been working to create more bike lanes in order to make the roads safer for cyclists and the sidewalks safer for pedestrians. In 2017 and 2018, the DOT installed 45.3 miles of bike lanes throughout the city.

This year, they plan to install 30.3 miles of bike lanes. More than two miles of the 30.3 miles of bike lanes are in progress, while the remaining 28 miles are still in development, including two projects in the Bronx, the Southern Boulevard project and the Willis Avenue project.
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PI: Dr. Erin Hazlett  MIRB#: 01708
Raising Parental Awareness on Gangs in the Five-Two

(continued from page 5)

being recruited as a high school student by a neighborhood gang even though he never expressed interest in them. Inspector Alps promised to help the young man who preferred remaining anonymous to the Norwood News.

For other kids who do end up in gangs, it is the sense of being heard and appreciated, at least in the early stages, that lures them in. Though the initial pitch for a gang promotes a family-like environment, it is oftentimes followed by violent initiation rites. The Gang Squad shared videos, prefaced with a warning of violent content involving minors, with the audience of about 35 attendees showing beatings meant to initiate new gang members or as a disciplinary response to those who break gang code.

Rather than scare off new members with these beatings, it brings a sense of belonging, responsibility, and structure according to the presenters at the summit.

One reason the Gang Squad promotes the ACE program in their outreach efforts is to engage a broader community beyond the immediate family. Jayson Gonzalez works within the Bronx community helping young people find organizations such as Neighborhood Benches which helps break cycles of violence in families by promoting positive role models and teaching leadership skills.

“I liked what I heard tonight,” Gonzalez said after the summit. “But our communities need more involvement from parents, teachers, and organizations. We can’t just leave it up to the police to fix these problems.”

Gonzalez’s words were echoed by some of the people who waited after the meeting to speak with Inspector Alps and Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCO) present with their concerns. Alps encouraged the public’s input. “It’s the police working with the community together in a proactive manner through education to stop the youths being attracted to these gangs,” said Alps.

The multi-faceted approach to help kids reject gang life is seen as critical by those in the front lines of the campaign. Nugent from the gang squad, gave a stark message to parents. “We’re here today to help you reach your kids before we do” he said.
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**Accompanying the Elderly**

Volunteer to visit the elderly once a week through the city Department of Aging’s Friendly Visiting Program of Neighborhood SHOPP. Volunteers donate their time to accompany the elderly once a week for an hour as a means of improving their mental health. Volunteers will need to undergo a background check and commit six months to the program. For more information, call 311.

**Norwood Youth Market**

Affordably priced fruits and vegetables will up for sale at the Norwood Youth Market, East Gun Hill Road and DeKalb Avenue, each Thursday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Nov. 21. Vendors accept cash, SNAP/EBT, debit/credit, WIC and senior FMNP coupons. For more information, go to grownyc.org/norwoodyouthmarket.

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<td>7/31, 8/19</td>
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Bus Plan Could Axe Norwood Routes

(continued from page 1)

for riders to Moshulu Parkway North. In total, 23 stops are proposed to be discontinued, with nine new stops being introduced. The proposed plan will also remove 15 of the 79 remaining stops for the line. This will cut the number of stops by 19 percent and “improve stop spacing to an average of 1,005 feet,” according to the report.

The plan also proposes to eliminate BxM4 express service along Jerome and Bainbridge avenues. Riders will no longer get service between Katonah Avenue and East 237th Street in Woodlawn and the Grand Concourse and East 158th Street in Melrose. The bus will no longer run through the Grand Concourse and is proposed to be redirected onto the Major Deegan Expressway. In total, the line could have 30 of its 43 stops discontinued, with two of them being officially removed.

The Bx30 is proposed to no longer travel into Norwood but instead would end at Pelham Parkway and White Plains Road. The last five stops are currently in Norwood, running from Bainbridge Avenue and East 210th Street through East 200th Street and Rochambeau Avenue. This would inconvenience riders heading for Norwood since they would have to transfer buses which would lengthen their travel time. In total the line could have 54 of its 91 stops discontinued, with eight of them being officially removed.

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, whose district partially covers Norwood, criticized these suggested changes. In a letter to MTA president Andrew Byford, Dinowitz expressed his frustrations, writing “the draft plan appears to overly burden Norwood with service reductions and it is unclear whether frequency improvements will be sufficient to compensate for this loss in network coverage.”

Dinowitz added, “The Bx30 is chronically plagued by bus bunching and unreliability and I believe it would be significantly overburdened by these changes. The plan proposes to eliminate BxM4 express bus service. There are simply not enough accessible subway stations throughout the city for disabled readers to use the subway instead of the BxM4.”

The proposal aims to address several bus issues such as reliability, wait time, and traffic congestion, a move that aligns with the MTA’s impending Congestion Pricing Plan, which would charge vehicles a fee when they enter Manhattan south of 60th Street. The plan, which won’t be implemented until 2021, looks to reduce congestion and encourage Bronx residents to utilize other ways of transportation. While riders will have no choice but to rise to the occasion, they will no doubt be inconvenienced.

The ridership of elderly and disabled travelers could be affected by these potential sudden changes. With limited options such as Access-a-Ride or an Uber, many fear the route alterations will overburden their commute.

“They can’t get there on time, you call them at night in advance and they still show up late,” said a woman, who declined to be named, on her experience with Access-a-Ride.

“These buses are very slow. Since I’m disabled, I usually take a cab to my doctor appointments, but I feel sorry for the people who have to take these buses, it’s ridiculous,” said Janet Farley, a rider on the Bx30 bus.

The plan also aims to improve overall customer experience. The MTA wants to implement “real-time seat availability information to show how full the bus is via web and mobile applications,” according to the report. They also encourage riders to utilize One Metro New York (OMNY), their new tap-to-pay technology that would eventually eliminate all MetroCards in 2023. All of these facets look to expedite the bus boarding process for customers, one aspect that could help buses run smoothly. It’s a proposal Daniel Pearlstein, policy and communications director for Riders Alliance, a transit advocacy group, looks forward to.

“As bus advocates, we’ve been pushing for a new system because right now what we’ve got is everybody has to board the bus up front, everybody has to dip their card which takes a bunch of time. We’re looking forward to a system of all-door boarding, where you can board and pay a fare at any door of the bus,” said Pearlstein.

Opinions from the community will be vital for the final plan come September. MTA spokeswoman Amanda Kwan acknowledged.

“There’s several rounds of community outreach during the entire process, including another round of open houses to gather public input on the proposed final plan when it’s released in September,” wrote Kwan. “After we review the public feedback on the final plan and make any changes, we will send the proposal to the MTA Board for approval,” she added.

Residents can voice their opinions to the MTA in July. Bronx Community Board 8, which represents Kingsbridge, will host Byford for a “Community Conversation” on July 18 at IN-Tech Academy, located at 2975 Tibbetts Ave. The public is encouraged to come out and discuss the Bronx Bus redesign from 7 to 9 p.m., with doors opening at 6 p.m.

On July 29 from 4 to 8 p.m., the MTA will also have personnel engage with community members using a street van set up on Broadway and West 231st Street.
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