

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Statement of Speaker of the New York State Assembly Sheldon Silver

Before the

Postal Regulatory Commission  
September 23, 2009

Chairman Goldway and Members of the Commission, I am the Assemblyman who represents Lower Manhattan and I thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony regarding the Pitt Street Post Office, located at 185 Clinton Street in the Lower East Side of New York City. I would like to take this opportunity to state my strong opposition to the potential closing of Pitt Station to the Postal Regulatory Commission. Such a closure would have a significant negative impact upon the large population of residents which currently utilize this post office.

Since this decision was announced, I have heard from literally thousands of constituents who are outraged about the idea of losing their local post office. Very few Manhattanites, especially members of this community, own cars and most walk to their local post office.

Pitt Station is located in a dense residential community known as Cooperative Village, which is then surrounded by other large apartment buildings. Cooperative Village, which is comprised of four cooperatives with 4,500 apartments in twelve buildings, is part of a NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) program. This designation is given to a community that is made up of at least 50% senior citizens. In general, seniors have a greater difficulty walking significant distances. They need a post office that is close to home and one that is handicap accessible. Seniors also tend to be far more reliant on traditional mail to conduct their business as opposed to electronic mail.

The next nearest post office to Cooperative Village is Knickerbocker Station. In making this decision to close Pitt Station, I hope the Postal Service will consider that it is likely that this distance will be traveled by foot, due to the well known fact that the Lower East Side is underserved by mass transit. Knickerbocker Station is not only farther in distance from Pitt Station, it is also not on a bus line like Pitt Station. Seniors who live in the Cooperative known as East River Houses who used to make the .7 mile trip to Pitt Station by bus will now have to walk a total of a minimum of .5 miles door to door to reach Knickerbocker Station if using the next nearest bus route.

The goal of the closure, as I understand it, is to reduce overhead costs (rent, utilities etc.) and shift customers to a nearby post office. But the increased burden of travel on residents will make it either unlikely or impossible for many to use the service and cause a significant drop in customer base. This will therefore reduce or completely eliminate the intended fiscal gain that the closure is intended to have.

Additionally, I would like to point out that while the Pitt Station is easily accessible at street level, Knickerbocker Station has steps that must be climbed to access the building. Knickerbocker Station does have an elevator, but it requires an elevator operator to run, which often causes long delays while waiting for the operator to respond. Furthermore, customers complain that the elevator is frequently out of order, posing an added burden on a senior or disabled person who may have traveled a significant distance to reach the post office and cannot climb the stairs.

Many people have also suggested that most postal services can be done by computer. While this may be true in some locations, the community utilizing this post office, as mentioned before, is comprised of many senior, elderly customers. Many do not have computers and therefore do not use email or pay bills online. They do, however, frequently visit their local post office.

I sincerely hope that upon examining the realities of the demographics and geographies of this neighborhood that the US Postal Service will reconsider its decision to close the Pitt Street Station. For all of the foregoing reasons, I urge the Postal Regulatory Commission to convey these concerns in your recommendations to the US Postal Service. Thank you again for giving my testimony your full consideration.