

**Testimony to the Committee on Sanitation  
Re: Street Condition Observation Unit (SCOUT)  
Presented by Jeffrey A. Kay, Director, Mayor's Office of Operations  
November 23, 2009**

Good afternoon Chairman Felder and members of the Committee and Council. My name is Jeff Kay and I am the director of the Mayor's office of Operations. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the Street Condition Observation Unit, aka SCOUT, program.

SCOUT officially launched in October, 2007. The SCOUT team was developed with two primary objectives in mind. First, SCOUT was intended to inform city agencies of conditions in City neighborhoods in a proactive manner. The Mayor's belief was that City agencies should not wait for a constituent to complain about a problem – instead, the City should be out there, taking the initiative to seek out potential issues to repair and therefore enhancing the quality of life for New York City's customers.

Second, the SCOUT program strives to hold agencies accountable for the way they respond to conditions that are reported through the 311 customer call center. Through SCOUT's quality assurance program – a percentage of each month's conditions are re-inspected to ensure that agencies have "actioned" the condition appropriately. In addition to checking for agency response, we are able to compare the agency's action on the street to the message it sends to customers through the 311 system.

SCOUT reports conditions to five City agencies: DOT, DSNY, DEP, Parks, & DOB. Each month the SCOUT team drives every City street in the five boroughs, covering over 6,500 miles.

Using GPS-enabled, wireless technology, the team reports upon a list of conditions based on what one could see walking or driving through our neighborhoods - such as graffiti, potholes and sunken catch basins. Once a condition is located, the inspector logs it into his or her BlackBerry device, and the condition is sent to 311, and then sent to the appropriate agency for action – the same way a 311 caller's service request would be sent to an agency. SCOUT reports come to agencies as if they were reported anonymously. Since the program began, inspectors have reported over 110,000 conditions to agencies.

In the fall of 2008, Operations launched "SCOUT on the web" a mapping tool which allows users to search for SCOUT reports by location. The map also reports the last time an inspector was in a community district.

In August of this year, we announced a partnership with Mini USA to pilot a fleet of their electric vehicles. SCOUT inspectors now make use of eight fully electric Mini Coopers to do their daily inspections, free of charge to the City.

We are very proud of the SCOUT program and believe it has led to many more conditions being actioned by City agencies, as well as an improvement in the way agencies address complaints that come through 311. From our quality assurance program,

we have indeed been able to address some operational challenges in the way agencies address street-level complaints. For example, as a result of the program, we have improved the way that City agencies address graffiti. Through SCOUT observation and quality assurance, we worked with City agencies to streamline the process for cleaning graffiti and reduced the average time it takes to clean graffiti from 70 days in 2007, to approximately 30 days currently.

In addition, as a result of the SCOUT program, the City is studying the best way to handle taking action on a variety of street conditions, including those that in the past had bounced between agencies like DOT and DEP. In addition to creating a street defect glossary and revamping content and resolution codes at 311, we are currently in the midst of a pilot program whereby DOT is inspecting DEP conditions, and holding them accountable for street conditions in a similar way to the way we deal with contractors. We believe this will eventually lead to more consistent, efficient and transparent treatment of street conditions.

These improvements are in addition to the basic benefit of the program – which is the City finding and resolving thousands of conditions, without waiting for the public to complain about them first.

Thank you for your time today and I would be happy to respond to any of your questions.

COMMUNITY BOARD 7/BROOKLYN  
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
CONCERNING THE DOS STREET CLEANING PROGRAM AND OPERATION SCORECARD  
November 23, 2009

Thank you for this opportunity to share our experiences with this committee concerning our more than thirty year effort to reduce the number of days designated for street sweeping in a large portion of the Sunset Park community.

Community Board 7, in the Sunset Park community, has three distinct street sweeping regulations within the Sunset Park community. Our industrial area, generally west of Third Avenue, has midnight sweeping regulations. The area west of Sixth Avenue has two-day-a-week regulations (one day per side). The area between Third and Sixth Avenues has four-day-a-week regulations (two days per side). All three of these areas are all located within sections 3 and 4 of BK-7.

In the past we have been told by DSNY that they will not reduce the four-day-a-week regulation because our scorecard shows that these areas are the dirtiest in the community and do not reach a 90% cleanliness threshold. However, under Operation Scorecard, neither we nor DSNY can find out what streets are being measured, so if it is our industrial area or east of Sixth Avenue that is being measured, it is those who live within Third to Sixth Avenues who are literally made to pay. Without knowing which streets are actually being evaluated we have no opportunity to even show if four-day-a-week cleaning is cost effective because of the incongruous nature of our regulations in sections 3 and 4. Perhaps the area between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues are already sufficiently clean, but there is no way to prove this under the current system of evaluation.

Ironically, although our streets are allegedly dirtier than those of our neighbors, BK-7 does not have a dedicated cleaning staff. We share BK-6A (located within Community Board 6) with BK-6 while we house the cleaning staff and vehicles of BK-10. This seems illogical as we believe that dirtier streets, as we are told ours are, should have a dedicated staff, rather than share these resources with another community.

Community Board 7 has long held that our community does more than its fair share when it comes to sanitation infrastructure. In addition to the Hamilton Avenue Marine Transfer station, which will eventually take about half of Brooklyn's trash, we host the garage of our neighbor to the south, BK-10, and soon the SIMS recycling facility, which will take most of the city's recycling. We are additionally burdened with the IESI commercial waste facility, which currently takes more than 1000 tons of residential garbage per day. All of this garbage comes to our community by truck and currently leaves by truck. As there are no on ramps to the Gowanus Expressway, the closest highway to our industrial area in our community, these trucks have to navigate our streets, often on residential blocks or alongside schools, take make it back to a highway. Could this importation and export of other communities' garbage via truck also be a reason for our "dirtier" streets? How does the addition of all these trucks to our already overburdened community impact our air quality? We believe that such additional burdens should be taken into account and not simply some unchallengeable, indeterminate statistic when deciding the appropriate regulations for our community.

Our Board also strongly believes that moving vehicles four times per week adds emissions to a community that is already in non-attainment with Federal clean air standards, possibly due to the Gowanus Expressway. This cleaning schedule only exacerbates the poor quality of our air in a community with a high asthma rate. If the additional sweeping days make our streets cleaner, is this being offset by dirtier air from all the vehicles that are forced to move almost daily? Furthermore, do these additional days also make it more likely that people in our community will drive to work because they are forced to move their cars during the work day, further reducing air quality?

As we have seen our neighboring communities achieve reduced street sweeping days, often with little difference in cleanliness rating from our community, we are forced to ask once again, why not us?

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeremy Laufer  
District Manager  
Community Board 7/Brooklyn