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Clock is Ticking For Downtown Construction Command Center

BY MATT DUNNING

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Officials for the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center, the city-state agency charged with coordinating construction projects Downtown, said earlier this week that they are still waiting for Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Gov. David Paterson to renew the executive order that established the agency six years ago. The joint order, which Bloomberg and Paterson extended for two years in 2008, is set to expire on Dec. 31.

Robert Harvey, the command center's Executive Director, told a Community Board 1 committee Monday that the agency oversees more than \$15 billion worth of construction projects south of Canal Street, and that its most important work may yet be ahead of it. The LMCCC predicts construction-related truck traffic in Lower Manhattan will begin to rise steadily over the rest of 2010, and reach its apex around July of next year, when as many as 15,000 trucks per month will make daily deliveries to Downtown building projects.

The LMCCC's 2010 budget, around \$15 million, was funded through a series of grants from federal, state and city agencies. Harvey said representatives from both City Hall and the Governor's Office have indicated their support for the agency's continued existence.

"[Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert Lieber and Tim Gilchrist, the Governor's Deputy Secretary for Economic Development] both agreed that our executive order needs to be extended, and we're pushing forward to make sure that it does get extended," Harvey said, adding the agency has been an important conduit for communication between government entities, construction companies and local residents, and that he hoped the order would be extended before any of the LMCCC's staff begins looking for new jobs.

"It's key that we retain this team," Harvey said. "We're really the only third-party, independent analysts down here that looks at projects and gives the straight information. We have no political or any kind of agenda."

A spokesman for the Mayor's office said Bloomberg does plan to renew the LMCCC's executive order, but would not say when it could happen.

"LMCCC plays a critical role in Lower Manhattan and we expect that to continue," the spokesman said. Calls to Paterson's offices were not immediately returned.

"A lot of the regular neighborhood problems are cleared up through the LMCCC," CB1 member Tom Goodkind said. "We really want to keep these guys around."

News of the LMCCC's impending deadline came as the agency rolled out a new "4D" construction map on its website, lowermanhattan.info. In 2007, the LMCCC began internally tracking building projects Downtown in three dimensions, using Google Earth. On Monday, Harvey said the agency had added a fourth dimension—time—to its map, affording users a window into Lower Manhattan's future.

"It's going to change from day to day," Harvey said. "It gives you the best information that we have access to."

Using a sliding timeline below a 3D map of Downtown, visitors to the website can flash forward as far as

2018, when most of the construction projects in Lower Manhattan are scheduled to be completed. Harvey said the database powering the new feature will be updated regularly, and that the agency is still working out a few bugs—the 41-story former Deutsche Bank tower at 130 Liberty Street, which has been deconstructed down to the 14th floor, appears in the 3D model in its pre-Sept. 11 state. A three-year Worth Street reconstruction project, postponed until after similar street reconstruction is complete on Chambers Street in 2013, is still marked with its original November 2010 start date.

"It's something that's never really been done before," Harvey said. "It's a monster to feed if it's going to be accurate."