

CURBING CARS

The Citywide Coalition for Traffic Relief & Intro. 199



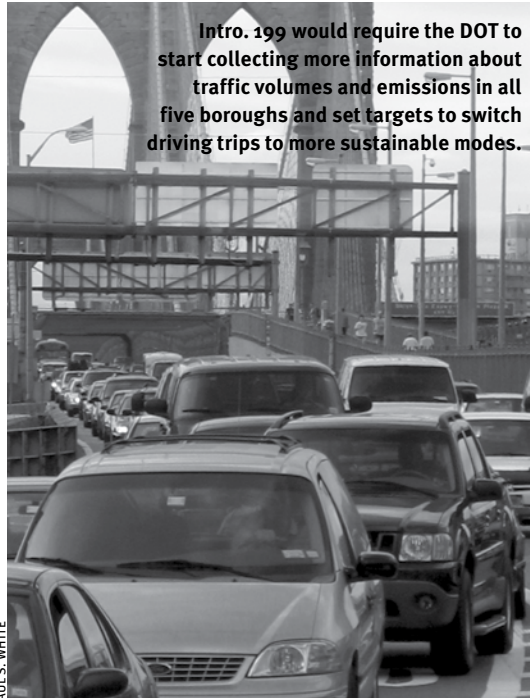
Over 130 groups citywide were represented at City Hall in November to urge Mayor Bloomberg to relieve traffic congestion in their neighborhoods.

IN NOVEMBER, THE CITYWIDE COALITION for Traffic Relief, a partnership of over 130 local organizations, gathered on the steps of City hall to urge Mayor Bloomberg to reduce the amount of motor traffic on city streets and improve alternatives to driving. At the press conference the Coalition unveiled the Charter for New York City Traffic Relief that identifies five steps the City should take to meet these goals:

1. Give bus riders, walkers and bicyclists more street space and priority
2. Traffic-calm streets to curb speeding and reckless driving
3. Reduce the impacts of truck traffic
4. Do a feasibility and cost/benefit study of road pricing
5. Improve parking policies to reduce illegal parking and curbside saturation

The Coalition is composed of local community groups from all five boroughs, including churches, block associations, senior centers, environmental and social justice organizations. What is striking about this coalition is that for the first time it brings together groups from all around the city working on health, injury prevention, environmental and quality of life issues to advocate for citywide, systematic transportation solutions.

One encouraging sign that the City is paying attention to these demands is a piece of legislation that came to City Council this January, entitled Intro. 199, better known as the "Traffic Information and Relief Bill" bill. Simply, the bill would require the Department of Transportation to collect and make



Intro. 199 would require the DOT to start collecting more information about traffic volumes and emissions in all five boroughs and set targets to switch driving trips to more sustainable modes.



From midtown Manhattan to Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, New Yorkers are fed up with traffic ruining their quality of life.

public citywide data on traffic congestion (the agency's current data collection focuses almost exclusively on Manhattan) and to set targets to reduce driving and increase bicycling, walking and transit use. It would also require the Department of Health to work with the DOT to set goals to reduce traffic-related pollution and crashes.

Intro. 199 is about leveling the information playing field everywhere in the city. The DOT's traffic and transportation data collection is currently minimal in Manhattan and nearly non-existent in the other boroughs.

Intro. 199 will equip the DOT and the public with the information necessary to understand traffic patterns and existing street usage. This will remove a significant roadblock for many of T.A.'s local partners, arming them with the information they need to fight for and win specific transportation and street safety improvements.

Julian Allsid, President of the South Midwood Residents' Association and a Traffic Relief Coalition member, had this to say about Intro 199:

"For years we have been trying to get the city to improve traffic safety in our community, which has a very high concentration of public school children and dangerous street conditions. It has been very difficult to get data from the city, which made it much harder to organize and even know what we were dealing with. There is no question that having more data and making it available to the public would help communities like ours."

Likewise, environmental justice advocates like Sustainable South Bronx and Mothers on the Move have been organizing against disproportionate levels of truck traffic and pollution for years. With better information about air quality and emissions levels and targets to improve them, residents will be more equipped in their fight for a cleaner environment and improved public health. Coalition members throughout New York City are asking for these tools to help do their part in making New York City a more livable place.

The City is poised to make some significant policy decisions to relieve traffic congestion in the next few months, and public engagement is key to the success of any major civic undertaking

in New York City. For a traffic relief plan to truly provide what New York City neighborhoods need it must address the five points outlined in the Coalition's Charter for New York City Traffic Relief. The passage of Intro. 199 will put the DOT and City Hall on the road towards serious traffic relief, street safety and a more sustainable city for everyone. □

TakeAction!

Contact your City Councilmember and find out if they have co-sponsored this legislation. If they have not, ask them to be a co-sponsor. If they already have, thank them for leading the fight for Traffic Relief.

Call your Community Board and tell them to write a resolution in support of Intro 199

Find out more about the Citywide Coalition for Traffic Relief and sign on: traffirelief.org