

Transportation ALTERNATIVES

115 West 30th Street Suite 1207 New York, New York 10001-4010
Ph 212-629-8080 Fax 212-629-8334 info@transalt.org transalt.org

NYC's Advocates for Bicycling, Walking and Sensible Transportation

December 15, 2005

Commissioner Iris Weinshall
NYC Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Commissioner Weinshall,

100,000 New Yorkers and scores of civic, health, parks and transportation groups support a Central Park Loop free of vehicular traffic.

These same individuals and groups recently made a compromise request to Mayor Bloomberg: the City should test the viability of a car-free loop by instituting a trial closure for the summer of 2006.

In a November 22, 2005 letter, you responded negatively to this compromise request, citing the findings of a fifteen-year-old traffic study.

Your response is unacceptable.

"The Central Park Drives Alternate Use Study" employs data collected in 1991 and includes doomsday traffic predictions for closing park entrances that have been shut to cars for years with no resulting problems. The most applicable study of traffic volumes in and around the park-- Sam Schwartz's 2004 Central Park Traffic Study-- shows a 26.2% net decrease in vehicle volumes since 1991. Clearly, traffic volumes have changed significantly enough to warrant a new study.

You also cited "The Gates Traffic Impact Analysis". While more current than the Schwartz study, this analysis was conducted at a time when Central Park was inundated with an estimated four million additional visitors, many of whom arrived via motor vehicles on streets adjacent to the park. (Nevertheless, this study found that although volumes increased somewhat on north-south arteries, travel time on those avenues actually decreased.)

100,000 New Yorkers deserve more than a denial predicated on outdated and inapplicable studies. New Yorkers deserve a 3-month trial closure and accompanying study to ascertain the viability of a car-free Central Park Loop. Short of this, we request a public forum at which your agency explains why vehicular traffic is necessary on the Central Park Loop.

We respectfully request a response by Monday, January 16.

Sincerely,


Paul Steely White