

Who Wants Traffic Relief? The Citywide Coalition for Traffic Relief

NEW YORK'S BUSINESS LEADERS are lining up behind congestion pricing, parking reform, improved walking and bicycling and other traffic busting measures.

In early 2005, the partnership for New York City, the city's leading network of city business leaders, announced that they were in support of a London-style congestion pricing cordon around Manhattan's Central Business District. On a more local level, more and more business improvement districts—from Manhattan's Downtown Alliance to the 167th Street Business & Professional League in the South Bronx—are pressing the city for wider sidewalks and traffic restrictions.

But how supportive are rank-and-file New Yorkers?

This fall, Transportation Alternatives and Citizens for NYC formed the Citywide Coalition for Traffic Relief to prove that public support for a bold traffic reduction measures exists in all corners of New York City.

The steering committee is engaging local community and business groups around the Charter for Traffic Relief. The Charter outlines five steps that the City should take



to reduce traffic and its negative environmental, economic and social impact on the residents and businesses of New York City.

Our goal is to sign-on 250 groups citywide in support of the Charter for Traffic Relief, after which the steering committee and members of the coalition will hold a news conference to call

upon the Mayor and the City Council to institute the traffic reduction solutions outlined in the Charter. □

The Charter for Traffic Relief

We the undersigned residents of New York City urge that, in the interest of reclaiming the sanctity, health and productivity of our neighborhoods, the following five solutions be considered as part of a comprehensive traffic relief plan to reduce citywide traffic volumes by 15% by the year 2009.



1. Wider and more protected rights-of-way for transit, walking and bicycling

It is not enough to rhetorically encourage New Yorkers not to use their cars.

In addition to cleaner subways and more frequent subway service, New Yorkers need faster buses, more comfortable sidewalks, more signal time to cross the street and safe bicycling. The key to making these improvements is more space: sidewalks need to be wider and buses and bicyclists need more, wider and better protected lanes and pathways. Specifically, the city should reclaim street space for a new generation of arterial street greenways and exclusive busways and adopt a citywide blueprint to reshape key streets and squares into pedestrian paradises.

2. Parking Reform

New York City can drastically update its parking policy. Free and under priced on-street parking in commercial districts generates a feeding frenzy of trolling motorists, reduces valuable parking turnover and exacerbates double parking.

The city should expand its successful midtown parking pricing program to commercial districts throughout the five boroughs.

3. Traffic Calming

"Traffic Calming" refers to redesigned streets that are safer for walkers and discourage cut-through traffic, speeding and driving in general. The City could expand its limited traffic calming program to equip all New York City residential neighborhoods with traffic safety upgrades such as 15 mph speed zones, speed reducers, wider sidewalks and extended pedestrian crossing time.

4. Reduce Truck Impacts

Trucks are a serious concern in NYC. By the year 2020, truck traffic in New York City is projected to increase 50% to 70% over today's already high levels. Trucks are major noise polluters, cause most of the wear on our streets, impact property via vibration damage and contribute disproportionately to severe crashes and traffic congestion. Though the law sets maximum truck size at 55-feet, hundreds of grossly oversized trucks roll daily through all five boroughs. The City could better enforce existing truck rules and routes, while developing new policies to protect neighborhoods from this onslaught and could include traffic calming that discourages truck turns onto inappropriate streets, time-of-day toll schedules to remove some truck trips from peak hours, changes in tolls that distort truck routes and the progressive

removal of avenue truck routes onto parkways as infrastructure permits. Implementation of rail and barge solid waste export systems and better New York City connections to the U.S. rail freight network could be accelerated.

5. Congestion Pricing

Charging motorists for the privilege of driving on New York's most congested streets is indeed controversial. Many advocates of congestion pricing regard it as a long overdue and common sense method that would reduce traffic and generate much-needed revenue for transit improvements. Congestion pricing has reduced traffic congestion in central London by 30% and despite some initial resistance, is now widely supported. Because time is money, its advocates say, the charge will pay for itself with shorter commute times for workers and businesses. Toll collection technology has advanced to the point that it need not contribute to additional traffic congestion.

We, the undersigned residents of New York, urge that in the interest of reclaiming the sanctity, health and productivity of our neighborhoods, these five aforementioned solutions be reviewed and considered as part of a comprehensive traffic relief plan to reduce citywide traffic volumes by 15% by the year 2009. A 15% reduction need not impact negatively on commerce and mobility, as driving trips can be converted to transit, car pooling, walking and bicycling trips.

TakeAction!

If you are part of a community organization that feels that your neighborhood constituents are negatively affected by traffic and would like the City to get pro-active on alleviating these issues, join the coalition for traffic relief today at: www.trafficrelief.org.

If you represent a supportive community group, neighborhood, block or business association, please go to www.trafficrelief.org to endorse this Charter.