

Sensible Transportation

This Changes Everything:

New Study Examines the Role of the Auto in Manhattan's Economy

MANHATTAN'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD), defined as Manhattan below 59th Street, is the most productive urban center in the United States, generating over \$150 billion in annual economic output. This awe inspiring engine is fueled by 1.7 million daily workers and tens of millions of annual shoppers who flock to Manhattan's CBD.

But how essential are the cars that some of them use to get there?

A new Schaller Consulting study released in February by Transportation Alternatives, "Necessity or Choice? The Role of the Auto in Manhattan" explodes long-held myths about the importance of automobiles to Manhattan's economy.

In a nutshell, this ground-breaking new study shows that only a small percentage of workers and shoppers are currently driving to work or shop, and for the 90% who do use the car, decent transit alternatives exist.

For years some experts have claimed that automobile traffic is vital to the functioning of Manhattan's economy, primarily in that it is necessary to get workers to work and shoppers to shop. Recently, NYU Urban Planning professor and former Bloomberg advisor Mitchell Moss wrote in the New York Daily News that car restrictions are "a threat to the economic vitality of our city," and would hurt "New Yorkers who live in communities not served by mass transit" and "make our museums and cultural attractions less accessible."

The NYC Department of Transportation mis-guided by this flawed economic logic puts the vast majority of their resources into maintaining a "level of service" for automobiles, and most often declines to devote more street space to walking and bicycling. Automobile traffic, it would seem, is a necessary evil.

"Necessity or Choice? The role of the



Who is more crucial to the midtown Manhattan economy: the pedestrian or the private car driver?

automobile in Manhattan," marks the first time this topic has been examined so thoroughly, using household survey information from the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council and census data. This study proves that the automobile is more of a hindrance than a help to most people traveling in Manhattan and that motorists are vastly more likely to switch modes than switch destinations if car travel is made less speedy or convenient.

Here are two important questions from the study and Schaller Consulting's key findings in response to them:

1) What percentage of Manhattan workers and shoppers actually drive?

The study found that for the large majority of people traveling to the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD), the personal auto is more of a hindrance than a help.

● **Only 14% of trips to CBD destinations are taken by car**, compared with 72% by foot, by bus or both. Thus, five times more people would benefit by having more space for walking and buses than would be affect-

ed by reducing the space allocated to autos.

● **Only 6% of shopping trips** involve car use.

2) What percentage of current Manhattan drivers possess viable transit alternatives?

As for the second question, the study found that for most motorists in the Manhattan CBD, driving is a matter of choice, not necessity.

● **64% of auto commuters live near subway or commuter rail stations**, and others have access to express bus service.

● **Only 10% of CBD auto commuters commute between home and work** areas between which the auto is the typical way to make the trip. Ninety percent of auto commuters live and work in areas where most commuters use some other mode to get to work (i.e., rail, bus, walk, taxi).

In addition to finding that the supermajority of present auto commuters would not have a problem hopping onto transit, the study found that much of the traffic in Manhattan CBD has no business in the CBD, but instead is composed of drivers using the CBD as a through-route to other destinations. Thirty percent of CBD drivers using the Holland

Necessity or Choice?

The Manhattan Central Business District (CBD) defined as the area from 59th Street to the Battery is the largest and densest CBD in the country and also the best served loca-

tion in the country in terms of public transit. Still over 500,00 commuters drive into the CBD daily. Who are they and why do they choose to drive? Take our quiz and find out.

1. Ah, sweet convenience. Just hop in, turn the key and crank up the radio. What percentage of car drivers entering Manhattan's Central Business District (CBD) are just passing through on their way elsewhere?

- A. 0-30%**
- B. 30-60%**
- C. 60-90%**

2. Perhaps drivers have more errands to run than the rest of us, and do not want to be troubled with hopping on and off public transit all day. Of the drivers whose final destination is the CBD, what percentage just leave their cars parked in the CBD all day, without using them to

make additional trips?

- A. 30-50%**
- B. 50-70%**
- C. 70-90%**

3. Maybe drivers in the CBD are shopping, not working. What percentage of shopping trips in the CBD involves the use of a car?

and Lincoln Tunnels and 39% of drivers entering via the East River bridges are destined for locations outside of the CBD.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that reallocating street space from cars to pedestrians, bicyclists, buses and delivery vehicles would more efficiently contribute to the mobility of persons and goods in Manhattan. It would bolster, rather than slow, Manhattan's economic engine.

So what does all of this mean for the future of New York City transportation?

1) Reducing the street space devoted to automobiles or restricting auto use would not prevent people from going about their professional and personal lives in Manhattan.

Since drivers have access to alternate modes of transportation, if the cost increases or the convenience or speed of auto travel decreases, drivers are likely to switch modes, not switch destinations. London's recent experience with congestion pricing is concrete evidence that even with a substantial charge on autos, very few people stop coming to the CBD.

2) Since driving is a matter of choice and not necessity for most auto users, providing space for cars should be viewed as a policy choice, not as an economic imperative.

The valuable public space allocated to the personal auto has many possible productive uses for pedestrians, bicyclists, buses, taxis, trucks and commercial vehicles. Space should be granted to autos instead of other users only when the auto is a higher and better use: more efficiently contributing to the mobility of persons and goods in Manhattan, to the economy of the city and the street environment.

3) Steps to reduce auto use should include improvements to alternative modes.

People generally choose the fastest mode of travel. As the time people save by driving increases, more people will drive. Substantially reducing auto use in the CBD will require expansion of transit, especially bus service.

This groundbreaking new study lays the foundation for a host of important transportation and streetscape improvements that have gone unimplemented for fear of restricting the movement of driving workers and shoppers.

To obtain a copy of the study, contact us: info@transalt.org □

Speeding, There's No Excuse

ONE HUMAN'S LIFE for another human's time; this is the horrible logic of speeding. New York City sees it almost every day and in almost every way. Yet the specifics that surround the incident, the hills and valleys of each separate speeding story can always be flattened to that terrifyingly simple logic.

Transportation Alternatives is working to open the eyes of City motorists to this logic through the "Speeding, there's no excuse," education campaign. With the support of health professionals, City Councilmembers and the Y & R Agency in New York, Transportation Alternatives is making New Yorkers see, hear and understand that the deadly impact of speeding leaves no room for excuses.

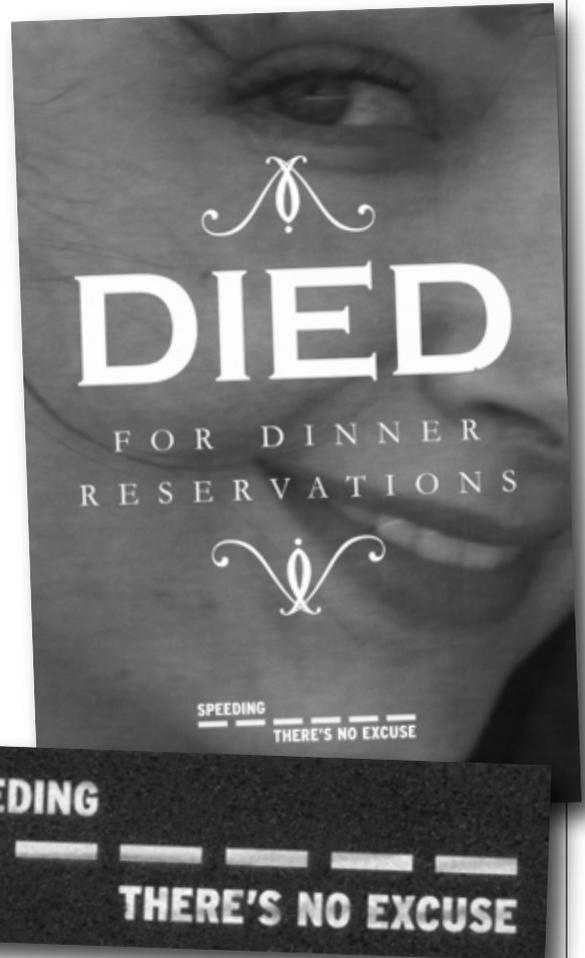
At Staten Island University Hospital, one in seven trauma room admissions are "pedestrian struck" collisions and many more are speeding vehicle related. The figures are so high that Jeffery Nicasastro the Director of

Trauma and Surgical Critical Care at Staten Island University Hospital has said the Borough has a "speeding epidemic" on its hands.

It should come as no surprise then, that Staten Island is the place we have chosen to launch the "Speeding, there's no excuse campaign." On bus shelters and phone kiosks at high incidence areas all over the Island, haunting images will remind each passerby of the inexcusable logic of speeding. At the Staten Island Ferry terminal, hurried commuters will be warned of speeding's repercussions, and in ads on trains all over the city, the message will be repeated.

"Speeding, there's no excuse."

Worldwide, speeding drivers kill an estimated one-thousand people each day and it is never "by accident." Research shows that the crashes in which speeding motorists kill cyclists, pedestrians, passengers and drivers are almost entirely preventable through a combination of education, engineering and enforcement that would cost a pittance in comparison to the \$230 billion that road traf-



This spring look for ads like these on bus shelters, phone kiosks and subway displays around Staten Island and beyond.

fic injuries cost the United States annually.

The "Speeding, there's no excuse," campaign is designed primarily to educate. Yet our goal is to build upon this campaign; to change enforcement and engineering policies on Staten Island and have an impact citywide.

If the true consequences of speeding are revealed to the motoring public in an effective way, then the climate which surrounds motoring will change. Drivers will think twice before "giving it some gas." Neighborhood groups will work harder for traffic-calming. Even elected officials and police officers will ultimately rally behind red-light cameras and other automated enforcement devices.

The logic behind trading one human life for another human's time is simply unacceptable and Transportation Alternatives is working to show it. □

TakeAction!
Write your City Council Member and tell them that you want to see "Speeding There's No Excuse" ads in your neighborhood (bcc T.A. on the letter). For more info email: communications@transalt.org.

- A. 6%
- B. 19%
- C. 37%

- transit is:
- A. 60 minutes
- B. 30 minutes
- C. 10 minutes

4. New Yorkers are busy people, perhaps driving is faster. For nearly 50% of CBD auto commuters the time difference between driving and taking

For answers and to read the full report from which these facts were collected log on to: transalt.org/info/pub.html.