



Business leaders agree: good conditions for walking is vital to attracting shoppers citywide. Page 12

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THERE I WAS ON JANUARY 26 listening to Mayor Bloomberg's State of the City address. About halfway into his speech, after congratulating himself and his administration for all of the new development that is happening throughout the city, he said something that made my heart stand at attention: "And to improve traffic flow in all five boroughs, we will launch a new program called 'Take Back the Streets'..."

Then time stopped. During this pause, my heart sang: Take Back the Streets. Take Back the Streets! Yes! Right on, Mayor Mike! To improve traffic flow in all five boroughs! Wow! The Mayor is doing it!

Then, time still standing still, my heart still singing, my mind began scrambling to grasp the rationale and significance of what was happening right before my very ears:

City Hall has finally figured out that the only way to keep all of this new development from turning New York City into a traffic-snarled parking lot is to transform our streets so that they squarely favor higher occupancy modes of travel. In 'taking back the streets' the Mayor is launching a bold plan to reapportion and manage our streets to convert the minority of space-hogging drivers into space-saving pedestrians, bicyclists and bus riders.

In practice, 'taking back the streets' will most certainly mean congestion pricing; double wide sidewalks and more pedestrian crossing time; a citywide network of wide and protected bike paths; 'surface subway' bus rapid transit corridors on dozens of major streets...

This will mean a renaissance for New York City! Finally our city will reward, not punish efficient transportation; our streets and sidewalks, free from the noise and stink of traffic, will become more akin to parks; children will

be able to walk and bike safely, and everyone will get from A to B more quickly; our great city will once again be a model for the world.

Then time began flowing again. Mayor Bloomberg continued to speak. His very next words were:

"... to crack down on construction contractors that illegally tear them up. And, to ensure that when public utilities fix the streets, we'll hold them accountable for making sure they stay fixed!"

And so I was slammed back down to earth.

Today, mayors in cities from Ottawa to Bogotá to Seoul to London are truly "Taking Back the Streets" with great economic, social, environmental and political success. Meanwhile, here in New York, the boldest transportation reform our Mayor can muster is to crack down on the city's cheating pothole fillers. This is shameful.

Clearly, it is up to us to take back our own streets.

Together we must act to convince our city leaders that it is time to usher in what our city so desperately needs: a pro-pedestrian, pro-bicycling and pro-transit Streets Renaissance. This issue of Transportation Alternatives is full of actions you can take to make this vision a reality. So read up and then take a minute to take back the streets.

Sincerely,

Paul Steely White
Executive Director
Transportation Alternatives

Transportation ALTERNATIVES

MISSION STATEMENT: Encourage bicycling, walking and public transit as alternatives to automobile use, and reduce automobile use and its attendant environmental and social harms.

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PUBLISHER: Paul Steely White

MANAGING EDITOR: Dani Simons

DESIGNER: Gary Lingard

CONTRIBUTORS: Masami Adachi, Graham Beck, Noah Budnick, John Chiarella, Tresa Horney, Lindsey Lusher, Wiley Norvell, Amy Pfeiffer, Karla Quintero, Dani Simons, David Snetman, Paul Steely White

MESSENGER SERVICES: Thunderball, 212-675-1700

T.A. BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Neysa Pranger, *President*; Ken Coughlin, Laurie Davidowitz, Leah Dilworth, Chris Dunn, Walter Hook, Daniel Kaizer, Rich Kassel, Robert Kotch, Steve McMaster, Jeff Prant, Paul Steely White

T.A. STAFF: Paul Steely White, *Executive Director*; Graham Beck, *Campaign and Communications Coordinator*; Noah Budnick, *Projects Director*; Kate Edmundson, *Web and Design Coordinator*; Tresa Horney, *Director, NYC Streets Renaissance*; Mike Infranco, *IT Coordinator*; Fred Kaimann, *NJ Coordinator*; Petra Kirstein, *Membership Coordinator and Bookkeeper*; Wiley Norvell, *Volunteer Coordinator and Office Manager*; Amy Pfeiffer, *Safe Routes for Seniors Project Director*; Karla Quintero, *Research Coordinator*; Dani Simons, *Director of Communications and Development*; David Snetman, *Bicycle Campaigns Coordinator*; Colin Weatherby, *Intern*

COVER PHOTOS: Dani Simons (front), Masami Adachi (back)

127 W 26 St, Ste 1002, NY NY 10001-6808
Tel: 212-629-8080 Fax: 629-8334, info@transalt.org, transalt.org