



TRANSPORTATION
ALTERNATIVES



August 27, 2020

Honorable Polly Trottenberg
Commissioner,
NYC Department of Transportation
55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10041

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg,

Transportation is one of the most important issues that the New York City government must address in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. This spring we saw the benefits of reduced traffic in New York - cleaner air, a resurgence in biking, the reclaiming of the precious real estate that makes up our streets. We applaud your efforts to open streets to biking, outdoor dining and for recreation.

As we return to work, New Yorkers need safe and healthy ways to get around our city. However, we are concerned that as things continue to return to normal, many commuters will drive private automobiles or rely on for-hire vehicles out of concern - which we believe is largely unwarranted - for their health when using mass transit.

More cars on the road will make our streets less safe and make it more likely that the Vision Zero program will have another year of backward progress. This is also contrary to objectives of the upcoming congestion pricing program to reduce vehicular traffic. More automobile emissions will make our air quality worse, especially in environmental justice communities, which is strongly tied to worse health outcomes for people who are infected with COVID-19.

As you know, to ensure that alternative means of transportation are more widely available, the State legislature adopted a law to authorize the use of e-bikes and e-scooters earlier this year. The City Council followed suit earlier this summer by adopting laws to legalize e-scooters and e-bikes in the city, and to establish a pilot for a shared e-scooter program.

We were pleased to see the e-scooter pilot program become law, which states that the program must be implemented by March 2021 and requires DOT to issue operator permit applications by October 2020. E-scooters will help connect people to transit, and serve as an alternative to cars for short trips, which will decrease traffic congestion, and reduce greenhouse gas and particulate matter emissions, improving air quality. E-scooters can play an especially important role as many residents return to work. E-bikes and e-scooters, with proper safety protocols in place, give New Yorkers a safe and emission-free way to travel while still practicing safe social distancing. They also provide another multi-modal tool to connect people in transit deserts to mass transportation.

We believe this pilot program would be most effective if implemented in communities underserved by transportation -- particularly the Bronx, Brooklyn & Eastern Queens, where many residents live more than a 20 minute walk from a subway station. Furthermore, to ensure that residents of these areas have sufficient access to mass transit, we encourage the DOT to permit a robust scooter fleet, with a single contiguous operation zone.

Our transportation system needs to have more safe, emission-free options so that residents can have more choices for their commute without making congestion and air quality worse. The e-scooter pilot program will do just that. We are excited at the prospect of this program and look forward to its implementation by March 2021.

Thank you,

Julie Tighe
President
New York League of Conservation Voters

Thomas Grech
President and CEO
Queens Chamber of Commerce

Danny Harris
Executive Director
Transportation Alternatives

Karen Imas
Vice President of Programs
Waterfront Alliance

Julie Samuels
Executive Director
Tech:NYC

Tom Wright
President and CEO
Regional Plan Association

CC: Ydanis Rodriguez, Fernando Cabrera, Costa Constantinides, Antonio Reynoso