

**New York City Economic Development Corporation**  
**Economic Development Committee Hearing**  
**Intro 2026 and Intro 2067**  
**February 17, 2021**

Good morning, Chairman Vallone and members of the Economic Development Committee. My name is Adam Lomasney and I serve as an Assistant Vice President of Transportation as well as the Director of Aviation for NYCEDC (“EDC”). Today I am joined by Jervonne Singletary, Assistant Vice President in our Government and Community Relations Division and Bianca Sosa, Assistant Vice President for Asset Management. I am pleased to testify on Intro’s 2026 and 2067, which seek to address helicopter issues in the City. After my testimony we’ll be glad to answer any questions you may have.

As you may know, the City has three public use heliports in operation, two of which are owned by the City -- the East 34<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport and the Downtown Manhattan Heliport (known as “DMH”). The third heliport--on West 30<sup>th</sup> Street--is owned by New York State and managed by the Hudson River Park Trust. These three public use heliports in Manhattan are critical components of our city’s transportation infrastructure. They operate as nodes that plug into a larger transportation system, with the East 34<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport and West 30<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport focused on charter and corporate traffic, and the Downtown Manhattan Heliport focused on tourism. The East 34<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport is open from 8AM to 8PM on weekdays and is closed on weekends. The downtown facility is open for tours from 9AM to 7PM Monday through Saturday. No tour flights are allowed on Sunday; corporate and charter flights are allowed from 9AM to 5PM, but they represent a small percentage of overall traffic for downtown. The Downtown Manhattan Heliport is also unique in that it is the only facility that can accommodate military helicopters used for presidential visits because of its size and physical layout.

EDC’s role with the heliports is pursuant to the maritime contract between the City and EDC. The City has retained EDC to engage in various activities intended to promote the economic development of the City’s waterfront property and related transportation facilities--which includes the two City-owned heliports. It is for that reason EDC oversees the heliport facilities

and therefore acts as a contract administrator through the concession agreements which are entered into between the New York City Department of Small Business Services (“DSBS”) and the concessionaires.

The day-to-day management of heliport operations is handled by our concessionaires: Atlantic Aviation at E. 34<sup>th</sup> St. and Saker Aviation at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport. The concession agreements define the terms and conditions of how each facility may operate. These agreements define matters such as hours of operation, maximum annual flight volumes, insurance levels, reporting requirements, and terms of payment, among other items.

In its dual role of promoting economic development and waterfront activation, EDC has always sought to balance the need of maintaining these critical pieces of infrastructure and the negative noise impacts that helicopters can cause. In 2016, Mayor de Blasio, the City Council and EDC worked with the local helicopter industry, the Downtown Manhattan Heliport operator, tour flight companies and the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) to collaboratively reduce the number of tour flights operating out of DMH by 50%. This agreement also eliminated tour flights over land, including Governors Island, Staten Island and the route to Yankee Stadium over Northern Manhattan. The agreement also prohibited Sunday operations.

As a result, these efforts have eliminated approximately 30,000 tour flights annually. This agreement also requires a consultant to monitor complaints from the 311 system that may be related to tour flights originating out of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport. Through this effort, larger helicopter complaint data received through 311 has been analyzed on a monthly basis and categorized by likely origins such as NYPD flights, tour flights originating out of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport, tour flights originating outside of NYC, and other types of flights.

EDC also tracks through the 311 system complaints made about helicopters. Most of the complaints the City receives tend to reference helicopters that are hovering or flying over other areas of the City, not around the two City-owned heliports and not identified as originating out of either of the City-owned heliports. Due to the pandemic, flights dropped to less than 5% of the previous year at DMH and less than 20% at East 34<sup>th</sup> Street since Spring 2020. They are now at

about 10% and 40% of 2019 levels for both heliports, respectively. However, with more people staying home, we've seen an increase in 311 complaints.

In 2018, the previous agreement for the East 34<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport was nearing its expiration date. Upon notification and various consultations with Council Member Vallone, Community Board 6 and the Manhattan Borough President's office--as prescribed in the applicable procurement rules--EDC commenced the solicitation process for a new concession agreement.

After proposal evaluations, interviews, and negotiations, the City--with EDC as contract administrator--entered into a new concession agreement with Atlantic Aviation in 2019 for a period of up to ten years. Through the agreement, Atlantic is responsible for capital improvements, maintaining the heliport in a safe and clean manner, monitoring air quality at the heliport, reporting on flight operations, complaints received, and any off-hours flights. Additionally, Atlantic is responsible for ensuring compliance with any FAA standards and regulations including regular safety reporting and sharing any FAA filings with EDC. They have also committed to work directly with the Manhattan Borough President's office task force and other City agencies on noise mitigation and community concerns.

It is important to note that while EDC strives to be a partner in addressing noise mitigation issues, we ultimately have limited control in regulating or incentivizing the industry at large. That is because the FAA has the sole authority to regulate U.S. civilian air space and therefore establishes rules and restrictions for its use. This means that the FAA has the sole authority—not states or localities-- to approve matters such as aircraft design standards, safety procedures, flight paths and altitudes, as well as the designation of airports and heliports. This authority also extends to adopting standards for mitigating aircraft noise.

Aircraft noise is categorized by various stages, which are determined internationally by the International Civil Aviation Organization ("ICAO"), adopted nationally by the FAA, and ultimately applied towards an aircraft upon acquiring its airworthiness certification. These standards require that the aircraft meet or exceed designated noise thresholds. For helicopters, three different stages of noise exist: Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3. Stage 3 is the most recent

standard, after being created by ICAO and adopted by the FAA on March 4, 2014. Newly designed helicopter models certified after that date must meet the quieter Stage 3 standard.

Aircraft currently operating at our heliports are almost entirely Stage 2 helicopters. While Stage 3 is quieter and would significantly address the noise concerns that communities have, these types of helicopters are unfortunately not widely commercially available at this time, nor has the FAA published any formal plan for the phaseout of Stage 1 and Stage 2 helicopters from operation.

### Legislation

Int. 2026 would prohibit Stage 1 and 2 charter helicopters from landing and taking off at City managed heliports. We have concerns about the practicality of this bill. First, the vast majority of helicopters currently in operation are categorized as Stage 1 and 2, and this bill would effectively ban them from using the City's public use heliports. Moreover, as I mentioned a few moments ago, FAA regulations prescribe the procedures and limitations for states and localities that seek to adopt noise mitigation restrictions.

Int. 2067 would require EDC to collect airworthiness certificates, air registration certificates, recent aircraft inspection reports, origin route and planned destination routes. Under the East 34<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport concession agreement, EDC already receives monthly flight logs for the following information: operations that detail an aircraft tail or registration number, the make and model, the operator of the aircraft if known, the number of passengers on board, the date and time in and time out, and origin and destination if known.

Pilots are already required to present airworthiness certificates to the FAA upon request. As it pertains to the heliports, the collection and storage of documents by EDC, such as airworthiness certificates or aircraft inspection reports, does not seem appropriate because EDC is not a federal aviation authority but rather a contract administrator acting on behalf of the City.

Regarding the air registration certificates, the operator does report aircraft tail or registration number indicating each aircraft is registered. Regarding routes taken and planned routes, pilots are not required by the FAA to file flight paths prior take off and therefore we believe that this requirement would be unenforceable by NYCEDC.

As a matter of course, we report to the City Council, Community Boards and Borough President on the operations of the heliports. For the Downtown Manhattan Heliport, we send a monthly report that details the number of allowed and actual tour flights, in addition to a report that details the type of 311 complaints received. For the East 34<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport we send a quarterly report that details the total number of flights and complaints received by the operator.

To date, we have partnered with several of your offices and will continue to work with you in these conversations about noise. We recently participated in the Manhattan Borough President's Helicopter Task Force and were truly encouraged by the level of collaboration, that included representatives from the FAA, Eastern Region Helicopter Council, elected officials from across the Hudson, and communities that discussed ways to address the issue.

Moreover, EDC is committed to being a partner in this effort and is available to participate in any other working groups that might be convened with the FAA on the issue.

Thank you for your attention today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Department of Citywide Administrative Services**  
**Testimony of Keith Kerman, NYC Chief Fleet Officer**  
**Intro 2027: Electrification of Helicopters and Related Units**  
**February 17, 2021**

Good morning, Members of the Committee on Economic Development. My name is Keith Kerman and I am a Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and the City's Chief Fleet Officer. Thank you for allowing me to discuss Intro 2027, which would require DCAS to study the electric vertical takeoff and lift sector (EVTOL), or in simpler language, electric helicopters.

In February 2020, Mayor de Blasio signed Executive Order 53 committing the City to transition to an all-electric fleet by 2040. We are already making important progress with over 2,800 plug-in units and over 1,000 electric chargers. Just recently DCAS announced the completion of Phase 1 of our Fast Charging initiative with 61 fast chargers now complete for City fleet units, including three with public access -- Midland Beach and Ocean Breeze Facility in Staten Island and Randall's Island Park in Manhattan.

We already have sedans, SUVs, mini-vans, cross-overs, off-road, and other fleet units with plug-in capacity, and DCAS will be establishing contracts for many additional types of electric vehicles in 2021, including small garbage trucks for the Parks Department, pickups, vans and small work trucks. We will also be working to test and develop electric units for the Police, Sanitation and Fire Departments.

In time, we also want to see our aviation units join in this clean energy fleet transition. The City currently operates nine helicopters. The NYPD has seven of these helicopters, four of which are used for patrol, two for air and sea rescue, and one for training. These are operated by the NYPD Aviation Unit, whose base of operations is at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. DEP and the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene also have aviation units, each currently operating one aircraft. DOHMH uses their helicopter in disease control operations such as West Nile Virus,

and the DEP helicopter is used for law enforcement purposes at the Watershed. The DOHMH unit is based in Suffolk County and the DEP unit is in Wappingers Falls in Dutchess County.

The City uses over 185,000 gallons of jet fuel annually, procured through DCAS, to power the existing helicopter fleets.

There has been early market research, testing, and development of electric aviation units, both manned and unmanned. DCAS looks forward to researching these options further, meeting with vendors and regulators in this area, and reporting our findings as to the state of the market, battery charging issues, and regulatory concerns. EVTOL holds the promise of zero emissions and low noise aviation units and other related developments, including possible autonomous operation. Advances in electric battery capacity and density will be critical to the successful introduction of these options.

We look forward to exploring this new area of electrification with you while continuing to grow our vehicle electrification efforts as well. Thank you for inviting us to join you today.

## Don't Regulate NYC Helicopter Flights, End Them

*Testimony by Charles Komanoff to a Feb. 17, 2021 hearing of the City Council economic development committee. Contact information follows at the end.*

Last fall, a local conservation leader and former city official asked if I might be interested in quantifying the environmental costs of helicopter flights over New York City. He had in mind a study along the lines of [Drowning In Noise: Noise Costs of Jet Skis in America](#), my year-2000 report for the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse that estimated the damages to peace, quiet, safety and clean air from so-called personal watercraft.

I had doubts about the efficacy of such an analysis, given federal pre-emption as well as the lobbying muscle of helicopter interests. I also worried that perhaps my detestation of helicopter noise was just an idiosyncrasy, a quirk shared by few. So I informally polled my network of friends, acquaintances and colleagues.



*Author photo at Governors Island Parade Grounds, June 22, 2015. For comparison, vacuum cleaner noise averages 75 decibels.*

What I found is that my frustration at the continual and sometimes incessant invasion by helicopters of much of the city's airspace and soundscape is widely held. People despise them. They hate the intrusion helicopter flights cause, the entitlement they embody, the excess and uselessness they connote.

I also found that New Yorkers are dumbfounded at city government's ostensible helplessness.

Our abhorrence and resentment isn't reserved for just one category of helicopter flights. It extends to nearly all — tourist flights, commuter flights, news-reporting flights, and, yes, NYPD flights. Aside from the rare, and welcome, rescue mission, each flight type serves only a rarefied, privileged group. Each has alternatives: foot tourism, train or car travel to JFK or the Hamptons, shoe-leather newsgathering, on-the-ground policing. Each flight

intrudes upon thousands of New Yorkers, if not more: in our parks, on our piers, on terraces or rooftops, in our living rooms during the day, in our beds at night.

As I delved into the literature these past few months, I learned of another dimension to helicopters' assault on our civic well-being. To prevent stalling and to lubricate critical engine parts, **helicopters burn aviation gas fortified with lead**. Avgas's lead content, 0.56 grams per liter, replicates that of the leaded gasoline that throughout motordom's prime years, from the 1920s into the 1980s, exhausted airborne lead out of car and truck tailpipes and into Americas' cities, poisoning millions. (See calculation and citation at end of this post.) Children, whose developing brains are particularly vulnerable to cognitive damage from lead-caused reduced oxygen uptake, were especially affected.

With this as context, the intent of Intro 2026, "to prohibit chartered helicopters from taking off and landing at heliports owned by the city if those helicopters do not meet the stage 3 noise levels for helicopters as determined by the Federal Airport Noise & Capacity Act of 1990," is woefully inadequate.

Endeavoring to regulate noise levels for a single category of helicopter flights is a task both sisyphian, given the inexhaustible legal and engineering resources of helicopter companies vis-a-vis chronically understaffed city agencies, and meager, given that chartered helicopters are just one of several classes of flights that we should be capping, shrinking and eliminating.

Toward that end, I urge the Council to shelve Intro 2026 and the two companion bills Intro 2027 and 2067 and instead undertake a research and legislative campaign with these elements and objectives:

- to terminate as quickly as possible all contracts permitting private helicopter flights from and to city-owned facilities;
- same as above, at any private airfields within city limits;
- to partner with local authorities and advocates in the New Jersey cities of Kearny, Elizabeth and Linden to stop heliports there from servicing NYC tourist overflights, thereby curbing lead emissions during take-offs and landings and in fuel handling and storage;
- to work with NY and NJ members of Congress to require the Federal Aviation Administration to give full consideration of the adverse impacts of helicopter flights rather than rubber-stamping aviation interests;
- to support these efforts by commissioning a comprehensive analysis of noise-annoyance and other environmental damage costs from helicopter flights from, to and over the five boroughs;
- to sharply curtail NYPD helicopter deployments for other than exigent, life-saving situations.

Consider what should be a quiet haven for city residents: water-and-sky-kissed, car-free Governors Island. From my home in Tribeca, Governors Island is a quick 1.5-mile bike ride plus short ferry hop. Yet I haven't gone in years, on account of helicopter noise.

One Monday in June, 2015, using my professional sound-meter, I recorded decibel readings at four locations there. They ranged from the high 60's into the mid and high 70's, once reaching nearly 81 dB. The omnipresence of helicopter flights made it difficult to obtain background noise levels, but readings taken in their brief absence were around 55 dB.

*The 20-decibel elevation in noise levels attributable to the helicopters equates to a four-fold increase in perceived noise. (Any 10-decibel increase translates to a doubling in perceived noise.)* As one longtime advocate for Governors Island told me, "One of the great benefits here is that there are no cars, but from an aural perspective that is completely obliterated" by the helicopters.

Quiet isn't, or shouldn't be, a luxury. It should be within reach of every New Yorker. I urge the Council to stop dealing away our peace and quiet to a narrow and frivolous special interest. Helicopters have no place in, or above, our great city.

*Calculation equating Avgas lead content to leaded gasoline: Avgas's lead content, 0.56g/liter (per Wikipedia [Avgas page](#), see table under "Grades," refer to "most commonly used aviation gasoline," 100LL), equates to 2.12g/gallon. Also see FAA 2019 [Fact Sheet – Leaded Aviation Fuel and the Environment](#). The average lead content in gasoline in 1973 was 2-3 grams per gallon, per USEPA Jan. 29, 1996 press release, [EPA Takes Final Step in Phaseout of Leaded Gasoline](#).*

**Charles Komanoff • 179 Duane Street • New York, NY 10013**

**[komanoff@gmail.com](mailto:komanoff@gmail.com) • [www.komanoff.net](http://www.komanoff.net) • @komanoff**

## NYC Helicopter problems

Dear NYC Council Members:

I wish to testify to request that all unnecessary tourist helicopters over Manhattan be stopped. I live in Greenwich Village and was not only traumatized by 9-11, but also am recovering from a severe accident-caused TBI (traumatic brain injury).

Because of numerous neighborhood demonstrations, this neighborhood already has many law-enforcement and news helicopters flying low, from as early as 7:30 am to 11:30 pm. These aggravate my PTSD from 9-11 (as do low-flying aircraft); awaken me and/or keep me from sleeping (I've needed daytime naps since my accident); and upset me because of a low tolerance for auditory stimulation resulting from my TBI.

I have several friends in the neighborhood who work from home, and the erratic, loud helicopter noise breaks their concentration and sometimes disrupts Zoom meetings. In addition, their children who are learning from home also have their studies/Zoom/concentration disrupted.

As if that weren't bad enough, helicopter navigational systems disrupt television reception (I use an antenna) and internet reception as well. When I consulted several techies, they advised it was partly because the helicopters flew so low. Because mine is a historic neighborhood, whose historic sites are low, tourist copters fly low to point these out. This also means their sound is louder and more disruptive.

Tourists wishing views of Manhattan from above have the option of going to several landmarked skyscrapers, restaurants, hotels and bars which offer these views. And views from above

Please take action to stop this unnecessary and traumatizing disruption. Thank you for anything you can do to help.

Sincerely,

(Ms.) F.Seidenbaum

## **Brooklyn Heights Association - Testimony at NY City Council Committee on Economic Development - February 17, 2021**

Good morning Councilmembers and fellow members of the public. My name is Lara Birnback, and I am the Executive Director of the Brooklyn Heights Association, as well as a board member of Stop the Chop NY/NJ, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to end all nonessential helicopter flights over the New York Metropolitan area.

I want to thank the Council for its attention and sincere commitment to the problem of regulating helicopter noise, pollution, and safety in our city as evidenced through the bills under discussion today. Although the BHA supports Intro 2026, Intro 2027 and Intro 2067, we strongly believe these bills do not go nearly far enough to protect the millions of New Yorkers suffering from the noise and environmental pollution created by tourist and commuter flights. As has been widely reported, complaints to 311 about helicopters soared in 2020 — 311 data revealed a more than 130% increase over 2019.

Brooklyn's waterfront communities, along with residents across the city, have been plagued for years by these noisy and completely unnecessary intrusions into our public spaces, our homes, and our peace of mind. We are grateful that the City has invested in developing the waterfront to add much needed outdoor space for rest and recreation—but we are baffled that for-profit entities continue to be allowed to pollute our air and harass visitors and residents alike on a daily basis. Our city should be focused on combatting climate change – not continuing to support an industry that caters to the few citizens who have a couple of hundred dollars to burn on a quick trip to the airport or to the Hamptons.

On behalf of the BHA and Stop the Chop, I thank you for the preliminary steps represented by these bills. I also ask you to further action against the helicopter scourge, and terminate the heliport leases on New York City controlled land, and work with the Hudson River Park trust to eliminate nonessential flights from the West 30<sup>th</sup> street heliport. I also ask that you publicly support House Bill 4880 – sponsored by New York Congressional Representatives Carolyn Maloney, Jerold Nadler, and Nydia Velazquez among others. The bill would prohibit helicopter flights over any city with a population of over 8 million and a population density of over 25,000 people per square mile, except for purposes of public health and safety, including law enforcement and emergency response.

I cannot say it better than Congressman Nadler, who said “Since 1980, there have been at least 30 helicopter crashes in New York City, many of which have been fatal. There is simply no justification for allowing tourists to joy-ride over our city, endangering lives and creating unnecessary noise pollution.”

Thank you for your consideration.

**STATEMENT TO THE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
REGARDING INTROS 2026, 2027, 2067  
BY LO VAN DER VALK, PRESIDENT, CARNEGIE HILL NEIGHBORS  
(Hearing Date: Feb. 17, 2021)**

I want to thank the Chair Vallone and the members on the Committee on Economic Development for this opportunity to address these bills and the issues relating to helicopters, which continues to be a matter of grave concern to our community mainly because of the abhorrent noise pollution they cause.

**Background of our Organization:** I would like to say a few words about Carnegie Hill Neighbors. We are a not-for-profit community and membership organization founded more than 50 years ago in 1970. Our catchment area extends from Fifth to Third Avenue and from 86<sup>th</sup> to 98<sup>th</sup> Streets. Our initial purpose was to preserve the architectural character of our historic neighborhood and to seek revisions in the then zoning laws to ensure a more livable neighborhood. Both efforts paid off and we now enjoy the protection of 28 historic landmarks (a veritable “museum without walls” open to all), historic district that encompass about 50 percent of our area, and zoning laws (that also apply to other parts of Manhattan) that conform more closely to human scale.

During the fiscal crisis of the 1970s we initiated in 1980 the annual plantings of tulips and begonias and the maintenance of greenery for the Park Avenue Malls in Carnegie Hill. The program was financially supported by the bordering co-op buildings, and that template of care was soon adopted for the thirty-five plus blocks on Park Avenue south of 86<sup>th</sup> Street. These flowering and tree lined malls have become a highly welcome part of the Manhattan landscape, enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

**The Three Intros:** We very much support all three bills. We understand they are necessarily targeted and more limited in scope to be effective. (Our larger concern with noise is covered below.)

- Intro 2026 requires that helicopters cannot use City Heliports if they meet stage 1 or stage 2 noise levels (as defined by federal regulations).
- Intro 2027 provides for the evaluation of the safety and feasibility of using electric powered vertical takeoff and landing vehicles in the City fleet including the safety and feasibility of automated controls.
- Intro 2067 provides for the collection of data by the NYC Economic Development Corporation regarding helicopters operating from City owned properties, including, documentation of arrival and departure times; airworthiness; registration requirements; and inspection results.

**The Additional Focus at the National Level to enforce more rigorous noise standards for high density urban areas:** In offering this testimony we cannot stress enough our grave concern over the incessant noise that can continue daily over many hours, especially during the warmer weather days of spring, summer and fall. Our area, with its proximity to Central Park, is a veritable fly zone for helicopters, especially of tourism and for commuters. While there are strong safety and environmental issues posed by helicopters, noise is the primary objection. The throbbing noise of helicopters is powerful and virtually inescapable, especially when hovering as is the practice of tourism helicopters.

The statistics collected by BetaNYC's Helicopter Task Force covering on a daily and monthly basis both flight frequency and noise complaints to 311, show a remarkable correlation and bear witness to the nuisance brought on by nonessential tourist and exclusive commuter flights. Police, media, and medical helicopters are excepted because they are a necessity. But there is no real need for tourist and most of commuter helicopter use. Moreover, such practice benefits the few at the expense of the many who are forced to suffer the often unbearable noise – and, again, for no good reason.

Unfortunately, in general (i.e., outside of City owned heliports) no governmental enforcement agency (including the FAA) is authorized or capable of enforcing noise standards.

We, therefore, underline our strong support for the H.R. 4880 Bill introduced by US Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and co-sponsored NY and NJ Congressmembers Jerrold Nadler, Nydia M. Velázquez, Yvette D. Clarke, José E. Serrano, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Thomas R. Suozzi and Albio Sires that would eliminate non-essential helicopter flights over densely populated areas while permitting military, emergency, police, government, and media use.

# **BLADE**

## **Our Vision For Urban Air Mobility**

# About Blade

**Based in New York City, Blade is a technology-powered, global air mobility company.**

**We provide consumers with a cost effective and time efficient alternative to ground transportation for congested routes, predominantly within the United States and India.**

**Additionally, the company is the leading air transporter of human organs for transplant surgery—servicing all of New York City's hospitals.**



BLADE

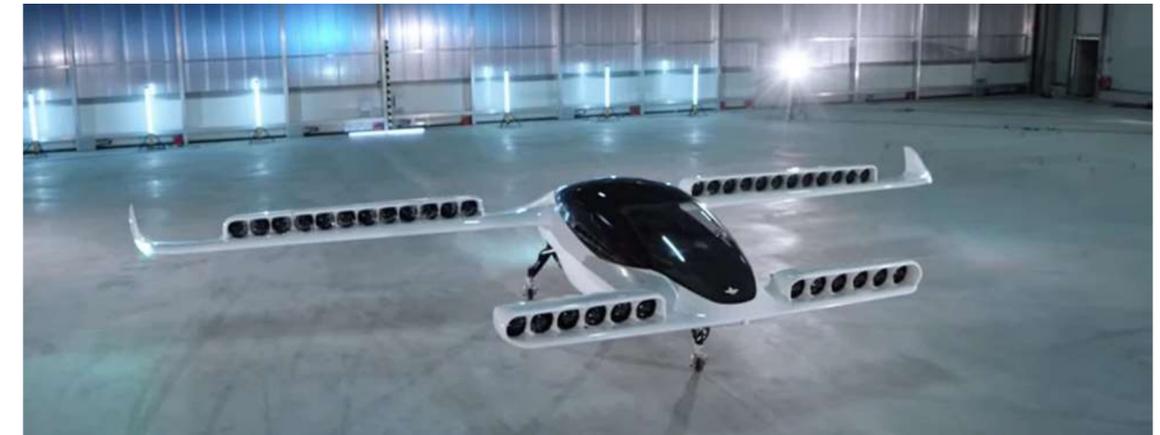
# Transition to Electric Vertical Aircraft

## FAA certification expected 2022-2025

- **Quieter**
  - Near silent in cruise at altitude
  - Designed to blend into urban background noise
- **Safer**
  - Fly-by-wire computer protects flight envelope
  - Distributed electric propulsion increases redundancy
- **Greener**
  - Battery powered and zero-emissions
- **Affordable**
  - Lower build and maintenance costs lead to cheaper flights
- **Coming Soon**
  - Flying experimentally in Singapore, China, New Zealand



Joby S4



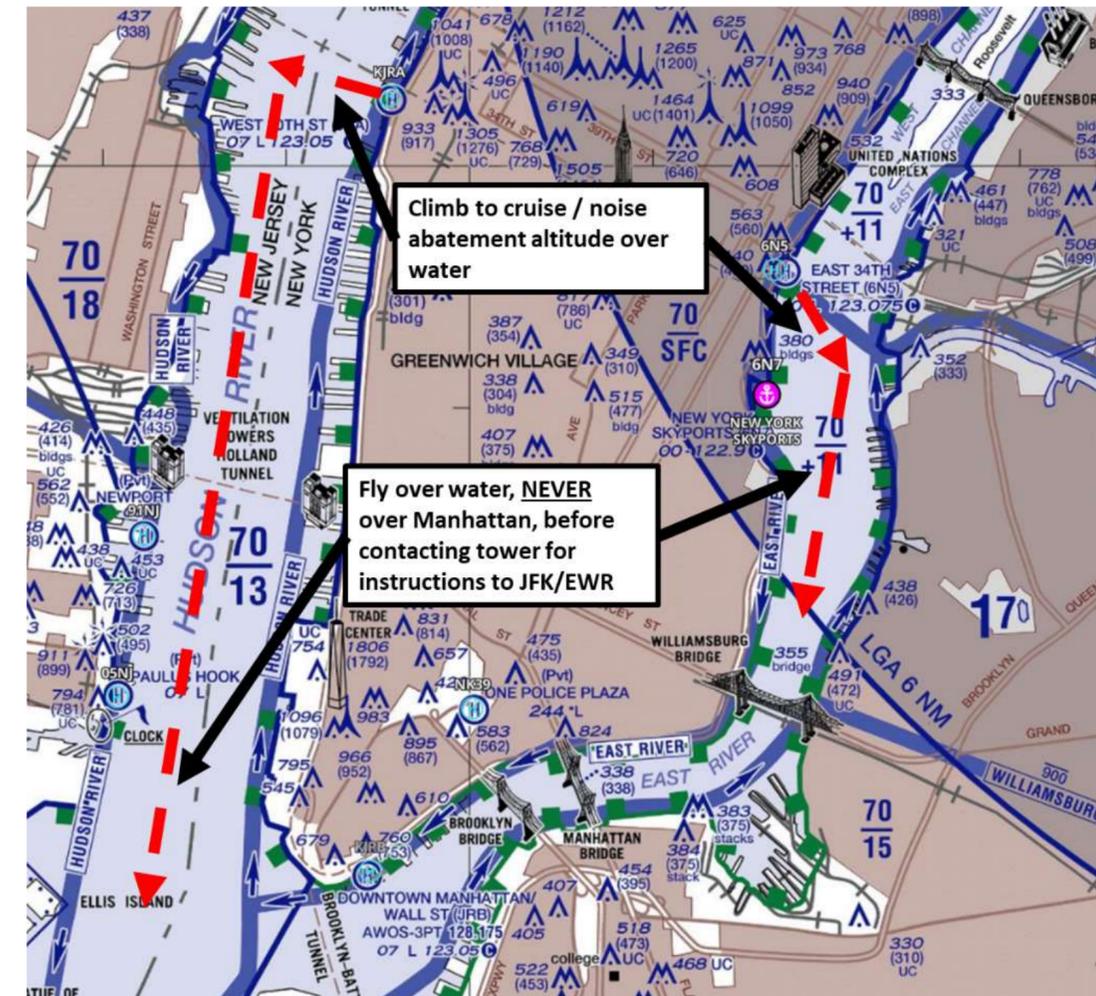
Lilium Jet



City Airbus

# Current NYC Helicopter Landscape

- NYC Heliport flight volumes down ~90%
- Legal Wall Street helicopter tourism flights (over water only) down ~95%
- Few remaining helicopter charter flights fly over water on noise abatement routes
- At the same time, noise complaints have skyrocketed 50%



So where is the noise coming from?

# Non-NYC Helicopters Flying Over Manhattan

New Jersey, Westchester and other out-of-state helicopter tour operators do not follow NYC tour routes

- Hovering in between buildings in Manhattan
- Preventing autorotation safety procedures
- Passengers are onboard with doors off and leaning out of aircraft to take photos



# One Day On a Weekend For FlyNYON

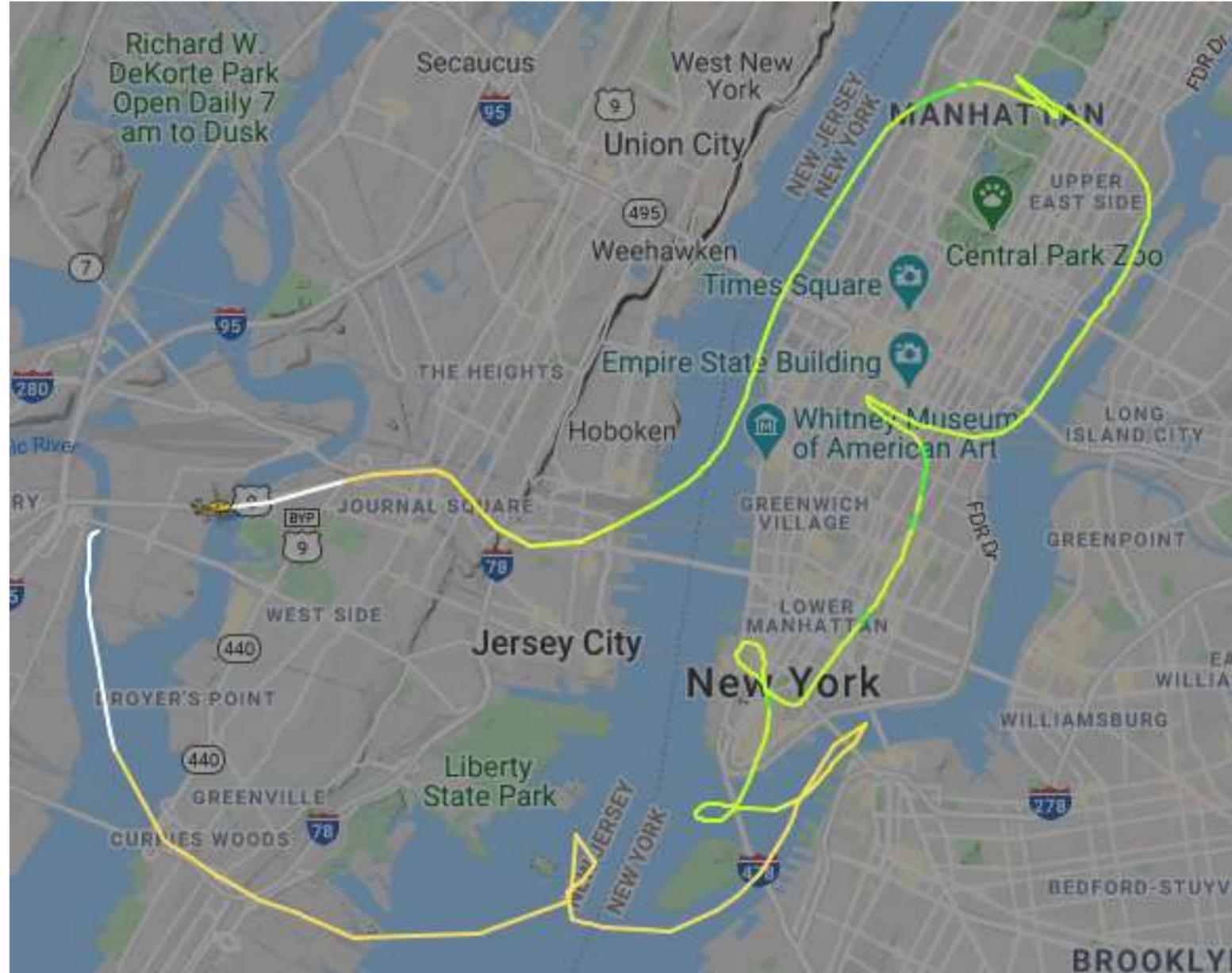
Saturday, February 6th, 2021

Time	Tail Number	Time	Tail Number	Time	Tail Number
11:16	N217MH	14:38	N726H	16:36	N216MH
11:16	N726H	15:29	N216MH	17:01	N206MH
13:23	N206MH	15:29	N206MH	17:05	N7159H
13:25	N217MH	15:38	N217MH	17:05	N216MH
13:25	N726H	15:50	N216MH	17:06	N726H
13:26	N7159H	16:11	N216MH	17:11	N217MH
14:31	N206MH	16:11	N726H	18:00	N726H
14:34	N7159H	16:14	N7159H	18:11	N217MH
				18:20	N206MH

*In freezing temperatures with doors off during a pandemic shutdown*

# **Summary of FlyNYON Flight Paths Saturday, February 6, 2021**

# 11:16 – N217MH



# 11:16 – N726H



# 13:23 – N206MH





# 13:25 – N726H



# 13:26 – N7159H

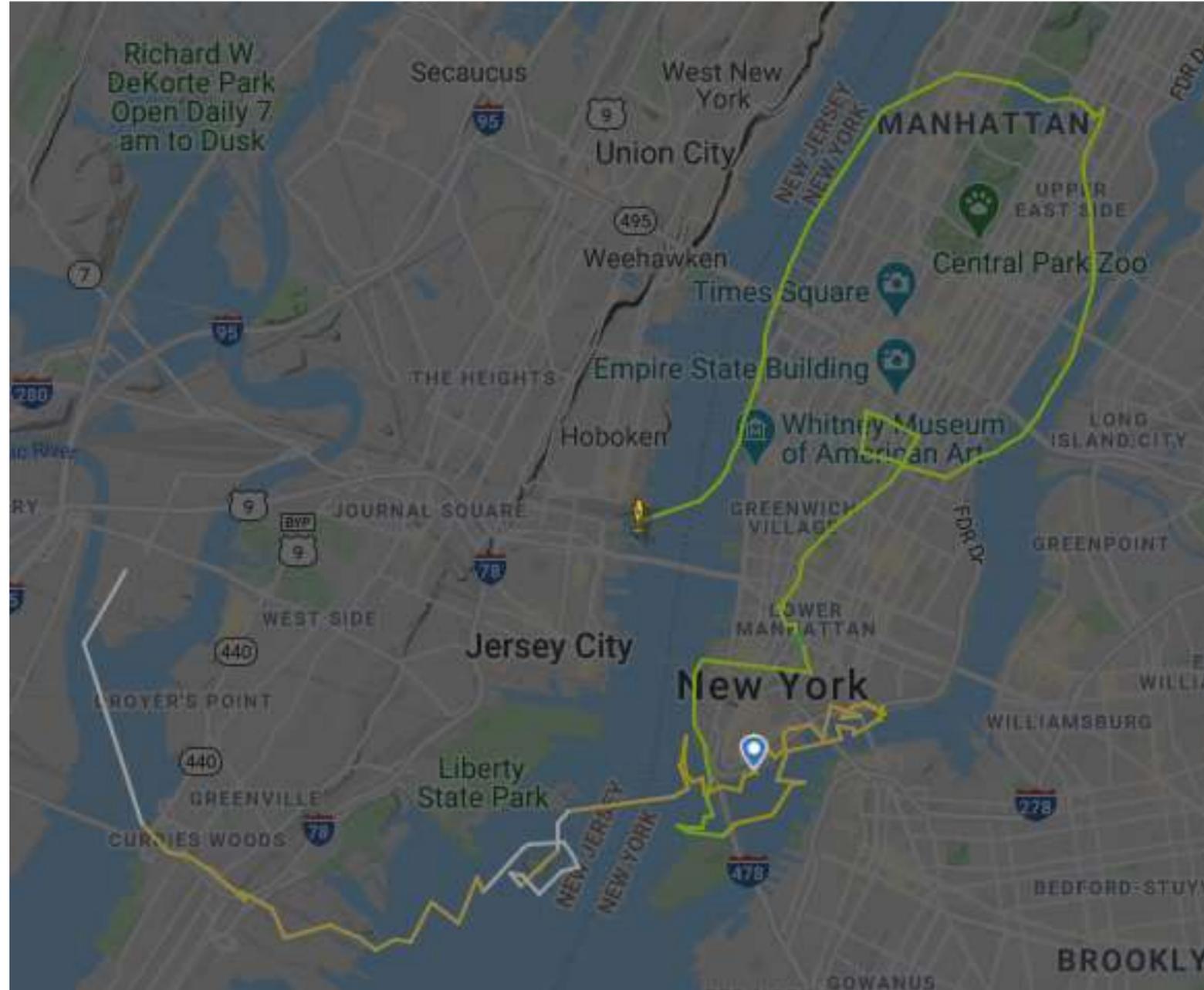


# 14:31 – N206MH





# 14:38 – N726H





# Blade's Noise Reduction Plan

## Reducing Our Impact on the Community

### Implemented

- **Voluntary Restrictions for Point-to-Point Flights**
  - Noise Abatement Routes
  - Voluntary TFRs
  - **No Manhattan Overflight (Unless directed by ATC)**
- **Prevention of Unsafe Tour Operations**
  - Will only work with operators who follow NYC tourism rules
  - **No Doors-Off Selfie Tours**
- **Use of Quietest Conventional Aircraft**
  - 80% of flights use quietest-in-class Bell 407

### Potential

- **Fund Watchdog Group to Track Flight Paths**
  - Ensure compliance with noise reduction routes
- **Upgraded Heliport Noise Barrier**
  - More effective and beautified
- **Electrification**
  - Speed adoption of next generation quiet aircraft
- **Potential Amendments to Legislation on Following Page**

# Issues With Current Proposed Legislation

- There are no Stage 3 helicopters in service. Thus, the proposed legislation would effectively end the New York City air mobility industry
- Legislation will not stop operators from New Jersey from operating disruptive tourism flights over the Manhattan cityscape
- Legislation would lead to the shutdown of New York City heliports, jeopardizing the infrastructure necessary for the imminent arrival of Electric Vertical Aircraft

# Potential Amendments to Legislation

- Determine appropriate alternatives to prohibition on Stage 3 helicopters, which would effectively end the New York City air mobility industry while enabling operators from New Jersey to continue disruptive tourism flights over the Manhattan cityscape
- Prohibit landings at New York City heliports by operators that violate EDC-mandated New York City tourism routes and noise abatement routes
- Industry-funded watchdog group to track flight paths to ensure compliance with noise abatement routes and altitudes. Operators that violate these routes would lose landing privileges at NYC heliports

# STC Testimony at NY City Council Committee on Economic Development

## Hearing February 17, 2021

**Paul A. Vallone, Chair**

**Members: Inez D. Barron, Robert E. Cornegy, Jr., Farah N. Louis, Mark Gjonaj, Peter A. Koo, Brad S. Lander and Keith Powers**

Committee Chair Vallone and other Distinguished Committee members, my name is Eric Katzman. It is my pleasure, as a Board Member of Stop the Chop NYNJ, to join you today to discuss three important bills, 2026, 2027, and 2067.

For those of you not familiar, Stop the Chop NYNJ (STC) is a non-profit grass roots organization formed in 2014 to advocate for, and educate, everyday citizens of all five boroughs and the surrounding area whose quality of life and safety is severely and negatively impacted by the nonessential helicopter industry. Members of STC testified before this committee in 2015.

The fight to sanely regulate this industry goes back many decades, yet conditions have not gotten better, and in many citizens eyes and ears, have gotten much worse, despite the efforts of the City Council in 2010 and in 2015. For example, in 2010, officials drew up new regulations, which altered flight paths, banned short flights and increased city monitoring. In 2016 the helicopter tourist industry agreed to limit the number of flights and adjust the routes but as you know these efforts have not solved the problem. Indeed the industry did not live up to the spirit of the agreement as many tourist flights now originate out of heliports in NJ with the flight paths inundating NYC air space.

As I assume you are aware, our federal congressional delegation has introduced legislation to ban all nonessential helicopter flights over NYC. STC supports H.R. 4880 which was originally introduced in late 2019 and a similar bill is expected to be re-introduced this year.

To frame the problem, in 2019, pre-Covid, there were roughly 30,000 tourist flights and an even greater number of charter/commuter flights. To put this in perspective, 30,000 flights/year is the equivalent of 82/day. If we assume the vast majority occur between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm, that is almost 7 flights per hour or one every 8-9 minutes all day long, each and every day.

The issues surrounding the nonessential helicopter industry are fairly complex, and I do not have time to talk about all of them today. While the current bills are a step in the right direction, and STC supports all of them, we believe they do not go nearly far enough. In fact, we believe they will do little to relieve the suffering of New Yorkers and the broader metropolitan area.

In terms of economics, STC believes the only argument the industry can make to sustain their profit-making businesses is a very weak one. And in several prior hearings before the Council, the industry's claims were debunked. In 2015, Councilwomen Rosenthal said *"These inflated figures are based on the ludicrous premise that tourists choose to come to New York City to take a 15-minute helicopter ride, and that the money tourists spend at hotels, restaurants, and Broadway shows is due to the existence of the helicopter tourism industry... there is little economic impact from the helicopter tourism industry that cannot be absorbed through other tourist industry options."*

And Councilman Lander, you said in 2018 *"So here's the public policy problem we have as I see it. ... On the one hand there are these jobs... 219 jobs and a couple million dollars that the city gets. On the other*

*hand, it makes a very large number of people really really miserable. And that's just the fact of the matter. I guess the question is how miserable do they have to be before it's not worth a couple million dollars and 219 jobs. Now that's not a simple public policy problem to solve because it's easy to measure the jobs and it's easy to measure the money and it's hard to measure misery."*

STC believes the negative economic externalities of nonessential helicopters overwhelms whatever modest claims the industry suggests it delivers to NYC. Indeed these economic externalities which we believe this "Economic Development Committee" needs to consider and incorporate include environmental and health cost along with safety.

In terms of **environmental cost** to NYC residents and the important issue of climate change, the bills being discussed today, for example, do not address the carbon pollution that 30,000 tourist flights/year and commuter flights emit. We know that various for-profit operators are gearing up to DRAMATICALLY expand the number of commuter flights over the next few years. These nonessential commuter flights will only add to air pollution and go against NYC's post-covid need to leverage the region's existing and efficient public transportation network. STC supports the NYC Council's work to mitigate climate change but the Council should consider that nonessential helicopter usage directly threatens such efforts.

From a **health perspective**, and acknowledging the economic cost is tough to measure, the noise pollution and related stress associated with helicopters is worrisome for both adults and children. Studies have suggested that noise related stress can result in cardiovascular disease, cognitive impairment, tinnitus and hearing loss. NYC council members know that one of the greatest concerns for NY residents is noise and the associated stress. STC believes the current bills do not prohibit chartered helicopters from flying low over one of the most densely populated areas on earth, nor do they prohibit chartered flights over our homes or near the crown jewels of NYC. Those crown jewels include our parks which we have spent billions of dollars improving over the past 20 years [Hudson River Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Riverside Park, the East River Esplanade, Battery Park, Governors Island and Central Park are all severely degraded by this noise pollution]. These public parks are shared oases for NYC citizens and visitors alike yet the benefits of nature, quiet and stress relief are under attack every day as select tourists and the 1% increasingly commandeer and expropriate the air space.

We at STC are not experts on FAA regulations regarding the various types of helicopters, but we have NEVER heard a quiet helicopter. While the industry offers up the potential of supposedly quieter electric helicopters in perhaps a decade, NYC residents in the meanwhile will be forced to suffer through degraded park experiences and noise-related stress.

Last, but not least, STC reminds the City Council of the **safety** issues surrounding nonessential helicopters. We do not believe the proposed bills sufficiently address safety concerns. STC believes that NYC was ultimately lucky that more lives weren't lost or infrastructure damaged when a tourist helicopter plunged into the East River or when another helicopter crashed onto the top of the Equitable Building.

STC asks this committee to pass legislation to terminate the heliport leases on NYC owned land (which would affect the Downtown and East 34<sup>th</sup> heliports.) and work with the Board of the Hudson River Park Trust to do the same for the West 30<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport. If that is not possible, then STC would like to see a dramatic reduction in the number of flights allowed from these heliports. Lastly, STC would like all NYC political leaders to publicly support H.R. 4880. Thank you for your time and consideration.

I find the calm atmosphere in my apartment constantly disrupted by the many helicopter flights over NYC. Their loud, jarring noise are very offensive.

While I can see the need for police helicopters, sightseeing flights should be banned or cut back significantly.

I understand that many sightseeing flights originate in NJ and don't come under NYC jurisdiction but surely some type of interstate accommodation could be reached.

I urge you to cut down on the number of helicopter flights in NYC.

Danny Gold



Hello and thank you.

My name is Jeffrey S. Starin and I am the President of NextGenNoise.org a Brooklyn-based grass-roots organization that strives to implement common sense solutions to aviation noise. One of the signature features – if you want to call it a feature – of aviation noise is how industry and government almost always seem to work solely for the bottom line of industry, despite increasing the profits of industry not being a part of the government’s mandate. When we examine the problem of aviation noise we see that in many ways the FAA is a willing participant and cohort to the aviation industry and at times seems to work in concert with industry – whether through omission of information or outright collaboration - to pull the wool over our eyes when it comes to reducing pollution and noise from all manner of air vehicles whether helicopters, airplanes or even drones.

Now I want to be clear, this is not a an indictment of the FAA which has many dedicated, smart and hard working engineers and personnel within their ranks. This is a political football. In my view.

A party asked me to testify here today because they are concerned as I am, about helicopter noise and how it is degrading our health and quality of life in NYC. When I read the proposed legislation I immediately recognized a kind of what I would call “lobbying” maneuver – a technique that is oftentimes used by attorneys and their

lobbying franchise to delay or otherwise obfuscate the real issues at hand. Of course stage three needs to be implemented. That's just common sense. But focusing on this aspect of a much larger problem only serves to divert attention and intentionally bog down this legislative body by having it squabe over technicalities when in fact this body has the power to pass larger, and bolder and farther reaching legislation than is asked of it with this bill.

So with that in mind I'd like to start my very brief presentation by asking the Council a simple question. The answer should be self-evident and here's the question:

Why is this legislative body giving the helicopter industry a free pass? Please keep that in mind as I now dive into my presentation:

=====

I understand my time is limited so I'll focus on just one element of my presentation – there are many but this is just one. I will also offer a solution in closing.

I have before you on the screen an aviation helicopter chart (exhibit A) - a bird's eye view. It is a facsimile of the official FAA helicopter aviation chart for the NYC area. It shows the actual highways overhead which helicopters must travel en-route from one destination to another when entering or leaving the NYC airspace. There is a lot of information here and I know it's not easy to digest. As a private pilot I understand every feature but for the sake of this presentation I'd like to draw your attention to the these highways in the sky. They even have names, just like roads - and I hope you can see

them on this aviation chart - this highway in the sky is called the Republic route, this one is called the Track route and this one is called the Williamsburg route, here's one that goes down the Harlem River called the Harlem River route. I'd like to point out two interesting routes – the “Park Route” which goes over Prospect Park in Brooklyn and the Central Park Route which traverses Central Park. Really? Is it really necessary to send low-flying aircraft over the only places left in a noisy city where people are trying to find some semblance of peace and quiet away from the hustle and bustle of the city? I think not. Common sense says ‘not’.

My point in showing you this is to draw the analogy between these roadways overhead and something else we are all very familiar with: our terrestrial roadways that weave through our communities and to illuminate that in the United States on the national, state, county and local level there are laws that prohibit, for example, an 18-wheeler tractor trailer from repeatedly going down residential streets or even some county roads because . . . why? Because it's common sense; let's not forget that.

Even though traveling down residential streets may in fact be the shortest route from say one warehouse to another for a tractor trailer, in most places where I've ever lived 18-wheeler vehicles are forbidden from doing just that. And these laws apply not only to tractor trailers, but also to sightseeing buses, public transportation, dump trucks, and similar. Another reason they are forbidden from going down residential streets and

roads isn't just for safety but because if they are allowed to repeatedly convey over these streets on a regular basis it has been shown that it reduces property values which has the effect of eventually reducing a states, city or municipalities tax income. And that furthermore has the effect of reducing services which all plays out to eventually degrade quality of life to such a point that nobody really wants to there anymore.

That is what is happening now in New York City. Right now and it's not just because of the pandemic.

I'm asking the city council - this is the path that you are going down by allowing these noisy and polluting helicopters to buzz back and forth over our heads, disrupt our sleep, and reign down unbearable noise and pollution that only serves to advance respiratory diseases and of that, most significantly, asthma to mention just one. This is known. This is a fact. I can produce the medical studies by universities to substantiate this claim.

So here is the solution: require these "vehicles" to travel over the water, regardless of the added cost to their business and the extra distance they must travel. Imagine a helicopter falling out of the sky over a schoolyard vs. one falling out of the sky over the ocean.

Both are tragedies but do you want to be held responsible for the outcry that will ensue when lives are lost on the ground because the City of New York prefers to side with profits over common sense? If trucking companies and site-seeing companies and other

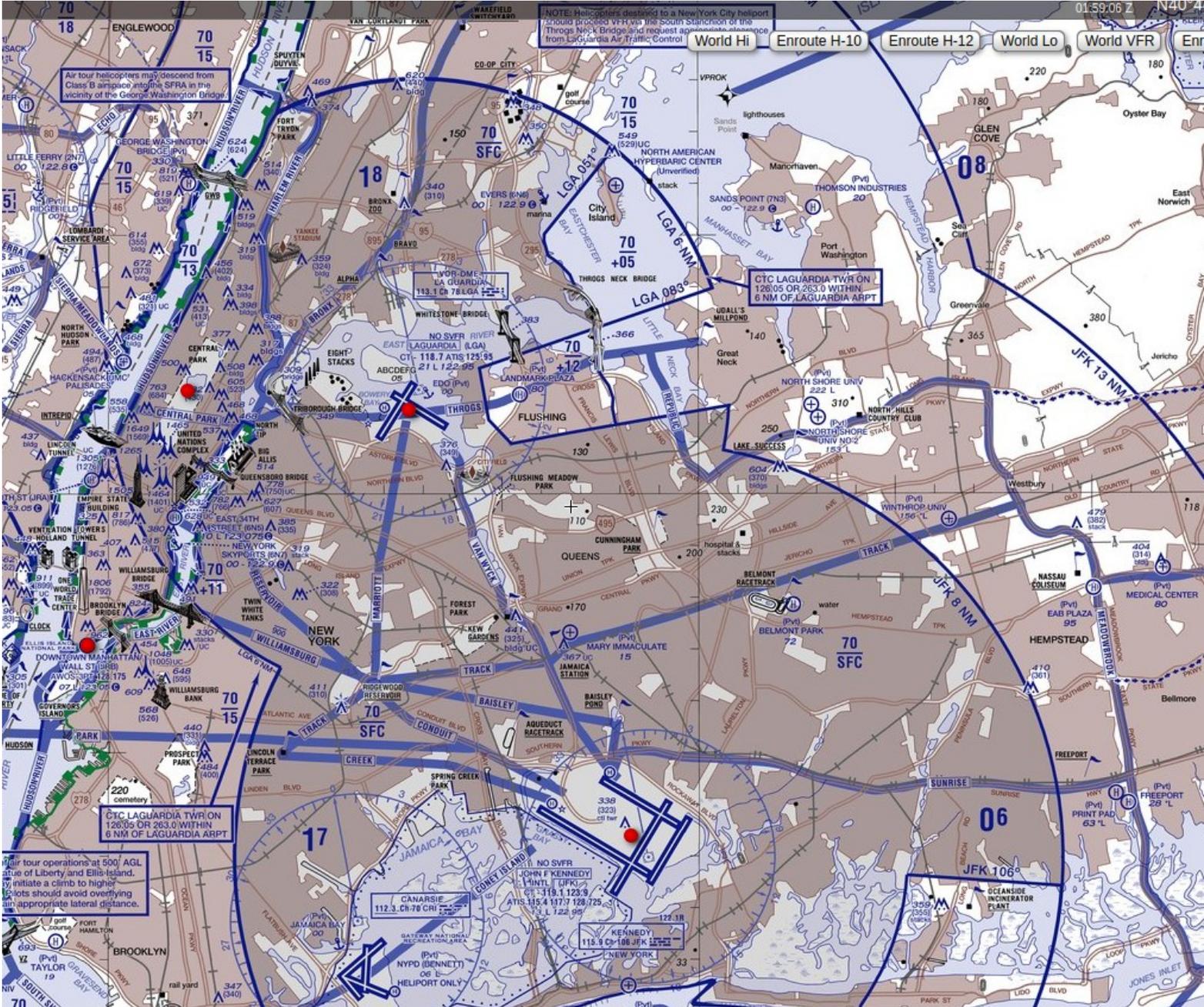
transport companies are forbidden from traversing city streets then why are you giving the helicopter industry a free pass?

I am asking you along with others here today to put a stop to this! These highways in the sky are no different than the roads that crisscross through or by our residential neighborhoods, our day care centers, our hospitals, historic neighborhoods, our backyards and our parks. Why are you giving the helicopter industry a free pass that you withhold from other transport companies that would love to take the shortest route from warehouse to warehouse but they don't because there are reasonable laws in place to prevent that. And where do those originate from?

Common sense.

Thank you for your attention.

# Exhibit A NYC Helicopter Aviation Chart



**Dear Council Members,**

**I am totally opposed to the above bills regarding the Blade commuter expansion plan and the tourist helicopters. Helicopters are noisy and dangerous. Our city is already besieged with levels of noise that are unhealthy for our ears, our sleep and our general well-being. Helicopters will only add to this; they are not monitored like airplanes, they are unstable in certain weather conditions and yet not required to be grounded. For the sake of a few private companies making more money, why would the City Council allow New Yorkers to suffer even more than usual. We know how tourist helicopters have already increased pollution wherever they operate - to quote: "re significant sources of particulate air pollution, and have been shown to be major sources of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon particles (PAHs)—an especially harmful component of particulate air pollution. "**

**Sincerely,**

**Judith Norell  
915 West end Ave  
New York, NY 10025**

Com on Economic Development - non-essential helicopters

To the Committee:

I am writing to endorse the proposals to amend the administrative code to reduce the noise caused by chartered helicopters, to study electric powered take-off and landing vehicles, and to collect safety and route data.

For four years I have been a volunteer tour guide at Governors Island. Over that time, the increase in helicopter traffic over the Island and around the harbor has caused what amounts to unremitting noise on the Island. It is often so noisy that it is impossible to carry on a simple conversation - tours need to stop until helicopters are beyond noise range. They have significantly adversely affected the ability to enjoy this magnificent Park, to which the City has contributed substantial funds for the enjoyment of New Yorkers.

Any efforts to reduce noise, study the impacts of helicopter traffic on the natural and lived environment are important and worthy of your active pursuit.

Many thanks for your attention to these concerns,

Judy Mann  
535 Dean Street, Apt 914  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

I live on W 74 St on the Upper West Side. The number of helicopters constantly swarming above my building is not simply overwhelming, it is disturbing. Every 5-10 minutes there is a gang of 5-6 tourist helicopters from NJ (namely FlyNYON) that circle above my building and Central Park for at least 10 minutes at below 1,000 ft height. Sometimes they hover for 10-15 minutes. Sometimes at -40 to -70 kts. The noise is deafening, it's like being bombed from above. And this happens every single day. During the week and on weekends, including Sundays. God forbid it's a sunny weekend, there is no option to sleep in, the helicopters start attacking UWS as early as 6-7am and continue flying until 10pm or later.

On top of the pest of tourist helicopters, the commuter helicopters use UWS as their route to Long Island at any time of day or night. Those fly even lower at 500-600ft. People have constant headaches and mental health issues due to the helicopter noise.

Along the Hudson river, the helicopters fly at 200-300 ft very close to Riverside Dr, when the regulations allow only in the middle of the river and only above 1,500ft. The problem is that no one follows those regulations and on the other hand, no one holds those perpetrators accountable.

The amount of 311 complaints that I left is uncountable. I've sent letters to Mayor de Blasio, Governor Cuomo, many other public officials. Nobody responded. Nobody is willing to take any action. The government completely gave up on its citizens and taxpayers.

**Katherine Miller**

**Testimony of Kenneth M. Coughlin in response to Committee on Economic Development hearing February 17, 2021, on Introductions 2026, 2027 and 2067**

As I write this on a Saturday morning from my home on the Upper West Side near Central Park, I clearly hear a helicopter hovering and turning a few blocks away. This is only one of dozens of helicopters that I and my neighbors will be subjected to in the course of this otherwise lovely winter day.

Helicopter traffic over our neighborhood has become nothing short of an infestation. I have stood in Central Park and been unable to converse with another person due to the deafening sound of a pair of helicopters hovering overhead. I have heard several neighbors say that they are considering leaving the city solely due to this invasion.

I also write as a cyclist who regularly uses the Hudson River Greenway and who often endures the ear-splitting noise and breathes in the dangerous pollution from helicopters only a few steps away at the 30<sup>th</sup> Street heliport.

When a quality-of-life issue reaches such a point, elected officials must act.

The three bills before the committee – Ints. 2026, 2027 and 2067 – are a small step in the right direction but they will not meaningfully address the problem that New Yorkers like me are subjected to.

Simply put, we need to ban all non-essential helicopter flights from the skies over New York City, including all commuter and tourist flights. Federal legislation, HR 4880, would do this, and the Council should support this measure in any way it can. Pending this, the Council must act to ban all non-essential commuter and charter flights from all three City-owned heliports.

Non-essential helicopter flights benefit an exceedingly small, privileged minority while degrading the quality of life and harming the health of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Beyond this, helicopters as a form of transportation or recreation are incredibly wasteful. At a time when the very future of our planet depends on our ability to drastically reduce our carbon usage, eliminating unnecessary helicopter flights would seem to be the easiest of steps we could take.

Kenneth M. Coughlin

10 West 87<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt. 3B

New York, N.Y. 10024

Hearing Testimony of Lawrence Goldhirsch, Esq.

I am a personal injury lawyer for a large Manhattan law firm.

On May 21, 2004 a windblast from a helicopter at the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Heliport blew a cyclist off his bike injuring him. He sued in 2005. (Bliwas v. Liberty Helicopters, Sup. Ct. NY Co. 108855/2005)

On Mar. 27, 2007 Michael Strasmich was bicycling past the 30<sup>th</sup> St. heliport owned and operated by Air Pegasus when he was blown into another cyclist by a gust of wind from a landing helicopter. He sued Air Pegasus for his injuries, filing suit in 2007.

After 4 years of litigation Air Pegasus moved the court to dismiss the case on the grounds that Air Pegasus was not responsible for a helicopter's downwash. The court disagreed and denied the application to dismiss. The court held that Air Pegasus was responsible for advising the pilot about wind conditions and thus played a part in controlling the helicopter's approach and landing. After that decision the parties finally settled. (Strasmich v. Helicopters 2011 WL 11075174).

Most recently, my client, a 90 year old lady in good shape, was blown off her bicycle on Nov. 25, 2018 by the downdraft of a helicopter at the Heliport. She suffered several fractured ribs, a punctured lung and was hospitalized for almost a week. After she was thrown, she tried to report the incident to Air Pegasus personnel on the tarmac but reported he fled into a building and locked the door. I filed suit on her behalf in Feb. 2020. Pegasus replied that they kept no records of which helicopter was involved and sued 9 other helicopter companies that were using their premises that afternoon. The case is still ongoing.

Air Pegasus refuses to take any responsibility for such accidents. If you are to award more business for this entity by increasing routes, I urge you to include some agreement whereby they will be responsible for any injuries caused by any of the helicopters using their facility. By having a heliport so close to pedestrian and bicycle paths, Pegasus should be held strictly liable to any injured persons on the ground without it being necessary for such persons to have to retain a lawyer to sue for their injuries which usually takes years to resolve.

L. Goldhirsch, Esq.

lgoldhirsch@weitzlux.com

I would like to testify how disturbing the increase of tourist helicopters over Central park that use the west 80's as their corridor to get into the city. It has been increased drastically since September while we are all at home trying to work or do school in quarantine, the noise is unbearable, and constant until after dark. They start at around 9:30 am , one after the other, especially in the fall when the leaves would be a great sight for the tourists. I did not choose to live on a flight path when I bought this apartment 21 years ago. Now I am forced to. They hover and wait their turn to get into the park and that is usually right over my apartment. If this rackets was going on on the ground, we could call some one to complain, but what to do when its over your head? I have never wanted to move but I also don't want to live below a Disney like ride these tourists are experiencing. Thank you in advance for anything that can be done.

Lynette Baiocco

stop the chop

Hello,

I moved out of NYC after 42 years in July 2020, and the number one reason was helicopter traffic. When I moved to NYC in 1978 it was not an issue. But for the last 5 or so years I lived in NYC my daily life was marred by helicopter traffic. Helicopters passed over my home in Brooklyn on the way to the airport every 15 minutes during some parts of the day. It was a horrific, damaging experience to live under such noise, especially since there is already constant airplane traffic over the city. Helicopters are so much worse! They completely take over your living experience when they pass overhead. It's an absolute intrusion, an unavoidable harsh and sometimes even painful experience. And the fact that the noise is unnecessary, caused by the privileged few who don't want to sit in traffic, or want a fun tour, is just infuriating.

The constant helicopter traffic made my life in Brooklyn miserable. Years ago I stopped going to Governor's Island and Fire Island because those experiences were ruined by helicopter traffic. When my landlord died of COVID last year and I had to move, I was so ready and happy to leave NYC, and the number one reason was helicopter traffic.

Stop this absurd abuse and give people a break. There is data showing that the noise is harmful to health.

I now live in a small town in Wisconsin that is blissfully free of helicopter traffic, my number one goal in choosing a new place to live. I honestly think I've been traumatized for life by that noise.

Stop it!

Lynn Armentrout

## **banning helicopters**

Dear Honorable Councilmembers,  
I am a volunteer tour guide on Governors Island and I ardently support at the very least a ban of helicopters flying over and/or hovering over Governors Island.

Governors Island is one of the few locations in NYC where we can "get away from" the hustle, bustle and noise of city living. It is an oasis unlike any other. I can't tell you how many times I have had to stop my narrative during my historical tours of the island because of the disruptive noise coming from overhead...from helicopters. They should be banned from flying over the island, and better yet, banned from coming anywhere near it.

Thank you.  
Lynne Hayden-Findlay  
521 East 14 St Apt 1C  
New York NY 10009

Dear City Council,

I live near Riverside Park and one of the few positive things about the pandemic has been the decrease in helicopter noise out my window and when I walk in our beloved Riverside Park.

I am thrilled to see that more of our leaders are heading the pleas of all of us who belong to StoptheChopNY/NJ. (see

article: <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2021/02/12/stop-the-chop-ny-nj-announces-widespread-community-opposition-to-expansion-of-helicopter-commuter-flights-between-nyc-and-westchester/>)

In addition to calling for Mayor Bill de Blasio and other local elected officials to end helicopter flights originating from New York City controlled heliports, STC is also advocating that members of the U.S. Congress support [H.R. 4880](#). This proposed federal legislation, introduced by NY Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney on October 28, 2019 and co-sponsored by NY and NJ Congressmembers Jerrold Nadler, Nydia M. Velázquez, Yvette D. Clarke, José E. Serrano, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Thomas R. Suozzi and Albio Sires would eliminate non-essential helicopter flights over densely populated areas while permitting military, emergency, police, government, and media use.

While the NYC Parks Department does a terrific job of keeping up our parks, along with the Riverside Conservancy, so much of this beauty and tranquility is lost when we have regular buzzing, whirring, blasting noise over head of these tourist and corporate helicopters.

Please pass legislation to allow only **NECESSARY** helicopters in the skies over our

dear NYC. We all know there are already enough of these!!

I totally agree with Ms. Elstein's comments below:

“There is a very high cost paid by residents so that tourists and wealthy corporate commuters can use these helicopters,” said Melissa Elstein, STC’s Secretary. “These businesses externalize the environmental impact to the rest of society. Helicopter traffic negatively impacts outdoor businesses, festivals, and public events, such as concerts and theatrical performances in Central and Riverside Parks. This unnecessary mode of transportation is wreaking havoc with New Yorkers’ lives as we can no longer enjoy a peaceful day in our parks, along the waterfront, or in our homes without the all too often roar and vibrations of low flying helicopters.

I thank you for having this hearing and allowing our voices to be heard.

Please STOPTHECHOP!

Margaret Dunlevy  
Riverside Drive

## Helicopter noise pollution

I have been complaining about the noise from helicopters for decades and nothing concrete has been done to alleviate the problem. The pounding helicopter noise is often unbearable and it can go on all day long. I find it impossible to get anything done with that kind of distraction and I often just sit in my home with my fingers jammed in my ears because there's no other way to block out the noise. I live near Central Park but even going there is no escape because the noise can be even worse when you don't have walls and windows blocking some of the racket. At a time when more and more people are working from home this is not just a personal problem but it also affects the productivity of New York businesses as well as children who are unable to do homework.

Mark Kleinman

Testimony by Melissa Elstein of West 80s Neighborhood Association for Helicopter Legislation Hearing 2/17/21 Hosted by NYC Council Member Paul Vallone

I am a long-time Upper West Side resident and a cofounder and Board Secretary of the West 80s Neighborhood Association – a local, all volunteer-led community nonprofit organization. We work on neighborhood improvement issues, such as advocating to protect historic buildings, improve green infrastructure (such as street trees, and how to properly care for them), create pollinator friendly pathways, reduce single-use plastic pollution including removing plastic bags and balloons from trees, promote reusable containers and zero waste initiatives, improve recycling rates and composting infrastructure, climate change mitigation and prevention, green energy expansion and reduction of fossil fuels infrastructure, open spaces, street cleanups and rat eradication efforts, graffiti removal, save our small businesses and storefronts, and other quality of life concerns. I am also a Board member and the Board Secretary of Stop the Chop NY/NJ - also a local, all volunteer-led community nonprofit organization with a mission to ban all nonessential helicopters from the NY metropolitan airspace ([www.stopthechopnynj.org](http://www.stopthechopnynj.org)).

Thank you for accepting this emailed testimony as our support for NYC Council Member Paul Vallone’s newly introduced helicopter legislation: Int. 2067-2020, 2027-2020, 2026-2020. Please note we also are publicly supporting federal legislation regarding helicopters such as HR 4880 “Improving Helicopter Safety Act of 2019” introduced by Congressmembers Carolyn Maloney, Jerry Nadler, and Nydia Velasquez; HR 389 “The Safe and Quiet Skies Act” also introduced by Congressman Nadler and cosponsored by NJ Congressman Albio Sires among others; and HR 5423 the “Aircraft Noise Reduction Act” introduced by Congressman Joe Neguse. (All relevant helicopter legislation can be found at Stop the Chop NY/NJ’s website under the “legislation” tab).

With regard to the current helicopter situation in NYC, and testifying on behalf of the West 80s Neighborhood Association, please be aware that Upper Westsiders have been observing on an almost daily basis the onslaught of loud and low-flying helicopters that travel up and down the Hudson River, across Riverside Park, over residential building rooftops, and around Central Park. These helicopters along the Hudson River fly only minutes apart, and even though I and many of our members reside numerous blocks away from the river, the roar of these helicopters is heard in apartments through closed windows. When frequently flying directly over my 22-story building towards Central Park, the noise is especially loud and unsettling, and also creates vibrations in our apartment. (I have read that the unique action of rotor blades slicing through air produces a specific and disturbing type of noise pollution).

As someone who has lived through 9/11 and numerous other emergencies in NYC (such as blackouts), helicopters are associated with emergencies and trigger an alarm reaction in myself and, as I understand from numerous conversations, in many others. Initially, I had presumed that these incessant helicopters were indeed emergency service or media helicopters, but upon researching the tourist helicopter industry routes, I learned that tourism helicopters (as well as commuter helicopters) are traversing the NYC routes and sites I have mentioned. Given that NYC has experienced at least 30 helicopter crashes since 1980, some fatal (including the recent June 10, 2019 deadly crash and fire on a midtown roof), there is good reason to fear for the safety of New Yorkers, their lives and property. In addition to the safety concerns of helicopter accidents, there is the real security worry about helicopters' potential use in terrorist attacks (unfortunately, we know from experience, that NYC is a target of terrorists).

In addition to the noise pollution I have described, the proliferation of non-essential helicopters (tourism and commuter) flying low in our airspace is alarming for environmental reasons. As the city advocates for reducing car and vehicular traffic due to polluting emissions (e.g., enacting congestion pricing, car-free streets, restrictions/caps on for-hire vehicles, and the encouragement of public transportation and bicycles), it is hypocritical to allow one of the least environmentally-friendly modes of transportation, let alone simply for tourist photo-ops, to pollute our airspace. Helicopter engine emissions contain carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas contributing to our current planetary climate crisis) and helicopters can burn as much as 3x the amount of fuel as vans. Transportation is already North America's top source of carbon emissions, so why add "fuel to the fire" by allowing the increase of such polluting, fossil-fuel guzzling flying vehicles for non-emergency reasons. There are numerous other safer and less disruptive opportunities for tourists to take in the beauty of NYC – skyscraper observation towers, tour boats, ferries and buses (all affordably transporting more than a handful of passengers at a time, unlike helicopters).

As mentioned above, our Upper West Side parks have become fly-over zones for commuting and tourism helicopters, occurring seven days per week starting early in the morning through sunset. In NYC, Central Park especially is a welcome and much-used urban oasis for residents and tourists alike. For example, the park is widely used by schools for track training, parents with their young children in playgrounds and fields, and adults for recreation, relaxation, and birding. There are many seasonal concerts, events and performances, including the beloved Shakespeare in the Park and the NY Philharmonic – all attended by residents and tourists. Unfortunately, what should and used to be a peaceful respite from urban noise, has actually become the opposite as helicopters travel directly over, circle and hover above Central Park (especially the reservoir and jogging circle) at all hours on a daily basis. Not even Sundays are off limits to these intrusive modes of transportation. There have been particularly egregious examples of this intrusion during many jogs around the Jackie O. jogging path: I have observed and heard three, sometimes four, tourist helicopters simultaneously hovering over Central Park's reservoir before circling around it and then heading to the East Side. The Summer before the pandemic, I observed two extremely low-flying helicopters simultaneously hover over the large "Philharmonic in the Park" crowd, and my observations were corroborated by numerous

others when I subsequently described this alarming situation at the next Central Park Precinct Community Council meeting.

The commuter helicopter companies, such as Blade, like to point the finger at the tourist companies emanating their flights from NJ, as well as the NYPD and the media helicopters. However, their commuting flights to the local airports, Hamptons, and other Long Island destinations, as well as Westchester, also create noise and the resulting misery to parks goers and residents on the UWS. For example, a couple of weeks ago, my husband and I (along with many other birders) were in Central Park one Saturday evening to look for the rare Snowy Owl that has newly made Central Park her home. We were waiting quietly for the owl to appear along the reservoir jogging path, and before her appearance and in the 30 minutes we waited, 5 commuter helicopters (and 1 tourist) roared directly over head as they commuted eastbound. It is sad and frustrating that Central Park – an iconic NYC place of beauty and peace, available to all for free - has become over-run with the polluting noise and fumes of the helicopter industry. New Yorkers pay high taxes to enjoy the benefits of public services, such as parks and recreation, and that rightful enjoyment has become minimized and jeopardized by the actions of this narrow industry catering to the few and to the detriment of the many. (This need for quiet, healthy, peaceful places of urban nature has become even more apparent during Covid-19. Additionally, given that asthma is an increased risk factor for contracting a serious or fatal case of this Corona virus, keeping our airspace clean from polluting and toxic particulate matters created by aircrafts such as helicopters is even more pivotal).

We oppose the expansion of Blade's commuting helicopter plans (to and from Westchester), and oppose their current operations as well. As a tri-state region, we should be improving our public transit infrastructure (such as high speed, clean and efficient trains to the airports, the Hamptons, Westchester, NJ, and CT), and not be supporting or creating more helicopter infrastructure for nonessential flights. We urge the non-renewal of the heliport leases to nonessential helicopter operators at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport, the W. 30th Street Heliport, and the E. 34th Street Heliport. Remember, that it was former Mayor Guiliani in 1999 that closed the E. 60th Heliport due to neighbors' complaints of noise and concerns of pollution. New Yorkers have been complaining about these helicopters for decades! Does a small, densely populated island borough really need three heliports here (and note that they are all located from the 30s - downtown).

The time is now to end this helicopter assault on our senses, the risk to our lives and property, the environmental degradation, the reduction of quality of life, the harm to our bodies and emotions that helicopter noise induced stress causes. (There are numerous studies that prove that extreme, incessant noise such as helicopters has a physical and mental negative impact on humans, and affects wildlife as well. See Stop the Chop NY/NJ website under "About/Environmental and Health"). We believe that only looking at the minimal income benefits NYC derives from leasing its' heliports, there must be a full, holistic study of costs from

nonessential helicopters as well - including property damage costs from crashes, costs of emergency vehicles and responders to crashes, lost wage time due to crashes and stress, hospital costs due to crashes as well as physical manifestations of noise-induced stress, costs of reduction of quality of life, costs to property value reductions for buildings under helicopter paths, environmental costs, etc.

Many of our West 80s neighbors have called the West 80s especially around W. 86th Street the “Helicopter Highway”. We know residents in other neighborhoods say the same about their blocks. The Hudson River has become a Hudson Helicopter Highway as well. NYC’s sky has become the wild west of helicopters, and with the expansion of commuters planned, and tourist helicopters being promoted on social media (such as doors off shoe selfies over Central Park and other NYC landmarks), it will get worse if we do not pass all these common-sense local and federal laws. It is time to protect New Yorkers and be the environmental stewards of our airspace.

Thank you for accepting this written testimony.

Best,  
Melissa Elstein, Secretary and Founding Member  
West 80s Neighborhood Association  
P.O. Box 732  
New York, NY 10024  
[www.west80s.org](http://www.west80s.org) [www.LoveYourStreetTreeDay.com](http://www.LoveYourStreetTreeDay.com)  
<http://www.facebook.com/west80s>  
Twitter: @west\_80s  
Instagram: CleanAndGreenNY



My Name is Melodie Bryant and thank you for taking my testimony today. I'll be brief.

Helicopters are a real problem for New Yorkers - and not just the helicopters that use City heliports. This last weekend, which was cold and blustery, 166 sorties flew over Manhattan from New Jersey. At this rate, summer is shaping up to be a real nightmare here. And with Blade going public - their press release stated their growth plans - it's not going to get any better; so anything we can do is good. But I don't understand why we're still tiptoeing around the real solution. Correct me if I'm wrong, but to my knowledge, two of the heliports hosting these helicopters are on city land. Why can't the City Council terminate those leases?

Pre-Covid there were 50,000 flights from City heliports annually - that's 100,000 take offs and landings. Why are we talking about noise levels, and asking for a study of electric helicopters, which won't be in use for another decade? And who says they'll be any quieter? And why are we catering to wealthy commuters and charter companies, at the expense of the health and sanity of literally millions of New Yorkers, who cannot enjoy their public space along the shoreline, or who live under their flight paths?

Time is passing and New Yorkers are suffering. Please. I'm begging the New York City Council to do better. If we have no power to stop the ensuing flood of tourist helicopters from NJ, at least we can reduce the pain at home.

Thank you

Melodie Bryant  
Chelsea

STOP THE CHOP - Helicopters over Manhattan

Dear City Council,

I live between Central Park and Riverside Park. During this pandemic we have been so grateful for both of these wonderful parks to get outside and appreciate the healing power of nature. However, the frequent helicopter noise was reaching epidemic proportions and seriously affected the mental health of all family members. I have a special needs child who is super sensitive to motor noises and those low flying choppers have a negative effect on family life.

I am thrilled that more leaders are listening and neighbors are joining StoptheChopNY/NJ. (see article: <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2021/02/12/stop-the-chop-ny-nj-announces-widespread-community-opposition-to-expansion-of-helicopter-commuter-flights-between-nyc-and-westchester/>)

In addition to asking our Mayor Bill de Blasio and other local elected officials to end helicopter flights originating from New York City controlled heliports, STC is also advocating that members of the U.S. Congress support [H.R. 4880](#). This proposed federal legislation, introduced by NY Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney on October 28, 2019 and co-sponsored by NY and NJ Congressmembers Jerrold Nadler, Nydia M. Velázquez, Yvette D. Clarke, José E. Serrano, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Thomas R. Suozzi and Albio Sires would eliminate non-essential helicopter flights over densely populated areas while permitting military, emergency, police, government, and media use.

We love our parks and our family has done extensive volunteer work in both Central Park and Riverside Park. We want to enjoy

these places but the tranquility is lost when we have buzzing, whirring, blasting noise overhead from tourist and corporate helicopters.

Please pass legislation to allow only NECESSARY helicopters in the skies over our dear NYC. We all know there are already enough of these!!

I totally agree with Ms. Elstein's comments below:

"There is a very high cost paid by residents so that tourists and wealthy corporate commuters can use these helicopters," said Melissa Elstein, STC's Secretary. "These businesses externalize the environmental impact to the rest of society. Helicopter traffic negatively impacts outdoor businesses, festivals, and public events, such as concerts and theatrical performances in Central and Riverside Parks. This unnecessary mode of transportation is wreaking havoc with New Yorkers' lives as we can no longer enjoy a peaceful day in our parks, along the waterfront, or in our homes without the all too often roar and vibrations of low flying helicopters.

I thank you for allowing our voices to be heard.

Please STOPTHECHOP!

Nan Dee, in the West 90s 10025

## STOP THE CHOP in Central Park petition

For at least the last 3 or 4 years, and probably longer, Central Park has been under daily and unrelenting helicopter assault from the skies. The noise is ear-splitting, bone-jarring, and it never stops. It's not just that helicopters fly over the park -- no, they *hover* over the park -- for 20-30 minutes at a stretch. Eventually they leave, but then more helicopters arrive within the hour, and they hover too.

*Why are they there??? What are they looking for??? Why has no one stopped them???*

My usual hangout is the tennis courts. I remember the time a helicopter was flying so low over Court 8 at the tennis courts that I thought it would land on either Cindy's or Kiki's shoulder. I wondered if the people in the copter wanted to play doubles. And, when I see them flying so low and hovering for so long over the Reservoir, I wonder if they've brought their bathing suits and are planning to dive right in for a swim.

*Why are they here??? What are they looking for??? Why has no one stopped them???*

As I say, my hangout is the tennis courts -- where I was a regular tennis player for 56 years. I don't play any more, but Central Park has always been the most important place in NYC for me. I have done freelance work there. I have written chapters of my book there. I have written many, many of my lyrics there. My usual time in the park on a really beautiful day lasts about 6-7 hours. Or at least it used to BH (before helicopters).

*Helicopters are especially fond of beautiful days, too. They never miss one -- no, not even one. They are even more helicopters and they hover overhead for even longer.*

The sound of a helicopter extends 3/4 of a mile in every direction. You can't escape the noise by moving away as you would in the case of a noisy lawnmower. You can only throw up your hands and leave the park entirely. With your fingers in your ears as you hightail it out of there as fast as your legs will carry you. My 78-year-old legs can't get me of of there nearly quickly enough.

For my entire life, Central Park has been my one refuge from a crowded, noisy, concrete-and-asphalt city. It's been my Hamptons, it's been my Palm Beach, it's been my Berkshires. I have had no need for those beautiful places because I've had my own beautiful place -- no driving in bumper-to-bumper traffic required. I have relished its peace and tranquility and beauty. It's been the one crucial reason for my remaining in New York City -- more than theater, more than restaurants, certainly more than museums. I have often said: "No Central Park -- then no more Nancy in NYC."

*Why has this refuge been stolen from me??? Why was it allowed to happen in the first place? Why has it been allowed to continue? **It can only be that lawmakers have absolutely no idea what's going on and how bad it is.***

Don't take my word for it. Councilmembers: Come to Central Park, hang out for a day near the tennis courts, bring a blanket and a sandwich, and experience the cacophony for yourselves. And don't worry about picking the "wrong" day -- you can't, not if the sun is shining. There are only Very Bad Days and Even Worse Days. But there are absolutely *no* quiet days. Maybe there used to be when this horror first began, but not any more.

I am so, so grateful that the Stop the Chop Organization has been established. It gives me hope that the nightmare can finally be brought to an end. These people are doing God's work -- so for God's sake, please listen to them!!

Respectfully yours,

Nancy Stark

152 East 94th Street

New York, NY 10128

212-289-6203

<https://www.change.org/StoptheChopNYNJ>

74 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY 10024

16 February 2021

New York City Council  
New York City Hall  
City Hall Park  
New York, NY 10007

Dear New York City Council,

I am 42 years old. I was born and raised in New York City, and have lived here for most of my life. I love the city, and there has never been anything that has ever made me want to leave the city.

That is, until the the helicopter problem got completely out of hand. Then, for the first time, my wife and I started making plans to move out of the city. As the New York Times rightly pointed out ‘A Plague of Helicopters is Ruining New York.’ (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/opinion/sunday/a-plague-of-helicopters-is-ruining-new-york.html?searchResultPosition=1>)

Ironically, with all of the problems that the city has been faced with during the pandemic, the torrent of constant helicopter noise in our particular neighborhood was temporarily abated due to the drop in tourism.

However, we know that in other areas the problems have only gotten worse, such as over Central Park. And after the pandemic, these problems will return worse than ever unless we do something about it now.

Where my wife and I live on Riverside Drive in Manhattan, helicopters were going up and down the Hudson River, all day, every day (perhaps a little bit less on Sundays or when the weather was rainy). It was a constant, all-day, source of noise and disturbance. Worse than any quality of life issue we had ever experienced in New York. Apparently there was a bill in 2015 meant to curb tourist helicopters. But it made no differ-

ence. As one article rightly pointed out, it does not make much difference to have one helicopter every two minutes rather than one minute.

Living underneath constant helicopters is like living in a war zone. People who live near the heliports report noise that is worse than experienced by soldiers in Bagdad during the Iraqi War. Is this how New Yorkers are supposed to live?

I am not one for over-regulation. But if there were ever an argument for regulation, it is here. You have a group of 3-4 tourists, almost all of whom are not tax paying New York City residents, disturbing many thousands of tax-paying New York City residents with one helicopter joy ride. This is completely backwards, and the reason that regulations are meant to exist.

It is the same for commuter helicopters: just a few people can disturb thousands of people just so they can get to the airport a little faster, or to the Hamptons a little faster. No, this is not right.

There is no room for non-essential helicopters over a densely populated city such as New York City.

Whereas I am usually someone who believes in compromise, this is not an area for compromise. Making helicopters slightly softer or slightly less regular will not make a dent in the problem. Corruption and greed cannot win this battle. If they do, New York will lose so many of its residents and so much of its tax revenue in order to keep a relatively small industry with a big lobbyist. This is a clear cut issue: Tourist and Commuter helicopters need to be banned.

Sincerely,

Steven Fox

Good day,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My name is Teresa McCaskie. I have been exposed to excessive helicopter noise and pollution due to the charter/taxi/crowd sharing traffic for years. As many speakers have expressed in the Public hearing held on 2/17/21, the sheer volume and noise is unbearable. Life should not be lived this way.

Over the years I have learned that all aircraft are not built as “safely“ as they should be. It is important for the NYC Council to be aware that many of the “for hire” Charter/crowd sharing/ helicopters that are flying to and from the NYC helipads over Queens, Brooklyn, Nassau and Suffolk county (that includes The East End of Long Island) are NOT all equipped with a Crash Resistant Fuel System in their aircraft. Below is the link to the [FAA.gov](https://www.faa.gov/aircraft/air_cert/design_approvals/rotorcraft/media/rot_CRFS_Compliant_List.pdf) website which categorizes each make and model. Please note that SIKORSKY s-76 helicopter are NOT included on the FAA’s compiled list.

[https://www.faa.gov/aircraft/air\\_cert/design\\_approvals/rotorcraft/media/rot\\_CRFS\\_Compliant\\_List.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/aircraft/air_cert/design_approvals/rotorcraft/media/rot_CRFS_Compliant_List.pdf)

It’s been noted that roughly 20 % of all helicopters flying in the US are equipped with a crash resistant fuel system (CRFS). Should a helicopter crash, even at a very low altitude, upon impact, it can become a “fireball”. Think back to the 70’s FORD Pinto gas tank problem. The NTSB has written to the FAA over the years and has made them aware of the situation. In the 2018 FAA Reauthorization Bill (Sec. 317.), all newly manufactured helicopters will be “mandated” to be equipped with a CRFS. As for all the “old” models still flying over parks, cities and schools across America, they will NOT be required to be retrofitted. Publicly the FAA continually speaks of “safety” however, this “loophole” exists to only benefit the industry. As the for paying unknowing consumer, it will pretty much boil down to “BUYER BEWARE” before take off.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/older-helicopters-present-fire-hazards-despite-industry-pledges-of-remedies-1533643205>

<https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-las-vegas/pilot-in-grand-canyon-crash-campaigns-for-safer-helicopters-1938814/>

Based on the information provided above, please show your support of the Safe Skies and Quiet Act. H.R. 4547 - Safe and Quiet Skies Act of 2019. <https://nadler.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=394509>

Safety for those on the ground needs to take priority.

Thank You,  
Teresa McCaskie  
Long Island, New York

Sent from my iPad

I am a financial analyst with intimate knowledge of economic models that get characterized as highly sophisticated, and yet miss a whole lot of key variables. Often, these missing variables are due to lack of broad contextual knowledge or, to cut corners to arrive at the alluring answer of making money quickly.

I mention this because it pained me greatly to see a committee focus on economy of chartered helicopters while totally ignoring the well-established body of scientific work on the harmful effects of aviation noise. Without regurgitating scientific publications entirely, aviation noise is proven to *negatively* impact adult and child cognition, increase heart ailments and cause psychological imbalance. These scientific facts were a large factor in developing quieter aircraft engines and to limit aircraft approaches near airports.

**However**, helicopters largely escaped regulatory scrutiny even though they generate inordinate noise. This was because of lack of their prevalence relative to aircrafts. That is, up until the last few months- when NYC skies suddenly lit up with hundreds of helicopter flights.

I have recorded helicopters flying over Central Park generating in excess of 95 decibels. To help frame this, large trucks driving on Columbus avenue generate 65-70 decibels; ambulance with their sirens on are at about 85 decibels. While these road vehicles hit peak decibels only for a fleeting second as they drive by, a single helicopter's noise lingers at peak decibels for several minutes. Compound one flight with hundreds in New York and one will soon go mad even before one goes deaf or dies of heart attack.

This committee might *totally* ignore health ailments caused by aviation noise in adults and children because accretion of health ailments and tabulation of its health cost is too difficult to model for an economic model that predicts revenues from helicopters and related services.

It would be a travesty to ignore helicopter noise **even if** you choose to ignore carbon footprint of their engines that haven't kept up with the cleaner standards forced upon aircraft jet engines.

The city offers very few places of refuge for its poor or middle-class residents. These helicopters are destroying the little solace we find in waterfronts, in our parks and even inside our homes. Helicopter users who willingly decamped to their idyllic refuges in the Hamptons or other places last year should not get to destroy our health by paying the city. The city bears the burden of our health cost.

The city must reject **any** incremental revenue from these helicopters because those New Yorkers who stayed behind to live here deserve a cleaner and healthier New York city.

Ajit Thomas  
102 West 85<sup>th</sup> street, Apt 5D  
NY, NY 10024  
ajit.thomas05@gmail.com

### **Testimony on helicopter noise, Committee on Economic Development**

Dear Chair Vallone, dear Members Barron, Cornegy, Louis, Gjonaj, Koo, Landers, and Powers:

I submit this testimony on my personal experience of helicopter noise over the East River in public parks at the Queens waterfront as you consider legislation on helicopter companies.

First, I'd like to emphasize that I do not know if helicopter flights over the East River are a current problem--after one particularly egregious experience in September 2019, I had to stop visiting the LIC waterfront because the helicopter noise, especially on summer Fridays and weekends, made me feel literally sick. Yet, I do know that helicopters originating from New Jersey are currently an enormous health problem for people living in some parts of Manhattan, and I know that Blade and Ross plan to expand their helicopter business, which greatly troubles me. While I live in Jackson Heights, Queens, and am therefore not affected by helicopter noise over Manhattan, I do know from my personal experience at the Queens waterfront how this noise can quite literally drive you insane, and I am asking you to prohibit or severely limit helicopter flights over NYC land or open water for tourist and commuter flights.

Water dramatically amplifies noise (you can ask any physics teacher why that is so), which means that helicopters over open water are even louder than they are over land. For New Yorkers like me, without a house or garden, public parks are the only way to have a little outdoor relaxation. Waterfront parks are the jewel of New York City – and helicopters are allowed to destroy the use of this public space – and to negatively impact the physical and mental health of those who have to suffer the incredibly loud and constant noise. Cars are bad enough – yet this is so much worse than cars. For me, it became unbearable to spend time in Hunters Point Park, it upset me mentally and made me feel ill. After the experience in September 2019, I wrote letters to Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer (since those helicopters took off and landed in Manhattan) and to CM Van Bramer (since Hunters Point Park is in his district), but I did not receive a response, and did not know what else I can do other than deprive myself of fresh air so I don't have to suffer this unbearable noise. Here is what I tweeted about that experience:

<https://twitter.com/radlerkoenigin/status/1175141944651128832>

It is unacceptable that hyperwealthy New Yorkers have the right to abuse public airspace in this way, impacting our mental and physical health in order to get more quickly to the Hamptons – or to Westchester – and polluting the air. In addition, past accidents show that helicopters over a city are also extremely dangerous for residents.

Please do everything you can to limit what these tourist and commuter flight companies do to our health, safety, and environment.

Sincerely,

Angela Stach

## Helicopter Noise and Danger

Besides the deafening noise over the upper eastside ( I live on East 87th Street off Park Ave) what about the danger.

Constant noise can be at least 2 or 3 hours in the middle of the afternoon and at night in the summer until at least 8:30 PM.

What about the possibility of a crash into a building or Central Park. I've also seen a few helicopters this summer that were quite close to each other.

Remember the crash on top of the Pan Am Bldg in 1977 that killed 5 people.

*This week, [a helicopter crash-landed on a roof in Midtown](#), killing the pilot; while pieces of the copter fell below to the streets, no one below was injured. For some, the incident called to mind a deadlier helicopter accident that happened at a Manhattan tower over four decades ago.*

On May 16th, 1977, a [New York Airways](#) helicopter killed five people in Manhattan. While it did not crash, it did tip over as it sat idling on the heliport atop the Pan Am Building (now the MetLife Building, at 200 Park Ave) in Midtown. This caused the aircraft to come apart—as it tipped over a large rotor blade snapped off and, as [the NY Times](#) described it the next day, "slashed people to death before coming to rest 59 stories below and a block away on Madison Avenue." The first four victims were on the roof, the fifth was on the street below.

Let them take helicopter tours over Catskill Mountain but not in NYC.

**Ben Asen Photography**

[www.benasen.com](http://www.benasen.com)

[shopart.benasen.com](http://shopart.benasen.com)

212-348-0496 office

917-414-7203 mobile

[www.instagram.com/benasenpix](http://www.instagram.com/benasenpix)

**It's All About The Light**

Dear City Council,

I live near Riverside Park and one of the few positive things about the pandemic has been the decrease in helicopter noise out my window and when I walk in our beloved Riverside Park.

I am thrilled to see that more of our leaders are heading the pleas of all of us who belong to StoptheChopNY/NJ. (see

article: <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2021/02/12/stop-the-chop-ny-nj-announces-widespread-community-opposition-to-expansion-of-helicopter-commuter-flights-between-nyc-and-westchester/>)

In addition to calling for Mayor Bill de Blasio and other local elected officials to end helicopter flights originating from New York City controlled heliports, STC is also advocating that members of the U.S. Congress support [H.R. 4880](#). This proposed federal legislation, introduced by NY Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney on October 28, 2019 and co-sponsored by NY and NJ Congressmembers Jerrold Nadler, Nydia M. Velázquez, Yvette D. Clarke, José E. Serrano, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Thomas R. Suozzi and Albio Sires would eliminate non-essential helicopter flights over densely populated areas while permitting military, emergency, police, government, and media use.

While the NYC Parks Department does a terrific job of keeping up our parks, along with the Riverside Conservancy, so much of this beauty and tranquility is lost when we have regular buzzing, whirring, blasting noise over head of these tourist and corporate helicopters.

Please pass legislation to allow only NECESSARY helicopters in the skies over our dear NYC. We all know there are already enough of these!!

I totally agree with Ms. Elstein's comments below:

“There is a very high cost paid by residents so that tourists and wealthy corporate commuters can use these helicopters,” said Melissa Elstein, STC’s Secretary. “These businesses externalize the environmental impact to the rest of society. Helicopter traffic negatively impacts outdoor businesses, festivals, and public events, such as concerts and theatrical performances in Central and Riverside Parks. This unnecessary mode of transportation is wreaking havoc with New Yorkers’ lives as we can no longer enjoy a peaceful day in our parks, along the waterfront, or in our homes without the all too often roar and vibrations of low flying helicopters.

I thank you for having this hearing and allowing our voices to be heard.

Please STOPTHECHOP!

Cheryl Burger  
W 96 Street

Hello and thank you.

My name is Jeffrey S. Starin and I am the President of NextGenNoise.org a Brooklyn-based grass-roots organization that strives to implement common sense solutions to aviation noise. One of the signature features – if you want to call it a feature – of aviation noise is how industry and government almost always seem to work solely for the bottom line of industry, despite increasing the profits of industry not being a part of the government's mandate. When we examine the problem of aviation noise we see that in many ways the FAA is a willing participant and cohort to the aviation industry and at times seems to work in concert with industry – whether through omission of information or outright collaboration - to pull the wool over our eyes when it comes to reducing pollution and noise from all manner of air vehicles whether helicopters, airplanes or even drones.

Now I want to be clear, this is not a an indictment of the FAA which has many dedicated, smart and hard working engineers and personnel within their ranks. This is a political football. In my view.

A party asked me to testify here today because they are concerned as I am, about helicopter noise and how it is degrading our health and quality of life in NYC. When I read the proposed legislation I immediately recognized a kind of what I would call “lobbying” maneuver – a technique that is oftentimes used by attorneys and their

lobbying franchise to delay or otherwise obfuscate the real issues at hand. Of course stage three needs to be implemented. That's just common sense. But focusing on this aspect of a much larger problem only serves to divert attention and intentionally bog down this legislative body by having it squabe over technicalities when in fact this body has the power to pass larger, and bolder and farther reaching legislation than is asked of it with this bill.

So with that in mind I'd like to start my very brief presentation by asking the Council a simple question. The answer should be self-evident and here's the question:

Why is this legislative body giving the helicopter industry a free pass? Please keep that in mind as I now dive into my presentation:

=====

I understand my time is limited so I'll focus on just one element of my presentation – there are many but this is just one. I will also offer a solution in closing.

I have before you on the screen an aviation helicopter chart (exhibit A) - a bird's eye view. It is a facsimile of the official FAA helicopter aviation chart for the NYC area. It shows the actual highways overhead which helicopters must travel en-route from one destination to another when entering or leaving the NYC airspace. There is a lot of information here and I know it's not easy to digest. As a private pilot I understand every feature but for the sake of this presentation I'd like to draw your attention to the these highways in the sky. They even have names, just like roads - and I hope you can see

them on this aviation chart - this highway in the sky is called the Republic route, this one is called the Track route and this one is called the Williamsburg route, here's one that goes down the Harlem River called the Harlem River route. I'd like to point out two interesting routes – the “Park Route” which goes over Prospect Park in Brooklyn and the Central Park Route which traverses Central Park. Really? Is it really necessary to send low-flying aircraft over the only places left in a noisy city where people are trying to find some semblance of peace and quiet away from the hustle and bustle of the city? I think not. Common sense says ‘not’.

My point in showing you this is to draw the analogy between these roadways overhead and something else we are all very familiar with: our terrestrial roadways that weave through our communities and to illuminate that in the United States on the national, state, county and local level there are laws that prohibit, for example, an 18-wheeler tractor trailer from repeatedly going down residential streets or even some county roads because . . . why? Because it's common sense; let's not forget that.

Even though traveling down residential streets may in fact be the shortest route from say one warehouse to another for a tractor trailer, in most places where I've ever lived 18-wheeler vehicles are forbidden from doing just that. And these laws apply not only to tractor trailers, but also to sightseeing buses, public transportation, dump trucks, and similar. Another reason they are forbidden from going down residential streets and

roads isn't just for safety but because if they are allowed to repeatedly convey over these streets on a regular basis it has been shown that it reduces property values which has the effect of eventually reducing a states, city or municipalities tax income. And that furthermore has the effect of reducing services which all plays out to eventually degrade quality of life to such a point that nobody really wants to there anymore.

That is what is happening now in New York City. Right now and it's not just because of the pandemic.

I'm suggesting to the city council that this is the path that you are going down by allowing these noisy and polluting helicopters to buzz back and forth over our heads, repeatedly, all day long and sometimes into the night, disrupting our sleep, and raining down unbearable noise and pollution that only serves to advance respiratory diseases and of that, most significantly, asthma to mention just one. This is known. This is a fact. I can produce the medical studies by universities to substantiate this claim.

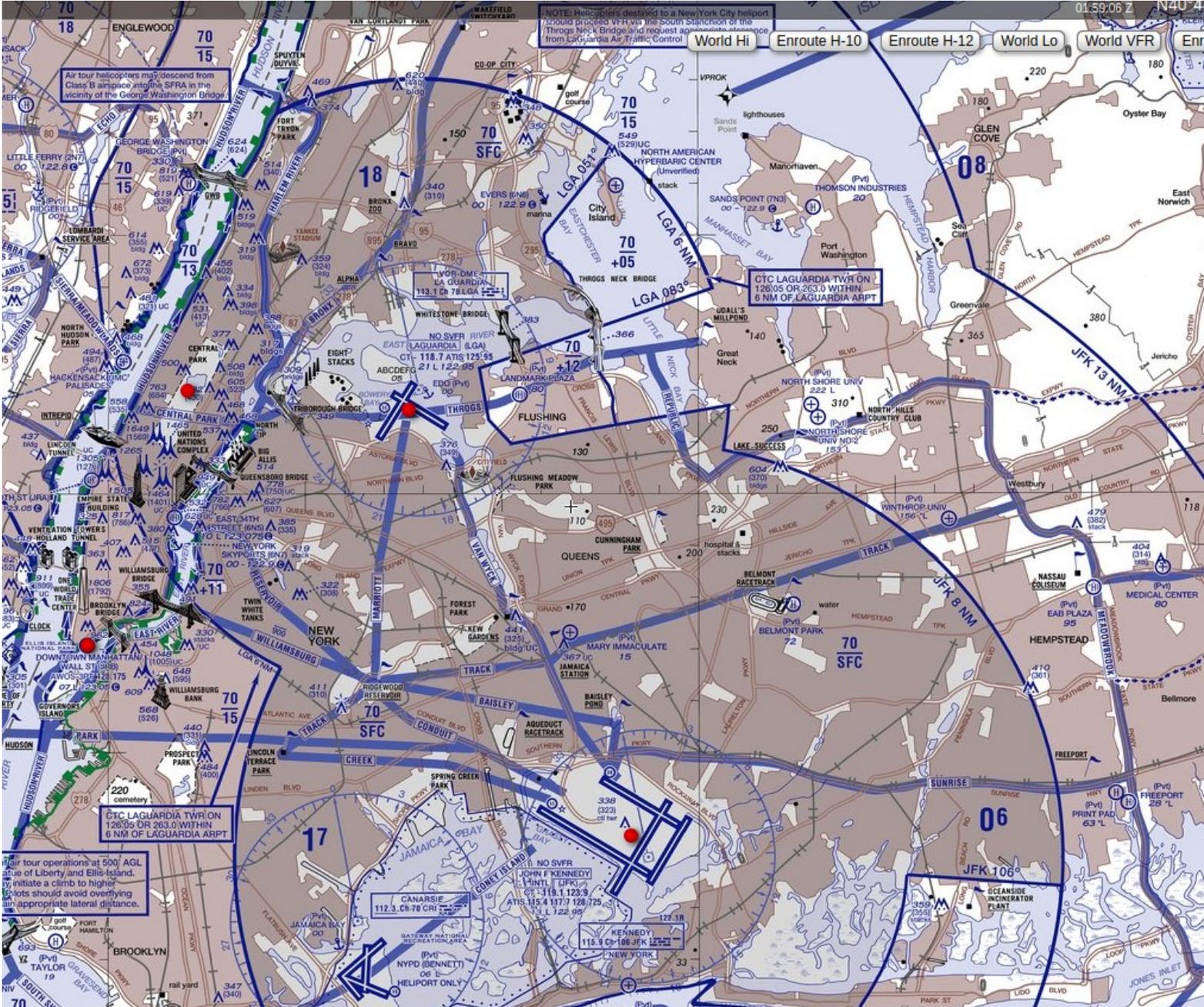
So here is the solution: require these "vehicles" to travel over the water, regardless of the added cost to their business and the extra distance they must travel. Imagine if you will a helicopter falling out of the sky into a schoolyard or city street vs. one falling out of the sky over the ocean. Both are tragedies but do you want to be held responsible - because you will, hereafter - for the outcry that will ensue when lives are lost on the

ground because the City of New York prefers to side with profits over common sense?  
That the City of New York prefers to give helicopters a free pass here? If trucking  
companies and site-seeing companies and other transport companies are forbidden from  
traversing city streets for purposes of safety, then why are allowing helicopters the right  
to do so?

I am asking you along with others here today to put a stop to this! These highways in  
the sky are no different than the roads that crisscross through *or alongside* our  
residential neighborhoods, our day care centers, our hospitals, historic neighborhoods,  
our backyards and our parks. You have the power to put reasonable laws in place to  
prevent the noise and God forbid a tragedy.

Thank you for your attention.

# Exhibit A NYC Helicopter Aviation Chart



Dear New York City Council

I would like to submit this additional testimony about helicopter noise to the City Council, in conjunction with the February 17 hearing on helicopter noise.

This brief biographical summary below, prepared for the American Public Health Association during the recent revision of its policy statement on noise pollution, describes my background and qualifications to comment on helicopter noise.

Dr. Fink is an internist and noise activist based in the Los Angeles area. A graduate of Yale, he also received an MBA from the Wharton School and worked in medical administration and teaching for 40 years. Since 2014 he has been one of the country's leading noise activists, focusing on the impact of noise on the public, including non-occupational noise-induced hearing loss and ambient noise as a disability rights issue for those with auditory disorders. Dr. Fink has presented papers on noise at national and international meetings, leading to publications in peer-reviewed journals. He is an Expert Consultant to the World Health Organization on its Make Listening Safe program and a subject matter expert on noise and the public for the National Center for Environmental Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Fink is Founding Chair of The Quiet Coalition.

As I discussed in this article, noise is not just a nuisance. Noise is harmful sound. [A new definition of noise - Acoustical Society of America](#) [asa.scitation.org > doi > pdf](#)

I reviewed the 9 evidence-based noise levels affecting human health and function in this article [Ambient Noise Is “The New Secondhand Smoke” – Daniel Fink](#) [acousticstoday.org > ambient-noise-is-the-new-second...](#) The scientific evidence about the dangers of noise for humans is incontrovertible.

The Environmental Protection Agency reviewed this topic more than 45 years ago. [Information on Levels of Environmental Noise Requisite to Protect Public Health and Welfare with an Adequate Margin of Safety \(EPA, 1974\)](#). That analysis is still valid.

Aircraft noise has a particularly deleterious effect on human health and function, as summarized by Basner et al for the World Health Organization. [Aviation Noise Impacts: State of the Science - NCBI - NIH](#) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov > pmc > articles > PMC5437751](#)

Basner's literature review formed the scientific basis for the World Health Organization's 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region. [Environmental Noise Guidelines ... - WHO/Europe | Publications](#) [www.euro.who.int > publications > abstracts > environ...](#)

Additionally, ambient noise is a major disability rights issue for people with hearing loss, as discussed in this article. [Disability rights aspects of ambient noise for people with ...](#) [asa.scitation.org > doi > am-pdf](#) Helicopter noise has a disproportionate impact on older New Yorkers. Half of those over age 65 have hearing loss. [Hearing Loss Prevalence in the United States - NCBI - NIH](#) [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov > pmc > articles > PMC3564588](#)

I urge you to take strong action to restrict helicopter flights over and around New York City.

Quietly yours,

Daniel Fink MD  
Board Chair  
The Quiet Coalition  
Lincoln, MA 01773

Hello, my name is David Murphy. I live on Central Park West. I wish to call attention to problems created by tourist helicopter companies that circumvent the Economic Development Corporation's oversight by operating out of New Jersey.

Our neighborhood, the West 80s and 90s, is BESET by tourist helicopters. Tourist helicopters take off from Linden or Kearney New Jersey so that they are not subject to the agreement made between the EDC and the helicopter companies not to fly over land in New York except Yankee Stadium. The biggest tourist operator out of New Jersey is FlyNYON.

Tourist helicopters fly up the Hudson from New Jersey, head across Manhattan in the West 80s or low 90s, and then circle over Central Park for up to two minutes. They fly fairly low, so I often see FlyNYON's logo on the copter. Their whap-whap-whapping is amplified when they make turns over the park. Then they drift down the East Side to circle over Madison Square on their way back toward the Hudson. Sometimes they also fly over Brooklyn or Governors Island. Although COVID has somewhat reduced their frequency, in peak periods tourist helicopters pass over the same neighborhood seven or eight in an hour, all afternoon, because they all fly the same route. Imagine helicopters going over your house one after another every eight minutes, each one's noise persisting for some three minutes before the next one. And consider the danger of a crash onto houses, schools, or visitors to Central Park.

Companies that fly out of New Jersey are subject only to the FAA's oversight. But consider that they are EXTRACTING wealth from New York. Can you as elected officials do more?

I add that if commuter helicopters are allowed to fly all over the city, none of us will get any peace. We on the ground outnumber helicopter passengers, and we are New York City voters—they're by and large not. Please pressure the FAA to get us relief. The FAA shouldn't treat the air above our houses as an asset belonging to out of state tourist operators. Thank you.

I am writing in support of Stop the Chop.

I live and work on Roosevelt Island. It is rare to not have a day interrupted by the noise of helicopters and seaplanes, especially in the warmer months. As a software engineer, concentration is a cherished resource, and the flights are a recurring source of interruption and irritation.

Beyond the losses in productivity, the flights impact my mood and well-being. Every single time I feel my windows shudder due to a low flying helicopter, I am prompted to daydream about moving somewhere quieter.

Lastly, I have regularly witnessed reckless flying. I worry that it is only a matter of time until either Roosevelt Island or the Ed Koch Bridge will experience a crash.

**David Wen Riccardi-Zhu**

In reporting that helicopter complaints to 311 have “soared” with several thousand more reported through Friday than were reported for all of 2019 (7,758 compared to 4,400), Mr. Martinez, writing in The City on November 15, 2020, rightfully notes that the noise emanating from the helicopters make New Yorkers feel even worse, now that so many are “cooped up” in their homes. Mr. Martinez quotes one New York resident as saying that the “noise just makes you crazy” and another saying that “I have wanted to run into the street screaming.” These quotes clearly reflect the feelings of the many individuals exposed to helicopter noise in their homes, especially now with many people working out of their homes and experiencing extra stress brought on by the COVID pandemic.

However, the impact on people exposed to noise go further than statements that noise can drive one crazy or that noise makes one want to scream. The research linking noise to adverse impacts on mental and physical health has clearly found that exposure to intrusive noises is hazardous to mental and physical health. Noise is not “just annoying”—it is detrimental to our well-being! I would suggest that Councilmembers go to [www.growNYC.org/noise](http://www.growNYC.org/noise) and check out the publications that address the adverse impacts of noise on health.

For the past forty-five years I have conducted research and written on the deleterious effects of noise on health. Additionally, as a member of the Board of growNYC.org for over thirty years, I have responded to phone calls from New York City residents seeking my assistance with their noise complaints. Thus, I believe my long-term commitment to educating people to the dangers of noise pollution, my work with individuals in New York City and elsewhere who have been intruded upon by noise, and my research and writings on noise effects qualify me to comment on Int. 2026, a local law amending the administrative code to reduce noise caused by chartered helicopters. This law is not simply asking that New Yorkers be exposed to less helicopter noise. In my opinion, the law is asking that New Yorkers be less exposed to a pollutant that impedes their health.

I would like to add that Int. 2026 is just a first step in lessening the effects of helicopter noise. However, this first step would be very much welcomed at this time.

Arline Bronzaft

## Helicopter Noise over North Queens

For years, we have been battling helicopter noise in Whitestone, especially in warmer weather.

In summer helicopter traffic over my home gets so bad that it affects my concentration when working from home!

You can not enjoy the outdoors because we are incessantly assaulted in our own backyard!

Being indoors doesn't help because it vibrates my whole house for about two minutes for every time a helicopter flies by.

This insanity has to stop! We beg all city and state officials to help us in this matter of quality of life!

Nobody should have to endure this torture!

Thank you for the attention to this matter.

Albert Mirashi  
albertmirashi77@gmail.com

Sent from my iPhone