

Whereas, As part of Vision Zero, New York City officials successfully requested that the State allow it to lower the default speed limit from 30 miles per hour to 25 miles per hour throughout the City and to as low as 15 miles per hour alongside schools and on streets where the City has implemented traffic calming measures; and

Whereas, According to data and analysis, pedestrians that are struck by vehicles travelling at 30 miles per hour are twice as likely to be killed as pedestrians that are struck by a vehicle travelling at 25 miles per hour; and

Whereas, Pedestrians fatality rates have been found to be significantly higher in high-poverty neighborhoods when compared to low-poverty neighborhoods; and

Whereas, According to the NYC Department of Transportation, where Neighborhood Slow Zones have been implemented, bringing the local speed limit down to 20 miles per hour, there has been a 14% reduction in injurious crashes and a 31% reduction in injuries for both drivers and passengers; and

Whereas, Since the implementation of these measures, traffic fatalities in New York City have declined significantly, going from 701 in 1990, to 381 in 2000, to an all-time low of 202 in 2018; and

Whereas, In 2019, the City Council passed Local Law 195 of 2019, known as the New York City Streets Master Plan, to improve the safety and accessibility of the City's streets for all New Yorkers through benchmarks for the construction of hundreds of miles of dedicated bus lanes and protected bike lanes; and

Whereas, In the ongoing efforts to combat dangerous and reckless driving, the City Council passed a local law creating the Dangerous Vehicle Abatement Program, under Local Law 36 of 2020, which requires the registered owner of a vehicle with 15 or more adjudicated school speed camera violations or five or more adjudicated red light camera violations during any 12-month period to complete an approved safe vehicle operation course offered by the New York City Department of Transportation, with failure to complete such course permitting the department to seek an order of seizure and impoundment and, if sustained, for the New York City Sheriff to seize such vehicle until such time as such course is completed; and

Whereas, Despite all these measures undertaken by the City over the years, dangerous and reckless drivers still pose a threat to the safety of all New Yorkers and additional steps need to be taken to address this hazard as recent data reveals that there were 273 traffic fatalities in the city in 2021, the highest number since 2013, and 255 traffic fatalities in 2022; and

Whereas, In the 2022-2023 session of the New York State Legislature, there is a package of bills collectively known as the SAFE (Streets Are For Everyone) Streets Act, that was introduced with the goal of taking aggressive action against dangerous driving, encourage street redesigns to improve safety, and provide support to crash victims and their families; and

Whereas, One of these bills is S2422, sponsored by State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, commonly referred to as “Sammy’s Law,” which would allow New York City to establish its own lower speed limits by removing the current State restrictions that set the default citywide speed limit at no less than 25 miles per hour; and

Whereas, The sponsor of S2422 explains the need for the measure by citing a study conducted by AAA which estimated that 30 percent of pedestrians struck by motor vehicles at an impact speed of 25 miles per hour will sustain serious injury and about 12 percent will die, but that 91 percent of those struck at impact speeds below 15 miles per hour do not sustain serious injuries, and fewer of them will die; and

Whereas, Another bill that is included in the SAFE Streets Act is A1901, sponsored by Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick, which would enact a “Crash Victims Bill of Rights,” requiring accident reports to be delivered to victims of accidents or their next of kin; victim impact statements to be delivered at traffic infraction hearings by injured parties or their next of kin; and employers to grant leave of absence to employees delivering a victim impact statement at a traffic infraction hearing; and

Whereas, The SAFE Streets Act also includes S1724, sponsored by State Senator Pete Harckham, and its companion bill A4346, sponsored by Assembly Member Phil Steck, which would grant safe passage to cyclists by requiring motorists to pass them from behind at a safe distance of no less three feet; and

Whereas, Other bills in the SAFE Streets Act include S100, sponsored by State Senator Sean M. Ryan, and its companion bill A3180, sponsored by Assembly Member Didi Barrett, which would require the consideration of complete street design for certain transportation projects that receive federal or state funding; and S2714, sponsored by State Senator Timothy Kennedy, and its companion bill A1280, sponsored by Assembly Member Jonathan D. Rivera, which would enable safe access to public roads for all users by utilizing complete street design principles in resurfacing, maintenance and pavement recycling projects; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.2422, also known as ‘Sammy’s Law,’ in relation to allowing New York city to establish a lower speed limit, and A.1901, enacting a crash victims bill of rights, as well as the other bills of the package known as the SAFE Streets Act.

RA/BJR
LS #8763
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