



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0074-2002, Version: *

Res. No. 74

Resolution calling upon the City of New York to end the ban on vehicles with a single occupant from entering Manhattan between 6 AM and 10 AM south of 60th Street other than the restrictions imposed at the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel.

By Council Members Weprin, McMahon and Liu; also Council Members Felder and Clarke

Whereas, Almost six months have passed since terrorists attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001; and
Whereas, Immediately after the attack, Manhattan traffic became so congested that the City invoked its emergency powers to curb vehicles from entering Manhattan through tunnels and bridges south of 60th Street; and

Whereas, These restrictions were subsequently modified so that Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOVs) are prohibited from using these entry points on week days between 6 AM and 10 AM; and

Whereas, The Brooklyn Battery Tunnel is an exception to this general rule and all traffic is prohibited from 6 AM to 8 PM every week day, and only passenger cars may use the tunnel at night and on weekends; and

Whereas, A study was commissioned by a consortium of business and labor groups to examine the impact of various transportation constraints on travel into the Manhattan Central Business District (CBD); and

Whereas, The study, "Toward A Safe and Sensible Transportation System," released in January 2002, found that "on average some 238,000 fewer people" entered the CBD in November 2001 than did in October 2000, and "almost 80% of the reduction, or 190,000, are people who are no longer coming by car;" and

Whereas, The study found that those "who could or would switch to transit or car pools probably already have" and in fact subway ridership is down 49,000 people per day "making it apparent that motorists and their passengers are not switching to subways in significant numbers;" and

Whereas, The study found deteriorating economic conditions did not explain the decline, "almost 80% of the decline to the CBD came from people who previously arrived by motor vehicle; nearly 190,000 fewer people arrived by motor vehicle daily, while all other modes declined by just 48,000 people; if the decline were due merely to economic conditions or reluctance to enter the CBD, the distribution of losses would have been more proportional by mode of transportation;" and

Whereas, A related study by Appleseed, "A Preliminary Assessment of the Impact of Restricted Access to the Central Business District On the Economy of New York City," also released in January 2002, stressed that 61% of the decline is at the Holland Tunnel, Queens Midtown Tunnel and Lincoln Tunnel; and

Whereas, Appleseed's study also emphasized that because "two-thirds of the decline in the number of CBD entrants takes place outside the AM peak" it is likely that "most of the reduction is not coming from people who had been commuting to work by car, but from discretionary travelers;" and

Whereas, It is evident, as the Appleseed report concludes, "The loss of visitor traffic has an especially serious impact on the City's hard-hit retail, restaurant, entertainment and cultural industries;" and

Whereas, The traffic congestion has abated, but the policy has not changed; and

Whereas, An end to the ban on SOVs would have a positive impact that would signal a return to normal conditions for the City, thereby encouraging visitors to return to New York City; and

Whereas, Encouraging regional visitors to return to New York City is a vital part of the City's response to an economic downturn; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the City of New York end the ban on vehicles with a single occupant from from entering Manhattan between 6 AM and 10 AM south of 60th Street other than the restrictions imposed at the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel.

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