



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

nyc ➔ 25x25

A Challenge to New York City's Next  
Leaders to Give Streets Back to People

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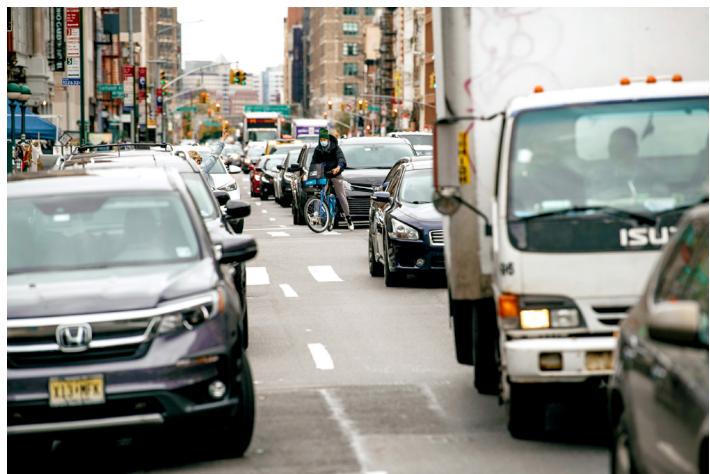
# NYC 25X25: A CHALLENGE TO NEW YORK CITY'S NEXT LEADERS TO GIVE STREETS BACK TO PEOPLE

Taken together, streets and sidewalks are New York City's largest publicly owned space. Cars dominate that space. Despite the spatial abundance of 6,300 miles of asphalt and three million free parking spaces, New Yorkers' everyday lives are relegated to narrow sidewalks and the margins of streets, where we are left to fight over the precious remaining scraps of our public space.

In the past two decades, elected officials have made little citywide progress in upending this wholesale car dominance — opting for disconnected and piecemeal improvements that fail to effectively manage our streets as a system of public spaces. For New Yorkers, the negative effects of a car-filled city remain. Asthma, heart disease, and preterm births rise with car pollution. Carbon emissions remain high and climate change threatens our future. New Yorkers risk life-altering injury and death crossing the street. Bus riders waste time on gridlocked streets. Burdensome commutes and a lack of transportation choices isolate communities from opportunity.

With a coalition of more than 80 unions, and economic, educational, environmental, disability rights, and public health organizations, Transportation Alternatives challenges New York City's next leaders to end this vicious cycle by making a specific and substantial promise: to convert 25 percent of car space into space for people by 2025.

Today, New York City faces a budget shortfall, a crisis of racial injustice, rising inequality and traffic violence, the loss of millions of jobs and small businesses, and the ongoing threat of climate change. Our recovery can begin, in part, by reimagining our largest public asset — New York City's 6,300 miles of streets and three million free parking spaces — in support of the needs of all New Yorkers.



Source: Scott Heins / TA

## AN INEQUITABLE ALLOCATION

Streets are the single largest public asset in the City of New York — more than 6,300 miles of roadway crisscrossing at more than 39,000 intersections covering more than 120,000 city blocks. The lives of 8.6 million New Yorkers largely play out on the slim sidewalks that edge this massive network — the vast majority of everyday human activity relegated to the margins.

Public space devoted to cars  includes 19,000 lane miles for driving and three million free on-street parking spaces — more than **1.5 spaces for every car in the city.**

Today, though a minority of residents drive [a car to work](#) and a supermajority walks, takes public transit, or rides a bike, most of New York City's streets are designed for a car-driving minority. An overwhelming 96 percent of New Yorkers [walk to and from public transit](#), but public space devoted to the movement and storage of cars includes some 19,000 lane miles for driving and three million free on-street parking spaces — [more than 1.5 spaces](#) for every registered vehicle in the city — accounts for more than 75 percent of our shared streetscape. The remaining scraps of space are devoted to car-free bus lanes (0.02 percent), bike lanes (0.93 percent), and sidewalks (24 percent).

People who live outside New York City [drive 4.4 million cars and trucks](#) through city neighborhoods every day. Traffic-clogged and dangerous streets cost the City of New York and its residents more than \$6 billion a year in [traffic crashes](#) and [lost time](#). Low-income communities and communities of color bear the burden — [longer commutes](#), [hotter neighborhoods](#), [worse air pollution](#), [higher asthma rates](#), [more health conditions related to car pollution](#), and [more premature deaths](#).

A better future will require a new management approach from city officials — one that sees streets as a *system of public spaces* designed to serve people and breaks from traditional thinking centered on moving and storing cars.

By converting a sizable and significant portion of car space into space for people, New York City's next leaders could be the first generation to address the inequitable distribution of space that has harmed New Yorkers for generations.

Now is the time to take bold steps to correct a fundamental imbalance in our public space and who it serves — and give New Yorkers back our public space.



## THE PROMISE OF FEWER CARS AND MORE SPACE

Following the public health and economic crises of 2020 and 2021, and the budget crisis facing the City of New York, and with congestion pricing and its [predicted massive drop in car traffic](#) to central Manhattan on the horizon, addressing these inequities is timely. It is also smart. Converting car space into expedited bus routes, safe bike routes, and expansive space for neighborhood life is both [highly popular](#) with New York City voters and proven to [create more jobs](#) and bring [significant economic benefit](#) for small businesses and city budgets alike.

Changing our streets starts with setting our priorities. If our streets are public space, then what is the best use of that space? Is it storing a few cars for free, or making space outside a local school for storytime? Is it prioritizing one commuter in a private car or 50 commuters on a public bus? Is it widening streets for oversized SUVs, or widening sidewalks so people with disabilities, older New Yorkers, and children can move about without fear? Is it double and triple parking, or planting trees to reduce pollution-induced asthma?

City streets are rich with the potential to serve the public good and improve the lives of all New Yorkers — if only that space were not devoted to the movement and storage of cars owned by a minority of New Yorkers.

By repurposing 25 percent of current driving and parking space, the future leaders of New York City could create more than 13 Central Parks — or 12 Flushing Meadows-Corona Parks or 21 Prospect Parks or six Staten Island Greenbelts or 11 Van Cortlandt Parks — worth of new space by 2025. With that space, the next leaders of New York City could:

By repurposing 25 percent  
of car space, we could create  
**more than 13 Central Parks**  
— or 12 Flushing Meadows-  
Corona or 21 Prospect Parks —  
worth of new space by 2025.



- **Expand Transportation Options and Park Access.** Ensure that every New Yorker lives within a five-minute walk of a car-free protected bus lane, and within a quarter-mile of a protected bike lane, and within a five-minute walk of public green space, and within a block of a bike parking space, and within the access area of a newly citywide Citi Bike bike share system.
- **Give Power Over Public Space Back to Communities.** Allow communities across New York City to decide the best possible alternatives for streets in their neighborhoods.
- **Spur Economic Recovery.** Ensure that New York City remains a global hub of creativity, inclusion, innovation, and employment by creating public spaces proven to stimulate spending, attract and retain residents and jobs, and encourage tourism.
- **Reduce the Public Health Burden on Communities of Color.** Lower rates of asthma, heart disease, depression, preterm birth, autism, and other public health challenges that increase with vehicular pollution, decrease with access to open space, and disproportionately affect Black and Latino communities.
- **Fight Climate Change.** Meet our city's climate goals by targeting cars and trucks, the city's second-largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Save Lives.** Prevent pain and suffering for the hundreds of New Yorkers killed in traffic crashes every year, the tens of thousands injured, and their families.
- **Increase Quality of Life and Life Expectancy.** Improve lives by raising air and water quality, reducing noise pollution, encouraging social and physical activity, increasing accessibility, and creating new public space to plant trees, add benches, and make space for children to play.
- **Improve Fiscal Health.** Solve the double parking problem by adding space for clean and electric freight and for-hire vehicles, and derive new, sustainable revenue for New York City by fairly pricing the curb and dramatically expanding metered parking.
- **Create Space for People.** Transform crowded sidewalks hemmed in by curbside trash mounds into broad boulevards for walking and shopping, making every street passable for strollers and wheelchairs, with space for benches, street vendors, bus shelters, bike parking, and public restrooms.
- **Lower Costs.** Drastically reduce the \$6 billion dollar burden that traffic crashes and congestion leave on New York City's economy every year.

- **Make Streets Accessible.**

Make our streets safer and more inclusive for New Yorkers with vision, mobility, and hearing impairments by improving safety and visibility at intersections with curb extensions, curb cuts, accessible pedestrian signals, widened sidewalks and a network of Open Streets, and by rebuilding impassable and often hazardous existing sidewalks.



*Source: Kohn Pedersen Fox / Urban Design Forum*

- **Reduce Gridlock.** Improve road conditions and reduce congestion for those who need to drive by providing alternative transportation choices, and pricing congestion, commuting, and the curb appropriately.

Once we make the decision that public space should be prioritized by its best possible public use, the only logical next step is to reduce space for cars and increase space for people. A protected car-free bus lane can [move more people](#) with greater efficiency than a hundred cars ever could. A protected bike lane

**Storage for  
100 Cars**

**Four Public Restrooms,  
16 Benches, 32 Trees...**

Part of New York City's economic survival is contingent on New Yorkers returning to the subway. One way to bring them back, and spur economic activity at subway stations citywide, is to change the experience of arriving at your local stop.



By converting **100 parking spaces outside each of New York City's 472 subway stations** into space for people, we can create a community space and multimodal transit hub in every neighborhood that is bursting with economic and social activity.



The typical subway station has eight staircases at two intersections leading down into the subway. The conversion of 100 parking spaces could add, at each subway entrance a social greenspace with two benches, four trees, a public restroom, a food vendor, and secure bike parking, e-bike charging stations, or a Citi Bike dock.



In addition, this conversion would allow for **28 parking spaces worth of space to add and expand bus shelters and widen sidewalks** outside subway stations.



In total, just these subway-adjacent space conversions would **add 15,000 trees** to New York City, or about three-quarters of the trees currently planted in Central Park, and more than triple the number of public benches on city streets.

can provide more value to the [economy](#), our [health](#), and the [environment](#) than multiple lanes of traffic. Even a tiny bit of greenspace or a pair of benches is enough to clean the air or start a conversation, each a step to a higher quality of life for all New Yorkers.

These changes are also good politics. New York City voters overwhelmingly support all of these ideas — bus lanes, bike lanes, bike share, safer crosswalks, benches, parklets, playgrounds, and Open Streets — [even when building them requires the loss of parking](#).

## BUILDING ON RECENT SUCCESSES

When the Covid-19 pandemic overtook New York, the City closed many streets to cars to make space for safe physical distancing and the reopening of small businesses. The lesson learned was that the status quo — public space long dominated by car traffic — was not the only way that streets could be. The rapid creation of Open Streets and outdoor dining showed that converting car-filled streets to better use can be done quickly and inexpensively and can deliver huge benefits to essential workers, small businesses, children, older adults, people with disabilities, low-income communities, communities of color, and central business districts.

NYC voters overwhelmingly support bus lanes, bike lanes, bike share, safer crosswalks, benches, parklets, playgrounds, and Open Streets **even if they mean a loss of parking.**



These were not new ideas for New York City. From the pedestrianization of Times Square to the launch of the city's first car-free busway on 14th Street, New York City knows how to reimagine streets. Each of these ideas was an individual success in terms of transportation efficiency, public safety, public health, and the local economy — proof that converting car space into space for people works. **Now, future leaders of New York City must scale these successes, and use our streets as a pathway for New York City's recovery.**

The City of New York faces a daunting budgetary crisis. Recovery will require a new look at assets that have been historically misused and underutilized — like 6,300 miles of streets and three million free parking spaces — as potential tools to support our city. There is no question that our public space is inequitably distributed. **Addressing this inequity will produce economic gains and cost reductions in public health, public**

**safety, and the environment that will easily outweigh the initial investment.** With the potential for revenue generation, job creation, and dramatic long-term cost reductions in health and infrastructure spending, converting car space into space for people is an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss.



Source: Etienne Frossard

Faced with the monumental challenges of economic recovery, mounting inequality, increasing traffic violence, climate change, and the potential for more pandemics on the horizon, it is time to make a fundamental shift in what purposes our public space serves, and ensure that the New York City of the future is built for people, not cars.

## Meters for $\frac{1}{4}$ of Free Parking

→ \$1 Billion in Revenue

What is curbside space worth? In New York City, more than 97 percent of parking spaces are free, and the few spaces that are metered average a meager earning of \$7.35 a day.

Demand-based pricing allows cities to price parking on a block-by-block level.

San Francisco recently piloted a parking management program and found that drivers, other road users, and local businesses all benefitted. The program's success and popularity has expanded the program and is now permanent.



Parking search times dropped **43 percent overall** and **67 percent** in areas without any previous metered parking.



The program's transparency and ease of use led to a **23 percent drop** in citations. Double parking, which is especially dangerous to cyclists and creates congestion for drivers, dropped 22 percent.



The pilot led to a **30 percent reduction** in both greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled, and an **increase in public transit speeds**.



Pilot areas saw a **30 percent increase** in shoppers, diners, and those seeking entertainment activities, three of the hardest hit industries in New York City due to Covid-19.

If the City of New York added meters to one-quarter of currently free parking spots, it could generate, by the most conservative estimates, \$1 billion in annual revenue.

## WHAT WE CAN BUILD: THE SPATIAL POTENTIAL OF CITY STREETS

**O**ne hundred years ago, New York City streets underwent a paradigm shift. At the time, and for decades prior, city streets were open-air marketplaces and social spaces, and avenues were built for strolling and later, a place to catch an above-ground public transit line. But that all changed as the automobile became affordable to more Americans.

Cars and people briefly competed for streets. [Cars won](#), and our city has suffered every day since. Countless small businesses were closed or [relegated indoors](#), children were taught to stay out of the street, above-ground transit lines were dismantled, sidewalks were narrowed so streets could be widened, highways destroyed neighborhoods, car owners were saddled with crippling debt, traffic injuries and fatalities became everyday tragedies, and poor, immigrant, and Black communities bore the brunt of these changes. Car traffic took over the majority of New York City's public space.



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Cars won and our city has  
suffered every day since.

Today, we reap the consequences of these decisions: a struggling economy, a warming climate, a public transit system in peril, a growing car dependence causing an epidemic of traffic violence, and racial and economic inequity exacerbated by planning and transportation decisions that lock low income communities and communities of color into health crises and generational poverty.

But just as our planning and transportation decisions led us to this point, so, too, can they lead us to a better future. Solutions can be found in New York City's largest public asset. It is time to transform our streets to a higher purpose. It's time to give New York City back to people.

## A BETTER USE OF 25 PERCENT OF CAR SPACE

What could we build in place of free car parking and unending gridlock? What could we do in a city with 25 percent less space for cars and twice as much space for people? To start to imagine the answers, we need to understand just how much of our public space is given over to cars.



Source: Street Plans / Lyft

The best way to understand the significant amount of space New York City allocates to drivers is to hypothesize what could be built instead. Looking at converting 25 percent of the space currently devoted for cars into space for people, here is one vision of what New Yorkers could have instead:

- 500 lane miles of new protected bus-only lanes, so every New Yorker lives within a quarter mile of a protected bus lane;
- *and* 500 lane miles of new protected class one bike lanes, so every New Yorker lives within a quarter mile of a protected bike lane that connects to a citywide network;
- *and* 40 lane miles of busways — car-free bus-only routes — on New York City's most congested streets and most used bus routes;
- *and* 38 million square feet of open space returned to communities, so people across New York City get to decide, for the first time, the best possible use for their streets, adding pedestrian plazas, curbside parklets, and community gardens, so every New Yorker lives within a quarter-mile of open space;
- *and* “universal daylighting” — removing car parking to increase visibility

and decrease the likelihood of a crash — **at every one of New York**

**City's 39,000 intersections**, and using this space for traffic-calming neckdowns, bike parking and micromobility docks, bus bulbs, and green space like tree pits and rain gardens;

- *and 1,000 lane miles of permanent Open Streets, including pedestrian-only zones in the central business districts of each borough, and a signature car-free public space built on a major thoroughfare in every borough;*
- *and 5.4 million square feet of space for arts and cultural venues, restaurant seating, street vendors, retail, and other uses to bolster economic recovery;*
- *and 2.9 million square feet of expanded pedestrian space, including widening sidewalks and adding traffic-calming infrastructure like bulbouts and curb extensions, so that every intersection is safe to cross and every street is passable for strollers and wheelchairs, and has space for benches, street vendors, bus shelters, bike parking, and public restrooms;*
- *and a one-block-long car-free multi-use space for play, student drop-off and pick-up, and outdoor learning **outside each of New York City's 1,700 public schools;***
- *and 19.4 million square feet of bike parking spaces, including racks, corrals, and secure bike parking, bike share, e-bike, and e-scooter docks, and other micromobility uses, so that Citi Bike access will finally stretch citywide and nearly every New York City block will host a bike parking spot;*
- *and at least one 80-foot-long zone **on every block** for public utilities, package deliveries, electric freight loading and unloading, microdelivery cargo hubs, e-cargo bikes, for-hire-vehicle and taxi passenger pick-up and drop-off, and trash collection, so commercial deliveries and trash bags are off the sidewalk;*
- *and 18,000 square feet **outside of every subway** station for local multimodal travel hubs, with expanded bus shelters, benches, food vendors, public restrooms, and bike parking;*
- *and 780,000 spaces for car-share parking and paid parking spaces (converted from free parking) with the potential to generate, by the most conservative estimate, at least \$1 billion annually.*

# A Better Use for 25 Percent of Car Space



- 1 This includes widening sidewalks and adding traffic-calming infrastructure like bulbouts and curb extensions, so that every intersection is safe to cross and every street is passable for strollers and wheelchairs, and has space for benches, street vendors, bus shelters, bike parking, and public restrooms.
- 2 Transforming just two parking spaces per block allows trash bags to move off the sidewalk. This creates a more passable, sanitary, and safe experience for pedestrians while facilitating trash pickup by sanitation vehicles.
- 3 This includes racks, corrals, and secure bike parking, bike share, e-bike, and e-scooter docks, and other micromobility uses, so that Citi Bike access will finally stretch citywide and nearly every New York City block will host a bike parking spot.
- 4 Removing the parking spots nearest to the intersection allows for better sightlines for both drivers and pedestrians. This prevents crashes and frees up space for traffic-calming neckdowns, greenery, bike parking, and other amenities.

These improvements could be located where they have the greatest possible benefit to communities and tailored to the needs of places. For example, although Lower Manhattan and Borough Park, Brooklyn, would both benefit from less car-dominated streets, the type, scale, and siting of streetscape improvements would need to match the need, opportunities, and neighborhood context of each place.

Repurposing car space for better use is not just beneficial for New Yorkers — it's broadly popular among New York City voters in every borough, and of every age, race, and income demographic. In a [recent Siena College Research Institute poll](#) of registered New York City voters commissioned by Transportation Alternatives, **every one of these amenities remained extremely popular, even if they would mean less street parking space.**

- 85 percent wanted safer crosswalks
- 84 percent wanted more space for children to play
- 83 percent wanted more trees and greenery
- 75 percent wanted more benches and other seating on the street
- 68 percent supported adding more protected bike lanes to their neighborhoods
- 64 percent supported outdoor restaurant seating
- 63 percent supported expanding Open Streets
- 58 percent wanted wider sidewalks
- 56 percent supported bike share stations
- 56 percent supported more citywide dedicated bus lanes.



Source: "Public Square" / FXCollaborative

A separate [New York City Department of Transportation poll](#) revealed similarly overwhelming support for street space improvements: 64 percent of residents — not just registered voters — supported reclaiming space for protected bike lanes, and only 13 percent were opposed; 66 percent supported bus lanes, and only 11 percent were opposed; 52 percent supported bike parking and 64 percent supported outdoor dining space, with only 17 percent opposed in either case.

## THE QUESTION OF CONGESTION

Like in a tiny New York City kitchen, in a finite city, an efficient use of space must be a priority. As New York City's next leaders take up the challenge of a more equitable distribution of streets as public space, efficiency must be goal number one. And if an efficient use of space is the goal, [the car is the worst possible choice](#). A single car lane on an urban street can move, at most, 1,600 people in cars an hour. Mix that car traffic with traffic from trucks and buses, and you can move, at most, 2,800 an hour. A two-way protected bike lane can move 7,500 people an hour and a sidewalk 9,000. A car-free bus lane can move 8,000 people an hour. A busway on a car-free street can move 25,000 people an hour in each direction.

Despite these known facts, little progress has been made toward spatial efficiency and congestion reduction. The per capita number of cars in New York City has [barely budged since 1970](#). In Manhattan's central business district, [80 percent](#) of those who park on the street park for free and two in five drivers on the street pass through without stopping or parking. The City of New York has [declared congestion levels](#), which are at their highest rate in decades and rising, as “unsustainable.”

All this is the result of elected officials' failure to reduce space for cars. This is known as “induced demand” — a phenomenon where increasing the supply of something further increases the desire for it. Research beginning in the 1960s demonstrated [that building roads and parking increases driving](#), and a recent wave of similar research has found that this effect is substantial — a [one-to-one relationship](#) where an X increase in car capacity increases driving X percent. The inverse is also true; reductions in space for cars reduces car [ownership](#) and [driving](#). Even in transit-friendly areas of New York City, researchers found that [parking creates traffic](#), while improvements to infrastructure for transit, walking, and biking [all decrease](#) driving.

## One Lane of Gridlock → A Quicker Commute

New York City's buses are the slowest in America, but bus speed and ridership both increase when there are fewer cars in the way of buses.

CONVERTING  
a lane of car traffic  
INTO  
**A CAR-FREE BUSWAY**  
can increase bus ridership by  
17 percent in just two months, and  
make commutes 24 percent faster.

Excess car parking decreases transit use, and places where it feels difficult to walk are places where people are more likely to choose driving, regardless of transit proximity.

Wider sidewalks and universal daylighting can make streets more walkable and reduce excess parking, decreasing car ownership and increasing transit ridership at the same time.

The majority of New Yorkers (66 percent) SUPPORT reallocating street space for dedicated bus lanes.

New York City's population is projected to swell to nine million by 2040. We cannot move buildings to make roads wider, so our only option is to rethink our spatial equation. To accommodate more New Yorkers, we need to make more efficient use of our finite public space and ensure that our planning and transportation decisions put people, not cars, first.

Congestion pricing — a plan to toll the Manhattan central business district, which New York City's next leaders must implement immediately — will start to change this arrangement. There will be short and long term reductions in demand from drivers for roadspace and lower volumes of cars on the road network. This is a political leg-up for New York City's next leaders looking to change the spatial arrangement of streets because it will be easier to change the function of these public spaces once fewer cars are in the way.

Clearing the way of car traffic, so New York City's buses are a viable form of transportation, and expanding the Fair Fares program, so every New Yorker can afford the bus, should be first steps in any reimagining of New York City's streets. Safe access for bikes, which can be an affordable lifeline for so many New Yorkers, should be a second priority, along with the citywide, City-subsidized expansion of the bike share program. These steps will clear the way of gridlock for those New Yorkers who need to drive.

Across New York City, the mistakes of the Robert Moses era — massive urban highways that induce demand for driving while delivering pollution

and raceway speeds to residential neighborhoods — remain standing. These destructive highways — from the Cross-Bronx Expressway to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway — are more often than not located in low income neighborhoods and [neighborhoods of color](#), are not just inherently harmful, but currently crumbling, having reached their natural lifespan and now requiring a wealth of one-off repairs. A more cost effective way forward that is more in line with New York City's climate and public health goals would be to tear down or repurpose those highways. Cities from [Paris, France to Rochester, New York](#) have begun to tear down highways to better align their streets with the goals of their city, whether those goals are addressing climate change or encouraging economic growth. It is time that New York City stops wasting money on bandaids for aging highways and starts [tearing down our mistakes](#).



Source: Street Plans

## WHO WILL BENEFIT: IN A FINITE CITY, A VISION FOR MORE SPACE FOR PEOPLE

**A** wholesale reimagining of our street space could change the lives of residents across New York City. What if your neighborhood had more amenities — more benches, public restrooms, bike share, and pedestrian plazas? What if there were fewer cars inching into the crosswalk? What if the sidewalks were wider and free of trash, the protected bike lanes and bus lanes more convenient, and the open space closer than ever? What if the public street space in your neighborhood served the needs of you and your neighbors?

New York City's next leaders have the opportunity to convert car space into space for people in a way that can change the equation for every New Yorker.

**For the low-income commuter who relies on public transportation,** there could be a route to economic mobility. Today, New York City's buses are the [slowest in the nation](#), and the New Yorkers who could most benefit from time savings, lower cost commutes, and access to more jobs are often relegated to buses trapped in car traffic. Researchers have found that efficient transportation access is the single most important factor affecting the potential to [escape poverty](#). The [median income](#) of bus riders is substantially lower than those of subway riders or New Yorkers overall, and bus [riders are less likely](#) to have a bachelor's degree, more likely to be a single parent, more likely to be foreign-born, more likely to be a person of color, and more likely to have a child at home. Converting car lanes into protected bus lanes on [Fordham Road](#) in the Bronx improved bus speeds by 20 percent, and the same changes to the [M60 bus line](#) in Manhattan reduced travel times by 36 percent, with no increase in congestion for private car drivers.

**For the low-income immigrant worker who relies on a bike,** there could be protection from the risk of premature death. In the past year, [92 percent of all cyclists](#) were killed on streets where the median income is below the city average. The Bronx — the borough with the highest rate of poverty — is home to only six percent of all on-street protected bike lanes and only six percent of bike share docks. Converting car lanes to a citywide network of protected bike lanes (as laid out in the Regional Plan Association's [Five-Borough Bikeway](#)) could save lives. The protected bike lane on Ninth Avenue in Manhattan reduced injury-risk to cyclists by [65 percent](#).

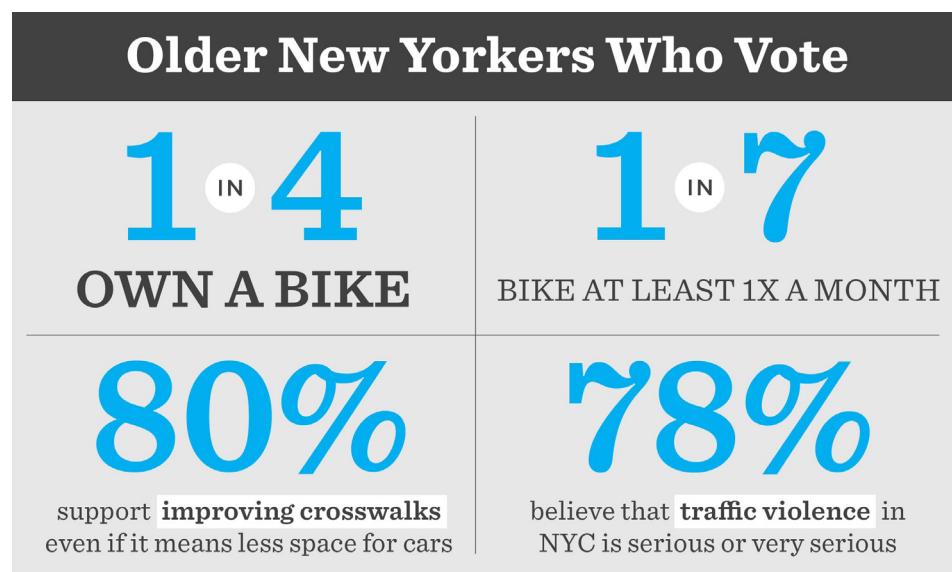
**For the New Yorker with heart disease or asthma**, there could be cleaner air to breathe and a faster and easier way to arrive at open space. Today, one in six New Yorkers who die from heart disease or stroke are under 65, and these deaths account for one in four premature deaths. For Black New Yorkers, the rate of premature death due to heart disease is almost twice that of white New Yorkers. One in 10 children in New York City and one in 12 adults have asthma. Air pollution from particulate matter is directly linked to heart disease and asthma, and car traffic is a leading contributor to air pollution. Converting car space into pedestrian plazas in Times Square reduced nitrogen oxide pollution by 63 percent and nitrogen dioxide pollution by 41 percent. Both pollutants lead to direct health consequences in humans, including cardiovascular and respiratory health disease.

**For the frontline healthcare worker**, there could be an easier commute after a long day at an essential job. Today, healthcare is the largest industry in New York City and is so large that more than a quarter of private-sector workers in the Bronx work in healthcare. These workers ride the bus more than workers in any other industry excluding social work and have the longest commutes in the private sector. A 2017 survey of members by United Healthcare Workers East ranked transit as the number two stressor among home health aides, second only to the death of a family member. The same survey found that the bus was so unreliable that some companies pay for for-hire-vehicles to transport staff. Protected bus lanes for the M34 route in Manhattan increased bus-in-motion speeds by 26 percent and decreased delays at traffic lights by 29 percent, and for the M14 route, the 14th Street car-free busway reduced travel time by 47 percent.

**For the New Yorker who owns a small business**, there could be a wealth of new opportunities, as wide sidewalks, and bike and bus access expand customer bases. During the Covid-19 crisis, small business revenue dropped by more than a quarter, one third of all small businesses closed permanently, and 90 percent of restaurants could not pay their rent. These small businesses represent 98 percent of New York City employers and provide jobs to three million people — roughly half the workforce. Converting car space on Eighth and Ninth avenues in Manhattan into parking-protected bike lanes and safer crosswalks brought a 49 percent increase in sales for local businesses.

**For the older New Yorker**, there could be the opportunity for safe mobility that allows them to remain active and engaged in their community. Today,

being struck and killed by a driver is the second leading cause of injury-related death for New Yorkers over 65, a fatality rate four times that of [younger New Yorkers](#). New York City's population is aging, with more than 14 percent of New Yorkers (and [22 percent of voters](#)) now over the age of 65. This [growing demographic](#) is working longer, and biking and walking to work at an increasing rate. Buses, free from the staircases of the subway system, [remain a critical form](#) of transportation for seniors, and AARP supports converting car space into car-free Open Streets as a [public health intervention for older people](#). An initiative to convert car space in 41 areas of New York City into [daylighting](#), sidewalk widening, and pedestrian safety islands resulted in a [17 percent](#) decline in senior pedestrian fatalities in these areas.



For a parent of a school-age child, there could be a safe, accessible, and nearby place to take a restless child. Today, there are [only eight playgrounds](#) for every 10,000 children in Brooklyn, the least of any borough. The few play spaces available are subpar, with 24 percent rated as being in “unacceptable” condition by the New York City Comptroller. Converting a street outside every New York City school into a playspace for our city’s more than 1.3 million students and offering up car parking for community use in every neighborhood could offer kids new safe spaces to roam and parents a reprieve outside of school and home. Three out of [four school-aged children](#) in New York City are not driven to school, and more than one in three walk. Protected bike lanes, widened sidewalks, and Open Streets would help provide safe routes to school and encourage walking and biking for teachers, students, and their parents.

**For New Yorkers living with a disability that affects their mobility**, there could be a more accessible city with fewer barriers to getting around. Today, more than one in 10 New Yorkers are living with a disability, and [more than half](#) of those disabilities are ambulatory. But our sidewalks are commonly blocked by obstacles, like towering piles of garbage, and more than half of neighborhoods served by the subway system [do not have any accessible stations](#), meaning hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with disabilities must rely on Access-A-Ride, the bus, or bikes. Converting parking spaces into drop-off and pick-up zones and storage for garbage could give Access-A-Ride vehicles, which make 6.1 million trips a year, clear access to the curb and keep sidewalks clear for easy mobility. Converting car space into bike lanes and working with Citi Bike and micromobility operators to offer models for those with ambulatory disabilities could provide safe transportation alternatives for people with disabilities. A network of car-free Open Streets could ease travel in a wheelchair without the worry of impassable sidewalks and inaccessible curbs.

**For the New Yorker who currently needs to drive for work**, there could be easier commutes, more available parking, and the gift of time returned. Today, New Yorkers who need to drive, such as delivery drivers, taxi drivers, or contractors who commute with heavy equipment, are wasting huge amounts of time in traffic because there are so many elective drivers on the road. Converting free car storage into demand-based, paid car parking and converting driving lanes into protected bus and bike lanes will invite elective drivers into more efficient, cheap, and pleasant modes of travel, and make more space on the road and at the curb for those who need to drive. While all industries should work toward reducing car-use and ownership in their ranks, converting car space into space for people will provide alternative transportation options which accelerate that change over time. Traffic congestion in the New York City metro-area costs the truck-based delivery industry [\\$4.9 billion a year](#). Researchers project that the impact of increasing curb space available to delivery drivers with the creation of loading and unloading zones would decrease all travel times in New York City [by 61 percent](#). With demand-based pricing, searching for parking will decrease by as much as 67 percent.

**For the school-age child**, there could be a chance for the very first taste of independence. Today, being struck by a car is the [leading cause of injury-related death](#) for New York City children under 14, a population that includes

some [1.5 million young New Yorkers](#). By improving safety at intersections by converting car parking spaces into universal daylighting and protected bike lanes, and closing one street adjacent to every New York City public school to cars, we can make our streets safe for children. The conversion of car space at 124 high-risk intersections near schools in New York City into daylighting, sidewalk widening, and pedestrian safety islands, brought a [44 percent decrease in injuries](#) for school-age children at those intersections, along with an 11 percent increase in students walking or biking to school.

**For the first responder**, there could be fewer delays between a call to 911 and saving a life. New York City's 911 operators field [more than 4,000](#) calls a day. Converting car driving lanes into car-free bus lanes can provide an express traffic-free lane that first responders can rely on, speeding response times to those calls. At the height of New York City's bike lane building boom, emergency response times were quicker than ever. The New York City Fire Department has said that [bike racks](#) do not impede their work and that [bike lanes](#) do not increase their response time. Instead, the Fire Department explicitly cited [the increase in car traffic](#) on city streets as the major factor increasing response times and noted that when there is less traffic, [response times drop](#). In London, an Open Streets program had no negative effect on response time for emergency services, and in some locations, emergency [response times improved](#).



Source: Kohn Pedersen Fox / Urban Design Forum

## EVIDENCE: A BETTER USE OF STREETS CAN BOOST THE ECONOMY, CLEAN THE AIR, IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH, AND INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY

**B**y converting car space to better use, the City of New York can boost the economy, make progress toward our climate goals, protect the safety of New Yorkers as they move about their neighborhoods, and make strides toward creating a healthier and more equitable city. Transportation Alternatives envisions a city where streets are elevated to serve as many New Yorkers as possible, with a car-free bus lane, protected bike lane, and green space within a quarter mile of every New Yorker's home, and a wealth of new multi-use space that replaces car storage with community benefit. For the next leaders of New York City, converting car space into space for people is an opportunity backed by a wealth of evidence that converting space for cars into space for people is [popular](#) and will provide immediate economic, environmental, public health, and public safety benefits.



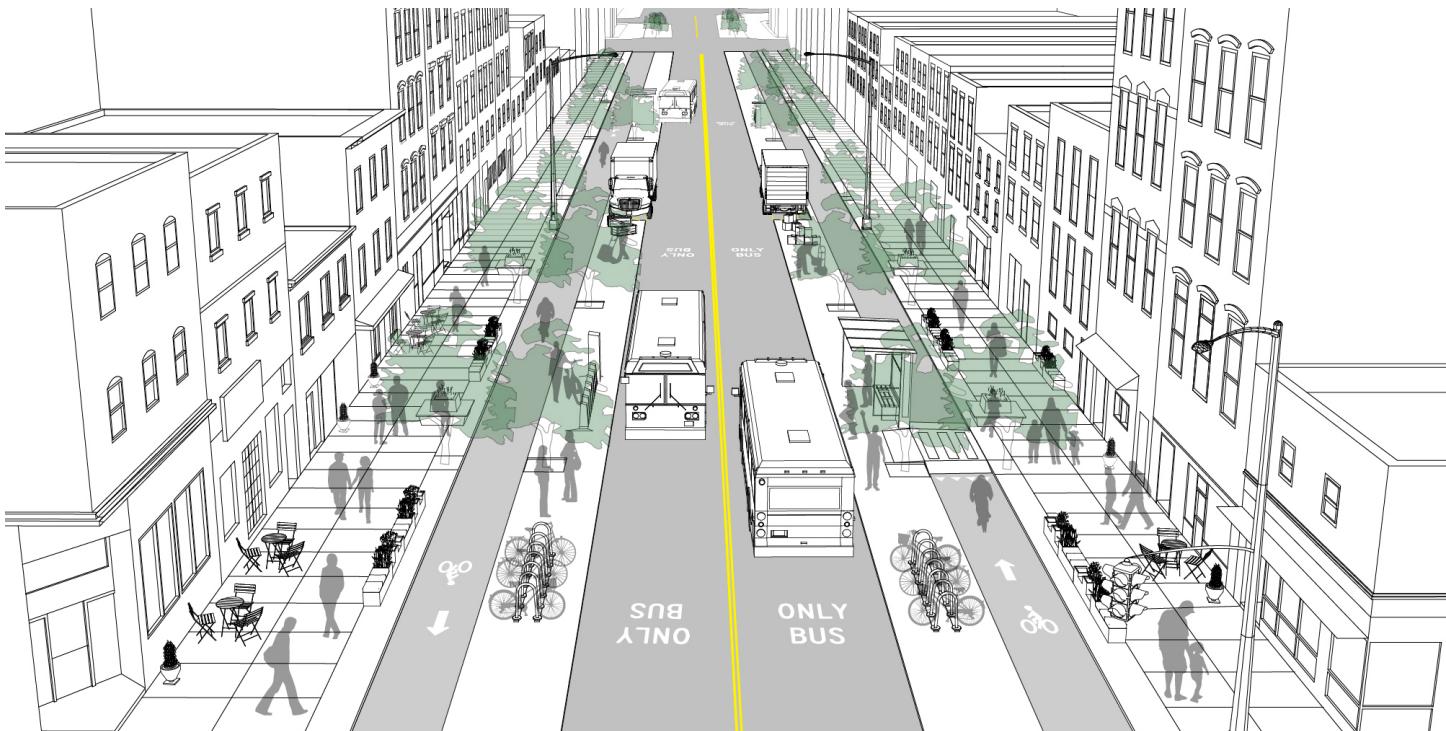
Source: Carly Clark / Street Plans

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The danger and congestion caused by giving over the vast majority of public space to car traffic comes with significant public and private costs: emergency services, property damage, medical care, insurance, travel time, and time lost. At the same time, converting this car space into space for people produces significant economic gains on the citywide, community, and individual

levels — and this is true for every possible non-car use of that space. Bike infrastructure benefits small businesses. Bus lanes boost transit budgets. Parks and pedestrian spaces mean more jobs, more tourism, and more money spent where it is needed most.

**Transportation access enables upward mobility.** Deprioritizing car traffic will allow more space for buses and better access to existing transit hubs, making public transit [commutes shorter](#). Researchers have found that efficient transportation access plays a significant role in [upward mobility](#), with shorter commutes helping to move people out of poverty. Today, [one million New Yorkers](#) travel more than 60 minutes each way to work. [Two out of three of these commuters](#) earn less than \$35,000 per year. Non-white New Yorkers are more likely to have longer commute times, while white New Yorkers have [below-average](#) commute times.



Source: Carly Clark / Street Plans

**Saving time saves money.** Congested streets cost New Yorkers \$1.7 billion in travel time and [87 million hours of lost time](#) every year. Converting car driving and parking lanes in Mexico City, Mexico into [a connected network of car-restricted bus lanes](#) saved individual commuters a collective of \$142 million in travel time. And similar initiatives in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Istanbul, Turkey, saved individual commuters [13 minutes per trip and 52 minutes per day](#), respectively.



Congested streets cost New Yorkers **\$1.7 billion in travel time and 87 million hours of lost time** every year.

**Car space converted to pedestrian space raises revenue.** More walkable neighborhoods create more accessible shopping districts and benefit local economies. New York City has seen several recent examples of this effect, including a new pedestrian plaza on Pearl Street in Brooklyn that brought a [172 percent increase in sales](#) for local businesses. Other recent examples of conversion of car parking and driving lanes into pedestrian space that have benefited local economies include [Vanderbilt Avenue in Brooklyn](#), [Fordham Road and Pelham Parkway in the Bronx](#), as well as [St. Nicolas and Amsterdam Avenues in Manhattan](#).

**Car space converted to bike space raises revenue.** Converting car space to bike space also benefits local economies. On Ninth Avenue in Manhattan, protected bike lanes led to a [49 percent increase](#) in sales for local businesses. In [Melbourne, Australia](#), converting one car parking spot into multiple bike parking spaces led to a three-and-a-half-fold increase in spending at local businesses. Researchers examining six cities that converted car parking or car travel lanes into bike lanes found that local business [always saw an increase in sales](#). One car parking space can comfortably fit 20 bicycle parking spaces, and space used by bicycles generally generates [3.6 times more expenditure](#) than space used by cars. In New York City, people on bicycles are [much more likely to shop where there is secure bicycle parking](#). People on bicycles are better customers, [spending significantly more money](#) than those who drive.

**Bus lanes boost transit budgets.** Deprioritizing car traffic could also help save a struggling public transit system. Researchers have found that a network of car-restricted bus lanes not only increases the potential per-person capacity of traffic lanes and reduces the citywide cost of congestion and crashes, but also causes a significant number of people to [shift from](#)

## Storage for One Car → Storage for 20 Bikes

Until the 1950s, it was illegal for car owners to store their cars on the street. Today there are about three million free on-street car parking spaces, or 1.5 spaces for every registered car in New York City. Meanwhile, there is only one bike rack for every 116 bikes.



### ADDED SAFETY BENEFIT

Converting car parking to bike parking at intersections increases visibility, a practice known as “daylighting,” proven to reduce speeding and reckless driving behaviors.

[car travel to public transit](#), creating an additional pool of transit revenue. Converting car driving and storage lanes on 14th Street, Manhattan into car-restricted bus lanes brought a [17 percent increase](#) in ridership in just two months, so much so that [the City needed to purchase additional buses](#). In general, more walkable streets increase transit use, while guaranteed on-street parking increases the likelihood of car ownership and driving, regardless of transit access. In the last decade, Seattle spent the [most per capita](#) of large metro areas on new transit projects and accordingly saw the largest decline in the [share of people driving alone to work](#) and the [largest drop in car ownership](#).

***Streets for people boost jobs and tourism.*** The Trust for Public Land has found that a well-maintained, integrated network of citywide open spaces can [increase tourism](#) spending by 20 percent. A broad-scale expansion of the popular Open Restaurants program could help to shore up the [close to three hundred thousand](#) hospitality jobs that have been affected by economic uncertainty. Building bike and pedestrian infrastructure has also been found to [create more jobs per million dollars spent](#) than road infrastructure. And improving pedestrian connections across busy thoroughfares, under freeway overpasses, or through other car-dominated spaces that separate residential neighborhoods from adjacent commercial districts will [benefit local businesses](#).

## One Bike Lane → 50 Percent More Jobs

In the coronavirus pandemic, New York City lost one million jobs, thousands of small businesses were shuttered, and nearly a year after shutdown, unemployment stood at 16 percent, twice as high as the rest of the country. While this job loss remains a massive hole in New York City's economy, one job creator can be found in the streets.



For every one million dollars spent, projects creating bike infrastructure produces **47 percent more** jobs than creating car infrastructure.



Compared to car infrastructure, on-street bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects create **nine percent more jobs**, and pedestrian infrastructure alone creates **28 percent more jobs**.



Notably, cars are also an economic diverter. Around **73 percent** of the retail price of gas and **86 percent** of the retail price of cars immediately leaves the local economy.



Because car ownership is less popular in New York City than the rest of the country, New Yorkers already **save \$19 billion** on car travel, which translates into more than **\$16 billion available** to be spent in the local economy.

That means that making biking and walking more accessible can stimulate New York City's economy in countless ways.

**Safety has an economic value.** Nationally, the status quo of unsafe car traffic is borne by individuals uninvolved in crashes, who pay **nearby three-quarters** of all crash costs through insurance premiums, taxes, and travel delays. In 2010 alone, dangerous streets cost New York City **\$4.29 billion in the cost of traffic crashes**. In Bogotá, Colombia, the transformation of car lanes into a network of connected bus lanes **saved the city \$288 million** in avoided traffic injuries and fatalities.



Source: Carly Clark / Street Plans

## ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

New York City is facing a climate emergency. Between 2017 and 2019, the city's greenhouse gas output [increased](#) by almost four percent. Emissions from cars and trucks — the second-largest source of the city's air pollution — have decreased by only [one percent since 2005](#). Maximum daily summer temperatures in New York City have been rising by half a degree every decade since 1970, and the sea level has risen more than [a tenth of an inch every year](#) since 1850 — a higher rate than the global average. In New York City, climate change will have the most significant effect on neighborhoods with the lowest incomes and the highest percentages of [Black and Latino residents](#).

Converting 25 percent of car space to better use could be the singular factor that helps New York City reach its climate goals because [cars are a major source](#) of air pollution in New York City, with one car emitting [4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide](#) annually. Less space for cars will mean less air pollution, a smaller carbon footprint, and more space for alternatives that are significantly less toxic to the environment. Increasing access to protected bike lanes and dedicated bus lanes will reduce the number of people who choose to drive, reducing carbon emissions, heat island effects, and cleaning the air.

Converting free parking into paid parking can **cut car usage by 20 percent**. Converting half of free parking into bike, bus, and pedestrian space can **cut car usage by 30 percent**.

***Driving reductions reduce particulate matter.*** Converting free parking into paid parking can reduce car usage by 20 percent, and converting half of free on-street parking into bike and bus lanes, or space for walking can [cut car usage by 30 percent](#). When New York City shut down due to Covid-19 in the Spring of 2020, the number of people driving declined by as much as 67 percent, and harmful [fine particulate matter in the air](#) fell by 23 percent.

Researchers using this “natural experiment” as a model calculated that if these levels of driving reduction were sustained for five years, the result would be a citywide [34 percent improvement](#) in levels of particulate matter, with the greatest potential for these effects in low-income communities, Black communities, and Latino communities. The car-free pedestrianization of Times Square [reduced nitrogen oxide pollution](#) by 63 percent and nitrogen dioxide pollution by 41 percent.

***Green space cleans the air and water.*** Converting car space into green space could correct some of the negative effects of car traffic. One tree can remove the equivalent of [11,000 miles of car emissions](#) from the atmosphere every year, and in New York City, that adds up to \$5.60 in benefits for every dollar spent planting trees. Current tree cover in New York City conserves [\\$84 million in energy](#). [On-street rain gardens](#) clean the air, cool the temperature, and keep stormwater runoff and street pollution out of our waterways. One bioswale can filter [89,000 gallons of rain](#) a year, reducing combined sewer overflow that pollutes rivers with sewage.



Source: Street Plans

***More public transit leads to less carbon emissions.*** A reduction in car dependence must be met with an increase in transit options. Public transit consumes [half the energy](#) of private transportation and emits only five percent of the carbon dioxide per passenger-mile, and these lower consumption levels apply to operation as well as manufacturing, maintenance, infrastructure construction, and fuel production. In New York City, [96 percent of transportation air pollution](#) comes from cars and trucks, responsible for 29 percent of all air pollution produced in the city.

*Bike infrastructure leads to greener neighborhoods.* Researchers have found that promoting cycling by converting car driving and storage lanes [to bicycle lanes](#) can reduce transportation-related carbon emissions by 11 percent. Converting car parking spaces in Pittsburgh into space for bike share stations reduced demand for [parking by two percent](#), even when controlling for lost parking space, a monthly reduction of 0.82 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions per square mile.



## PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

A city that is less dominated by cars will also have positive impacts on New Yorkers' physical and mental health. On a systemic level, less space for cars will reduce the [heat island effect](#) and particulate matter in the air, which contribute to hospitalizations for problems like asthma. On an individual level, deprioritizing car space can save lives, especially in New York City's poorest neighborhoods. Making sure that every New Yorker lives within a five minute walk of open space will lower rates of asthma, preterm birth, heart disease, depression, and other public health challenges, and increase the quality of life and life expectancy for every New Yorker by improving air and water quality and encouraging physical activity. Access to a citywide network of protected bike lanes within a quarter-mile of every New Yorker could make low-impact exercise more accessible and converting on-street car storage into space for on-street trash containers could reduce the stress of navigating sidewalks hemmed in by towering curbside trash piles and interactions with vermin.



Source: Transportation Alternatives



Source: Caroline Slick / Center for Zero Waste Design

**Converting car space to space for people reduces pollution.** Converting just one major street from car use into space for biking and walking caused nearby ultrafine particulate matter rates to [fall 58 percent](#) when New York City closed Park Avenue to car traffic for Summer Streets. (Ultrafine particulate matter is [especially dangerous](#) because it is so tiny that it can enter the bloodstream via the lungs and reach the brain and heart.) The most conservative estimates count air pollution as the cause of death for [at least six percent](#) of people who die in New York City every year. Converting car space to space for people could even make New Yorkers more resilient to the next pandemic, because [higher rates of air pollution](#) positively correlate with higher mortality risk from Covid-19.

**Fewer cars leads to fewer hospital visits.** Particulate matter from [car traffic causes asthma](#), low birth weight, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, and developmental delays. In New York City, [more than one in 10 children have asthma](#); in the Bronx, the childhood asthma rate is closer to one in five. In New

Air pollution is the cause of death for **at least six percent of New Yorkers** who die every year. And higher rates of air pollution correlate with higher mortality risk from Covid.

York City's poorest neighborhoods, asthma is a leading cause of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and school absences. Researchers using the "natural experiment" of New York City's Covid-19-related drop in car traffic as a model concluded that sustaining these levels of driving reduction for five years [could result in 2,392 fewer diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder](#), 1,981 fewer cases of child asthma, 5,175 fewer emergency room visits and 527 fewer hospitalizations for child asthma, 944 fewer preterm births, 256 fewer term low birth weights, 7791 fewer adult mortalities, and 10 fewer infant mortalities, with the greatest potential for these effects in low-income communities, Black communities, and Latino communities.

***Converting car space to green space reduces heat-related mortality.***

Heat-related illness and death, a growing threat in a warming climate, can also be reduced by converting car space to greenspace. In the United States, Black, Asian, and Hispanic people are 52 percent, 32 percent, and 21 percent more likely, respectively, to live in neighborhoods that are [prone to the heat island effect](#) compared with non-Hispanic whites. Researchers in New York City have found that mortality rates for older New Yorkers are significantly higher on extremely hot days, and that those [elevated mortality rates track highest](#) in low-income community districts, Black neighborhoods, and areas with the highest percentage of roadway and lowest percentage of greenspace. Urban heat island effects decline in green space and rise in areas of dense roadway, so converting car driving and storage lanes to greenspace can directly [reduce urban heat island effect](#).

***Bike infrastructure extends life expectancy.*** Researchers have found that when 45 miles of bike lanes were constructed in New York City, it increased the probability of any given New Yorker riding a bike by more than nine percent. The health impacts of this increase can be quantified in terms of

Every \$1,300 spent  
converting driving and parking  
lanes to protected bike lanes  
provides benefits equivalent to  
**one additional year of life** for  
all city residents.



infrastructure investment: [every \\$1,300 spent](#) converting car driving and parking lanes to protected bike lanes provided benefits equivalent to one additional year of life over the lifetime of all city residents. Additionally, [researchers](#) comparing the impact of Citi Bike on public health found that, between the system launch and the 2015 expansion in New York City, the resulting public health savings rose to \$28.3 million. The same study showed converting car storage spaces to public bike share docks and protected bike lanes, especially in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, could significantly prevent premature deaths and [produce significant public health savings](#).

***Open space improves mental health.*** In a nationwide study, researchers found that children who grew up with the least access to greenspace had a 55 percent higher risk of [psychiatric disorders](#) from adolescence into adulthood. In Los Angeles, a study showed that residents [living within a quarter-mile](#) of a greenspace had better mental health scores than anyone living at a greater distance, and that the mental health benefits of [open space access](#) were so significant as to be equivalent to decreasing local unemployment rates by two percentage points.

***Driving reductions increase friendships.*** Researchers have found that people who live on streets with low car traffic have three times as many friends and [twice as many acquaintances](#) as people who live on high-car-traffic streets. In New York City, [people who live on high-car-traffic streets](#) have fewer relationships with their neighbors and spend less time walking, shopping and playing with their children than people who live on low-car-traffic streets. Researchers have found that converting a residential street in a low-income neighborhood to [a street that prioritizes walking and biking](#) resulted in five times as many neighbor interactions, twice as many children playing, and twice as much time spent playing.

***Fewer cars means better sleep.*** Sleep is a critical determinant of physical and mental health, and because car traffic is a significant contributor to noise pollution in New York City, converting car space into space for people can give New Yorkers a better night's sleep. More than three in five New Yorkers reported that noise pollution was affecting their sleep, and more than one in three has their sleep disturbed three or more nights a week. Traffic was the [most common cause of disturbances](#). Sleep disturbances were more common for Black and Latino New Yorkers.



Source: Taller KEN / Urban Design Forum

**Car-free space makes people happy.** More public open space could engender [feelings of optimism in more than nine out of 10 people](#) who use it. Researchers in St. Louis found that 94 percent of residents who visited a car-free street felt that the change made the city more welcoming, strengthened the community, and made them feel more safe and more positive about the city.

## PUBLIC SAFETY BENEFITS

New York City is facing an epidemic of traffic violence. Nearly one third of all New Yorkers have been in a traffic crash, and [70 percent of New Yorkers](#) know someone who has been injured or killed in a crash. These numbers increase for Black New Yorkers, New Yorkers over 50 years old, New York City households that make under \$50,000, and residents of Staten Island. Car crashes seriously injure or kill a New Yorker every two hours. Being struck by a car is the leading cause of injury-related death for [New York City children under 14](#), and the [second leading cause of injury-related death for seniors](#). Around 2,500 New Yorkers are seriously injured in traffic crashes every year. Every year, more than half of those killed are people walking and biking, and 50 percent of those who die are killed on only seven percent of streets.

There are stark disparities in the impact of this violence, with traffic crashes more likely on streets in [neighborhoods with lower household incomes](#). Children's safety is especially imperiled by streets that prioritize cars, such as [the wide streets that abut New York City Housing Authority \(NYCHA\)](#).

[developments](#). A pedestrian or bicycle crash victim in the low-income predominantly Black neighborhood of East Harlem is more than three times more likely to be a child than in the neighboring wealthy predominately white Upper East Side. In the low-income areas of the Lower East Side and Chinatown, a person struck by a car is nearly two times more likely to be a child than a crash victim on the wealthy Upper East Side.

Changes to the streetscape that incorporate [principles of universal design](#) to prioritize use by people over cars, such as Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessibility, universal daylighting to increase intersection visibility, and building car-free bike and bus lanes, can prevent the pain and suffering of hundreds of New Yorkers killed and the tens of thousands injured in traffic crashes every year.

**Converting car space to Open Streets means fewer injuries.** While there are many different types of traffic-calmed streets and Open Streets, the gold standard is an active and maintained street restricted to all but necessary local car-use, like on 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights, Queens. After New York City created the 34th Avenue Open Street and banned thru traffic by cars, [injuries fell by 85 percent on this stretch of road](#), compared to an overall 22 percent citywide decrease in injuries during the same period of time.

**Restricting car access prevents crashes.** Researchers have found that fatalities and injuries are more likely to occur on streets with [parking directly adjacent to crosswalks](#), those where drivers can [make turns without restrictions](#), and those that have [60 feet or more](#) devoted to car lanes. Researchers have also found that deprioritizing car movement with interventions such as [daylighting](#), protected bike lanes, and turn restrictions have resulted in dramatic injury reductions. Fully or partially [restricting car access](#) at high-crash locations in New York City reduced injuries in people walking and biking by 41 percent and 33 percent, respectively. On residential streets, those that prioritize walking, biking, and accessibility for people with disabilities have been shown to have a [50 percent lower rate of injurious crashes](#) than streets that prioritize driving.

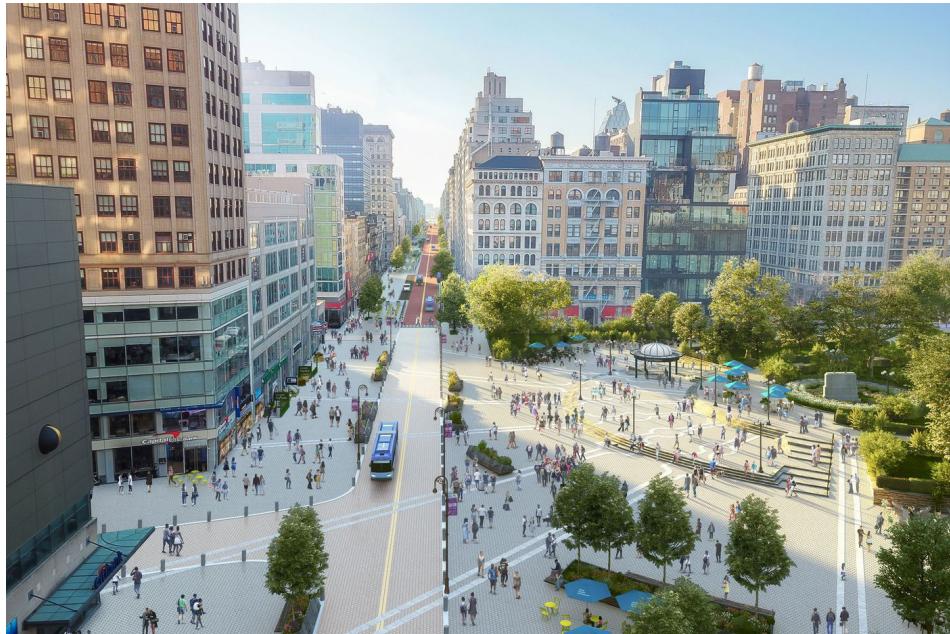
**Bike, bus, and pedestrian infrastructure reduces death and injury for all road users.** Researchers have found that converting car storage and driving lanes into [a network of connected and adjacent bike lanes](#) increases the number of bicycle commuters, and [increasing the amount of people riding bicycles in a city](#) decreases the number of fatal and injurious crashes for people walking and biking. In New York City, converting car storage and

Between 2001 and 2013, when hundreds of miles of car parking was converted into bike lanes, the **average risk of serious injury for cyclists** fell 74 percent.



driving lanes to [car-free protected bike lanes](#) caused bicycling ridership to skyrocket while reducing injurious crashes by 17 percent, pedestrian injuries by 22 percent, and all injuries by 20 percent. Between 2001 and 2013, when hundreds of miles of car parking was converted into bike lanes, the average risk of serious injury for cyclists [fell 74 percent](#). Converting a car driving lane into pedestrian and bus infrastructure on First and Second avenues in Manhattan caused traffic injuries to [drop 21 percent](#) even though cycling rates rose up to 177 percent on some segments, bus ridership was up nine percent, and traffic speed and volume remained constant.

## HOW TO GIVE STREETS BACK TO PEOPLE: IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW YORK CITY'S NEXT LEADERS



Source: Marvel / Union Square Partnership

A wholesale transformation of New York City's public space from car-dominance to a variety of better uses will require a deliberate strategy around management and governance. To date, the work that New York City has done to convert car space into space for people has been largely project based, and most transformations were localized, one-off successes. The challenge for New York City's next leaders will be how to scale recent successes citywide and holistically manage our public space. This is an admittedly large challenge and one that is necessary for New York's next leaders to address head-on. But the overwhelming public support across demographics for all kinds of street improvements, and the urgency of our economic, health, traffic violence, equity and climate crises all add up to a broad mandate for change.

Because these kinds of interventions need to work on multiple scales — systemic improvements to our transportation network and targeted, community-specific improvements at the block level — New York City's next leaders will need an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to management, community engagement, phasing, enforcement, and revenue. Transportation Alternatives challenges mayoral and City Council candidates

to return a significant and sizable portion of car space to people, to do so with meaningful community engagement, and to implement, maintain and fund these projects with concrete and sustainable plans.

## MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

A holistic managerial approach to transforming city streets into a shared public space will require a new role in city government to manage the streets as a complicated inter-agency enterprise. This role will need to coordinate between city agencies such as the Department of Transportation, Parks Department, Department of Design and Construction and the Department of Education, among others, as well as outside partners and community groups. Most importantly, the role will need the authority to set priorities and allocate funding across agencies.

### THREE KEY QUESTIONS

1. How will your administration change the City’s approach to managing streets?
2. How will you staff this change in a way that endows proper, crosscutting authority to set priorities and make cross-agency budget decisions? (Will you create a new cross-disciplinary role in the mayor’s office? Will you create a Mayor’s Office of Public Space, Deputy Mayor of Public Space, or similar position?)
3. What data, technology, and assets from each agency will your administration rely on in your management?

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- How will you overcome past administrations’ burdensome requirements for private maintenance partners for infrastructure like pedestrian plazas and bike corrals?
- How will you future-proof your management structure against changing political whims and budget cuts?
- How would you integrate the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and elevate the power and expertise of epidemiologists in the management of streets as public space?

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

These changes will require strong community partnerships and meaningful local engagement that transcends top-down decision making. Conversations around use of street space have long been divisive; community engagement around equitable reallocation of street space needs to be centered on a goal of healing. For certain components of this proposal — including the conversion of car parking spaces for on-street seating, the expansion of Open Streets, and the repurposing of school-adjacent streets — a committed, dedicated, and enthusiastic community partner can be essential to the successful implementation and ongoing success of the improvement.

### THREE KEY QUESTIONS

1. How will you center community voices and leverage partnerships to plan and implement the reallocation of street space?
2. How will your community engagement approach respond to community-specific needs, knowledge and opportunities? How will you ensure local residents and community groups can play a meaningful role in deciding what gets built in their neighborhood?
3. What community partnerships will you rely on to advance this vision? How will you leverage community partnerships to manage ongoing maintenance, operations, and programming of community spaces?

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- How will you broaden community engagement beyond the status quo of Community Boards, whose members are often not representative of the demographics of the neighborhoods they serve?
- How will you engage the disability community to ensure that street changes meet the needs of, and are clearly communicated to, New Yorkers with disabilities?
- In less resourced communities, how will you compensate community organizations for the labor of the engagement process?
- Will you abide by open government data principles to promote transparency, accountability and value creation? If so, how?

## PRICING AND REVENUE GENERATION

A reimagined streetscape and reinvigorated transit network can be the key to New York City's recovery, but only with a solid strategy for funding and revenue generation. There are opportunities for direct revenue, such as the expansion of demand-based metered parking, which could bring in, by conservative estimates, more than \$1 billion in revenue to the City of New York annually. Other tactics, such as the reinstatement of the New York City commuter tax, would create new sustainable revenue streams. There are also opportunities to leverage the private sector to create financial incentive programs to encourage transit use over driving.

### THREE KEY QUESTIONS

1. How will you use streets to drive revenue and improve the fiscal health of the City?
2. How will you price the use of street space as a citywide system?
3. To pay for this plan, will you reinstate the New York City commuter tax? Institute a mileage tax on non-commercial drivers? Charge an even higher registration fee for oversize vehicles, including SUVs and light trucks? Work with the State of New York to implement other taxes or sustainable commuter incentives?

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- How will you leverage the private sector to create sustainable, reliable funding streams for new infrastructure and reduce ongoing operational costs and risks to taxpayers?
- What sort of incentive or penalty programs will you consider when partnering with large companies to reduce driving among their employees?
- Would you build in a price incentive to use electric vehicles or other sustainable choices?

## ENFORCEMENT

New safe streets and transportation infrastructure is only as good as the City's willingness to ensure it is usable. This means enforcement — making sure bike lanes and bus lanes remain open and that dedicated freight zones are not used for unauthorized parking. But this must be done in a responsible, equitable, and safe way. In New York City, seven out of 10 likely voters support the idea of ending armed police traffic enforcement. The current enforcement of traffic laws by armed police puts New Yorkers, especially Black and Latino New Yorkers, at risk of police violence and is also a relatively ineffective method for making streets safe. Much of the budget once dedicated to police traffic enforcement could instead create self-enforcing streets. Fair and equitably placed automated enforcement, such as red light cameras and speed safety cameras, can fill in the gaps as [self-enforcing streets](#) are built citywide and as New York City drivers adjust to this new normal.

## THREE KEY QUESTIONS

1. What will your enforcement approach be to ensure that bike lanes, bus lanes, and other dedicated car-free spaces remain free and open for their intended use?
2. How will you expand bias-free camera enforcement technology, such as bike lane and crosswalk cameras that protect the right of way, and speeding and red light cameras that serve as a deterrent to reckless drivers?
3. How will you reallocate resources to help ensure that Black and Latino New Yorkers, in particular, can use our streets without fear of policing?

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Will your administration reallocate funds away from the NYPD traffic enforcement budget to remove traffic enforcement from police purview?
- What is your vision for including traffic enforcement agents and school crossing guards, (currently under the NYPD) in the solution for safer streets? How will you ensure the safety of these guards and agents to protect them from reckless driving and assault?
- How will you address placard abuse and ensure proper operation of City fleet vehicles, including right-sizing fleets that have grown in recent years?



Source: Scott Heins / TA

## PHASING AND PRIORITIZATION

Rebalancing streets away from cars and toward people will have an outsized impact in some neighborhoods. Communities that have suffered the most from disinvestment and neglect have the most to gain from the economic, environmental, public health, and public safety benefits of new open space and must be prioritized. Access to a new express bus in a car-free dedicated bus lane, for example, can provide a lifeline to an essential worker who would otherwise be out of range of the city's public transit system. Similarly, adding open space in communities that are currently outside of a five-minute walk of a park or playground can have an immediate and lasting impact on health on individual and community levels.

### THREE KEY QUESTIONS

1. How will you balance equity, urgency, and economic feasibility to make the greatest impact for the most New Yorkers in the shortest amount of time? What will our streets look like within 100 days of your taking office?
2. What metrics will you use to determine where need is greatest? Is it where other kinds of infrastructure — transit, open space, street safety measures — are the most lacking? Is it where the negative impacts of car dominance are the highest?
3. How will you anticipate the city's needs for the future rather than just the present?

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- How will you acknowledge and take action to correct the racist legacy of urban highways and other inequities inflicted by urban planning?
- How will you build for commutes that are becoming more local and less oriented around central business districts?
- What bold actions will you take first? Will you start with the most visible transformation?

## STREETS FOR PEOPLE: THE ONLY POSSIBLE FUTURE FOR NEW YORK CITY

In a moment of overlapping crises — health, social, economic, environmental — the question that New York City's future leaders must ask themselves is not whether we can be bold enough to shift course but whether we can afford not to.

For over a century, New Yorkers have been forced to accept a “normal” on our streets that is anything but. It should not be normal for people to fear death and serious injury when crossing the street, for sidewalks to be covered in mountains of garbage, for so many to breath air poisoned by pollution, for children to lack space to play, for jobs and opportunity to be rendered inaccessible, especially for low-income communities and communities of color, or for a whole city to be crippled by congestion. It should not be normal for a city to give away its most valuable asset — open public space — to a minority of residents, largely for free.

In a moment of overlapping crises, the question that New York City's future leaders must ask is not whether we can be **bold enough to shift course** but whether we can **afford not to**.



New York City's next generation of leaders must take up the challenge of delivering to New Yorkers a new, better normal by giving our city back to people. This is the only possible future for New York City. If our next leaders take up this challenge, they will accomplish so much: boost the economy, meet our climate goals, increase quality of life and life expectancy for all New Yorkers.

Transportation Alternatives envisions a city where the bus is never stuck in traffic and never far away, where bike share, bike parking, and protected bike lanes are easily accessible to all New Yorkers, and where greenspace dots every corner of the city. We see potential in our streets to do less harm to New Yorkers' health and safety, and to do more good for New York City's economy and environment. We see a future where the basic amenities we all need — like green space, public restrooms, food vendors, benches, and trees — are not rare but everywhere. In our streets, we have the space to meet the needs of 8.6 million New Yorkers. Now, we need leaders with the will and courage to elevate the potential of our largest public space, and create a better city for generations to come.

Today, New York City's streets are unquestionably unfair, giving the majority of space to vehicles that cause daily harm to our city and its residents. The challenge to candidates — converting 25 percent of car space in New York City into space for people by 2025 — is intended to be a bold first step to correct a historic inequality. We need leaders willing to give New York City back to people and ensure that our finite public spaces benefit the many, not the few. The future of New York City depends on it.

## METHODOLOGY

In developing the 25x25 campaign, Transportation Alternatives (TA) engaged with more than 200 community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, businesses, and individuals across the five boroughs of New York City.

In the section of this report titled “What You Can Build: The Spatial Potential of City Streets,” TA hypothesizes new uses for 25 percent of current car parking and driving space. These calculations are based on a total of 19,000 lane-miles (as opposed to street miles, which disregards lanes) divided over a number of types of replacement infrastructure. For example, a one-mile-long street segment with three lanes of traffic would count as three lane miles. Information on the sources for replacement infrastructure follows.

### Streets

To calculate the citywide street area, TA used streets centerline data from the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DOITT). Street width was multiplied by length. For lane miles, 19,000, a number from the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT), was used when applicable. Of the total area covered by the streetscape (streets, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes), vehicle travel lanes make up 54.2 percent.

### Sidewalks

To calculate the street areas, TA used the streets centerline data from DOITT. Area of parks was included in the data and was subtracted from the total area of sidewalks. Of the total area covered by the streetscape (streets, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes), sidewalks make up 23.74 percent.

### Bicycle Lanes

TA used the NYC DOT’s New York City Bike Routes [dataset](#) to calculate the area of bike lanes. The width of class one bike lanes varies from 8 feet to 14 feet. Width of class two bike lanes varies from five feet to eight feet. For the purpose of area calculations, the average width for each class was used — that is, class one lanes were taken to be 11 feet wide and class two lanes were taken to be 6.5 feet wide. Data was sorted by classes to calculate area for each class in each region, which was then summed to calculate total area. Off-street bike lanes and greenways were removed. The 3.1 miles of bike lanes on pedestrian plazas and sidewalks were counted under bike lanes and subtracted from corresponding areas. Of the total area covered by the streetscape (streets, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes), bicycle lanes make up 0.93 percent.

### **Free On-Street Parking**

The number of free on-street parking spots is based on Jehiah Czebotar's [tracking](#) since the release of a 2016 internal NYC DOT memo from then-Commissioner Polly Trottenberg's testimony, which estimated 2.99 million parking spaces. Jehiah Czebotar has tracked and subtracted all parking space removals dating back to the memo's study period. According to the City Comptroller, there are 85,000 metered parking spaces in New York City which was subtracted from total number of spaces, which totaled 2,989,413 at the time of this report's publication in late February 2021. Of the total area covered by the streetscape (streets, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes), free on-street parking makes up 20.52 percent and paid on-street parking is an additional 0.6 percent.

### **Citi Bike Citywide Expansion**

The number of Citi Bike stations needed for a citywide expansion of the Citi Bike system is based on current and announced station installations and the density per square mile of people and stations. An average of 18 stations per square mile, with an average of 14 docks per station, was calculated on the remaining square mileage currently outside the access area of Citi Bike.

### **Universal Daylighting**

The number of square feet needed for universal daylighting is based on a NYC DOT number, 162,000 street corners. The total area reclaimed was calculated by removing two standard parking spaces' worth of area at each corner. Due to the fact that a very limited number of intersections in New York City are daylighted already — and those use only half the square footage recommended by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) — and that some corners indicated would be needed, in our calculation, for bus bulbs, 15 percent was subtracted from the total. The remaining spots were multiplied by 180 square feet.

### **Public Utility Curb Reform**

The number of square feet needed at the curb for public utilities such as deliveries, for-hire vehicles, and trash contained is based on four parking spaces converted on each of New York City's 120,000 blocks, totaling 720 square feet based on dimensions of 80 feet by nine feet.

### **Community-Driven Needs**

The number of square feet needed for community-driven needs is based on a proposal of two million square feet for pedestrian plazas combined with 200,000 parking spaces, or 36 million square feet, converted into parklets, trees, and greenery where needed most.

### **Bike Parking**

The number of square feet needed for secure bike parking, bike parking racks, and bike corrals is based on 100,000 parking spaces using 10 bike racks per parking space, based on industry practices, and six to 10 secure biking spaces in a secure bike parking container, like [Oonee's Mini](#).

### **Space for Restaurants, Vendors, and Retail**

The number of square feet needed for arts and cultural venues, restaurant seating, street vendors, retail, and other uses to bolster economic recovery is based on 30,000 parking spaces, as well as the number of Open Restaurant permits during the program's peak, with additional space added for non-restaurant seating uses.

### **Subway Station Parking**

The number of square feet needed to create economic hubs outside subway stations with expanded bus shelters, public bathrooms, benches, and bike parking to promote multimodal travel is based on reclaiming 100 parking spaces at each of the Metropolitan Transit Authority's 472 stations.

### **Bus Bulbs**

The number of square feet needed to create [bus bulbs](#) to improve crosswalk safety was calculated by using NACTO's recommendation of 300 square feet per bus bulb and multiplying by one-third of the total number of bus stops in New York City.

### **Car Ownership**

TA calculated car ownership per capita by dividing the total population of New York City by the number of registered vehicles in New York City according to the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles. Registered cars per capita has fluctuated between 4.4 New Yorkers-per-car and 3.53 New Yorkers-per-car since 1970. The most recent records available, [December 2018](#), show 3.83 New Yorkers-per-car.

### **Number of New York City Parks Worth of Space Reclaimed**

The equivalence between converting 25 percent of current car space to a certain number of New York City parks (Staten Island Greenbelt, Central Park, Van Cortlandt Park, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and Prospect Park) was calculated by dividing the total reclaimed area by the number of acres per the [New York City Department of Parks](#) and rounding to the nearest whole number.

### **Metered Parking Revenue**

In Fiscal Year 2018, the City of New York [collected \\$228 million](#) in metered parking revenue. With only [85,000 metered parking spaces](#) — less than three percent of all spaces — each meter averages \$2,682.35 annually, or \$7.35 a day. By expanding the number of metered parking spaces in commercial corridors by 780,000, and assuming very conservatively that each new meter would only collect 50 percent of current meter averages, the city would collect \$1.07 billion annually in new revenue.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS NYC 25x25?

### **What are you asking for?**

NYC 25x25 is a challenge to New York City's next leaders to address the inequitable distribution of public space and the ongoing harm of car traffic to New Yorkers' health and safety, our climate, and the New York City economy. We are asking our next leaders to be bold and address this problem head-on by repurposing 25 percent of our street space to better use by 2025.

### **Why 25 percent specifically? Why 2025?**

The transformation of 25 percent of our streetscape by the year 2025 would be a wholesale and substantial change that would improve our city in countless ways. As we face the overlapping crises of Covid-19, economic downturn, racial inequity, climate change and traffic violence, now is not the time for partial solutions. We need a real commitment to equity on our streets for the large majority of New Yorkers who do not drive. Reallocating 25 percent of space is just the first step toward reaching this goal — but it's a meaningful and achievable goal for our next leaders during the next mayoral administration.

### **How popular is this idea?**

Taking back space from cars for a variety of other uses is broadly popular with New Yorkers in every borough and across all ages, racial identities, and income levels. New York City [voters support](#) more space for children to play (84 percent), more greenery (83 percent), places to sit (75 percent), wider sidewalks (58 percent), and improved crosswalks (85 percent), even if it means less space for cars. More than 60 percent of voters support expanding the Open Streets program, 56 percent support dedicated bus lanes, and 68 percent support protected bike lanes. A separate poll by the Department of Transportation of all New Yorkers, not just voters, [found even higher support](#) for these issues.

## HOW INEQUITABLE ARE OUR STREETS RIGHT NOW?

### **Why should we take space from cars?**

Scientists, researchers, and experts in climate change, public health, [economics](#), and [the environment](#) agree that we must make serious and

immediate reductions in car space and car usage. Space for cars is [inefficient](#) in a crowded city, and too many cars harm our physical and mental health, and our environment, and cut off economic opportunities for those who need them most.

#### **How is our public space currently being used?**

Of our [total streetscape](#), 75 percent is dedicated to moving or storing vehicles, with over 54 percent for travel lanes and 21 percent dedicated for free on-street parking. Less than 21 percent is dedicated as sidewalk space and less than one percent is dedicated for bike and bus lanes combined.

#### **How do New Yorkers currently get around?**

Even though over three-quarters of our streetscape is dedicated to moving or storing cars, New Yorkers [overwhelmingly use public transit, walk, or bike](#) to get where they're going. Three out of four trips are made by one of these sustainable modes of transportation. About one in four trips are made by car, over half are made by public transportation, and about one in five are made on foot or by bike. [Over 97 percent](#) walk or bike to or from public transportation.

#### **Would reducing space for cars unfairly punish drivers? Who actually owns a car in New York City?**

New York City households [that own a car are more than twice as wealthy](#) as those without a car. Lower-income New Yorkers are much [more reliant on transit](#), buses especially, and the median income of bus riders is substantially lower than that of New Yorkers overall. Right now, the average cost of car ownership ([nearly \\$10,000](#) a year nationally) is prohibitively expensive for millions of New Yorkers. Privileging private cars ahead of transit riders and pedestrians on our streets is not only unfair, but harmful to the supermajority of low-income New Yorkers who do not own a car. Building more car-free options on our streets is a way to [boost economic opportunity](#) and [lower bills for millions](#).

#### **What about New Yorkers who need to drive for their jobs, or because of a disability?**

Today, New Yorkers who need to drive are [wasting huge amounts of time](#) in traffic because there are so many elective drivers on the road — [nearly half](#) of whom are completing short trips of two miles or less. Converting driving and parking lanes into protected bus and bike lanes will invite those who have a choice whether or not to drive to opt for more efficient, cheap, and pleasant modes of travel. In turn, this will make more space on the road and at the curb for those who need to drive.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WE RECLAIM ALL THIS SPACE?

For sources and a more detailed explanation of the benefits of less car-dominant streets, please see: Evidence.

### **Who will benefit from taking space from cars?**

In short, all New Yorkers will benefit, including drivers. Those who need to drive will benefit from fewer drivers on the road. Parking will be easier to find when more of it is metered, [encouraging turnover and bringing more customers to small businesses](#). And all street users benefit from [improved safety, significant cost savings from fewer crashes, lost time, more jobs created per million on infrastructure](#), and the [environmental, physical, and mental health benefits](#) that come with reducing car-use.

### **How will taking space from cars help the economy?**

Researchers agree that an efficient and diverse transportation system is the [single most important factor for upward economic mobility](#) for an individual. Making our streets safer and more transit friendly will drastically reduce the \$6 billion dollar burden that [traffic crashes](#) and [congestion](#) leave on New York City's economy every year. And for every \$1 million spent on infrastructure, [47 percent more jobs](#) are created on bike and pedestrian infrastructure projects than on car infrastructure projects.

### **Local businesses are really struggling. Will this help?**

New York City has seen several recent examples of less car-oriented streets leading to a boom in business, including a new pedestrian plaza on Pearl Street in Brooklyn that [brought a 172 percent increase in sales](#) for local businesses. Nearby businesses on a redesigned Vanderbilt Avenue saw [sales increase by 102 percent](#) and improved pedestrian infrastructure and a dedicated bus lane brought an [increase in sales of 71 percent](#) on Fordham Road in the Bronx.

Demand-based pricing of parking spaces [increases shoppers, diners, and those seeking entertainment activities by 30 percent](#) – three of the [hardest hit industries](#) in New York City due to Covid-19.

### **Will taking space from cars really make us healthier?**

Yes. In so many ways. To name just a few: Every \$1,300 spent converting car driving and parking lanes to protected bike lanes provided benefits equivalent to [one additional year of life](#) over the lifetime of all city residents. An expanded bike share system has the potential to bring significant

health economic benefits, [especially for high poverty communities of color](#).

Particulate matter from cars causes asthma (a leading cause of [ER visits and school absences](#)), low birth weight, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, developmental delays, and many other [serious health conditions](#).

Places in the city with fewer cars, like Park Avenue during Summer Streets, show [immediate decreases](#) in air pollution.

### **What about mental health?**

A recent study showed that children who grew up with the least access to greenspace had a [55 percent higher risk of psychiatric disorders](#). The mental health benefits of open space access were so significant as to be [equivalent to decreasing local unemployment rates by two percentage points](#). And another study found that people who live on streets with low car traffic have [three times as many friends and twice as many acquaintances](#) as people who live on high-car-traffic streets.

### **What are the main environmental benefits of taking more space from cars?**

In New York City, cars and trucks are responsible for [29 percent of all air pollution](#) produced in the city. Carbon emissions from vehicles have only [decreased by one percent since 2005](#), and the number of cars traveling through New York City [has been growing](#). More public transportation [leads to lower carbon emissions](#) and cleaner air. And new and improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure significantly reduces the number of car trips, leading to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Less space for cars also means more space for greenery, and this, too, pays dividends: one mature tree can remove the equivalent of [11,000 miles of car emissions annually](#).

### **Will our streets really be safer with less space for cars?**

Improved bike, bus, and pedestrian infrastructure brings [safety benefits to all road users](#). For example, converting a car driving lane into pedestrian and bus infrastructure on First and Second Avenues in Manhattan caused all [traffic injuries to drop 21 percent](#) even though cycling rates nearly tripled on some segments, and traffic speed and volume remained constant. Between 2001 and 2013 when hundreds of miles of car parking was converted into bike lanes, the [average risk of serious injury for cyclists fell 74 percent](#) in New York City.

## HOW WILL TAKING SPACE FROM CARS IMPACT DRIVERS?

### Won't traffic get worse?

For decades, study after study [has proven](#) that taking away travel lanes does not cause congestion. It's a [phenomenon](#) called "induced demand." Once people see that there is less space, they rationally adjust their driving behavior. Recently, when car traffic lanes were removed to create the [14th Street Busway](#), the adjacent streets saw [no increase in car traffic](#), despite the fears of many who objected to the plan. When bike, pedestrian, and bus infrastructure was added on First and Second Avenues in Manhattan, [traffic levels improved or remained steady](#). Most importantly, a street should be scored not by the number of cars that it moves per hour but by the number of people. And travel lanes for cars are by far [the least efficient ways](#) of moving people.

### Wouldn't this punish people who need to drive for work, like delivery drivers and taxi drivers?

By providing more efficient, reliable, regular, and safe means of alternative transportation, New Yorkers who don't need to drive will switch modes, resulting in less congestion. This has been [proven](#) in research, [documented by the Department of Transportation](#), and been a [real-world experience for New Yorkers](#). For delivery truck drivers, the creation of dedicated loading and unloading zones would decrease all travel times in New York City [by 61 percent](#). Demand based pricing will price parking accurately so that, on average, two parking spots are always available on every block. In San Francisco's recent pilot, this meant [43-67 percent less time searching for parking, 30 percent less fuel wasted, and 22 percent less double parking](#) that causes congestion.

### Won't this slow response times for emergency services?

Less overall congestion will make travel times faster for those who need to drive, including first responders. Converting car driving lanes into car-free bus lanes can provide an express traffic-free lane that first responders can rely on, speeding response times to those calls. At the height of New York City's bike lane building boom, emergency response times were actually [quicker than ever](#). The New York Fire Department has explicitly cited [the increase in car traffic](#) on city streets as the major factor increasing response times and noted that [bike lanes](#) do not increase their response time.

### **What about out-of-town commuters and tourists?**

Pre-pandemic, [three out of four commuters](#) traveled into New York City by a sustainable transportation mode during rush hour. Because cars are the least efficient transportation mode, even a small reduction in drivers would have a significant impact on traffic levels. The vast majority of tourists arrive in New York City without a car, too. And yet, both commuters and tourists have to contend with the overwhelming majority of space dedicated to cars with no benefit to them. The Trust for Public Land has also found that a well-maintained and integrated network of citywide open spaces can [increase tourism by 20 percent](#).

## **HOW CAN WE MAKE ALL THIS HAPPEN?**

For sources and more detail on the implementation considerations of NYC25x25, please see: Implementation.

### **New York is in a budget crisis. How will we pay for all of this?**

Many of the benefits described in this plan will pay for themselves. For example, the [\\$4 billion](#) the New York City economy currently spends every year on crashes can be significantly reduced through street redesigns. Accurately pricing on-street parking on commercial corridors with meters could, by the most conservative estimates, bring in over [\\$1 billion in new annual revenue](#). And most economists agree that government spending, especially on infrastructure, is beneficial to accelerate the recovery process, and bike and pedestrian projects [create more direct in-state jobs for every \\$1 million spent](#). This plan will also require bold leadership in order to re-prioritize New York City's budget.

### **Who will be in charge of making these decisions?**

The mayor controls New York City's streets. Although the main responsibilities of the street fall under the Department of Transportation, there are many agencies with a stake — for example, trash and snow is handled by the Department of Sanitation, and trees are maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation. [Part of our challenge](#) to New York's next leaders is to establish a centralized way to manage our streets as a system of public space, and to quickly implement and budget for these changes across agencies in a coordinated fashion.

### **Who will decide what goes in my neighborhood?**

NYC 25x25 includes a challenge to New York's next leaders to create meaningful opportunities for community engagement both within and

outside of the typical community board approval process. Local community groups and residents should get to decide how space is repurposed on their block, whether it's a single parking space being converted to a parklet, or the closing of the entire street to cars to create an Open Street. Community engagement will need to fit each individual community, with an eye toward equity and including voices who are usually left out.

### **Has this worked in other places?**

Yes. In the last decade, Seattle spent the [most per capita](#) of large metro areas on new transit projects and accordingly saw the largest decline in the [share of people driving alone to work](#) and the [largest drop in car ownership](#). San Francisco's pilot of demand-based pricing was such a success that it was made permanent. And Paris' reclamation of space from cars to people has resulted in a [huge increase in cycling](#) over the last year. Six in ten Parisian [cyclists today](#) report having never cycled before. When London added over 62 miles of protected bike lanes in less than 12 months, [cycling skyrocketed over 200 percent citywide](#) and in some areas over 300 percent.



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