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CONTACT: Press Office / 646-885-5020

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The New York City Department of Sanitation Releases Plan for Commercial Waste Zones

Commercial Waste Zones will create Safe and Efficient Collection System, Provide High-Quality, Low-Cost Service and Advance the City's Zero Waste Goals

The New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) today released "Commercial Waste Zones: A Plan to Reform, Reroute, and Revitalize Private Carting in New York City." The plan lays out a blueprint for the implementation of commercial waste collection zones across NYC over the next three years.

While DSNY collects trash and recycling from residential buildings, more than 90 different private carters crisscross the city each night to service the city's 100,000 commercial businesses, driving long, overlapping and unsafe routes. Just last week, the NYPD, working with Business Integrity Commission (BIC), began a major enforcement effort against an industry that has been involved in dozens of fatalities in recent years and yielded more than 500 moving violations in one week. This plan, created through extensive stakeholder engagement, will bring comprehensive reform to the commercial waste industry. The plan and appendices are available at nyc.gov/commercialwaste.

"The city's current commercial waste carting system has proven itself to be inefficient, unsafe and unsustainable," said **Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia**. "The Commercial Waste Zones plan is a comprehensive blueprint to create a safe and efficient collection system for commercial waste that provides high quality, low cost service while advancing our zero waste goals. It is a plan that will lead to a fairer, safer, more sustainable New York City."

Commissioner of the Business Integrity Commission Daniel Brownell said, "This plan sets forth the essential elements for the design of a commercial waste zone system tailored to New York City and will strengthen the City's tools for safety oversight in the private carting industry. The plan reflects a collaborative process with input from a variety of stakeholders including the private carting industry, advocates, and the business community, among others. With the release of this plan, the City is one step closer to bringing improvements to the private carting industry. We would like to thank DSNY for spearheading this key initiative to help meet the Mayor's zero waste goals."

The plan will divide the city into 20 zones, each served by three to five carters selected through a competitive process. This approach will reduce truck traffic associated with commercial waste

collection by more than 60 percent, or more than 18 million miles per year, while strengthening service standards and allowing for customer choice. In addition, commercial waste zones will create a new regulatory framework that allows the City to achieve several additional program goals:

- **Zero Waste:** Reduce commercial waste disposal and incentivize recycling
- **Environmental Health:** Reduce truck traffic throughout the city to reduce air pollution and improve quality of life
- **Pricing:** Provide fair, transparent pricing with low prices for businesses
- **Customer Service:** Strengthen customer service standards and establish accountability
- **Health and Safety:** Improve training and safety standards to make the industry safer for workers and the public
- **Labor and Worker Rights:** Improve industry labor standards and uphold worker rights
- **Infrastructure and Waste Management:** Prioritize investments in clean, modern fleets and facilities that make up a reliable, resilient, and sustainable waste management system
- **Robust, Competitive Industry:** Create a system that works for carters of all sizes and prevents overreliance on any single company

In 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio released *One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City* (OneNYC), the City's plan to become the most resilient, equitable, and sustainable city in the world. Among the initiatives, OneNYC committed to conducting a comprehensive study of commercial waste zones. That study, completed by DSNY in 2016 in partnership with the Business Improvement Commission, found that commercial waste collection zones would reduce truck traffic by up to 68 percent and cut greenhouse gas and other air pollutant emissions from commercial waste collection by as much as two-thirds. The Commercial Waste Zones plan builds on the earlier study and provides the City's recommended framework to move forward with the reforms.

Over the next few years, the City will work to implement the Commercial Waste Zones plan; steps will include completing an environmental review, working with City Council to pass needed legislation, selection of carters via an RFP process, and a multi-year customer transition process.

"Having hundreds of private carrier trucks pollute the air as they drive all over the city every day isn't just inefficient; it's not safe and not how we demonstrate stewardship of our shared city and planet," said **Mark Chambers, Director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Sustainability**. "New York City needs to reinvent our approach to commercial waste, and Commissioner Garcia's Commercial Waste Zones plan provides the leadership we need to create a cleaner, safer city for every New Yorker."

"New York City's dangerous private carting industry needs fixing, and so DOT strongly supports the DSNY plan," said **DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg**. "It will deliver a more efficient and sustainable system, help reduce congestion and improve conditions for workers. In line with Vision Zero, the plan will increase safety on our streets – where private carting trucks have been involved in too many deadly crashes."

“The proposed commercial waste zone program will be a game changer in the private hauling industry in our city and reform the current ineffective collection system. Incentivizing recycling, reducing truck traffic and improving working conditions is a winning formula. The City Council will continue to work with the Department of Sanitation and all the stakeholders involved to move this plan forward,” said **Council Speaker Corey Johnson**.

“Today marks a critical milestone in our effort to bring meaningful, comprehensive reform to New York City’s private sanitation industry,” said **Council Member Antonio Reynoso, Chair of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management**. “For years this industry has exploited its workers, polluted our environment, and put pedestrian lives at risk. With the implementation of a Commercial Waste Zone system, we will put an end to this egregious behavior. Workers will finally have recourse if a company steals their wages; no longer will there be dozens of carters servicing a single neighborhood; routes will be manageable so drivers don’t have to break traffic laws to complete them before the end of the night; recyclables won’t up in a landfill; and customers will have a clear and transparent process for securing service and pricing. I applaud DSNY for putting forth a thoughtful and comprehensive report that shows the numerous benefits that will accrue to New Yorkers through implementation of this system. In the coming months, I will be working with my Council colleagues, industry stakeholders, customers, and advocates to develop enabling legislation that protects workers, requires environmentally sustainable business practices, ensures quality service, and creates route efficiencies to decrease pollution.”

“The Department of Sanitation’s proposed Commercial Waste Zones plan will lead New York City on the path toward a safer, more efficient waste management system reducing the hazards and pollution that come with multiple carting companies operating randomly across the five boroughs,” said **Council Member Adrienne Adams**. “This is a significant step toward further improving the performance of the city’s waste sector.”

“By allowing for a more streamlined approach to commercial waste collection, our City is moving towards a more efficient and sustainable system,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. “As the Council Member representing Lower Manhattan, I have seen firsthand the numerous environmental and quality of life impacts of truck traffic on overburdened neighborhoods. This plan will bring much-needed reforms to the waste collection structure by cleaning up our neighborhoods while reducing truck congestion, and I look forward to continuing our efforts with the Department of Sanitation, my Council colleagues, and stakeholders to keep our communities healthy, clean and safe.”

“The widespread issues with the commercial waste carting system in our city show that we cannot count on the private sector to regulate itself. While commercial waste zones aren’t a panacea, they will help to reduce air pollution, cut carbon emissions, and ensure workers are treated with dignity and fairness. Far too many people have died or been injured as a result of the commercial waste industry’s negligent business practices, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the City Council, the Mayor’s office, and DSNY to ensure we hold bad actors accountable while creating a better, more workable system,” said **Council Member Rafael Espinal**.

“We're getting commercial garbage trucks off our streets. This means less miles driven and reducing the number trucks operating on the same route, resulting in cleaner air and safer streets for all of us,” said **Council Member Ben Kallos**. “Anything that gets more garbage trucks off the road is a good thing in my book. Thank you to Mayor Bill de Blasio, Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia and City Council Sanitation Chair Antonio Reynoso for implementing a plan to reduce private garbage truck traffic in New York City.”

“In my district today, nearly 40 waste haulers are collecting waste from businesses within a single zip code, causing unnecessary emissions, noise, traffic and safety hazards on our local streets,” says **Council Member Brad Lander**. “I want to thank the Chair of City Council’s Sanitation Committee, Antonio Reynoso, Commissioner Garcia and her team at DSNY, and the Transform Don’t Trash Coalition for their leadership in creating a plan that will finally create a rational structure for our City’s commercial waste industry. I look forward to working with this team and our diverse businesses, communities and industry stakeholders to advance legislation at the Council that will help us meet our zero waste goals, reduce truck traffic in communities of color, provide more fair and transparent pricing for businesses and improve conditions for commercial waste workers who have some of the most dangerous jobs in the City.”

“With this plan we are one step closer to fulfilling the Council’s promise to reform New York City’s private sanitation industry,” said **City Council Member Carlos Menchaca**. “The Mayor’s framework proposes to keep our neighborhoods safe and clean, while prioritizing what should be prioritized – environmental sustainability, fair labor practices for workers, and more efficient routing that doesn’t discriminate against any community. This has been a long fight, but it’s been worth it, since nothing is more basic to a government’s responsibility than doing what this framework does. Every step towards this goal has been thoughtful and comprehensive, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Council to continue that approach with authorizing legislation.”

“Commercial waste zones will help to make trash collection more efficient and ease congestion in commercial corridors, like Midtown Manhattan. The plan is good for the environment and better for New Yorkers. I thank the Department of Sanitation for their proposal to create a cleaner City,” said **Council Member Keith Powers**.

“The time to reform the commercial waste industry is long overdue,” said **Council Member Donovan Richards**. “I commend the de Blasio administration for starting the conversation on the best way to reduce truck traffic, improve safety on our streets and gain better labor standards and worker rights in this industry. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Council and the administration to craft a plan that works for workers, businesses and our environment.”

“Fundamental reform of the private sanitation industry has been urgently needed for years. The Commercial Waste Zone plan presents a comprehensive strategy targeting key priorities for New Yorkers -- the safety of workers and our communities, air quality and public health, drastic reduction of solid waste, major efficiency and customer service improvements, and more. Thank you to Council Member Reynoso, Commissioner Garcia, the Mayor's Office, and all of the advocates who worked so hard and for so long to bring this plan to reality,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

“We are pleased to see the City take a comprehensive approach to reforming the commercial waste industry. Waste zones have the potential to dramatically cut truck traffic across the city, but especially in the low-income communities and communities of color where waste export facilities are disproportionately sited. We hope the City Council will use this policy to set high standards for the industry – from collection to disposal to export – which will help to lessen the burden of waste for environmental justice neighborhoods, while bringing the city closer to its equity and sustainability goals,” said **Eddie Bautista, Executive Director, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance**.

“The Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) commends the Department of Sanitation (Department) on engaging a wide range of stakeholders in developing the proposed zone design for commercial waste collection in New York City. The proposal incorporates and was improved by the input of the participants, and bringing together the industry, customers, organized labor, environmental advocates, and others to discuss solid waste and recycling issues from a variety of perspectives was useful. SWANA looks forward to continuing to work on this topic with the Department, the industry, and other stakeholders as this process moves forward, as well as on other solid waste policy issues facing New York City,” said **David Biderman Executive Director and CEO, Solid Waste Association of North America**.

“The Department of Sanitation's Commercial Waste Zones Proposal is a smart way to address safety issues within the current hauling industry, while ensuring that small businesses in all five boroughs can access waste hauling service that is safe, modern, and efficient,” said **Jonathan Bowles, Executive Director, Center for an Urban Future**.

“This commercial waste zone plan is an important first step in protecting workers in the private carting industry. The private sanitation workers who keep our city clean are primarily people of color, many of them undocumented or formerly incarcerated, and many companies use that to exploit them. We commend the mayor for putting forth a plan that will hold companies accountable for safety. We will fight to ensure that all sanitation workers get the good wages they deserve and we will continue to advocate for exclusive zones,” said **Sean T. Campbell, President, Teamsters Local 813**.

“The benefits of the Department of Sanitation's proposed Commercial Waste Zones plan are widespread; we are particularly supportive of its ability to reduce truck traffic, illegal dumping, and sidewalk waste. As a neighborhood with many food and retail establishments as well as narrow streets, we have struggled with these issues for years and look forward to the safer and cleaner streets that this plan can provide,” said **Wellington Chen, Executive Director, Chinatown Partnership**.

“The city's commercial waste zone plan, released today, is a critical first step towards ensuring all street users in New York, especially pedestrians and bicyclists, are protected from reckless and dangerous private carters. It's now critical that the city finish the job and enact reforms like waste zoning and redouble their commitment to smart street design and responsible, effective enforcement. The private carting industry has long shown that systemic safety must be compelled, and if we're going to fully realize Vision Zero in New York, then half-measures can

no longer be considered good enough,” said **Marco Conner, Deputy Director, Transportation Alternatives**.

“Commercial waste zones are a necessary and urgent policy that, done right, will dramatically reduce emissions and make conditions safer for workers and communities of color. To achieve this overdue environmental justice goal, the voices of the most directly impacted communities should be at the forefront of decision-making, and careful attention given to the number of carters per district and how the policy relates to waste transfer operations. The City’s announcement of its proposal is an important step forward in the conversation that needs to be had and we applaud the progress that it represents and the leadership of Mayor de Blasio in tackling this issue,” said **Elena Conte, Director of Policy, Pratt Center of Community Development**.

“MSWAB is supportive of commercial waste zones in NYC and has been for several years. As proven in other cities, collection zone contracts can dramatically advance zero waste initiatives. The potential environmental benefits are significant including but not limited to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from more efficient trucking, and higher diversion rates from discounted recycling and increased transparency in the system. There are other important potential benefits as well including better safety standards, and fairer prices for businesses of all sizes especially if they participate in waste audits that provide haulers actionable information. In addition, a zoned system offers a better quality of life for all NYC residents by optimizing carting truck routing that can reduce overall truck traffic and noise on our streets,” said **Sarah Currie-Halpern, Chair, Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board**.

“A zoned commercial waste system will improve pricing transparency and customer service for all businesses in NYC. Small businesses in particular will gain access to organics collection services, which are frequently out of reach. The plan calls for a pricing structure that rewards environmentally responsible waste management through a clear pricing scheme. To reach Zero Waste by 2030, we must reduce waste, in addition to recycling and composting. The system DSNY is proposing would help businesses better understand how much waste they generate and would help them to achieve waste reduction,” said **Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli, Director, Common Ground Compost**.

“The proposed Commercial Waste Zones plan is a net benefit to the health and safety of NYC’s residents. It has the potential to decrease traffic fatalities, reduce air and noise pollution, and increase the transparency, efficiency and sustainability of commercial waste disposal in New York City,” **Robert Freudenberg, Vice President, Energy & Environment, Regional Plan Association**.

“The Sanitation Department’s bold new plan outlines a transformative change for the commercial waste industry here — one that would yield greater recycling participation, more rational waste truck routing, dramatically less truck traffic and air pollution, and greater pedestrian safety. We look forward to seeing this implemented with strong provisions for worker safety and equitable pay for private sanitation employees,” said **Eric A. Goldstein, NYC Environment Director, Natural Resources Defense Council**.

“DSNY’s Commercial Waste Zones plan sets NYC on the path to meaningful, comprehensive reform of a broken commercial waste system. We look forward to working with the administration and the City Council to ensure passage of a historic, robust reform that fully protects the workers on the trucks and the communities where the vast majority of the City’s garbage is trucked each night,” said **Melissa Iachan, Senior Staff Attorney in the Environmental Justice Program, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.**

“The structure of commercial waste carting in New York City needs to change; stricter enforcement will not fix the inefficiencies of the current system. We support the Department of Sanitation’s Commercial Waste Zones plan as a means to creating efficient pickups, reducing environmental impact, and addressing shortcomings in the industry’s safety and labor standards, all while maintaining a competitive system for carters and New Yorkers,” said **Carol Kellermann, President, Citizens Budget Commission.**

“The Department of Sanitation’s Commercial Waste Zones Proposal has positive implications across our local communities, commercial businesses, and nonprofit sector. The Proposal’s transparent pricing and incentives for recycling will have widespread impact and even promote more food rescue by providing clearer incentives for businesses looking to achieve zero waste while contributing to their community. These will all benefit a more efficient and sustainable New York City,” said **Robert Lee, CEO, Rescuing Leftover Cuisine.**

“BK ROT welcomes the city’s effort to reduce harmful emissions and dangerous labor practices in waste hauling while ensuring waste carters offer organic recycling to all customers. This is a positive first step in tackling NYC’s overall waste issues and we support increased efforts to actively foster the inclusion of MWBEs across the entire spectrum of goods and services within the industry. Encouraging MWBE participation in zone contracts will ensure many established innovative enterprises have the opportunity to scale up and support the city’s Zero Waste goals. We believe a successful policy reform must address the vast inequities in opportunity,” said **Sandy Nurse, Founder and Executive Director, BK ROT.**

“ABNY appreciates the opportunity to provide our input into Commissioner Garcia and the Department’s inclusive process for this comprehensive and far-reaching proposal,” said **Angela Pinsky, Executive Director of the Association for a Better New York.** “We look forward to continue working with the City and all stakeholders to ensure that the commercial waste plan achieves the balanced goals of reducing carbon emissions, making our streets safer, while providing affordable and effective waste removal that serves our neighborhoods.”

“This commercial waste zone system is the first step to reform the private carting industry and is a testament of what we can achieve when community, workers, and environmental groups come together. We look forward to working together with the City Council and the mayor’s office to push for a bold legislation that truly holds companies accountable and ensures a real transformation in this industry. We need a system where workers know that they will make it home at the end of their shifts, where children are breathing clean air, and pedestrians are safe to walk in their neighborhoods,” said **Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director, ALIGN.**

“We applaud Sanitation Commissioner Garcia for her leadership on the new Commercial Waste Zone plan for New York City,” said **Julie Tighe, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters**. “The new plan is a significant step forward in reducing truck congestion and addressing the amount of refuse in our landfills while ensuring pricing protections for consumers. Commercial waste carters drive redundant routes in notoriously unsafe conditions, causing traffic congestion and increasing air pollution. We are encouraged that the plan incentivizes recycling and organics collection to help the City meet its zero waste goals. Solutions like this are an important step in making city streets more livable, reducing waste, decreasing pollution from trucks, and combating climate change. We look forward to working with the administration and key stakeholders to ensure that this plan achieves the deepest reductions possible in waste sent to landfills, truck congestion, and greenhouse gas emissions.”



Currently, a typical route carries a single carter through multiple boroughs to collect material all throughout the city. This contributes to unnecessarily long routes and excess truck traffic, noise, and air pollution throughout the city. The current system hinders progress on safety, recycling, fleet and infrastructure investment, and price transparency.



With the Commercial Waste Zones plan in effect, a carter must work only within the geographical boundaries of a district. This will result in 18 million miles of truck traffic taken off city streets every year, a 63 percent reduction from current practice.

Among other requirements, the Commercial Waste Zones plan will:

- Provide recycling collection and offer organics collection to every refuse customer and demonstrate proper disposal of materials
- Require carters to submit a zero waste plan and offer recycling and organics collection at a discounted rate
- Require full compliance with Local Law 145 of 2013, and upgrade fleet or retrofit as needed
- Provide transparent pricing that incentivizes cost control and allow customers to negotiate below rate cap
- Include backup procedures for carter's failure to perform
- Allow broker bidding, subcontracting and partnering permitted in circumstances that align with program goals
- Give customers multiple service options and allow them to switch carters if their needs are not being met
- Require carters meet employee safety training requirements, and have their safety record evaluated in their solicitation review
- Require carters submit collective bargaining agreements, and demonstrate a history of compliance with labor laws

About the New York City Department of Sanitation

The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) keeps New York City healthy, safe and clean by collecting, recycling and disposing of waste, cleaning streets and vacant lots, and clearing snow and ice. The Department operates 59 district garages and manages a fleet of more than 2,000 rear-loading collection trucks, 450 mechanical brooms and 695 salt/sand spreaders. The Department clears litter, snow and ice from approximately 6,500 miles of City streets and removes debris from vacant lots as well as abandoned vehicles from City streets.