

Mayor Adams, Partners Urge Albany to Pass Local Control for Traffic Safety

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Adams Administration, Legislators, and Advocates Push for New York City to Gain Power to Set Speed Limits, Control Automated Traffic Enforcement

City Asking for Proven Tools to Combat COVID-Fueled Rise in Traffic Violence, Increase in Crashes Occurring When Speed Cameras Are Off

Video available at: <https://youtu.be/q8dKam981kc>

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams today led a coalition of administration officials, legislators, and advocates urging Albany to give New York City control of critical tools to tackle the spike in traffic violence that has played out across the city throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Joined by senior administration officials, members of the state Legislature and the City Council, transportation advocates, and New Yorkers whose families have been affected by traffic violence, Mayor Adams called on the state Legislature to pass legislation empowering the city to set speed limits and control the automated traffic enforcement program. Under current law, speed cameras in the automated enforcement program can only be active Monday to Friday, 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM, and the program is set to expire this year.

“No family should have to suffer the loss of loved one to traffic violence, but that’s what can happen when a speeding car drives through a red light,” said **Mayor Adams**. “My job is to prevent New Yorkers from dying in our streets, and I need Albany to give me the tools to do my job. I want New Yorkers to hold me accountable for my decisions and

my results, and that means I need home rule control over our speed cameras and red-light cameras. This is about keeping New Yorkers safe.”

Mayor Adams and the coalition visited the intersection of Ocean Avenue and Beverley Road near P.S. 245 in Flatbush, Brooklyn — the site of a fatal speeding crash that took place on August 18, 2020. In that incident, the driver of a speeding car ran a red light at high speed, ramming a second car in its side. An 18-year-old in the rear seat of the second car, Isaiah Benloss, suffered a traumatic brain injury and died in November 2021. Since the crash occurred at 3:30 AM on a Tuesday, the speed cameras were turned off, as required by New York state law.

The automated enforcement program has been highly effective when speed cameras are active, as speeding violations near the intersection of Ocean Avenue and Beverley Road have declined 89 percent since the installation of cameras began around P.S. 245 in 2019. Overall, since the start of the speed camera automated enforcement program in 2014, speeding violations are down 72 percent on average at camera locations during the hours they operate. Meanwhile, traffic violence has skyrocketed nationwide during the pandemic, including in New York City — and 59 percent of traffic fatalities now occur during hours when the city’s speed cameras cannot operate, inhibiting the city’s ability to identify drivers and take appropriate actions. Last year, more than one in three fatal on-street crashes occurred in school zones during hours when cameras were required to be inactive.

The Adams administration supports legislation establishing local control in the following areas:

- **School Zone Speed Cameras:** Without action by the state Legislature, New York City’s authority to operate nearly 2,000 cameras in 750 school speed zones will expire this year. The city seeks control over the program to ensure it continues and to lift the limits on the hours this life-saving program is permitted to operate.
- **Red-Light Cameras:** In 1993, New York City was among the first major American cities to receive state authorization for red-light cameras. While the Legislature has renewed the law multiple times since initial passage, the number of allowed camera locations has remained at 150, and fines have remained at \$50 since inception, preventing a system of escalating fines for repeat offenders.

- **Bus Lane Enforcement:** Under state law, the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority are authorized to operate stationary and on-bus automated cameras to enforce bus lane restrictions but not violations that impede operations on bus routes with no bus lane.
- **Local Speed Limits:** Changes to the default speed limit in New York City require state authorization, which last came in 2014. Sammy’s Law, named after Samuel Cohen Eckstein, a 12-year-old who was killed by a speeding driver in Park Slope in 2013, would give New York City the authority to set safer speed limits on certain streets.

“Speed cameras save lives, as do lower speed limits,” said **DOT Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez**. “Unfortunately, as a former councilmember, I know too well that New York City is not always able to control our destiny around public safety, which means that some critical life-saving changes to our streets happen too slowly. New York City has been a model for Vision Zero cities across the country, so based on our proven success, I am joining the mayor in calling on the state to give the city the authority to manage traffic safety — including all our automated enforcement programs.”

“The NYPD fully supports the expansion of automated enforcement. The data provided by DOT is clear — speed cameras save lives,” said **New York City Police Department Chief of Transportation Kim Y. Royster**. “The NYPD will continue to supplement speed enforcement on New York City’s highways and local roads. Speed is a major factor in determining the severity of injuries, and the NYPD will continue in its mission of educating the public about the dangers of speeding and taking enforcement action against speeding drivers.”

“Speeding is dangerous and all too common among drivers here in New York City,” said **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan**. “Automated enforcement works. It is an important and necessary tool in making our streets safer. We need to continue all efforts to reduce and prevent traffic deaths and serious injuries. I stand by the mayor and our sister Vision Zero agencies to support local control of speed cameras and speed limits as a proven public health measure that saves lives.”

“New York City deserves safe streets,” said **New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission Acting Commissioner and Chair Ryan Wanttaja**. “Automated enforcement has proven time and time again to save lives, making our streets safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and law-abiding drivers, including the professional TLC-licensed

drivers that keep our city moving 24/7. I join Mayor Adams in calling on the state to give New York City the tools it needs to keep our streets safe for everyone.”

“Keeping our city safe includes keeping our streets safe,” said **New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) Commissioner Dawn M. Pinnock**. “With support from our colleagues in Albany, we can save lives and make New York City’s streets safer for all road users. At DCAS, in our role managing the city’s municipal vehicle fleet, we are investing in technology and employee training to prevent collisions and set the standard for fleet safety.”

“New York City streets are becoming increasingly dangerous for our residents and visitors,” said **U.S. Representative Yvette Clarke**. “The rise in traffic incidents and fatalities has increased over recent years, and this cannot be left to solve itself. That is why I commend Mayor Eric Adams for taking the necessary steps to combat the rise in traffic violence. Together, with backing from Albany, we can save countless lives by pursuing proven traffic solutions, like lowering speed limits, increasing red-light cameras, and commanding the automated traffic enforcement program. Currently, these aspirations are out of our city’s reach, due to standing policy inhibiting requisition of the mayor’s coalition efforts. I proudly stand with our mayor in his efforts to decrease traffic violence and calling for our state government to provide his administration the necessary tools to better manage and enforce our own traffic laws.”

“It is unconscionable to endanger more New Yorkers’ lives every day, because Albany doesn’t allow us to take measures that we know make our streets safer, like setting our own speed limits, fully utilizing our already existing speed cameras, and more,” said **New York State Senator Andrew Gounardes**. “That’s why I introduced S5602, my bill in the state Senate to bring our legislative power back to our streets, neighborhoods, and communities, and I am committed to ensuring that it gets done.”

“In spite of concerted efforts by the city over many years, the epidemic of New Yorkers being killed by cars continues,” said **New York State Senator Liz Krueger**. “If we’re ever going to turn the corner on deadly traffic violence, we need to ensure the city has all the tools it needs at its disposal. Unfortunately, right now, the city has one hand tied behind its back because Albany holds the decision-making power in several vital areas. This has never made sense, and it’s got to change.”

“State laws hinder our city’s ability to get dangerous drivers off the road and keep streets safe,” said **New York State Senator Roxanne J. Persaud**. “We don’t need another traffic fatality under a camera system that we do not control. Albany must give us the right to regulate when our cameras are in use. Older New Yorkers, school students, people with disabilities — all New Yorkers — have a right to safe streets.”

“It is ludicrous that New York City needs to ask for permission every time they want to make streets safer, whether we are talking about lower speed limits or speed cameras,” **New York State Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz**. “We need to empower our city to make decisions that are in the best interests of public safety, both for pedestrians and for drivers. I strongly support taking legislative action to get this done and urge my colleagues to join us in advocating for local control of our streets.”

“Passing Sammy’s Law to let New York City set lower speed limits will save lives,” said **New York State Assemblymember Richard N. Gottfried**, Assembly sponsor of Sammy’s Law. “New York City should have the right to protect public safety on our own streets without begging permission from Albany.”

“I support the mayor’s call for local control of traffic laws and traffic safety measures,” said **New York State Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi**. “Albany should not be getting in the way of protecting New York City residents.”

“We have the tools available to do much better in preventing traffic crashes and deaths,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon**. “I support allowing New York City to operate the school speed camera program and the red-light program, set speed limits, and enforce bus lane restrictions. New York City’s streets must be shared safely between pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. Expansion and local operation of these programs will help keep people safe.”

“Speed cameras, lower speed limits, and bus lane enforcement — simply put — save lives,” said **New York City Comptroller Brad Lander**. “New York City needs the ability to tackle our epidemic of traffic violence with effective tools to make our streets safer. I urge Albany to give us the power to do so.”

“Speed limits and speed cameras save lives, and we must act immediately to make our streets safer,” said **Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson**. “Local control for traffic safety would allow for those closest to the problems to address the needs, and I

applaud Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez for their efforts to make safety our priority.”

“The government powers and mechanisms to keep our streets and commuters safe should be placed at the local level — to elected officials and community groups who know what’s occurring on a street-by-street basis,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso**. “New York City must have local control of our traffic laws and measures to provide safety to all.”

“Speed cameras save lives. It’s as simple as that,” said **New York City Councilmember Erik Bottcher**. “It would make no sense for Albany to deny New York City the ability to utilize these life-saving tools. I applaud Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez for their leadership on behalf of all New Yorkers.”

“Last year was the worst year for traffic violence since Vision Zero began. Too many drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians have died or been injured on Ocean Avenue, and our city doesn’t have the power to take real action,” said **New York City Councilmember Shahana Hanif**. “If our city government is to address traffic safety, we need the state Legislature to grant us home rule. We cannot wait on Albany to change speed limits and update traffic — we need that power now to take action and save lives. I’m proud to join Mayor Adams and DOT Commissioner Rodriguez in their call to reclaim safety in our city.”

“Traffic violence is a silent killer in our neighborhoods, and we need to work to solve it as soon as possible,” said **New York City Councilmember Rita Joseph**. “Albany must give New York City local control to stop traffic violence, or more lives will be needlessly lost. I thank Mayor Adams for using his platform to speak boldly and decisively on this issue. I fully support his efforts of trying to get Albany to pass local control for traffic safety. It doesn’t make sense for politicians in Buffalo to decide speed limits in Brooklyn.”

“Our family members, friends, and neighbors die in traffic accidents almost daily because New York City’s hands are tied behind its back when it comes to traffic safety,” said **New York City Councilmember Shekar Krishnan**. “I fully support the mayor’s call for local control of speed cameras, red-light cameras, and speed limits. We need the state to give us the power to keep our communities safe.”

“Our city faces a traffic violence epidemic, and our state Legislature must grant city leaders the powers to tackle this head on,” said **New York City Councilmember Julie Menin**. “I strongly support home rule for New York City on traffic issues, so our city has control over its red-light cameras, school zone speed cameras, and other key traffic safety programs. As the councilmember who represents the police precinct with the most injuries and most deaths in all of Manhattan last year, I call on lawmakers in Albany to grant us home rule, so we can make our city’s streets safer and stem this crisis of traffic violence.”

“Traffic safety is a critical issue across our city, including in the 33rd council district, where we have had a tragic number of fatalities,” said **New York City Councilmember Lincoln Restler**. “We can’t wait on upstate representatives in Albany to make the urgent changes needed to address dangerous conditions on our streets. New York City leaders need to be empowered to save lives and implement local speed limits and red-light cameras now.”

“My sister Hermanda Booker was a special education teacher and beloved member of our family. In 2017, she was senselessly killed while crossing the street on her way to work in Midwood,” said **Rhondelle Booker Adams, member, Families for Safe Streets**. “It’s now 2022, and deadly traffic violence is surging — 46 percent higher than at this point last year. While Families for Safe Streets remains focused on achieving physical street redesigns that prevent speeding and protect vulnerable street users, Albany must also give New York City control over additional automated enforcement tools to help end the bloodshed and heartbreak on our streets. Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez are right: We need local control over these life-saving Vision Zero programs, without any further delay.”

“Lower speed limits save lives,” said **Amy Cohen, co-founder, Families for Safe Streets**. “In 2013, my 12-year-old son Sammy was killed by a speeding driver. After the city lowered the speed limit, another child was struck on the same street. But this time, the child survived because of the lower speed. We must be able to reduce speed limits and save lives on more streets in New York City. Families for Safe Streets members know too well the horrific pain of traffic violence. We urge state lawmakers to pass Sammy’s Law and give New York City home rule over street safety to ensure no other families have to face this horrific pain.”

“Combatting rising traffic violence is essential to creating a safer and healthier New York City,” said **Tiffany-Ann Taylor, vice president for transportation, Regional Plan Association (RPA)**. “To do that, city leaders need to be able to use all the tools available to them — including speed limits and speed, red-light, and bus cameras — with the flexibility to employ them appropriately. As recommended in the RPA report, ‘Re-Envisioning the Right-of-Way,’ it is crucial that leaders in Albany take action to grant DOT the authority to create safer streets, and we are proud to join them in this effort.”

“We join Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez in their urgent call to Albany to grant New York City the authority to operate automated-enforcement cameras and set speed limits as it sees fit,” said **Eric McClure, executive director, StreetsPAC**. “We know that cameras and lower speed limits save lives, and there’s absolutely no reason that local leaders shouldn’t have the right to determine how to implement them. Dangerous drivers don’t take the night off, and neither should our speed cameras. And red-light cameras clearly shouldn’t be limited to a scant one percent of the city’s intersections. Governor Hochul, Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie, we implore you to give New York City the ability to take these life-saving measures now.”

“Albany’s control over New York City street safety is deadly,” said **Danny Harris, executive director, Transportation Alternatives**. “Fifty-nine percent of recent traffic deaths in the five boroughs occurred at a time when Albany requires speed safety cameras to be off. This is unconscionable and needs to be changed immediately. As traffic violence is on the rise, we stand with Mayor Adams, Commissioner Rodriguez, and so many elected officials in urging state legislators to give New York City full authority over street safety. Alongside permanent re-engineering of dangerous corridors, expanded automated enforcement will help us get Vision Zero back on track and save countless lives.”

“It’s unconscionable that the city can’t effectively use the tools it has to combat traffic fatalities, and we thank Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez for their leadership and standing with us in demanding that the state pass home rule legislation to ensure safe streets for all New Yorkers, including cyclists, drivers, and pedestrians, especially children,” said **Ken Podziba, president and CEO, Bike New York**. “This is a matter of life and death, and the leadership in Albany must protect the people they serve.”

“As a cosponsor of New York State bill S.5602, I fully support state authorization to New York City to expand its speed camera program and operate them at any time in the

speed zones that have been identified as an area of concern,” said **New York State Senator Robert Jackson**. “I recognize the successes of the New York City school zone speed camera program, and therefore we should eliminate the restriction on hours of operation on weekdays. Our speed camera program works to deter speeding, so we will continue to work at the state level to allow city cameras to operate 24/7 and for stronger penalties for speeding motorists who continue to put lives in unnecessary danger in New York City.”

“We need to use every life-saving tool in the arsenal to address the crisis of traffic violence on our streets,” said **New York State Assemblymember Emily Gallagher**. “As a state lawmaker, but even more as a New Yorker who has lost loved ones to crashes, I am urging my colleagues and the governor to deliver home rule to Mayor Adams and the New York City Department of Transportation. We have many important responsibilities in Albany — setting speed limits or limiting school zone cameras should not be among them.”

“These are our streets. These are our bodies and the bodies of our children, elders, friends, neighbors that are mutilated and destroyed in traffic violence every day,” said **New York City Councilmember Julie Won**. “We know these streets better than anyone, and Albany must empower the Department of Transportation to implement proven, life-saving measures near our schools and on our blocks.”

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