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MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES CENTRAL PARK, WORLD'S MOST ICONIC GREENSPACE, WILL BECOME PERMANENTLY CAR-FREE

*Center Drive, Terrace Drive, East Drive and West Drive will be permanently closed to cars;
Decision will return park to its original purpose as a recreational space*

NEW YORK—In advance of Earth Day 2018, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that Central Park, the world's most iconic greenspace, will become entirely car-free. Beginning on June 27, 2018, the day after the conclusion of public school classes and the first day outdoor pools are open across the city, the last sections of the park's loop drives that remain open to cars will be permanently closed to them, returning the park to its original use as an urban refuge and recreation space. More than 42 million visitors flock to Central Park each year. Returning the park's loop road to walkers, joggers and cyclists will reduce air pollution in the park and improve safety. It also signals New York City's commitment to prioritizing people over cars in its premier public spaces.

Mayor de Blasio designated Prospect Park's loop drive as permanently car-free this past January. Both of the city's iconic 19th century Olmstead and Vaux parks will now share that status.

"Our parks are for people, not cars. For more than a century, cars have turned parts of the world's most iconic park into a highway. Today we take it back. We are prioritizing the safety and the health of the millions of parents, children and visitors who flock to Central Park," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

"Like many New Yorkers, I count on Central Park to give me a much-needed dose of nature, and so I applaud the de Blasio administration for taking this important step. Making one of the most famous greenspaces in the world a little greener in honor of Earth Day is the perfect way to celebrate our planet. Summer in the city is going to be that much better now," said **City Council Speaker Corey Johnson**.

"Today we proudly announce that Central Park will be car free," said **DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg**. "As with Brooklyn's Prospect Park, which went permanently car-free earlier this year, the change will be welcome news to pedestrians, cyclists and those who love our parks. We thank the Mayor for his leadership, and congratulate the advocates who fought for decades to make this day a reality. We look forward to the celebratory ride this summer."

“Central Park is not just one of New York’s favorite parks – it’s one of the most-beloved, most-recognized parks in the entire world. Now, we’re making history by demonstrating just how clean, accessible, and safe an urban park can be,” said **Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP.**

Cars have used Central Park’s scenic loop drive for more than a century. Reductions in the hours during which cars are permitted began in the 1960s. Most recently, in 2015, Mayor de Blasio had announced that all park drives north of 72nd Street would be car-free. Northbound car traffic has continued to be permitted on Center Drive from 7am-7pm on weekdays, and southbound traffic has continued on West Drive, Terrace Drive and Center Drive from 8am-10am on weekdays.

The transverse roadways at 97th, 86th, 79th and 65th Streets are not affected by these changes. They were built into the park’s original design as fully-separated, below-grade streets to accommodate thru-traffic.

DOT, NYC Parks, NYPD and the Central Park Conservancy are coordinating on this transition. DOT analysis shows that traffic increases on surrounding areas is expected to be minimal. To help enforce this change, the NYPD will make additional Traffic Enforcement Agents available at local intersections. As the car-free hours take effect, DOT will closely monitor conditions to better accommodate traffic changes, as well as implement additional changes if necessary.

“Central Park is one of New York City’s most iconic open spaces and is used by millions of New Yorkers and visitors,” said **Daniel Zarrilli, New York City’s Senior Director of Climate Policy and Programs and Chief Resilience Officer.** “Making Central Park car-free will ensure that everyone who enjoys the park will enjoy cleaner air and improved safety in support of the City’s sustainability and climate goals.”

“Central Park becoming car free ensures we continue to better connect to our communities, and our low carbon future,” said **Mark Chambers, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability.**

“Central Park is a jewel of New York City,” said **Congressman Adriano Espallat.** “Today’s announcement ensures that New Yorkers will be able to safely enjoy the beauty, vitality, and all that the park has to offer.”

"Central Park is a natural wonder, providing a beautiful oasis that contributes to the physical and mental health of all who enjoy the park. Additionally, for generations, Central Park has served as a cultural and educational hub in the middle of the busiest city in the world. More than 42 million visitors head to Central Park making it a major tourism destination and economic engine for our city. Today's announcement is a major victory for our beloved park. I applaud Mayor Bill de Blasio's commitment to a greener, safer, and healthier New York City," said **Senator José M. Serrano.**

"Today's historic announcement to make Central Park permanently car-free will protect the crown jewel of New York City parks as a true refuge from the bustle of the city streets, not to mention help reduce carbon emissions. Thank you to Mayor de Blasio, DOT Commissioner Trottenberg, and Parks Commissioner Silver for taking this extraordinary step to put park users first," said **Senator Brad Hoylman.**

"It's great Earth Day news that Central Park is finally going completely car-free. Central Park is an oasis of calm and greenery in the heart of the world's busiest city, and now it's about to get even better," said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried**.

"The removal of cars from the Central Park loop is a great stride forward to making parks safer and more environmentally friendly," said **Council Member Barry S. Grodenchik, Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation**. "I am pleased to see this valuable space returned to parks users."

"Today we're taking a bold step in our commitment to the environment and making our green spaces truly green, and opening them to pedestrians and cyclists," said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair of the Committee on Transportation**. "It is a timely announcement as we celebrate Earth Week and our 3rd Car Free Day tomorrow as a contribution towards preserving our planet for present and future generations. I commend the Mayor and the administration in further establishing Central Park as a place where we as New Yorkers can escape from the busy city. We have the potential to make our City the most walkable in the world."

"Earth Day 2018 warrants a special New York City celebration. Park visitors will now experience our historic green spaces without the threat of speeding vehicles. Today's announcement that Central Park will join Brooklyn's Prospect Park as a 100% car-free haven means shared public space returns to its best use. The Mayor and leaders of our Parks and Transportation Departments have set things right. Now, millions of park goers each year will be safer, breathe easier, and appreciate our historic parks as they were intended," said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Chair Committee on Immigration**.

"Permanently barring cars from Central Park is a long-overdue victory for every New Yorker and our environment. Parks are for people, and taking cars out of Central Park – the lungs of our city -- is a great step toward making New York greener and safer. As someone who loves to walk and cycle in the park, and as the Council Member who represents this area, I am thrilled that this precious oasis is finally freed of car traffic. I commend the Mayor for returning one of our great parks to the people," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

"New York City's precious green spaces should be a refuge," said **City Council Member Mark Levine**. "New Yorkers shouldn't have to worry about looking over their shoulder for oncoming traffic if they're visiting a park on a walk with their kids or riding their bike. With today's announcement, countless families, joggers and cyclists can enjoy an even safer, healthier park space."

"I greatly applaud the de Blasio administration's decision to remove cars from Central Park," said **Council Member Antonio Reynoso**. "In a city as dense as New York City, parks serve as an escape from noise and traffic. Prioritizing pedestrians and bicycles in one of NYC's most beloved parks demonstrates that we value the preservation of open-space and greenery within our communities."

"There are few places you can go where on one block you're in the bustle of the city, and the next in an urban oasis. Central Park is just that place. A car-free park gives back treasured green space and prioritizes safety and sustainability. Pedestrians, cyclists, and visitors from across the globe

can enjoy the park, carefree. I applaud the Mayor for this historic decision,” said **Council Member Keith Powers**.

“The Central Park Conservancy applauds Mayor Bill de Blasio, NYC Department of Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, and NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver for working to ensure a car-free Central Park,” said **Elizabeth W. Smith, President and CEO of the Central Park Conservancy**. “It is our mission to restore, manage, and enhance Central Park. For over 35 years, the Conservancy has worked tirelessly with many New York City agencies to make Central Park safe and accessible. This historic initiative will ensure that the Park’s essential purpose as an urban oasis will be preserved.”

"With today's announcement, Mayor de Blasio has done what 20 mayors before him could not do: get cars out of Central Park," said **Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives**. "We're glad to see this conclusion to the decades-long campaign to return New York's most iconic green space to the way it was originally intended, and we thank the mayor and Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg for their leadership in working to make Central Park once again a place for people, not for cars."

“Central Park is an amazing place and resource for New Yorkers and visitors from all over the world who use the park every day to exercise their bodies and their minds in order to live a healthy life,” said Michael Capiraso, NYRR President and CEO. “At New York Road Runners our mission is to help and inspire people through running, and today this already amazing park goes car free to enhance its beauty, safety, and accessibility for all runners.”

“Transportation Alternatives’ Car-Free Central Park Committee was formed in the mid-1990s and spearheaded by longtime 5BBC member Ken Coughlin, who became the committee’s chairperson in 1996. The committee raised the importance of having a car-free Central Park and the Five Borough Bicycle Club applauds this long-needed bicycle-friendly advance,” said a **spokesperson for the Five Borough Bike Club**.

“The effort to free Central Park from motor vehicles has been a long one, but it has been a fight well worth fighting. Today, we’re ecstatic to see that come June, Central Park’s loop drives will become car-free forever,” said **Ken Coughlin, a StreetsPAC board member and long-time advocate for getting cars out of the park**. “We’re grateful to Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Trottenberg for turning a decades-long dream into reality.”

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