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MAYOR ADAMS, AMAZON COLLABORATE TO CRACK DOWN ON “GHOST VEHICLES,” ILLICIT LICENSE PLATES IN NYC

Collaboration Follows Adams Administration’s Continuing Crackdown on Ghost Vehicles

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams and Amazon today took a new step in New York City’s crackdown on “ghost vehicles,” collaborating to further prohibit and prevent the sale of any product advertised on the e-commerce site as a “camera blocker” to anyone ordering such a product within New York state. As part of the collaboration, Amazon will proactively search for and restrict the sale of smokescreen license plate covers and tinted license plate covers to customers with a New York state address. Amazon has also agreed to automatically display electronic notices stating that a given item cannot be shipped to New York locations — before one of these products can even be added to a customer’s online shopping cart.

In January 2022, the city enacted Local Law 22 prohibiting the sale of products designed to conceal or obscure vehicle license plates to New York City residents. This local law builds upon a provision of the State Vehicle and Traffic Law, which also prohibits the concealing or obscuring of license plates. Despite Local Law 22, companies have continued to sell these products to New York City residents who use them to purposefully break the law. Amazon’s commitment to restrict the sale of these products complies with Local Law 22 and sets an example for other retailers.

“Today, we are sending a clear and simple message: We will leave no stone unturned to keep New Yorkers safe on our streets,” said **Mayor Adams**. “Ghost cars are by design unsafe and untraceable, so in addition to finding and towing them, we’re going to stop them from appearing in the first place. Amazon has been a willing partner in the battle for street safety and we thank them for working with us to keep New York City streets safe. We expect all e-commerce platforms and other sellers to follow their lead, comply with the law, and keep these products out of New York.”

“We strive every day to ensure a trustworthy experience for our customers,” said **Jennifer Cruickshank, director, New York public policy, Amazon**. “We are proud to collaborate with Mayor Adams and support his efforts to keep tinted and smokescreen license plate covers from being sold in New York.”

Ghost vehicles — vehicles bearing illegal and counterfeit license plates — are [fueling an epidemic of virtually untraceable cars](#) that harm and kill pedestrians, bicyclists, and New York City’s most vulnerable — including seniors, children, and other at-risk groups. Obstructed license plates are often intended to defraud speed and red-light cameras throughout New York City — resulting in upticks in dangerous traffic violations and convincing drivers they can evade accountability.

In the first seven months of 2022, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) arrested over 2,700 vehicle operators driving with forged license plates. The NYPD has also towed nearly 2,000 vehicles parked in violation while displaying a covered, obstructed, or illegal paper plate.

Vehicles with fraudulent or obstructed license plates towed by the NYPD and the Sheriff’s Office are often not redeemed and sent to auction. Approximately 25 percent of the 5,500 vehicles with paper plates found to be in violation and towed by the NYPD’s Traffic Enforcement District last year were abandoned by their owners. Through June 2022, 562 of the 1,646 towed vehicles with paper plates were similarly not redeemed.

“Whether it’s to avoid paying tolls or an attempt to evade law enforcement, the sole purpose of these products is to skirt the law, and that’s unacceptable,” said **Deputy Mayor for Public Safety Philip Banks III**. “Make no mistake — any product used to obscure a license plate poses a safety threat. This effort is an innovative, proactive strategy to further protect all of the motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians who share our roads. I commend Amazon for their partnership and thank Mayor Adams for continuing to put New Yorkers’ safety first.”

“This administration will not enable reckless driving on our streets. That means we must ensure there is not a market for unsafe products to reach New Yorkers,” said **Deputy Mayor for Operations Meera Joshi**. “We thank Amazon for being a willing partner in helping us remove license plate covers from their list of products and enforce against potential bad drivers.”

“The NYPD will never waver in its mission to ensure that the city’s roads remain safe for all,” said **NYPD Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell**. “We often say that traffic safety is public safety, and vehicles that are unsafe and untraceable represent the opposite of public safety. That is why we have been holding strategy sessions with our partners to end the far-ranging public safety hazards that threaten everyone who lives in, works in, or visits New York City. Our efforts to find the best approaches to road safety will go on as New Yorkers demand and deserve.”

“We are committed to working collaboratively with partners to improve public safety,” said **New York City Sheriff Anthony Miranda**. “Plastic covers creates ghost vehicles facilitating speeding, passing red lights, driving recklessly, and avoiding tolls. These actions present a clear danger to our families, those walking, and those driving. Any device that creates or promotes ‘ghost vehicles’ will be fully investigated.”

“We know that the growing number of drivers who obscure license plates are a threat to public safety, because DOT’s automated enforcement cameras cannot hold them accountable when they speed or run red lights,” said **New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez**. “We thank Mayor Adams for coming to this innovative

agreement with Amazon to stop the sale of such items in our state. In addition to 24/7 speed cameras, DOT has an ambitious plan to redesign streets and intersections — as we use every tool at our disposal to stop traffic violence.”

“The drivers and operators of these ‘ghost vehicles’ are knowingly evading the law, escaping accountability, and contributing to the decline of our city’s street and public safety,” said **New York City Councilmember Kamillah Hanks, chair, Committee on Public Safety**. “This partnership will assist with the enforcement and ultimate goals of enacting Local Law 22 and will consequently crack down on fraudsters and dangerous drivers who put us all at risk.”

“I’m proud to have passed Local Law 22 in December, which made selling these products illegal,” said **New York City Councilmember Robert F. Holden**. “My staff and I have worked with Amazon. I’m proud to see that Mayor Adams knows how serious this problem is and is taking direct action to cut scofflaws and criminals off from their supply of these products, whose only purpose is to enable reckless driving and other crimes in New York City.”

“As New York City faces a crisis of traffic violence, obscured license plates make our streets more dangerous by enabling unchecked dangerous driving,” said **Danny Harris, executive director, Transportation Alternatives**. “Our leaders must do everything in their power to keep people on our streets safe. That is why we worked so hard this year to implement 24/7 speed safety cameras, and we need this program to be as effective as possible. Today’s announcement from Mayor Adams and Amazon is a step toward strengthening this key Vision Zero program and keeping New Yorkers safe on our streets.”

“New Yorkers are being maimed and killed by traffic violence every day. That is why Families for Safe Streets fought so hard for 24/7 speed safety cameras,” said **Devan Sipher, member, steering committee, Families for Safe Streets**. “Any product that helps drivers evade accountability for reckless driving is purposefully making our streets more dangerous, especially for children and the elderly. Today’s announcement by Mayor Adams and Amazon is a welcome step toward ensuring that speed cameras continue to keep New Yorkers safe.”

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