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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 20, 2018

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

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, thank you very, very much. We've got – there we go, okay. Well, this is a wonderful day for this city, this is a moment that people have waited for a long, long time. And I want to start by saluting everyone at New York Road Runners, congratulations. This is a big day for all of you and a big victory for all of you.

[Applause]

To Michael, New York Road Runners has done so much for this city, the marathon is just one piece of it. I want to thank you for your leadership, I want to thank you for all that this organization does and we are proud to be one of the world's great running cities and now this park will realize its full potential for our runners, for our walkers, for our bicyclists, for our kids on tricycles. The unicyclist, don't leave out the unicyclists.

[Laughter]

Very loud constituency – all of them will now get to enjoy a car free Central Park. This is a whole new day for New York City.

[Applause]

I want to thank some of the key leaders, the City agencies who are here, who have been a part of making this park great. And I think everything they do is only going to get better when the park is fully car-free. I want to thank the commanding officer for Manhattan Patrol Borough North, Chief Kathleen O'Reilly of the NYPD.

[Applause]

Guy who has one of the best jobs in New York City, Commanding Officer of the Central Park Precinct, Captain Peter Andrea –

[Applause]

Another one of the great jobs of New York City, the Chief Operating Officer for the Central Park Conservancy, Chris Nolan –

[Applause]

Our Chief Resilience Officer for the City of New York, Dan Zarrilli –

[Applause]

And our Director for the Office of Sustainability, Mark Chambers.

[Applause]

And to all of the advocates and the activists and the community members who have fought for this for a long time, again congratulations this is your day. Congratulations to all of you.

[Applause]

Now, I want everyone to understand why it is important that the leaders in the City government who work on resiliency and work on sustainability are here because we are on the eve of Earth Day this weekend. And this announcement is very much connected to understanding what we have to do to protect our Earth and to fight against climate change. Because let's face it, there's an extensional threat that we are facing and that's climate change. And Earth Day is a call to arms to all of us to keep making big changes, to keep protecting our Earth, to protect our children and grandchildren. Earth Day has taken on a whole new meaning, as we come to understand the danger of climate change. And we can act in so many ways to fight back against climate change, to live differently. And that's what Earth Day really calls us to do.

So, we need to think about all of things that allow us to make that change. All of the ways we can stop polluting the Earth, all the ways we can use renewable energy, all of the ways we can conserve, that's what Earth Day calls us to do. And it also calls us to think about how we cut the admissions that have plagued this Earth. The City of New York is in the global vanguard, we are pledged to cut admissions by 80 percent in this city by 2050. That's going to make a huge difference. The City of New York is leading the way by divesting our pension funds from fossil fuel companies. That's going to make a huge difference. We are suing some of the biggest petroleum companies to hold them liable for what they have done to the Earth and what they have done to this city and to get resources from them so we can protect our city going forward.

All of it comes back to making every conceivable change we can. And it comes back to remembering the meaning of a park like this. This park was not built for automobiles. Right? This was not the purpose of this park to be a place for automobiles. Literally it was built before there were automobiles. It was built for people. And the idea of thinking about every aspect of our lives and finding ways to make that change – that's what this is all about. And this is such a powerful notion, to take this absolutely crucial piece of our city and liberate it from the

automobile and help people return to what our ancestors used to know, look around you – people walking, people biking, that is what this park will now be about.

[Applause]

Now, we are New Yorkers so we know that famous phrase, if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere – when we do things here people pay attention everywhere. We are talking about this park, one of the most famous sites in this city known across the world, right up there with the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building, when people think about New York City, they think about Central Park and this news will spread all over this country, all over this world today, that the most iconic park on Earth will now be car free. That's going to be felt everywhere.

[Applause]

Who's going to benefit from this? Our children, our families, people, as Michael said, for whom this is their background, in effect. All the people who come to visit us, this is one of the places they want to see the most. All of those people will benefit. That's not a few people my friends. We've done the count. There are 42 million visits to Central Park every year, 42 million visits. Now all of those people will have a safe, beautiful experience because this park will be car free.

Now, I just want to drive home the central point and I am going to ask the distinguished audience to help me. And you heard a little history lesson there earlier in my remarks so I'm going to ask you all, was Central Park built for cars?

Audience: No.

Mayor: I'm sorry, was Central Park built for cars?

Audience: No!

Mayor: Should it be car free now?

Audience: Yes!

Mayor: Is it meant to be for the cars or the people?

Audience: For the people!

Mayor: You've done good.

[Laughter]

Parks in this city are sacred because, probably more than any place, our parks are our refuge, they are where we do everything – little league, and kids learning on the playground how to play for the beginning of their lives. For some of us, even more important things. My wife Chirlane

and I got married under a tree in Prospect Park. It doesn't get better than that. They are an oasis. And I always say, for some people, they are literally where they take their summer vacation, because that's what they can afford, to be in a park and that's even more important for those families.

Well now what will be different when all those families come here, they are going to breathe cleaner air because there won't be any exhaust from cars. The parents aren't going to be looking over their shoulder all the time to worry about their kids' safety with a car going by. There's going to be a kind of peace, a sense of security that wasn't there before. I cannot think of a better way to celebrate Earth Day than returning this extraordinary park to the people and letting us all feel the beauty of nature without a single car in sight. That's going to be the difference for the people of this city. I want to just say a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

And I want to emphasize that part, all day and all year and every year – this is a permanent change, car free forever. Because some people thought it might be just a trial thing. It's no trial thing, this is the big change forever.

[Applause]

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that I want to turn to one of the people that made this possible because we had to do some very careful planning, first with Prospect Park and now with Central Park to make sure we could work. And I really want to thank our Commissioner of Transportation, her whole team because they believed in this vision and they believe they could find a way to make it work for everyone so they are heroes today, Commissioner of Transportation Polly Trottenberg.

Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And it is a historic day, I wish it were a little warmer but it feels like spring in the air. And it is so exciting to be here with you today as we announce Central Park going car free on the heels of Prospect Park. Mr. Mayor, it is a tremendous legacy for you.

As many of you know, and you mentioned our department, the Parks Department, there has been a process that has been going on for many years. The efforts to start removing cars from Central Park started with Mayor Lindsey in 1966 and over the years we have slowly closed entrances, reduced hours, we have more and more reclaimed the park as you've said for families, for children, for runners, for cyclists but today we are announcing we're taking that final step. And I can tell as someone who lives by the other big park, Prospect Park, it's been such a success there, we've been able to very successfully manage traffic impacts. It's going to be an equally fantastic success here.

And I do want to thank my team, particularly Eric Beaton, and Ann Marie Doherty, Ann Marie has been working on closing these two parks for her whole career and she's done an amazing job so thank you.

[Applause]

And I just want to close by saying it's also been an honor for us to work with the Advocacy Committee, Transportation Alternatives, New York Road Runners and all the people who love this park and Prospect Park. Thank you, it's a really great day.

Mayor: There is a very happy man who is going to be speaking next.

[Laughter]

He declared – we had a town hall meeting in the Bronx, he asked for a title change in public. He did not want to be known as Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, he wanted to be known as a commissioner for fun, and now he is living up to his new title because this place is going to be even more fun. Parks Commissioner – and fun commissioner – Mitch Silver.

Commissioner Mitchell Silver, Department of Parks and Recreation: Thank you, Mayor. And wow, this is amazing, amazing change. So excited, Central Park is not just New York's favorite park but it is the most beloved, most recognized parks in the entire world. And I'm lucky enough to have Central Park as my office. I literally work here in Central Park right near the zoo. I walk during lunch and run here very often, and I'm also an active member of Road Runners, and so I'm so delighted that I can now run without smelling the exhaust and worrying about a car veering off course. So, I'm so delighted. I'm equally delighted Mayor because it will become official and car free on my birthday. So, I'm delighted on June –

Mayor: Really? Save the date, save the date.

Commissioner Silver: June 27th will be the day that we go car free, so I'm actually going to walk and run, delightfully, maybe around the entire six mile loop. And every day, I see New Yorkers and visitors alike falling in love with this one of a lifetime public space. Now, thanks to the Mayor and DOT, our friends at Central Park Conservancy were making history. Thank you, Mayor, for this historic, historic day. Making Central Park traffic free shows the country and the world how clean, accessible, and safe an urban park can really be. It's another reason to love Central Park and to love New York City.

Thank you all very much and enjoy a car free Central Park.

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