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BYE BYE, CARS!: DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS JOIN ADVOCATES FOR A BICYCLE RIDE BEHIND LAST CAR DRIVING THROUGH CENTRAL PARK

World's most iconic green space goes permanently and officially car-free tomorrow; Only Central Park's four transverse roads will now be open to private vehicles, returning park to its original purpose as an urban refuge and recreational space

NEW YORK—Officials from the de Blasio Administration will join parks and cycling advocates on Tuesday evening for a bike ride behind the last car driving through Central Park. As of 7pm this evening, the park is now entirely and permanently car-free, restored to its original use as an urban refuge and recreation space.

“Back on Earth Day, we announced that this summer, Central Park would be once and for all dedicated to people, not cars,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “For more than a century, we had turned parts of the world’s most iconic park into a highway – and starting tonight, we have officially taken it back for good. We are prioritizing the safety and the health of the millions of people who flock to Central Park. A special tonight goes to those advocates, pedestrians, cyclists and park lovers who fought for decades for a priceless policy change.”

In April, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that as of June 27, the last sections of Central Park’s loop drives in the southeastern corner of the park -- that had remained open to cars during weekday rush hours -- would become permanently car-free. Tomorrow was chosen as the first car-free day because public school classes concluded today and outdoor pools open tomorrow across the city. The transverse roadways at 97th, 86th, 79th and 65th Streets are unaffected by these changes, as they were built into the park’s original design as fully-separated, below-grade streets to accommodate thru-traffic. This past January, Mayor de Blasio had also designated Brooklyn’s Prospect Park permanently car-free. Both of the city’s iconic 19th century parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux are permanently car-free.

“We are thrilled to be here tonight to take an evening bike ride and wave goodbye to Central Park’s final car -- ushering in a new era for one of the world’s most iconic green spaces,” said **DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg**. “This change in Central Park, as well as in Brooklyn’s Prospect Park earlier this year, will make all the difference to pedestrians and cyclists, and everyone who loves our parks. We thank the Mayor for his leadership, along with

Transportation Alternatives and other advocates who fought for decades to make this day a reality.”

“Making Central Park traffic-free shows the country and the world how clean, accessible, and safe an urban park can really be,” said **NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP**. “Thanks to the Mayor, DOT, and our friends at the Central Park Conservancy, we can enjoy this beloved, historic park in a whole new way.”

“Central Park is an oasis of open space in our concrete jungle, an urban landmark in which cars have felt out of place for some time now,” said **City Council Speaker Corey Johnson**. “I am thrilled we are taking this final step in returning Central Park to its original intentions, and I encourage all New Yorkers – and tourists too – to enjoy this incomparable, and now car-free, park to the fullest this summer and forever after.”

“Central Park is one of the greatest planned green spaces in the world. Finally, New Yorkers and visitors from across the globe alike can enjoy it without the danger and disruption of car traffic,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Freeing our city’s major parks from the intrusion of traffic is the right move for the parks themselves and the New Yorkers who visit them. I thank the mayor, the Department of Transportation, and the Parks Department for finally getting this done.”

“Central Park is one of our city's greatest treasures and one of the world's most iconic parks,” said **Senator José M. Serrano**. “For 160 years, the park has served as the shared backyard of countless New Yorkers, providing an abundance of not only health and recreational benefits, but also cultural and educational opportunities. Today's announcement ensures that the more than 42 million people that visit each year will enjoy a cleaner, safer and quieter park. I commend Mayor de Blasio for his commitment to a greener and safer New York City.”

“All New Yorkers should welcome the news that Central Park is finally completely car-free. More than ever, people in the heart of the world’s busiest city will be able to enjoy its greenery and tranquility,” said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried**.

“In April we celebrate Earth Day by shutting down a large segment of Broadway for Car Free Day. The event has been welcomed by New Yorkers and it’s encouraging to see that we’re expanding the areas that are car-free every day in the city,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, chair of the Council Committee on Transportation**. “Turning Central Park car-free is an important change in the way we use our parks and encourage New Yorkers to use greener transportation alternatives.”

“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 City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation**. “I am pleased to see this valuable space returned to parks users.”

“Today, a car-free Central Park gives back treasured green space and prioritizes safety and sustainability,” said **Council Member Keith Powers**. “Pedestrians, cyclists, and visitors from

across the globe can enjoy our urban oasis, carefree – because it is officially car free. I applaud the Mayor on this historic occasion.”

“I applaud the de Blasio administration for their decision to remove cars from Central Park,” said **Council Member Antonio Reynoso**. “In a city as dense as New York, parks serve as an escape from daily noise and traffic. Prioritizing pedestrians and bicycles in one of NYC’s most beloved parks demonstrates that we value the preservation of open-space within our communities. I am glad to see that the administration is taking steps towards a more environmentally sustainable and pedestrian friendly City, and I look forward to continuing to work towards this goal.”

“Permanently barring cars from Central Park is a long-overdue victory for every New Yorker and our environment,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**. “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,”

"Our city is full of cars. They clog up the streets, they line practically every block. Central Park was meant to be a different kind of place -- a place for people," said **Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives**. "We've worked for years gathering signatures, holding rallies and winning supporters, never knowing for sure if this day would ever come, so we're elated to usher in a new car-free era for Central Park."

"No one alive today has experienced Central Park as it was meant to be experienced – as a true refuge from a bustling city," said **Ken Coughlin, chair of Transportation Alternatives' Car-Free Central Park campaign and a member of the organization's board of directors**. "Getting the cars out has been a textbook example of gradualism -- an entrance closed here, car hours reduced there -- but these incremental steps accumulated over the decades and led us to where we are today. We thank Mayor Bill de Blasio for finally finishing the job of restoring Central Park to its status as a true oasis."

"We at Bike New York are beyond thrilled that this long-awaited dream of a car-free Central Park is now a reality," said **Ken Podziba, President and CEO of Bike New York**. "May this historic return to a car-free urban oasis enable generations of bicyclists and pedestrians to enjoy this crown jewel in the manner its founders intended. We salute Mayor de Blasio and his administration, including Commissioner Trottenberg and the Department of Transportation and Commissioner Silver and the Parks Department, for once again doing the right thing and continuing to give more of this great city back to the people. I'd also like to thank the Central Park Conservancy, Transportation Alternatives, and all the advocates, past and present, who never gave up this fight for a safer, healthier, and much more enjoyable Central Park."

Until tonight, cars had used Central Park’s scenic loop drives as traffic short cuts for more than a century. Reductions in the hours during which cars are permitted began in the 1960s under Mayor John Lindsay. DOT, NYC Parks, NYPD and the Central Park Conservancy have been coordinating on the transition to a car-free park. DOT analysis shows that traffic increases on

surrounding areas are expected to be minimal. To help enforce this change, the NYPD will make additional Traffic Enforcement Agents available at local intersections.

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