

# STREETSBLOG

## Campaign To Remove NYPD From Traffic Enforcement Gains Steam

An influential Manhattan panel voted to return street safety to the DOT. Will Mayor de Blasio heed the call?

By Julianne Cuba | Jun 25, 2020 | 29 COMMENTS



Some enforcement: An NYPD SUV parks in a bike lane in Manhattan. Photo: Dan Miller

he [campaign](#) to remove the NYPD from traffic enforcement and return street oversight to the Department of Transportation gained momentum this week as an influential local panel

The board said the letter follows one it sent in 2018, highlighting what it said was the poor job of the NYPD's notoriously [understaffed Collision Investigation Squad](#) to investigate fatal crashes.



“In our experience, NYPD CIS under the highway district has been falling short of its mandate. A prior letter dated Oct. 18, 2018 regarding collision investigation captures many of our ongoing concerns: Officers on the scene of collisions in our district have been reluctant or slow to notify CIS and have been prone to making victim-blaming comments prior to a full investigation,” the June 23 letter states.

The letter comes on the heels of a [report this week from Transportation Alternatives](#), which calls on the de Blasio administration to remove the NYPD from its oversight of traffic enforcement — not only to make streets safer from crashes, but also to protect Black and Brown New Yorkers, who are often targeted by police and disproportionately victims of police brutality.

Streetsblog recently [reported](#) that of the 440 tickets police issued to people for biking on the sidewalk in 2018 and 2019, 374 — or 86.4 percent — of those where race was listed went to Black and Hispanic New Yorkers. The wildly disproportionate stats followed another report showing that cops issued 99 percent of [jaywalking tickets](#) to Black and Hispanic people in the first quarter of this year.

Streetsblog earlier this month [documented](#) the ways in which the NYPD has failed as an ally of Vision Zero, although DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg [insists](#) that New York's Finest remains her agency's valued “partner.”

One local safe-streets advocate, Jehiah Czebotar, who lives in Hells Kitchen, which is in CB4, said he's seen first hand how poorly police officers respond to street-safety issues and even often make things more dangerous by parking on sidewalks and in bike lanes.

“NYPD has been unresponsive to our community refusing to keep crosswalks clear, making it unsafe and often impossible to cross our streets with our children,” Czebotar said.

The Manhattan civic panel cited the work of author Radley Balko, who argues in his book “Rise of the Warrior Cop” that traffic enforcement should be separate from other police activity because traffic stops are “generally not criminal encounters, but have become pretexts for racial bias and overtime bilking that can quickly escalate, resulting in injury, death, and/or unwarranted incarceration.”





**T** voted to support the move.

Manhattan Community Board 4, which includes such wealthy neighborhoods as Chelsea and Hudson Yards, voted during its June 22 executive meeting to support the return of the NYPD's Transportation Bureau to the DOT, citing years of failure to protect vulnerable road users.

“NYPD has been an unreliable partner in pursuing the shared goals of calming the traffic and reducing traffic injuries and fatalities,” leaders of the board wrote to Mayor de Blasio, Council Speaker Corey Johnson and other local elected officials, in informing them that the board's executive committee had “voted to support the return of the Bureau of Transportation from the NYPD to DOT, where it could be better integrated and aligned with the city's goals of calming vehicular traffic, achieving Vision Zero, and expanding the use of alternate modes of transportation.” Traffic enforcement moved to the NYPD from the DOT in 1996.





**CHEKPEDS**  
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NYPD's Transportation Bureau belongs to NYCDOT says  
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5:08 PM · Jun 23, 2020

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Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, a recipient of the letter, said she that would support the reversion of the traffic bureau to the DOT.



“I do think there’s an argument that [the DOT is] more likely to focus on prevention,” Brewer said. “We all want to have less people killed in terms of bicyclists and pedestrians, and there is an argument to be made to go back to DOT as long as there is good coordination.”



DOT did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but de Blasio responded last week to TA’s report during a daily press briefing:

Some people are proposing taking some units out of the NYPD, putting them in another agency, funding them exactly the same way, having them do exact same work. That may have merit, but I don’t want it to be misconstrued. There are some things I think can be done better by civilians than by NYPD, and some things done better by NYPD than civilians. We’ve got to work out which is which, but that doesn’t implicitly mean a budget savings.

Some are just calling for a pure budget reduction to the NYPD. So when you say something like traffic enforcement or anti-crime, that work has to happen, it’s going to happen with the same people in different ways potentially, but it has to happen. So I don’t want there to be a misunderstanding about that. I think the anti-crime point is, are there some things that the same people might do it, the same mission has to be done, but they might do it a different way. Yeah, we have to look at all of that.

The full board of CB4 will vote to ratify the call on July 22.

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Filed Under: Borough Presidents, CHEKPEDS, Christine Berthet, Collision Investigation Squad, DOT, Families for Safe Streets, Gale Brewer, NYPD, Transportation Alternatives, Vision Zero, Promoted

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## Lentol Wants 20 MPH Speed Limits on Big, Dangerous Brooklyn Streets

By Stephen Miller | Jan 28, 2014

This afternoon, Assembly Member Joseph Lentol announced that he's sent a letter to Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg asking for 20 mph speed limits on the busiest, deadliest roads in his district. "There are three main streets within my district that are notorious for speeders – McGuinness Boulevard, Kent Avenue, and Park Avenue," Lentol wrote in [...]



## Manhattan Community Boards Want to Fix 57 Dangerous Places for Peds

By Stephen Miller | Jan 31, 2014

Yesterday, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer compiled a list of 57 pedestrian danger hotspots identified by community board district managers and sent it to city agency heads serving on Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero task force. Many of the locations in Brewer's list have a long track record as dangerous locations, including many where people [...]

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**means nothing** • a month ago

Drunk driving should be legal even if it isn't safe.

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**Jeremiah Clemente** ➔ means nothing • a month ago

Why?

^ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›



**thielaes** • a month ago







This makes sense simply from the perspective of financing city services. Armed police officers must be held to a significantly higher standard due to their ability to use lethal force. Those officers need much more extensive training and their management must be extremely watchful to ensure that their officers have the character required to fill that critical role. The training and testing costs alone make each of those armed badges higher cost staff.



Most traffic infractions do not require an armed officer. There could be another tier of unarmed officers who's purview is limited to non-violent situations. Of course any situation can escalate and those officers would be trained to step back and call in the big guns when the offender doesn't cooperate. Sure, that leaves the door open for the offender to just leave the scene. But an offender that runs today will likely be eventually caught and charged with a more severe crime, perhaps a felony.

We would be better off with a smaller, elite armed force who handle the dicey situations and perhaps a larger unarmed force for ordinary nonviolent situations. Most cities have already started this separation of duties. Parking violations are handled by unarmed staff. The armed police rarely write parking tickets anymore. And then of course employ automation were possible: speed cameras to catch speeders. Red light cameras to catch people running red stoplights, etc.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall** → thielges • a month ago

You cannot have "another tier of unarmed officers" doing traffic stops. Traffic stops are inherently dangerous, and beyond that, the officer performing the stop needs that authority under the law to stop a person and require that person to provide a driver's license. Persons who are not police officers or peace officers under New York State law do not have that authority, which is why the unarmed civilian Traffic Enforcement Agents only write parking tickets rather than moving violations. (And by the way, more than 95% of the parking tickets written in New York city are written by Traffic Enforcement Agents rather than police officers, so your comment about how parking violations are to be handled is not a new idea to be considered, but is instead what has already been the case for many years.)

What you seem to be indulging in is a fantasy of disarming the police in general and pretending that this is England, where most police do not ordinarily not carry firearms. The problem with that lovely little dream is that the US is not England. The reason that most English police do not need firearms is that firearms are not items that are commonly carried by the English population. In the US, however, there are guns all over the place. Even in highly regulated New York, there are vastly more guns than there are in the UK, and it is simply unrealistic to suggest that police who are publicly known to be unarmed take enforcement action that might result in an arrest against persons who may potentially be carrying lethal weapons.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**thielges** → Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall • a month ago

I disagree. Your argument is basically "this is how it is done in the USA and it cannot change". I believe that Americans have embraced change throughout



history and can continue to change for the better. It may take time but there's no reason to procrastinate.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall** • a month ago

What absolute rubbish the Community Board letter is. They have no idea what they are talking about, and most of what they say is both wrong and wrong-headed. First of all, the entire NYPD Transportation Bureau was never under DOT, and if there is any "return" of anything to DOT, it will only be a return of the civilian Traffic Enforcement Agents who form most of the staff of the Traffic Enforcement District (which until 2011 was called the Parking Enforcement District.) All the Traffic Enforcement District does is write parking tickets, direct traffic in intersections, and tow illegally parked cars. The agents cannot and do not perform car stops, and they do not conduct collision investigations. Both of those functions (which are the ones the chattering Community Board is complaining about) are performed by police officers. They were performed by police officers before the NYPD took over the traffic enforcement agents, and they will continue to be performed by NYPD police officers if the traffic agents went back to DOT, so what, precisely, would this proposal accomplish?

As for those "punitive" parking tickets -- the agents wrote them when they worked for DOT, too, and they would continue to write them if they went back to DOT. Face it: parking enforcement is necessary if you want traffic in the city to move, and it is also an enormous source of city revenue, so moving the agents from one agency to another will not change that. What would change is that the summons integrity procedures imposed by NYPD would vanish, and you

[see more](#)

2 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**claudiagold** ➔ Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall • a month ago • edited

We ordinary citizens DO NOT want cops involved any place where it's not 100% necessary.

1 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**Thor** ➔ claudiagold • a month ago

I do not want BLM and unhinged white leftist wingnuts involved any place where it's not 100% necessary. F\*k the racist BLM and unhinged white leftist wingnuts.

1 ^ | v 2 • Reply • Share ›



**claudiagold** ➔ Thor • a month ago

I'm fed up and tired of having to be above the fray. Republicans acted like racist jerks for years and Christians were some of the worst while acting like holier than thou freaks. Sorry if you don't like when the other side doesn't act PC.

^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**Thor** ➔ claudiagold • a month ago

Sorry if you don't like my opinion. BLM is a racist group. Unhinged white





leftist wingnuts are a Marxist group. Not a good combo.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**claudiagold** → Thor • a month ago • edited

Anyone calling BLM racist is basically always racist themselves.

Also Marxism is just one particular strain of Leftist thought. I am Leftist, b not exactly Marxist.

1 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**Thor** → claudiagold • a month ago

Everything is racist to a bigot. So, you must be a bigot. Highly offended by everything that you don't agree with...then yell racism. Sorry, but I don't care if someone calls me a racist for having a differing view. BLM is anti American and all lives matter. Not just black lives.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall** → claudiagold • a month ago

Golly, what a well-informed and carefully reasoned response that was. Is everything you say always so brilliantly clever? You must be a lot of fun at dinner parties.

1 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**woodyguthrie** • a month ago

Automate 90% of traffic law enforcement, including parking violations. Cheaper, more effective. Put cameras everywhere. Just embrace it. This is where things are going anyway. Having police enforce traffic laws is flawed in every way.

4 ^ | v 2 • Reply • Share ›



**Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall** → woodyguthrie • a month ago • edited

Did you ever stop to think that if you want to base enforcement on technology, that technology needs to exist? How is your proposal supposed to work -- that cameras are activated to take pictures of every single car that pulls to a curb, including those that are legally parked? How is the camera supposed to know whether the parking was legal or not, especially when you have things such as pay-by-cell? Is every single picture then supposed to be reviewed by a human being? And how do you ensure that the front plate and the back plate match the registration sticker (ohhhh, the registration sticker; you forgot about that one, didn't you? And what about inspection stickers -- will your cameras catch them, too? And how about parking permits for persons with disabilities, or parking meter receipts that are displayed improperly, or that have expired -- how will the camera know?

And that is just addresses enforcement now done by the NYPD's civilian traffic agents. Enforcement of "traffic laws" includes enforcement against drunk drivers --what, you want that to stop, too?

Next time, try thinking before you spout ideas that at heart are fundamentally flawed...



1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Ian Turner** → Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall • a month ago

Uh, you might want to google "automated parking enforcement". More generally, you might want to do some quick research the next time you are thinking of going on an unhinged rant.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall** → Ian Turner • a month ago

You think "automated parking enforcement" involves cameras that can instantly read registration stickers while matching them to plates, or tell whether a motorist has a PPPD, or whether a motionless vehicle is actually parked rather than stopping or standing? You might want to do better research into what "automated parking enforcement" actually involves before you try to bring it up as your "proof" that "putting cameras everywhere" will somehow magically do what needs to be done.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Joseph Milller** • a month ago

If you're not jaywalking or riding your bike on the sidewalk the odds of getting a ticket is...wait for it.....zero.

1 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›

**Joe R.** → Joseph Milller • a month ago

And is there any good public safety or other reason to enforce those laws? NYC didn't enforce those laws at all until the late 90s, even during eras with low crime. The sky didn't fall. It shouldn't even be illegal to jaywalk or cycle slowly on the sidewalks.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Mitchell Ross** → Joseph Milller • a month ago

Sorry, that's not true. After stopping a person of color without probable cause to do an illegal search, they issue a jaywalking ticket to establish fake probable cause for the stop.

3 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›

**Brooklyngurl** • a month ago

Hello, the complaints from the tickets that most people are writing about are NOT ISSUED by the Traffic Enforcement department, but by regular officers because these are MOVING VIOLATIONS. Traffic agents are NOT ALLOWED to give jay walking tickets either. Please don't confuse the issue if you don't know which department does what within an organization. Traffic Agents presently direct traffic and enforce parking rules. If they were moved out of NYPD, they would only be able to write parking tickets. They wouldn't direct traffic and if you think they will pay a cop to direct traffic, expect to sit in traffic within any high traffic area during rush hour, because that isn't within their job description. Community boards need to educate themselves first before deciding on the well being of workers who are mostly minorities within the Traffic department under NYPD. Don't just arbitrarily use the race card in every situation, it doesn't apply if the one breaking the rules gets caught



apply it and one breaking the rules gets caught...

1 ^ | v 3 • Reply • Share ›



**Vooch** ➔ Brooklynurl • a month ago

not true at all

^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**Plunkitt\_of\_Tammany\_Hall** ➔ Vooch • a month ago

It's entirely true. What do you think Traffic Enforcement Agents do?

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**HotSauzz** • a month ago

NYPD hit me, a black man, with 3 tickets for making a left on a bike on my way to work. While writing the ticket, I counted at least 2 white men go straight through a red right in front of all of us. Didn't argue their willful selective enforcement as I knew that wouldn't help the situation but now I gotta come up with several hundred dollars for riding a damn bike.

9 ^ | v 1 • Reply • Share ›



**Roberto Izquierdo** ➔ HotSauzz • a month ago

so you want the cops to drop everything and chase after the white guys?

3 ^ | v 3 • Reply • Share ›



**luke\_1** ➔ HotSauzz • a month ago

Plead not guilty

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**bolwerk** ➔ HotSauzz • a month ago

Wish you had a cell phone video of that.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



**bolwerk** • a month ago

Hope the push for more car-free streets continues. Car-free streets largely don't need to be policed, whether the agency is called police or something else.

Re the comments around Balko, I don't think it can be exaggerated how much traffic policing in turn normalized other police encroachment into our lives. Often to deal with social problems directly relating to over-proliferation of automobiles.

4 ^ | v 3 • Reply • Share ›



**Edwin V** • a month ago

This makes too much sense. NYPD shouldn't do this work. Start with accident reporting and then all traffic enforcement.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›





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### **After NYPD Kills Bill, Council Pushes for Traffic Safety Data From DOT**

By Noah Kazis | Nov 5, 2010

The City Council Transportation Committee held a hearing yesterday on four bills that would release new information about traffic crashes and how the Department of Transportation decides whether to install traffic calming measures and traffic control devices like stop lights and stop signs. All together, the bills would cover a wide spectrum of information, but [...]

### **Harlem CBs Dither on Pedestrian Safety While SI Board Begg for Bike Lanes**

By Stephen Miller | Sep 23, 2013

Last week, Staten Island Community Board 1 passed a resolution asking DOT to install bike lanes, while in Manhattan, a community-requested plan for a road diet and pedestrian islands continues to be delayed by two Harlem community boards. After months of organizing by Transportation Alternatives — resulting in more than 260 petition signatures and 22 partners signing onto a [...]

### **On Traffic Justice, Stringer Lets Ray Kelly and Cy Vance Off the Hook**

By Stephen Miller | Mar 4, 2013

After the driver who killed six year-old Amar Diarrassouba on Thursday was let off with two summonses, for failure to yield to a pedestrian and not exercising due care, NYPD says its Accident Investigation Squad has concluded its investigation. Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance refuses to comment. This afternoon, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer was joined by other [...]

### **Streetsblog's Guide to the Democratic Mayoral Candidates**

By Ben Fried, Stephen Miller and Brad Aaron | Sep 6, 2013

The September 10 primary is just a few days away, and over the course of this grueling campaign the candidates have had plenty of time to lay out their vision for New York City's streets. Transportation Alternatives and StreetsPAC both put together detailed candidate surveys and compiled responses from the leading Democratic candidates. For Streetsblog's guide to the Democratic mayoral [...]

