

January 12, 2026

Dear Mayor Mamdani, Deputy Mayor Kerson, Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa, and Commissioner Flynn:

We write regarding 2025 decisions by New York City Parks and the New York City Department of Transportation to allow motor vehicles on two park roads, Freedom Drive in Forest Park in Queens and Silver Lake Park Road in Silver Lake Park on Staten Island, that had been car-free since 2020. We urge the City to reverse these decisions and establish permanent, year-round car-free use on both roads, prioritizing people over motor vehicles. Petitions calling for [Freedom Drive](#) and [Silver Lake Park Road](#) to be remain permanently car-free year-round have each garnered nearly 900 signatures.

Both of these decisions were hastily made and implemented during the last nine months of the Adams administration in response to unsubstantiated claims that motor vehicles would help prevent crime in parks, and with little to no input from neighbors and members of the surrounding communities.

These reversals are particularly troubling in light of the Mayor's announcement last week that the City will move forward with the full redesign of McGuinness Boulevard, with a stated goal of making New York City's streetscape the envy of the world by prioritizing safety and people-first design. At the very moment the City is committing to safer, more ambitious street transformations on major corridors, allowing motor vehicles back onto streets within public parks moves in the opposite direction. Reintroducing cars into spaces that had successfully functioned as car-free undermines this vision and sends a conflicting signal about the City's commitment to safety, accessibility, and people-centered public space.

## Car-free Streets in Parks Since 2020



**Freedom Drive  
Forest Park  
Queens**



**Silver Lake Park Road  
Silver Lake Park  
Staten Island**

Similarly, a pressure campaign by a City Council member resulted in the recent [NYC Parks decision](#) to allow motor vehicles on Forest Park's Freedom Drive, which went into effect on Monday, January 5.

New York City Parks has publicly stated that keeping Freedom Drive closed to vehicular traffic is "[an overall benefit to the park and the neighborhood](#)," yet moved forward with allowing cars back onto the road seasonally during the warmer months. Similarly, in a [letter to local elected officials](#) regarding Silver Lake Park Road, NYC Parks stated that "we believe keeping our parks vehicle-free is a benefit to all who use them," yet nevertheless opened the street in the park back up to vehicles.

In its first week since the reintroduction of motor vehicles to Freedom Drive, neighbors were not made aware that the street now allows cars and continued to walk on the former car-free Open Street, putting pedestrians at risk. Illegal dumping, which was chronic, has returned.

Allowing vehicles back onto Freedom Drive also creates an accessibility issue as the pedestrian path to the adjacent Victory Field deposits park users directly into car traffic on Freedom Drive, where there is no crosswalk or signage.

Previously, these car-free streets in Forest Park and Silver Lake Park enabled people of all ages and abilities, cyclists, and children to exercise, play, gather and commute safely. The car-free Freedom Drive in Forest Park also improved safety outside the park, preventing drivers from using Freedom Drive as a shortcut from nearby high-speed streets and protecting children at two nearby elementary schools and Giovanelli Playground. Eliminating these popular and successful open streets sets up a dangerous precedent and points to a pattern of rolling back street safety improvements in the service of a minority of drivers.

Following the decision to allow motor vehicles on Silver Lake Park Road, we have observed cars, delivery trucks, and school buses traveling well in excess of local speed limits. Pedestrians have been relegated to a narrow and broken sidewalk adjacent to the park road, in close proximity to motor vehicles and tailpipe pollution. Cyclists and children have all but disappeared from the park drive on weekdays. Since late April 2025, there has been at least one motor vehicle collision with multiple injuries reported on NYC Open Data.

The de facto removal of these mapped, protected bike lanes and accessible pedestrian spaces directly undermines the City's compliance with Local Law 195, the New York City Streets Plan, which emphasizes accessibility and sets a goal of adding 50 miles of protected bike lanes annually. DOT [reported](#) failing to meet this benchmark in 2024.

We urge the City to immediately reverse these decisions and restore these park streets to safe, people-first, non-vehicular use. We would welcome the opportunity to host you and your staff on a walking tour of the affected locations to experience the impacts of these changes firsthand and to explore additional park streets that could be safely and permanently prioritized for pedestrians and cyclists.

Sincerely,

Sara Lind, Open Plans  
Elizabeth Adams, Transportation  
Alternatives  
Kathy Park Price, New Yorkers for  
Parks  
Morgan Monaco, Prospect Park  
Alliance  
John Kelly, Eastern Queens Greenway  
Paul Steely White, Parks & Trails New  
York  
Michael Ring, Disabled in Action of  
Greater New York  
Claudia Corcino, Ciclistas  
Latinoamericanos de New York  
Sofia Barandiaran, East Coast  
Greenway Alliance  
The Alliance to Save Silver Lake Park

Kelly Vilar, The Staten Island Urban  
Center  
David Panza, Staten Island Athletic  
Club  
Lisa Lubarsky, Richmond Rockets  
Andrew Smith, Safer Streets  
Richmond Hill  
Kevin Montalvo, Queens Distance  
Runners  
Ridgewood Rides  
Kevin LaCherra, Make McGuinness  
Safe  
Brent Bovenzi, North Brooklyn Open  
Streets  
Bobby Feltault, Open Streets Network  
John Surico, 31st Ave Open Street  
Collective

cc:

Chief Public Realm Officer Ya-Ting Liu  
Chief Climate Officer Louise Yeung  
NYC Parks Queens Borough Commissioner Jaqueline Langsam  
NYC Parks Staten Island Borough Commissioner Joseph Homsey