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Statement of Tri-State Transportation Campaign Executive Director Veronica Vanterpool on New York City's 25 mph Speed Limit Taking Effect

"Fifty years ago, the New York State Legislature made a big policy mistake when it raised the statewide default speed limit from 25 mph to 30 mph. Since then, data has confirmed that a change in the speed limit, whether an increase or decrease, makes a difference as to whether a person struck by a vehicle dies or survives. Pedestrians struck by vehicles traveling at 25 mph are half as likely to die as those struck at 30 mph. With a new lower speed limit of 25 mph going into effect tomorrow in New York City, we are glad Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Council enacted legislation to protect the most vulnerable of NYC's road users: pedestrians.

Yet, there are benefits that drivers should embrace as well. A reduced speed limit gives the driver more time to avoid a crash with a pedestrian, bicyclist, or other vehicle—and that should offer relief to everyone behind, and in front of, the wheel.

A reduction in crashes, injuries and deaths means a reduction in their associated municipal costs—for police, emergency vehicles, health care, and insurance costs related to injuries and property damage. Business and residential districts will be better served by streets teeming with pedestrians, young and old and of all abilities, whose increased sense of safety will encourage them to walk and bike more to new neighborhoods, jobs, and businesses. With New York City's population at its peak, it is inconceivable that minor changes with such significant benefits, such as this, are not more easily embraced by our cosmopolitan metropolis.

New York City will receive international attention and acclaim for this change but the praise need not stop at the boundaries of the five boroughs. Suburbs in our region are home to the most deadly roads for pedestrians in our region, such as Jericho and Hempstead Turnpikes on Long Island. But local municipalities cannot reduce their speed limits without approval from the state legislature. In keeping with the philosophy of our home rule state, communities across New York should also be given the same legal authority to improve the safety and livability of their downtowns and residential streets that New York City is relying on now. We hope that such legislation will take hold in the 2015 state legislative session.

Who will champion this change for the rest of New York's municipalities? We look forward to working with the next leader."