

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign Statement on City Council Bill Allowing Restaurants to Use Streets for Dining

On Thursday, New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson and Council Member Antonio Reynoso [introduced a bill](#) that will allow restaurants to use street space for outdoor dining when the City reopens. The bill tasks the NYC Department of Transportation with figuring out the best places for street closures. In response, Tri-State Transportation Campaign released the following statement:

“As New York City prepares to reopen businesses, Mayor de Blasio has an opportunity to provide a major lifeline for the city’s struggling restaurant industry. For restaurants with indoor dining to reopen, they will have to significantly reduce their seating capacity in line with COVID-19 guidelines. This measure alone will exclude many restaurants that cannot afford to serve at a fraction of normal capacity.

“New York’s restaurant industry produces over [\\$50 billion in sales annually](#)--money that the city will lose if many restaurants remain closed or shut down for good. The obvious solution is for Mayor de Blasio to pass the City Council’s bill to allow restaurants to use space on designated streets for outdoor dining. Not only will this help business owners, but also hundreds of thousands of restaurant workers who are struggling without pay throughout the pandemic. Outdoor dining lets New Yorkers safely enjoy the establishments they have missed frequenting at a reduced risk and with proper distancing measures in place.

“Following the lead of cities around the world, DOT should repurpose parking spaces and travel lanes for outdoor dining and safe distancing of pedestrians and cyclists. The process for determining which streets to repurpose should be led primarily by community input.

“This is a moment to rethink street space writ large. Before traffic congestion exceeds pre-COVID levels, creating unhealthy and dangerous conditions for everyone, the city should not only expand outdoor dining space; the city should also repurpose parking spaces and travel lanes for emergency bus lanes and biking and micromobility lanes. Prioritizing bus service and active transportation is a quality of life issue, a public health issue, and an equity issue.

“This is about being pro-city, pro-public space, and pro-small business, not anti-car. New York City cannot afford to return to the status quo with this many lives and the economy at stake.

Mayor de Blasio must act now to ensure our city can safely reopen and restaurants have a fighting chance to survive.”

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 25-year old advocacy organization that fights for an equitable, multi-modal transportation network that provides options and supports the economies of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. TSTC works to fix our commutes, meet our climate goals, stop traffic deaths, and make transportation fair.