



Equity On Our Streets: A Transportation-Led Recovery Agenda for Candidates

COVID has transformed how New Yorkers move. At the pandemic's height, many people rarely left home. Others rode less frequent and less crowded public transit. Bicycling boomed. Driving nearly stopped, only to roar back alarmingly though most offices remain closed.

Equitable recovery starts on the ground. Improving public space on our streets and sidewalks can boost mobility, access, safety, and resiliency. Local transportation fixes can arc toward just and sustainable growth.

The hurdles are real. Cars release the overwhelming share of our stubbornly high transportation carbon emissions. COVID cases were worsened by air pollution. Drivers and motorcyclists have recklessly used empty streets to set modern crash fatality records.

Still, subway ridership more than tripled since April. The City set records for bus lane installation and reduced more speed limits. Lockdowns revealed organic 15-minute cities, with most essentials in walking distance. Open Streets and Restaurants took traffic lanes and curbs back for people.

Big opportunities stand within reach. Streetscape improvements are quick and cheap to install and adjust. To rebuild New York and achieve New Yorkers' shared goal of a more just and inclusive city, the next mayor and City Council should adopt a bold transportation agenda.

Fund Public Transportation

Before COVID-19 and today, public transit shows strain. Subways that were overloaded are still delayed by antiquated signals and deny access to people with disabilities. The Mayor and the City Council must invest in transit infrastructure:

- Congestion Pricing: Provide prompt support for the program so that it can roll out as quickly as possible once all regulatory hurdles are cleared.
- Value Capture: Equitably capture a portion of real estate value created by rezonings and redevelopment to fund transit improvements and guarantee infrastructure can meet demand.
- Local Solutions: Raise new revenue, for example, by metering more parking, developing better curb management systems, and fairly charging private users of street and sidewalk space.

Better Bus Service

New York's slowest-in-the-nation bus system carried 2.5 million daily riders before COVID and serves over one million now. Buses are lifelines for low-income New Yorkers of color and link neighborhoods that lack subway access. In 2019, the Better Buses Action Plan promised 25% faster buses, a goal that must be met via the following policies:

- Bus Rapid Transit along major thoroughfares with poor subway connectivity. Initial corridors could include Fordham Road, Northern Boulevard, Flatbush Avenue, and First Avenue.
- Streets Master Plan legislation from 2019 requires 30 new bus lane miles per year. Better bus lanes depend on separation from mixed traffic and universal, automated enforcement.
- Accelerate transit signal priority and support MTA network redesigns that reflect people's current commuting needs to job hubs like hospitals and airports.
- Redesign bus stops with more shelters, countdown clocks, and maps, and enable all riders, including people with disabilities and older people, to board and alight safely and comfortably.

Prioritize Our Climate Goals

Transportation emits more than 1/3 of New York's greenhouse gases. Vehicular exhaust harms many communities that live near congested highways, ports, and delivery zones. To keep New Yorkers safe and meet our climate goals, the city must:

- Invest in air quality monitoring in frontline communities.
- Prioritize equitably distributed electrification projects, especially charging stations for medium and heavy duty vehicles. Cut red tape blocking construction and operations.
- Electrify all City fleets and all school buses to cut pollution and emissions and grow clean vehicle market share.
- Expand the City pilot for electric cargo delivery bikes, expanding support to smaller or independent delivery companies.
- Build in equitable distribution of green micro-mobility solutions such as e-scooters, e-mopeds, and e-cargo bikes.
- Reduce emissions in business districts: Assess feasibility of low-traffic zones. Incentivize zero-emissions electric delivery vans, bicycles, and scooters.

Fair Fares & Freedom Ticket: Affordable Access to Public Transit

- The City should continue to guarantee that everyone can share the benefits of public transit by vigorously promoting Fair Fares to all who are eligible, studying the program's impacts, and carefully considering expansion to New Yorkers living within 200% of poverty.
- While transit ridership is depressed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the City should work with the MTA to expand Freedom Ticket for a one-year pilot program that covers all Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road lines serving New York City.

Prioritize Accessibility

Our streets and other public infrastructure should be avenues to opportunity. The City must lead the way to a more inclusive, accessible transit network, one that is an avenue of opportunity for people with disabilities.

- Integrate the City's accessible taxi fleet into MTA Access-A-Ride so riders can get a ride right away, rather than having to reserve a ride the day before. Additionally, any fare discounts available to subway and bus riders should also always be extended to Access-A-Ride users.
- Ensure a greater percentage of livery services, including ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft, serve all New Yorkers, as yellow taxis already are required to do.
- With the increased usage of e-bikes and the emergence of e-scooters, the City should require the servicing companies to provide accessible options for people with disabilities, just as has been done in other cities.
- Support Zoning for Transit Accessibility to accelerate progress toward a fully-accessible subway system by creating a citywide Transit Easement Certification and strengthening the existing station improvement bonus.
- Work with the MTA to prioritize the installation and maintenance of elevators throughout the subway with the goal of achieving a fully accessible subway system by 2034.
- Ensure that the ferry system, a growing option for New Yorkers living far from other modes of public transportation, is fully accessible to all, including the ferry landings to the boats themselves.
- Ensure bus bulbs are fully accessible, including high-visibility markings to prevent people from falling off and ramps to allow people who use mobility devices to board just as people without disabilities would.
- Make intersections safe with fully accessible curb cuts citywide, including daylighting all intersections, and install Accessible Pedestrian Signals at signalized intersections.
- Clean sidewalks, crosswalks and bus stops from ice, snow, and ponding water more rapidly so pedestrians can get around after major precipitation events including heavy rains.
- With the expansion of sidewalk dining and related activities as a response to COVID, ensure that sidewalks are clear of obstructions and passable for people with mobility impairments.

Rapidly Expand Safe Opportunities For Bicycling

Cycling is sustainable, healthy and increasingly popular. The City has expanded the bike lane network in some areas. During COVID, cycling is setting records. The City must take key steps to make all streets safer for people on bikes:

- Set annual targets and a process to implement Regional Plan Association's Five Borough Bikeway Vision, to create a 425 mile network of protected arterial cycling lanes. This includes developing and starting to build bicycle capital projects that will be implemented as part of a broader public works agenda and have a game changing effect on cycling rates in NYC.
- Commit to implementing the Streets Master Plan legislation from 2019, which requires 50 new protected bike lane miles per year, with priority given to areas with high crash rates and poor existing networks.
- Expand bike share into an equitable and integrated five-borough system. Eliminate the fee Citi Bike pays the City when bike share stations replace metered parking.

- Create safe dedicated bike lanes on all NYC bridges.
- Create dedicated and, when possible, secure bike parking facilities on every block, including at transit hubs to promote bicycling for the first/last mile of multimodal transit trips.
- Equitably implement e-bike legalization, including regulations that affect food delivery workers. Provide purchase incentives and tax benefits for biking and other micromobility use.
- Pilot compact street sweepers to expand protected bike lane infrastructure to streets with limited road space.

Achieve Vision Zero

The Mayor and City Council won a safer 25 mph speed limit and approved several other traffic safety laws. But progress has been uneven, with modern fatality records set for cyclists in 2019 and drivers and motorcyclists in 2020. Equity must become an official goal of Vision Zero and City agencies must ensure no communities are unfairly targeted for enforcement or denied safety benefits. To reach the goal of zero deaths or serious injuries, set for 2024, officials must:

- Publish a set of metrics and plans to get to zero deaths and serious injuries by 2024.
- Cut the citywide speed limit to 20 miles per hour and even lower limits at other locations, including 5 miles per hour on all Open Streets.
- Expand automated enforcement to fairly deter dangerous driving, including with speed-safety and red-light cameras and new technologies like failure-to-yield cameras.
- Empower NYCDOT to manage traffic enforcement, streamlining control of city streets, centralizing automated and human enforcement in one department, and decreasing unnecessary interactions between NYPD and communities of color.
- Prioritize the streets and intersections in DOT's Pedestrian Safety Action Plans for redesigns based on "complete streets" principles.
- Fully fund and expand the Dangerous Vehicle Abatement Program, targeting reckless drivers with restorative justice programs, and if these do not succeed, impounding the driver's vehicle.

Parking and the Allocation of Street Space

A wholesale redesign of NYC streets should expand on the Open Restaurants program and include a plan for overhauling trash collection, building electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and designating delivery zones:

- Eliminate parking requirements for new buildings and instead require contributions to other improvements like construction of bike share stations or car-sharing spaces or contributions to subway and bus infrastructure.
- Expand metering and efficient loading options, including increasing the proportion of commercial loading zones on side streets and night-time deliveries and reviving incentives for off-hour freight deliveries.
- Eliminate non-medical parking privileges for private vehicles, with upwards of 125,000 placards in circulation, which encourages official corruption and erodes public trust. Prioritize enforcement against parking on sidewalks, in bus lanes, and double-parking.