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Coalition Calls on Elected Officials to Stop Cuomo's Empire Station Complex and Consider Better Alternatives

Transit Advocates, Civic Groups, and Manhattan Residents Demand A More Thoughtful, Transit-Centered Plan That Preserves Neighborhood

New York, NY – Today, the *Empire Station Coalition* held a press conference in front of The Hotel Pennsylvania to call for a pause on Governor Cuomo's Empire Station Complex until a comprehensive plan, which explores legitimate alternatives to demolishing historic buildings and considers through-running train service, is developed.

The Governor's plan will demolish much of the neighborhood around Penn Station to make way for a whopping 10 new skyscrapers, but does not include specific transit upgrades or a new station design. This isn't a plan to fix Penn Station, it's a plan to build an unwanted "Vornado campus" of buildings. What the city needs instead is a design that will make Penn Station more efficient, welcoming, and easier to navigate.

Yesterday, the coalition sent Governor Cuomo a [sign-on letter](#), which outlines the group's concerns and recommendations.

"The last thing our city needs is another Hudson Yards," said **Lynn Ellsworth, Chair of Human-Scale NYC**. "We need a different plan that doesn't demolish the historic city and deals with the actual problem of Penn Station itself rather than just build more skyscrapers. Albany politicians: wake up and push back against Cuomo and Vornado. Defund this terrible plan."

"There are many below ground, surface transit, and transportation issues that urgently need to be addressed at Penn Station, unfortunately this plan addresses none of them." said **Felicia Park-Rogers, Director of Regional Infrastructure Projects for Tri-State Transportation**

Campaign. “The Governor’s plan continues the pattern of thinking that led to tearing down the original Penn Station and creating the sub-standard station currently in place – it prioritizes real estate development over transportation and the needs of the residents, workers, and visitors in one of the nation’s most important transit hubs.”

“Development should not be done in a fashion that doubles down on dated transit strategies, knocks down landmarks, and destroys the neighborhood’s historic fabric all while continuing to leave Penn Station under Madison Square Garden,” said **Sam Turvey, Chairperson of ReThinkNYC**. “The proposed Empire Station Complex amounts to a completely unbalanced and anti-urban juggernaut for a city that needs more holistic, complementary and properly sequenced solutions that will enable the city and region to prosper in the post-pandemic era.”

“Any master plan for Penn Station must start by getting the actual transit plan right - the current proposal treats that foundational question like an afterthought,” said **Barry Caro, Senior Advisor to ReThinkNYC**. “Instead of using this once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a world class regional rail system, the current proposal doubles down on the same outdated approach to train operations that has been obsolete for 60 years. Let’s be crystal clear: We don’t need to build another Penn Station next to the one that already exists. We just need to fix Penn Station.”

“Steven Roth and Stephen Ross are two of the richest men in the world, the last people whose work we need to subsidize,” said **John Massengale, architect and Chair of the Congress for New Urbanism’s New York Chapter**. “Yet that is what New York City and New York State have done at Hudson Yards and in the Empire Station plan. New York taxpayers are paying for a city they don’t want, a city many think looks more like Houston-on-Hudson than New York. And that is why people are starting to call the Empire State the ‘Real Estate State.’”

“We need to have a government that works for the people and not for real estate moguls that crush residents without any consideration,” said **Omri Semadar, a resident of the Penn Station neighborhood**. “Why should we evict hundreds of residents and thousands of workers despite there being better and more efficient solutions to fix Penn Station and preserve the neighborhood?”

“New York City must learn from its mistakes and stop destroying historic, viable buildings to construct unwanted and unneeded towers that only benefit developers,” said **George Calderaro, board member of the 29th Street Neighborhood Association and the Victorian Society New York**.

“The current proposal cannot be called a plan,” said **Jeffrey Kroessler, President of the City Club of New York**. “It is just big buildings without any thought or idea beyond that. It shows that thoroughly discredited ideas are alive in the governor’s mansion and in the executive suite at Vornado.”

“This is a neighborhood with a character, a history and a soul,” said **Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director of the Historic Districts Council**. “It cannot be treated as a blank space for ill-conceived and unsustainable real estate power fantasies.”

“Governor Cuomo’s plan has nothing to do with fixing Penn Station and everything to do with razing a neighborhood to build 10 skyscrapers so Vornado – who has donated close to half a million to Cuomo – can profit,” said **Ann McDermott Co-founder of TakeBackNYC**. “This project will further decimate small businesses in the area.”

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***Human-Scale NYC** is a network of over 100 civic and neighborhood groups across the city. Our mission is to promote neighborhood livability, democratic control over the built environment, and human-scale urbanism by means of education, policy debate, and advocacy.*

***Tri-State Transportation Campaign** is a 27-year old advocacy organization that fights for an equitable, safe, 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. Learn more at tstc.org.*

***ReThinkNYC** is a New York City-based non-profit organization specialized in transportation infrastructure and how it relates to complex urban, governance and socio-economic issues.*

***CNU NYC** is the New York City chapter of the Congress for New Urbanism. The chapter particularly focuses on issues of affordable housing, density, urban design, and street design. Jane Jacobs is our patron saint.*

***29th Street Neighborhood Association/The Initiative for a Sustainable Midtown** was founded to protect and foster the quality of life of our community from 24th St. to 33rd St. between 8th and 1st Aves.*

***Victorian Society New York** was founded in New York City in 1966 to foster the appreciation and preservation of our nineteenth and early 20th century heritage.*

***The City Club of New York** promotes thoughtful urban land use policy that responds to the needs of all New Yorkers. We provide a forum for public discussion of development issues affecting the urban environment and advocate vigorously for solutions that best serve the greater good.*

Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York's historic buildings and neighborhoods.

Founded in 2009, **Untapped New York** is powered by a team of passionate New Yorkers, always exploring the city and dedicated to our mission of discovery.

TakeBackNYC is a political coalition of NYC small businesses, residents, and advocacy groups formed with one goal and one goal only: Empower and protect the rights of NYC small business owners.