

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

April 24, 2024

**Contact:**

[jtomlin@actumllc.com](mailto:jtomlin@actumllc.com)

**COALITION LAUNCHES “BLUE HIGHWAYS” CAMPAIGN TO FURTHER TACKLE NEW YORK’S NOISE, TRAFFIC AND POLLUTION PROBLEMS; WILL PUSH CITY TO MOVE FASTER IN ESTABLISHING A “GREEN FREIGHT” SYSTEM IN THE NEW YORK METRO AREA**

*Group calls on Adams administration to repurpose Downtown Manhattan Heliport as a dedicated maritime freight terminal, phasing out non-essential helicopters and displacing over 1,000 trucks per day from clogged city streets*

**New York, NY (April 24, 2024)** – A new coalition, initiated by Move NY, the campaign behind congestion pricing, today announced the “Blue Highways” campaign, calling upon the mayor and other lawmakers to move more aggressively to shift freight and package deliveries from city streets to the City’s underutilized waterways. The transition would remove thousands of trucks off city roads and bridges, reduce air pollution, asthma rates and carbon emissions, while improving street safety and New Yorkers’ overall quality of life. The coalition cited the move to maritime freight as inevitable and the next logical climate initiative to further reduce traffic and carbon emissions, following New York’s imminent congestion pricing program that is set to “turn on” in June.

To achieve this, the Blue Highways campaign is calling on Mayor Adams to go further in maximizing the use of its waterways for commercial freight by setting aside and investing in the waterfront sites and infrastructure required to support the movement of goods around the city and region via water and micro-mobility. Ultimately, a thriving blue highway system will feature zero emission vessels, powered by electric, wind, and alternative (non-petroleum) fuel, transporting cargo from ports throughout the region to New York City and beyond. Goods will then be offloaded onto newly established maritime piers and delivered, via small human/electric vehicles (“walkers”, “e-carts” and “e-bikes” and the like,) to their final destinations.

The immediate focus of the campaign is the New York City Economic Development Corporation’s (EDC’s) pending decision on the future of Pier 6 (a.k.a. Downtown Manhattan Heliport), which is expected soon. The Blue Highways coalition has sent a letter to Mayor Adams calling on him to seize this unique and historic opportunity to convert Pier 6 to a predominantly maritime freight facility, while phasing out non-essential helicopter use, thereby firmly establishing the beginnings of a green maritime freight industry in New York City.

The site’s conversion could displace as many as 1,000 truck trips a day from city streets, helping to alleviate overcrowded roads, bridges, highways, and tunnels. Less

truck (and helicopter) traffic would reduce noise and air pollution, improve the health and safety of New Yorkers, and reduce the number of truck related deaths and injuries, in support of the national Vision Zero plan for safe streets. Under this vision, essential helicopter flights at Pier 6, including Marine One and medical and emergency services, would maintain a permanent, dedicated helipad at the site.

Aside from its miniscule contribution to the city's coffers, the Downtown Manhattan Heliport contributes little to the city besides pollution, chronic, deafening noise, and serious health and safety impacts for millions of New Yorkers. By restoring Pier 6's original function as a hub for maritime freight delivery, the City would make blue highways a reality and strengthen New York's claim as a global leader on confronting climate change.

The Blue Highways campaign plans to mobilize New Yorkers and rally elected officials to get behind the City's expedited shift to green freight.

"Converting Downtown Manhattan Heliport to a predominantly marine freight terminal is an opportunity for the Adams administration to make a serious down payment on the establishment of a sustainable, "blue highways" system in New York City," **said Move NY's Alex Matthiessen, director of the Blue Highways Campaign.** "It's not easy to launch a new industry – it requires a commitment of resources and political will. But if Mayor Adams is serious about tackling climate change, he must seize opportunities to invest in green maritime infrastructure. Downtown Manhattan Heliport is, and has been for decades, a major environmental liability and blight on the record of every administration that's supported and perpetuated it in this age of global warming. Now Mayor Adams has the chance to turn it into an environmental asset and confirm New York's place as a global leader on climate."

"Investing in our future means reimagining Pier 6 as a hub for sustainable freight, not perpetuating a legacy of noise and pollution," said **Jaqi Cohen, Director of Climate and Equity Policy at Tri-State Transportation Campaign.** "Converting this space to a green freight terminal will align with New York's climate and equity goals by reducing truck traffic, improving air quality, and creating a more livable city for all."

"In order for New York City to have a green future we must find innovative ways to reduce congestion on our roads," said **Betsy Plum, executive director of Riders Alliance.** "The Blue Highways Campaign is aimed at doing exactly that by accelerating the shift of freight transportation from city roads to our underutilized waterways. We need Mayor Adams and the EDC to step up and embrace opportunities like this to provide a healthier and more sustainable future for New Yorkers. Helicopters are a nuisance and environmental hazard."

"With the climate crisis at our doorstep in New York City, it is important that Mayor Adams and the EDC take significant steps towards more sustainable freight operations," said **Greg Remaud, NY-NJ Baykeeper.** "Using Pier 6 primarily for marine freight

distribution is far more valuable to New Yorkers than non-essential helicopters. The fact that such helicopter tourism flights are ruining the visitor experience at landmarks like the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and Liberty State Park are reason enough to phase out gratuitous helicopter use and phase in a full-fledged green freight system throughout the region.”

**Andrew Willner, Executive Director of The Center for Post Carbon Logistics**, said, “The Center questions the wisdom of dedicating prime water dependent resources to luxury tourism operations which harm those who live, work, and visit New York.” He continued, “The lack of imagination and forethought exhibited by New York’s leadership and City’s planning teams in this matter is concerning and is a disservice to the New Yorkers, and antithetical to the public utterances of City, State, and Federal officials, State and Federal guidance, laws, and regulations, and the City’s own policies, considering the looming climate crisis.” The Center’s report on pier 6 [is available on the Center’s website](#).

“Key to the mission of PortSide New York is growing sustainable maritime uses of NYC’s waterfront. We are thrilled to see the need for a marine highway increasingly being understood and embraced,” said **Carolina Salguero, Executive Director of PortSide**. “I saw the impact of Pier 6 as a marine port after 9/11 when the largest rubble from the World Trade Center was shipped from there by tug and barge. Using two emergency barge ports in lower Manhattan reduced the time it took to clear Ground Zero from two years to eight months. Let’s build on that history and transition the heliport back into a marine port.”

“Converting Pier 6 from a heliport to a maritime freight hub makes infinite sense,” said **Melissa Elstein, Board Chair of Stop the Chop**. “In one master stroke, it would sweep tens of thousands of noisy and polluting helicopters from our skies while removing thousands of trucks from our streets. The New York City Economic Development Corporation’s Request for Proposals for the operation of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport (DMH) is a rare opportunity for the City to address urban ills like climate change, heat island effect, reduced air quality, and congestion. Rather than the continuation of polluting and noisy fossil-fuel based tourist and commuter helicopters taking off and landing (over 30,000 flights per year just from DMH ), NYC should ban them once and for all and commit to a cleaner and greener use of that waterfront land.”

“As exponentially more people wake up to the pace of climate change, something amazing is happening,” said **Melissa Everett, executive director of Sustainable Hudson Valley**. “Tech that we weren’t thinking about a few years ago is fast going mainstream. Low-impact maritime transportation might have looked like a romantic fantasy five years ago, but no longer. New York City has a good track record for innovating its way out of trouble, and repurposing the heliport is a great example of innovating our way out of the climate crisis. It’s an anchor, so to speak, for next-generation clean tech.”

“People often forget that Manhattan is in fact an island,” said **Gregg Zuman, Director of cycletrucking service REVX**. “New York City is made up of creeks, bays, rivers and inlets historically used for a variety of economic purposes. The Blue Highways Campaign to return Pier 6 to its origins as a sustainable freight terminal is exactly the kind of strategic shift the city implements to substantially expand the number of boats, barges, and cycletrucks within our dense urban neighborhoods.”

"Carbon free marine transportation for people and goods is here in NYS!," said **David Borton, CEO of Solar Sal Boats**

# # #