

May 23, 2016

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

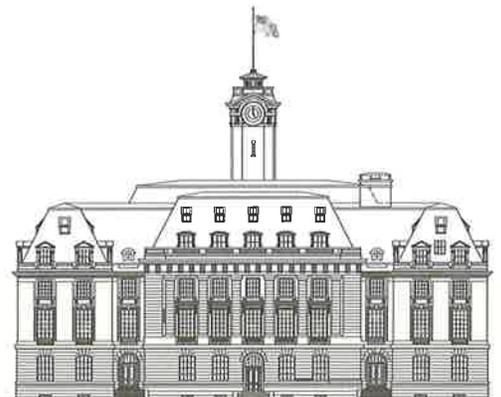
I hope this letter finds you well.

As you know, my team and I have been engaged in an aggressive effort to woo a bigger slice of the film and TV production to Staten Island. It is not hyperbole to say that we on Staten Island have every conceivable backdrop needed for many productions. We want filming taking place here because we recognize the direct and indirect economic benefits that can accrue.

Commissioner Menin, during her short tenure, has been an incredible help, and she understands what we are trying to accomplish. Just recently, I was contacted by independent film producers who were choosing between shooting their film about baseball in Staten Island or Toronto. Thanks to some great work by Julie and our teams, we found a way of making Staten Island viable for this film. It is this kind of forward thinking that we need to make Staten Island a more attractive location for a variety of filming.

I am now writing to propose even more aggressive actions. I was recently contacted by someone involved with the industry to tell us about a problem that uniquely affects Staten Island – the Verrazano Bridge toll. While we are all aware that the cash toll is \$16, many people are unaware that the truck toll is significantly higher depending on the number of axles a truck has. A truck with 7 axles pays a toll of \$124 cash price. And, as you know, there are numerous trucks involved for each shoot to transport all of the necessary equipment. This leads to significant expenses that any production that wants to film in Staten Island must bear, just for transportation! One producer has said that payment of the toll for his trucks cuts into his budget to such a degree that he usually seeks to find a cheaper alternative in order to put more money on the screen. But for this cost, he would be filming more on Staten Island.

That's just one example. I am sure there are countless more. The fact remains that the Verrazano Bridge toll is costing Staten Island and New York City film opportunities we might otherwise have, negatively affecting economic opportunities we might otherwise enjoy. And, we as a State, through the Film Production Tax Credit, already recognize the value in forgoing some revenue with the knowledge that it will be made up by the increased economic activity increased filming will bring.



There are three potential solutions to this problem that I can see:

1. We can approach the MTA to figure out a way of lowering tolls for film productions. As we all know, this approach is highly unlikely.
2. We can work with the City Council on legislation to implement a Film/TV production bridge refund program, similar to the NY State Film Production Tax Credit program with eligible productions registering and being reimbursed for the cost of the toll crossing. This is more likely than 1, but still faces significant hurdles.
3. We can create and fund a program on the Executive level through the Mayor's Office of Film and Media to rebate a portion of the tolls paid by eligible production companies.

Imagine the vote of confidence in this industry and the borough of Staten Island such a program would demonstrate. It would tell the Film and TV world in no uncertain terms that Staten Island is "Open for Business" for film and TV production.

And, with the addition of Broadway Stages coming soon to Staten Island, there will be even more opportunities for filming on Staten Island. Implementing a toll relief program now will ensure the success of the operation and bring increased revenue via other productions all over the Island.

I am hopeful you see the value in working together on something this important. I am interested in seeing greater economic development and more well-paying jobs come to our borough; the film and TV industry can help move those goals forward.

Let's say "Action" and unleash the power of this industry on Staten Island.

I look forward to speaking with you about this proposal.

Very truly yours,


James S. Oddo
Borough President