

July 11, 2017

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

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I hope this letter finds you well.

To say that many Staten Islanders have a “killer commute” is a description to which anyone who knows their situation would nod their head in agreement, assuming it is hyperbole. However, studies now show that the phrase “killer commute” might be a more literal statement than it appears at first blush.

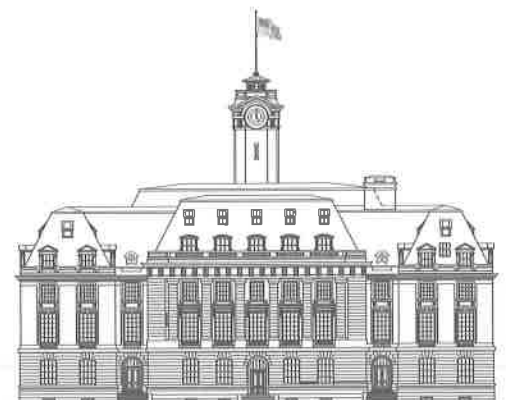
The fact is that this is a health issue, whether government wants to readily admit it or not. And since it has reached crisis proportions, it’s fair to call it a health crisis as well as a commuting crisis. I have asked, and will continue to ask, city and state leaders to figure out a way to mitigate this crisis.

To help determine the potential health effects of our daily commute, I asked my staff to conduct some preliminary research and they found many studies that show the negative effects it has on our health. To illustrate some of those, here are ten things your commute does to your body, according to Time magazine:

1. Your cholesterol is higher
2. Your blood sugar rises
3. Your depression risk rises.
4. Your anxiety increases
5. Your happiness and life satisfaction decline
6. Your Blood Pressure temporarily spikes
7. Your blood pressure rises over time.
8. Your cardiovascular fitness drops
9. Your sleep suffers
10. Your back aches

We go to work to ensure that we live a long, happy life.

We shouldn’t have to risk dying young to do it.



That is why next week we have a “Congestion/Traffic Summit” scheduled at Borough Hall. This meeting will bring all city and state agencies, even those only tangentially related to commuting, into the same room to discuss plans to make our commutes more tolerable.

I know that we are a part of the greatest metropolis in the world, and that there is no silver bullet that will slay this commuting monster. There is no quick fix that will eliminate traffic jams and provide us with twenty minute commutes. Yet, the current status quo - where multi-hour commutes have become the norm - is unacceptable, and I’m hoping this meeting is a first step to figure out a plan to make it more tolerable. It starts with an understanding that two-hour commutes each way are much more than an inconvenience or an annoyance.

There are, of course, some things that are more easily accomplished than others – enforcement comes to mind. Specifically, I’m thinking of complaints we have received from express bus drivers about delivery vehicles parked in bus stops throughout their Manhattan runs. I believe this is a very real problem with a very ready solution; put the onus on the delivery driver, not the bus driver. The times of day for outbound and inbound commutes are pretty much inflexible – delivery times are not. If the NYPD and/or DOT prevent delivery vehicles from stopping in bus stops it would certainly speed the trip to and from work, and I believe our city government should do all we can to keep bus stops clear and accessible for their required purpose.

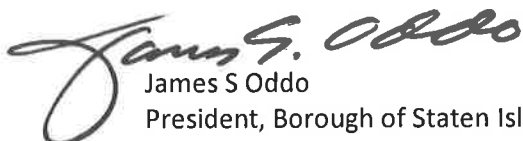
And this gives us renewed impetus to bring fast ferry options to Staten Island. While no one has a “right” to a speedy commute, better utilizing our waterways would at the very least allow more Staten Islanders to completely bypass the chokepoints known as the Staten Island Expressway, the Verrazano Bridge, the Gowanus, and the Hugh Carey Tunnel.

Our waterfront is underutilized, and fast ferries will have a positive affect not only on the health of the commuter, but by taking those vehicles off the streets and roads we may be lowering our carbon footprint in a measurable way. That will affect ALL Staten Islanders.

I request that you give these – and other potential mitigating measures we may wish to explore - every consideration. It is past time that we use everything in our toolbox to correct this condition.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,


James S Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island

