phndc
Prospect Heights
Neighborhood
Development Council

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December 8, 2021

Mr. Keith Bray
Brooklyn Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
16 Court Street
Brooklyn, NY 11241

Dear Commissioner Bray,

On behalf of the Prospect Heights Neighborhood Development Council, we are writing you to express our support for a comprehensive traffic study of Grand Army Plaza to address traffic safety issues, as has been requested by the Plaza Street Block Association (PSBA).

As discussed in our meeting with representatives from PSBA and the Park Slope Civic Council on September 29th regarding GAP traffic calming, we strongly urge you to take steps to address traffic safety concerns in the GAP area. Our suggestions include changes to the light cycles and signal coordination to facilitate pedestrian crossings surrounding the plaza, as well as installation of additional speed bumps, curb extensions, and other traffic calming measures on Plaza Streets East and West to prevent speeding by motorists. Furthermore, we suggest conversion of the painted bike lane on Plaza Street to a protected bike lane; this could be accomplished by switching the current parking and bike lanes. Permanent loading zones would further improve traffic conditions in the area.

As you are surely aware, injuries and fatalities due to traffic violence are at the highest level since the start of the Vision Zero initiative. Partly fueled by the pandemic, NYC is currently experiencing a bike boom; however, a response in terms of street design changes to safely accommodate all these new cyclists has not yet followed. Instead, we are facing unprecedented traffic congestion — not only raising concerns in terms of traffic safety, but also regarding air pollution and climate change. All these concerns are at play at GAP; therefore, we believe action is imperative.

In the short term, we urge you to implement interim interventions to alleviate the immediate traffic safety issues on Plaza Streets East/West and the GAP pedestrian crossings. In the future, we believe a full redesign of GAP should be considered, taking into account safe access to Prospect Park from the surrounding neighborhoods, the City's Vision Zero goals, as well as the larger goal of transforming NYC into a green, climate-resilient city. Such a vision might include closing portions of the plaza to vehicular traffic, and connecting the fountain and the park, as was proposed several years ago by the members of the Grand Army Plaza Coalition, including PHNDC.

It is our understanding that the Department of Transportation plans to study traffic in and around the Prospect Heights neighborhood in preparation for pedestrian and traffic calming improvements to Vanderbilt Avenue and Underhill Avenue. We believe this study presents an excellent opportunity to address safety issues at Grand Army Plaza, and would request that GAP be included in its scope.



Dr. Saskia Haegens
Co-chair, Livable Streets Committee



Gib Veconi
Chair

cc: Borough President Eric Adams
Council Member Laurie Cumbo
Brooklyn Community Board 8