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January 15, 2014

Polly Trottenberg, Commissioner  
New York City Department of Transportation  
55 Water Street, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10041

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg,

I am writing to you regarding traffic conditions along the 21st Street corridor in western Queens. As you may know, 21st Street is a major thoroughfare that serves as a conduit between the Queensboro and Robert F. Kennedy Bridges, resulting in cars, trucks, and other heavy vehicles using the street to move quickly between these two points. This frenzied traffic pattern not only cuts off many residents of western Astoria from the rest of the neighborhood, but places seniors and children in serious danger. In the last two decades, this stretch of 21st Street has claimed the lives of seven cyclists and pedestrians, and left over 100 more with serious injuries.

I therefore ask that the DOT conduct a traffic study of the 21st Street corridor with the goal of creating a more safe and accessible street to all. We need calming measures, such as countdown clocks and traffic lights for pedestrians, as well as flattened crosswalks with no physical impediments. The combination of heavy traffic and inadequate pedestrian amenities make crossing the street for pedestrians with disabilities or children in strollers a potentially deadly endeavor. Community Board 1, Transportation Alternatives, State Senator Michael Gianaris, and State Assemblymember Aravella Simotas all agree that real change is required to make 21 Street safer for everyone.

The increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic along 21 Street is a boon to our local economy. Any additions to our business and residential communities bring benefits to all. We need to make sure, however, that our infrastructure keeps up with this increase in traffic. As of this writing, seven pedestrians have been killed on our New York City streets this year. If we are to make Vision Zero reality, we can no longer accept these tragedies as merely an unfortunate byproduct of the urban environment.

Sincerely,

Council Member Costa Constantinides  
New York City Council, District 22

CC/ss