



Hey, I'm walkin' here! An innovative reorganization of pedestrian management is underway

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Ratso Rizzo's exclamation in *Midnight Cowboy* is perhaps the quintessential expression of the pedestrian experience in New York City. Conflict is inevitable between two groups competing for space and priority.

But perhaps things are changing. On February 11, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced that the 8-month pilot program that turned sections of Broadway running through Times Square and Herald Square from traffic lanes to pedestrian plazas would be made permanent. This is easily the most visible and most significant victory in what has become known in New York City and across the country as the Livable Streets Movement.

The ideals of the movement are neither revolutionary nor unique, but their definitions are. Whereas to many, "traffic" connotes only vehicular traffic, Livable Streets advocates define traffic much more broadly - emphasizing pedestrians, bicyclists and mass transit users. From a windshield perspective, Times Square has been closed; Livable Streets advocates would say it has been opened.

In order to create a truly world-class public space in Times Square, the Bloomberg administration and the New York City Department of Transportation have necessarily concentrated on pedestrian traffic flow. Sam Schwartz Engineering (SSE) was hired to deploy our Pedestrian Management Agents (PMAs) at four intersections in Times Square during the pilot program.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the notoriety of New York City walkers for seemingly using every available opportunity to cross a street regardless of whether cars are coming or not, our agents were able to increase compliance with walk/don't-walk signals by 62%, from a rate of 57.5% to 93.4% compliance with the walk/don't walk signals.

SSE has also provided Pedestrian Managers to augment pedestrian safety around the World Trade Center site, most significantly at the intersection of Church St. and Vesey St. This is the main access/egress point from the WTC PATH station, and by our counts may be the intersection with the highest peak hour pedestrian volumes in the city.

Our pedestrian managers all come from law enforcement backgrounds and bring at least 15 years of experience with them to the job. At any one time there is nearly a century of experience guiding pedestrians across Church St. In addition to their law enforcement and crowd control qualifications, all of our employees have received certification through the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA).

Times Square has long been called the crossroads of the world but special events aside, (New Year's Eve for example), it has acted mainly as a space people must pass through and they try to do so as quickly as possible. But now the plazas allow for performances, both scheduled and impromptu, rest and repose, reflection and appreciation of the grandeur of New York City. In short,

there is now interaction and less insulation from the environment and those we share it with.

As New York City establishes more public spaces, redefining the meaning of traffic and focusing on pedestrian rather than vehicular activity, an innovative reorganization of pedestrian traffic control is also taking place. We believe that Pedestrian Management is a critical component of this transformation and are proud to be on the cutting edge of its enactment.

It is long overdue.

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