



Department of Transportation commencing \$100 million Vision Zero project

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Mayor Bill de Blasio revealed that shovels are hitting the ground on a \$100 million Vision Zero project to redesign Queens Blvd. as a safe, livable corridor that will protect residents, connect neighborhoods and improve the borough's quality of life. In its first year of operation, Vision Zero resulted in the safest for pedestrians since record-keeping began in 1910, and 2015 is shaping up to be even safer.

The project, unanimously approved by the local community board, dramatically designs one of the city's most dangerous streets, bringing safer crossings and more crosswalks for pedestrians, protected bicycle lanes, expanded medians with trees and plantings, and reconfigured intersections that deter speeding and other dangerous behavior.

Since 1990, 185 New Yorkers have lost their lives on Queens Blvd., most of them pedestrians. The first phase of the project will target 1.3 miles of Queens Blvd. between Roosevelt Ave. and 73rd St. in Woodside. Between just 2009 and 2013, six people were killed on this stretch of roadway, 36 suffered severe injuries and 591 more were hurt in crashes. The improvements will be installed through October, followed by the project's extension further east in 2016.

"We don't accept that streets like Queens Boulevard have to be dangerous, that children and grandparents have to be taken from their families year after year. And so, shoulder-to-shoulder with this community, we are taking action on one of the most ambitious and complex overhauls ever undertaken by the City. This street has earned the name 'Boulevard of Death.' Today, we begin work on the 'Boulevard of Life,'" said Mayor de Blasio.

"I want to thank Mayor Bill de Blasio for his relentless push to achieve Vision Zero in NYC, and the local community for working with us to improve Queens Boulevard," said Department of Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg. "After decades of crashes, this corridor will be redesigned to become a safer, greener, and more attractive corridor for residents and businesses. I look forward to seeing cyclists enjoy a new protected bike lane, pedestrians confidently crossing and motorists safely traversing through the World's Borough."

"For the first time in history our City is taking concrete, progressive steps toward re-engineering the 'Boulevard of Death' to ensure it truly does become a boulevard that is filled with life," said Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer. "Under the leadership of DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, the de Blasio administration continues build upon its commitment to protecting the lives of Western Queens children, families and seniors who live along the Boulevard. No families should ever suffer the loss of a loved one along this major thoroughfare and our City's \$100 million investment into Queens Boulevard sets our City on a course closer to the day when Vision Zero is a reality."

Re-engineering dangerous roadways is a key pillar of Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero initiative to

eliminate roadway fatalities, alongside traffic enforcement and education. Queens Boulevard is one of four major corridors being redesigned for safety under the \$250 million Great Streets initiative funded in this year's budget, in addition to 50 priority intersections and streets overhauled for safety each year by the DOT.

The Queens Boulevard redesign process began in January with DOT-sponsored workshops to gather community input on safety needs, and a complete study of traffic and safety conditions. In March, the DOT presented a draft design to Community Board 2's Transportation Committee, and in May, returned to the Board to respond to and discuss the community's comments. DOT returned in June to both the Transportation Committee and Full Board to present and secure support for the final plan, which it did in a unanimous vote.

When implemented, the project will significantly improve safety on the corridor. The new design will route through-traffic on the main line roadway and reduce motorists' switching repeatedly between the main line and service road via "slip lanes." The plan eliminates highway-like design features that encourage speeding, and completes the pedestrian network by connecting neighborhoods with new crossings. The DOT will implement the following improvements:

Safer crossings will be installed along the corridor. Pedestrian islands will be constructed at 65th Place and 50th Street so pedestrians can cross the boulevard in stages, rather than dashing across. A new midblock crossing will be constructed between 72nd St and 73rd St to give pedestrians more opportunities to cross Queens Boulevard. High visibility crosswalks and new signals will be added to Queens Boulevard at the BQE ramps at 66th Street and at 68th Street to provide safer crossings.

DOT will add protected bike lanes with buffers and new pedestrian space along the median next to the service lane in both directions. A raised, concrete bicycle path, separated from traffic, will be constructed under the overpass on the eastbound service road from 67th Street to 69th Street.

Pedestrian ramps along the corridor will be upgraded to be ADA-compliant, improving accessibility for New Yorkers with disabilities.

Low-volume slip lanes will be closed to reduce conflict points. The slip lane between 54th Street and 56th Street will be closed, and at 59th Street, 59th Place and 61st Street, slip lanes will become "STOP" controlled turn lanes - which slow speeds and allow for safe bicycle and pedestrian crossings. DOT will construct a new slip lane transition between the main and service roads at 64th Street, closer to the entrance to the BQE.

Service roads will be reduced to one moving lane in each direction along certain stretches, and the main line will continue to have three moving lanes in each direction, encouraging through-traffic to use the center roadway.

Access to the BQE tunnel will be reconfigured at 65th Place to better organize traffic flow and create safer driving conditions.

Following completion of this work, capital improvements on this stretch will start in Fiscal Year 2018. DOT will soon begin work to redesign Queens Boulevard from 73rd Street to Eliot Avenue, and then from Eliot Avenue to Jamaica Avenue.

"By implementing these traffic improvements on Queens Boulevard, we continue to demonstrate our commitment to safer streets under Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero program. These new enhancements will make our community safer for pedestrians and cyclists alike by lowering the rates of death and serious injury at the hands of reckless drivers," said State Senator Michael Gianaris.

"It's no secret that Queens Boulevard has been, for too long, one of the most dangerous corridors in New York City," said Congress Member Joe Crowley. "Sadly, too many New Yorkers have lost a friend, family member or a neighbor to the hazardous conditions on this major thoroughfare. I commend the City for making Queens Boulevard a priority in its Vision Zero initiative and for making the necessary investments in this plan which will, without a doubt, help ensure the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike."

"Pedestrian safety has been a major concern in this community for years, and improving these safety conditions has been a priority of mine since I was first elected to office," said Assembly Member Michael DenDekker. "Thirty-six severe injuries and six fatalities over the course of only four years along this relatively small stretch of road is simply an unacceptable statistic. I have great hope that this project will make this stretch of road safer, and that we will be able to significantly reduce the number of pedestrian injuries and fatalities."

"I'm grateful that DOT and the Mayor's Vision Zero program have targeted this section as a starting point for new safety improvements for Queens Boulevard," said Assembly Member Margaret Markey. "This stretch of roadway has been a dangerous and confusing barrier through our communities for many years. These improvements will rationalize a challenging stretch of roadway in a way that will make our communities safer and benefit pedestrians, bikers and drivers."

"Queens Boulevard has developed a notorious reputation, being dangerous for pedestrians and drivers alike. Dozens of injuries and a handful of fatalities have occurred in just over a mile of the roadway, and the numbers are disturbing when looking at the entire boulevard. New Yorkers uniquely rely on a range of transportation options, many of which don't include a vehicle. Walkers and bikers are at every corner, and they have that right to travel as is most convenient for them. It is my hope that the Great Streets Initiative, once fully implemented, will make it safer and easier for all New Yorkers to navigate our bustling streets. I commend the Mayor and the Department of Transportation for starting this process and look forward to its progress," said Council Member Elizabeth Crowley.

"Today the people of Queens attain a long awaited much needed change: the Boulevard of Death is no more! By redesigning one of the most dangerous roads in our city we will save countless lives and ensure a safer Queens," said Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez. "I am proud of the \$250 million that the Council was able to allocate for the Vision Zero Great Streets program and look

forward to its implementation throughout New York City. I commend Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Trottenberg and Speaker Mark-Viverito on their leadership and look forward to further implementation of the Vision Zero Great Streets Program."

"This is a momentous day, for Queens and for all of New York City. Local residents have spent decades calling on officials to fix what has long been known as the 'Boulevard of Death,' and now work has begun on the first phase of Queens Boulevard," said Caroline Samponaro, Deputy Director of Transportation Alternatives. "We thank Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Trottenberg and the City Council for getting this lifesaving project underway. Other communities across the five boroughs also need this kind of redesign to fix the dangerous corridors where most traffic fatalities and serious injuries take place, so New York City can reach Vision Zero by 2024."

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