



Queens Civic Congress

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Testimony to City Council On Proposed Truck Route Regulations April 3, 2003

**By Richard C. Hellenbrecht, Vice President, Queens Civic Congress
Chairman, Queens Community Board 13**

Good afternoon Chairman Liu and members of the New York City Council. Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about the serious concerns of increasing and unenforced truck traffic on prohibited streets.

My name is Richard C. Hellenbrecht and I am speaking today both as Chair of Queens Community Board 13 and as Vice President of Queens Civic Congress, a coalition of 100 civic, community, cooperative, homeowners and tenant organization in the borough of Queens. I heartily support the effort of Councilman Leroy Comrie to make this introduction, which provides additional clarity and direction to truck drivers making deliveries or carting construction and other materials in and near residential areas, particularly in the outer boroughs.

At the community board I have received numerous complaints of heavy trucks rumbling down residential streets and boulevards that are not designated as truck routes. While there are restrictions in place, they have little effect on busy truckers, especially those from out of town who may not be familiar with city streets and regulations. In most cases, truckers are under pressure to get their load to their destination as quickly and conveniently as possible. A traffic ticket is a "cost of doing business" and there is very little enforcement anyway. There is widespread confusion over enforcement. I had a very funny series of letters from my precinct commander and the Queens head of DOT recently. DOT wrote that truck regulations should be enforced without signs, while in response to the same complaint, the captain stated that his officers couldn't enforce the regulations because there were no signs.

At several meetings with DOT I pushed hard for signs, but DOT flatly refuses to put up "negative signage" for non-truck routes. (I guess they don't consider "No Parking," "No Standing" and "No Turns" to be negative!) Their alternative is to put up affirmative "Truck Route" signs on routes adjacent to frequent community complaints. (Little good they are if you're not there to see them.) I suggest we settle this once and for all and just call them "Truck Free Routes."

The real problem is that our residential communities are too often invaded by huge, noisy, smoky trucks hurdling through streets not designed for trucks, sometimes dropping rocks, dirt or dangerous pieces of construction debris. They rip up the streets, which are not designed or constructed to accommodate heavy trucks, and they rattle houses and nerves as they speed by. Often these streets are near schools or routes to schools. In addition to noise and mess, these trucks pose a real threat to young children walking alone and to mothers pushing younger siblings in strollers. These people bought

homes and invest a lot of money in them because they seek a particular quality of life. To be awakened by fully loaded trucks barreling down a quiet street at 6 am is not what they bargained for.

The Queens Civic Congress, which represents more than 100 civic associations throughout Queens, has long seen the blatant disregard of truck route regulations as a major problem and included this plank in its 2002 to 2003 Platform: "Control and reduce illegal and perilous truck and commercial vehicular traffic on Queens' local streets through meaningful policing and environmental enforcement."

I believe the new regulations will be helpful by providing additional tools to our local precincts to control damaging and inappropriate traffic. I would ask that additional consideration be given in the legislation to providing internationally recognized signs depicting "Truck Free Route" on a limited number of local streets that are too often used by truckers. I am sure the district offices of community boards could provide valuable assistance in identifying the most affected streets.

In conclusion, my basic argument comes down to the fact that for whatever good reasons the City Council and DOT many years ago mapped truck routes. These routes do exist, they are the law and they ought to be enforced as rigorously as other laws. I believe the current Introduction adds teeth to these regulations and should be implemented as quickly as possible.

I thank Councilmember Comrie and his fellow sponsors and I strongly endorse this Introduction. The increased fines and routing requirements should help, but they also must be enforced by local police and traffic agents. I urge the committee to consider my additional suggestions and other ways to strengthen these rules to protect the quality of life, the environment and the infrastructure in residential areas.

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The entire Queens Civic Congress Platform may be viewed on the internet at <http://www.queensciviccongress.org/Platform/02platform.htm>

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