City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Transportation and Public Utilities to hold hearings examining strategies to address traffic congestion in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, A draft report published in March 2018 by the Center City District found increased congestion on several Central Philadelphia streets. Cars moving between 23rd and Broad Streets experienced 20% longer travel times, when compared with 2013, and bus passengers experienced 25-40% longer waits on the same routes; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's narrow thoroughfares, combined with a boom of commercial and construction activity in Center City and beyond, have created conflicts for space among multiple modes of transportation. The increased traffic volume often results in congestion and increased travel time; and

WHEREAS, The burgeoning internet economy has contributed to the City's congestion through an increase in delivery vehicles on the City's streets. These vehicles often stop in travel lanes to facilitate deliveries, and seem to accept parking tickets as part of the cost of business. Citywide fines for delivery vehicles totaled more than $6.3 million, a 22% increase from 2013, according to data from the Parking Authority, with more than 80% of tickets being written for infractions in Center City; and

WHEREAS, Increased popularity of ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft has resulted in a greater number of cars on the road. According to the Parking Authority, an estimated 20,000 ride-sharing vehicles operate in Philadelphia, compared with only 2,000 medallion taxis. A study of Manhattan's Central Business District from 2013 to 2017 found a 33% increase in miles traveled by ride-sharing services, while traffic slowed by 18% over that period. The tendency of these vehicles to stop in travel lanes to pick up or drop off passengers creates unpredictability in the street and can exacerbate conflict for already-limited street space; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's growing population of residents between the ages of 20 and 34, who account for 40% of Center City' population, have brought to the City a preference for bicycle travel. Often competing for their right-of-way with personal or delivery vehicles that are stopped in travel lanes, these bicyclists need safety infrastructure to minimize interaction with automobiles and pedestrians who share the road. This infrastructure will require thoughtful consideration from those who design and manage the City's streetscapes; and

WHEREAS, A dissertation published in February, 2010 concluded that "traffic congestion overall has a negative impact on road safety." While no conclusive explanations are available, the researcher posited that "higher speed variance among vehicles within and between lanes and erratic driving behavior in the presence of congestion" might explain the negative impacts that were seen; and

WHEREAS, The City's Vision Zero initiative is intended to "eliminate all traffic-related deaths and severe injuries, while increasing safety, health, and mobility for all". The Vision Zero task force has found that "approximately 53% of the City's traffic-related deaths are the result of aggressive driving". To the extent that congestion increases erratic and potentially dangerous driver behavior, it must be addressed in order for the City to accomplish the important goals established by the Vision Zero initiative; and

WHEREAS, Increases in traffic congestion seen over the last few years in Philadelphia pose a potential threat to the vibrancy and growth from which those increases result. The problem merits a coordinated response from those who plan the shape of the streetscape and manage the flow of traffic in the City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorize the Committee on Transportation and Public Utilities to hold hearings examining strategies to address traffic congestion in the City of Philadelphia.

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