



This was sent to all City Council Members to set the record straight to why TEA should remain in the NYPD.

Dear Council Members,

We recently learned of an organized campaign urging you to move Traffic Enforcement out of the NYPD and back into the Department of Transportation. While we strongly support efforts to reform the NYPD and policing practices, and while our union has been deeply supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement and engaged in the protests following the murder of George Floyd, our members feel extremely strongly about retaining their status in the Police Department. The Communications Workers of America represents approximately 3,200 Traffic Enforcement Agents and Supervisors (TEAs), members of Locals 1182, and 1181 respectively. Despite being considered First Responders, a role highlighted in the COVID-19 pandemic, TEAs are severely underpaid and face significant abuse on the job. TEAs are paid between \$41K and \$50K and suffer approximately 100 assaults per year while on the job. Over 95% of the Traffic Enforcement Agents and Supervisors are people of color.

TEAs fought for years to be shifted from the Department of Transportation into the NYPD. They believed that serving as members of the NYPD and wearing the uniform conferred an important degree of respect and authority and translated to real safety on the job. They deeply believe that the uniform reduces the public's inclination to assault agents, who in spite of their status in the NYPD, continue to suffer significant workplace violence. And they firmly believe this problem will worsen if the agents lose their role as members of the NYPD.

Finally, merely shifting the TEAs from one city agency to another does nothing to reform the NYPD. It would be merely a cosmetic cost reduction to facilitate claims of significant cuts to the NYPD budget. It will have no impact at all on the very real issues that must be addressed if meaningful police reform is to take place. In fact, none of the issues cited by proponents of this change will be solved by moving Traffic out of the NYPD because the TEAs and Supervisors literally have nothing to do with these particular policing practices. To list just a few of the misleading arguments being advanced by supporters of this change:

- The proponents of this change decry racially discriminatory policing of social distancing during the pandemic, but Traffic agents have no authority to police social distancing.
- They cite statistics showing that of-color New Yorkers receive 89% of the tickets issued for jaywalking or mid-street illegal crossing, but Traffic agents have no authority to police jaywalking and do not issue jaywalking tickets.
- They also cite figures showing that of-color drivers are far more frequently pulled over by police and even more frequently searched for drugs and alcohol, but again, our agents have no authority to pull cars over.
- Finally, in a published op-ed, advocates call for the replacement of “intermittent, selective and biased traffic enforcement,” and redirection of these resources to “traffic engineering, “but the

truth is, all CWA-represented Agents and Supervisors do is issue parking tickets and direct traffic in busy intersections. The only moving violations they are authorized to ticket occur when drivers “block the box.” And somewhat ironically in this context, the Agents do issue tickets to drivers who illegally park in bike lanes—a practice that is surely appreciated by Transportation Alternatives.

We urge you to consider the strongly held feelings of 3,200 dedicated and largely unappreciated New York City employees and reject efforts to move TEAs from the NYPD into the DOT. Instead, we urge you to focus on efforts that will produce substantive and meaningful policing reform to make our City safer and more just.

Sincerely,

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