

June 28, 2011

CONTACT: Amy Spitalnick
212.298.5565 / 516.521.0128 / amy@danielsquadron.org

**TESTIMONY OF STATE SENATOR DANIEL SQUADRON ON 9/11 MEMORIAL TOUR
BUSES AND METERED BUS PARKING**

Squadron: The more visitors come by PATH and ferry instead of tour buses, the more they will experience everything Lower Manhattan has to offer

My name is Daniel Squadron and I represent the 25th District in the New York State Senate, which includes Lower Manhattan. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

In just over two months, the National September 11 Memorial will open on the tenth anniversary of the horrific terrorist attacks. The Memorial will be one of the most important cultural attractions in the country; we are proud to have it in Lower Manhattan.

When the eyes of the world turn to New York on that day, they will see that our city's reconstruction is on track. New buildings are going up at the World Trade Center site, and the recent census shows that Lower Manhattan has gained, not lost, thousands of residents since September 11, 2001.

But there is one area where our city remains woefully unprepared: we do not have a concrete plan to handle the millions of people who are expected to visit the September 11 Memorial, arriving in what is predicted to be thousands of tour buses. Where will all these buses park? How will we keep our streets moving for residents and businesses? If we don't act now, the tour bus disorder surrounding the September 11 Memorial could impede the hard-earned revival of Lower Manhattan.

For months I, along with other local leaders, have been voicing these concerns. Thanks to our work, there has been a renewed focus on addressing these issues. The Department of Transportation's plan to implement metered bus parking on the streets surrounding the Memorial is an important step that must move forward. Until the Vehicle Security Center is complete, these parking spots for buses will cut congestion and bring in much-needed revenue.

However, much more comprehensive solutions are necessary to handle the potential confusion of thousands of tour buses in Lower Manhattan – and the question remains whether DOT, NYPD and other city agencies will get bus metered parking and other necessary solutions in place in time for the opening.

We can't just "manage" the tour buses that enter Lower Manhattan. For the sake of our community's recovery, the future of businesses downtown, and the ever-growing residential community, I've long said that the only solution is to keep as many of these buses out of Lower Manhattan as possible while bringing in visitors by other means.

The more visitors come into Lower Manhattan by PATH and ferry instead of tour buses, the more they will experience everything we have to offer – not just the Memorial, but the shops, restaurants, and parks that are symbols our rebuilding.

Of course we cannot prevent tour buses from entering Lower Manhattan altogether. But we can create strong disincentives for tour bus operators to enter the congested area near the World Trade Center

site, while at the same time offering innovative, accessible, and convenient offsite options that will allow visitors to easily travel into and out of Lower Manhattan.

If we do those two things right, we can keep hundreds of tour buses out of Lower Manhattan while bringing in thousands of visitors. In addition to metered bus parking, I proposed a plan that includes these four key elements:

- Park the buses in New Jersey. The PATH train could shuttle passengers from the Harrison train station, with its ample parking, directly to the World Trade Center site. Ferries could bring thousands of visitors from Liberty State Park in Jersey City.
- Create a “no-cruising zone” in Lower Manhattan. A number of cities have already created areas in which vehicles are not allowed to indefinitely circle -- keeping buses from clogging the streets.
- Regulate curb use. By creating the first-ever dispatch system for curbside bus pick-up and drop-off, we could regulate the chaos that has proven dangerous to pedestrians and passengers alike. Speaker Silver and I wrote a bill that would require some intercity buses to get a city permit regulating the location of pick-ups and drop-offs. In addition to regulating an industry in serious need of increased safety, the permit system could also be applied in the area surrounding the world Trade Center.
- Enforce the rules well. A roving spot enforcement team could ensure that buses are following the rules. Violations should carry significant penalties that will fund the enforcement.

But I've been deeply concerned about the failure to move forward on these ideas before September. Beginning this Spring, my colleagues and I brought together stakeholders and city agencies to address the influx of buses. The metered bus parking plan is a result of those meetings. In addition, the Memorial has worked creatively to coordinate their Timed Reservation System with tour bus operators to cut down on traffic. I hope our other suggestions will be quickly implemented as well.

As we prepare for the Memorial's opening, we have an opportunity: not just to avert a looming crisis for Lower Manhattan, but also to transform the way people move through the heart of our city.

Parking tour buses in New Jersey, creating tight rules that prohibit cruising, and ending our system of chaotic, unregulated bus stops would help Lower Manhattan thrive, bring order to our streets, protect pedestrians, bolster the PATH system and help harbor ferries carry more people every day. It's a win for Lower Manhattan redevelopment, a win for the business community, and a win for tens of thousands of new Downtown residents.

But time is running out. With just over two months until opening day, there is no room for further delay. DOT, NYPD and other city agencies must act now.

Thank you.