



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4

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J. LEE COMPTON
Chair

MICHELLE SOLOMON
Acting District Manager

April 6, 2006

Commissioner Thomas Frieden
Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene
125 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Re: Carriage Horses

Dear Commissioner Frieden:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 was upset to hear about the accident earlier this winter that led to serious injuries to carriage horse driver Carmelo Vargas and the death of "Spotty." While the carriage horse industry employs over 300 people and is a part of the New York City tourist industry and the economy in Community Board No. 4 (all five stables for carriage horses are located in our community district) and we appreciate the knowledge and concern of the stable owners, we remain concerned about the health and safety of the horses and feel we can do better.

While there is anecdotal evidence to cause concern, there is little actual evidence on the health effects of carriage service on the horses. The hard surface of pavement, the "nose to car fumes" for horses on the street, the lack of turn-out areas in most horse stables or at set-aside areas in the city, and the difficult urban environment are likely to have some effect on horses. While these are concerning to the Community Board, without sufficient evidence we do not feel it appropriate to recommend a change from the current allowed street access.

The Community Board thus requests:

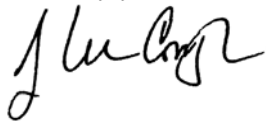
1. **The Department of Health should conduct a study on the health and lifespan of horses in the horse carriage industry.** There is limited information available on the health condition or lifespan of horses in the carriage industry as compared to other environment and work/life conditions. Without this information, it is not possible to judge whether the carriage horse industry is appropriate in modern New York City or what specific improvements would be most helpful;
2. **There should be improvements to stable and working conditions for horses in the carriage horse industry:** Even in advance of a study there are several common sense upgrades that can occur at minimal cost – stables should be large enough for horses to lay down and turnaround (which most, but not all stables currently meet), humidity should be factored in to work restrictions on hot days, carriages should carry water spray (in the summer) and blankets (in the winter). We call upon the Department of Health to meet with the ASPCA, which has sponsored legislation for improvements, and the carriage horse owners to adopt improvements to the working conditions. We also call upon the Department of Transportation to investigate installing a dedicated carriage horse lane during high volume hours;

3. **Increase training required for horse carriage drivers:** Ultimately working conditions for horses, and their drivers, depend on the knowledge and conduct of those drivers. A full curriculum for drivers required in advance of receiving a license should include information on common horse health conditions and afflictions, healthful treatment, feeding and caring, and driving in an urban environment;
4. **Consider a fare increase for horse carriages:** The horse carriage fares have not been increased since 1989. While the tourist industry has boomed in New York City, the horse carriage industry has not been able to appropriately prosper. Improved working and safety conditions would also be difficult, and even unfair, to implement without permitting a reasonable increase in carriage fares;
5. **Activate the Advisory Board on Horse Carriage Industry:** The current City law mandates an Advisory Board that includes representative of carriage owners, veterinarians and the public. However, it has never been activated. We request that it be activated and specifically required to issue annual reports to the public that include such information as the number and type of violations issued during the last year; reported horse illnesses and number of horses euthanized; age and disposition of horses retiring; the number of people employed by the horse carriage industry; number of patrons; and estimated economic impact of the industry; and
6. **Increase enforcement:** Currently enforcement is provided primarily by the ASPCA, who have 12 animal inspectors for the entire state, only three of whom have equine experience. There is no City funding for this enforcement. We request that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provide funding specifically for horse inspectors.

Community Board No. 4 appreciates the concern and passion expressed by animal activists, most of whom want an immediate ban of the horse carriage industry. While we are not adopting their recommendation for a ban, we request their assistance in monitoring the conditions for horses in New York City and encourage appropriate agencies to respond meaningfully to their input.

We also appreciate the hard work and caring that those in the horse carriage industry use to carry out their responsibilities and ask for their cooperation and assistance in this effort.

Sincerely yours,



J. Lee Compton
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Jay Marcus
Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

cc: Local Elected Officials
ASPCA
Kinship Circle
Humane Society
Stable owners
DOT