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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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February 28, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NY State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Mayor Eric Adams  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Brad S. Lander  
NYC Comptroller  
One Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

Kim Royster  
Chief, Transportation Bureau  
NYC Police Department  
One Police Plaza, Room 1102  
New York, NY 10038

Mark J.F. Schroeder, Commissioner  
NYS Dept. of Motor Vehicles  
6 Empire State Plaza  
New York, NY 12228

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
NY State Majority Leader  
188 State Street, Room 907  
Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
Speaker, NYC Council  
165-90 Baisley Blvd.  
Jamaica, NY 11434

Dear Governor Hochul, Mayor Adams, Comptroller Lander, Chief Royster, Commissioner Schroeder, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Council Speaker Adams:

At its Full Board meeting on February 16, 2023, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

**1. Resolution in response to panel discussion of experts addressing obscured license plates and their impact on the loss of revenue due to their evasion of red light cameras, speed cameras and tolls, the dangers vehicles with obscured license plates pose to public safety, and the lack of sufficient enforcement.**

**Whereas** the practice of drivers obscuring license plates to avoid being caught by red light and speed cameras when they speed, run red lights and tolls is proliferating in the NYC area, greatly endangering all people on the street and, as reported by local representatives, have cost tax payers millions of dollars (NYC Dept. of Transportation (DOT) data March 2020-April 2022:

1.5 million obscured license plate incidents reported; by 2021 up to 4% of vehicles evading cameras representing a \$75,000,000 loss); and

**Whereas** offenders obscure license plates in many different ways, among them, by scraping off paint, with covers or objects, with spray paint, by retracting license plates, by forging fake plates and by using false paper substitutes for the real plates; and

**Whereas** fines for illegally obstructed license plates are as little as \$65 with a maximum up to \$300, resulting in \$75 to \$100 million a year in lost revenue; and,

**Whereas** intentionally obscured plates undermine the Reckless Driver Accountability Act that is designed to penalize reckless drivers with 15 or more camera-issued speeding tickets or five red-light tickets and keep them and their vehicles off NYC streets; and

**Whereas** it is illegal to buy or sell devices that obscure license plates (Amazon is no longer allowed to sell obscured plates shipped to NY addresses) yet it remains possible to buy them in stores and online if shipped out of state; and

**Whereas** when congestion pricing goes into effect, scofflaws would look to avoid paying tolls by obscuring their license plates, leading to a reduction of the revenue that congestion pricing is designed to raise and less impact on its aim to lower congestion; and

**Whereas** it has been established that drivers obscuring their plates are known to be the most egregious offenders when it comes to reckless driving that can lead to serious if not fatal injuries; and

**Whereas** the 1st and 5th Precinct of the NYPD say they are actively targeting vehicles with obscured plates and finding that this leads to additional criminal charges as many drivers caught with obscured license plates are found and charged with illegal possession of guns, knives, drugs, and other contraband; and

**Whereas** license plates are regulated by the State of New York which complicates NYPD's ability to impound parked cars with obscured license plates; and

**Whereas** areas around police precincts are known to have one of the highest ratios of parked cars with obscured license plates; and,

**Whereas** NYPD enforces its own officers with obscured license plates offenses under the rule of Command Discipline, penalizing those officers who own cars with obscured plates by taking away vacation days, as opposed to issuing fines that can be tracked with the payment of a summons; and

**Whereas** NYS Governor Kathy Hochul has proposed legislation in her FY 2024 Executive Budget that will authorize law enforcement and the Department of Motor Vehicles to levy increased penalties on drivers whose license plates are knowingly altered to make them unreadable in photographs, including increased fines and registration denials. The law will also enable law enforcement to seize materials affixed to license plates that are designed to prevent them from being read by speed and toll collection cameras; and

**Whereas** NYS Senators Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Andrew Gounardes will be reintroducing legislation by Senator Gounardes from the 2021-2022 NYS Legislative Session to the current NYS Legislative Session that would direct municipalities to create a program for bystander reporting of stolen, false or fraudulent license plates; and

**Whereas** NYC Council Member Erik Bottcher introduced a bill at the NYC Council Legislative Session in 2022, to be re-introduced at the Council's 2023 Legislative Session, to require the

NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) to report monthly on evasion of red-light cameras or school speed cameras by motor vehicles with unreadable license plates;

**Therefore be it resolved** that CB2 strongly supports Governor Hochul's proposal to increase fines on drivers who obscure their license plates and calls upon the NY State legislature to support and speedily pass this legislation; and

**Be it further resolved** that CB2 strongly supports reintroduction at this current NY State legislative session of State Senator Gounardes' 2021-2022 bill formalizing a public reporting process for obscured license plates, which now will be co-sponsored by State Senators Gounardes and Hoylman-Sigal, and calls upon the NY State Legislature, when this bill is reintroduced, to pass the bill as soon as possible; and

**Be it further resolved** that CB2 agrees that the fine for obscuring a license plate should be severe, whether ticketed in motion or parked, with a minimum fine set in the hundreds of dollars with the option to impound the vehicle; and

**Be it further resolved** that CB2 strongly supports NYC Council Member Bottcher's bill mandating DOT to report on speed and red-light camera evasions and urges that it be quickly brought to the Council's Transportation Committee and approved and to the full NYC Council to review and swiftly vote passage; and

**Be it further resolved** that CB2 recommends stricter disciplinary measures for police officers caught with obscured license plates, and proposes that NYPD offenders be handed the same punishment as other citizens, rather than subtracting vacation days, which is more difficult to audit; and

**Be it finally resolved** that CB2 urges New York City and New York State to research and institute as soon as possible new technology to replace license plates as visual identifiers, creating license plates with new technology that would make toll evasion, red light camera running and speeding more difficult to hide

**Vote:** Passed, 38 Board Members in favor  
4 against (J. Deverna, R. Sanz, S. Smith, C. Spence)

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Jeannine Kiely, Chair  
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Shirley Secunda, Chair  
Traffic & Transportation Committee  
Community Board #2, Manhattan

JK/EM

cc:

Hon. Dan Goldman, Congressman  
Hon. Brian Kavanaugh, NY State Senator  
Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, NY State Senator  
Hon. Timothy M. Kennedy, NYS Senator (Chair, NYS Senate Transp. Comm.)  
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NY Assembly Member  
Hon. Grace Lee, NY Assembly Member  
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member  
Hon. Christopher Marte, NYC Council Member  
Hon. Carlina Rivera, NYC Council Member  
Hon. Selvena Brooks-Powers, NYC Council Member (Chair, Transp. & Infrastr. Comm.)  
Edward Pincar, Jr., Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Dept. of Transp.  
Craig F. Ruyle, PE, NYC Regional Director, NYS Dept. of Transp.  
Thomas G. Bayer, PE, Asst. to NYC Regional Director, NYS Dept. of Transp.  
Sgt. Michael Corrado, NYPD 1st Precinct  
Sgt. Joel Mottola NYPD 5th Precinct  
Sgt. Daniel Houlahan, NYPD 6th Precinct  
Sgt. Arsenio Berrios, NYPD 9th Precinct  
Sindhu Bharadwaj, NYC Comptroller's Office  
Adam White