



# Parking in Sunnyside now easier for locals

## Changes made to benefit area small businesses and residents

by Jason Pafundi

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Elected officials announced last week that short-term parking is being added and regulations are being adjusted along Queens Boulevard in Sunnyside to make parking more accessible for motorists.

In a press conference on Thursday, Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer (D- Sunnyside), Rep. Joe Crowley (D- Bronx, Queens), state Sen. Mike Gianaris (D- Astoria) and city Department of Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan spoke of the need for the changes as a way to help the small businesses of Sunnyside.

"We must do all we can to ensure businesses in Queens can grow and thrive," Crowley said. "Making these parking adjustments will help do just that."

Later this month, 60 muni-meter spaces underneath the 7 train will be converted from 12-hour parking to a four-hour maximum. Area residents and small business owners had long been complaining that people from outside the neighborhood were using the spaces to leave their cars before heading into Manhattan.

"Sunnyside is not just a place to park your car on the way to Manhattan," said Van Bramer. "It is a destination in and of itself, and we want those in the neighborhood, from the neighborhood, shopping at our stores, and this will allow that to happen."

In addition to the long-term parking changes, the weekday "No Standing 7 a.m. to 10 a.m." regulation on the north curb of westbound Queens Boulevard from 48th Street to 32nd Place will be eliminated. Also, the existing two-hour muni-meter reg-

ulations will be extended, going into effect at 8 a.m. to provide more parking opportunities for motorists looking to access businesses in the area.

"These new changes are really going to make a big difference in my morning," said resident Lisa Pancir. "I used to have a hard time just running in to get a coffee, but now I won't have to worry about getting a ticket or being towed."

The DOT evaluated conditions along westbound Queens Boulevard during the morning peak hours and found that the 'no standing' regulation could be eliminated without significantly impacting traffic flow.

"We worked very hard to bring common sense parking regulations to the community," Sadik-Khan said.

Gianaris agreed. "The lifting of rush-hour parking restrictions is a common sense approach that balances traffic concerns with that of local residents and owners will welcome the additional parking spaces in their neighborhood," he said.

The economic climate in this country made these changes necessary, he said.

"To have the rules exist to make it difficult for people to stop their cars and shop is ridiculous in a time of economic turmoil," Gianaris said. "The rules of this city need to make it easy as possible for businesses to prosper."

Business owners up and down Queens Boulevard have applauded the changes.

"These issues have been around for a while, and finally changes have been made," said Kieran Smart, owner of a local pub on the north side of the boulevard.

Helping small businesses and local resi-



Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer speaks at a press conference to announce changes to the parking regulations on Queens Boulevard in Sunnyside. With Van Bramer are Rep. Joe Crowley, left, state Sen. Mike Gianaris, DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan and Ciaran Staunton, a local business owner.

PHOTO BY JASON PAFUNDI

dents were the main reasons for the changes.

Van Bramer said that parking is the No. 1 issue for so many people who live and work and own small businesses in the area, and he hopes these changes address some of their concerns.

"With the lifting of these restrictions, we are announcing that the parking rules and regulations aren't punitive or unfair to small business owners and residents," he said. "They are meant to support local small businesses and allow local residents an equal access to parking spots in their neighborhood."

Gianaris added that the rules now exist to support the people that live in Sunnyside.

Not everyone, though, was on board with the changes. Commuters from other parts of Queens and Long Island have long used Sun-

nyside as a bridge to Manhattan, and with these changes, that opportunity will be diminished.

Former Sunnysider Phil Tamberine likes the flexibility driving his car gives him, but he also doesn't want to drive into the East Village for work.

"Since I moved to New Hyde Park, I've driven to Sunnyside, parked and then taken the train to Manhattan," Tamberine said. "These changes are punishing me for moving."

Despite complaints from residents and commuters outside of the area, Van Bramer said the changes are about fairness.

"We can have some commuter parking, but we need to have more parking for local folks who want to shop in local businesses," he said.

The changes take effect Oct 31.

**"Sunnyside is not just a place to park your car on the way to Manhattan."**

— Jimmy Van Bramer, councilman