March 5, 2013

Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan
New York City Department of Transportation
55 Water Street
New York, NY 10041

Dear Commissioner Sadik-Khan:

I am writing regarding the tragic accident that took place in my district on Thursday, February 28, 2013, which resulted in the death of a 6-year-old boy named Amar Diarrassouba. As you know, a large tractor trailer was making a right-hand turn from East 117th Street onto 1st Avenue.

I appreciate the commitment of DOT to traffic-calming efforts across our city, including right here in El Barrio/East Harlem with the planned installation of protected bike lanes. However, this accident has raised questions as to why such a large truck was driving on a one-way residential street, which I understand from residents of that block, is a common occurrence. East 116th Street is the nearest east-west truck route and as such I believe this street is more appropriate for large trucks, such as those coming from East River Plaza. While my understanding is that in some cases trucks are permitted to proceed through non-designated streets on their way to a designated route – in this case driving west on 117th Street to 1st Avenue – I am concerned about the adverse impact on pedestrians in this area.

I look forward to the opportunity to speak to you and your staff in an effort to examine the routes to and from East River Plaza, as well as other traffic calming measures we might be able to consider for the streets surrounding the mall. I know that Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer has presented a number of important recommendations, which I also support and hope we can work together to implement.

Thank you for your continued partnership in improving our streetscape for our city’s pedestrians.

Sincerely,

Melissa Mark-Viverito
Council Member, District 8

Cc: Manhattan Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgione