



## **Committee on Governmental Operations**

### **Community Board Reform**

**Testimony by Paul Steely White, Executive Director, T.A.**  
**Thursday, April 30, 2015**

Thank you Chair Kallos and the members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, for convening this hearing.

I am Paul Steely White, the Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives. We are a 40-year old non-profit, with more than 100,000 activists in our network, dedicated to improving the safety of New York City's streets. We appreciate and encourage this committee's efforts to improving our city's community boards and making them open and accessible to more New Yorkers. Although **we support the basic purpose of today's bills**, we believe the effort to impose **term limits is too modest** to help ensure that we have community boards that remain responsive to the needs of all local residents.

Too often we see community-based proposals for life-saving changes to street design being delayed for years, by individual community board members who exercise unwarranted influence while remaining unresponsive to the needs of the most vulnerable residents. Every month and every year that passes means more New Yorkers killed and injured for life, while proven life-saving solutions are stalled, making a mockery of the democratic process our community boards are meant to represent.

Transportation Alternatives **supports Intro 0732-2015**, to make urban planning professionals available to community boards. We also **support the basic purpose of Intro 0585-2014**, but are **strongly concerned** about the two main elements of this bill: The **"grandfather clause"**, that would allow current board members to be re-appointed for life, and the **six-term limit** for new board members, which would allow future members to serve for twelve consecutive years.

### **Intro 732 – Urban Planning Professionals**

We **support** providing institutionalized urban planning expertise to community boards. Land-use is among the most complicated and important policy areas. This move complements the effort to impose term limits on community board members, by providing less of a need for members to spend a life-time to acquire expertise in land-use and urban planning.

### **Intro 585 – Term Limits**

#### **"Grandfather Clause"**

Transportation Alternatives is **strongly concerned about the "grandfather clause"** in this bill. No community board member should be allowed to serve for life. It excludes new voices, and all levels of local government must

reflect the area's demographic diversity and the ever-changing nature of local communities. Our residents should not wait a life-time for community boards to reflect their diversity.

### **Six-Term Limit**

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At Transportation Alternatives we recognize the hard work of community board members who are dedicated to serving their communities. We urge this Committee and the Council to give more New Yorkers this opportunity, and allow our city to access the untapped potential of new voices and new skills, to ensure that our community boards reflect our shared diversity, and become responsive to the changes necessary to ensure the safety and livelihood of everyone in the community.



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At Transportation Alternatives we recognize the hard work of community board members who are dedicated to serving their communities. We urge this Committee and the Council to give more New Yorkers this opportunity, and allow our city to access the untapped potential of new voices and new skills, to ensure that our community boards reflect our shared diversity, and become responsive to the changes necessary to ensure the safety and livelihood of everyone in the community.



## **Committee on Governmental Operations**

### **Community Board Reform**

**Testimony by Paul Steely White, Executive Director, T.A.**  
**Thursday, April 30, 2015**

Thank you Chair Kallos and the members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, for convening this hearing.

I am Paul Steely White, the Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives. We are a 40-year old non-profit, with more than 100,000 activists in our network, dedicated to improving the safety of New York City's streets. We appreciate and encourage this committee's efforts to improving our city's community boards and making them open and accessible to more New Yorkers. Although **we support the basic purpose of today's bills**, we believe the effort to impose **term limits is too modest** to help ensure that we have community boards that remain responsive to the needs of all local residents.

Too often we see community-based proposals for life-saving changes to street design being delayed for years, by individual community board members who exercise unwarranted influence while remaining unresponsive to the needs of the most vulnerable residents. Every month and every year that passes means more New Yorkers killed and injured for life, while proven life-saving solutions are stalled, making a mockery of the democratic process our community boards are meant to represent.

Transportation Alternatives **supports Intro 0732-2015**, to make urban planning professionals available to community boards. We also **support the basic purpose of Intro 0585-2014**, but are **strongly concerned** about the two main elements of this bill: The **"grandfather clause"**, that would allow current board members to be re-appointed for life, and the **six-term limit** for new board members, which would allow future members to serve for twelve consecutive years.

### **Intro 732 – Urban Planning Professionals**

We **support** providing institutionalized urban planning expertise to community boards. Land-use is among the most complicated and important policy areas. This move complements the effort to impose term limits on community board members, by providing less of a need for members to spend a life-time to acquire expertise in land-use and urban planning.

### **Intro 585 – Term Limits**

#### **"Grandfather Clause"**

Transportation Alternatives is **strongly concerned about the "grandfather clause"** in this bill. No community board member should be allowed to serve for life. It excludes new voices, and all levels of local government must

reflect the area's demographic diversity and the ever-changing nature of local communities. Our residents should not wait a life-time for community boards to reflect their diversity.

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