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Stop the Chop NY/NJ (STC) Announces Widespread Community Opposition to the Harmful and Dangerous Expansion of Helicopter Commuter Flights Between New York City and Westchester

New Flight Path Threatens to Increase Adverse Noise and Environmental Impact that Non-Essential Helicopters Pose to New York City and Surrounding Areas

(New York, NY—February 9, 2021)—Stop the Chop NY/NJ (STC), a grassroots non-profit environmental organization dedicated to educating the public on the harms caused by nonessential helicopter flights over the New York metropolitan area, announced today their widespread community opposition to Blade Urban Air Mobility’s (Blade) harmful and dangerous planned expansion of commuter helicopter flights between New York City and the Westchester County Airport.

STC, which represents the interests of local New York City and New Jersey residents, community groups, and green spaces, objected to the expansion on the grounds that increased helicopter traffic will exacerbate noise pollution over residential communities, parks and landmarks, and increase environmentally harmful fossil fuel emissions. In 2020, complaints about [helicopter noise skyrocketed](#) in New York City.

“We are opposed to all non-essential helicopter flights, including Blade’s exclusive commuter flights, that subject New York City metropolitan area residents to unnecessary noise, air pollution, and other serious risks,” said Andrew Rosenthal, STC President, “We are calling on our elected leaders in New York, New Jersey, and Congress to ban these types of flights, which are increasingly clogging our airspace and damaging the greater New York City, Long Island, and New Jersey area.”

The proposed route expansion, announced as a partnership between Blade and Ross Aviation on January 8, 2021, would establish a new flight path between the Westchester County Airport and the West 30th Street Heliport, which is situated inside Manhattan's Hudson River Park. It is set to launch in March 2021.

Nonessential helicopters, defined as tourist, charter and commuter flights, like those organized by Blade as well as other for-profit entities, currently account for the most helicopter traffic at an altitude below 2,500ft in the New York Metropolitan Area. Local tourist and commuter helicopter companies operate from Manhattan, New Jersey, and Long Island over airspace controlled by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

In addition to calling for Mayor Bill de Blasio and other local elected officials to end helicopter flights originating from New York City controlled heliports, STC is also advocating that members of the U.S. Congress support [H.R. 4880](#). This proposed federal legislation, introduced by NY Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney on October 28, 2019 and co-sponsored by NY and NJ Congressmembers Jerrold Nadler, Nydia M. Velázquez, Yvette D. Clarke, José E. Serrano, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Thomas R. Suozzi and Albio Sires would eliminate non-essential helicopter flights over densely populated areas while permitting military, emergency, police, government, and media use.

“There is a very high cost paid by residents so that tourists and wealthy corporate commuters can use these helicopters,” said Melissa Elstein, STC's Secretary. “These businesses externalize the environmental impact to the rest of society. Helicopter traffic negatively impacts outdoor businesses, festivals, and public events, such as concerts and theatrical performances in Central and Riverside Parks. This unnecessary mode of transportation is wreaking havoc with New Yorkers' lives as we can no longer enjoy a peaceful day in our parks, along the waterfront, or in our homes without the all too often roar and vibrations of low flying helicopters.

Additionally, there are safety and security risks from these flights. As such, we believe it also reduces property owners' real estate values. Looking at the larger societal picture, our public transportation infrastructure must be improved; investments in high speed, modernized trains to the suburbs, airports, and the East End of Long Island would reduce traffic (both vehicular and helicopter), helicopter noise and carbon emissions.”

The large volume of helicopter traffic creates extreme noise and is believed to cause a [range of serious physical and mental health issues](#). Excessive aircraft noise has been shown to lead to memory impairment, lower reading and speech comprehension, and reduced cognitive abilities in children and adults.

Helicopters are also a threat to public safety. Since 1980 there have been at least [30 helicopter crashes](#) many of which resulted in serious injuries and fatalities, in and around densely populated New York City. [Recent incidents include](#) a June 2019 commuter helicopter crash into the midtown Manhattan AXA/Equitable Building that killed the pilot in a rooftop fire and forced the emergency evacuation of the building; a May 2019 Blade helicopter crash into the Hudson River; and a March 2018 tourist helicopter crash into the East River in which all five passengers drowned.

“Brooklyn’s waterfront communities have been plagued for years by these noisy and completely unnecessary intrusions into our public spaces, our homes, and our peace of mind. The City has wisely invested in developing the waterfront for much needed space for rest and recreation—and yet allows these for-profit entities to harass visitors and residents alike,” said Lara Birnback, STC Vice President and Executive Director of the Brooklyn Heights Association.

Though New York and New Jersey taxpayers have invested [more than \\$2 billion](#) in waterfront parks, currently helicopter flights buzz over these urban oases incessantly.

“For more than 30 years, residents and leaders of Hoboken and Jersey City have tirelessly worked to reclaim our public waterfront—backed by significant fiscal investments from the State of New Jersey and Hudson County—transforming decrepit industrial piers into beautiful waterfront parks with spectacular views of the Manhattan skyline and the Statue of Liberty. But non-essential helicopters’ unrelenting noise and environmental pollution over our waterfront robs residents and visitors’ ability to enjoy our cherished world class urban oases,” said Phil Cohen, Hoboken City Councilman.

Guzzling non-renewable fossil fuels, helicopter emissions from these frequent flights contribute to worldwide climate change. Globally aviation is responsible for [12% of Co2 emissions](#) from all transportation sources. On average, each helicopter produces approximately 950 pounds of carbon dioxide per hour, whereas the average car produces 22 pounds per hour; or to illustrate this disparity, [eight choppers idling](#) at a heliport is the equivalent of 340 cars idling outside your window.

In coastal cities like New York, the effects of changing climate are already being felt as sea levels rise leading to increased flooding and summer temperatures climb resulting in deadly heat waves. Though hotter weather impacts everyone, these environmental changes are felt disproportionately in low-income communities and [communities of color](#).

A cost prohibitive service, Blade is being marketed to the wealthy as a faster and cheaper way to commute than by private car services. Blade’s announcement comes

just one month after a [UN Environmental Program's report](#) found that the richest 1% of the global population account for double the amount of carbon emissions as compared to the poorest 50%. According to the report, the world's wealthy will need to reduce their carbon footprint by a factor of 30 to curb the effects of climate change. The UN recommends lifestyle changes such as less air travel; embracing of renewable energy sources; and engaging in more public transportation, walking, and biking.

To support STC's campaign to ban non-essential helicopters over New York City and regulate New York and New Jersey's airspace, please [sign up for their newsletter](#), and sign the organization's petition on [change.org](#).

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ABOUT STOP THE CHOP (STC)

Stop the Chop NY/NJ is a nonprofit, grassroots organization staffed entirely by volunteers and formed to ban nonessential helicopter flights over the NY metropolitan area. The organization is dedicated to educating the public about the dangers to health, the economy, the environment and national security presented by the ceaseless nonessential helicopter sightseeing tours and commuter flights that fly over the NY metropolitan area. For more information, please visit [stopthechopnynj.org](#).