



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

February 21, 2020

James Patchett
President and CEO
New York City Economic Development Corporation
One Liberty Plaza, 165 Broadway, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10006

Re: Environmental Impact of NYCruise Expansion

Dear President Patchett:

New York City's cruise ship ports and the hundreds of thousands of visitors they welcome to our shores each year are a boon for the city's economy. However, in addition to bringing passengers to our shores, these same behemoth cruise ships are also responsible for spewing noxious exhaust fumes that disperse into neighborhoods already burdened with some of the city's dirtiest air.

In light of the NYC Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) NYCruise Expansion plan, which aims to renovate dock facilities at the Manhattan terminal to accommodate larger vessels and provide additional docking facilities, it is imperative that EDC share a comprehensive plan to reduce cruise ship emissions. This must include a strategy to fully equip the Manhattan terminal with shore plug-in technology, which would allow ships to forgo the use of notoriously polluting onboard diesel engines and instead connect to the City's electrical grid.

Likewise, I am also requesting information relating to efforts at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal to make better use of existing plug-in capabilities at the port. My office has been briefed on ongoing conversations with U.S. Representative Nydia Velázquez and Councilmember Carlos Menchaca regarding EDC's intentions to upgrade the Brooklyn terminal's capability and procedures, and I request information on how these impending modernizations can help protect the environment and health of neighboring communities.

Last year, 214 cruise ships docked at the Manhattan and Brooklyn Cruise Terminals. While docked at these piers, the overwhelming majority of the cruise liners continued to idle and run auxiliary engines which are typically powered by high-sulfur diesel fuel that has been linked to cancer, asthma, heart disease, and other serious health problems. As I understand, the Manhattan Cruise Terminal at Pier 88 and Pier 90 currently has no access to globally-adopted plug in technology, and the Red Hook Terminal's \$21 Million shore-power system has only been employed by about one-third of ships at dock and is long overdue for the forthcoming improvements.



The consequences of allowing ships to needlessly idle when at dock are dire. Estimates have shown that even just a single cruise ship idling for a day can generate as much diesel exhaust as 34,400 idling tractor-trailers. Further, cruise companies attempts at ecological responsibility through the use of “scrubbers” only masks the problem while maintaining the environmental risks and preserving their bottom line. This excessive and easily reducible pollution is environmentally destructive, toxic, and needs to be immediately addressed.

New Yorkers that live in Hell’s Kitchen and Red Hook, the communities bordering the cruise ship piers, have had to suffer the impact of their proximity to this source of pollution for too long. According to the New York City Community Air Survey, both of these neighborhoods have poorer air quality than both their borough and the citywide average. These residents’ health and our shared environment should no longer bear the burden of the city’s tourist economy. As EDC plans to further expand the city’s cruise capacity, special care needs to be taken to ensure that the ship and cruise terminal operators are responsible partners and these communities are protected.

I would appreciate your written response outlining a plan to mitigate current and future cruise ship pollution at both the Manhattan and Brooklyn terminals by March 13, 2020. This is a critical public health and environmental issue that needs to be central to any NYCruise expansion strategy. Please contact Luke Wolf in my office at lwolf@comptroller.nyc.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer
New York City Comptroller

c: Hon. Nydia Velázquez, U.S. Representative
Hon. Carlos Menchaca, City Council Member
Brooklyn Community Board 6
Manhattan Community Board 4