



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

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Environmental Justice Groups, Environmental Organizations, City Council Members and Community Leaders call on the Bloomberg Administration to keep its Solid Waste Management Plan Promises of “Fair Share”

New York, NY (April 12, 2011) – Environmental justice groups, environmental organizations and community leaders joined New York City Councilmembers Brad Lander, Sara Gonzalez, Annabel Palma, Jumaane Williams and others on the City Hall steps today to demand that the Bloomberg Administration keep its Solid Waste Management Plan promises of “Fair Share”. The press conference kicked off prior to the City Council’s first-ever “Fair Share” hearing by the Landmarks, Siting and Maritime Sub-Committee, where it examined testimony on the intent and shortcomings of the NYC Charter’s “fair share” provision. The Council learned yesterday that no one from the Administration would testify.

The Mayor’s Preliminary Budget for the Sanitation Department would gut NYC’s landmark 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan, undermining its goals of “Fair Share”, equity, environmental responsibility and sustainability. The Preliminary Budget functionally eliminates all marine transfer stations in Manhattan included in the Solid Waste Management Plan, plus another marine transfer station in Southwest Brooklyn, by delaying capital funding for another 5-8 years. If approved, this proposal almost exclusively concentrates the burden of handling NYC’s solid waste in a handful of low-income communities of color in Brooklyn and the Bronx – yet again.

The Mayor’s proposed budget delays funding for several key SWMP facilities:

- East 91st St. Marine Transfer Station (from FY 11 to FY 16)
- West 59th St. Marine Transfer Station (from FY 14 to FY 19)
- Gansevoort Marine Transfer Station for recyclables (from FY 13 to FY 18)
- SW Brooklyn Marine Transfer Station (from FY 11 to FY 16)

The City is also considering “waste- to-energy” facilities – most of which rely on incinerator-based technologies and whose siting may be restricted to environmentally overburdened communities of color.

In 2006, Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council approved the landmark NYC Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP), a sweeping overhaul of the City’s waste export system. At its heart, the re-vamped 2006 SWMP was based on principles of fair share

and borough self-sufficiency; the SWMP was designed to radically shift the City's waste export infrastructure from a vastly polluting, truck-based export system ravaging a handful of low income communities of color, to a more environmentally friendly – and equitably sited – barge/rail-based system of waste export. According to projections from the Department of Sanitation, the shift to a more equitably sited barge/rail-based system of waste export would reduce vehicle-miles traveled (VMT's) within the City by a stunning 5.5 million miles annually.

“It is hard to contemplate that Mayor Bloomberg would preside over the evisceration of one of his own legacy projects, developed in such close partnership with the City Council and the advocacy community. There is perhaps no starker example of environmental injustice than having Manhattan – which generates 40% of the City's entire waste stream – completely dump its waste handling responsibilities on communities of color in Brooklyn, the South Bronx and Queens. The specter of “waste-to-energy” facilities – which, due to zoning laws and the NYC Waterfront Revitalization Program's Significant Maritime Industrial Area designations, are likely to be sited primarily in communities of color – is also unnerving. We believe the Administration is getting bad advice. We urge the Mayor to listen to his better angels and stay the course of the SWMP,” said Eddie Bautista, Executive Director of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance.

"I am disappointed that the Bloomberg administration has chosen not to testify at our hearing on the effectiveness of the fair share rules. It is especially troubling, given that they are already retreating from the Mayor's commitment to equitably distributing the burden of trash hauling among the boroughs. Like the advocates here today, I was disturbed to see that the most recent capital plan removes the necessary funding from the SWMP, which they had hailed in the past as a historic commitment to more equitable siting. With the long delay of the funding for Manhattan's facilities into the next administration, the plan is essentially meaningless,” said Council Member Brad Lander, Chair of the Landmark, Siting and Maritime Sub-Committee.

“The placement of solid waste transfer stations throughout the five boroughs was critical to the SWMP as adopted by Mayor Bloomberg. The Mayor's preliminary budget delays funding for the construction of these new marine transfer stations is unfair to those boroughs that are already overburdened by garbage. It is only fair, and environmentally responsible, that each borough handle its own garbage. It is time for each borough to do its part, and we cannot afford any more delays,” said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

“During the initial SWMP negotiations, I was told that Brooklyn - and my District in particular - needed to do its fair share to ensure our City could handle its waste into the future. Before considering the plan, I asked the Administration to show me where the new transfer station near the Mayor's home would be. Once I saw that and other stations in his home borough, I agreed to support those planned for mine. Now, years after that plan was approved, the preliminary Sanitation budget shows the Administration has reneged on past commitments and unjustly laid the burden of managing the City's waste on less affluent outer-borough neighborhoods once again,” said Council Member Sara M. González. “In the interest of environmental justice, I join many of my colleagues, concerned constituents, organizations, advocates and activists in calling for the current preliminary budget plan to be tossed in the trash and fully expect the promises this

Administration made to my District and other communities throughout the City to be honored,” the Councilwoman concluded.

"For years in New York City, communities of color and other low-income communities have been oversaturated and overburdened with undesirable city facilities," said Council Member Annabel Palma of the Bronx. "The historic 'Fair Share' agreement was an important step towards erasing this injustice, but unfortunately, this Administration has failed to hold up their end of the bargain. I, for one, think that the Administration owes these communities an explanation and I believe that their refusal to testify today is indicative of their continuing callous disregard for working New Yorkers and communities of color."

"The proposal has essentially undercut the spirit of the SWMP plan, which sought to ensure equity among all neighborhoods in the city. Yet again, the poorest and communities of color are forced to bear the burden of environmental injustice," said Council Member Jumaane Williams.

“We cannot overstate what a bad idea it is to burn trash in New York City,” said Laura Haight, NYPIRG’s senior environmental associate. “The newer thermal technologies pose the same problems as the mass-burn incinerators that New Yorkers rejected in the 1990s – they are dirty, dangerous, expensive, and unsustainable.”

“Under the guise of saving money, the Mayor’s proposed budget for FY 2012 essentially guts the SWMP, functionally eliminating every Manhattan facility included in the SWMP, as well as the Marine Transfer Station for Southwest Brooklyn, leaving only facilities in those communities that bear the inequities of the City’s current solid waste management practices,” says Gigi Gazon, Community Organizer in the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

“Five years ago, the Bloomberg administration promised the North Brooklyn communities relief from the burden of garbage and truck traffic in our communities. Every day, we have over 200 trucks polluting our communities and now the Administration wants to delay more the implementation of this plan. Enough is enough - Mayor Bloomberg, keep your promise! Don’t delay any more the implementation of this plan,” said Ray Kairys, Chairman of OUTRAGE.

In lauding the passage of the 2006 SWMP, Mayor Bloomberg stated “perhaps the biggest success of the new Waste Management Plan is that it achieves equitability across all five boroughs” (Mayor’s Press Release 257-06, July 23, 2006). The Mayor staunchly advocated for the Gansevoort facility, stating that if “the Gansevoort facility is not built, the Solid Waste Management Plan’s requirement that every borough participate in handling its own waste in a substantial way will not be realized” (PR 189-07, June 13, 2007). While touting progress around the W. 59th Street MTS, the Mayor’s Office stated that “the City is taking an important step in towards creating commercial transfer capacity in every borough, which is a critical component of the Mayor’s landmark Solid Waste Management Plan (PR 370-07, October 14, 2007). By his own admissions, Mayor Bloomberg’s Preliminary Budget would undermine the SWMP’s biggest success by eliminating a number of its critical components.