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Press Release

November 25, 2015

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IMMEDIATE

### Governor Cuomo Announces Friday Opening of HOV Lane for Gowanus Expressway and Carey Tunnel

#### *High Occupancy Lanes Will Help Ease Traffic Flow on Busy Shopping and Travel Day*

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that, for the first time in more than 15 years, the Gowanus Expressway and Hugh L. Carey Tunnel HOV lanes will be open for the morning commute the day after Thanksgiving, Friday, November 27th. Higher traffic volume is expected due to a favorable weather forecast and an improving economy.

"Opening this HOV lane on Friday will allow for a smoother trip for travelers and commuters alike during this busy travel time," Governor Cuomo said. "This is one more way we are seeking to put Drivers First and make travel quicker and more convenient this Thanksgiving weekend."

This HOV opening is one of a variety of ways that Governor Cuomo is looking to make travel easier and safer during the Thanksgiving holiday. This week, he directed that temporary lane closures associated with road and bridge construction projects on New York State highways to be put on hold, and announced a crackdown on impaired and distracted driving.

The Gowanus bus/HOV lane operates inbound from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. weekdays from the Verrazano Narrows Bridge to the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel, a distance of 5.3 miles. The lane is constructed each morning by moving concrete barriers into place, and requires 3+ persons to be in a vehicle to use. Also, because the HOV lane leads directly to the EZ pass lane at the tunnel, motorists using the lane must have EZ pass.

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Matthew J. Driscoll said, "The Gowanus Expressway HOV lane is an efficient travel option in and around New York City. Whether you're using that lane to get to work or bargain hunt in Manhattan you're contributing to a stronger economy. Easing the HOV lane restriction Friday is another example of Governor Cuomo's commitment to putting drivers first and using our transportation network to fuel the economy."

The 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week bus/HOV on the Staten Island Expressway will also be open. Recently, the New York State Department of Transportation completed a \$118.5 million project to extend this lane from Victory Boulevard on Staten Island to the Verrazano Narrows Bridge in both directions.

Senator Diane Savino said, "All of Staten Island thanks Governor Cuomo for ensuring that the Gowanus Expressway and Hugh L Carey Tunnel HOV lanes will be open the morning after Thanksgiving. Every year, this is one of the most heavily traveled days and the addition of this lane will provide some much needed congestion relief. Whether you are on your way home or out to Black Friday, this ensures a safer, more enjoyable travel experience for all."

Assemblyman Matthew Titone said, "The Gowanus Expressway and Carey Tunnel are vital roads for our businesses and residents and the opening of the HOV lane will be welcome news for all commuters. We thank Governor Cuomo for working to resolve this long overdue issue and making the busiest shopping day easier for commuters."

Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis said, "This move shows that the Governor is listening to the concerns of our residents and businesses. The HOV lane should never have been scheduled for closure. It was a bad decision on behalf of the State Department of Transportation as Friday is a regular work day for most Staten Islanders."

Assemblyman Michael Cusick said, "The HOV lane on the Gowanus Expressway is, as countless Islanders know, a critical link in the road system from Staten Island to Manhattan. As many residents will head into Manhattan on Friday both to work & to enjoy the busiest shopping day of the year, this lane will help improve the flow of traffic and make the travel experience quicker and easier for all. I want to thank Governor Cuomo & the State Department of Transportation for responding to the direct concerns raised by Staten Island's state legislators and to the written request by my colleagues on the City level."

Staten Island Borough President James Oddo and Minority Leader Steve Matteo said, "We are grateful to Governor Cuomo for answering the plea we made in our recent letter and ensuring that the HOV lane is open for business on Friday, which is not a city, state, or federal holiday. After the debacle on Veterans Day when the lane was not in operation, closing it the day after Thanksgiving would have added insult to injury for Staten Island's harried commuters. The fact is that 'light' traffic days seem to be a thing of the past, and any changes to the daily routine can lead to significant delays, even on days that were formerly considered 'light' traffic days. We are hopeful this will lead to the conversation we are asking for about the wisdom of closing the lane on certain lightly observed holidays. Again, thank you to Governor Cuomo for intervening and taking action."

Councilmember Debi Rose, "Anyone who travels on the Gowanus Expressway and through the Hugh L Carey Tunnel the morning after Thanksgiving knows the type of extreme congestion that can occur, but this year will be different. Thanks to Governor Cuomo, HOV lanes will be opened to help improve traffic and safety. I urge all travelers to drive safely this holiday season and to take advantage of this lane if your vehicle qualifies."

El Sol Contracting and Construction of Maspeth, New York operates the bus/HOV lane on the Gowanus Expressway.