



## Legislation Text

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### Res. No. 1533

Resolution calling upon the State of New York to remove the name “Robert Moses” from various state parks, roadways and bridges in recognition of the racism that motivated specific characteristics of those venues and discouraged lower income New Yorkers, specifically people of color, from easily accessing them.

Council Member Cabrera

Whereas, Robert Moses was a New York State and Municipal officer whose career in public works has been credited with shaping much of the physical landscape of New York City; and

Whereas, Robert Moses served as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks (1934 to 1960), Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (1934 to 1981), President of the Jones Beach Parkway Authority (1933 to 1963), Commissioner of the New York City Planning Commission (1942 to 1960), Special Advisor on Housing for the Office of the Governor of New York (1974 through 1975), and President of the Long Island State Park Commission (1924 through 1963); and

Whereas, During his tenure, Robert Moses supervised the construction of 35 highways, 12 bridges, numerous parks and public housing projects, Lincoln Center, Shea Stadium, two hydroelectric dams and the 1964 World’s Fair; and

Whereas, Entire neighborhoods and countless structures were razed in order to accommodate the building of new highways, parks, and cultural centers, overwhelmingly in low income and minority neighborhoods, thereby serving to sever rather than expand socioeconomic opportunities for its displaced residents;

Whereas, According to Robert Moses historian and John Jay College Professor Jason Haber, under the guise of urban renewal, 7,000 African Americans and Hispanics were evicted from a diverse working class

neighborhood in order to make way for Lincoln Center; and

Whereas, Lacking political influence, neighborhoods of color were often unable to fight plans to bulldoze their largely middle and lower income neighborhoods; and

Whereas, While transportation remains inexorably linked to opportunity, Moses saw expressways as an antidote to what he termed “slum areas” and argued that new highways would provide urban renewal; and

Whereas, Professor Haber argued that Robert Moses built Jones Beach to accommodate white visitors, and knowing that most African Americans were not car owners at the time of construction, purposely built highway overpasses leading to Jones Beach too low for buses to access; and

Whereas, Professor Haber asserted “in 1936, Moses built 11 enormous pools across the city, but had no intention of permitting minorities to use them” as evidenced by “setting those built in Harlem to colder temperatures, believing, for whatever reason, that African Americans didn’t like to swim in cold water”; and

Whereas, According to Brooklyn College political science Professor Gaston Alonso, many of the expressways built by Robert Moses not only served to displace thousands of underserved and predominantly low income residents by effectively walling off neighborhoods and creating commercial deserts, but those expressways continue to cause hazardous and unhealthy traffic conditions in those communities while bypassing local commerce and robbing communities of favorable economic and cultural opportunities; and

Whereas, The Cross Bronx Expressway has served to segregate middle and upper class residents to the north from the lower income residents to the south and prioritized a car culture above public transportation such as the subway; and

Whereas, According to the MIT-Boston University Big Dig Seminar Report, construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway permanently destroyed neighborhoods and “displaced as many as 5,000 families” when an alternate route proposed by then Bronx Borough President James Lyons along Crotona Park would have affected no more than 19 families; and

Whereas, According to the Sheridan Hunts Point Land Use and Transportation Study, the Sheridan

Expressway in the Hunts Point Community has long served to congest the surrounding neighborhoods and obstruct access to the Bronx River Waterfront; and

Whereas, Improvements to the Sheridan Expressway would result in improved air quality, increased pedestrian safety and access to Hunts Point peninsula food centers, open access to waterfront parkland and include new residential and commercial opportunities for local residents; and

Whereas, In order to build the Belt Parkway, Jamaica Bay marshland was infilled causing negative environmental impacts on the nearby communities, as evidenced by the extensive flooding caused by Hurricane Sandy; and

Whereas, Robert Moses sought to also build his visions in other states, Former Obama Administration Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx described Moses' Harlem Park in West Baltimore as a once "thriving middle class Black neighborhood" which, in spite of the project never having been built, saw its neighborhood razed by Robert Moses who called the neighborhood a slum and was quoted as saying "the more of them that are wiped out the healthier Baltimore will be in the long run"; and

Whereas, Secretary Foxx observed that roughly two-thirds of the families displaced by Moses' American highway construction projects were poor and mostly African American residents, and argued that the role of transportation should serve to "strengthen communities along the highways, instead of its origins and destinations," and should further opportunities for and within the communities themselves; and

Whereas, In order to support and recognize New York City neighborhoods that have been disproportionately affected, disenfranchised and disconnected from opportunities as a result of the actions of Robert Moses; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the State of New York to remove the name "Robert Moses" from various state parks, roadways and bridges in recognition of the racism that motivated specific characteristics of those venues and discouraged lower income New Yorkers, specifically people of color, from easily accessing them.

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