

STATEMENT OF THE BROADWAY LEAGUE IN SUPPORT OF EXTENDING THE MORATORIUM ON STREET FAIRS

November 28, 2022

The Broadway League has been the principal trade association for the commercial theatre industry in New York and across North America for over 80 years. It represents more than seven hundred theatre owners, producers and road presenters nationwide – with most members maintaining offices in New York City. The League would like to thank The Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) and Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management (OCECM) for proposing to extend the moratorium on street fair applications to 2023. We join the Times Square Alliance in endorsing this amendment.

The League encourages common sense policies governing vehicular and pedestrian traffic, improving access to the Theatre District, and bettering the quality of life for residents, visitors and businesses in Times Square. We have endorsed sensible restrictions on economic activity, including licensing pedicabs, improving oversight of street vendors, boundaries for tip-seeking performers, delineating pickup/drop-off locations for tour buses and enhanced management of outdoor events.

During the 2018-19 season, Broadway attendance reached 14.8 million, topping the combined attendance of the 10 professional major league sports teams in New York City and New Jersey. During that period, Broadway had a direct economic impact of almost \$15 billion on New York City and directly supported approximately 97,000 jobs. However, this industry continues to rebuild its audience as attendance remains well below pre-pandemic levels. Fewer than half as many people saw a Broadway show during the recently ended season than did so during the last full season before the coronavirus pandemic. This decrease in attendance has severe consequences for the local businesses that rely heavily on Broadway's ancillary spending.

The designation of Broadway (between 42nd and 47th Streets) as an outdoor plaza increased vehicular and pedestrian congestion as revised traffic patterns overlapped with a proliferation of outdoor events. Times Square is already one of New York's most costly and traffic-infused neighborhoods, boasting a population that, unlike most areas of New York, increases on weekends. Navigating midtown is a significant burden and the array of outdoor events regularly drive foot-traffic into the streets, divert attention from storefronts and generate enormous amounts of trash.

A substantial portion of our audience are over 65 years old, and many patrons are disabled and require special access. We regularly hear complaints, especially from these patrons, relating to the enormous challenges associated with reaching our venues when a street fair has completely closed-off access streets to the theatre district. Added congestion and difficulty reaching the venues also leads to late arrivals, which disrupts performances and is a nuisance to all audience members.

Accordingly, it is imperative that, during this critical period, lawmakers help make Times Square an inviting and accessible environment that includes reliable access to the Theatre District for patrons, actors, stagehands, musicians and other workers this industry employs. Fifty-four percent of weekly Broadway attendees come on the weekend, when most street fairs get scheduled, and 1 out of 3 arrive by motor-vehicle. Street Fairs in Times Square mandate significant alterations to already confusing traffic patterns which frustrate motorists, lead to increased vehicular congestion and create a significant barrier to accessing Broadway's theatres. In the 2018 season alone, Times Square streets closed twenty-seven times for fairs.

We would also submit that, when the moratorium on street fairs gets lifted, your agencies re-evaluate distribution of the city's street festivals to ensure these events are more evenly disbursed throughout New York. While street festivals can be a welcome activity, there has historically been a disproportionate number of fairs in Times Square. In 2018, approximately 73% of the street fairs, and 18% of all fairs citywide, took place in Times Square, a neighborhood that makes up just .1% of the City's land mass.

Again, we thank the Street Activity Permit Office of the Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management for considering this proposal which will encourage traffic to and from the area, make Times Square less chaotic and support local businesses.