



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

462 36th Street, 3F, Brooklyn, NY 11232 | www.NYC-EJA.org

On the ground – and at the table.

**Testimony on the City's Infrastructure to Handle and Process Organic Waste Pursuant to
Int. No. 55- Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
New York City Council
February 27, 2024**

Founded in 1991, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. NYC-EJA empowers its member organizations to advocate for improved environmental conditions and against inequitable environmental burdens by the coordination of campaigns designed to inform City and State policies. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability of low-income communities of color to thrive. NYC-EJA is led by the community-based organizations that it serves. NYC-EJA is also a founding member of Transform Don't Trash (TDT), a longstanding coalition of environmental justice, labor, and climate organizations working to transform New York City's sprawling solid waste management systems to be far more equitable, efficient, sustainable, and safe for workers and the communities most affected by solid waste infrastructure.

In New York City, over 24,000 tons of garbage are produced daily, generating massive transportation and pollution impacts to and from privately owned and operated waste transfer stations along the waterfront. The current solid waste system is an ongoing environmental injustice, in which 75% of the City's waste is still trucked in and out of a handful of low-income communities and communities of color. The vast majority of this garbage generated by businesses and buildings citywide passes through communities with some of the highest rates of asthma such as North Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Southeast Queens. Despite laws intended to change this, these communities of color continue to deal with far more than their fair share of heavy truck traffic, safety hazards, pollution, noise, and odor that other neighborhoods are spared. For this reason, **NYC-EJA is here to express our strong support of Intro 055 of 2024**, which would require DSNY to begin using municipal marine transfer stations to accept commercial waste. Passage of this legislation would hasten the long overdue transition of NYC's waste export system from a polluting truck-based one to a water barge-based system, where one barge can replace the capacity of 48 eighteen wheel tractor trailer "long haul" trucks from spewing pollutants into these communities.

While the total amount of waste handled at private transfer stations in NYC has decreased approximately 17% since the implementation of Local Law 152 of 2018 (the "Waste Equity Law"), [newly released data from the Department of Sanitation](#) shows that the system remains



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grossly unfair and unequal. Just four community districts still handle 75% of all NYC's private waste. Additionally, private waste transfer stations are more likely to be sited in communities with a higher percentage of people of color living below the poverty line and bring with them truck traffic, noise, and health-harming emissions according to [NYC Comptroller's recently released audit report on the City's Fair Share compliance](#). While there are 24 waste facilities crammed into these overburdened community districts, a total of 45 other districts have no waste facilities at all.

Reducing emissions and pollutants from trash removal operations is necessary for the climate and health of all New Yorkers. City government can lead the way in spearheading environmental protection, by going deeper than providing surface-level programmatic design without thorough implementation efforts. Mayor Adams and the City Council should take immediate steps to relieve these communities of excessive truck traffic, pollution, and odors, while reducing the miles that are driven by dangerous and polluting waste trucks on New York City Streets. We call on the Mayor and City Council to Pass [Intro 055 of 2024](#), which would require the City to begin accepting commercial waste at publicly-owned Marine Transfer Stations, thereby significantly reducing the number of dirty, dangerous diesel garbage trucks spewing co-pollutants into already overburdened neighborhoods. Environmental justice communities have long advocated for this step, which is required by the Solid Waste Management Plan passed by the City almost 20 years ago but has still not been implemented by DSNY.

The fight for waste equity, cleaner air, healthier and safer communities continues as we work to ensure not only that the City handles its trash and siting of waste transfer stations more equitably, but also reduces its greenhouse and co-pollutant emissions by transitioning to greener, alternative modes of solid waste management. NYC-EJA alongside TDT looks forward to continued engagement with the Committee on Sanitation, and Council Members representing impacted communities to ensure that we continue to make rapid progress toward a more sustainable and just future.