

City Hall to study 911 Call Center traffic

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New highway off-ramp planned

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The reduced height of the proposed 911 Call Center to be constructed just south of where Pelham Parkway and the Hutchinson River Parkway intersect is now a given. However, it seems that there is a wellspring of further good news.

The NYC Dept. of Transportation is undertaking a study the traffic improvements needed of the site where the call center will be located, off Waters Place. It was also recently announced that the height of the call center would be reduced by 10 stories to only 254 feet. The facility had reached a proposed height of 351 feet.

The change in the city's stance can be credited to the work of Community Board 11 and Councilman Jimmy Vacca. Vacca said he would not support the proposed back-up emergency call center unless the city worked to reduce the height of the structure and provide better access to the location for both mass transit and private vehicles. Mayor Bloomberg's office has now made that commitment.

"This is a big victory for our community," Vacca said. "I made very clear to the mayor that I could not support this project unless the city did everything it could to reduce the height and to

avoid a traffic nightmare."

In a March 24 letter to Vacca, Deputy Mayor for Operations Edward Skyler said the city would commit \$1.1 million to study the need for new exit and entrance ramps from the Hutchinson River Parkway to the call center site, as well as the Hutchinson Metro Center.

Skyler also expressed the city's commitment to aggressively petition the M.T.A. for direct bus service to the property. The city will also study and implement traffic improvements around the call center, including a right-turn-on-red at Waters Place.

Skyler's letter states that the city plans to use the Pelham Parkway stables as a staging area during construction. The city will direct the design team to minimize the visual impact of rooftop equipment at the roughly \$750 million building.

City officials and community leaders expressed their gratitude for Vacca's work on this issue.

"I want to thank Councilman Vacca for working hand-in-hand with our members and for getting the city to agree to lower the size of the building," said Community Board 11 district manager John Fratta.



Photo by Victor Chu

An exit ramp off the southbound Hutchinson River Parkway similar to the one pictured may one day provide direct access into the 911 emergency call center site.