

# WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



*In A WE ACT Minute*

*July 20, 2007*

## ***The Campaign for New York's Future: City Authorized to Move Forward with Congestion Pricing Plan***

On Wednesday, New York State legislators agreed to create a commission to review plans for the implementation of congestion pricing in New York City. A congestion pricing pilot project will help the City determine the best way to carry out congestion pricing, while figuring out how to address possible shortfalls of the plan. WE ACT's Executive Director Peggy Shepard is featured in a [short film](#) which looks at the potential health and transportation benefits of congestion pricing in New York City. People suffering from diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis are particularly sensitive to ground-level ozone, particulate matter (soot) and other pollutants. Congestion pricing would help remedy the poor air quality in the NYC metro area. (The [American Lung Association State of the Air: 2007](#) report looks at current air quality and its health impacts.)



WE ACT is a member of the Campaign for New York's Future – a coalition of approximately 80 NYC-based groups advocating for a healthier, cleaner, more sustainable New York through the implementation of Mayor Bloomberg's [PlaNYC 2030](#). Congestion pricing is only one of the initiatives of PlaNYC, others include:

- Increasing access to parks, playgrounds and open spaces;
- Housing an additional one million New Yorkers affordably;
- Cleaning and redeveloping brownfields (heavily contaminated land);
- Developing critical backup systems for the city's aging water network;
- Providing additional reliable power sources and upgrading existing power plants;
- Reducing water pollution, thus opening waterways for recreation and;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30%.

The City needs Albany's permission to take specific actions to address transportation policy, energy policy and brownfields and implement those initiatives.

Many of the details of PlaNYC have not yet been developed. Whether you agree with the entire plan, are still unsure about parts of it, or even don't know

## **Genes & Justice: A Community Symposium on Health, Race and Rights**

On September 24, 2007, WE ACT will host *Genes & Justice: A Community Symposium on Health, Race and Rights* at the Schomburg Center in Harlem. Five years after our first widely successful national conference on the mapping of the human genome and its implications for communities of color, WE ACT brings together community members, scientists, librarians, activists and others to talk about health, race and rights.

We'll be sending out more detailed information soon, so stay tuned!

## **Go Green East Harlem**

Launched in May, Go Green East Harlem is a collaborative initiative sponsored by Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer's Office. WE ACT is part of the steering committee guiding the Go Green initiative, which is working to address six of the most pressing environmental issues in East Harlem: public health and asthma, parks and

much about it, New Yorkers can agree that our local government should be allowed to implement strategies to address public health, improve our transit system and combat climate change. WE ACT believes that many of the initiatives outlined in PlaNYC would make this city a healthier place to live and work.

## Celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mendez v. Westminster Decision

In June, **Assistant NYS Attorney General and WE ACT Board Secretary Roberto Lebron, Esq.** organized *Civil Rights and the Latino Community: Celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mendez v. Westminster Decision*. The [Mendez v. Westminster](#) case resulted in the desegregation of California schools in 1947, seven years before the Brown v. Board of Education decision desegregated schools across the United States.

The recent celebration featured a screening of Sandra Robbie's Emmy award winning documentary [For All the Children / Para Todos los Niños](#), and guests were graced with the presence of Sylvia Mendez, daughter of the plaintiffs, who testified during the landmark Orange County, California case. Ms. Mendez is traveling with Ms. Robbie to share this important milestone in the Civil Rights Movement with communities throughout the U.S., building momentum for inclusion of Mendez v. Westminster in elementary and high school history curriculum.



After remarks from Ms. Mendez and Ms. Robbie, WE ACT Board Member Norma Ramos, Esq. - Executive Director of the [Coalition Against Trafficking in Women](#), and Jenny Rivera - Special Deputy Attorney General for Civil Rights, NYS Attorney General's Office, spoke on current civil rights issues impacting the Latino community.



Ms. Sylvia Mendez and WE ACT Board Member Roberto Lebron, Esq. on either side of the USPS Mendez v. Westminster stamp that will be released this fall.

open space, sustainable business, farmers markets and healthy eating, green building, and transportation. Among other serious environmental health burdens, East Harlem suffers from some of the highest asthma rates in New York City and the U.S.

Through a partnership between community organizations, business people, local leaders, public health officials and environmental advocates, Go Green is leveraging collective resources to improve environmental health. The new storefront East Harlem Asthma Center of Excellence will include a walk-in asthma clinic, train medical providers in effective prevention and treatment of asthma, and offer assistance in reducing the indoor environmental triggers that exacerbate asthma – among other services. As Peggy Shepard stated at the Go Green launch, “This is... leadership coming together to achieve a greener, healthier community. Mayor Bloomberg's support of a comprehensive asthma program and Scott Stringer's initiative to foster greener development to achieve a healthy community combine to be a win for East Harlem.” For more information about Go Green, read the Borough President's May 30, 2007 press release [here](#).

## **WE ACT Will Work with City Agencies and Community Stakeholders to Develop New Use for 135<sup>th</sup> Street Marine Transfer Station**

We're proud to announce that WE ACT will help to envision and develop new uses for the 135<sup>th</sup> Street Marine Transfer Station (MTS), along with Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer's Office and community stakeholders. Through a broad-based steering committee and community-based charette process, we will work together to find the best possible use for the MTS at 135<sup>th</sup> Street. With its proximity to the new West Harlem Waterfront Park, which opens this fall, the MTS could become a convenient multipurpose facility with space for environmental education activities and a public fitness center – among other possibilities.

In 2005, WE ACT's "Lion's Share/Fair Share" Campaign resulted in Mayor Bloomberg deciding that the 135<sup>th</sup> Street MTS would remain closed, thus protecting community health in West Harlem from the air quality impact of hundreds of diesel trucks delivering trash to the MTS on a daily basis. However, even with a commitment from the City that the MTS would remain closed, the question remained: what should be done with this 28,000 square-foot space on the Hudson River, adjacent to Harlem Piers? WE ACT is excited to be playing a role in exploring what can be done to maximize the benefits of the MTS space, now and in the future. Our work to bring the community together around the re-use of the MTS will build on similar activities we conducted several years ago that led to the development of the Harlem Waterfront Park.

**New on WE ACT's website:**

[\*The NYC Lead Outreach Campaign\*](#)

[\*The Rosa Parks School Bus Campaign\*](#)

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### ***Support WE ACT!***

Become a WE ACT member today for \$25! Please visit WE ACT's [website](#) to make your secure donation, or contact Development Associate Emily Earle at [emily@weact.org](mailto:emily@weact.org) or (212) 961-1000 ext. 318 for more information.

**WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

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