[Date]

[Elected Official Name]

[Title of Office]

[Address]

[City, State, Zipcode]

Dear [Elected Official],

No one disputes the greatness of the Museum of Natural History, but sometimes even the greatest institutions go awry. The whole Upper West Side—the most densely populated part of Manhattan—will be affected by vastly increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic if the Gilder Center goes forward.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement acknowledges that, “Because existing traffic and pedestrian conditions are already congested at times and susceptible to worsening in service levels, even small increases in traffic and pedestrian levels could result in significant adverse impacts.”

This statement is so explosive that you’d think it alone could bring this ill-advised project to a halt.

Thanks to bike lanes, existing parking spots, and double-parked trucks unloading, the two major Upper West Side arteries, Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, have been reduced to mostly two lane streets. These arteries are so badly clogged that too often even emergency vehicles find themselves at a standstill. I regularly observe fire engines and ambulances stuck in traffic, blaring away for several minutes, unable to move an inch.

On any given school day right now, as many as 50 school buses line the streets of this neighborhood, many of them with idling engines keeping waiting drivers warm in the cold months and cool in the hot months, their exhaust fumes poisoning the air.

This is an ultra serious issue. But the Museum would like us to believe the problem can be easily mitigated by the simple, inexpensive and expedient signal changes and a widened crosswalk.

If this were true, why hasn’t the MTA done these things already? Wider crosswalks and re-timed signals can’t deal with the traffic we already have, let alone congestion problems during the years of construction and afterward. Are we just supposed to accept life-threatening delays as a normal part of life?

As [Elected Official Title] I implore you to reject the application for this ill-conceived project, which expects the UWS community to sacrifice its health and general well-being in exchange for little more than an expanded entrance hall. That would be a shabby deal for the neighborhood and the Upper West Side in general. It would be unworthy of the Museum.

Thank you.

[First Name] [Last Name]

[Address]