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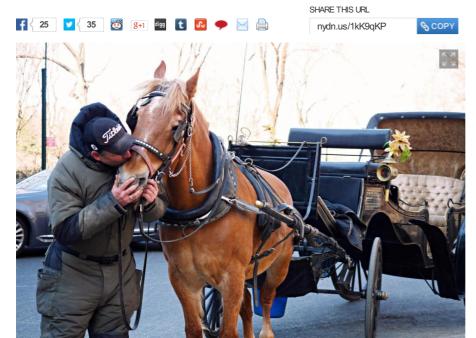
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AMERICAN PROPERTY AND PARTY AND PART

Don't let the neigh-sayers have the last word

BY MATTHEW DAUS / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Sunday, April 20, 2014, 4:25 AM

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JAMES KEIVOM/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Everyone wins

If Mr. Ed were pulling a carriage in New York City, what would he say?

I suspect he would complain to Wilbur about a lack of toilet facilities, about car exhaust fumes, traffic congestion, long working hours and not enough horseplay. (In other words, he'd sound a lot like many two-legged workers in Manhattan.) At the same time, Mr. Ed would probably be surprised to see fellow Hollywood stars like Liam Neeson joining the fray, as his horse brethren have become a hotly disputed political issue.

I believe Mayor de Blasio's heart is in the right place, and, as someone who feels for the animals myself, I support him making good on a campaign promise to address a status quo that ought not to continue.

But there's a long way between seeing problems with the carriage-horse industry we have and rubbing it out entirely. I am confident that the mayor, the City Council and the many other stakeholders can find a better way forward.

Getting there requires some perspective. Central Park was designed for horses, and our country's history was based on horse travel before automobiles took over. Many tourists had their first glimpse of New York City through the back seat of a Hansom cab, and many lovers their first kiss.

Why not respect that history by pursuing a "mend it, don't end it" approach?

One potential compromise would return the horses and carriages exclusively to Central Park, building and leasing some open fields to the stable owners to allow the horses to run free and play.

This would provide them with the touch of nature missing from their lives right now, reduce the possibility of traffic crashes and congestion, and remove the



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since going on the disabled list in early May. "He will make a start somewhere," Joe Girardi



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harsh summer smell of horse manure from Midtown streets.

Meantime, horse-riding therapy and a place for children to pet and visit the horses would be a great addition for residents and tourists alike, possibly leading to new revenue streams for the city and horse owners, with reduced horse working hours as well. These open fields would also create the transparency necessary to ensure there is no abuse, silencing the "neighsavers."

Okay, you say, but many carriage-horse opponents have their hearts set on replacing the animals with an electric vehicle they've spent years developing. Again, why does this need to be either-or? Surely we can find a way to accommodate both.

Maybe we should also bring back replicas of the Electrobats, the first motorized taxicabs and a forgotten part of NYC history. These electric taxicabs were first introduced in the late 1890s to compete with horse-drawn hansom cabs, and both formed the genesis of the NYC taxicab industry.

The Electrobats would be a historical reminder of how World War I, oil interests and the invention of the vehicle starter contributed to the demise of Henry Ford's and Thomas Edison's collaboration to mass produce electric Ford Model Ts - setting our country on a less environmentally sustainable path.

So, to summarize: Let the carriage-horse industry do a land swap to take over a piece of Central Park to create stables, a petting zoo and riding trails. Use that money to support the parks more broadly. Meantime, existing stables can be used to build affordable housing, advancing another critical de Blasio goal.

Horses win. Humans win. The city wins.

Daus, former head of the city's Taxi and Limousine Commission, is a distinguished lecturer at the City University of New York's Transportation Research Center.

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heap of trouble.



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