

'Copter tours lose ear space

Tourist helicopters flying out of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport will no longer be able to buzz over Central Park, the Empire State Building or around Brooklyn as part of new industry changes revealed yesterday.

Responding to noise complaints that have been soaring in lower Manhattan and Brooklyn since tourist helicopters were relocated from the West Side Heliport on April 1, the city announced a set of restrictions aimed at making life more tranquil.

They include an immediate elimination of the short four- to eight-minute tours, which represent 15 to 20 percent of traffic out of the Downtown Heliport and have been the biggest headaches for Brooklyn Heights residents.

These trips usually involved riding by the Statue of Liberty and Brooklyn Bridge.

The regulations will be enforced by the EDC, which says it put together the new plan with help from the heliport's five operators and the Eastern Region Helicopter Council.

Operators caught snubbing the new rules could have their permit to fly out of the heliport revoked by the city and face fines by the feds. Rich Calder

Driven to distraction

Police issued more than 3,000 tickets during a two-state campaign against drivers texting and talking on cellphones.

The weeklong crackdowns in New York and Connecticut were part of a federal program testing the effects of more aggressive enforcement of existing laws against distracted driving.

Authorities in Syracuse issued 2,185 tickets for cellphones and 115 for texting, while those in Hartford issued 1,100 for cellphones and 272 for texting. AP

SUBWAY TUNNEL OF LOVE

Site's commuter dating

By ADA CALHOUN and TOM NAMAKO

Next stop: true love.

A new Web site that's essentially eHarmony for straphangers is helping riders with similar commutes break the ice without the creepiness of approaching each other underground.

SubMate.com lets users enter their departure and arrival stations and the time of day they travel — and then matches the results with people taking similar trips.

"Every day, before and after your commute, you're surrounded by people," said the site's developer, Paris-based programmer Laurent Kretz. "Among them there might be a bass player for your band — or a cute girl you could date."

Kretz first thought of the idea when he asked a woman he routinely saw at an East Village subway station if she could help him with his Spanish.

"I was living in the East Village, working on 57th and 7th," he said. "Sometimes after work we met around the station at the Starbucks at Cooper Square. It lasted a couple of months."

The site kicked off two days ago, and already has users searching for a friend or romantic connection on the subway.

Once users make a profile — similar to what you'd create on Facebook — the site will allow you to view the profiles of other people along

the commute and send them messages.

"You know how you look at people and wonder about them. Where are they going? You wonder what they're wearing or what they're like," said Elizabeth Yannone, 26, a venture capitalist who commutes from Wall Street to Times Square every day.

She said she's just looking for someone to help her pass the time on the train every day.

"I like putting an identity to these people. Now I can look them up!" she said.

Other straphangers have higher hopes. "Now I can make new friends or even find a new date," said Romain Nouzareth, who added that girls on his commute from Hell's Kitchen to the West Village everyday includes several attractive women.

"I have to admit, people-watching in the subway is one of my favorite activities — looking at how people are dressed, what kind of life they can have, their job, are they tired, happy," he said.

Kretz has launched similar sites for the London and Paris transit systems.

He added that it might not be for everyone — or every time of day.

"In the morning, I don't even want to speak to people," Kretz said. "But when I leave work I want to meet people in my area."

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RAIL ROMANCE: Elizabeth Yannone could find the straphanger of her dreams on SubMate.com.

Christopher Sadowski