

+++ Press Release +++ February 18, 2021 +++

„Berlin car-free referendum“ initiative submits draft law to create largest car-reduced city centre in the world

- „Volksentscheid Berlin autofrei“ initiative launches petition for a referendum due to Senate’s failed traffic policy
- First law for a car-free inner-city in Germany
- Safer roads, healthier living, climate protection and more space for all through fewer cars on Berlin’s roads

Berlin, February 18, 2021. The „Volksentscheid Berlin autofrei“ initiative has submitted a new law, „Berlin law for road use based on the common good“ to the Senate Department for the Interior for cost estimation, thereby triggering the citizen-led referendum process. The initiative aims to make Berlin’s streets safer and give more space to all by reducing the number of (private) car journeys within the S-Bahn-Ring. With a total area of 88 square kilometres, the world’s largest car-reduced city centre would be created.

„We want people to be able to sleep with their windows open and children to be able to play in the street again. Especially children and senior citizens are endangered by cars. Also, grandparents should be able to ride their bicycles safely and have plenty of benches to take a breather on,“ said Nina Noblé, spokesperson for the initiative. „Our law improves the quality of life for all Berliners.“

Legally, this initiative takes a new approach. The law re-designates use of the streets within the S-Bahn-Ring by reserving them for environmentally friendly mobility, including public transport, bicycles and pedestrians. People who depend on their car – for example, firefighters, people with limited mobility, tradespeople and commercial traffic – may continue to use it. Through significantly reducing car traffic, those people will actually reach their destinations far quicker. This law is the first-of-its-kind in Germany and could benefit other cities due to its transferability and ease of application in other urban contexts.

„The Senate has no meaningful transformation plan towards sustainable and equitable transport,“ said Manuel Wiemann, spokesperson for the initiative. „E-buses and a few kilometres of bike lanes in five years are simply not enough. There are too many cars on the road in Berlin polluting the air through tire wear, occupying far too much common space and unnecessarily endangering human lives – whether electric or diesel. Cars are everywhere – we have become used to them. But where, if not in Berlin, can we create a new normal on our roads?“

Timetable: The Senate now has two months to produce an official cost estimate. After this period the initiative aims to collect 20,000 valid signatures as part of the first stage of the petition for a referendum. The initiative will use the signature collection phase to raise the issue up the debate agenda of the House of Representatives election. In 2023, Berliners will be able to vote on the law in a referendum. The law allows a transitional period of four years so that the streets within the S-Bahn ring will be calmer, safer and shared more equitably from 2027.

The **full text of the law and the explanatory memorandum** can be found in the [downloads section of our web site](#).

About Us: We are an initiative of about one hundred volunteers from Berlin. We live inside and outside the ring. Some are still studying, others are already retired. Among us are traffic jam-plagued car drivers, stressed pedestrians and cyclists as well as people who love Berlin’s public transportation. Some of us have children, who want to grow up in a liveable city and be mobile without fear. We are non-partisan and independent of institutions or organisations.

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