New York, January 31, 2017 – Sam Schwartz, one of the country’s most accomplished and respected experts in the theories and practices of sustainable urban transportation policy, will serve as the inaugural Theodore Kheel Visiting Fellow in Transportation at the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College. The announcement was made today by Jennifer J. Raab, President of Hunter College.

Mr. Schwartz, who begins the semester-long fellowship for the spring term that begins this week, served with distinction as New York City Traffic Commissioner in the administration of Mayor Edward I. Koch from 1982 to 1986, and then as First Deputy and Chief Engineer of the newly organized NYC Department of Transportation from 1986-1990. The author of scores of professional papers and several books, he is widely credited with inventing the term “gridlock,” and for years has written a weekly advice column on traffic for the New York Daily News as “Gridlock Sam”—“Gridlock Shmuel” when the column was printed in the Yiddish News Report, “Transit Sam” in his regular features for the Downtown Express. Mr. Schwartz is currently president and CEO of Sam Schwartz Engineering, a firm specializing in local, national, and global transportation planning. Among his most notable recent projects have been major consulting roles in orchestrating the reconstruction of the World Trade Center, the construction of the soon-to-open Second Avenue Subway, and the planned BQX streetcar connecting Brooklyn and Queens. He is also working on the current, ongoing modernization of LaGuardia Airport.

As the inaugural Kheel Fellow, Mr. Schwartz will serve as a practitioner-in-residence, helping to inspire students to study urban transportation policy at Hunter and advocate for the creation of a balanced transportation system for American cities. Mr. Schwartz will conduct research, write, and be involved in a wide range of faculty and student engagement, including the guiding of independent study projects, mentoring and career advisement, and will participate as well in Roosevelt House public programs. The fellowship is named for
Theodore W. Kheel (1914-2010), the legendary attorney and mediator who helped resolve simmering labor disputes in New York City during an unsurpassed, 50-year-long public service career in which he was first New York’s official transit arbitrator, ultimately its chief labor negotiator.

“We could not be more pleased to be welcoming one of New York’s leading traffic and transportation experts to launch a fellowship named for the late, extraordinary Ted Kheel, and made possible by the foundation he created,” said President Raab. “Just as Ted Kheel epitomized responsible transportation solutions for the late 20th century, Sam Schwartz has built brilliantly on that vision to help create a sustainable system for navigating our city—and many other urban spaces—into the 21st century. We know that Sam will bring a wealth of knowledge and learning opportunities for our students at Hunter and look forward to working closely with him as he mentors them—and the rest of the college community—on this vital aspect of our lives.”

“Hunter enjoyed a long and immeasurably important relationship with Ted Kheel,” President Raab added. “Committed, as he put it, to ‘change the way New Yorkers think about the environment,’ his Nurture Nature initiative not only launched but generously funded our Institute for Sustainable Cities, which still does extraordinary, cutting-edge work in his name. So we feel particularly honored that his children have taken his commitment yet another step forward by funding the Kheel Fellowship.” In 2010, Hunter awarded Mr. Kheel an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in recognition of his lifelong impact on New York City.

Commented Harold Holzer, the Jonathan F. Fanton Director of Roosevelt House: “Having had the privilege of working closely with Sam Schwartz on several transportation and historical projects over the years, I know first-hand how bravely he tackles seemingly insurmountable transportation challenges, and how brilliantly he devises achievable solutions. He is a visionary engineer and a natural teacher, and we look forward with great anticipation to welcoming him to Roosevelt House to guide our students and illuminate our public.”

“We can think of no one better qualified than Sam Schwartz to carry my father’s name, vision, and ideas forward to a new generation of New Yorkers,” said Robert Kheel, President of the Nurture Nature Foundation. “My father was committed to creating a sustainable transportation system. He believed such a system was critical to the future of our cities, and should be thought of as a fundamental service, like police protection and trash removal. He was also a great supporter of education, as a means of addressing problems and preparing for the future. Sam has more knowledge than almost anyone else in this country to put to the service of these goals. We are pleased and proud to be supporting the first Theodore Kheel Fellow and look forward to his contributions to my father’s legacy—and to the public policy mission of Roosevelt House and Hunter College.”

Commented Mr. Schwartz: “I am truly honored, and frankly humbled, to serve as the first
Theodore Kheel Fellow at Roosevelt House, and to begin working with Hunter College students on studying and advancing key innovations in transportation policy. It is a particular privilege to be associated with two names for which I have so much respect: Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose sense of social responsibility and policy advocacy set the standard for the 20th and 21st centuries, and Ted Kheel, a negotiator, civil rights leader, and transportation authority who was among the first to recognize the connection between social equity and transport policy. In a 1969 New York Magazine article, he wrote: ‘Transportation is as much a civil rights issue as housing and education and jobs.’ Almost a half-century later, a nucleus of planners and engineers are finally reaching that conclusion. I am hoping my fellowship can offer scholarly research that, among other things, advances his keen observation.”

Mr. Schwartz’s other notable recent projects include the “MOVE NY FAIR” plan, which attempted to introduce congestion pricing to ease city traffic and fund public transportation; Columbia University’s new Manhattanville campus; a streetcar system for the Caribbean island of Aruba; a state-of-the-art highway in Canada; and the first-ever transportation proposal through the DMZ in Korea. He also chaired the New York City Bridge Centennial Commission and in that role helped save the Williamsburg Bridge, which the federal government had planned to dismantle and replace.

Educated at Brooklyn College (BS, Physics) and the University of Pennsylvania (MSCE), Mr. Schwartz began his transportation career as a New York City cabbie, then joined the NYC Traffic Department as a junior engineer in 1971. While commissioner, he authored the 1980 “NYC Transit Strike Plan”—the occasion that inspired him to introduce the word “gridlock” into urban transportation vocabulary.

Mr. Schwartz previously served as an adjunct professor at Cooper Union (where he co-founded the Infrastructure Institute), Long Island University, and Brooklyn College. He helped found two New York City public schools: the School for the Physical City and the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School. He is a board member of the Regional Plan Association and the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation, and has served as a Fellow of the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

His most recent book is Street Smart: The Rise of Cities and the Fall of Cars, and he is currently at work on a book about driverless vehicles in the urban future. Among his dozens of honors are the 2014 AAA Traffic Safety Award and the 2012 Sustainable Civil Engineering Award from the American Society of Civil Engineers. His engineering and planning firms have offices in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Tampa, among other cities, and employ more than 100 people.

From: POLITICO New York

By Conor Skelding
‘Gridlock’ Sam to become transportation fellow at Hunter College

‘Gridlock’ Sam Schwartz, the former city traffic commissioner who’s been pushing a congestion pricing plan for years, will become Roosevelt House’s first transportation fellow, Hunter College announced Tuesday.

Schwartz, who in addition to being a persistent advocate for his ‘Move New York’ plan is now a private consultant, will be the inaugural Theodore Kheel visiting fellow in transportation at Hunter’s Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute.

The appointment is for this spring semester.

Schwartz earned his bachelor’s degree at Brooklyn College and his master’s degree at the University of Pennsylvania. After working as a city cab driver, he joined the city Department of Transportation, where he coined the word “gridlock.”

Share this:

Roosevelt House, an integral part of Hunter College since 1943, reopened in 2010 as a public policy institute honoring the distinguished legacy of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Its mission is three-fold: to educate students in public policy and human rights, to support faculty research, and to foster creative dialogue.

Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College
47-49 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10065
tel: 212.650.3174 | email: roosevelthouse@hunter.cuny.edu

© Copyright 2017 Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College