



APN) ATLANTA -- About 15 activists protested near Peachtree Center on Saturday, April 09, 2011, from 5 to 7pm, regarding the use of horse-drawn carriages as a tourist attraction.

Atlanta Progressive News obtained photographs and observed as several individuals drove horse-drawn carriages throughout downtown.

Signs on the horses say the price is 25 dollars per person for a fifteen minute ride. The ride goes down Peachtree Street; it turns down Andrew Young International Boulevard and circles back north and then east back onto Peachtree.

The protests have been occurring once a month since summer 2010 and are organized by Georgia Animal Rights and Protection (GARP). GARP was also involved in the circus elephant protest at Atlanta City Hall, which was covered by APN last month.

Atlanta Police officers asked a couple of protesters to move from the sidewalk on Andrew Young to the sidewalk on Peachtree, away from where the horses were parked, at one point.

However, the protesters objected because they were on the public sidewalk and not blocking the pathway. This reporter stated to the officer that APN would have freedom of assembly concerns as well. The officer then communicated on their radio with someone, but did not return.

Later, the same officer told other protesters that they could take photographs of the horses, but could not interfere with the individuals trying to sell rides to tourists.

The owners of the carriages were very aggressive towards the protesters, including carrying a sign that said MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS - DOWN WITH PETA. Incidentally, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) did not organize the protest, but does provide in-kind resources to GARP.

One carriage owner also asked the protesters to stop taking pictures of the horses. When asked why, he said, "Because they're mine!"

The carriage owner refused an interview request from APN and refused to provide his name.

One of the downtown Ambassadors came over to observe the verbal altercation, and later shouted "terrorists" in an apparent taunt at the protesters.

The Ambassador's badge said his name was M. Haisup. He later apologized and said he was just joking when questioned by APN.

"We're for a ban, not regulation," Karlene Cohen, 46, organizer of the protest, told APN. "Regulation will never make things safe- it's a living, breathing animal that gets spooked, they hear all these cars, that's why they put these blinding things in their eyes. It's a ticking time bomb."

"Obviously the cruelty to the horses [is of concern], the reason why is, it's not natural. Their feet, their hooves, it's not natural for them to be on this pavement. There's a Cornell study that the

pavement can get fifty degrees hotter. All this wear and tear you see... it is not natural for these poor little horses. Its feet are small, they're very tiny. Those very tiny feet are in charge of all this carriage," Cohen said.

"That's why they get all these leg and hoof ailments. Their health starts to decline, because these are their only feet and their only legs. These are modern-day slaves. It is always on their backs, there is never a break," she said.

"Their life span as a carriage horse is four years as opposed to twenty to thirty years. The four years that they have, is just miserable," she said.

Cohen said she observed at the protest another one with a gouge and bleeding going down its leg.

"One horse had blood where they strap the carriage to his tummy, blood, and it's just rubbing back and forth all day and all night," she said.

According to Cohen, tourists and hotel workers watched last year as one horse literally dropped dead in front of the Ritz Carlton last year.

In another incident, according to Cohen, a driver and passengers were thrown from a carriage when one of the horses was hit by a car.