

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

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March 19, 2025
Start: 10:28 a.m.
Recess: 5:16 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Selvena Brooks-Powers, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joann Ariola
Chris Banks
Amanda Farías
Farrah N. Louis
Mercedes Narcisse
Carlina Rivera
Julie Won

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Gale A. Brewer
Lincoln Restler

A P P E A R A N C E S

Demetrius Crichlow, President of New York City Transit

Jai Patel, Co-Chief Financial Officer at New York City Transit

Shanifah Rieara, Chief Customer Officer at New York City Transit

John McCarthy, Chief of Policy and External Relations at New York City Transit

Ydanis Rodriguez, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation

Margaret Forgione First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation

Paul Ochoa, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation

Eric Beaton, Deputy Commissioner of Transportation Planning and Management of the New York City Department of Transportation

Nicole Garcia, Queens Borough Commissioner for New York City Department of Transportation

David Do, Chair and Commissioner of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

Sherryl Eluto, General Counsel of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Evan Hines, Deputy Commissioner for Operations, People and Innovation of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

James DiGiovanni, Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Community Affairs of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

Maggie Austin, Executive Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Design and Construction

Rachel Laiserin, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Financial Officer of the New York City Department of Design and Construction

Jeffrey Margolies, Associate Commissioner for Communications and Policy of the New York City Department of Design and Construction

Raul Rivera, self and NYC Drivers United

William Medina, leader and organizer at the Worker Justice Project

Ben Furnas, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives

Jackson Chabot, Treasurer of the New York Metro Chapter of American Planning Association

Darnell Sealy-McCrory, Families for Safe Streets

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Sally Burns, Planning Associate for Union Square Partnership

Mamadou Cellou Balde, worker organizer, and member of the Work Justice Project

Amanda Berman, Senior Director of Court Reform at the Center for Justice Innovation

Charles Guthrie, self

Sharon Brown, Rose of Sharon Ministries

Leslie Davol, Street Lab

Michael Ring, Second Vice President of Disabled in Action

Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Christopher Schuyler, Managing Attorney of the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for Public Interest

Elizabeth Denys, self

Saskia Haegans, one of the organizers of the Vanderbilt Avenue Open Street in Prospect Heights in Brooklyn

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Natasha Elder, Regional Director with New York
Public Interest Research Group, representing the
Straphangers Campaign

Laura Sewell, Loisaída Open Streets Community
Coalition

Jim Burke, 34th Avenue Open Streets

Bobby Feltault, Vice Chair of the 31st Avenue
Open Street Collective

Eric McClure, Executive Director of StreetsPAC

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Check, check. This is a
3 microphone check for the Committee on Transportation
4 and Infrastructure located in the Chambers, recorded
5 on March 19, 2025, by Pat Kurzyna. Check, check,
6 check.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
8 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing on
9 Transportation and Infrastructure.

10 If you'd like to testify today, please
11 see one of the Sergeant-at-Arms in the back to fill
12 out a testimony slip.

13 At any point, please no one approach the
14 dais at any time.

15 Please silence all electronic devices.

16 Chair, you may begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [GAVEL] Good
18 morning and welcome to the Committee on
19 Transportation and Infrastructure's hearing on the
20 Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget and the Fiscal 2025
21 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for the
22 Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Department of
23 Transportation, and Taxi and Limousine Commission,
24 and the Department of Design and Construction. My
25 name is Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, and I Chair this

2 Committee. I would like to acknowledge my fellow
3 Council Members who are present here today. We're
4 joined by Council Member Farrah Louis.

5 Today, we'll hear testimony from three
6 transportation agencies, the MTA, DOT, and TLC. Each
7 plays an essential role in the lives of New Yorkers.
8 The recently deceased civil icon, my Soror, Hazel
9 Dukes, once said, if I can help somebody as I pass
10 along, then my living shall not have been in vain.
11 Facilitating a safe, efficient transportation network
12 is an opportunity for us to put her words into
13 practice every day. Effective and efficient
14 transportation is vital for economic growth, social
15 mobility, and commerce. It also serves a crucial role
16 in community health and our overall well-being as a
17 city. I look forward to speaking with each of these
18 agencies about their role in moving the city and its
19 residents forward.

20 We'll also hear today from DDC, the
21 City's chief capital agency. The methods, means, and
22 materials we use in construction are so crucial, not
23 only to our transportation network, but to the
24 sustainability and long-term health of our city
25 across all sectors.

2 First up today is the MTA, whose Calendar
3 Year 2025 operating budget is 19.88 billion dollars.
4 We would like to explore the seemingly ever-
5 increasing cost shifts to the City, including
6 congestion pricing and its initial impact on city
7 residents. We will also inquire about the Authority's
8 proposed capital plan, which includes a 33.4-billion-
9 dollar gap and was recently vetoed by the Capital
10 Program Review Board on Christmas Eve. We plan on
11 asking what next steps the Authority plans to take
12 with the State regarding budget negotiations in
13 Albany and how the MTA plans to navigate the
14 political climate in Washington.

15 We'll then hear from the Department of
16 Transportation at noon on its Fiscal 2026 Preliminary
17 Budget, which totals 1.47 billion dollars, equal to
18 1.3 percent of the City's proposed Fiscal 2026
19 Preliminary Budget. The agency's preliminary
20 commitment plans totals 13.32 billion dollars across
21 Fiscals 2025 to 2029. The Fiscal 2026 Preliminary
22 Plan includes 6.4 million dollars in new needs for
23 Fiscal 2026 and 3.8 million dollars in other
24 adjustments. As always, I hope to discuss with DOT
25 how the City can more equitably invest across

2 historically underserved communities. Local Law 195
3 of 2019, also known as the Streets Plan or the
4 Transportation Master Plan, was passed in October
5 2019 when Commissioner Rodriguez was Chair of this
6 Committee. Local Law 195 states by February 1, 2023,
7 and by each February 1st thereafter, the Department
8 shall submit to the Mayor and the Speaker of the
9 Council and post on the Department's website an
10 update regarding any changes to the plan from the
11 previous year. Despite that provision, DOT released
12 its Streets Plan almost a full month and a half after
13 the required February 1st date and did not submit
14 their report to the Council, but instead released it
15 to the press first. Notably, the Department of
16 Transportation is once again failing to meet the
17 legal mandates the Council established several years
18 ago in the Streets Plan. I plan to ask DOT about this
19 at today's hearing and I look forward to getting a
20 better understanding of how this year's budget will
21 ensure that DOT can meet its legal requirements and
22 more effectively serve communities citywide.

23 Then we will hear from the Taxi and
24 Limousine Commission at 2 p.m. on its Fiscal 2026
25 Preliminary Budget, which totals 58 million dollars.

2 We would like to explore their enforcement capacity
3 over unlicensed commuter vans as well as get an
4 update on their vehicle accessibility. Over the last
5 decade, this industry has experienced tremendous
6 change, particularly since the introduction of app-
7 based for-hire vehicles to the city. The Council
8 remains committed to removing barriers that prevent
9 drivers from earning a living while they provide
10 essential services to New Yorkers, and we look
11 forward to discussing how this budget further
12 empowers drivers to succeed.

13 Finally, we will hear from DDC at 3 p.m.
14 on their 2026 Preliminary Budget, which totals 159.4
15 million dollars, which is 20.4 million dollars less
16 than its Fiscal 2025 adopted budget. The Preliminary
17 Plan includes no new needs for DDC and 21.9 million
18 dollars in reductions from other adjustments and
19 asylum seeker response savings in Fiscal 2025, with
20 modest changes in Fiscal 2026 and in the outer years.
21 In the Preliminary Commitment Plan, there is 24.59
22 billion dollars in capital projects DDC is managing
23 for City agencies and entities across the years of
24 the plan. Today, I plan to ask DDC about the major
25 capital projects the agency is leading, from the

2 borough-based jails to the east side coastal
3 resiliency, but I also hope to discuss how DDC is
4 accomplishing its projects. For example, how the
5 agency is innovating to advance projects more quickly
6 and efficiently, and how is DDC seeking to maximize
7 utilization of M/WBE?

8 Before we begin with testimony, I would
9 like to thank Council Staff for their hard work in
10 preparing for this hearing, Adrian Drepaul, Senior
11 Financial Analyst; Julia Haramis, Unit Head; Chima
12 Obichere, Deputy Director; Mark Chen, Senior Counsel;
13 Kevin Kotowski and John Basile, Senior Policy
14 Analysts. And of course, my staff, Julian Martin, my
15 Policy and Budget Director; and Renee Taylor, my
16 Chief-of-Staff.

17 Also, I'd like to acknowledge that we've
18 been joined by Council Minority Leader Joann Ariola.

19 And with that, I will now ask the
20 Committee Counsel to go over some procedural items
21 and swear in the representatives from the MTA.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Thank you. I'm
23 Mark Chen, Counsel to the Committee on Transportation
24 and Infrastructure.

2 Our first panel will be from the
3 Metropolitan Transit Authority, Demetrius Crichlow,
4 President of New York City Transit; Jai Patel, Co-
5 Chief Financial Officer; Shanifah Rieara, Chief
6 Customer Officer, and John McCarthy, Chief of Policy
7 and External Relations.

8 I will now administer the oath. Please
9 raise your right hands.

10 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
11 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
12 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
13 questions?

14 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Thank you. You
16 may begin when ready.

17 PRESIDENT CRICHLLOW: Good morning, and
18 thank you for having us. Special thanks to Committee
19 Chair Brooks-Powers. I'm Demetrius Critchlow,
20 President of New York City Transit. I'm joined by Co-
21 Chief Financial Officer Jai Patel, who will also be
22 giving remarks today, Chief Customer Officer Shanifah
23 Rieara, and Chief of Policy and External Relations,
24 John McCarthy.

2 Before we get started, I wanted to
3 acknowledge that this is my first time here since
4 becoming President of Transit so I'm going to talk a
5 little bit about myself. I'm a third-generation
6 transit worker, followed in the footsteps of my
7 father and grandfather, and in April, I'll mark 28
8 years of service to the MTA. I started my career as
9 an Assistant Signal Maintainer at the Long Island
10 Railroad, digging ditches, climbing poles, and
11 keeping the trains moving, also repairing crossing
12 gates to ensure our system was safe. I've taken
13 increasing responsibility to overseeing the
14 operations at Penn Station Central Control and
15 eventually transferred to MTA Headquarters to become
16 a Special Assistant to the then-Chairman and CEO.
17 I've taken leadership positions at New York City
18 Transit, privilege of serving as a Chief of Field
19 Operations, Chief of the Rail Control Center, Vice
20 President of Staten Island Railway, and most recently
21 as a Senior Vice President of Subways, where we
22 delivered historically strong subway performance and
23 implemented new and higher standards for cleanliness,
24 safety, and maintenance. Being appointed as the
25 President by Chairman and CEO Janno Lieber has really

2 been an honor of my career, and I'm thrilled to be
3 serving the 50,000 employees and 6 million customers
4 that we have daily.

5 I'm really driven by two things, safety
6 and service. Getting people to where they need to go
7 safely and on time, that's really our bread and
8 butter. I know that for our riders, we're only as
9 good as our last commute, and lately service has been
10 strong. On weekdays, subway on-time performance
11 averaged 82.5 percent in January, and weekends are
12 even better at 86.8 percent. Buses have also been
13 improving, thanks in part to the start of congestion
14 price congestion relief. System-wide, bus speeds are
15 up almost 4 percent from last month, and crossing
16 times in the morning rush have dropped dramatically.
17 48 percent at the Holland Tunnel, 30 percent at the
18 Williamsburg Bridge, and 30 percent at the Queensboro
19 Bridge. Even better, travel times are dropping across
20 the board. The QM8, which travels through the Midtown
21 Tunnel, has shaved 10 minutes off of its usual run
22 time. The Sim8X, which travels through the Lincoln
23 Tunnel, has seen nearly a seven-minute reduction in
24 its mean travel time.

2 Let's talk a little bit about
3 paratransit. For 2024, it was a record-breaking year
4 for us, nearly a 20 percent increase in trips
5 provided throughout the year. We carried more than
6 13.3 million riders, and there was also historically
7 high on-time performance with customer satisfaction
8 in the high 70 percent.

9 Some other exciting things we've done
10 recently following successful efforts in the Bronx
11 and Staten Island, we finalized the plan for the
12 Queens Bus Network redesign, which will take effect
13 starting in June. It includes a 35-million-dollar
14 annual investment in increased bus frequencies and
15 creates new and more direct routes with better
16 connections to the subway and Long Island Railroad.
17 We're also debuting rush routes for the first time
18 ever, providing an express train-style journey for
19 customers traveling long distances. Next up is
20 Brooklyn. You might have seen that our open gangway
21 subway cars are now running on the G-Line. They first
22 debuted on the C a year ago, and customers have been
23 loving the updated design. We have nearly 400 of our
24 new R211 cars in service, helping us deliver better
25 service. With a mean distance between failure of 220

2 miles, that's five times better than the R46s that
3 they replaced. That means five times fewer break
4 times.

5 Not to be understated is accessibility in
6 our system. We are cranking out elevators and ADA
7 projects at an unprecedented pace. Faster, better,
8 and cheaper. There are now 150 fully accessible
9 subway stations system-wide with another 36 in
10 construction right now. Even more on the way. 23
11 projects that are being funded by congestion relief
12 revenues plus another 60 in the 2025 to 2029 capital
13 plan. 30 that have already been identified at high-
14 priority stations, and 30 more that will be selected
15 after public input.

16 It's important to me that we're able to
17 run good service while work is underway. Right now,
18 we're about halfway through a major project in the
19 Rockaways. Service on the A is out while we do
20 extensive rehabilitation and repair work to fix
21 damage from Superstorm Stanley. I had the pleasure of
22 visiting this project with Chair Brooks-Powers
23 earlier this month, and I've been to the Rockaways
24 multiple times before and during the outage to make
25 sure customers have the best possible alternatives.

2 We've increased express bus service, added two high-
3 frequency free shuttle bus routes, and are running a
4 free subway shuttle on the peninsula. The Long Island
5 Railroad is offering discounted fares. When
6 alternative service is good, it makes a world of
7 difference for our customers. We saw that last summer
8 when the G-Line was suspended for signal work, and
9 we're bringing that same focus to the Rockaways.

10 On fares, the transition to contactless
11 fare payment is moving along. Tap and Go is now
12 available to nearly all riders since we brought over
13 reduced fare customers back in December. The largest
14 customer group that had not been transitioned to
15 Omni, students have been tapping in since the fall,
16 and that student Omni card's usage is way up from
17 last year when we were still giving out MetroCards. I
18 want to thank the Council for supporting efforts to
19 expand the City's Fair Fare programs, which provides
20 half-price MetroCards to low-income New Yorkers. Our
21 team at the MTA is with you 100 percent and support
22 the efforts to expand the program. The more folks
23 that can sign up, the better. It's no secret we're
24 doing everything we can to make sure New Yorkers pay
25 the fare. Fare evasion is an existential threat, and

2 we're taking it head-on. As Chair Lieber always says,
3 it creates a sense of lawlessness right where you
4 enter the system when we want the transit system to
5 feel like a safe and welcoming place. New Yorkers pay
6 for their bacon, egg, and cheese at the bodega. They
7 pay for their barber. They pay for the theater. It's
8 only right that they pay for public transportation
9 too. Until we can replace our existing turnstiles,
10 we're going to stick with our strategy. Education,
11 stronger physical barriers, and plenty of
12 enforcement, which no question is working. Subway
13 fare evasion is down 26 percent and nine percent
14 across buses. Huge thanks to our Eagle teams and gate
15 guards, our internal teams who work to modify our
16 infrastructure, and of course our partners at the
17 NYPD. Customers tell us again and again that they
18 want to see more uniformed officers in the system.
19 It's the one thing that our riders from every
20 demographic group, income level, and neighborhood
21 agree on. I'm really excited about the NYPD's efforts
22 to deploy two officers per train during the overnight
23 tour. We're grateful to Governor Hochul for funding
24 this investment and to Police Commissioner Tisch for
25 mobilizing her team so quickly.

2 The safety of riders and employees is my
3 number one priority. I'm thrilled to see crime levels
4 dropping in the first two months of 2025. The latest
5 NYPD stats show crime is down 29 percent versus 2024
6 and down 45 percent compared to this time five years
7 ago, right before the pandemic hit. These results are
8 a step in the right direction, but there's still more
9 work to be done. I know that recent high-profile
10 incidents have New Yorkers on edge. In addition to
11 advocating for more cops, we will keep pressing the
12 criminal justice system to come down hard on subway
13 criminals. If you commit a crime or harm one of our
14 riders or one of my employees, you're going to get
15 caught and we will seek the maximum penalty.

16 Last year, thanks to Governor Hochul, we
17 installed cameras in all of our over 6,000 subway
18 cars. We have cameras everywhere now in our system,
19 helping law enforcement solve crimes every day and
20 are working closely with our partners in the criminal
21 justice community, the DAs especially, to keep bad
22 actors out of the subway. The transit system is too
23 important to the city, to the region, and to the
24 country to allow the perception of safety or the lack
25 of it to chase people away. It's how millions of

2 people every day get to work, school, doctors, and
3 everything the city has to offer.

4 It's a force for equity. For the same
5 fare, a stockbroker can travel from the Upper East
6 Side to Wall Street and a nurse can travel from
7 Jamaica to Elmhurst Hospital. It's one of the few
8 things that makes New York affordable and it's the
9 economic engine of the state. The question now is, do
10 we keep pushing forward or do we go backwards? And
11 that's where I'll turn it over to Jay for more on
12 what on the MTA's finances.

13 CO-CHIEF PATEL: Thank you, Demetrius. I'm
14 glad to be here and to report that MTA's operating
15 budget is in a good place after a challenging few
16 years. It was five years ago, almost to the day, that
17 COVID hit and decimated ridership. You'll remember we
18 were looking at a business model for transit that no
19 longer worked. We made the case in Albany for new
20 funding and, thankfully, Governor Hochul and the New
21 York State Legislature delivered. As part of that
22 budget deal, it included 400 million in annual
23 recurring savings by the MTA. And thanks to our
24 disciplined approach, we hit that target last year
25 and expect to exceed it this year with 500 million

2 dollars in new efficiencies without resorting to
3 layoffs, service cuts, or fare hikes. Another point
4 of pride, MTA's budget is three percent lower today
5 than it was in 2019, even with a ton of extra subway,
6 bus, and rail service and the added cost of operating
7 a huge new terminal at Grand Central Madison.

8 We will continue to look for more
9 opportunities to reduce costs, but what I really want
10 to talk to you about today is MTA's capital budget,
11 which involves contributions from not just the MTA
12 itself, but also the city, state, and federal
13 governments, among other sources. March is peak
14 budget season in Albany and our team is up there all
15 the time fighting for every last dollar to fund MTA's
16 proposed 68.4-billion-dollar '25 to '29 capital plan.
17 It prioritized bringing the system into a state of
18 good repair. Many components are falling apart and
19 need to be replaced or preserved. If we don't do this
20 critical work, it's no exaggeration to say we will be
21 looking at another summer of hell. Does anyone really
22 want to go back to 2017?

23 I hope we can count on your support for
24 full funding. Like Demetrius said, transit is too

2 important to New York to let the system fail. So with
3 that, we're happy to take questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
5 much, and thank you President Crichlow for coming out
6 and visiting my District and seeing from the ground
7 what that impact is. I had to tussle with it myself
8 to get off the peninsula today, but I made it. A
9 little delayed, but I made it.

10 I want to start with cost shifts. So, in
11 the 2023 to 2024 State budget, there was an increased
12 payroll mobility tax increase levied on New York City
13 businesses. In 2024, the final estimated receipts
14 from payroll mobility tax and MTA aid was 3.5 billion
15 dollars, an 803-million-dollar increase from 2023.
16 This calendar year, the MTA sees this tax growing
17 from 3.7 billion dollars this year to 4 billion in
18 2028. Does MTA project this revenue source to
19 continue to grow in later years?

20 PRESIDENT CRICHLLOW: I'm going to ask Jai
21 to take that question.

22 CO-CHIEF PATEL: Thank you. So as part of
23 the fiscal cliff solve, the increase to the PMT was
24 part of a package of initiatives that the State
25 delivered. Part of it was new revenue sources, as you

2 cited, from the payroll mobility taxes, and that
3 piece, including the MTA's 400-million-dollar
4 efficiencies, helped us solve over a billion dollars,
5 almost 2 billion dollars of fiscal deficit that we
6 had. The payroll mobility tax was always projected to
7 be about 1.1 billion dollars in additional revenue in
8 the operating budget. That is what is forecasted, and
9 that's what is anticipated for the financial plan. It
10 fluctuates, but very slightly based on, you know, the
11 payroll within the city and the suburbs, but it's
12 constantly about 3 billion dollars overall.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And
14 with congestion pricing in effect, how will this
15 increased tax burden impact businesses in the
16 congestion zone?

17 CO-CHIEF PATEL: John can take that.

18 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Sure. Thanks, Chair. So
19 the Partnership for New York, which is the biggest,
20 you know, business group representing New York City
21 business interests, supports congestion pricing in
22 part because it actually makes their ability to do
23 business easier so they're comfortable with the way
24 congestion relief is working for them in coordination
25 with the other funding streams that go to the MTA.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
3 that. And Jai, I just want to come back to the
4 earlier question. Do you think the revenue sources
5 will grow in the later years?

6 CO-CHIEF PATEL: I think we have a small
7 projection of increase based on payrolls increasing.
8 That's really dependent on the economy. So, if the
9 payroll increases for businesses, we would get that
10 increase as a percentage. It really has been a steady
11 payroll mobility tax receipt that we receive on an
12 annual basis.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'd
14 like to also acknowledge we've been joined by Council
15 Member Rivera, Council Member Narcisse, and Council
16 Member Banks.

17 What will the additional funds from the
18 payroll mobility tax be used for?

19 CO-CHIEF PATEL: So, as part of our fiscal
20 cliff during COVID, we saw our farebox revenue drop,
21 which created a 2-billion-dollar budget deficit. The
22 payroll mobility tax helps us backfill that drop in
23 revenue from the farebox revenue loss and helps us
24 resolve our fiscal cliff through 2026.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. I'd like
3 to move to paratransit. In 2020, the State began to
4 require the City to fund 50 percent of the net
5 paratransit operating expenses of the MTA. An
6 amendment in Fiscal 2024 increased the funding
7 contribution for two years to 80 percent, with a
8 maximum annual contribution of 50 percent plus 165
9 million dollars. As proposed in the Governor's
10 budget, it would permanently extend the City's
11 funding contribution to this level, costing the City
12 an additional 165 million annually starting in State
13 Fiscal 2026. Does the MTA think it is prudent that
14 the State is seeking to make these additional costs
15 permanent, and if so, why?

16 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So I'll just start by
17 saying our paratransit organization is really like no
18 other. It's the largest paratransit organization in
19 North America. We service, on average, last year, 13
20 million total rides last year, which is amazing when
21 you think about the nature of what we do. Individual
22 trips for individual people. That's a 20 percent
23 increase versus the prior year. So first you have to
24 just acknowledge the service itself. The service
25 itself was a City service that we're taking on at the

2 MTA. And so for our position, we want to be able to
3 provide the best paratransit service that this City
4 deserves, and it takes funding to do so.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So just to be
6 clear, the MTA stance on seeking the additional
7 costs, making them permanent, because when we were
8 here at this time last year, it was projected that it
9 would expire. And so now MTA is coming back, or the
10 State budget, rather, is now calling for it to be
11 made permanent so we're trying to understand what
12 that justification looks like, considering that we
13 were under the impression at that time when we were
14 briefed in the hearing that it would be temporary and
15 that it would sunset.

16 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, I'll just cover
17 the operations, and I'll turn it over to Jai for more
18 of the numbers.

19 This is one of the troubles of being too
20 successful, and that's what we have here. We have the
21 nation's best paratransit organization, where just
22 under 80 percent of the customers are satisfied with
23 the service that we're providing. We have an increase
24 in ridership to service the folks that need the
25 service so increase in folks means increase in trips,

2 means increase in dollars that have to be spent to be
3 able to service individual trips, and so our position
4 is that the City has to continue to pay its share.

5 Jai?

6 CO-CHIEF PATEL: I can add, as part of the
7 State budget recommendation to help us solve our
8 operating deficit, the recommendation was a two-year
9 funding from the City at the 50 percent with the 165
10 million cap. The MTA financial plan included and has
11 been including that funding source going forward in
12 the plan for the plan period through 2028 so the MTA
13 had always planned that this funding would continue
14 as a City resource into the MTA operating budget. So
15 by eliminating it, it would create a deficit on the
16 MTA budget of 200 million dollars or more on an
17 annual basis if the City didn't contribute the
18 percentages recommended by the executive budget.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. In
20 five short years, the City has been forced to
21 shoulder an almost 50 percent increase in its
22 contribution for paratransit. What does the MTA
23 project to be the right cost share for the City of
24 paratransit costs in future years? And also, just a
25 point of clarification, in the State budget, it's

2 calling for us to make this contribution permanent.

3 Initially, it was for the MTA region. Is this
4 increase only for New York City's budget, or are the
5 other parts of the MTA region also looking to be made
6 permanent with their contributions as well?

7 CO-CHIEF PATEL: So, the MTA's paratransit
8 services is funded through the MTA so as part of that
9 agreement that we have, it's the City funds the
10 program at a cost share. I don't know about any other
11 program outside, but we service all five boroughs
12 with our paratransit services. The counties have
13 different services that are funded through the
14 county, I believe, budgets so I don't know about
15 their funding source. But like I said earlier, our
16 financial plan always projected for this funding
17 share to continue in the long term.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But that
19 wasn't how it was presented in the past.

20 CO-CHIEF PATEL: Our financial plan, and I
21 can speak from on the MTA side, our financial plan
22 always projected that the 50 percent with the cap,
23 actually ours removed the cap and funded 80 percent
24 as the City share. The executive budget includes the
25 50 percent with the 165 million cap.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But that
3 requires State legislation to be able to extend it.
4 And again, it was supposed to sunset. So, I hear you.
5 I think the concern is in terms of the transparency
6 aspect of the conversation. What was presented was
7 that this would sunset. It was to get the MTA out of
8 that crunch. As you said in your own words shortly
9 before, the MTA is in a good place right now.
10 Obviously, there are budget gaps in different aspects
11 of the MTA budget, but I'm just trying to see how
12 we're justifying making this permanent. And then when
13 I look at other counties that fall within the MTA
14 region, when there was this temporary contribution
15 put in place, will theirs now be made permanent or is
16 it just New York City?

17 CO-CHIEF PATEL: So I can't speak to the
18 latter part. I'm not informed on that piece. But
19 paratransit services, as Demetrius pointed out, have
20 grown. We're providing 20 percent more trips on an
21 annual basis. The highest even since pre-COVID,
22 right, during the pandemic. Customers are receiving
23 great service. They have a high customer
24 satisfaction, I believe over 70 percent customer
25 satisfaction. And so customers within the community

2 take the service, and we are asking the City to just
3 contribute the share of cost. The MTA cannot burden
4 increased cost. Our budget is much smaller than the
5 City's budget, as you know, and so even removing this
6 is a big impact to our financial plan on an annual
7 basis compared to the City's continuation of this
8 cost equity.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I just think
10 it's a lot, especially in light of, you know, we have
11 congestion pricing. We have now the City contributing
12 permanently in regards to the paratransit. Like, all
13 of that stuff adds up at a certain point. And I see
14 you have...

15 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah, Chair, I just
16 wanted to, you know, this is a good conversation to
17 have. Just today, the scheduled trips, 43,000
18 scheduled trips today which is the most ever. That
19 just, you know, it's sort of a timely conversation.
20 And what happens is more trips, more cost. And then I
21 think you're getting at is like, well, how do we
22 allocate those costs? Historically, this is a local
23 government operation. It's been, as Demetrius said,
24 the President said, it's taken on by the MTA as per
25 an agreement. In other localities throughout the

2 state, it's different in different places. Primarily,
3 it's run by the local governments and funded through
4 them. So, you know, I think there has to be a
5 relationship between the City and the MTA as far as
6 funding, but also what sort of service we put on and
7 how attractive it is. We've put in place requirements
8 for how quickly we respond to calls for service, and
9 we're meeting them and that's making it more
10 attractive so it's drawing even more.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And I hear
12 you, right? Because I'm not taking away the service,
13 the quality of service that's given, the need for it.
14 I just question in terms of what we're being asked as
15 a municipality to contribute considering we went from
16 an agreement of 33 percent before 2020 to now MTA
17 wanting us to contribute 80 percent, which is a steep
18 jump. And especially when the MTA came just about a
19 year or two ago to say that this is something that
20 was going to sunset. And now the MTA is saying, oh
21 no, we want to make it permanent. And I get that to
22 President Crichlow's point, there's an increase in
23 the trips, and so quite naturally, that means that
24 there's going to be a growing budget. But to now put

2 that on the City to do 80 percent now is pretty
3 steep.

4 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Understood. And just in
5 fairness, this is active, it is being negotiated in
6 Albany, and I think this conversation will continue
7 there. And we certainly understand your point. And I
8 think it's important that our budget needs are also
9 reflected because it's like everything else, the more
10 service we want, there's a cost associated with that.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No,
12 absolutely. New York City, we contribute over, I
13 think over 46 percent to the State, right? And so New
14 York City is always contributing in different
15 aspects, and so when we have something coming before
16 us to jump to 80 percent, we have to question that
17 and the rationale behind it, particularly when we
18 were told that this would sunset.

19 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah. Well, the good news
20 is we're talking about something that the money being
21 spent, there's value getting from so that at least is
22 part of the conversation that we should have.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But I'm still
24 not clear if MTA projects this to be the right cost
25 share, like when we look at future years, because

2 when we looked at it and it was temporary, I imagine
3 the MTA was looking outward in terms of future years
4 and what the needs are and how to balance when they
5 made the ask and said, well, we'll make it sunset. So
6 now that the State budget is calling for making this
7 permanent, I want to know what does the MTA project
8 to be the right cost share for the City power transit
9 costs in the future years because we are 80 percent
10 right now. Next year, y'all may come and say, we got
11 to do the whole thing. I'm not saying that we want
12 to, you know.

13 CO-CHIEF PATEL: No, ideally, right, we
14 think 80 percent is the right contribution for the
15 City with growing costs, right? As costs grow, if you
16 contribute 80 percent, that's equitable. You know,
17 honestly...

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I would say
19 it's not equitable.

20 CO-CHIEF PATEL: That is what's, you know,
21 what we have in our financial plan. Ideally, as you
22 know, a Chief Financial Officer, I do not like the
23 cap, right? Because it's really not 80 percent then
24 if you have a dollar value cap on it so in the
25 outyears, as the program grows and the dollar values

2 grow, it will be 70 percent, 60 percent, and, you
3 know, at some point, it will be a less share than 80
4 percent if you have a dollar value cap on it. So, my
5 recommendation or my, you know, perspective on a
6 financial side would just be a straight 80 percent
7 cost share. We would know that because we do a five-
8 year financial plan so the City would be able to
9 project those costs based on what we are seeing for
10 trip volumes for the program.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do you support
12 a dollar cap?

13 CO-CHIEF PATEL: I do not.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. I'm
15 going to jump to 2025 to 2029 capital plan. And then
16 after that, I'm going to allow my Colleagues to ask
17 questions, and then I'll come back to another round
18 for myself.

19 So, the MTA's proposed 2025 to 2029
20 capital plan, which totaled 68.4 billion dollars,
21 included an unfunded gap of 33.4 billion dollars. As
22 such, on Christmas Eve 2024, Majority Leader Stewart-
23 Cousins and Speaker Heastie vetoed the capital plan,
24 citing "closing the MTA's proposed 2025 to 2029
25 capital plan deficit may require State legislative

2 action for identifying additional non-State revenue
3 sources and can be solved during the upcoming
4 legislative session in the context of the State
5 budget negotiations." What revenue source, if any,
6 does the MTA anticipate the state will identify to
7 close the 33.4-billion-dollar gap?

8 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yes. So, Chair, you have
9 it right. As far as we put together a capital
10 program, it was based on that 20-year needs document,
11 which was an intense study of what needs to get done.
12 This was endorsed by external parties as far as the
13 projects that were chosen. It's a heavy on state of
14 good repair. We put this program together. It was
15 approved by our board, goes to Albany. The veto is
16 strictly related to the financing, as you said. So,
17 that's, you know, that's a very important factor,
18 because all parties are saying this is the right plan
19 at the right amount. It's just how do we figure out
20 how to fund this plan? So, right now, I was up in
21 Albany yesterday. There are discussions ongoing.
22 We're not really in the position to dictate or even
23 advise publicly what are the appropriate measures to
24 take, whether it's something that comes out directly
25 of the State budget, if it's in State debt, is it a

2 new revenue source, but I was at an event this
3 morning. The Chairman was very clear, again, which is
4 this is not a surprise that a big system that's worth
5 1.5 trillion dollars needs investment to keep it up.
6 It's on a rolling every five-year pace. So, this is
7 not a bailout. This is not something that was
8 unexpected. It's something that's necessary to keep
9 the system, as Mr. Crichlow said, to keep this engine
10 moving that's so critical to New York. So, we're very
11 confident that all the parties are interested in
12 making sure this is funded and finding the best way
13 forward, and we'll see that result as the State
14 budget comes to a conclusion.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, just to be
16 clear, I understand that you can't make those
17 decisions, but what are you pushing? Where are you
18 pushing to get this revenue from?

19 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah. So, again, it's not
20 appropriate for us to be the ones who are pushing one
21 particular way or the other. But just historically,
22 just as way of background, it's come from State debt.
23 It's come from City. It's come from the PMT or other
24 revenue raisers. So, those are the different items.
25 We discussed in our capital program that there's such

2 a huge investment in rolling stock so perhaps there's
3 a way to build something that finances this that is
4 dedicated specifically to the rolling stock because
5 that takes a little longer to spend because you have
6 to order it and so you're not paying up front for
7 those big trains that are being built hopefully
8 upstate in New York and creating jobs. So, maybe
9 there's a way to implement that through, again,
10 something that the State can figure out. But, again,
11 it's really important for us in the position we're in
12 to allow the Assembly, the Senate, and the Chamber to
13 sort of discuss the best path forward whether or not
14 it's one thing or various revenue opportunities.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
16 that. Even though I would argue that a couple of
17 years ago, MTA was pushing really hard for congestion
18 pricing so MTA has the ability to push for where they
19 want the dollars to come from.

20 The next question is what is the MTA
21 doing to increase efficiency and root out wasteful
22 and fraudulent spending?

23 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: You know, we've been
24 pretty lean as an organization looking at
25 operationally what are the things that we need to

2 provide and how can we get back savings, and so, over
3 the last several years, we have cut back operating
4 expenses significantly in order to run more service.
5 So, as Jai mentioned earlier, we're providing more
6 service with a smaller budget than what we had before
7 so I think that's just a key indicator of what we're
8 doing. Jai, you want to talk a little more?

9 CO-CHIEF PATEL: Yeah. I mean, I think
10 what I would add to Demetrius' comments is, you know,
11 the MTA is always looking for operating efficiencies.
12 We had 400 million dollars of efficiencies in 2024
13 that we achieved. We pushed the envelope and
14 challenged the agencies to come up with a higher
15 number this year, and we incorporated 500 million
16 into our budget this year for operating efficiencies,
17 and we're working with each of the operating agencies
18 to continue to examine the budgets and see where we
19 can be a little bit more efficient, find better and
20 cheaper ways of doing things in the organization so
21 we will continue that as an operation.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
23 Part of the '25 to '29 Capital Plan is funded with 14
24 billion dollars in federal funding. With the recent
25

2 priority shift by the Presidential Administration,
3 how is the MTA making sure these funds are secured?

4 CHIEF MCCARTHY: I'll jump in, Chair. You
5 know, good question. It's obviously front of mind for
6 us and so many New Yorkers. The good news is that the
7 way federal funding comes through is generally
8 through a formula. So, you know, we are such a large
9 percentage of transit in the United States. We move
10 more people than anyone else, certainly, and probably
11 over 40 percent. We don't get nearly as much funding.
12 There's a lot of money going to Washington. It
13 doesn't make its way back. So, we're already at a
14 disadvantage. We'll fight like hell to make sure that
15 we get the federal formula money. The discretionary
16 grants is where we're most concerned. We're watching
17 that very closely. These are sort of funds that go to
18 projects that are identified that would be eligible
19 for certain discretionary funds so that's in that 14
20 billion, but the big chunk is formula money so, if
21 that gets reduced, it's getting reduced elsewhere.
22 We're going to watch that very closely to make sure
23 that those dollars come back to New York.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Now, the
25 President had indicated that I think the MTA has

2 until tonight to release crime data or it risks
3 losing some funding. Will the MTA be releasing that
4 data?

5 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah. There was a letter
6 sent yesterday night to the MTA asking for data by
7 March 31st. We'll certainly get that to the
8 Department of Transportation before that date.
9 Fortunately, the Members may have been made aware
10 that we have really become the gold standard of
11 public information. We get that from advocate groups
12 that have in the recent past been critical of the
13 MTA. Now, we're sort of leading the league in getting
14 information up on websites and available to the
15 public so that they can scrutinize it and figure it
16 out. That information that the federal government's
17 asking for, little secret, it's already out there in
18 the public so we'll put it together for them and make
19 sure they have it in a handy way so that they can
20 learn. But we have a ton of information on public
21 safety, sort of the work that we've done to reduce
22 crime. We're down 40 percent compared to the same
23 first two months of 2020, right before COVID,
24 compared to the first two months of this year, we're

2 down 40 percent so there's a lot, there's a story to
3 tell and we look forward to telling them.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
5 that. Just going back to one of your previous answers
6 to me, the gap is over 30 billion dollars. Do you
7 envision that the State will make that up in the
8 State budget that they're working on right now?

9 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah, you're correct.
10 It's over 30 billion. And yes, that would be the
11 amount identified that is not yet identified. So, as
12 I was discussing earlier, there will be various ways
13 where that gap can be filled, but that is the number,
14 that's the target number in order to make that 68.4-
15 billion-dollar plan whole.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And when the
17 MTA initially proposed and submitted the capital plan
18 to the CPRB, what was the thought behind submitting a
19 budget with such a huge unfunded gap, and what was
20 your expectation on funding the 33.4-billion-dollar
21 gap?

22 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, I think they're
23 two separate issues, right? The transit system needs
24 work in order to continue running, right? So, the
25 capital plan...

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But that's
3 what congestion pricing is working on.

4 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Well, that congestion
5 pricing was 2020 to 2024.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: All right.

7 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: The capital plan took
8 into consideration the state of the current assets
9 with the system and said over the next five years,
10 2025 to 2029, what do we need in order to make sure
11 that the system doesn't fall apart? It takes into
12 consideration 90 percent of the capital plan is just
13 made on state of good repair, substations, signals,
14 tracks, power, cars. It is literally the stuff that
15 you need to run our system. That's it. So, if the
16 first portion is like what is the need, what do you
17 need to do in order to keep this system running
18 safely, the second portion is like, what does it cost
19 to do that? And I think what John has already said is
20 that portion of the funding, we ourselves are asking
21 for that to be delivered.

22 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah. I'll just add, what
23 Demetrius just went through was like, this was a
24 process that the most, when you figure out sending
25 sort of the bill, it's like the first thing is we

2 were strictly, we were told, and this is legislation
3 that said, do a 20-year needs. It didn't say, what
4 can you pay for, where's the money. It said, tell us
5 what is needed. So, we're following the law. We did
6 that. And then what we did was we went out to third-
7 party validators. JPMorgan Chase did a study on what
8 should someone, an entity of this size, be spending
9 to keep that investment up and running, and then we
10 said, what can we do. A lot of times, you can't have
11 outages throughout the city where you're not running
12 on certain lines because you want to do all the work
13 so you can't do all the work at the same time. Or
14 what's available in the construction industry, how
15 much work can they do? So, we factored that in and
16 then came up with this. And this is the cost
17 associated with it, but we followed the process, and
18 now the process takes us to Albany in conversations
19 about how it's funded. But when you have a 1.5-
20 trillion-dollar asset, it's going to cost money to
21 keep that up and running. And we're being serious
22 about the cost. We're being realistic. But now is the
23 time where we have to figure out, with Albany, how to
24 fund that, and that's going to happen over the next
25 couple weeks.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The Governor's
3 Budget Director has admitted that fees and taxes
4 would be needed to address the 33.4-billion-dollar
5 gap in the MTA's 2025-2029 capital plan. It has been
6 widely reported in the press that the Governor is
7 considering an increase of the payroll mobility tax.
8 In your own estimate, how much higher does the PMT
9 need to be increased in order to cover the 33.4-
10 billion-dollar gap?

11 CO-CHIEF PATEL: Sure. As we've been
12 saying, we're agnostic to the revenue source. But to
13 answer your question about PMT, I think the last
14 increase that we did for the operating budget, we did
15 a 26 basis points which generates about 1.1 billion
16 dollars of revenue. We could bond against that and
17 generate between 15 and 20 billion dollars, maybe a
18 little less than the 20, to give you an idea of the
19 size.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
21 Additionally, the proposed State executive budget
22 includes a requirement for the City to contribute 3
23 billion towards the MTA's 2025-2029 capital plan.
24 With the City providing 400 million dollars of that
25 total in State Fiscal 2026, can you give the

2 Committee a preview of how the MTA is prioritizing
3 programs within the new capital plan?

4 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yes. I'll hand it over to
5 Demetrius, but real quickly, Chair, that would be
6 equal to the dollar amount that was in the '20 to '24
7 program so it doesn't quite keep up with inflation,
8 but that would go towards the New York City transit
9 portion of the capital program, which is around 80
10 percent of the overall program. That is filled with
11 accessibility projects, modern re-signaling projects,
12 and a ton of state of good repair. Demetrius, that's
13 the type of work that's prioritized in this program,
14 right?

15 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Yeah, I mean a huge
16 increase in substation work. Again, car replacement.
17 We have cars that are 50 years old that we're
18 replacing on Staten Island, for example, as part of
19 the current capital plan. There's just a lot of work
20 that the system itself has. Replacement of signals.
21 Everyone always talks about the signal system. You
22 guys are upgrading your signal system, but the
23 reality is the current signal system is 60 years old.
24 You don't upgrade with the same thing that you
25 currently have. You don't replace with the same

2 thing. You want to look for what's new. My goal is to
3 be able to provide better service than we're doing
4 right now. The only way you could do that is to use
5 new technology. The new technology has a cost tied to
6 it. Our capital plan is really just strongly based on
7 what is the need to provide for service today better
8 than what it was yesterday.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do you think
10 that it should be increased?

11 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: This has been a long
12 process. A lot of coordination with the State. The
13 number that we landed at is the number that is
14 determined to be the right number for this capital
15 program. If we had more money, I'm sure there's
16 absolutely more assets that could be replaced at the
17 MTA, but this is the number that's determined for
18 right now for our capital plan.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do you think
20 that the City's contribution should be increased?

21 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: I think we're
22 agnostic on the contribution itself. We just want the
23 funding to be able to run the best transportation
24 system possible.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What can we
3 expect the capital plan to include with respect to
4 both the IBX and the 2nd Avenue Subway?

5 CHIEF MCCARTHY: In the '25 to '29
6 program, there is, I believe it's 2.7 billion dollars
7 dedicated to the Interborough Express, the IBX, and
8 the 2nd Avenue Subway is funded in the prior two
9 capital programs. I know it's a little confusing, but
10 the amount of time it takes to go through the NEPA
11 process, you have to start these very early, identify
12 funding so that you can get those full funding grant
13 agreements from the federal government. The money is
14 parked in the '15 to '19 program and the '20 to '24
15 program. The program that we're talking about that's
16 in Albany right now doesn't have to do with the 2nd
17 Avenue Subway, but there is funding for the IBX. It
18 gets that project going, which is, you know, we're
19 very excited about that project. We think it's a huge
20 benefit for Brooklyn-Queens connection so there is
21 funding in that.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How will the
23 Governor's Executive Budget proposals for
24 implementation studies related to the IBX and 2nd
25

2 Avenue Subway be used to inform the capital planning
3 and funding?

4 CHIEF MCCARTHY: So, I think, Chair,
5 you're getting at that there was money that was put
6 in the last budget that sort of allowed the IBX to
7 move forward before it was funded in the funding that
8 we're anticipating in the '25 to '29 program, so that
9 dollar amount is going to let us get a general
10 engineering contract out there. It's out in the
11 street right now. It's in procurement. Whatever, as
12 that advances, they will study the line, figure out
13 what needs to be done, what are the costs associated
14 with doing the entire project, start the federal
15 environmental review process, and move that forward.
16 So that's where that money will go.

17 As far as the 2nd Avenue Subway, I
18 believe, as I said, 2nd Avenue Subway Phase 2 is
19 funded. This is for looking at what would be possible
20 if one were to extend that 2nd Avenue Subway, the Q
21 train, west over to the, you know, you can hit the AC
22 and the 1 train and the 23 so that would be a study
23 to see if that's even feasible.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
25 going to now yield to Council Member Louis.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair,
3 and thank you, Chairman, for being here today with
4 your team.

5 I have four questions. This one is
6 regarding Newkirk Plaza Pedestrian. Newkirk Plaza,
7 the Pedestrian Plaza, I've been waiting for over a
8 year for an update from MTA regarding Newkirk Plaza
9 in support to beautifying the station house. I wanted
10 to know if I could get a response today when we will
11 receive an update so we can allocate capital funding
12 to improve that corridor, and if the project remains
13 stagnant, will MTA commit to investing capital funds
14 in FY26 to beautify the station house or allow DOT to
15 oversee the site?

16 My next question is in regards to IBX. My
17 constituents have raised numerous concerns about the
18 Interborough Express, yet outreach to communities
19 along the corridor have been minimal. I wanted to
20 know how much funding does the MTA anticipate
21 allocating for direct outreach to affected
22 homeowners, and how much has the MTA budgeted for
23 eminent domain along the route, and what will be the
24 process for engaging homeowners whose properties may
25 be impacting.

2 My third question is regarding automated
3 ticketing enforcement by buses. Since the rollout of
4 automated ticketing enforcement on buses last year,
5 there's been a lack of outreach to drivers resulting
6 in significant confusion. Many faith-based
7 institutions, particularly churches in my district,
8 previously received discretionary parking enforcement
9 on days of worship. With automated enforcement,
10 congregants are now receiving tickets that are making
11 attending religious services incredibly difficult so
12 I wanted to know how much funding has the MTA
13 invested in outreach to inform the program?

14 And my last question is in regards to the
15 Kings Highway Pedestrian Plaza and Wayfinder machine
16 placement. I've been in constant discussion with MTA
17 regarding the Kings Highway Pedestrian Plaza at Troy
18 and Avenue K. It's causing major impacts on a
19 property, and wanted to know why was this location
20 chosen despite its proximity close to the residents?
21 And typically, these machines are positioned in front
22 of bus shelters, in particular, low-foot traffic
23 neighborhood. What justification does the MTA have
24 for placing this machine in front of this property,

2 and how does it align with the budgetary efficiency
3 for the B82 route?

4 Because I have limited time, I usually
5 just do like all the questions at one time, but the
6 first one was in regards to New Kirk Plaza, the
7 second Interboro Express, the third was automated
8 ticketing enforcement, last, pedestrian plaza, Kings
9 Highway.

10 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: I'm positive I'm not
11 going to get a full answer for all of those.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Well, we could talk
13 about it afterward, but whatever you can do now, I
14 appreciate it.

15 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: The first item we are
16 aware of, we're currently working with DOT to get an
17 agreement on it, so I can't give you a definitive
18 today, but just know it is top of mind on one of the
19 items that we're trying to negotiate with DOT. Happy
20 to take a walk out there with you anytime, either
21 there or to King's Highway, if that would be helpful.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: The sooner, the
23 better. The previous President did take a walk with
24 us, and we're still experiencing the same issues, and
25 I think these things are quick fixes that we can work

2 on together, or we could give it over to DOT
3 regarding Newkirk Plaza if MTA doesn't have the
4 capacity. But regarding Kings Highway, a Wayfinder
5 machine in front of a resident, I think is definitely
6 unacceptable if there's a way around that. MTA has
7 been responsive, but we need fast action to
8 reposition or to move it.

9 But regarding Interboro Express, and I'm
10 sure maybe the Chairwoman has more questions about
11 this, but it would be good to know, being that our
12 District is cited as a potential location, we're
13 hearing eminent domain a lot, but none of our State
14 Representatives has provided any information so
15 everybody's depending on me so I'm depending on you.

16 CHIEF MCCARTHY: I can jump in on that. So
17 we've done dozens of outreach events, and we have
18 more planned. On the 27th of this month, we'll be in
19 Ridgewood. On the 3rd, we're going to be at South
20 Shore High School in Canarsie. And then we have a
21 couple more, Borough Park later in the month. And
22 then in May, Jackson Heights so it's a big area, but
23 we're going to be out there a lot. We already have,
24 and will continue to be. And any questions, we have a
25 great team working on this.

2 It's very early in the process so anybody
3 who's talking about eminent domain, they're way ahead
4 of themselves. There's no way that we would have
5 known.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Just know it's
7 coming from your team.

8 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah, yeah. No, no, no.
9 It's to let people know that this is something we'll
10 have to look at. We don't have that specific yet. But
11 we will, the law on eminent domain is very strict. We
12 follow it very closely so always know that we will
13 follow the law, make sure anything involving that and
14 your office will be made aware of as well so we have
15 a lot of good meetings coming up so we'll make sure
16 you...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: You and I will work
18 closely on this.

19 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And the last
21 question is regarding automated ticketing
22 enforcement.

23 I'm sorry, Council Member, we're going to
24 have to come back for round two. We're trying to keep
25 it tight today.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: No problem.

3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

4 Council Member Narcisse.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. Good
6 morning, Chair, and good morning to be here to answer
7 this question.

8 My first question is the American with
9 Disabilities Act was passed in 1990, nearly 35 years
10 ago, and it's long overdue that the MTA move towards
11 providing a 100 percent accessible transit system for
12 all New Yorkers. What is the current progress toward
13 meeting the stated 95 percent by 2055 subway
14 accessibility goals? What is the average cost to
15 install an elevator or escalator in a subway station?
16 And for Avenue L line, ever since Sandy, weekend's
17 been a problem, and I'm going to say even my own
18 children coming to visit me having problem because
19 they cannot get to me because of the transportation
20 desert that we're located so what phase are we are
21 now?

22 And another question that I just would
23 hear, give me, spare me sometimes because I wanted to
24 ask that one. In the New York City Comptroller audit,
25 this week is revealed that nearly one in four

2 wheelchair user on Express Buses could not board due
3 to wheelchair lift issues or drivers failing to stop.
4 What immediate action is the MTA taking to ensure all
5 Express Bus drivers are properly trained and held
6 accountable for ADA compliance? The audit highlights
7 significant service reliability issues with 70
8 percent of survey riders reporting service
9 cancellations and some waiting over hour for the next
10 bus. What specific measures is the MTA implementing
11 in the upcoming budget to address service gaps and
12 ensure Express Buses adhere to the schedule,
13 particularly for disabled riders who rely on this
14 route?

15 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Okay. Thank you for
16 that. I appreciate it. So for an accessibility, I
17 think the reality is the capital plan is really the
18 solution to that. Right now we have 150 stations that
19 are ADA accessible. In the 2020 to 2024 plan, we had
20 68 stations additional and, for the 2025 to 2029
21 plan, which is what we're talking about, there's 60
22 additional locations., So that would bring the system
23 as a whole, again, the largest transportation network
24 in North America, to be 54 percent of its stations as
25 ADA accessible, which is like a huge place. It's more

2 than what we've done over the last several capital
3 programs. It's huge, and so it shows our interest,
4 our desire to make our system more accessible. We are
5 fully supportive of you and the City's commitment to
6 helping us get there. You know, it really does mean
7 that we have to support the capital program in order
8 to make progress on it. You know, what we've done on
9 the operating side is make sure that those locations,
10 which are accessible are functioning. So, our
11 elevator and escalator availability has been at like
12 98 percent because we've invested resources to make
13 sure that the current system that we have running
14 runs well. Adding new locations, we all for it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: What is the cost
16 for elevator or escalator?

17 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: What's the cost? I'm
18 sorry.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah. What's the
20 cost? What's the average cost? You don't have to be
21 specific. What's the average cost to put an elevator
22 for accessibility?

23 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Sure. I can jump in on
24 that. So, the way we do an elevator package, we
25 package it with other work at the station. The

2 neighborhood of the cost is around 60 to 80 million
3 to go in there, do elevators. It's lower than it was
4 before. We've sort of come up with some really new,
5 innovative ways of building, including taking some of
6 the stations that are the elevated stations, taking
7 the elevator directly to the platform. It used to be
8 that we'd build an extra elevator, take you to the
9 mezzanine and then send you over to the, to the
10 different sides and then go up. And say, if you're
11 someone who's using a wheelchair or, or it depends on
12 that elevator, you get to that mezzanine and one of
13 them is not working, that's no fun. So it's doing two
14 things. It's customer friendly, and it's also saving
15 us money. So, there's always outliers. Some are less
16 expensive and some are more expensive, but that's
17 generally the neighborhood. The good news is it's
18 lower than it was. And we're cranking (TIMER CHIME)
19 these out at four and a half times what we used to do
20 five, six years ago.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

22 We'll next hear from the Council Member Banks.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I guess my time...

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you, Madam
3 Chair, and to the panelists. First of all, good
4 morning.

5 Wanted just to get an update on the 3
6 train, the elevator installation. Can you provide an
7 updated timeline for the installation of the
8 elevators at the Ashford Street train station or New
9 Lot Street train station as well as are there any
10 plans or any talks about the expansion of the 3 line
11 into the Southernmost part of my District, which is a
12 transportation desert. Are there any talks behind
13 that? Well, maybe you could answer that and then we
14 can talk about congestion pricing.

15 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So I'm not familiar
16 with the update. I know we did start the work on the
17 elevators at New Lot, but I could certainly follow up
18 with you on the progress.

19 The second thing you mentioned was,
20 sorry...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Expansion (CROSS-
22 TALK)

23 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: New line expansion.
24 I'll tell you, I used to be a line manager on the 3
25 line.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay.

3 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: And so I could tell
4 you my personal feeling is I would love for the
5 expansion to go. We do have some additional projects
6 that are going on that are being considered for the
7 current capital program that would be impacting the
8 area over there. We have a new shop that's going to
9 be built in order to take on the new cars. We're
10 going to be looking at putting all new cars on the 2,
11 3, 4, 5, and, you know, introducing in the future
12 CBTC for those lines. In order to do so, you have to
13 have a new shop. The shop there is ancient and, you
14 know, in the long-term, I don't know the exact...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Timeframe.

16 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: You know, timeframe,
17 for anything beyond that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay. I wanted to
19 say something about congestion pricing, but I'll
20 actually go to fare evasion. We know that the new
21 apparatus that has been put in place by the MTA with
22 the flaps, and then I think the extra, how effective
23 have they been in stopping fare evasions? What's the
24 cost? I know it's been exploited on social media of
25 how easy it is to breach them. And I heard earlier on

2 that there was a decrease in fare evasions. So, I
3 just want to, you know, dive a little deeper into
4 that to see how those particular apparatuses that put
5 in place are working and what was the cost of putting
6 that in place?

7 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Sure. So, obviously
8 the solution is new turnstiles, right, but that's a
9 very, very expensive solution. The next capital
10 program includes a lot of money in investing into new
11 fare gates, but we didn't want to sit and rest on our
12 laurels while that comes along so we said what can we
13 do now that can reduce the number of fare evasion, so
14 we focused (TIMER CHIME) on several different types
15 of fare evasion. We focused on those that go in
16 through the gate, those who jump the turnstiles,
17 those who back cock against the turnstiles, and those
18 who step over. We did interventions for each of them,
19 a sleeve to stop people who step over. We put a
20 mechanical device to prevent those from back cocking.
21 And then we did fins to prevent those who normally
22 jump over device. And we have gate guards that are at
23 the locations to prevent those who go through the
24 gate.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: So those are
3 physical bodies that are there?

4 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Yes. In addition to
5 delayed egress, which is a timing mechanism for those
6 who actually don't need to actually use the gate on a
7 regular basis. So I say that to say, we use that at
8 different locations to trial out, to see if that
9 mechanism reduces that type of fare evasion. Now, the
10 goal is to take all of those interventions and roll
11 them out to single individual areas. So if you can
12 reduce those four things at one location, fare
13 evasion continues to go down. So now we have three
14 locations system-wide that we just rolled out, which
15 have all of those interventions at them. But as a
16 whole, even before we got there, each of those
17 interventions have resulted in the subways alone in a
18 26 percent reduction in fare evasion, 26 percent
19 right off the bat. Are we done? Absolutely not. But,
20 you know, I'm really confident that with each of
21 these interventions being put out, there are always
22 going to be people who are like hardcore fare
23 evaders, but we will prevent those individuals who
24 have the money, have that coffee in the hand, and it
25 was just jumping it as an opportunity to jump it.

2 They normally would not be the fare evader for
3 anything else. They would pay for every single avenue
4 that they can. But in this instance, they're just
5 opportunistic. It'll stop those individuals.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
7 Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And the cost.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: The course, the
11 cost.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Did you get
13 all your questions answered, Council Member?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: I'll come back in a
15 second round.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, but the
17 questions that you asked, were all of them answered?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: The cost. I just
19 need the cost as to the intervention. The flap and..

20 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, I can get you the
21 exact cost, but the work itself is being done in-
22 house so it's a lot cheaper than if we had gone with
23 a contractor to do all the work.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you, Madam
25 Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

3 Next, we'll hear from Council Member Rivera.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Good morning. Hi.

5 Thank you for 28 years of service. And I appreciate

6 what you said. We're only as good as our last

7 commute. I take transit every day. I had a really

8 good commute this morning for what it's worth. I take

9 the 6. I feel safe. I hear the subway surfing PSAs,

10 and I know that you really, really care about that

11 issue and that's something that's very hard to

12 address.

13 I see the half-moon turnstiles at Brooklyn

14 Bridge so I see what you're trying to do. I know

15 you're using education. You mentioned stronger

16 physical barriers and plenty of enforcement until you

17 can replace existing barriers. What is a realistic

18 timeline on that replacement? What can we expect? Are

19 there things that we've learned from other cities?

20 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So I'll say, first

21 off, we don't want to fail here, right? So it's

22 really important for us to get this right so first we

23 had a RFP just to determine what the next fare gate

24 should look like. What state of the art for New York,

25 not for some, you know, town and some small place

2 where no one evades the fare. We need a specific
3 intervention for here in New York. By the end of the
4 year, we committed to rolling out 20 locations with
5 new gates, and so I think that's what you'll see in
6 the near-term. And the information that we get from
7 rolling out those 20 gates will be able to fuel what
8 we use for the capital plan and our expenditures tied
9 to it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. Your
11 paratransit numbers are impressive. I know elevator
12 installation is brought up constantly and I know how
13 costly it is, but I do have to ask about a local
14 station that's very, very busy and important to my
15 District. Is there a timeline for installing an
16 elevator or ADA accessible infrastructure at Delancey
17 Essex? That's my home station.

18 PRESIDENT CRICLOW: I do not have that
19 information now, but I will get it to you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. We actually
21 had a hearing on subway surfing, and I know you said
22 arrests are up because of enforcement. What's the
23 typical penalty for someone who stopped for subway
24 surfing, and can you give us an idea of the

2 demographic only because I know the young people are,
3 you know, we've seen the articles in the news.

4 PRESIDENT CRICHLLOW: So, you know, first
5 off, I have a 13-year-old, and so this is like near
6 and dear to me. I can't imagine my child, we're not
7 talking about adults, my child being on the top of a
8 train, it scares me to death, I would wring their
9 neck. No question. It's a serious problem, something
10 that we take very, very seriously. I will turn it
11 over to Shanifah to talk about some of the efforts
12 that we've done to be able to close the loop on this.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: And only because
14 I'm out of time, and I was going to ask you about
15 fare evasion on the bus, and how do you stop that
16 without any gate guards, considering how vulnerable
17 the drivers are. But have you considered community
18 service as a penalty for subway surfing, only because
19 I've had several conversations with a mom from my
20 District whose son died, and she thought maybe that's
21 another way to get them to understand and be
22 connected with the system in a real way?

23 CHIEF RIEARA: I love that recommendation.
24 I mean, and as you know, as Demetrius mentioned,
25 these are young kids, kids as young as 11, you know,

2 sometimes even, you know, the age of even younger.

3 So, you know, oftentimes these kids are returned to

4 their family and working with, you know, NYPD, we are

5 talking, exploring even engaging non-profit groups to

6 see how we can do an entire wraparound approach to

7 ensure that these kids find other means, you know,

8 for fun and engagement versus riding on the subway.

9 And we are, you know, working with Demetrius' team

10 and other members of the MTA engaging New York City

11 Public Schools as well, and we are working on rolling

12 out a new subway surfing campaign in conjunction,

13 again, with a bunch of high school students.

14 CHIEF MCCARTHY: I just don't want to

15 leave one question unanswered on Delancey. So, we're

16 very close. We're working with EDC on some real

17 estate issues so we'll be in contact with you because

18 hopefully we'll have good news very soon.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for

20 that. I'm going to return to Council Member Louis for

21 round two and Council Member Narcisse follows Council

22 Member Lewis for round two as well.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair. I

24 just wanted a quick response regarding the automated

25

2 ticket enforcement program and how we all could work
3 together to address that.

4 PRESIDENT CRICLOW: Right. So, you know,
5 I happened to go to the church and hear directly from
6 the pastor and the constituents that were there
7 firsthand what their issues were. You know, it became
8 quickly evident that, you know, at the MTA, we needed
9 to partner more with DOT in notifying the community
10 of these things. And so, you know, in addition to
11 partnering with the DOT to make sure that folks are
12 known, we at the MTA also started our own initiative
13 to start notifying different locations when we will
14 be rolling out. Again, in the past, that had been in
15 the DOT function because it generally has to do with
16 the streets and abiding by the rules of the streets.
17 But, you know, the MTA has already started a major
18 campaign starting to notify, especially at the routes
19 coming up, faith organizations and communities of
20 impending changes.

21 CHIEF RIEARA: But I just want to also to
22 add from a customer perspective, we are trying to
23 balance that because at the core, our bus riders and
24 customers want buses to go faster. And, you know,
25 with the legislation that we gathered, it allows us

2 to do that, but there is an opportunity for more
3 community engagement and letting people know around,
4 you know, along the route lines that, you know, this
5 is enforcement is happening. But ultimately, we need
6 to for buses to go faster.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And
9 I apologize for earlier. Council Member Narcisse.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you,
11 Chair. And thank you, Mr. Crichlow, for being here
12 and your team. I want to know what phase are we
13 actually in for the L line and when that work
14 actually going to be completed? The two for the to
15 get to L line to the last stop.

16 PRESIDENT CRICHLLOW: So, I am not aware of
17 the work we're talking about. I'm happy to look at
18 the specific outage.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Because like I
20 said, on weekend, we don't have no train most of the
21 time. And in weekdays, people are complaining
22 sometimes because we're not having a regular service
23 for the L train, and that's the only way out for us
24 in that end of the community, the Canarsie part.
25 We've been suffering for a long time. Ever since

2 Sandy, they say, yeah, we're still working. Whenever
3 we ask questions, we're still working on things so
4 what are the things that we're working on? Ever since
5 Sandy, that's how long we've been working on., So I
6 want to know why we're not having trains on weekend.

7 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So I'll definitely
8 talk to the team about it and get back to you. I will
9 say that the Canarsie is probably one of our best
10 lines. I mean, it's... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah, but on
12 weekends, it's not.

13 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: It's like fantastic.
14 On-time performance for the L line is like 90
15 percent, and that's on headways of, you know, like 90
16 seconds during the rush hour. It's like some
17 ridiculous amount of service. But I totally get your
18 point on the weekends. I'll take a look. I know we
19 did look at making sure that the shuttle buses, when
20 there are outages, are robust enough to be able to
21 handle the ridership, but I will look at the
22 frequency of the outages and get back to you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yes, thank you.
24 And Access-A-Ride. We know that they're delaying a
25 lot. A lot of people have been delayed to over 250

2 from 300 for Staten Island in Manhattan. What is the
3 MTA is doing to kind of ensure those riders are still
4 able to like if... my question is MTA has to go their
5 way so what is the plan for to pick up for those
6 riders, especially those elderlies that cannot
7 actually have transportation to from one point?

8 PRESIDENT CRICLOW: So I appreciate it. I
9 mean, our Access-A-Ride program, again, is that is
10 like no other. We have a requirement at this point
11 for our vendors who deliver Access-A-Ride service to
12 provide service within... we hold them to metrics to
13 say how many times do you arrive at your location
14 within 20 minutes of your scheduled arrival? How many
15 times do you arrive within 30 minutes of your
16 schedule? Those are the targets that we set for them.
17 You know, right now, across the boroughs, inclusive
18 of Staten Island, 92 percent of our trips, we talked
19 about all those millions of trips, we do 92 percent
20 of the trips are within 20 minutes of schedule.
21 (TIMER CHIME) That's individual trips for individual
22 people. 96 percent are within 30 percent of their
23 scheduled time. So, you know, we also hold the
24 contractors to no-shows like with every instance. And
25 we have less than one for every 1,000 trips of no-

2 shows to the customers. So, when you talk about like
3 being able to provide service for Access-A-Ride
4 customers, I'm like fully confident that we can
5 sustain the ridership. But I'm happy that the City
6 has committed to the resources necessary going
7 forward to make sure we continue to provide that
8 great service to our customers.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Did
11 you get your question answered fully, Council Member
12 Narcisse? You good?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yes, I did.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Council Member
16 Restler?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
18 much, Chair Brooks-Powers. I really appreciate it.
19 It's good to see you, President Crichlow. I think
20 it's a wonderful thing that we have somebody who's
21 worked their way up through the MTA system and is now
22 leading New York City Transit, and I'm really pleased
23 by your leadership to date.

24 There are a few items I wanted to ask you
25 about today. Firstly, I know we're approaching the

2 President's deadline on congestion pricing, but I am
3 grateful, grateful, grateful that the Governor and
4 CEO Lieber have committed that we're going to keep
5 the cameras on until a judge tells us otherwise, and
6 I hope that day never comes. Can you just share with
7 us any top line updates on improvements in bus speeds
8 in the congestion zone and for the express buses
9 coming in and out?

10 PRESIDENT CRICLOW: Sure, sure. I started
11 out with my testimony talking about the fact that
12 we've had huge, huge improvements in our bus service.
13 Some of our routes have increased substantially. Just
14 give me one second.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm just on the
16 clock so if we could just do quick answers, that'd be
17 great.

18 PRESIDENT CRICLOW: All right. No
19 problem. We've had some bus routes, every single
20 crossing that gets into Manhattan has seen an
21 improvement, some lines as much as seven to 10
22 minutes of improved speeds. And then within the City
23 itself, we're seeing easily several buses are all
24 operating faster than what they had scheduled, so
25 much so that we have a pilot now to take the

2 scheduled bus headways that you currently have for
3 the buses and allow them to go straight to their
4 destination because what was happening is they had so
5 much time built in their schedules and now there's no
6 traffic, so the buses themselves would come, stop at
7 a station and have to wait for their timing point and
8 then move, and we're removing those timing points on
9 seven select bus lines right now to pilot it out.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, that's
11 exciting that it sounds like there may be
12 opportunities for us to increase service as a result
13 of more efficient travel times around the city for
14 buses so that there's even more frequent, reliable
15 and efficient service for riders. I've talked to
16 people taking Express Buses to Southern Brooklyn and
17 Staten Island who've never commuted in so fast so
18 that is a beautiful, beautiful thing. I hope that
19 you're having active conversations with the
20 Department of Transportation about how we can expand
21 more busways, more Express Bus service and actually
22 achieve some of the goals in the Master Streets Plan
23 and that you all are committed to making the
24 necessary investments on the MTA side. Is that a
25 priority for you?

2 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: I mean, I want to run
3 the best bus system possible and bus lanes are the
4 way to get there.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 100 percent. We
6 have an opportunity to rethink our streetscape in
7 this moment before we give it up to other uses with
8 the benefits of congestion pricing around us so it
9 would be very helpful, I think, for us to be
10 immediately developing those plans if they're not
11 already in place. I know that the other side of this
12 building is a mess. But I was very moved, I was very
13 impressed by the Vital City report that came out
14 recently about subway safety, and (TIMER CHIME) I
15 thought in particular the data that we've seen a
16 major reduction in robberies, but an increase in
17 assaults and that we're seeing a shifting pattern in
18 the type of crime that exists in the subway informs
19 that we need new approaches to actually keep riders
20 safe. And so we had a great walkthrough with
21 leadership from the MTA and I should note Katerina
22 from your Government Affairs Team has been excellent
23 so I really want to thank her and you for her
24 dedication to working with our office. But we just
25 did a walkthrough at Clark Street and High Street,

2 which are two stations where we've had ongoing safety
3 issues during my three years in the City Council. How
4 are the shifting patterns of when crime is happening
5 and the types of crime that's happening in the
6 subways, how is that shifting your approach to
7 ensuring that we're keeping riders safe? And just to
8 note the other piece that I thought was notable was
9 20 percent higher, I believe, rates of crime
10 happening overnight than happening during daytime
11 hours so we know there are certain times of day,
12 there's certain types of crime that we're seeing. You
13 obviously can't have a police officer on every
14 subway, even though I guess the Governor's trying.
15 That's not going to work in a sustainable way. What
16 can we do to better instill safety, confidence in the
17 safety for riders in our system?

18 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, I will say that
19 Chief Gulotta has been an amazing partner on this. He
20 is without question concerned about trying to change
21 not just what is actually happening in the numbers,
22 but also the perception of the subway system being a
23 place where it's ridden with crime. So, first thing
24 is really looking at the data and seeing where the
25 crime's mentioned. You mentioned yourself the issues

2 happening on the overnight. So Gulotta has been
3 committed, and literally as recent as last week, we
4 talked about their program of staffing with cops on
5 every train on the overnight period, where the
6 largest number of crimes are happening. It's really
7 targeting the areas and the locations where those
8 crimes happen so I think that's really the trend that
9 they've been looking at. Our employees have been
10 saying that they are seeing the cops out there on the
11 overnight, which has been extremely strengthening for
12 them, because they're in the same situation as
13 customers. They don't want to be assaulted. We want
14 the support of the police, and getting feedback from
15 our employees that they are seeing cops is huge for
16 us.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah. I just
18 think...

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Sorry, Council
20 Member.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I got to wrap up.
22 On the subways, it's not as helpful as on the
23 platforms. On entrances, it's not as helpful as on
24 the platforms. That's where people need that extra
25 support and your input, and I just want to thank you

2 again for leadership on the G train, because I know
3 it was kind of a beneficiary of F train investments,
4 but it's making a big difference for our community so
5 thank you for that.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
7 Council Member, and happy birthday.

8 Next, we'll hear from Council Member
9 Brewer.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
11 much. First, I want to thank Alberto Roldan. He's a
12 rock star. I want to thank you very much.

13 At a meeting the other day with some
14 disabled riders, you probably know this, I didn't,
15 they said that the lights, unless they're LED, can
16 absolutely cause an epileptic attack or something
17 else. I just was wondering whether all the lights are
18 LED, going to be LED. I know we hear about the
19 elevators all the time, but I'm wondering about the
20 lights. I hadn't thought about it.

21 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, I'm not sure if
22 we're talking about in stations or...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Stations.

24 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Okay. So, we are
25 converting to LED. They are brighter. Customers are

2 telling us that when you come to a station where
3 we've installed LEDs, they feel safer because the
4 stations are brighter. We have not heard anything
5 about epileptic conditions with the current LEDs that
6 we're installing.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, the old
8 lights. The old lights, the ones that are not LED,
9 are the challenge.

10 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Okay.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So good thing, but
12 what's the timeframe for conversion?

13 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: I am not positive
14 offhand, but I will get that back to you. I could
15 tell you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So,
17 everybody wants LED.

18 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah. We just put out a
19 release. We're over 250 stations, so we're well on
20 our way. This has been a pretty aggressive work by
21 Demetrius and his transit team.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I would think that
23 you might want to get the disabled community to be
24 even more supportive because they really, really

2 would like that. Just another constituency that would
3 be helpful.

4 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. This is
6 minor, but not citywide, but the Columbus Avenue
7 subway escalator, now that's Deutsche Bank's problem,
8 probably not yours, but it's out of service. People
9 are quite upset. When it's a private concern, how do
10 you stay on top of them?

11 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, we started a
12 group of employees that are specifically responding
13 to consultants, contractors, private owners that have
14 their elevators and escalators. They were the worst
15 performing within our subway system, and just by
16 having more communication directly with them, we've
17 improved. I want to say it increased from in the 60s
18 to somewhere in the 80 percent. Still much more work
19 that needs to be done, but I think that communication
20 with them when we know outages are going on and
21 holding them to task to get them back in service has
22 been a very important part.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I don't know
24 the stats, but could you get back to me with that one
25 and how your team is staying on top of Deutsche Bank?

2 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Sure thing.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And then I
4 think people understand between you and Bowery,
5 trying to get people off the subway who are sleeping
6 or not supposed to be there, but what happens? In
7 other words, who follows up? Do they come back?
8 What's the status of people getting services? It's a
9 little bit hard for me because we don't know where
10 the people go when they leave. We don't know if they
11 get housed, etc. Is that (TIMER CHIME) something that
12 you follow? That's not your job?

13 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, we actually have
14 a team called the SCOUT team, which is going out to
15 different locations, and when they come into contact
16 with a person that has needs, they are able to
17 involuntarily commit the person to get the resources
18 they need. And I will tell you that there are folks
19 at headquarters, MTA headquarters, that do follow
20 through with how that person is doing, if they're
21 continuing to get the resources, and when they are
22 released from services. Again, it's something that we
23 monitor, but it's not something that we control.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I'd love to
25 go out with the SCOUT team at some time and be able

2 to follow, because I think the problem in general,
3 not just you, street, subway, okay, but we don't stay
4 housed, we don't like where we are, the whole bunch
5 of issues, and that's what I'm concerned about.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I can go out with
8 the SCOUT team?

9 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: Yeah, I think so.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

11 CHIEF MCCARTHY: We'll set that up for
12 you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
14 much.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
16 March 21st, President Trump deadline. What do you
17 expect will happen?

18 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: My expectation is
19 that we will continue to keep the cameras off unless
20 we are directed otherwise.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Off or on?

22 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: On. Excuse me.

23 Forgive me.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm about to
25 say we just broke news. Okay.

2 PRESIDENT CRICLOW: We will keep the
3 cameras on unless directed otherwise.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. And now
5 that I've asked the Committee questions, I'm going to
6 just ask three questions that are more related to my
7 District really quickly, and then we can close. So,
8 the Rockaway Beach branch in the MTA's 20-year Needs
9 Assessment for 2025 to 2044, MTA estimated that
10 reactivation of the Rockaway Beach branch would serve
11 39,200 daily riders, a 17 percent decrease when
12 compared to the MTA's 2019 ridership estimate of
13 47,000 daily riders. What does the MTA attribute this
14 change in ridership to? And then as a follow-up
15 question to that, the QueensLink recently received a
16 400,000-dollar grant from the U.S. Department of
17 Transportation. The funding comes from the
18 Reconnecting Communities pilot program and will be
19 used for community equity analysis. This will be a
20 detailed study of the project's environmental
21 impacts, economic potential, accessibility benefits,
22 and sustainability advantages. Has the MTA done a
23 similar study or assessment of the QueensLink? And
24 what would the MTA need to see from the community
25

2 equity analysis in order to green light the
3 QueensLink project in the future?

4 CHIEF MCCARTHY: So we've done studies on
5 the reactivation.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I remember you
7 said studies, but to this extent.

8 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah. At that level,
9 we've done a feasibility, but this might be a little
10 different. So, congratulations that they got the
11 grant so we'll certainly want to take a look at that
12 as it's developed more. But everything we do in terms
13 of investments are in the vacuum of all the projects
14 that are possible in this region, and we try to judge
15 them against each other and what are the benefits and
16 are those benefits worth the investment so the same
17 thing will apply here so we'll certainly take a look.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Long Island
19 Railroad reduced fare. First of all, thank you for
20 the reduced fare in light of the A train outage. So
21 due to the A train shutdown in the Rockaways for
22 infrastructure work, the MTA began offering reduced
23 fares for Long Island Railroad riders from Far
24 Rockaway to Manhattan or Brooklyn via Jamaica with a
25 reduced Long Island Railroad fare of 2.75 offered for

2 the duration of the shutdown. What data concerning
3 ridership on the railroad has the MTA observed during
4 this time, and would the MTA consider making the
5 reduced fare permanent? Why or why not?

6 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: I'm going to just say
7 we do have ridership before and we do have the
8 ridership after, you know, starting the work that we
9 did. I'll turn to John to answer the second half of
10 the question.

11 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah, sure. So, you know,
12 there's ridership, you know, people are able to use
13 it, and that's good. We do have with your support and
14 effort, we were able to apply the CityTicket, which
15 is an incredible discount, to the Long Island
16 Railroad for tickets that are purchased for folks who
17 are getting on and off at Far Rockaway. And because
18 remember, for about 20 years, they were treated as
19 part of Long Island, Nassau County, yet they weren't,
20 so finally, we were able to bring that in so they're
21 getting that 5-dollar charge for the off peaks, and
22 so it's a discount on during the peak as well. The
23 thing is, any application of a new fare, that is a
24 that's something that the MTA board has to look at.
25 It's not, you know, a staff level decision. But once

2 you start looking at that, that becomes the entire
3 city. We've made this discount available for all City
4 stations so I think we want to focus on things that
5 apply to all the stations as opposed to picking and
6 choosing winners and losers but, you know, look,
7 we're happy to get more customers on Long Island
8 Railroad. It's great that people are using it. The
9 big uptick was, though, when we went to CityTicket
10 Far Rockaway and got that big win.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And it was
12 another uptick with the outage of the A train.

13 CHIEF MCCARTHY: With the outage. (CROSS-
14 TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: (INAUDIBLE)

16 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah, yeah, I get it. I'm
17 just saying that that's a decision that would have to
18 be made by the board. But in fairness, it has to be
19 applied citywide, and I think the idea of going so
20 far below what the fare is. This is a very expensive
21 system to run at the Long Island Railroad level so at
22 some point, the board has to make tough decisions.
23 And, you know, I don't see that being a direction.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So you
25 (INAUDIBLE) citywide.

2 CHIEF MCCARTHY: I would say I think we
3 want to keep the CityTicket as low as possible
4 citywide. That's where we're focused.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Bus
6 speed on time performance. IBO conducted an analysis
7 of publicly available bus speed data for the New York
8 State Open Data and MTA to better understand the
9 current state of the New York City bus network. IBO's
10 analysis compared current bus speeds to pre-pandemic
11 speeds using January 2019 as a benchmark. Despite
12 multiple City and MTA plans to improve bus speeds
13 between January 2019 and December 2024, bus speeds
14 did not change substantially for any of the three
15 trip types. Average bus speeds across all 316 bus
16 routes during peak weekday hours is 7.6 miles per
17 hour, consistent with January 2019 speeds at 7.8
18 miles per hour. What is the MTA doing to improve bus
19 speeds throughout the city? And is the camera
20 enforcement of traffic violations working?

21 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: So, we mentioned two
22 things that we're doing our part to be able to
23 reduce, to improve upon bus speeds. One is making
24 sure we have as many bus lanes as possible. Having
25 bus lanes is fantastic. We've seen increase in speeds

2 every instance that we've installed bus lanes. And
3 then the second portion is our ACE system, which has
4 been extremely successful in how we do our work.
5 Being able to keep people out of the bus lane in
6 addition to keeping them out of bus stops and double
7 parking along the route has been huge for us. So, you
8 know, I could say that we're now up to 34 bus routes
9 that have the ACE system and, you know, the buses
10 themselves are increased on average 5 percent.
11 Sometimes some of the individual lines are up to 20
12 percent. It's safer, less accidents. So, we're very,
13 very confident that a continued rollout in ACE over
14 the next several years will have improvement to bus
15 speeds.

16 CHIEF RIEARA: And to add to that, I mean,
17 something that we are looking at holistically is,
18 again, the redesigning of our, looking at our entire
19 bus system. You know, the Bronx was completed,
20 Brooklyn, Queens, as you know, and was part of those
21 discussions, was completed with some really cool
22 enhancements with rush routes. You know, Brooklyn is
23 up next and the other boroughs. So, again, large
24 community engagement with lots of our customers and
25 looking how we can move our riders from point A to

2 point B faster and mitigating a lot of those
3 impediments that, you know, hamper bus operators from
4 navigating the city terrains.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
6 What has been the impact of congestion pricing on bus
7 speeds?

8 CHIEF RIEARA: Positive. It's within the
9 CBD, as President Crichlow has mentioned, buses are
10 moving around the bus routes at a quicker speed to
11 the point where schedules have to be adjusted to, you
12 know, to prevent any lag or waiting at bus stops.

13 CHIEF MCCARTHY: And I would just add,
14 we're seeing great numbers with Express Buses, not
15 only coming in from Brooklyn, Queens, coming through
16 the tunnel so they're picking up a lot in the
17 tunnels. There's just lower numbers there. Also, from
18 Staten Island, we have buses that go through New
19 Jersey so we know that those buses are picking up a
20 lot of speed. So, we think New Jersey Transit's
21 probably experiencing the same thing. And again, not
22 your issue, but like even Rockland and Orange, we're
23 hearing from the bus coach operators, and they're
24 saying, yeah, buses are moving quickly. They're

2 actually getting more customers, and people are
3 happy.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How does the
5 MTA coordinate with DOT for the Q5 and Q85 bus lanes?
6 Can you share with me the average speeds of those two
7 routes?

8 PRESIDENT CRICHLow: I don't have the
9 average speeds of the route. I can tell you that we
10 do work with DOT to roll out bus lanes, and we give
11 them the locations where we see the most congestion,
12 where it would be the most benefit to riders to be
13 able to roll them out. So, I could get more
14 information to you specifically to what the ridership
15 is like.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
17 Okay, I have a few more questions. I'll send them in
18 writing because we want to get to DOT, but I thank
19 you for your testimony today.

20 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Thank you, Chair.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Settle down, and we're
22 about to begin.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Thank you all.

24 Our next panel will be from the Department of
25 Transportation, Commissioner of the New York City

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 90

2 Department of Transportation, Ydanis Rodriguez, First
3 Deputy Commissioner, Margaret Forgione, Executive
4 Deputy Commissioner, Paul Ochoa, and Deputy
5 Commissioner of Transportation Planning and
6 Management, Eric Beaton.

7 I will now administer the oath. Please
8 raise your right hands.

9 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
10 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
11 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
12 questions?

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I do.

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: I
15 do.

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I do.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Thank you. You
19 may begin when ready.

20 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon,
21 Chair Brooks-Powers and Members of the Committee on
22 Transportation and Infrastructure. I'm Ydanis
23 Rodriguez, the Commissioner of the New York City
24 Department of Transportation. With me today are First
25 Deputy Commissioner, Margaret Forgione; Executive

2 Deputy Commissioner, Paul Ochoa; and Deputy
3 Commissioner of Transportation Planning and
4 Management, Eric Beaton. Thank you all for the
5 opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Eric Adams,
6 on behalf of DOT's Fiscal Year '26 Preliminary Budget
7 and Fiscal Year '25 to '35 Capital Plan.

8 DOT has a Charter mandate to manage 25
9 percent of all land in New York City, including 6,300
10 miles of street and highway, 12,000 miles of
11 sidewalk, 44,000 intersections, and over 800 bridges
12 and tunnels. DOT's charge is to ensure that all New
13 Yorkers can get from point A to point B safely,
14 efficiently, and in an environmentally responsible
15 way. Thanks to continued investment by Mayor Adams
16 and City Council, New York City has the largest and
17 most complex Department of Transportation when we are
18 compared to any other city in our nation, and we are
19 leading the nation in reimagining the use of public
20 space and making the streets safer for pedestrians,
21 cyclists, even drivers, and all road users. This
22 budget will allow DOT to continue this important
23 work, and today I will share some highlights of the
24 agency's recent and upcoming projects.

2 DOT's FY26 expense budget is 1.5 billion.
3 That's larger than 1.1 billion that we have in the
4 fiscal budget of 2022, and you can see the breakdown
5 of this funding on the screen and in the chart in my
6 testimony. Enough funding for bridges, ferries,
7 roadways, sidewalk, traffic, transportation,
8 planning, and management. When we look at DOT's
9 approved FY25-35 Capital Plan, it's 33.5 billion
10 dollars, and you can see again in the breakdown of
11 this funding in the chart displayed on the screen in
12 my testimony as well.

13 Let's talk about Vision Zero. Last year
14 marked the 10-year anniversary since the start of
15 Vision Zero, something that my soul worked together
16 with Melissa Mark-Viverito at the time and Mayor de
17 Blasio, and today with the new leadership of the
18 Council and Mayor Adams, we continue working around
19 Vision Zero. Traffic fatalities were at their lowest
20 level since 2020, down 5 percent since the start of
21 the Adams Administration. Senior pedestrian
22 fatalities were at their lowest in recorded history,
23 down 17 percent from '23. Since the program began in
24 2014, the agency has been committed to bringing road
25 safety to every corner of the five boroughs and

2 distributing our street improvement project
3 equitably, and that commitment is having results. As
4 shown in our recently released Equity and Street
5 Safety Report, traffic deaths have declined most
6 significantly in lower-income neighborhoods and
7 neighborhoods of color in our working-class
8 community, and these neighborhoods have received a
9 higher share of street redesigns since Vision Zero
10 began. Of course, as Mayor Adams said, myself, you,
11 Chair, and the Council, one death is too many for all
12 New Yorkers, and we will continue to work to deliver
13 high-impact projects across the city that enhance
14 road safety and bring us closer to the goal of zero
15 fatality on our street.

16 In the spring, we will begin construction
17 on the fifth phase of the Vision Zero Great Street
18 reconstruction of the Grand Concourse between East
19 Fordham Road and East 198th Street. You can see a
20 picture of this project at Grand Concourse and East
21 180th Street on the screen and in my testimony. This
22 55-million-dollar project will include grade separate
23 bicycle facilities, pedestrian safety improvements,
24 and landscape medians.

2 On the daylighting, DOT recently released
3 a groundbreaking study of daylighting pursuant to
4 Local Law 66 of 2023, sponsored by Chair Brooks-
5 Powers. The study found that while daylighting is a
6 useful tool in certain locations, it is not a one-
7 size-fits-all solution. The study also found that
8 hardening daylighting with infrastructure installed
9 to prevent vehicles from occupying that space
10 enhances safety. You can see a photo of hardening
11 daylighting at Banker Street and North 15th Street in
12 Brooklyn on the screen and in my testimony as well.
13 This budget increased funding for additional
14 hardening daylighting, allowing us to focus on
15 delivering the treatment with real safety benefits
16 for all New Yorkers.

17 This morning, we announced regional slow
18 zones in each of the outer boroughs as the latest
19 part of our Sammy's Law rollout. You can see a photo
20 on the screen and in my testimony from when we
21 lowered the speed limit on Prospect Park West in
22 Brooklyn to 20 miles per hour as the first step of
23 the law's implementation, which we then followed up
24 with implementing a Lower Manhattan Regional Slow
25 Zone below Canal Street. With the rollout, each

2 borough will have a regional slow zone, City Island
3 in the Bronx, DUMBO and Vinegar Hill in Brooklyn,
4 Broad Channel in Queens, and St. George in Staten
5 Island.

6 Beyond our continuous street designs and
7 infrastructure projects, we are working with State
8 Legislators in Albany to reauthorize New York City's
9 life-saving speed camera program. Speeding remains
10 one of the most dangerous driving behaviors,
11 contributing to about a quarter of the city's traffic
12 deaths each year. The cameras are working. The
13 average number of daily violations issued by each
14 camera dropped 94 percent since the start of the
15 program. Additionally, corridors with speed cameras
16 installed in 2022 experienced 14 percent fewer
17 injuries and fatalities than locations with no
18 cameras. We look forward to working with the Council
19 to renew this program, including by passing a home
20 rule message. Let's get ready to pass it now.

21 Now, on our recently released annual
22 Streets Plan Update, which looks back over the past
23 year of record-breaking hard work to improve
24 intersection safety, expand the protected bike lane
25 network, reimagine our streets for pedestrians, and

2 so much more. On intersections, I am happy to say
3 that in 2024, DOT redesigned 2,688 intersections,
4 over five times the 400-intersection Street Plan
5 benchmark. We installed 885 accessible pedestrian
6 signals, exceeding the 500-intersection benchmark,
7 and DOT's Pedestrian Ramp Program oversaw the upgrade
8 or installation of pedestrian ramps at over 9,300
9 corners. These improvements make intersections safer
10 for cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers alike, while
11 helping New Yorkers with disabilities cross the
12 street. And as I said when I took the
13 Commissionership at this agency, intersections should
14 be sacred places.

15 DOT's continued to create new pedestrian
16 space. Last year alone, DOT added 350,000 square feet
17 of new pedestrian space throughout the city, and you
18 can see an example of this in the photo on the screen
19 and in my testimony with the Broadway Vision Project,
20 which also added a two-way bike lane.

21 DOT also continued to reimagine the use
22 of public space. Though this work is often not
23 measured by the Street Plan, the agency launched a
24 permanent outdoor dining program already more than
25 two times the size of the City's pre-pandemic

2 program. We have supported over 200 Open Street
3 locations every year, and it's not only Open Street
4 with barricades. This is about more than 200 Open
5 Streets with partnerships with business improvement
6 districts, not-for-profits, but also DOT has been
7 providing financial support. And we expanded Summer
8 Streets to all five boroughs. We moved it from seven
9 miles Summers Street before the administration of
10 Mayor Adams and myself to almost 20 miles for this
11 year.

12 DOT is also improving cycling in the
13 city. Last year, the agency added 29.3 miles of
14 protected bike lanes, the third-highest number built
15 in the City's history, following a record 31.9 miles
16 in 2023. This includes critical new bike connections
17 on Queens Boulevard and Manhattan's Second, Sixth,
18 Seventh, and Tenth Avenue. The agency also upgraded
19 in addition 4.4 miles of bike lanes through hardening
20 with physical infrastructure to better protect
21 cyclists from other vehicles. As we continue to build
22 cycling infrastructure, we will continue, and we ask
23 you to be partners with this, to educate New Yorkers
24 about the benefit of cycling. A person who bikes half
25 an hour every day lives six more years in their life.

2 Biking is not a privilege, but a safe, green, a
3 healthy way to travel around the city.

4 We are also delivering better bus lanes
5 for New Yorkers. Through transformative bus lane
6 projects on Manhattan's 96th Street, pictured on the
7 photo on the screen and in my testimony, Second
8 Avenue and along Allen Pike and Madison Streets,
9 through the expansion of bus-mounted camera
10 enforcements, last year, New York City DOT delivered
11 17.9 miles of new, upgraded, or newly protected bus
12 lanes, the highest annual mileage for protected bus
13 lanes improving commute for 269,000 average daily
14 riders.

15 Despite these record accomplishments,
16 some of the most ambitious Street Plan benchmarks
17 have proven untenable due to various logistical and
18 resources constraints. Prior to the bill that we
19 passed, which was a bill that I carried as a former
20 Chairman and co-sponsor of this bill, the agency
21 cautioned that the benchmark will require
22 significantly more funding and logistical support to
23 achieve. This gap was only made worse by the COVID-19
24 pandemic hitting soon after the bill passed, just a
25 few months after, leading to hiring and spending

2 freezes. With this in mind, the Adams Administration
3 has been aggressively rebuilding agency capacity to
4 meet the intent of the Street Plan, even on COVID-
5 delayed schedule.

6 On staffing, the Transportation Planning
7 and Management Division largely responsible for
8 everything that you see marking and planning in our
9 streets, and you can stand up at the entry of City
10 Hall and just imagine everything that happened at the
11 section go through this great department that we
12 have. So, they have increased staffing over 12
13 percent from COVID low of 466 staff members to 525
14 staff members currently. On space, more staff and
15 more operational output require more facility space,
16 and DOT and DCAS have been working together to secure
17 more space through the complex City process. This
18 includes new space for concrete crews in Brooklyn in
19 2024. You can see a photo from when I visited our
20 sidewalks and inspection management team at our yard
21 in South Bronx on the screen and in my testimony, a
22 new dedicated facility for in-house marking crews
23 that will allow that program to expand, and ongoing
24 work to upgrade Maspeth Central Shop, the house,
25 significant operational responsibility, including

2 DOT's sign shop, our in-house marking crew, and our
3 parking meter maintenance unit.

4 Also included as part of this year's
5 Preliminary Budget is 319 million dollars for the
6 reconstruction of our Flatland Yard facilities in
7 Brooklyn. This yard is a critical 24/7 site for DOT
8 operations as it houses the team responsible for
9 Brooklyn's roadway repairs and snow plowing as well
10 as fleet service, which performs maintenance on DOT's
11 heavy-duty vehicles.

12 On public engagement, the Adams
13 Administration has shown a big commitment to bring
14 the agency to the community, to local engagement,
15 including with the Commissioner in Your Borough
16 Initiative, where I spend one day a month in a
17 different borough meeting with elected officials,
18 community board, business improvement districts, and
19 more, and tomorrow my day is in Queens.

20 DOT has expanded how we do outreach,
21 including through on our street engagement with
22 street ambassadors, picture conducting engagements on
23 this e-scooter share program in Jamaica, Queens in
24 the photo on the screen and in my testimony. Door-to-
25 door service to residents and businesses and online

2 workshops. Last year alone, DOT received feedback
3 from local community members at nearly 2,600 events.

4 In addition, the Council has enacted a
5 number of local laws around notification that affect
6 the timelines of project delivery. Together, they can
7 cause projects to take longer, but are important for
8 helping deliver projects in line with local community
9 feedback.

10 On the funding, the Adams Administration
11 has committed significant capital and expense funding
12 toward the Street Plan effort, including the initial
13 down payments of over 900 million as well as funding
14 other needs.

15 On operations, the agency has stated from
16 the first Street Plan that its ambitious targets go
17 beyond the agency existing capacity and that of our
18 in-house crews and contracting partners. Achieving
19 the Street Plan in its entirety would, for example,
20 require roughly doubling the numbers of marking used
21 for new bus and bike lanes. DOT has been increasing
22 its in-house construction capacity, including opening
23 a new yard for additional concrete crew and
24 purchasing our first stripe hog, which is a
25 specialized piece of marking equipment that uses

2 high-powered water to prepare a surface for marking.

3 DOT will continue to strive to achieve the Street

4 Plan benchmark and to develop projects that advance

5 safe and sustainable transportation, including

6 delivering critical safety, infrastructure, and

7 quality-of-life improvements that are not measured by

8 the Street Plan.

9 Turning now to highlight the number of

10 exciting projects that are ongoing or in the

11 pipeline. Early this year, we announced that we would

12 establish a micro-hub zone to provide safe, dedicated

13 space for truck operators to transfer deliveries onto

14 smaller and more sustainable modes of transportation

15 for the last mile delivery to address the negative

16 environmental and public safety effects of truck

17 deliveries, including cargo bikes. You can see a

18 picture of a delivery worker using a cargo bike on

19 the screen and in my testimony. These projects

20 include funding for installation of charges and

21 maintenance to support this program.

22 Also related to deliveries, the Adams

23 Administration recently transmitted legislation to

24 the Council to hold the third-party delivery apps

25 responsible for mitigating the negative consequences

2 of their business models. This legislation will curb
3 unsafe speeding and risky riding behavior by delivery
4 workers, enhance delivery workers' safety, re-
5 establish order on our streets, and decrease the risk
6 of deadly battery fires. We look forward to
7 continuing to work with the Council on legislation to
8 regulate this industry.

9 On shared micromobility, last year, the
10 agency expanded the e-scooter share program to
11 Eastern Queens, providing critical connections to
12 major transportation and commercial hubs for roughly
13 600,000 residents in that community. The program now
14 serves 1.2 million New Yorkers across the East Bronx
15 and Eastern Queens, and this project provides
16 additional headcount to support the program's
17 expansion.

18 New York City DOT continues our critical
19 work to maintain the City's infrastructure in the
20 state of good repair. Thanks to the recent passage of
21 the City of Yes, the City has allocated 218 million
22 in this project for various streets reconstruction
23 projects, including roadway improvement and
24 stormwater management and resiliency upgrades
25 throughout the City.

2 In January, we celebrated filling the
3 500,000th pothole in the Eric Adams Administration,
4 and you can see a picture of this exciting moment on
5 the screen and in my testimony. During the past three
6 years, we have responded to potholes in 1.8 days,
7 faster than in any previous administration, and
8 potholes have been forming at a much slower rate
9 thanks to this Administration's commitment to better
10 and more regulated paving and the nearly 600,000 tons
11 of asphalt that the agency produces each year and as
12 we also buy an additional 500,000 pounds.

13 This budget also provides critical
14 funding to maintain the City's over 800 bridges and
15 tunnels. It increases funding and adds headcount to
16 allow us to address structural flags faster, better
17 protecting our infrastructure. It also advances 870
18 million for the Bridges Hazard Mitigation Program,
19 which will allow us to bring security upgrades to our
20 East River bridges.

21 And in Albany, this session, we are
22 seeking reauthorization of the City's automatic
23 weigh-in-motion, which all should be proud that New
24 York City is the first one using the weigh-in-motion
25 that is able to capture those overweight trucks under

2 the BQE, and we have seen a 60 percent reduction in
3 those areas where we're using our weigh-in-motion.
4 This program, as I say, is on the Brooklyn-Queens
5 Expressway and supporting further expansion of WIM
6 enforcement statewide. We appreciate Governor Hochul
7 for including her budget for the weigh-in-motion to
8 be used across the whole State of New York. The
9 system is working, reducing the numbers of overweight
10 vehicles in the structure by 60 percent. We look
11 forward to working with the Council to pass a home
12 rule message to renew the program and continue to
13 protect this aging piece of infrastructure.

14 Chair and members, finally, when I first
15 stepped into my role as a Commissioner, after serving
16 12 years in this Body that prepared me well for me to
17 be leading this agency, the agency minority and
18 women-owned business enterprise, M/WBE, utilization
19 rate was only 11 percent. It is with great pride that
20 I share that the progress we have made in the most
21 recent Fiscal Year, the M/WBE rate was impressive, 32
22 percent. And year to today, our M/WBE rate at DOT is
23 37 percent. This achievement underscores our
24 commitment to promoting inclusively and providing
25 meaningful support to diverse businesses within our

2 community, reflecting a broader vision of equity and
3 opportunity for all, including with our Doing
4 Business with DOT event featured on the screen in my
5 testimony.

6 In conclusion, I would like to thank this
7 Body, this great City Council, for the opportunity to
8 testify before you today in my fourth year as a
9 Commissioner. I look forward to continuing working
10 together to make this city safer, more equitable, and
11 more accessible for generations to come. We are so
12 proud of the work that not only the leadership of
13 this agency, but almost 6,000 men and women are doing
14 every day, keeping our infrastructure in the state of
15 good repair.

16 I want to say a few words, less than one
17 minute in Spanish, as Spanish-speaking that I am.

18 (SPEAKING SPANISH)

19 Thank you, Chair, and we will now be
20 happy to answer any question.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thanks so
22 much, Commissioner. It's good to see you and the team
23 here today.

24 I'm going to start with Streets Plan.
25 Local Law 195 of 2019, also known as the Streets Plan

2 or the Transportation Master Plan, was passed in
3 October 2019 when you, Commissioner, was the Chair of
4 the Committee on Transportation. Local Law 195 states
5 by February 1, 2023, and by each February 1
6 thereafter, the Department shall submit to the Mayor
7 and the Speaker of the Council and post on the
8 Department's website an update regarding any changes
9 to the plan from the previous year. In violation of
10 that provision, DOT released its Streets Plan almost
11 a full month and a half after the required February
12 1st date, and in further violation of the law, DOT
13 did not submit their report to the Council, but
14 instead released it to the press. Why was DOT
15 delinquent with its report, and why did they not
16 follow the law and submit it to the Council before
17 going to the press?

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: DOT was never
19 delinquent on releasing the report.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What day was
21 the report released?

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We were not
23 delinquent.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What day was
25 the report released?

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I get your
3 question. I hear your point. I can say DOT was not
4 delinquent. I apologize for not submitting the report
5 first. However, today what all of us should do to
6 celebrate all the accomplishments that we have
7 obtained as part of the Street Master Plan.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What day was
9 the report released?

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: You're right. You
11 stated right. You stated right that we went to the
12 press, and I apologize for that, but I can say it
13 again, I want to invite everyone to focus on the big
14 accomplishments. We are running the largest
15 Department of Transportation in the City. We have a
16 lot of accomplishments in the city. We are
17 (INAUDIBLE) many people in the city. As a city, we
18 are the leading one on bus lane and bike lane, dining
19 out, and everything that we do, so I do apologize for
20 not submitting the report to you before.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
22 Commissioner.

23 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: You're welcome.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In DOT's most
25 recent report, which was released last week, the

2 Department admitted that in 2024 it only built 13.5
3 miles of protected bus lanes, which once again is far
4 short of the 30 miles required annually. The
5 Department of Transportation was also required to
6 install transit signal priority, also known as TSP,
7 at 1,000 intersections annually, but completed only
8 766 last year. The report noted that the Department
9 of Transportation installed roughly 29 miles of
10 protected bike lanes in 2024, which is an
11 improvement, but still less than the 50-mile
12 benchmark required by the legislation. Now, I do
13 appreciate, Commissioner, in your testimony, which we
14 received yesterday, thank you for that, again, I'd
15 like to acknowledge that, that there is more funding
16 that's needed. I just want to get a sense of how much
17 funding is needed to be able to meet the goals.

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I will pass
19 it to both Eric Beaton as a planner and Paul to add
20 more details, but 50 miles of bike lane is not
21 realistic unless everyone is on board, unless each
22 Council Member come and say, I want bike lane in my
23 District. 20 miles of bus lane is not realistic
24 unless Council Members also support it.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But we're
3 working on a bus lane.

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I get it. I get
5 it. I'm approaching both. So I am more than happy, I
6 think that we started a conversation, very
7 productive, you know, with you and your team. I think
8 that we should have another follow-up conversation
9 with more details to revise those ambitious goals
10 that we have. Definitely, you know, as you work in
11 BNT and you get the 700 million dollars and you have
12 to spread that amount for different needs that each
13 Council have. The same thing that we also have to
14 maximize every single dollar. So we're proud that in
15 2022, Mayor, you increased our budget by 17 percent
16 in '22, and then he added close to 300 million
17 dollars in 2024. As you can see, the budget in 2022
18 Fiscal Year was only 1.1 million. Today, this budget
19 is 1.5. So definitely, we've been getting a lot of
20 support from Mayor Eric Adams and City Hall and you
21 guys at the Council, and we appreciate that, and we
22 will get to you into more details, definitely more
23 monies allow for us to go further. There's other
24 challenges about hiring staff, it's about facility,
25 but I want to pass it to Eric to get into more

2 details and then Paul to bring some pieces related to
3 budget.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And as
5 the Commissioner said in his testimony, it's not just
6 about the money, it's about all these things that
7 need to move together. And, you know, I think we've
8 been very fortunate, as the Commissioner said, that
9 OMB has given us money and worked with us as we've
10 been able to line up projects. So, as we've been able
11 to bring more equipment online and more personnel and
12 more yards, we've been able to move all of these
13 things together. I think putting money in the budget
14 just to say it's there while we're still working on
15 these other things is a reasonable choice for OMB not
16 to make. So, we are working closely with OMB, we're
17 working closely with the Mayors, and we are on all of
18 these things, on the money, on the facilities, on the
19 hiring, all the steps that are needed to be able to
20 better meet those goals.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
22 When it comes to bus lanes, DOT has consistently
23 failed to meet these requirements and has fallen
24 behind the aggregate five-year target. How is the
25 Department prioritizing bus lane improvement and what

2 plans are in place to meet the required mandates? And
3 I will color this by saying yes, we've had private
4 conversations that have been very positive. We are
5 engaged now with DOT from my District, and we've
6 identified several Council Members that would like to
7 get into conversation about bus lanes in their
8 District. So with that being said, I'd like to know
9 how DOT is prioritizing the improvements and what
10 plans are in place to meet the required mandates
11 besides what the Council is showing good faith on.

12 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. Our Deputy
13 Commissioner, Eric, he will take into the other
14 project that we have for this coming year, but I can
15 say that I want, I need Council to come on board and
16 support me to do bus lanes in your District. Like, I
17 cannot do the number unless, let's say, if we
18 continue having opposition from most Council
19 Districts when it comes to bus lanes. Bus lanes is so
20 critical. One million people are using our buses
21 every day, and they are our working class, and we are
22 responsible to providing the best bus lane. They are
23 critical mode of transportation. I'm happy with our
24 accomplishment. As I say, being in different places,
25 speaking with leaders across the nation and global,

2 no one is doing what we're doing. We want to do more,
3 and definitely we are committed to do it. But we can
4 share, Eric can take you into what are the projects
5 that we have this year.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And
7 just before I do that, very quickly, one of the
8 things here is that the way bus lanes are defined in
9 the legislation is that we only get credit if the bus
10 lane is either physically separated or camera
11 enforced so there's a number of projects that we did
12 where we have not been able to camera enforce working
13 with the MTA, or there are places where we took an
14 existing bus lane and improved it. We moved it from
15 curbside to offset or did other ways to improve it.
16 Those we don't get to count in our Streets Plan
17 number because it's not how the legislation was
18 written, but we still think are part of our job
19 delivering real benefits for New York City's bus
20 riders.

21 So as the Commissioner said, we've been
22 working closely with the MTA, and we think we have an
23 exciting roster of projects for this year. Just a
24 couple that I'll mention is the new busway on Tremont
25 Avenue in the Bronx. As we all know, it's incredibly

2 hard to get east-west on transit in the Bronx, and
3 this is really targeting one of the slowest points of
4 the east-west routes. And on Third Avenue in
5 Manhattan, we had a really good bus, bike, and
6 overall safety project on the Upper East Side. We're
7 both extending that farther north into Harlem and
8 farther south into Midtown to make sure that buses,
9 cyclists, pedestrians, and all traffic move quickly
10 and safely on those streets.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
12 that. I will say, though, with the bus lane dynamic,
13 it's not like the Council can veto a bus plan so I
14 think a lot of the emphasis is put on the Council,
15 but it does not rest with us for DOT to implement.

16 But in the terms and condition 40, which
17 tracks the Streets Plan outreach effort, it reported
18 that DOT did 47 outreach projects, but only nine of
19 those 47 were related to the Streets Plan. Can you
20 explain? Because I'm just trying to understand how
21 and if DOT is prioritizing the bus lanes a lot.
22 Obviously, by now, I think DOT knows that the bus
23 lanes are a priority for this Committee, and so I
24 want to understand why out of 47, only nine were
25 focused on the bus lanes for the Streets Plan.

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And this is a
3 conversation I know that we've been having for years
4 with this Body and us. We know that the public mode
5 of transportation that New Yorkers use the most is
6 our train and our buses. And we know how expensive it
7 is to expand a train, but we know that expanding or
8 upgrading our bus lanes, building more busways or
9 offset bus lanes is a way of how we can move our
10 buses quickly. So definitely our buses, as also the
11 bike lane, we are committed to provide New Yorkers
12 the possibility for them to move by train, by car, by
13 bus, and by bicycle and e-scooter too. We have many
14 projects. We have some constraints when it comes to
15 the weather. There's a particular period of time that
16 we only can go out and do the work, do the marking.
17 We also had to do the community engagement. And as
18 you say, one day I hope that the Council can pass a
19 bill that say DOT have all the flexibility for you to
20 go and build the bus lane. If that would be the case,
21 I can tell you that we would be getting a much higher
22 number. But I feel that there is, you know, a few
23 other details. I don't know.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: No, just, you
25 know, we are very committed to outreach on the bus

2 projects as well as others. The number of meetings
3 sometimes has to do with the specific geography of
4 these routes, right? When you have 2,600
5 intersections approved, that's a much wider
6 geography, so it takes a different set of meetings,
7 but we are committed to very deep outreach. Our bus
8 projects don't just have one community board meeting.
9 They're typically not just many community board
10 meetings, meeting with faith institutions, meeting
11 with all kinds of stakeholders along the corridor. I
12 can tell you our bus team spends a tremendous amount
13 of effort going out and doing that on-the-ground
14 outreach.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Also, the last
16 report had only two outreach done in Queens, and both
17 of those were for bike lanes so none with buses.
18 We're one of the most impacted boroughs in terms of
19 congestion pricing so I just want to highlight, and
20 this is from DOT's report.

21 Moving on to transit signal priority is a
22 system that uses technology to give transit vehicles,
23 like buses, priority at traffic signals. This is
24 something that could help dramatically improve city
25 bus speeds, which are currently the slowest in the

2 nation. Can you detail for the Committee how DOT is
3 prioritizing TSP installations at the required 1,000
4 intersections and how many TSP installations are
5 budgeted for in your current budget and how many are
6 planned for in Fiscal 2026?

7 And I also want to quickly acknowledge
8 that we are joined by Majority Leader Amanda Farías.

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Thank
10 you for the question, Chair. So, over the last three
11 years, DOT has done about 2,200 transit signal
12 priority intersections. These are very critical for
13 bus operations, as you say, because it allows them to
14 move more quickly through an intersection and
15 speeding up the bus times. We are funded to do this
16 work. We plan to complete 1,000 in this Fiscal Year
17 and going forward.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. In
19 Fiscal '23, the Council had called for 3.1 billion
20 dollars for DOT's Streets Plan efforts, and we were
21 able to secure 904 million dollars in capital and
22 expense funding that was added for between Fiscal
23 Year '22 to '26. Can you just give us an idea of how
24 that money has been spent to date?

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

3 Thanks for that question, Council Member. Streets
4 Plan touches upon essentially every single division
5 that the agency runs. It is split between traffic
6 operations, which as Margaret mentioned includes
7 TSPs, traffic planning, which as Eric Beaton
8 mentioned, touches on bike infrastructure, bus lane
9 infrastructure, street redesigns. It also touches on
10 street reconstruction, which you mentioned some of
11 the capital dollars. We can try to provide a
12 breakdown, but it is essentially absorbed across all
13 divisions. And I would also say some of that money is
14 also used for administration. We have HR people, we
15 have contracts people. As the Commissioner mentioned,
16 we've increased the amount of M/WBE usage, and that
17 does require more staff so it is absorbed across
18 multiple divisions, across multiple programs. I'm
19 happy to try to provide a breakdown. I'm not entirely
20 sure I can provide a breakdown by today, but I'm
21 happy to provide a general breakdown of Streets Plan.
22 It just touches on so many different things that the
23 agency does.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I
25 would like to get a copy of that breakdown.

2 Next, I'm going to just pivot to
3 daylighting, and then I'm going to yield to my
4 Colleagues for their questions. The Preliminary Plan
5 includes City funds of 1.38 million dollars in Fiscal
6 2025 and 3.85 million dollars baselined starting in
7 Fiscal 2026 for daylighting. How many intersections
8 does DOT anticipate would be addressed with this
9 funding, and how many intersections in each borough?

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let me share that
11 with the daylighting, and then Eric will get a
12 complement with the detail for this year. Daylighting
13 is an important tool that we have in our box. And
14 before we, the Council and the Administration, worked
15 together with announcements to make 1,000 daylighting
16 intersections last year, DOT already was doing
17 hundreds of daylighting every year. But daylighting,
18 as has been said before, has been proven that only
19 when they're hardened and they are added to all the
20 measures that we take, it benefits our goal to
21 improve safety. So last year we did 1,000, hundreds
22 of them were hardened, and we have a plan for this
23 year.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And as
25 the Ccommissioner said, what we're really focused on

2 here is the hardened daylighting, because that's
3 where we really see the safety benefit. And our
4 baseline for hardened daylighting was about 200
5 intersections a year. With this increased investment
6 by the Administration, we think we'll do 300 this
7 year, and then 400 in future years, and growing to
8 500 as the money grows over time. So, we think that
9 this is a very substantial increase in our ability to
10 do this, and it's something that we want to make sure
11 that we're doing alongside all of our other safety
12 treatments, which also have benefits. You know, not
13 substituting daylighting for other work, but trying
14 to make sure that it's additive.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry if I
16 missed this, but how many intersections in each
17 borough?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: For last
19 year, so we did 1,200 total daylighting. Again, a
20 little around 300 of them were hardened. In the
21 Bronx, we did 191; in Brooklyn, 297; Manhattan, 125;
22 Queens, 411, Staten Island, 173; and then two were
23 right on the Brooklyn-Queens border.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Can you
3 provide the Committee with the list of the
4 intersections impacted?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What type of
7 hardened daylighting will DOT be implementing?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So, it will
9 be a mix of different treatments, depending on the
10 location. Something that we used to good success this
11 year was the square concrete blocks, which both
12 provide hardening, but also, you know, someone can
13 lean against them. They provided a very nice
14 opportunity for us to do some community artwork in
15 places. So that's a new treatment that we used this
16 year that we expect to continue. In other locations,
17 it might be a bike rack. In other locations, it might
18 be a concrete neck down. We do try to match the right
19 treatment to the right location so that it fits in
20 with the community.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
22 that. What is the average cost associated with
23 hardened daylighting implementation for an
24 intersection, and how much would it cost DOT to
25 daylight 1,000 intersections?

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

3 There's two types of costs to daylighting. There is
4 the personnel cost, and then the other-than-personnel
5 cost. One thing is purchasing the actual physical
6 barriers that we're going to be using for
7 daylighting. As Eric was mentioning, it could be a
8 bike rack, or it could be a concrete block, a granite
9 block. And then there's the personnel cost. I should
10 also mention that as part of the new need that we
11 received in this plan, it included a new crew for our
12 roadway division to actually move the blocks as
13 needed. Move the blocks for resurfacing purposes and
14 drop off blocks. It is a critical component of our
15 roadway operation to be able to sort of move these
16 blocks as we do more and more and more. So, I would
17 say about 10,000 dollars per location, but I want to
18 be mindful that there's two types of costs associated
19 to this.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

21 Does DOT have any plans to harden daylight rain
22 gardens, and are they working with any other agencies
23 such as DEP to do so?

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: My
25 understanding is most of the rain gardens are mid-

2 block. I haven't seen rain gardens in the
3 intersections, but we're happy to coordinate with
4 DEP. We talk to DEP on a daily basis on various
5 projects that we do. So, if that is an issue, I
6 haven't heard that as an issue, but if that is an
7 issue, we're happy to work with our sister agencies.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And
9 how many agency staff are allocated to work on street
10 redesign projects that would include daylighting?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So as Paul
12 said, there's very large parts of our entire agency
13 that work on these, right? There's not just planners,
14 but there's the people who put down the markings.
15 There's the roadways crews that need to move the
16 blocks. There's our art team that worked on making
17 them look good for the community. So, it's hard to
18 give a super exact number. I will say that the
19 transportation planning and management division,
20 which is the division that sort of coordinates all of
21 it and does large amounts of the work, is about 525
22 people.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
24 going to yield now to my Colleagues. First, we'll
25 have Council Member Won.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you so much,
3 Chair Brooks-Powers. Good afternoon. It's so good to
4 see you all. I have a few questions.

5 I'm going to start with our latest
6 celebration that we were supposed to have this
7 weekend that everyone was pumped for, but we got to
8 reschedule. So I remember with Chair Brooks-Powers
9 and Commissioner Rodriguez, we did a walkthrough of
10 the Queensboro Bridge, especially to advocate for the
11 South Outer Roadway to be opened. That was slated to
12 open this weekend. Can you help us understand the
13 status of that opening?

14 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: (INAUDIBLE)
15 understanding, the work that is happening in that
16 bridge is almost 300-million-dollar project, so the
17 piece that you're referring to is one of those, of
18 many work that is happening there. We've been
19 advancing a lot. I'm proud of the work that was led
20 by Margaret Forgione, our First Deputy Commissioner
21 of Operation and her team. We pulled from bridges
22 been doing it. We're almost ready to complete the
23 project. And again, it's been a lot of work with
24 contractors and us, and I feel that we are very close
25

2 to finish that piece of the 300-million-dollar
3 project that is taking the Queensboro Bridge.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Just
5 to add a little to what the Commissioner said. I
6 know, I'm getting myself mixed up here. So, we know
7 it's top of mind for you to get the South Outer
8 Roadway opened. It's also top of mind for us. So, in
9 anticipation of today's hearing, we were trying to
10 get the South Outer Roadway opened and in use for
11 pedestrians. We got a little bit ahead of ourselves,
12 and we have a little bit more work to complete on
13 some fencing gates and a little bit of pavement work
14 so we do anticipate that happening pretty quickly.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So it was supposed to
16 be done. We're supposed to open it by end of first
17 quarter so we're nearing the end of first quarter.
18 So, can you give me a timeline and give me more
19 specificity and details of where the fencing is
20 needed and where the concrete work you're talking
21 about or pavement on the bridge?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Sure.
23 So, what I will say is that I can't give you an exact
24 date, but we are anxious to get it open very quickly.
25 We don't anticipate this to take an extremely long

2 period of time. In order to open the South Outer
3 Roadway and have it be safe for pedestrians, we
4 needed to install well over a mile of fence work, and
5 that work had to be coordinated with other work, in
6 particular, the upper deck replacement so the
7 finishing touches are being put on that very long
8 amount of fence.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: What part of the
10 fencing are you referring to? I have constituents who
11 use that bridge every single morning. I had them
12 report to me this morning that they don't see where
13 additional fencing is needed.

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay.
15 Well, what I can tell you is that our engineers are
16 very tuned into each and every aspect of the design
17 and the safety, and we do have a few more things to
18 do on the fencing and the gates as well (TIMER CHIME)
19 before we are comfortable opening it. So to the naked
20 eye of a layperson, it may appear to be fine, but we
21 have a little bit more work to do.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, can you tell us
23 where you're getting this work done and where the
24 pavement is supposed to be?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: So we
3 had a few...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: We were told by DOT
5 that the construction was complete so did they
6 misspeak?

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: So,
8 what I can tell you is that the north, the upper
9 roadway work, the deck work, is virtually complete.
10 There are going to be some more items that take place
11 over the next few months. I don't think we
12 characterize that work as complete. And then the
13 pavement that I'm referring to are some defects and
14 things of the same of the sort on the South Outer
15 Roadway that we need to fix.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, can you give us
17 at least a timeline? How many weeks are we talking
18 about?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I'm
20 not going to be able to give you a precise timeline
21 now.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, what are we
23 waiting for? Are we talking about quarters? Because
24 we were promised two years ago that this would open,
25 and we've been delayed more than two years.

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:

3 Again, I understand how top of mind this is for you,
4 and it is the same for us. We do anticipate it soon.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: What is soon? Are we
6 talking about a month?

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry. Can
8 we quantify what soon is? I'm sorry, Council Member.

9 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We will get back
10 to you on that one. We cannot tell, like, as I say...

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But you did
12 say soon. Is soon six months? Is it a year? What is
13 soon? How are you...

14 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: It will happen
15 this year, very soon.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So will it
17 happen in December of this year? Will it happen in
18 April of this year?

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: It will happen
20 very soon. We can check with our team and the
21 contractors to get back to you on average day. But so
22 far, all we can state is about the projects that,
23 again, was announced in the last year of the previous
24 Administration as something that could be finished
25 very soon was not the case as we talked to the

2 contractors. I think the contractors in the bridge
3 division, they're doing a great job. And Council
4 Members and other advocates, they should be very
5 proud that very soon that part of the bridge will be
6 reopened very soon.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, what I'm
8 going to ask is that while we're in this hearing, if
9 someone can reach out to the agency that's working on
10 this and give us a better idea of a timeline for it.
11 Because I will say that when I first became Chair of
12 this Committee, my very first transportation
13 infrastructure tour was in Council Member Won's
14 District. That is pretty much almost four years now.
15 And we were given a timeline at that point. Since
16 then, Council Member Won has continued to follow up
17 with the agency and has continued to be given
18 different timelines, the can has been kicked down the
19 road so I'd like to know in this hearing, on the
20 record, a more detailed timeline. What are we waiting
21 on? How long will it take? And so we will allow the
22 agency during this hearing to do what they need to do
23 to get us that answer. Council Member Won, were all
24 your other questions answered?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Yeah. Oh, I have one
3 more question.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. If you
5 could make it really quick and then we're going to go
6 to Council Member Brewer after.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And we will now
9 be, I already stated what the Deputy Commissioner
10 said, we will be reopening very soon. Not today.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: That response
12 was not sufficient.

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I will not give
14 you an exact date by this hearing.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The response
16 was not sufficient.

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We will follow up
18 with you and the Members on how soon we expect it to
19 reopen.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry,
21 Commissioner, but that response is not sufficient.
22 This is not something that just came up. I'm sure you
23 knew that with Council Member Won being a Member of
24 this Committee, it was going to come up today. It has
25 been coming up for three years. So as I have

2 requested, I'd like to have a more detailed answer
3 than that, so if you can check with the appropriate
4 division within the Department, that they can give
5 you more information to report back here, that would
6 be greatly appreciated. Thank you. Council Member
7 Won.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: I have a follow-up
9 question for universal daylighting. We appreciate the
10 3.9-million-dollar investment to have hardened
11 daylighting barriers, so bike racks as well as
12 concrete. Right now, there's 13,543 intersections in
13 estimate for traffic signals citywide, and there's
14 3,432 in Queens alone. So with the amount that's
15 currently allocated at 3.9, that's only 100 hardened
16 daylighting per year, not including the cost for
17 staff, as he was saying so that means we're
18 estimating 34 years for universal daylighting to take
19 place. So could you help me understand, if it costs
20 roughly 10,000 dollars to daylight one intersection,
21 do you estimate the cost to be 100 million dollars to
22 implement 1,000 intersections? Is that what DOT would
23 need to implement 10,000?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So part of
25 the reason we wanted to put this in context is

2 daylighting is only one of many different treatments
3 that we use to improve safety so we are very
4 committed to improving safety all over the city.
5 We're guided by where there's more crashes. We don't
6 spend as much effort on... there are many intersections
7 in Queens as the other boroughs that have had zero
8 crashes or zero injuries over the years so we focus
9 on the highest crash locations, and we try to do that
10 in the ways we can. I think we did this very detailed
11 study to find out what's really effective, because
12 it's easy to say, let's just go do it everywhere. But
13 what we found is that when we do it without this
14 hardening, it actually had a small negative effect on
15 safety. And we want to make sure that we are putting
16 the resources into anywhere that we're working to
17 make sure we are improving the safety.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: I want to point out
19 that you studied New York City, which doesn't
20 actually have universal daylighting. The study should
21 have included other cities in Europe and San
22 Francisco and others, or even in Jersey, that have
23 universal daylighting to actually study the effects
24 of it so I don't think your study is actually
25 accurate in a comprehensive way to say how effective

2 it is. And just using paint and plastic barriers is
3 not enough. We've had multiple children die. Chair
4 Brooks Powers has been a huge advocate of
5 daylighting, and we need to make sure that we're
6 doing the right thing so we're going to need more
7 than 100 barriers per year for the next 34 years.
8 Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And one thing
10 that I want to highlight to everyone is that with the
11 hardening of daylighting plus all the work that we do
12 around Vision Zero, which is made by the 3E, the
13 first E is the E of Engineer, the second E is the E
14 of Educational, and the third E is the E of
15 Enforcement. By today, we have the lowest numbers of
16 traffic fatality when we are compared to any other
17 year for the last 113 years. We hope to continue
18 seeing these numbers as low as today. We are proud of
19 the work that we do with hardening, creating
20 pedestrian islands, redesigning our streets, and
21 making safety for pedestrians, for cyclists, and even
22 for drivers.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: I also want to just
24 put on the record that the DOT study doesn't even
25

2 include the before and after analysis of New York
3 City's intersections with daylighting.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: The study did
5 include a before and after analysis of intersections
6 that were daylight within the past five years, which
7 is where we have the good data. We did look at that,
8 and it did show the particular improvement for
9 hardened daylighting and essentially no change for
10 the other locations that were daylight.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. The biggest
12 issue, of course, in my area is the e-bike situation.
13 I believe that the PMMR noted that bicycles rose in
14 terms of two-wheel vehicle fatalities, meaning
15 bicycles, rose 14 percent to 98 in FY24, which was
16 more than the year before. I know that to the credit
17 of former Deputy Mayor Meera Joshi, she has submitted
18 legislation to the City Council, which is being
19 looked at in terms of the apps and so on. My question
20 is, do you track the number of injuries and deaths
21 caused by bicycles on sidewalks? If not, why not? And
22 this just generally, even though it's PD's operation,
23 it's DOT's, it's not really clear how we're still
24 dealing with this issue so I wanted to get a little
25 more clarification on e-bikes and safety.

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'll just start
3 it, and then Eric and Margaret can follow. Look,
4 Mayor Eric Adams has said everyone has to be
5 accountable, and that also includes those who are
6 using e-bikes. What we are doing today by our own is
7 having a big social media campaign, educating those
8 who are using e-bikes, not only for them to be safe,
9 but also to look for pedestrians, but also letting
10 them know that it is not legal to ride a bike,
11 especially e-bikes, on the sidewalk. Mayor Eric Adams
12 transmitted the language to the City Council,
13 together with the previous Deputy Mayors and also
14 DOT. We hope to continue that conversation, and
15 hopefully it will allow for all to bring the food app
16 to the table, making them more accountable on the
17 work that they have to do to provide support to those
18 e-bike riders, who are the ones, most of the
19 essential workers, who are delivering the food to our
20 apartment.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But do you track
22 the ones on the sidewalk in terms of industry, or is
23 that not part of your tracking?
24
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes. We track
3 everything within the public right-of-way, including
4 the sidewalk.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. In terms of
6 Vision Zero, I know you mentioned it in your
7 testimony. Is there Vision Zero funding restored in
8 the Executive Plan?

9 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: For educational,
10 Gale?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Vision Zero
12 funding in general. I know it was cut during the PEG
13 at one point. So is Vision Zero funding, is it back
14 to what it was before?

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
16 Yeah. Thanks, Council Member, for the question. As
17 every other agency, we did have to abide by the PEG
18 last plan.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: We
21 were able to restore some of the Vision Zero funding.
22 Daylighting is one of them. We're still working with
23 OMB and the Administration for any other critical
24 needs to support our Vision Zero funding.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So, it was a
3 larger number before? I know about the one that
4 you're talking about, but it was a larger number
5 before, right? Before the PEG?

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: Yes.
7 Fiscal '23 was a pretty tough fiscal year for all
8 agencies, and everyone needed to do their part to
9 meet the PEG.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. In terms of
11 (TIMER CHIME) just one more question, on road
12 resurfacing, I know that once Con Ed and the cable
13 companies and everybody else has done their, putting
14 supposedly the streets back, it does seem to me that
15 the, I mean, I am on the subway, in a cab, I don't
16 have a car, but it seems like the street resurfacing
17 does sometimes feel like a third world country if
18 there is such a thing, because it doesn't seem like
19 they've been put back in a quality fashion. Who does
20 the oversight, and who does the testing to see if the
21 streets are returned to the level of sophistication
22 for the driver that they should be? It does seem to
23 me that they are certainly not resurfaced correctly.

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, Council
25 Member, as you can look at the photo behind you, and

2 Eric can be giving the testimony, I know in your
3 previous role as a Manhattan Borough President and
4 previous Council Member...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It was bad then
6 too.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And today, I can
8 say that there's no other city in this nation that
9 keep this street in the state of good repair as New
10 York City. We always have to remember all about that.
11 New York City is the most density city that we have
12 in this nation. It's only 350 square miles. There's
13 always construction going on. There's a lot of heavy
14 truck there. Everything that we get from electricity,
15 water, internet access is happening underground. When
16 we go through the milling process, we give time for
17 the utility company for them to do the job. Again,
18 Margaret and Eric can add more detail, but I can say
19 there's no other city as we go to other places that
20 have the infrastructure in the state of good repair
21 as we do in New York City.

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Thank
23 you for the question. I think you're talking
24 specifically about, and the Commissioner says, we
25 invest over 300 million a year in resurfacing over

2 1,100 lane miles. As we mentioned, we have fewer
3 potholes now than ever before because our streets are
4 in much better condition, but I think you're raising
5 the question of when utility companies and others do
6 work and how well do they backfill and then top off
7 the street properly. We have well over 100
8 inspectors. We call them Highway Inspection Quality
9 Assurance Division inspectors, and they are all over
10 the city. They are not able to get to each and every
11 backfill and restoration. We do check a great number
12 of those, so we also encourage you, if you're seeing
13 work happening or even after the fact, if you have
14 seen something...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'll give you a
16 list.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
18 That's great. We'll go out there because even if it
19 was a month ago, we know who was doing work because
20 we issue almost a million permits a year. We can
21 track exactly who is doing that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's fine. Then
23 really quickly, overweight trucks. I know you're
24 doing work on the BQE.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Council
3 Member, I'm going to ask that you wrap up, please.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Just
5 overweight trucks. Is there something besides the BQE
6 that's under consideration for weighing these
7 overweight trucks, which are everywhere? Thank you.
8 And then just finally, 79th Street Rotunda, when is
9 it going to be done?

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes. Council
11 Member Gale, we appreciate Governor Hochul, that
12 she's included in the budget the ask for the
13 legislature to pass a bill that will make weigh-in-
14 motion a technology that we can use statewide. I hope
15 again that this Body also will be taking the lead
16 supporting that and at least if it doesn't go through
17 at the State level, I think it can be a critical tool
18 that we can use, as you say, not only in the BQE, but
19 in the Washington Bridge, in any bridges. When a
20 bridge is built, it's only been built for 80 or 90
21 years. After those 90 years, we have to invest
22 hundreds of millions of dollars. Yes, on the BQE in
23 the last year, we invested 1 billion dollars to
24 restore the Brooklyn Bridge. So we hope that the
25 weigh-in-motion is something that, again, with the

2 support of the Council, we will support the Governor,
3 the Assembly, and the state to make it statewide. But
4 if not statewide, at least citywide. And the 79?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes.
6 We will get you exact information after the hearing.
7 I don't want to give you anything that's not precise
8 right now.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Council Member
11 Won.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: I just want to follow
13 up. For the report that I was referring to for DOT
14 daylighting study, what I was referring to about
15 before and after analysis, 7,558 intersections with
16 hydrant zones, so 90 percent fire hydrants, 10
17 percent bus stops were studied and compared to other
18 locations citywide, so only within our own city that
19 doesn't actually have universal daylighting. This
20 analysis provided a very large sample size, but no
21 before and after analysis was possible. And then in
22 addition to that, which are fire hydrants mostly and
23 bus stops, 956 intersections, so significantly less,
24 were studied before and after injury results from
25 daylighting existed. These locations, both hardened

2 and signed only, were installed between 2019 and 2021
3 and compared to other nearby intersections to control
4 broader trends, and this analysis provided the much
5 clearer comparison but had a significantly smaller
6 sample size so I want to make sure it's on record
7 that the data that you're using for your universal
8 daylighting study is not enough.

9 In addition to that, I want to ask a
10 question about, I also want to put on record for our
11 follow-up on the Queens South Outer Roadway bridge
12 opening for pedestrians, we want to have a clear
13 implementation timeline for everything that you
14 talked about, for the fencing, the pavement, the
15 concrete landing, the concrete median, the new signal
16 across Crescent Street, the building of a concrete
17 sidewalk connecting 27th Street so we're going to
18 want to know that from the Queens side. Can you also
19 give me an update on LaGuardia's Open Street for 29th
20 Street with LaGuardia Community College?

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Do you affirm to
22 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
23 truth before this Committee and to respond honestly
24 to the Council Member's questions?

25 QUEENS BOROUGH COMMISSIONER GARCIA: I do.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: You may begin
3 when ready.

4 QUEENS BOROUGH COMMISSIONER GARCIA:
5 Nicole Garcia, Queens Borough Commissioner, New York
6 City DOT. So, we're moving ahead with the 29th Street
7 Open Street. We actually are working with your
8 office, Council Member, to schedule a briefing. We
9 did a pre-briefing just to kind of share some
10 conceptual drawings with the college. We're looking
11 forward to briefing you in the beginning of April and
12 then working with the college to build out the plaza.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. Because they're
14 still waiting for the bike racks that were promised
15 and the paint when we were there physically in-person
16 with the Commissioner.

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We love Open
18 Street. We want more CBOs, academic institutions,
19 (INAUDIBLE) as the Queens Borough Commissioner
20 follow. There was some part related to the leadership
21 of the institution that they were not ready to follow
22 up. You know, all Open Street have a CBO, so the
23 Business Improvement District as a partner, but we
24 are more than happy to make that things happen so
25

2 more than happy that we will follow with the office
3 and the president of the university.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. And my last
5 question is for DOT lighting. How does DOT prioritize
6 which locations receive street lighting first, and
7 are there other opportunities to expedite
8 installations for high-need locations? Because
9 recently we have been requesting updates and
10 installations in addition to 48th Street, so we still
11 need a thousand more lights. That's how many requests
12 we have, such as Estelle Place, Van Damme, 49th
13 Avenue, where we have high rates of crime.

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay.
15 So, whenever we hear from somebody that they don't
16 believe there is enough lighting, we will do an
17 illumination study to determine if additional
18 lighting is necessary. Sometimes that means we put an
19 arm on an existing pole, sometimes we will add
20 additional poles, and sometimes we will determine
21 that no additional lighting is necessary. In order to
22 install that lighting, we do have contracts, and we
23 do prioritize based upon when we first determined we
24 needed to do that, and also if we have any safety
25 locations. So, if you get me the locations in

2 question besides 48th Street, we will write back to
3 you and let you know when we anticipate these to
4 occur. And just so you're aware, they do go into
5 contracts. They don't happen overnight so it's not
6 always as immediate as we might like.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, is there a
8 standard uniform procurement process for these
9 contracts, where you can say, okay, I'm going to
10 purchase this cup, and then within 10 days we're
11 going to have this cup? So can you tell me, once we
12 are approved by the illumination study, how many
13 years or how many days can we expect to take for that
14 contract to be completed and installed?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
16 There's been a recent complication, and it might be
17 something that Paul wants to talk about, but rather
18 than have a contract which can have 10,000 light
19 poles in various locations, there's more of a need
20 now to determine where those locations are prior to
21 putting out the contract. That's one issue that we
22 have had, but we have many contracts that are at
23 different stages, and we do have the ability to get
24 these lights in. So again, if you give me the list,
25 we will get back to you and let you know.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: So, is there an
3 estimate time of once the study is approved, how long
4 it takes to actually install the light bulbs, the
5 lights overall?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
7 Right. And Paul will jump in in a second. We do have
8 these lighting requests from you. Hostel Place, 48th
9 Street, Van Damme, 51st, Borden, and we have a
10 corresponding contract that they will be in. It'll be
11 this year.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. So, they will
13 be standing with lights this year, within this year?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. And is there
16 any way, when we're talking to the community and
17 they're advocating for more lighting, is there
18 something they can do to expedite how fast the
19 lighting is installed or how they get approved?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We
21 will work hard to get the studies completed quickly
22 and get them in as fast as possible.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And one thing,
25 Chair, that I want to highlight is that as we will

2 work with each Council Member, you know, when it
3 comes to any need to improve lighting, you know, with
4 our Intergovernmental Division led by Rick and
5 Danielle and (INAUDIBLE) and the rest, you know, we
6 pay attention to the local, but I also want to
7 highlight how critically important it is for Mayor
8 Eric Adams to also improve lighting by especially
9 around the 400 blocks where most crimes are produced.
10 So as we are listening and working in each Council
11 Member's need, one of the things that we are doing in
12 the city is also focusing, led by NYPD and the
13 agency, within those 400 blocks where more than 60
14 percent of the crime being happening to also not only
15 improve lighting, but also to address any other
16 quality-of-life issue.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
18 Commissioner.

19 Moving to federal funding. On January 27,
20 2025, the Trump Administration issued a directive to
21 pause federal loan and grant spending. This directive
22 was quickly rescinded two days later, but an
23 executive order issued by the President to review
24 funding remains in effect. The outcome of the
25 executive order is currently uncertain. The

2 Preliminary Plan includes 109 million dollars of
3 federal funding for DOT in Fiscal 2025, 8 percent of
4 the agency's budget, and 84.4 million dollars for
5 Fiscal 2026, which is 6 percent of the agency's
6 budget. If the City is unable to collect this federal
7 funding, how does DOT plan on addressing this
8 potential federal shortfall, and how will it affect
9 operations?

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'm going to
11 start, and then Paul will add more details. I
12 remember when I was the Chair of this Committee,
13 Chima and the team on finance, I didn't understand at
14 the beginning why the budget in June was less than
15 what the budget was by November, because it is by
16 from June to November that the agency gets more of
17 the federal funding. One thing that I can say is that
18 we don't have any alarm at DOT. We had a great team
19 in Grants and Finance, Elisabeth Franklin, Igor, who
20 worked with Paul as a Deputy Commissioner who
21 oversees budgets and grants, plus other areas. So
22 far, a lot of the funding that we have from the
23 federal government is based on formula. We are
24 continually planning and working, and the Grant
25 Division is ready for any change it may have. Again,

2 if any change will happen and be concrete, the agency
3 will be ready to act. But so far, most of the federal
4 funding that we've been getting from D.C., regardless
5 of the first thing, or President Trump in D.C., or
6 Obama or Clinton, or any previous president, have
7 been based most of the time on formula.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: I think
9 that's right.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So. you're
11 saying that in the event that the Trump
12 Administration takes away federal funding,
13 effectively reducing funding to the agency, nothing
14 matters at that point?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Of course, yes.
16 If there's less resources, you know, the agency has
17 to figure out a way or how to keep our infrastructure
18 in the state of repair. As I say, 98 percent of the
19 job is more than bus lane and bike lane. It's about
20 the 17 billion dollars and the next 10 years we
21 already have secured to invest for our bridges, for
22 our roadway, that where we have 1,600 men and women
23 taking care of the roadway, it's like 1,400 men and
24 women that they also take care of the sidewalk. So
25 definitely, every single dollar that is less from the

2 federal, the state, or the city is something that
3 DOT, budgets, and finance, they have to work hard to
4 figure out how to keep maximizing every single
5 dollar. But what I can say is about so far, the
6 agency continues planning with what we have so far.
7 We have not had any definite news that the grant that
8 we have anticipated by the end of the previous
9 Administration is something that DOT will lose. But
10 if anything comes, you know, we had a great team. One
11 of the best things that I can say at DOT is that the
12 level of retention or leadership is more than 10
13 years. So, all of us are (INAUDIBLE) the previous
14 commissioners, previous leaders, and this agency
15 definitely has one of the best things when it comes
16 to finance.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What federal
18 grants has DOT applied for and which have been
19 awarded? Are there any additional grants that DOT
20 expects to be granted?

21 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: So
22 the Administration was very aggressive in pursuing
23 competitive grants from both the Bipartisan
24 Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. I
25 believe the Administration ended up securing over a

2 billion dollars' worth of federal grants, most of
3 which were executed, meaning the grant agreement was
4 signed with the federal government. As the
5 Commissioner mentioned, we have not heard any
6 indication that any grant that was executed is being
7 rescinded. And even on grants that were not executed
8 sort of towards the end of the Administration, those
9 have not been rescinded at this point. If any grant
10 is rescinded, you'll be the first to know. And as the
11 Commissioner mentioned, we would work with City Hall
12 and OMB to make sure that if a program is a pilot,
13 that we can try to fund it. And if it's sort of a
14 street reconstruction project, for example, which
15 were very competitive in the competitive grant
16 process, most of those projects were funded with City
17 tax dollars, which means that the federal funding
18 would be displacing City tax dollars. All that means
19 is that the project is going to move forward, whether
20 or not it's with City dollars or with federal
21 dollars.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm going to
23 move on from the question, but I did not hear from
24 you what federal grants DOT applied for and which
25 have been awarded.

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: From
3 the last administration?

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Period. What
5 is (CROSS-TALK)

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
7 Yeah, so we've had Reconnecting Communities, Attain,
8 Raise, the Bridge Investment Program. We've won
9 essentially grants in every single one of these
10 competitive grants. There were different cycles for
11 different years. I'm happy to provide a list to the
12 Council on all the competitive grants that we've
13 secured as a City. But I'm pretty sure when I say
14 this, that we were awarded at least one type of grant
15 for every type of competitive grant that was put out.

16 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And Chair, from
17 all federal, from Senator Schumer to Gillibrand, they
18 helped us to secure funding. Leader Jeffrey also
19 secured some funding to improve safety around the
20 school. Congressman Espaillat secured funding for the
21 Inwood area, too. So, so far, what we are saying is
22 about, you know, hopefully we will continue moving
23 forward as those grants, we were able to get those
24 grants by the end of the last Administration. But if,

2 you know, something goes in a different direction,
3 you will be the first one to know.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And are there
5 any additional grants that DOT expects to be granted?

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: As
7 the Commissioner mentioned, formula funds, from what
8 we've heard, are going to continue. Those are just
9 done based on a formula that the region gets. We have
10 not heard about other competitive grants that were
11 part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and
12 Inflation Reduction Law to, that those are going to
13 continue. But it's early in the Administration. We're
14 hopeful that some of them will.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And
16 can you provide the Committee an update on the grant
17 that was awarded for Brookville Boulevard in Queens,
18 and has DOT spent the money or are you still waiting
19 on payment?

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
21 Yeah. That was a great example of a planning grant. I
22 believe that was raised that we wanted. We have the
23 consultant on board. It's AKRF. They're a really good
24 consulting firm. They're in the data collection
25 phase, I believe, of that project. We have not gotten

2 any bills from them. So, the way grants work is a
3 consultant would bill us, we review it, we put a
4 package together and send it to the federal
5 government for reimbursement. That process hasn't
6 started because the work, I believe, just started a
7 few weeks ago. It does take a while to procure
8 federal contracts. That's the work just started, but
9 they're in the collection phase.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Is
11 there coordination between DOT and the State DOT for
12 City road work related to Rockaway Turnpike? And
13 also, now that I say that question out loud, earlier
14 this week I saw Nassau Executive Bruce Blakeman, and
15 he had mentioned also that I think the roadway where
16 Rockaway Turnpike meets Rockaway Boulevard had been
17 fully funded from the State. Is that the case from
18 your perspective?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: So,
20 in general, we do coordinate with the town of
21 Hempstead over this location and any roads that are
22 shared between the two jurisdictions. Most recently,
23 we coordinated with them over some signal
24 improvements. I'm not aware of any other projects
25 that we're currently considering with them so if you

2 know of something specific, if you can let us know,
3 but we're very happy to keep coordinating with them.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I think it's
5 the repavement of the road because it's definitely
6 damaged with a lot of potholes.

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yeah.
8 Any kind of street defects, of course. But normally,
9 the way we would handle that is go right up to the
10 line, and the City line is pretty clear, and I don't
11 think that's under dispute in any way so we would
12 pave up to the line.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But is there
14 ever coordination so that it could be just one smooth
15 road? Because the way it is in that area, we call it
16 five towns locally. It's like you kind of go in and
17 out of New York City and Nassau, depending on which
18 side of the road, which light you're at. It's just a
19 weird strip right there.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yeah.
21 So, I can find out if we have any paving plans, and
22 then we're happy to coordinate with them if they also
23 want to get paving done at the same time, so it's
24 like a consistent project for the public.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yeah. I think
3 that makes sense.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Vacancies. At
6 the Fiscal 2025 Executive Budget Hearing in May 2024,
7 Commissioner, you emphasized to the Council's
8 Committee on Transportation Infrastructure and the
9 Committee on Finance that the Department can "do more
10 with more." DOT currently has 624 positions that are
11 vacant, a 10.7 percent vacancy rate. The PMMR shows a
12 decrease in pothole repairs and roads resurfacing
13 lane miles thus far for Fiscal 2025. Does the
14 Department require more staffing, and if so, how many
15 more positions are needed?

16 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Definitely. Our
17 agency has been budgeted for that number, and we have
18 the vacancy, which is equal to the pre-COVID
19 pandemic. So, we are happy with how, under the
20 Administration led by Mayor Eric Adams, we've been
21 getting the support that we need. And I've got to say
22 that not only the agency is able to fulfill the
23 numbers of vacancies that we have, and the numbers
24 now is equal to pre-pandemic. One, we do it because a
25 lot of people want to work at DOT. Second, because we

2 have a great internship program. But this time, I can
3 tell you, there's going to be hundreds of young
4 people, most of them from college, that they will
5 come and start doing an internship. You know, we have
6 a beautiful story from Carlos Bannister, who does our
7 M/WBE, to Margaret Forgione, who started doing an
8 internship at DOT. Today, in her case, she led the
9 six operation units that we have from our bridges,
10 roadways, sidewalks, signals, ferry, and others. So,
11 I, you know, Paul can take you into some detail, but
12 definitely, you know, we, every day, do the best to
13 fulfill any vacancy that we have in DOT. But we, as I
14 said before, as much money we have is much better for
15 us.

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: Yes,
17 thanks, Chair. I think you mentioned resurfacing. I
18 believe the PMMR numbers are just, it's a kink of
19 just when the PMMR gets released, and the way a
20 resurfacing schedule works, a resurfacing is over a
21 calendar year. The PMMR looks at fiscal year, so we
22 usually catch up at the second half of the calendar
23 year. I'm sure Margaret can add on that.

24 On the vacancy point, listen, we work
25 with OMB and City Hall to bring in our priority

2 vacancies. The seasonal workforce that helps the
3 resurfacing program is an excellent case. We were
4 just approved ahead of Monday's resurfacing season
5 starting about 600 part-time individuals who come in
6 during the resurfacing season, so we do work with OMB
7 and City Hall to make sure that we're at the
8 appropriate levels of staffing. I should also
9 mention, the Mayor just yesterday announced the
10 expansion of the pilot program that allows some
11 office workers to keep working remotely a couple days
12 a week. That has been incredibly helpful in terms of
13 recruitment and retention. We were running some
14 numbers on retention, and from November 2021 to May
15 2023, our average monthly separation was about 48,
16 and from June 2023 to today, our average monthly
17 separations fell to 38. So, that's actually about a
18 21 percent decrease in people leaving the agency, in
19 part because, Commissioner mentioned, it's just an
20 incredible place to work, but also the facilities
21 that the Administration has implemented, both in
22 terms of salary increases and also the ability to
23 work remotely.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is there an
25 impediment to hiring and filling vacancies? If so,

2 what is it? Are current salaries competitive enough
3 to attract quality candidates?

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: They
5 are. Listen, DOT is still under a two-for-one hiring
6 freeze. However, just recently, the Mayor, the
7 Commissioner, and the Budget Director have agreed to
8 lift that hiring freeze for engineering positions key
9 to our construction program. So, civil engineers,
10 construction project managers, electrical engineers,
11 traffic engineers, essentially the engineers that we
12 need to execute some of that work.

13 Listen, pay in the government is still,
14 and may be for near future, at least, lower than the
15 private sector. However, we still offer a defined
16 pension plan, which is obviously very attractive for
17 a lot of people. Our work week is 35 hours a week,
18 compared to the private sector that is usually 40
19 plus. We do provide some cash overtime and comp time
20 and healthcare and other ways that we're able to
21 attract good talent.

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And also, DOT's
23 agency, again, in the last, I can say from my
24 previous role, right, having previous commission in
25 my time right now, definitely attract great talented

2 people. People graduating from CUNY, SUNY, Ivy League
3 college, they want to come at DOT. So, the reward
4 that people get, yes, we can sometimes can't compete
5 with, you know, some offer in the private sector, but
6 when someone come and work in DOT, an agency that
7 manages 25 percent of the land, that touches the life
8 of every individual, from parking, standing, the
9 meter, revocable consent, creating more than a
10 million square, a school field, or more public
11 safety, pedestrian plaza, I can tell you that DOT is
12 a place that is a matter of, you know, we continue
13 having the support, as we've been getting from the
14 Council, and working with OMB and this
15 Administration, but I was in Morocco three weeks ago,
16 and I can tell you, from any part of the globe, DOT
17 is the leading agency. Reimagining our public space,
18 there's no other city that had the lowest numbers of
19 pedestrian fatality as we have in New York City, when
20 we compare apple to apple. So, we cannot compare,
21 say, daylighting in this particular place in Jersey,
22 that only had 200,000 people, when New York City had
23 8.6 million people, the more density one, when last
24 year we received 64 million tourists. So, I feel,
25 again, that, you know, we continue inviting New

2 Yorkers, like we always have a good campaign, you
3 know, (INAUDIBLE) New York colleges, working, you
4 know, during my time, I also signed a memorandum
5 agreement between New York City Department of
6 Transportation and CUNY, where now we have a better
7 pipeline, recruiting engineers from city colleges
8 that graduated the largest numbers of black engineers
9 in the nation, to come and work at DOT. So, I feel
10 that with the work that we've been doing, leadership,
11 with the support that we have from Mayor Eric Adams,
12 definitely, you know, there's always going to be
13 challenging, we're filling out the vacancy, but I'm
14 proud with where we are today, close to 6,000 men and
15 women, responsible for the maintenance of 25 percent
16 City-owned land, guarantee a safe and efficient
17 movement of people and vehicles.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. The
19 PMMR currently does not present data on injuries
20 sustained by pedestrians on the sidewalk from
21 motorized vehicles. However, the number of motorized
22 vehicles routinely used in sidewalks has increased in
23 recent years. With the recent increase of food
24 delivery vehicles and two-wheel recreational
25 vehicles, data points surrounding safety to

2 pedestrians on sidewalks should be tracked and
3 publicly reported. Is DOT keeping track of the number
4 of injuries caused by micromobility vehicles?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yeah. So, the
6 answer is yes, but there are not that many that are
7 reported, and we work closely with NYPD to get those
8 statistics. One of the things that we are aware of is
9 that sometimes an incident that happens on the
10 sidewalk may not be reported to the police, right? If
11 someone, you know, knocks you down on a bicycle,
12 sometimes everyone just walks away, and so one of the
13 things we've been doing is building partnerships with
14 the big hospitals in the city to get their data as
15 well so it is a subject we care a lot about. We work
16 with NYPD to get the data we have, and we're working
17 on getting more data from the hospitals.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry
19 about that. Does DOT keep track of traffic
20 fatalities? If so, how many traffic fatalities were
21 reported in 2024, and what is the breakdown by
22 pedestrians, micromobility users, motor vehicle
23 drivers, and passengers?

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, and I can
25 say that we had a great Vision Zero Task Force at

2 DOT, and led by this Administration, Mayor Eric
3 Adams, it's the first time that NYPD keeps track
4 every week. For the first time, traffic violence is
5 also included in the report, the data collection that
6 the NYPD does. So, we do work very closely. Again, we
7 have our biweekly check-in between NYPD, Deputy
8 Mayors of Public Safety, and Deputy Mayor of
9 Operations, where both agencies are constantly
10 sharing reports, looking at the data. As I say, by
11 today, we have the lowest numbers of pedestrian
12 fatalities in the last 113 years. We're knocking on
13 the door, hoping that this will continue to be the
14 number. Eric and my team, they always alert me to not
15 celebrate so soon, because we still have the summer,
16 and we will have the winter. So far, we hope that
17 we're going to be ending in 2025 with the lowest
18 numbers. In 2023, we have the lowest numbers of
19 pedestrian fatalities in the last 113 years. And
20 that's because, again, the three E's of Vision Zero.
21 That's the E of Engineering, that's the E of
22 Education, that's the E of Automatic Enforcement.
23 Like, you know, what we have now, thanks to Governor
24 Hochul this year, there's going to be an increase of
25 600 locations on red light cameras. So we want to be

2 sure that drivers know that they want to be driving
3 at 45 and 55, go through the highway, but if they
4 come into the street of New York City, 25 miles per
5 hour is the speed limit. And the Automatic
6 Enforcement is also helping us to reduce those
7 crashes. So, in '24, we have a total of 53,758
8 injuries. By '23, we have 54,164. In '21, we have
9 51,718. So we do keep the track. And more than just
10 looking at the track, our team, led by Erin and
11 (INAUDIBLE) other members on DOT, they work day by
12 day with the NYPD to keep those tracks. And not only
13 look at the numbers, but it's also bringing
14 innovation and how we can continue taking any
15 necessary steps to improve safety for both
16 pedestrians and cyclists. And when we do improve
17 safety for pedestrians and cyclists, even the drivers
18 are safer.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. DOT
20 has implemented a number of tools to address
21 vehicular safety, but what steps has the agency taken
22 to ensure and protect pedestrians and motorists from
23 micromobility users?

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I hope, again,
25 that, you know, the language that was sent by Mayor

2 Eric Adams to the Council, it will take us to put
3 together a potential bill that will allow for us to
4 bring more accountability to those food app company.
5 Everyone should know that most of those, first of
6 all, 84 percent of New Yorkers, they're placing an
7 order once a week. And 23 percent of New Yorkers,
8 they're placing an order four times a week. So the
9 consumers, we put a lot of pressures on those men and
10 women, essential workers that deliver to our
11 apartments. When it comes to food, those delivery
12 workers, they are essential workers. So, what we want
13 is, again, working with you, Chair, and the rest of
14 the Members that we can work around the language sent
15 by Mayor Adams and his team and be able to work
16 around the bill that will make the food app company
17 more comfortable on how they also can do their part
18 to educate those e-bike delivery workers to also be
19 safe. But to all e-bike riders, we want for them to
20 know the message. It is not legal in New York City to
21 ride a bike in the sidewalk unless it's a child, and
22 especially e-bike. We also saw that in 2023, from the
23 27 cyclists that we lose, there were seven of them
24 that were not hit by any vehicle, and we saw patterns
25 about those using e-bike and hitting a wall and

2 falling by themselves, so we started a social media
3 campaign, one, educating those using e-bike, not only
4 delivery workers, for them to be smarter, and with a
5 campaign called Get Smart Before You Start, so that
6 they learn more how to maneuver the e-bike. And at
7 the same time, the same (INAUDIBLE) card, we also put
8 in the message to those who are using e-bike, knowing
9 that they also are responsible to protect
10 pedestrians, and especially our children and our
11 senior citizens. Today, and as we go with the Mayor
12 to any town hall meeting, and as you see in your
13 District, all New Yorkers, it doesn't matter the
14 socioeconomic and any composition, they ask a
15 question about how we can make those who use e-bike
16 accountable. This is priority for this
17 Administration, and we're working to address it.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
19 going to pivot to tractor trailer overnight parking.
20 On September 28, 2023, the City Council passed Intro.
21 Number 906-A, which requires the City to create off-
22 street parking for tractor trailers. The bill
23 requires DOT, DCAS, and DCP to coordinate on creating
24 off-street commercial parking in at least three

2 locations by December 31, 2025. What off-street
3 commercial parking has DOT created?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. So,
5 that project is still going on with our partners that
6 you mentioned at DCAS and City Planning, as well as
7 with EDC. We care very much about this, as the
8 Commissioner has said, and this is something to hear
9 about all over the city, Staten Island, Brooklyn,
10 Queens, Bronx, and it's a work that was going on
11 before that was passed and is continuing. I think one
12 of the things that we're excited about is that we're
13 getting prepared to launch our on-street overnight
14 truck parking, which is not exactly what the
15 legislation said, but while that's going on, we don't
16 want to be sitting on our hands. We want to try to
17 provide other ways to solve the problem, and part of
18 that is by providing spaces where those trucks can
19 park overnight. So, coming soon, we're going to be
20 setting those up in key places around the city, and
21 if that works, we may find more locations as well,
22 while still working with our partners on the off-
23 street locations as well.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Can you please
25 provide an update on the timeline for implementation

2 and the steps DOT has taken in conjunction with other
3 City agencies thus far?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yeah. So,
5 like you said, we're with this multi-agency task
6 force. In addition to those key agencies, we've been
7 working with PD, Sanitation, EDC, DCAS, DCP, as well
8 as the Sheriff's Office on the enforcement side, and
9 we're all looking at our own facilities, right? DOT
10 has a certain number of parking facilities that we
11 own and other pieces of land. We're doing an
12 investigation to see if any of those have the right
13 geometry and the right amount of space for providing
14 overnight truck parking. Other agencies are doing the
15 same. EDC is also engaging with the private sector
16 because some of those sites may be quicker for
17 standing up, so all of the agencies are working
18 together to explore all those avenues and to put the
19 report together.

20 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And you remember,
21 Chair, that I think that we worked together with the
22 Mayor like two years ago in Queens with a Police
23 Commissioner in hand and the Sheriff removing those
24 trucks were illegally parked in some area. So from
25 working with the multi-agency, Sheriff and NYPD, this

2 continued being a priority to identify those streets
3 where trucks were not allowed to put those in some
4 location and also to work with the pilot projects,
5 also charging in those areas where commercial truck
6 will be allowed. So definitely this is priority for
7 this Administration and working together with this
8 body review, I know that we have to address this. We
9 should know that all truck that we see in the street,
10 many cases, they are in community where also we heard
11 from electives about these are also our
12 constituencies. We just want to be sure that everyone
13 knows that, you know, as I said before, we live in a
14 density city, and trucks, you know, that are not
15 allowing residential area, definitely we are
16 continuing working with NYPD, the Sheriff, and City
17 Hall to address them.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No,
19 absolutely. And that blitz definitely helped to show
20 the potential of what could happen with enforcement
21 and towing of the trucks, and I actually just sent a
22 letter earlier this week to the Mayor requesting that
23 another blitz be done. And we understand it is a
24 balancing act because some of those truck drivers are
25 people who live within the community and have no way

2 to park. That's why Intro. 906 is so critical for
3 communities like that.

4 How much funding does DOT estimate it
5 would need to build municipal lots to alleviate
6 overnight parking congestion and illegally parked
7 trucks?

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We don't have a
9 put any number, but I'm more than happy to look at
10 and follow with you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
12 Does DOT coordinate with NYPD regarding illegal truck
13 parking enforcement? If so, how often are points of
14 contact made regarding enforcement?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I think
16 that we address it as you say, Chair, also, you know,
17 we work every, you know, in a concerted collaboration
18 with interagency between NYPD, Sheriff, and us
19 addressing that. But as I say, and Eric Beaton also,
20 Deputy Commissioner, address it, we definitely do a
21 lot of work together.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yeah. And we
23 have a task force that meets monthly, including NYPD,
24 as well as many other times that we work with NYPD
25 over any given week.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
3 going to move to outdoor dining. According to a
4 recent report on outdoor dining by the Comptroller,
5 just 40 out of 4,000 outdoor dining applications have
6 been processed since the new outdoor dining law took
7 effect. Also, the Fiscal 2025 November Plan added
8 176,000 for additional eight headcount positions to
9 process outdoor dining applications. Have all of
10 these positions been filled?

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes. And not only
12 those positions that, you know, we had a great
13 division of inspectors and review of planning so we
14 have dozens of members in right now working as we are
15 speaking, reviewing all the applications. One thing
16 that we should know is that before COVID, our city,
17 as a former Council Member, if you ask me in which
18 area, basically you have sidewalk, I can tell you
19 which were them because there was no more than five.
20 So sidewalk used to be what is now dining out. It's
21 something that was only in the middle- and upper-
22 class communities. It is now that, you know, during
23 COVID that we see dozens of, you know, restaurants
24 responding to the need of how keeping distance,
25 people putting tables and chairs. I think that, you

2 know, that dining out is one of the best example
3 level of collaboration between the Council and City
4 Hall where we decided to learn, you know, and you
5 hold many hearings here. You heard from the community
6 about their feedback of dining out. What used to be
7 only 1,200 dining out that we have in our city. By
8 today, we had almost 3,000 applications being
9 conditional approved. As the bill was passed by the
10 Council, there's a process to a lot of reviewing
11 through community board, elected official, but I can
12 say that we all, Council and Administration, we
13 should be very proud about by April 1st, there's
14 going to be already, by today, there's almost 3,000
15 applications being conditional approved. The sidewalk
16 as was voted by the City Council can be a year-round
17 so this establishment already they have the tables
18 and chairs in the sidewalk, but when it came to the
19 roadway, the program will be starting on April 1st,
20 and DOT is allowing those who being conditional
21 approved to start next Tuesday, putting the setup
22 already in the roadway. So, New York City, Dining Out
23 NYC is the largest and the best of the nation, and we
24 are only competing with Paris. And that's because all
25 the work that we did together, the Council and the

2 Administration, so anyone can say by X day there was
3 40 and 60, but we have a dozen of planning review
4 that we have at DOT. The most important and we should
5 focus about April 1st. So, by April 1st, there's
6 going to be around 3,000 applications conditional
7 approved. Again, when we talk about the 12,000 that
8 we had during COVID, that was 12,000 that happened
9 from '20, some people remove it. When we went now to
10 go, one after another, we are inspector, there was
11 around 6,000 in business that they had, set up in the
12 street, so all of us should be very happy that by
13 today, there's almost 3,000 applications conditional
14 approved, most of them already with the tables and
15 chairs on the roadway, which is a year around, but
16 the conditional that the temporary one that go from
17 April 1st to November 30th, there's going to be
18 already the business owner, the restaurant, and they
19 can start it next Tuesday. If they being conditional
20 approved, putting the set up in the roadway.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Does DOT
22 require additional funds to hire more staff to
23 process the applications? And if not, what is the
24 reason for the lag in process and time?

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: As
3 you mentioned, Chair, we were funded for this Fiscal
4 Year. We're working with OMB and City Hall to make
5 sure that we have the full funding of the program
6 moving forward. We do believe we have the appropriate
7 level of staffing for this program for both the
8 influx of applications and the applications moving
9 forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Sorry. Can you
11 repeat that?

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: Yes,
13 happy to. The short answer is yes, we were funded for
14 Fiscal '25 as just a one-year funding, but we're
15 working with OMB and City Hall to make sure we have
16 the appropriate level of funding in the baseline to
17 make sure that the program is properly staffed for
18 both the current set of applications that they're
19 reviewing and also the work that will continue for
20 the permanent program.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
22 Next, we're going to hear from Council Member
23 Restler.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Oh, great. Thank
25 you so much. Commissioner and team, great to see you.

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: First of all,
3 happy birthday.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you very
5 much. That's very kind of you, Commissioner. It's
6 always great to have you back in the City Council,
7 and thank you, Chair Brooks-Powers, for your
8 extraordinary endurance on what I think is one of the
9 longer hearing days of the year. I'll try to stick
10 with you as long as I can.

11 I have a few questions for you. The
12 first, though, I just want to dig in on is hiring.
13 I'm really concerned. I think, Commissioner, I
14 probably raise the same issues with you every year.
15 I'm consistent, if nothing else. I believe in the
16 agency. I'm grateful for my partnership with DOT. I
17 think that the people that you put around you and the
18 team that you built has done a good job. I probably
19 annoy Keith Bray more than any person in the City of
20 New York, and I'm grateful that he returns my phone
21 calls. The intergov team and everybody, top down, I'm
22 grateful for your partnership, but you can't do your
23 job and execute in all the ways that you want if you
24 don't have the staff. My understanding from looking
25

2 over the data is that we're at about a 10-plus
3 percent, 10.6 percent vacancy rate. Is that right?

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I will tell you,
6 two weeks ago, we were sitting here, and the First
7 Deputy Director at OMB testified that OMB is getting
8 back to agencies in a two-week time period to approve
9 hiring. When you send candidates to OMB for approval,
10 are you getting that? Are you getting responses in
11 two weeks to be able to move forward with candidates?

12 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I think that
13 there's nobody else in this body that knows City Hall
14 better than you, Council Member. Look, we all have to
15 navigate with our reality, with the staffing, you
16 know, and there's not anything different on Mayor
17 Adams' Administration from de Blasio to Bloomberg to
18 Giuliani when it came to staffing.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Do you have a
20 two-for-one in place right now?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: No. Thanks to
22 Mayor Eric Adams and Jacques from OMB, we have the
23 lift of freezing for engineers, so I think that...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So engineers are
25 not subject to two-for-one, but overwhelmingly, the

2 vacancies in your agency are subject to a two-for-one
3 hiring. So, to say that we don't have something
4 different than previous Administrations, that was not
5 the policy for the overwhelming portion of the de
6 Blasio Administration, and yet it has remained in
7 place under this Mayor despite the surplus we have in
8 place for this year and next so hiring has been held
9 up by OMB at every single turn. I just would like a
10 timeline, just to ask the question plainly. What's
11 the approximate timeline it takes for a candidate to
12 OMB (CROSS-TALK)

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Again...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: To have approval?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Again, I haven't
16 finished answering the first question. What I say on
17 the staffing is about definitely we have a lot of
18 support from Mayor Eric Adams, from Jacques at OMB
19 and his Deputy Commissioner at OMB. I feel that, you
20 know, with the limited-resource city that we are,
21 we've been getting enough resources for us to do our
22 job.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate
24 that. I can point to some metrics in the PMMR where I
25 think DOT would like to do better around improving

2 safety on our streets. I know that the intentions are
3 right, but (TIMER CHIME) you can't do without the
4 staff. So a 10-plus percent vacancy rate is not an
5 ideal scenario. You have that headcount for a reason.
6 I'm just looking to understand, when you send a
7 candidate to OMB, what's the average timeline it
8 takes to get that candidate approved?

9 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And we go case by
10 case, and we had a great team, again, led by Paul
11 Ochoa, your good friend, and all the division.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I love Paul. I'm
13 not criticizing Paul. I'm trying to get an answer on
14 how long it takes to get OMB approval.

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So, I can pass
16 that one to Paul, but I can say, Council Member
17 Lincoln, we are in the same pre-pandemic vacancy
18 today so definitely the work has been done. The
19 additional funding that we have at DOT, from 1.1
20 billion that we have in '22 to 1.5 billion that we
21 have today definitely speaks to how much we've been
22 getting support from Mayor Eric Adams for us to do
23 our job.

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
25 Yeah. Thanks for the question, Council Member, and

2 thanks for the advocacy. I was mentioning to the
3 Chair that we do work with OMB and City Hall to make
4 sure that our priority hires are approved. I was just
5 talking about the seasonal hires. We brought in about
6 600 seasonal hires just this past Monday. Those were
7 approved on time to make sure that we meet our...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Outside of
9 seasonal hires, outside of priority hires, just for
10 the regular person that's working at DOT that we're
11 trying to get in to fix street lights, to get issues
12 resolved in a timely fashion, what's the average
13 timeline it takes when you send a name to OMB? Is it
14 two weeks? Is it a month? Is it six months? Are you
15 tracking it?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: We
17 work with them. It could take a couple months.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right. I have
19 never heard an agency ever tell me that they're
20 getting responses from OMB in two weeks, which is
21 what OMB testified to a couple weeks ago. We want to
22 help. We allocate the headcount for a reason, right?
23 We believe that that's what DOT should be staffed at.
24 There's been a huge hiring push over these three
25 years with hiring halls and different things, or

2 there was, I think they've all died, but there had
3 been a big hiring push earlier in the Administration,
4 and yet, to your point, Commissioner, we're still in
5 the same place from a headcount standpoint. We
6 haven't actually addressed the vacancy rate. We need
7 help. And you're doing the best you can to identify
8 candidates, but if it takes two, three, four, five
9 months to get OMB's response, people don't wait. If
10 they can get other jobs, they get other jobs, because
11 who has the ability to wait for a job for five or six
12 months from the time you get an offer to the time you
13 actually can start? And OMB is clearly holding us up
14 to save money and pinch pennies at the expense of DOT
15 doing your job at the level that we all expect. And
16 the work you do is so important. I believe in the
17 agency. I believe in the leadership that you have in
18 place, and I am deeply disappointed that we continue
19 to struggle with a 10 percent vacancy that is
20 undermining the efficacy of the agency.

21 I have talked for too long. I will see if
22 the Chair will allow me to do a second round, because
23 I would love to talk about some substantive issues as
24 well but thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: But, yeah, but
3 there is cases where we've been approved in two
4 weeks.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I hear you.
6 Priority hires, seasonal hires is different.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Not only
8 seasonal. Not only seasonal.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Not only
10 seasonal, not priority. We have many cases where
11 we've been approved..

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, because it
13 is your birthday, because TLC is here waiting, and
14 we're a little behind, I will allow you to ask one
15 more question for your birthday.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: One more. Oh,
17 gosh. I have two.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: All right. You
19 get two. One for the baby.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Two. Oh, that is
21 the best.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm not going
23 to be nice in the next hearing, though.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm skipping TLC.
3 I won't ask. These will be my TLC questions. I'll
4 come back for DDC.

5 Commissioner, two questions. One is on
6 McGinnis. I want to thank you and your team for doing
7 a tremendous job on McGinnis. I think things have
8 been working incredibly well. We're just looking for
9 data to show what are the safety improvements that
10 we're seeing, what impact on congestion, how are
11 things working? Could we get a briefing set up in the
12 next month to understand how things have been working
13 to date so that we can update our community
14 accordingly?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We can follow
16 with you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you. Great.
18 I'm seeing nods. Perfect.

19 Second question is the BQE. You know,
20 this was clearly, I think, the number one priority
21 for Deputy Mayor Joshi. She was a great public
22 servant but no longer a part of the Administration.
23 Considering the tremendous chaos in Washington and
24 the fact that she's no longer here to spearhead
25 things at City Hall, it just seems totally

2 unrealistic that the Adams Administration plans have
3 a path forward. It's the most complex engineering
4 project, multi-billion-dollar project, requires
5 federal support. Without it, we need to think Plan B.
6 What we have requested from DOT, myself and the other
7 local elected officials who represent the Triple
8 Cantilever, is that we craft a stabilization plan
9 together to make sure that the structure is safe for
10 the next 15 to 20 years. We know your team monitors
11 the safety day-to-day carefully and they do a
12 diligent job, but we want to make sure that we're
13 looking a little further ahead and have that plan in
14 place. Could we get a commitment for a working
15 meeting in the next month with the local elected
16 officials, DOT, and some of the outside experts
17 you've been working with so that we can talk through
18 what are the stabilization and safety plans, planning
19 that's needed to preserve the Triple Cantilever
20 structure for the next 15 to 20 years?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The vision for
22 the future, the BQE, is a vision for Mayor Eric
23 Adams, and previous Deputy Mayor Joshi, myself, Jeff
24 as a new Deputy Mayor, we will continue following
25 that path. Whatever place we were two weeks ago,

2 we'll just continue doing our planning around the
3 BQE.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I appreciate and
6 thank your leadership and your support as Congress
7 Members, Assembly Members, everyone that understands
8 that the BQE is one of those projects that sometimes
9 we would do groundbreaking planning, community
10 engagement, hopefully groundbreaking the future, and
11 other people in government that we see ribbon
12 cutting. But I definitely believe that, again, as
13 this being one of the priority infrastructures for
14 Mayor Eric Adams, we will continue. Again, having a
15 meeting with you, nothing has changed. We will
16 continue. There's a down payment of 1.7 billion
17 dollars that the City has secured for the BQE, so
18 definitely getting additional funding for this big
19 project is important, not only for the residents of
20 Brooklyn, of the city, but for those from Long Island
21 to Staten Island is very critical. And this is the
22 type of project that is one of the most ambitious
23 infrastructure projects, and we still are aiming for
24 NEPA to begin this spring. So, you are part of all
25 the community, elected official engagement, but we

2 have not changed the direction because this is the
3 direction. The Deputy Mayor, myself, and most
4 important, the leadership of Mayor Eric Adams.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But could I get
6 an answer to the question of, we'd like to have a
7 separate working meeting to do stabilization
8 planning. So, if the NEPA process and Mayor Adams'
9 aspirational plans don't end up working out, that we
10 have an alternative safety stabilization plan in
11 place to keep our community safe and riders safe.
12 That's what we've been looking for. We think that
13 it's a very difficult political environment to get
14 his plan across the finish line. Accordingly, we'd
15 like to make sure that there are alternative secure
16 stabilization plans in place.

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. There's not
18 other city that has a Bridge Director as Paul
19 Schwartz as we have it here.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I like Paul.

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm not
23 criticizing Paul.

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Not only, and
25 again, I do appreciate it because we say in meeting

2 that we have with the electeds and those, you know,
3 this is the first time that we've been taking so far
4 the vision and the planning on the BQE. So again,
5 there's no reason of why we should move away from how
6 we've been engaging, planning together. We are
7 responsible again for the BQE and another 799 bridges
8 and tunnels that we have in the city. We have 17
9 billion capital for the next 10 years for bridges.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: This BQE is in
12 the state of repair. It requires a lot of money to
13 keep it as it is, but the BQE is a safe corridor that
14 we have as we speak.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate it.
16 Hundreds of millions of dollars have been pushed out
17 from this five-year capital plan from the beginning
18 of this Administration to outyears that should have
19 been invested in stabilizing the BQE. Your
20 Administration chose to take a different approach.
21 This project requires my approval. It will be a
22 ULURP, and there will be home rule messages through
23 Parkland LA Nation that require my sign-off. We are
24 not on a path to approval. I want to be very plain.
25 We need to start planning for Plan B. We need a

2 stabilization plan. I am asking for a meeting to
3 begin that work so that we have an alternative
4 approach if this vision does not end up working out.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Commissioner,
6 can you agree to the meeting?

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: He's part of the...

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But he's
9 calling for a meeting now. Can you (CROSS-TALK)

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We can talk, but
11 I can tell you that the hundreds of millions of
12 dollars that we invest in the BQE keep that bridge in
13 the state of good repair.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But can we do
15 the meeting? I just want a yes or no. Yes? It sounds
16 like a yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you, Chair.
18 I appreciate you considering it. I will follow up
19 with you, Commissioner. Thank you all for your time
20 today.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thanks,
22 Council Member.

23 And thank you all. There were some other
24 questions I had, but like I said before, I'll put
25

2 them in writing and look forward to hearing back. Did
3 you get an answer for Council Member Won?

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: No. But we'll get
5 back to you today.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. We'll be
7 looking for that. We'll be seeing you in a couple of
8 weeks again anyway. Two times for April. Okay. Thank
9 you, DOT.

10 Next, we'll have TLC.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Okay. Thank you.

12 I'm Mark Chen, Council to the Committee on
13 Transportation and Infrastructure. Our next panel
14 will be from the Taxi and Limousine Commission. Chair
15 and Commissioner of the Taxi and Limousine
16 Commission, David Do; General Counsel, Sherryl Eluto;
17 Deputy Commissioner for Operations, People, and
18 Innovation, Evan Hines; and Deputy Commissioner for
19 Policy and Community Affairs, James DiGiovanni.

20 I will now administer the oath. Please
21 raise your right hands.

22 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
23 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
24 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
25 questions?

2 COMMISSIONER DO: I do.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI: I do.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EVANS: I do.

5 GENERAL COUNSEL ELUTO: I do.

6 COMMISSIONER DO: Thank you. You may begin
7 when ready.

8 COMMISSIONER DO: Good afternoon, Chair
9 Brooks-Powers and esteemed Members of the Committee
10 on Transportation and Infrastructure. I also want to
11 wish Council Member Restler a happy birthday.

12 My name is David Do, Chair and
13 Commissioner of the New York Taxi and Limousine
14 Commission. With me is TLC's General Counsel, Sherryl
15 Eluto, TLC's Deputy Commissioner for Operations,
16 People and Innovation, Evan Hines, and TLC's Deputy
17 Commissioner for Policy and Community Affairs, James
18 DiGiovanni. We are grateful for your invitation to
19 provide an update on TLC's regulated industries and
20 the fiscal state of the agency.

21 TLC is a relatively small agency with a
22 large mission to regulate a taxi and for-hire
23 industry of nearly 300,000 licensees, from driver to
24 base operators and vehicle owners. Through a strong
25 fiscal management, the agency is continuing to

2 deliver for New Yorkers, and it is my hope that the
3 hearing is an opportunity to build on the progress of
4 the last fiscal year.

5 As I reported at the oversight hearing
6 held by this Committee last month, the TLC's
7 regulated industries are in a stable position, and we
8 are optimistic about the future of for-hire
9 transportation. In Calendar Year 2024, across all
10 industries, there were over 300 million trips
11 completed. In comparison to the previous year,
12 overall trips have increased by 4.4 percent. Each
13 sector of our regulated industries is unique, and
14 there is some variation across each type. Taxi trips
15 have increased by 7.5 percent from Calendar Year 2023
16 to Calendar Year 2024. Importantly, yellow taxi
17 drivers' wages have reached new heights, in part due
18 to the meter rate of fare increase TLC passed in
19 2022. The agency estimates that between 70 to 75
20 percent of yellow taxi drivers are full-time drivers,
21 and the median earnings for this group are now 60,000
22 per year compared to 55,000 in 2019.

23 The high-volume for-hire vehicle sector,
24 the largest segment of our regulated industry,
25 completed over 239 million trips in Calendar Year

2 2024, compared to about 232 million in Calendar Year
3 2023, representing a 3 percent increase. We also saw
4 similar driver earning increase in the sector as
5 well. The medium earnings for full-time drivers
6 before taxes and expenses are now 63,000 in
7 comparison to 50,000 in 2019, which is a result of
8 the TLC's robust driver payrolls authorized by Local
9 Law 150 of 2018.

10 Moreover, non-high volume for-hire
11 vehicles continue to show signs of progress as well,
12 completing 19.7 million trips in Calendar Year '24.
13 This is an 18 percent increase to Calendar Year '23.

14 The commuter van industry is beginning to
15 show signs of recovery, with 43 vans in service
16 compared to 34 at the beginning of 2024. This may be
17 in part due to the Empire State Development's
18 Commuter Van Stabilization Program. Through this
19 program, eligible applicants can receive up to 40,000
20 to help offset the cost of annual commuter van auto
21 insurance policies, as well as receive reimbursements
22 for specific vehicle safety upgrades, including
23 advanced driver assistance, dash cams, and GPS
24 tracking.

2 But this progress has not been without
3 significant challenges. One factor is the instability
4 of the for-hire vehicle insurance market created by
5 American Transit Insurance Company's 46-year saga of
6 insolvency. To be clear, TLC does not regulate
7 insurance companies, but the agency does set
8 insurance requirements, including no-fault minimums,
9 to ensure that drivers, passengers, pedestrians,
10 cyclists, and other roadway users are adequately and
11 quickly compensated for crashes involving TLC-
12 licensed vehicles. Importantly, this coverage differs
13 from liability insurance because it is available
14 immediately to crash victims without the need of
15 time-consuming and expensive litigation. We are
16 working closely with our partners in New York State's
17 Department of Financial Services to ensure that any
18 impacts related to American Transit Insurance
19 Company's insolvency on our regulated fleets,
20 drivers, and ultimately passengers are mitigated. We
21 are reviewing and monitoring proposed language in the
22 State budget that will aid in returning the company
23 to solvency and increase competition in commercial
24 insurance marketplace.

2 A second major obstacle was the use of
3 lockouts in Calendar Year '24 by Lyft and Uber. The
4 main purpose of these lockouts was to artificially
5 inflate the utilization rate in TLC's driver pay
6 formula to avoid paying drivers who had already been
7 onboarded to work for Lyft and Uber. Under the
8 current rule structure, drivers are paid for trip
9 time and trip distance, which are divided by the
10 utilization rate to capture total working time across
11 the entire high-volume industry. Lyft and Uber get a
12 credit of 58 percent utilization for driver pay
13 calculations, while only having to hit 53 percent.
14 This flexibility is intended to incentivize companies
15 to avoid lockout due to minor fluctuations in
16 utilization. However, in 2024, the utilization rates
17 began to fall below 53 percent, which meant that
18 driver pay calculations would reflect the actual
19 utilization rate from the previous Calendar Year and
20 not 58 percent, resulting in the companies having to
21 pay the drivers more. Instead of paying drivers, as
22 we have long asserted, the companies made the
23 deliberate choices to game the system by locking out
24 drivers in order to artificially push the utilization
25 rates back over 53 percent. They have failed to

2 manage supply and demand. As a consequence, on
3 February 5, 2025, TLC held a public hearing to
4 propose changes that would increase minimum per-pay
5 rates to account for increased driver expenses,
6 changes the way utilizations are calculated and
7 applied, and add restrictions to lockouts to ensure
8 that drivers have reasonable expectations of their
9 working hours and incomes. Specifically, the proposed
10 amendments split the utilization rate into two, a
11 time-based and distance-based utilization rate to
12 prevent manipulation by the high-volume, for-hire
13 vehicle companies and capture driver working time
14 more accurately. In addition, the proposed rules
15 require the company to provide 72 hours' notice
16 before restricting drivers' access to the platform
17 and prevent companies from logging a driver off mid-
18 shift except in certain limited circumstances.

19 Recognizing the important nature of these rules, TLC
20 extended the comment period to March 5, 2025, to give
21 our licensees additional time to review the proposals
22 and voice their opinions. We are reviewing the
23 feedback we received on these proposals and plan to
24 vote on the final rules in the coming weeks.

2 In addition to raising driver pay rates,
3 we also passed new rules to implement Local Laws 33
4 and 56 of 2024, allowing for our formal procedure for
5 the licensing of businesses that provide electronic
6 tablets and software for interior advertising and
7 for-hire vehicles. These rules were crafted to ensure
8 that drivers share in the financial benefits of this
9 innovation. Our rules state that an interior
10 advertising provider must pay at least 25 percent of
11 gross revenues generated by the interior advertising
12 system to each driver using or operating an approved
13 in-vehicle tablet.

14 We listened to the feedback from the
15 driving community and added language to ensure
16 tipping could be added as a feature of high-volume,
17 for-hire services. To protect these hard-fought
18 gains, we also included a framework to ensure TLC has
19 the necessary data to examine the compensation
20 received by drivers, issue violations if the
21 companies do not comply with the requirements, and
22 adjust the rate as needed.

23 I'm also pleased to report that we have
24 already exceeded this year's requirement of 15
25 percent of trips dispatched to electric or

2 wheelchair-accessible vehicles as part of the TLC's
3 Green Ride Rule Package. Lyft and Uber are
4 dispatching about 20 percent of trips to electric and
5 wheelchair-accessible vehicles, so we're on track to
6 hit our 2026 target ahead of schedule. As of January
7 31st, 12,635 for-hire vehicles out of the 105,873
8 licensed by TLC are electric, or 12 percent. By
9 requiring a shift from gas to electric, we have
10 reduced CO2 emissions by more than 19,000 metric
11 tons.

12 We remain committed to ensuring that New
13 Yorkers have cleaner air and quieter roads, but
14 driving electric is not only beneficial for our
15 public health and environment, but also for drivers.
16 As the Electrification in Motion report detailed,
17 for-hire EV drivers' average monthly pay per trip is
18 consistently about 2 to 3 dollars more compared to
19 those in gas-powered vehicles. Electrification has
20 many benefits for the driving community and the
21 public at large, and we will continue to monitor our
22 progress and review policy changes at the federal
23 level as necessary.

24 Next, I would like to preview TLC's
25 Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year '26, which is

2 projected to be approximately 58 million dollars,
3 broken down into 45 million in personnel services and
4 13 million in other-than-personal services. This is
5 an overall decrease of nearly 2.3 million or 3.8
6 percent from the previous year. This expected change
7 is the result of the Program to Eliminate the Gap
8 Savings Initiative and is mostly due to less-than-
9 planned contractual spending, vacancy reductions, and
10 efficiency in other than personal services.

11 Currently, the TLC's authorized headcount
12 is 546 for Fiscal Year 2026, which in comparison to
13 Fiscal Year 2025 is a decrease of 9. This is due to a
14 reduction of unassigned heads rather than a decrease
15 in staffing. TLC is working closely with OMB and
16 Mayor Adams to meet our staffing needs by backfilling
17 critical positions, and we actually are in the
18 process of hiring additional uniform team members.
19 The Mayor has been a strong advocate for increasing
20 the quality of life for all New Yorkers and
21 understands that, as an enforcement agency, TLC is a
22 partner in this effort.

23 As we continue to fill vacancies at the
24 agency, I'm proud to announce that 16 TLC enforcement
25 cadets graduated from the academy in 2024 and now are

2 keeping our city streets safe. These new officers are
3 the first class of the 100 enforcement officers that
4 TLC committed to hiring at the last budget hearing
5 using a combination of existing vacancies and new
6 funding. Throughout this year, we are continuing our
7 efforts to hire and onboard 84 new officers until we
8 reach this goal.

9 Overall, through strong management and
10 savings, TLC remains in solid fiscal health, and we
11 will continue to monitor revenue collections and work
12 with OMB to make adjustments as needed.

13 Next, I will share an update regarding
14 TLC's capital projects. Our safety and emissions
15 inspection facility in Woodside, Queens is currently
16 in the first phase of a 180-million-dollar
17 reconstruction. This project is being managed by the
18 Department of Design and Construction and is expected
19 to substantially be completed by the end of 2028. The
20 project is currently at 18.2 percent completion and
21 is needed to mitigate structural degradation as well
22 as to meet an increasing demand for inspection
23 services. Once completed, the new facility will
24 increase inspection capacity by 200 cars per day and
25 reduce street congestion associated with entering and

2 exiting vehicles. Notably, the scope of the project
3 was expanded to include 70 new electric vehicle
4 chargers, including 30 Level 3 fast chargers, to
5 support TLC's Green Rides initiative. The City will
6 seek partial reimbursement of the installation of
7 chargers from grants such as Con Edison's Power Ready
8 program. For TLC employees, there will also be a new
9 administrative building, a parking garage, and
10 vehicle testing equipment. The current inspection
11 facility remains operational while the new
12 construction is underway.

13 Across all of TLC's projects, the agency
14 is committed to ensuring that vendors reflect the
15 diversity of New York City. The Minority and Women-
16 Owned Business Enterprises program expands
17 opportunities for local entrepreneurs to access
18 government contracts and grow their business. TLC's
19 current Fiscal Year 2025 M/WBE utilization rate is 67
20 percent, or about 1.5 million in M/WBE contracts,
21 which reflects that we are only mid-year through the
22 Fiscal Year. I am confident that by June 30, TLC will
23 reach a utilization rate very near the same
24 percentage of last year. The number reflects
25 utilization for eligible contracts, which do not

2 include intergovernmental contracts or requirement
3 contracts. That being said, we are still at our
4 agency's goal for M/WBE utilization, which is 60
5 percent, and far above the City's goal of 30 percent.
6 M/WBE vendors were procured for services required to
7 upgrade our licensing systems through the agency's
8 TLC Connect project and revise our educational course
9 curriculum. Through all of these contracts, we are
10 contributing to advancing equity in our City.

11 As I conclude my remarks, I would like to
12 thank all of the hardworking TLC employees that made
13 our achievements possible in the past year. I look
14 forward to collaborating with the Members of this
15 Committee as the budget process continues to ensure
16 that New York City continues to have the safest and
17 most well-regulated for hire industry in the country.
18 I'm now happy to answer any questions that you may
19 have about the TLC's budget or regulated industries.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
21 Commissioner. I'm going to start with commuter van
22 enforcement. I'd like to thank you and your team
23 upfront for working alongside my staff as well as DOT
24 as we continue to navigate the commuter van industry.
25 There are concerns as to whether TLC has sufficient

2 resources and personnel to carry out effective
3 commuter van enforcement. There is not an official
4 count on how many unlicensed commuter vans are on
5 city streets. However, it is believed that the number
6 has surged due to an expansion of the rules and an
7 increase in the cost to become licensed, including
8 insurance that costs up to 50,000 dollars a year. TLC
9 data shows the number of TLC-affiliated commuter vans
10 in service has shrunk by 93 percent since Calendar
11 Year 2015, with just 39 vehicles still licensed to
12 operate as of January 2025, down from 215 a decade
13 ago. Additionally, the number of licensed commuter
14 van drivers has shrunk. It is not clear how many
15 operators have shifted to driving vans that are not
16 licensed and how many have taken other jobs. What are
17 the costs of enforcement for TLC? How much is
18 budgeted in Fiscal 2025 and in the outer years? And
19 how much was spent in Fiscal 2024?

20 COMMISSIONER DO: Well, thank you, Council
21 Member and Chair, for setting up the working group
22 together so that we can discuss these very important
23 issues. In support of the State, through the Commuter
24 Van Stabilization Program, there was an 11-million-
25 dollar pot dedicated to commuter vans, and that

2 program is being implemented by Empire State
3 Development Corporation. They provide up to 40,000
4 dollars to support our commuter vans, including
5 insurance, dashcams, and other telematics to help
6 support lower insurance rates so that we have a
7 pathway to making sure that there are more commuter
8 vans on our streets that are legal. Last year when I
9 came, there were about 34 licensed commuter vans.
10 This year, through our efforts and through the
11 State's efforts, there are 43 licensed commuter vans,
12 and actually that number has now reached into the
13 60s.

14 The second part of your question is, what
15 are the enforcement mechanisms that we do to support
16 and to make sure that illegal commuter vans are not
17 operating on our city streets. We regularly work with
18 NYPD to ensure, and with our TLC police force, to
19 ensure that illegal commuter vans are not conducting
20 business and that we have a pathway for the
21 legalization of commuter vans. And I'll stop there. I
22 think that was a long-winded answer to answering your
23 questions. But again, we support your efforts to
24 making sure that there are commuter vans to provide

2 that last mile, oftentimes to the train stations, for
3 all residents in all five boroughs.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Is
5 TLC authorized to seize unlicensed vehicles?

6 COMMISSIONER DO: We are authorized to
7 seize unlicensed vehicles. It's a little bit
8 difficult because we have to make sure that we see
9 them in an illegal capacity twice in a row, and then
10 on the third time, we are able to seize them.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
12 that.

13 Next, I'm going to go to the PMMR rider
14 safety. The PMMR shows there has been an increase in
15 complaints lodged against TLC drivers, with 9,220 in
16 the first four months of Fiscal Year 2025, as
17 compared to 8,356 in the first four months of Fiscal
18 2024, a 10.3 percent increase. Over the last three
19 Fiscal Years, the number of complaints has been
20 steadily increasing. There were 16,629 complaints
21 made against TLC drivers in Fiscal 2022; 24,131 in
22 Fiscal 2023; and 28,025 in Fiscal 2024. Additionally,
23 the number of drivers eligible for prosecution has
24 been increasing, with 9,290 in Fiscal 2022; 13,087 in
25 Fiscal 2023; and 15,471 in Fiscal 2024. In the first

2 four months of Fiscal 2025, there were 6,914
3 complaints eligible for prosecution, an increase of
4 61.6 percent compared to the same period in Fiscal
5 Year 2024. This brings to light a serious concern
6 that passengers in TLC-operated vehicles may be
7 feeling less safe. Why have these metrics been going
8 in a negative direction?

9 COMMISSIONER DO: So, let me step back and
10 say I share your concerns for not only passenger
11 safety, driver safety, and safety of all roadway
12 users. Safety is our highest priority at the TLC. And
13 yes, consumer complaints have been steadily
14 increasing, and as you said, in the last Fiscal Year,
15 there was about 16,000, and then in this new Fiscal
16 Year, 23,000 consumer complaints. And that is a
17 result of the good job that our prosecution team is
18 doing. We are highly responsive to consumer
19 complaints. We update the complainants throughout the
20 process of what is going on. And in many cases,
21 right, a lot of the complainants know that we are
22 going to do something about it. And so, that is why
23 we have seen an increased number of complaints. But
24 throughout all of that, we have maintained our level
25 of service, ensuring that we are highly responsive

2 within our MMR requirements for consumer complaints.

3 But I would also like to say that, you know, we also
4 attempt to mitigate the amount of summonses that we
5 give to drivers. Summonses is not what we want to do,
6 but we want to stop recidivism so that things like
7 points don't add up, so that we don't have to suspend
8 drivers, and potentially even permanently revoking
9 their license. That is not what we want to do. And
10 so, we provide education opportunities and a renewal
11 course every three years during the licensing period
12 so that drivers know the basic rules of the roads to
13 ensure our safety.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER EVANS: Actually, on a
15 fiscal year-to-date basis, we are up 28 percent with
16 regards to eligible for prosecution.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Does TLC have
18 enough funding and staff to meet the needs for
19 enforcement, driver support, and case management?

20 COMMISSIONER DO: Yes, Council Member.
21 What we know is that Mayor Adams has been a leader in
22 improving the quality of life of all New Yorkers,
23 improving public safety. And last Fiscal Year, when I
24 came, within the budget, one of the few agencies that
25 got additional dollars, we got 5.3 million additional

2 dollars to hire 100 new TLC police officers. And like
3 I said in my testimony, we've hired 16 and have
4 exhausted the civil service list and will work
5 towards hiring another 84 TLC police officers to help
6 in the efforts to keep riders safe. And so, we share
7 your concerns, the Mayor shares your concerns, and
8 let's work together.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. For
10 the PMMR accessibility section, in the past, TLC
11 emphasized improving accessible and equitable service
12 was a top priority for the Commission. According to
13 the most recent PMMR, there are only 3,992
14 wheelchair-accessible vehicles. What kind of
15 assistance does TLC provide to drivers who are
16 converting to accessible vehicles?

17 COMMISSIONER DO: We are incredibly
18 passionate about our accessibility goals, both on the
19 FHV sector and the yellow taxi sector. In the yellow
20 taxi sector, we are close to our 50 percent target of
21 all yellow taxis that are active are wheelchair
22 accessible. As of this morning, we're at 47.1
23 percent, or close to 4,600 yellow taxis that are
24 wheelchair accessible. And actually, since that PMMR
25 was updated, Council Member, on the FHV side, we have

2 close to 7,000 wheelchair-accessible vehicles. And
3 actually, I'm looking at my numbers right now.
4 There's actually 7,514 FHV wheelchair accessible as
5 of February 2025. And so what we're doing is working
6 on the FHV side. The only way to get a TLC vehicle
7 license right now is to put on the road a wheelchair-
8 accessible FHV.

9 More to that, the second part of that is
10 on wheelchair accessibility, we recently also changed
11 our rules to improve customer service metrics, or
12 SLAs. There, 90 percent of trips have to be completed
13 within 10 minutes or less, making sure that we're
14 closer to providing the same level of service for all
15 users, including those who depend on a wheelchair-
16 accessible vehicle. And so, like you, Council Member,
17 Chair, we are the most accessible regulator in the
18 entire nation. And so, we have work to do. We will
19 continue that work. We will continue to make sure
20 that we work with you, our disability advocates, and
21 all residents to continue to make our industry as
22 accessible as possible.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Commissioner,
24 in terms of vacancy at the Commission, right now you
25 have a 29 percent vacancy rate, which is about one-

2 third of the agency. Do you feel that you have
3 sufficient staffing?

4 COMMISSIONER DO: Yeah. Why there is a 28
5 percent vacancy is because the Mayor helped the TLC
6 add 100 new heads in the last year. And so, what that
7 meant is that because we receive more lines for
8 hiring, and we were only able to hire 16 because we
9 have exhausted that civil service list, that is why
10 our vacancy rate is a little bit higher than some
11 others. But as a small agency, that's also impactful.
12 Any vacancy will increase that vacancy by a lot more.
13 But we are on track to hiring. We have 434
14 applicants. Because these are public safety roles,
15 they're not subject to the two-for-one. And so, we
16 have the green light to hire these public safety
17 positions and decrease our vacancy rate.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
19 Commissioner.

20 Moving to electrification. According to
21 TLC's Electrification in Motion Report released in
22 September 2024, most EV trips happen in Manhattan,
23 where the most trips overall happen. However, Queens
24 sees a higher proportion of EV trips. 24 percent of
25 the city's EV trips are in Queens, while only 20

2 percent of trips in all other vehicles occur in
3 Queens. The Bronx, on the other hand, sees 12.4
4 percent of gas-powered for-hire vehicle trips, but
5 only 10.5 percent of trips in electric for-hire
6 vehicles. What is the reason for this discrepancy?

7 COMMISSIONER DO: So, what we have done is
8 to make sure that we have better electric
9 infrastructure in all five boroughs. And just this
10 morning, I was at JFK to open 24 new fast-charging
11 stations in Queens. This is going to allow for
12 drivers to start in Queens and make sure that Queens
13 residents have the ability to get these green
14 vehicles. What also is in that Electrification in
15 Motion Report is drivers start where there are DCFCs,
16 or fast-charging stations. Since the Green Rides
17 Initiative, charging stations in New York City has
18 doubled. And what many folks have said to me is that
19 if there are more people who utilize electric
20 infrastructure, what that means is that they will
21 build more electric infrastructure, and that has come
22 true. Today, we have 12,668 EVs, and many of them are
23 located in the Borough of Queens.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And does TLC
3 have any plans to expand electric charging capacity
4 in boroughs other than Queens?

5 COMMISSIONER DO: Yeah. So, the DOT could
6 better answer this, but we are building some of the
7 first DCFCs, or Level 3 fast-charging stations, at a
8 municipal garage in the Bronx. There has also been
9 new charging infrastructure by companies like EVgo,
10 Tesla in Brooklyn. And so, there has been a need, and
11 many of the need is being met with additional EV
12 infrastructure. Last year, when, you know, I guess a
13 year and a half ago, when we released the additional
14 licenses, there was a dearth of EV infrastructure.
15 Today, through our EV task force at our agency, the
16 work of the Port Authority and at their airports,
17 we're building more charging infrastructure than ever
18 before. And that's not just for FHV drivers, but for
19 others who want to convert to a quieter vehicle, to a
20 more sustainable vehicle in their private vehicles as
21 well.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
23 going to move over now to insurance and liability
24 coverage. Personal injury protection, also known as
25 PIP insurance, also referred to as no-fault

2 insurance, is designed to cover medical expenses and
3 lost wages for drivers and passengers injured in
4 traffic collisions, regardless of fault. City Council
5 Intro. 1050 was recently heard at a TLC oversight
6 hearing. This bill would prohibit TLC from requiring
7 the vehicles it licenses to have no-fault liability
8 coverage in an amount greater than the amount
9 required by State law. The City currently requires
10 TLC vehicles to purchase 200,000 dollars of PIP
11 insurance coverage, four times greater than the
12 50,000-dollar amount required by the State. Why has
13 the City set the PIP insurance coverage requirements
14 for taxis and for-hire vehicles higher than the State
15 requirement?

16 COMMISSIONER DO: I want to preface that
17 I'm not an insurance expert, but what I guess I say
18 to that is that our requirements are 100,000 dollars
19 per person, 200,000 dollars in APIP, and 300,000
20 dollars of coverage per incident. During 1998, when
21 there were a lot of crashes, the TLC at that time
22 made the decision for additional coverage. Today, we
23 see additional crashes. Just more recently, on
24 Christmas Day at Herald Square in Manhattan, where
25 six people were injured, or in your Borough of

2 Queens, Council Member, where there was a crash at 2
3 a.m. on the Eve of New Year's, where there was one
4 pedestrian that was killed and two others injured.

5 Additional PIP provides that benefit. But again, we
6 are not opposed to lowering some of the minimums. In
7 fact, we want to work with you to overall look at how
8 we can provide safety while making sure that the
9 coverage is adequate. This is an open question, but
10 why liability coverage versus, maybe this is your
11 next question, why no fault? No fault is a lot
12 different because it provides coverage almost
13 immediately. By law, it provides coverage within 30
14 days, whereas the liability portion of the insurance
15 may be subject to litigation. Who is at fault? Are
16 there other people that are at fault as part of it?
17 Then it takes a long time, many years, to go through
18 the litigation process, where no fault, you've got to
19 respond to that claim within 30 days, no matter who
20 is at fault.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: To your point,
22 Commissioner, where you say that you're not an
23 insurance provider, has TLC worked with the insurance
24 industry when they set the 200,000-dollar PIP?

2 COMMISSIONER DO: It was in 1998 under
3 former Commissioner Doss that did the research to
4 look at why 100, 200, and 300 were the appropriate
5 numbers. We will continue to work with our industry
6 stakeholders, with DFS, with others, to make sure
7 that the numbers are consistent with what they are.
8 But at 200,000, it provides a bigger pool for all
9 injured to draw from.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, and
11 thank you, TLC.

12 COMMISSIONER DO: Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Okay. Hi. Thank
14 you. I'm Mark Chen, Counsel to the Committee on
15 Transportation and Infrastructure.

16 Our next panel will be from the
17 Department of Design and Construction, Executive
18 Deputy Commissioner Maggie Austin, Deputy
19 Commissioner and Chief Financial Officer Rachel
20 Laiserin, and Associate Commissioner Jeffrey
21 Margolies.

22 I will now administer the oath. Please
23 raise your right hands.

24 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
25 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this

2 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
3 questions?

4 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Thank you. You
6 may begin when ready.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LAISERIN: Good
8 afternoon, Chair Brooks-Powers and Members of the
9 Committee. I'm Rachel Laiserin, Deputy Commissioner
10 and Chief Financial Officer of the New York City
11 Department of Design and Construction. I'm joined by
12 Executive Deputy Commissioner Maggie Austin and
13 Associate Commissioner Jeff Margolies, as well as
14 members of the DDC's leadership team. We're happy to
15 be today on behalf of Commissioner Foley.

16 FY25 has been a time of growth and change
17 for DDC. We anticipate that the coming Fiscal Year
18 will be the same. Even as we continue our traditional
19 role of building City public buildings and
20 infrastructure, we are taking on more and more
21 responsibility for other programs, including borough-
22 based jails, coastal resiliency, and green
23 infrastructure. We are improving the way we pair
24 vendors, we are improving the way the City plans its
25 capital improvements, and we are improving our public

2 outreach with a new website later this year. Lastly,
3 we have continued to advance our alternative delivery
4 program to more effectively deliver projects and
5 continue to advocate in Albany for even more tools.

6 DDC builds on behalf of more than 25
7 agencies, plus numerous museums, cultural
8 institutions, and other non-profits that receive
9 funding from City sources. The January Capital
10 Commitment Plan for FY26 contains over 5.5 billion
11 dollars in new planned investments. This figure
12 includes over 2 billion dollars for infrastructure
13 division projects, close to 1 billion dollars for
14 public buildings and our support portfolio, and 2.56
15 billion dollars for our borough-based jails. Capital
16 spending for DDC varies year over year as it is
17 dictated by the agencies that sponsor our projects
18 and the funding we receive from them.

19 We advise our sponsors about scope and
20 cost, but ultimately priorities are policy-driven.
21 DDC's FY26 operating budget is 159 million dollars.
22 This includes 128 million dollars for personal
23 services and 31 million dollars for other-than-
24 personal services services. Our budgeted headcount is
25 1,177, and our total operating budget includes 140

2 million dollars for IFA and 19 million in City tax
3 levy funding.

4 In public buildings, we have over 70
5 projects in active design, 31 in procurement, and 93
6 in construction, with a total value of these projects
7 of approximately 12.9 billion dollars. In
8 infrastructure, we have 109 projects in active
9 design, 55 in procurement, and 89 in construction,
10 with a total value of approximately 11 billion
11 dollars.

12 We are very pleased to report that we
13 have reached an important milestone in our growing
14 portfolio of design-build projects. Within the coming
15 weeks, we will complete the City's first design-build
16 project outside of our borough-based jails program.
17 It's a new Parks maintenance facility at Orchard
18 Beach in the Bronx. This project, as described in the
19 Administration's recent Design-Build Progress Report
20 that was submitted to the State Legislature, will be
21 completed two and a half years faster than would have
22 been possible with the lowest bidder contracting and
23 with cost savings of 10 percent of the budget, or
24 around 3.6 million dollars on a 36-million-dollar
25 project. We currently have 22 design-build projects

2 in contract, including the borough-based jails,
3 public buildings, and infrastructure projects. Of
4 these 22 projects alone, the City is saving an
5 estimated 45 years of time and 1.3 billion dollars
6 using design-build. Among those projects are
7 contracts for raised crosswalks, ADA-compliant
8 pedestrian ramps, deep sewer manholes, and multiple
9 Parks restrooms bundled together.

10 In December, Albany gave us the ability
11 to use Contract Manager Build, or CM Build, for
12 library and cultural projects, as well as Progressive
13 Design Build for future resiliency projects. We have
14 already identified projects where we can apply both
15 of these new contracting methods, with procurement of
16 four CM Build projects starting next month and
17 Progressive Design Build later this year.

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN:

19 Last year at this hearing, DDC discussed Advanced
20 Capital Planning, ACP, which is how we work with
21 other agencies to provide the information and
22 technical expertise they need to plan holistically
23 for the long-term maintenance and necessary upgrades
24 of their capital assets. This type of overall capital
25 planning, as opposed to work being done on a

2 piecemeal or project-to-project basis, holds great
3 potential for the City to save time and money on
4 future projects. ACP has three main elements. A new
5 data portal we created that compiles already
6 available public buildings data in one location, a
7 method to gather the data that we don't already have
8 available to us, including inventories of mechanical
9 equipment, or whether a building complies with the
10 American with Disabilities Act, the ADA, and using
11 data to support holistic capital planning across
12 agency portfolios of properties, guided by DDC's
13 technical and engineering expertise. All three
14 elements are moving forward, and we currently have a
15 pilot program with the Queens and Brooklyn Public
16 Library Systems. We will continue to grow the overall
17 program.

18 Along with proactive planning, another
19 major DDC goal is improving internal processes so
20 that the industry finds it more desirable to work
21 with us. Vendors understandably love nothing more
22 than getting paid on time, and the payment process is
23 known to be arduous. Over the last year, DDC has
24 evaluated its payment process with the goal of paying
25 vendors more quickly and accurately by streamlining

2 the administrative burden. We analyzed more than 60
3 discrete forms and have worked to remove outdated
4 bureaucratic requirements such as wet signatures and
5 notarizations where not required by law. We also
6 worked with our sister construction agencies, DOT,
7 DEP, and Parks, to ensure that we're all asking for
8 the same information in a similar fashion. We're now
9 at the point of rolling out new simple and easy-to-
10 use payment request forms, along with a clear step-
11 by-step guide to the process for all.

12 The borough-based jails program continues
13 to be our largest alternative delivery program as
14 well as our largest overall. This spring, we will
15 issue a notice to proceed for the design-build team
16 that will create the new Manhattan facility, the last
17 of the four new jails to enter this phase. We will
18 soon have four more humane and secure facilities in
19 active construction. These complex projects greatly
20 benefit from design-build, allowing site prep to
21 begin early and foundation work to start prior to
22 design completion.

23 As we reported in the recent Preliminary
24 Mayor's Management Report, DDC remains a leading
25 agency in contract awards and payments to minority

2 and women-owned business enterprises, M/WBEs, and
3 through Fiscal 2024, the agency's M/WBE participation
4 was 24 percent for contracts subject to Local Law 1,
5 with 461.4 million dollars in awards. DDC remains the
6 leading Mayoral Agency in awards to M/WBEs, with
7 approximately 5.6 billion dollars awarded since
8 Fiscal Year 2015, which is 29 percent of all City
9 M/WBE awards. We're growing our M/WBE numbers in our
10 alternative delivery program as well, and this month,
11 we announced that our two most recent design-build
12 contract awards went to certified M/WBEs. The first,
13 the new Roy Wilkins Rec Center, is valued at 128
14 million dollars. The other is the Parks Restroom
15 Contract that was mentioned earlier, which is valued
16 at 22 million dollars. We continue to set ambitious
17 and disaggregated M/WBE goals in both the design
18 portion and the construction portion of our design-
19 build contracts, and we're seeing results of these
20 efforts.

21 DDC plays a large role in the City's
22 resiliency efforts, and that continues to grow as the
23 agencies we build for, such as DEP, DOT, and Parks,
24 dedicate more of their budgets to resiliency. In the
25 recent PMMR, in order to account for this work, we

2 reported new resiliency data. In the first four
3 months of the Fiscal Year, we installed 15,693 square
4 feet of porous pavement and 1,265 feet of coastal
5 protection. Coastal protection at ESCR and BMCR on
6 the Lower East Side is creating a 3.22-mile-long
7 flexible flood barrier while also enhancing
8 recreational opportunities. Last month, we
9 demonstrated for the media the new flood gates at
10 BMCR, which rise up from the ground using electrical
11 power. We expect our coastal resiliency project to
12 start in Red Hook in a few months. That project is
13 budgeted at 184 million dollars, and we will use a
14 system of flood walls, flip-up and sliding flood
15 gates, and sidewalk and roadway improvements.

16 At DDC, we recognize that we must adapt
17 each and every day by looking inward at our own
18 processes and empowering staff, outward to push for
19 new contracting tools, and continued collaboration
20 with our sponsors and across the boroughs to be more
21 transparent about our work and as policy and
22 priorities change. We will continue to build on these
23 efforts in Fiscal Year '26. Thank you again for the
24 opportunity to testify today.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I
3 wanted to start with construction worker safety.
4 According to the 2025 Deadly Skyline Report,
5 construction worker deaths have picked up in recent
6 years. The report notes that 30 construction workers
7 died on the job in New York City in 2023, which was
8 the deadliest year for construction workers in the
9 city since New York Committee for Occupational Safety
10 and Health began tracking the data in 2013. What is
11 DDC doing to ensure worker safety on the job sites?

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Good
13 afternoon, Chair. Thank you for the question. We
14 obviously take safety very importantly at DDC. Each
15 and every project, before it starts, has what's
16 called a site safety plan that's worked on directly
17 with the contractor and our experts in our Site
18 Safety Unit. We have approximately 100 staff that
19 work for our Site Safety and Environmental Unit, and
20 they look at each project individually to ensure that
21 what the contractor is proposing is done safely. They
22 also have a team of folks that go out proactively,
23 unannounced, to check out the construction sites to
24 make sure that things are being done safely and they
25 address issues on the spot as needed. If an incident

2 does occur, we have a process where we document
3 everything and use that as a learning experience
4 going forward. We also hold Site Safety Summits. We
5 actually had one last month, so we are very aware of
6 making sure that each and every site is safe.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Are DDC job
8 sites safer than other construction sites from your
9 lens?

10 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: I'm not
11 sure we can fully comment on that. Again, we do have
12 a lot of internal protocols that we do feel work very
13 well. Again, we work very closely with the Department
14 of Buildings. When we're in the street, we work with
15 DOT to make sure our MPT, the maintenance and
16 protection of traffic, is adequate. It's a constant
17 conversation with both the internal team and the
18 oversight agencies.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Has DDC
20 studied safety models from other large cities when it
21 comes to construction safety?

22 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES:
23 Absolutely. We also work very closely with our
24 industry partners, for example, the BTEA, BCTC,
25 Building Congress. It's not just information that we

2 gather on our own, but also working with the industry
3 each and every day. They are truly our partners. The
4 labor unions, for example, obviously do our work.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What have you
6 learned from studying the different models from those
7 different groups?

8 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Over
9 time, we've modified the way we track incidents and
10 accidents. We also have started to use technology to
11 document things real time. If there's an issue in the
12 field, for example, the safety inspector can
13 communicate using an app with their colleagues back
14 at DDC. We also, again, regularly share that
15 information across the board so each and every team
16 on both the public buildings and infrastructure site
17 is aware of what's happening at other sites and maybe
18 can learn from that information.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
20 Going to M/WBE, you answered a lot of it in the
21 Commissioner's testimony, so I thank you for that.
22 Going back to Roy Wilkins Park, I know you mentioned
23 it in the testimony, but what is the status of the
24 Roy Wilkins Park Recreation Center? Were M/WBEs

2 selected in that process? Is there an M/WBE that's
3 leading that process?

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN:

5 Yes. Elite Construction is a City-certified M/WBE, a
6 black firm. They are in joint venture with Triton, so
7 that is an M/WBE JV firm that's leading that project.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Was there no
9 M/WBE or MBE that was able to not need to do a joint
10 venture?

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: No.

12 All of the submissions that we received, there were
13 no M/WBEs or M/WBE joint ventures.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How were the
15 M/WBEs selected in this project?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN:

17 There's a complicated selection process, and
18 actually, I was part of the initial selection
19 process. We have a team that evaluates the
20 submissions and creates a shortlist. Once the
21 shortlist is created, then another team evaluates it.
22 Part of the evaluation process is the M/WBE plan.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Was there any
24 local requirements that were included in the RFP to

2 ensure that there's commitments for jobs or some of
3 the subcontracts would go to local firms?

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: We
5 do impose, and the design-build legislation requires
6 a 30 percent goal on both the design and construction
7 portion. What we do is we work with the local
8 community to do engagement events for M/WBEs as well
9 as workforce engagement.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Have you
11 started the engagement opportunities, the events?

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: No,
13 not yet, but we are planning on starting this summer.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I trust that
15 you'll be doing that with Council Member Williams?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: We
17 will.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: We have
20 already picked a date for our first community
21 engagement meeting, so happy to say that things are
22 moving forward very quickly.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
24 going to pause before going into the rest of mine and
25 yield to Council Member Restler.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you very
3 much. Firstly, my thoughts are with Commissioner
4 Foley. He's okay?

5 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. Sorry to
7 not have him here today. I always enjoy seeing Tom.
8 He does a great job.

9 I'd like to focus my questions on the
10 borough-based jail. Just broadly, as of now, what's
11 our timeline to complete the four jails?

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Sure.
13 As you know, each one has a different timeline.
14 Brooklyn is 2029. I know we were emailing earlier.
15 Bronx and Queens are 2031, and Manhattan, which we
16 expect to register in the coming months, is 2032.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 2032, so five
18 years off of Local Law?

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES:
20 Correct.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Local Law
22 requires closure of Rikers Island by 2027. Are there
23 efforts the DDC has considered to expedite the
24 construction timelines and get these projects done
25 more quickly?

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: We've
3 considered everything. We do feel that design-build
4 is giving us the ability to do it as fast as
5 possible. If it was not design-build, we do estimate
6 at least another five years for each site that it
7 would take to actually design and construct these
8 sites.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The Lippman 2.0
10 Commission, I don't know what they're called, put
11 their recommendations out today. Is that the right
12 terminology? We can call it that. Does that work? You
13 know what I'm talking about when I say the Lippman
14 2.0 Commission. Judge Lippman's still around.
15 Identified that they thought that construction can be
16 completed a year, year and a half faster than DDC's
17 timelines. Have you looked at their recommendations
18 and considered their proposals? Have you been in
19 touch with them?

20 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: We
21 have. We are part of the City Council Speaker's team
22 that meets with the Lippman Commission and has been
23 meeting them prior to their release of this report.
24 We have had conversations specifically with their
25 staff. I know they expressed an interest in maybe

2 moving up Queens and the Bronx. We do feel like our
3 timelines are realistic, but we're happy to have
4 those conversations again.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We hope that
6 you'll look. Rikers is a hellhole. As soon as it can
7 close, it is the better for our city.

8 Particularly, I want to ask you some
9 questions about Brooklyn. As you know, Jeff, our
10 community is pretty disappointed with how
11 construction has advanced. The demolition process was
12 an absolute disaster and terribly mismanaged. We
13 currently have an AHV in effect until midnight for
14 the rest of the project in perpetuity. Then you have
15 separate AHVs, after-hours variances, in effect five
16 days a week until 4 a.m. Saturdays 9 to 5, plus three
17 upcoming weekends of 24/7 work in May. As you know,
18 this is a densely populated area. We have many
19 thousands of people that live hundreds of feet away
20 from this site. We're talking about 24/7 work, work
21 until 4 a.m., five nights a week, and in perpetuity
22 work until midnight for the next five years of this
23 project. It's been really disappointing that there
24 isn't a more manageable (TIMER CHIME) approach to try
25 and work with our community to mitigate negative

2 impacts. I've asked you 100 times, but I will ask
3 again. Can we look again at the necessity of these
4 AHVs and try to reduce hours to improve the
5 experience of neighbors with the construction?

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: You
7 know, we can always have that conversation. I do want
8 to acknowledge that work will continue to pick up. So
9 right now, we're at approximately 200 workers. We are
10 going to see that increase so work is really going to
11 speed up. As you probably know, they're pouring the
12 foundations right now. I would say the AHV for the
13 Atlantic Avenue work, that's only expected until they
14 finish that utility work, the 4 a.m. work. So that
15 will hopefully dissipate.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: As you know,
17 because I've shared it with you, I've got
18 constituents who complain about pile driving into
19 Atlantic Avenue at 3:45 in the morning. You say that
20 you can't give a commitment that that's not going to
21 happen again when issues arise. It's just what I
22 don't understand is we have a timeline for the
23 project that's 2029. It's already slow. But the
24 explanation for why we need AHVs until midnight is
25 that that's not to speed up the timeline for the

2 project. That's just the timeline for the project.

3 That you're treating it. And so it's very challenging

4 for me to understand, was that just the plan from the

5 beginning when you looked at the construction

6 timelines three years ago and considered these

7 vendors, that you were just going to have work go

8 until midnight every night for five years? Six years?

9 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: I don't

10 think it was ever our intention to keep people up at

11 night. I think we are trying to move this along. As

12 you know, these are complex facilities. It takes a

13 tremendous amount of time to build a secure jail with

14 the programming, with everything that the Lippman

15 Commission and the Borough-Based Jails Program

16 requires and deserves, and, you know, we'll continue

17 to try and mitigate those hours.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah. I mean, I

19 just want to say, and I'll close here, Chair. I

20 appreciate the latitude. The changes that have been

21 made by the Adams Administration make these jails

22 less humane, right? The number of therapeutic beds

23 that are specifically designed to meet the needs of

24 people with mental illness have been slashed in half

25 by Mayor Adams and his Administration. And the access

2 to outdoor space is severely limited. I do not
3 believe that the outdoor space that you all have
4 designed in the facilities actually meets the
5 standards of being outdoors. And, you know, when the
6 average length of stay in Rikers Island is a year-
7 plus for folks who have complex cases, not having
8 real access to the outdoors for a year has an
9 enormous impact on people's mental health and well-
10 being so I think that the changes that have been made
11 are, like, severely undermine the quality of the
12 jails that we're going to be creating, and I'm really
13 disappointed. And, you know, I've asked a thousand
14 times, how do we ensure there's access to the roof
15 and we have recreational space up there so that
16 people can enjoy meaningful outdoor space? I've asked
17 a thousand times, how do we create different staffing
18 models to expand the number of therapeutic beds? And
19 I've gotten no answers of any substance from this
20 Administration, and I realize you're the builders.
21 You're not setting some of these policies. But you're
22 the entity that comes to us that's responsible for
23 answering these questions. And, of course, when the
24 Department of Corrections is here, they say nothing.
25 They are utterly useless. And I'm being diplomatic.

2 So I am really disappointed by the quality of the
3 coordination with our community through the
4 construction process, and I'm really disappointed by
5 the changes that are being made to these jails that
6 are going to deliver a lesser outcome when this
7 process is completed. And so it's very, very, very,
8 very frustrating, and I really hope that you and the
9 Commissioner will find ways and Elisabeth will find
10 ways to work with us to try and make improvements
11 along the way, because I think that there are serious
12 problems that need to be addressed. Thank you, Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And
14 I'll just continue with the borough-based jails also.
15 Council Member Restler asked a few that I had queued
16 up. But just to get a little bit more line of sight,
17 can you let us know why there have been such
18 consistent delays?

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: I
20 wouldn't necessarily characterize it that way, Chair.
21 I mean, we have completed the dismantle of three
22 sites. Manhattan will be completed next month. Queens
23 and Brooklyn have already been completed as Council
24 Member Restler said. We're already fully working in
25 construction in Brooklyn. So, there's been a

2 tremendous amount of work that's already happened. As
3 I stated, these are really complex facilities, and
4 they also have to meet the overall needs, the
5 programming needs of the Department of Correction and
6 the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. So, they take
7 time, but we do feel like design-build has really let
8 us take the lead here and move them as quickly as
9 possible.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What do you
11 feel has been, like, your biggest obstacle to
12 implementing this project?

13 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: I mean,
14 these are confined sites. These are, as Council
15 Member Restler stated, if we could work 24/7, seven
16 days a week, we would love to, but we have to respect
17 our neighbors. It sounds like we need to do a better
18 job of that. We recognize that in certain
19 circumstances. But also working, for example, the
20 Manhattan site is neighbored by a senior housing
21 facility and the criminal courthouse so it's a very
22 narrow area, and everything has to be staged on site.
23 There's no other room to take streets in that
24 particular community. So, these are very challenging
25 and complex sites that we've inherited, but they make

2 the most sense because of their proximity to the
3 courthouse.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And I think I
5 read somewhere the Mayor was talking about the
6 capacity concerns for the borough-based jails. So,
7 what is the plan to ensure that the jails can handle
8 the full capacity of the current system?

9 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: So as
10 Council Member Restler said, our job is to design and
11 build based on the policy that's been set. So each
12 facility will have 1,040 beds, men in the Bronx,
13 Brooklyn, and Manhattan, and then there's a small
14 population, 450 beds for women in Queens. We have
15 those conversations with City Hall and DOC, but
16 they're not necessarily in our purview.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In DDC's
18 estimate, will the new jail's capacity be sufficient
19 to handle the City's jailhouse population?

20 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Again,
21 we're building the 1,040 beds per facility. That's
22 what we've been mandated to do.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I understand
24 the mandate, but do you feel it's sufficient?
25

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: I can't
3 comment on the DOC population and those needs,
4 unfortunately.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What is the
6 current cost estimate for completion of each of these
7 facilities?

8 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Sure.
9 It's about 15 billion dollars total, about 3 billion
10 dollars per borough, and then Queens is a little more
11 because, as I mentioned, the women are housed there,
12 so we have to maintain separation between the men and
13 the women, so it's almost like two jails in one so
14 you have to have separate facilities for the men and
15 separate facilities for the women.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: With the
17 delays that we have as of today, what is now the
18 delta in terms of the for these jails from where it
19 was projected at the onset?

20 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Sure.
21 So again, some of these costs were identified well
22 before DDC got involved. Not that we're the panacea
23 about setting all costs, but they really hadn't
24 fleshed out exactly what the costs were when they
25 were first announced many, many years ago during the

2 ULURP process. But if I'm not mistaken, I believe
3 these projects are all fully funded and moving
4 forward.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Going to
6 the PMMR on reconstructed road miles. According to
7 the PMMR, DDC completed 10.6 miles of roadway lane
8 mile reconstruction in the first four months of
9 Fiscal 2025 compared to 7.1 miles that were completed
10 in the first four months of Fiscal 2024. However, in
11 all of Fiscal 2024, DDC completed only 20.3 lane
12 miles, much less when compared to Fiscal 2023, when a
13 total of 33.6 roadway lane miles was completed,
14 significantly less than the 60.6 lane miles that were
15 completed in Fiscal 2021. Why has the roadway lane
16 mile reconstruction been declining over the past few
17 years?

18 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: So,
19 it's not that our work has decreased. It's just that
20 we've identified along with DOT and DEP different
21 priorities, different types of work that we're doing
22 each and every day. So, for example, we actually
23 added metrics to the PMMR to identify a new green
24 infrastructure metric as well as our pedestrian ramp
25 unit that is working on pedestrian ramps each and

2 every day across the five boroughs, and lastly, the
3 coastal resiliency projects. So as my colleague
4 testified to, we have robust projects both in all
5 three of those areas, and work is happening all over
6 the city that offsets potentially those lane miles
7 being completed, but it's not that less work is
8 happening in the streets.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Does DDC need
10 additional headcount in order to operate at a higher
11 capacity, and what other resources would be needed?

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: So,
13 our total headcount at this moment is 1,177. We
14 actually have a 4 percent vacancy rate, so we've been
15 really successful in bringing on talent. We do a lot
16 of hiring fairs, and we go to schools to recruit. So,
17 our goal really is to make sure that we're at full
18 capacity so that we can continue the work that we are
19 doing.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do you need
21 additional headcount?

22 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: So,
23 OMB has agreed to provide additional headcount for
24 our Borough-Based Jails Program. We're in the process
25 of doing that now, and I think once we get those

2 additional folks on board, I think we'll be in better
3 shape.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 Moving to design-build project completion deadlines.

6 Meeting project completion deadlines for important
7 infrastructure projects like hospitals can be crucial
8 for a community. Design-build has been seen as a way
9 to complete projects quicker and at lower cost and
10 reduce time by streamlining the existing process.

11 What are some benefits and drawbacks from your
12 perspective of design-build that you've encountered?

13 I really want to focus actually on the drawbacks
14 because Commissioner Foley has in past hearings
15 talked about what he felt the benefits were, but I'm
16 curious to see now that DDC continues to move forward
17 with more design-build projects, what are the
18 drawbacks that you all have experienced?

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: We
20 would obviously characterize not necessarily as
21 drawbacks, but it's a different way of doing business
22 for the City. So, for example, some of the lessons
23 learned, at least on the community engagement side,
24 is in design-build, you're bringing a team together
25 to the community, and the perception is that design

2 is already completed and there's not an opportunity
3 for feedback. So, one of the lessons learned, Chair,
4 you mentioned Roy Wilkins Park. We've really tried to
5 engage with Council Member Williams, Senator Comrie,
6 Assemblymember Hyndman, Borough President Richards,
7 to ensure that the community does have a voice and
8 are part of that process, not that they haven't in
9 the past, but to have that real opportunity from day
10 one to be part of that conversation. So, we're
11 putting in those guardrails to ensure that that is
12 something that works for Roy Wilkins, and also as
13 Executive Deputy Commissioner Austin mentioned, we
14 have now required the design builder to come to the
15 community within 90 days of the notice to proceed to
16 have those conversations about potentially trying to
17 work with local M/WBEs. So again, a lesson learned
18 from our previous engagement in the past on that
19 topic.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Do
21 multiple projects start simultaneously under design-
22 build, and if not, why not?

23 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: So,
24 there's always a period of design. As I mentioned,
25 some teams come with a very strong vision of how they

2 want to design a project, but the design is not fully
3 fleshed out. But what design-build does allow us to
4 do is start that early work, so literally testing the
5 soil to see what the soil conditions are, and then
6 potentially starting that foundation work once
7 they've progressed far enough along with the design
8 to ensure that the foundation they're going to build
9 will support the building so it gives us a lot of
10 opportunities to do that. It's also a really good
11 opportunity to work with our sponsor agencies to
12 ensure that from the outset, all the requirements
13 that they need to have those facilities serve the
14 community are met at the beginning from the outset.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
16 that. What is the status of Brookville Park's
17 bathroom projects, and what are the updated
18 completion timelines?

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Sure.
20 So, as part of the Executive Deputy Commissioner's
21 efforts, we have awarded that project to an M/WBE,
22 Armand. They will be receiving their notice to
23 proceed this summer, and they have an 18-month
24 timeline to complete six restrooms for the Parks
25 Department, so including Brookville Park. So there's

2 three in Manhattan, two in Queens, Casino Park, and
3 Brookville, and then Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx.
4 So, they will have 18 months to design and build and
5 deliver those facilities for the community.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm just
7 curious, because I was told design-build is supposed
8 to make things go so much quicker, be more cost-
9 effective. I secured the funding for the bathroom at
10 Brookville Park, I think about two or three Fiscal
11 Years at this point, and we're not even close to
12 shovels in the ground. And so, compare and contrast,
13 if this was like a regular construction management or
14 a more traditional path to develop that bathroom,
15 what phase would we be in today?

16 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Right,
17 I mean, we feel that 18 months is actually a very
18 aggressive timeline.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: That's 18
20 months once it starts.

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Right.
22 Well, we have to start with that clock. Otherwise,
23 you know, DDC gets involved. As you know, the capital
24 process can sometimes take a while for the funding to
25

2 get to DDC so that's how we judge our performance, of
3 course.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So when you
5 say it takes a while to get to DDC, is that an OMB
6 dynamic?

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: I'm not
8 saying. It's just the way that the priorities are set
9 by our sponsor agencies and how the funding does get
10 transferred.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Well, I'm just
12 trying to understand it, because I fully funded that
13 bathroom so the money is there, so when you say it
14 takes a while to get to DDC, I'm trying to understand
15 why would it take time to get to the agency if in
16 that Fiscal Year it was fully funded?

17 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: Right,
18 so I think in this particular instance, all of the
19 different bathrooms were put together so the funding
20 for all of those six restrooms were combined. I don't
21 know if Rachel...

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Were all of
23 the bathrooms not fully funded at the time?

24

25

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: I'm not
3 sure of the history. We can try and get back to you
4 unless Rachel has some more detail.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In the event
6 that all bathrooms are not fully funded, would DDC
7 still be of the position that they would bundle this
8 same group of projects?

9 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: So in
10 this instance, all six bathrooms, again, we don't
11 start design or construction unless all of the work
12 is fully funded. So these are fully funded. I don't
13 know the particular history on these particular six.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So I'd like
15 you guys to get back to me on that, because I want to
16 understand the timeline, because it's either the
17 design-build is not as quick as it's being promoted
18 as, or because all of the bathrooms were not fully
19 funded at the time, my project had to wait until the
20 others were fully funded. But then my follow-up
21 question at that point is, did it make sense to now
22 bundle it in this package? Because you have a
23 community waiting for this. It's been fully funded.
24 There's no reason that we should have to wait three
25 years to get to the procurement phase of this, which

2 takes another year, then to wait 18 more months to be
3 able to do the construction. That's not sensible to
4 me. And with that amount of length of time from when
5 it was funded to now, does DDC anticipate a shortfall
6 because of that?

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: We do
8 not anticipate a shortfall, but we understand your
9 question, and we can get back to you on the timeline
10 of that particular funding.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And is there
12 any way that DDC is able to expedite this? Because
13 again, it's been a while, and now you're telling me
14 that I have two and a half years pretty much left.

15 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: We will
16 happily talk to the design builder as soon as they
17 are fully on board. Again, we're waiting for
18 registration, then we'll issue that notice to proceed
19 in the summer.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How long does
21 the registration take?

22 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER MARGOLIES: So, it
23 will be going to the Comptroller in the next few
24 months, and then it's approximately 30 days.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Why does it
3 take a few months to go to the Comptroller? I'm just
4 trying to understand the process because I'm not in
5 DDC.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LAISERIN: So, we're
7 actually close to the end of the procurement process
8 for this, but we have to finalize the contract and go
9 through all the oversights, but we're pretty close.
10 It's fully funded. We have our certificate to proceed
11 from OMB, and it's just these last few steps that we
12 have to get moving forward, and then it'll be 18
13 months for design and construction. And again, a big
14 benefit is if we would have had to do two separate
15 procurements, one for design, then perform design to
16 100 percent completion, and then we would have had to
17 do a second procurement for construction, a low bid
18 at that point, and so I think we can go back and look
19 at the history of how we got here today, but
20 definitely we are ahead of where we would have been
21 in design-bid build.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, I would
23 love to have a forensic, particularly at Brookville
24 Park. I'd like to know from the moment that it was
25 approved, like not approved, but the budget was

2 adopted to now, what has happened, what that timeline
3 looks like, and if you can give me context as to why.
4 Like, okay, you got to wait for OMB to respond to
5 this, and it's in numerical order in the order it
6 comes in, or it requires this information. I want to
7 understand that better because that will shape how I
8 advocate for or against the design-build because,
9 again, when it was first conveyed to me, it gave a
10 perspective that this was going to happen really
11 quickly, but it's taken a really long time because
12 right now you're talking about six years to design
13 one bathroom in our park, even though it's multiple
14 bathrooms, but for this project that's been fully
15 funded, essentially it'll be about six years before
16 it's even built, and we have the public that have
17 been notified, are looking forward to it, and so I
18 don't think that framing design-build as a quicker
19 way, it may be a way to streamline in some sense, but
20 it doesn't seem like it makes it quicker.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LAISERIN: Yeah. I
22 think it's a fair question, and we'll go back and do
23 that kind of forensic analysis that you mentioned.
24 It's good lessons learned for us anyway, but I will
25 just say that design-build as a project delivery

2 method is going to be faster, not necessarily that
3 the internal City processes are any faster.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
5 Council Member Restler.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
7 much. Jeff, I won't give you a hard time about the
8 jail anymore. I do appreciate that you and Elisabeth
9 both try hard to work with us. You've got a pretty
10 impossible task, and I recognize that I'm telling you
11 both that I want you to go faster, and work less
12 hours, and there is some potential contradictions in
13 that, so that aside, thank you for being a good
14 sport.

15 I wanted to ask about AIMS, and something
16 that we've talked a little bit about before, of how
17 do we do a better job as a City of planning for kind
18 of infrastructure replacement, and making sure that
19 we're budgeting smartly for those needs. My
20 understanding is that DDC has begun kind of
21 informally to develop some best practices here and
22 work with City agencies. We are also, as you know,
23 looking at some legislative solutions on this front.
24 Could you speak to how DDC's process for kind of how
25 it's been going so far for DDC to coordinate with

2 other agencies, and understand the infrastructure
3 improvement needs, and replacement needs, and how OMB
4 is responding to actually fund those needs based on
5 your all determinations of how we need to be better
6 maintaining and planning for our aging
7 infrastructure? Whoever is the right person. I'm
8 sorry. I was just picking on Jeff before.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LAISERIN: That's
10 okay. I'll take that. We're very excited. We
11 mentioned it in the testimony. DDC has been embarking
12 on an advanced capital planning process, so we
13 started as a pilot last year, where we basically took
14 the AIMS data and kind of manually combined it with
15 some other public sources of data and DDC information
16 on the capital portfolio that the City has, and we
17 created a dashboard, and we've already seen some
18 insights from this, and we did this for the Brooklyn
19 Public Library and the Queens Public Library
20 portfolios, and you're able already to see, just in
21 this manual process, some really interesting
22 information, I think, about their portfolios that we
23 think is going to help guide how they make decisions
24 about which projects move forward, you know, going
25 forward. We are now moving, hopefully, into the next

2 phase. OMB allocated 3.5 million dollars for us to
3 build out two phases, that portal to automate it a
4 little bit instead of the manual process we did as a
5 pilot, but to fully automate that so that we can do
6 that on an ongoing basis and, also, part of that
7 funding will go towards the development of a survey
8 tool. We are still advocating for some additional
9 staffing to have people to go out and perform those
10 surveys, but the idea is they would use this newly
11 developed survey tool and go out to a select number
12 of buildings and really identify what are the
13 deficiencies in building, what is the state of
14 repair, so we could share that back to our sponsors
15 and so that they have more information. (TIMER CHIME)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm really
17 pleased that you all are taking the initiative to
18 pursue this, and I think it's a very important thing
19 for better maintaining our aging infrastructure
20 across the diversity of our city. I do have to say, I
21 think it's preposterous that Chair Brooks-Powers is
22 asked to fund every park and playground in her
23 District, even if it hasn't been touched in 50 years
24 or 60 years and is severely dilapidated. If she
25 doesn't intervene and take an initiative with her

2 very limited capital dollars, then nothing's going to
3 change, and we need to have an honest assessment from
4 DDC, I think it's important, an honest assessment
5 from DDC and perhaps other agencies about the state
6 of our infrastructure, and we need to hold OMB
7 accountable to actually fund it and provide the
8 resources that are needed for us to ensure that our
9 parks and our playgrounds and our bridges and
10 everything in between is well-maintained, and so I
11 appreciate you all putting some real thought into
12 this, taking initiative. I think it's an innovative
13 and important development for City government, and I
14 hope that we can find ways to tie OMB's hands a
15 little bit more to make sure they actually put their
16 resources behind the assessments and surveys that you
17 complete. Thank you very much, and thank you, Chair
18 Brooks-Powers, for the second round.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
20 Council Member, and thank you for spending your
21 birthday with the Committee on Transportation and
22 Infrastructure.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm out.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Your community
25 is fortunate.

2 With that, DDC, thank you.

3 We're going to move into the public
4 testimony portion of this hearing. I'm going to take
5 a five-minute break.

6 I now open the hearing for public
7 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
8 is a government proceeding, and the decorum shall be
9 observed at all times. As such, members of the public
10 shall remain silent at all times.

11 The witness table is reserved for people
12 who wish to testify. No video recording or
13 photography is allowed from the witness table.
14 Further, members of the public may not present audio
15 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
16 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-
17 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

18 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
19 please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-
20 at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized,
21 you will have two minutes to speak on today's hearing
22 topics, Oversight New York City Council Budget and
23 Oversight Hearings on the Preliminary Budget for
24 Fiscal Year 2026 for the MTA, DOT, TLC, and DDC.

25 I will call the first panel. Raul Rivera.

2 RAUL RIVERA: Today, I testify before you
3 to express my outrage and deep disappointment at the
4 abject failure of Chair Brooks-Powers of the
5 Transportation Committee. Under her leadership, our
6 city's transportation infrastructure has continued to
7 deteriorate, and the needs of hard-working New
8 Yorkers have been consistently ignored. But Chair
9 Brooks-Powers' failure is not an isolated incident.
10 It is symptomatic of a broader systemic problem that
11 permeates the highest levels of our City's
12 government. That's why I'm calling for the
13 resignation of TLC Commissioner David Do and DOT
14 Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez. Commissioner Do's
15 tenure at the TLC has been marked by a lack of
16 transparency, inadequate oversight, and a failure to
17 protect the rights of hard-working TLC drivers. His
18 inability to address the scourge of illegal pirate
19 vehicles has put countless lives at risk and
20 undermined the livelihoods of law-abiding drivers.
21 Commissioner Rodriguez's leadership at the DOT has
22 been equally disastrous. His failure to maintain our
23 city roads, his inability to address e-bikes, and his
24 anti-car policies, including monetizing our city for
25 non-profits like Transportation Alternatives and Open

2 Plans, big tech companies like Uber, Lyft, Getaround,
3 Zipcar, and City Bike. Mr. Rodriguez's lack of vision
4 for a sustainable transportation future has made our
5 city streets more dangerous, more congested, and less
6 livable. We deserve better. We deserve leaders who
7 will prioritize our safety, our livelihoods, and our
8 well-being. That's why I'm calling for the
9 resignation of Commissioner Do and Rodriguez and for
10 Chair Brooks-Powers to step down as Chair of the
11 Transportation Committee. It is time for a change. It
12 is time for leadership that will put the needs of New
13 Yorkers. We can do better and we must do better.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. You
16 can have a seat. I have questions for you today. Mr.
17 Rivera, what organization do you represent? Turn your
18 mic on, please.

19 RAUL RIVERA: Myself and NYC Drivers
20 United.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: NYC Drivers
22 United?

23 RAUL RIVERA: It's just a name. We're not
24 signed up as a non-profit.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, you're not
3 a formal organization?

4 RAUL RIVERA: We don't ask for money.
5 We're not a non-profit.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, you're not
7 registered with the Attorney General's Office or
8 anything?

9 RAUL RIVERA: No.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You're not an
11 organization?

12 RAUL RIVERA: That's done on purpose.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So who do you...

14 RAUL RIVERA: I'm surprised you're asking
15 questions. You've never asked questions before.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I have
17 questions today. Thank you. I'm not done. So, in
18 terms of who you represent, could you give me an idea
19 of how many people are a member of your organization?

20 RAUL RIVERA: About 300.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: 300?

22 RAUL RIVERA: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. And what
24 does the organization comprise of? What type of
25 people and industry?

2 RAUL RIVERA: They're all TLC drivers. In
3 order to join the group, all you have to do is have a
4 TLC license. That's it.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And are you a
6 TLC driver?

7 RAUL RIVERA: Yes, I am.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do you have a
9 current TLC license?

10 RAUL RIVERA: Yes, fully licensed.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay, because
12 I recall in past testimony you said that you lost
13 your ability to be a driver.

14 RAUL RIVERA: No. I have a license.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And it's
16 current?

17 RAUL RIVERA: It's active, yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

19 RAUL RIVERA: And if I didn't have a
20 license, I can still advocate. You know that, right?

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You can
22 advocate. I just want to understand who you represent
23 because you come into this hearing every time and
24 talk about who's represented by where, but we never

2 have full line of sight of who you represent because
3 I only ever see you.

4 RAUL RIVERA: You know who I am, Powers.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I know who you
6 are, Raul.

7 RAUL RIVERA: I've been here.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: That's what
9 I'm saying. I know who you are, but you come in here
10 and you say that you represent a group that I have
11 not seen.

12 RAUL RIVERA: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You tell me
14 that I do not meet...

15 RAUL RIVERA: Because...

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Excuse me. You
17 tell me that I do not meet with drivers when I have
18 had several meetings with active drivers in my
19 District office. You also accuse me of not being
20 willing to meet with you, and my staff has spoken to
21 you countless times and asked you to fill out the
22 same required documentation as everybody else, yet
23 you fail to submit it but continue to attack me and
24 say I do not meet with you, and that is not true.

2 RAUL RIVERA: No. We know that you met
3 with us. You gave us a 20-minute Zoom meeting in
4 2020.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm not even
6 talking about that. I was willing to meet with you in
7 person.

8 RAUL RIVERA: You're not doing it.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Because you
10 are not submitting the request.

11 RAUL RIVERA: What's the big deal? Why
12 don't you sit down with us?

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You have not
14 submitted the request form, Raul.

15 RAUL RIVERA: I sent you like four emails.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You have not—
17 My staff...

18 RAUL RIVERA: What request form?

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Raul.

20 RAUL RIVERA: You didn't ask for it in the
21 past.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Have you
23 received an email from my scheduler...

24 RAUL RIVERA: Yes, yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: With a list of
3 questions?

4 RAUL RIVERA: Yes, but I...

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Have you
6 responded to those questions to my scheduler?

7 RAUL RIVERA: I did. Yes, I did.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, you did
9 not.

10 RAUL RIVERA: Which one? She's not
11 responding. Which question?

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: She sent you
13 an email of questions, which you, yourself, on social
14 media said that it's not fair that I send those
15 questions, even though everybody who meets with me
16 answers the same thing. Who am I meeting with? You
17 are coming with other people to meet, and we have to
18 make sure we have the sufficient office space to make
19 sure people can sit there. You continue to do
20 propaganda and make accusations against me.

21 RAUL RIVERA: Don't say that about me. I
22 do not do propaganda.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm going to
24 say that about you because you say it about me, and
25 it's untrue. What I'm saying is...

2 RAUL RIVERA: What did I say that's
3 untrue?

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: On the record,
5 publicly, I have been willing to meet with you in
6 person. When you see me on the street and you run up
7 on me every time...

8 RAUL RIVERA: Wrong. Wrong.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I have stopped
10 to speak to you, okay? So, I'm not scared to speak to
11 you, but you cannot continue to do this.

12 RAUL RIVERA: Nobody's saying you're
13 scared.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Let me finish.
15 I am willing to meet with you, but you must follow
16 the proper steps and protocol, and then we will have
17 that meeting.

18 RAUL RIVERA: Yeah, but you're changing it
19 up.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I have not
21 changed it up. I have one line of email that every
22 single person that requests to meet with me gets the
23 same email.

24

25

2 RAUL RIVERA: Hold on. That's false
3 because when we had the first meeting, you didn't
4 request that.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: When we had
6 the first meeting, I was a new Council Member.

7 RAUL RIVERA: You was a Council Member.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I was a new
9 Council Member.

10 RAUL RIVERA: Regardless, you didn't
11 request it.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We are four
13 years later. For the last two and a half, three
14 years, we've been using the same form.

15 RAUL RIVERA: What's the big deal? You
16 know who I am. I can bring five drivers.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Raul, I just..

18 RAUL RIVERA: I can bring 50 drivers.

19 What's the..

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I just
21 answered, but I appreciate you coming and advocating,
22 and I thank you for your testimony.

23 RAUL RIVERA: You haven't done..
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And again, if
3 you would like to meet with me, I would like you to
4 respond to that email.

5 RAUL RIVERA: No, we already tried.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay, so then
7 you said you're not going to do it.

8 RAUL RIVERA: What we want is for you to
9 resign. That's what we want. We want you to leave.
10 That's what we want. And when you win re-election,
11 you're going to win re-election because nobody's
12 running against you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
14 Raul.

15 RAUL RIVERA: Four years. You've been a
16 Council Member four years.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
18 Raul.

19 RAUL RIVERA: How come it took so long?
20 You know about...

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We'll be
22 calling the next panel. Thank you. Sergeants, we can
23 have him removed. Thank you.

24

25

2 The next panel will be Sally Burns,
3 Darnell Steely McCrorey, Jackson Chabot, and Ben
4 Furnas, and William Medina.

5 William—I'm not sure which one is
6 William. Sorry, but you can come off mute and start.

7 WILLIAM MEDINA: Thank you, Chair. Good
8 afternoon. My name is William Medina, and I'm a
9 leader and organizer at the Worker Justice Project.
10 Today, I want to highlight the importance of having
11 safe streets for everyone, including more than 65,000
12 delivery workers in New York City who are seeking
13 better road conditions, such as micro-mobility
14 improvements, better infrastructure, and also to be
15 part of a society to promote clean energy
16 development, safe conditions, and environmental care.
17 As we see every day, we are an industry in constant
18 motion providing a service to our community so they
19 can receive essential products like food and
20 medicine. However, for this, the City needs not to
21 only train, educate, and equip all workers, but also
22 implement an infrastructure plan that ensures the
23 safety of those of us doing this work. Currently, the
24 streets we travel do not have adequate bike lanes for
25 safe transit, nor do we have barriers to protect us

2 from pedestrians and prevent accidents. These
3 mobility issues are visible on every corner of the
4 city, and without the support of the Government, it
5 is impossible to implement plans that improve these
6 conditions. For us, it is vital to educate workers in
7 this industry because we have the capacity to create
8 outreach plans, inform about street safety, and
9 provide services from our worker centers, such as
10 processing driver licenses, assisting with ticket
11 payments, and teaching how to move around the city
12 more safely while respecting traffic rules. Year
13 after year, this has had a positive impact on our
14 community, where many of our members have found a
15 sense of belonging and have recognized that they can
16 offer better services while respecting New Yorkers.
17 This is why we depend on the City to carry out all
18 these initiatives, which we have undoubtedly proven
19 are the foundation for improving this and many other
20 industries that recognize the hard work within our
21 immigrant communities. Without their support, the
22 workforce will be left vulnerable to punishment and
23 persecution in a city that needs urgent structural
24 change. This financial support will help thousands of
25 people access training on risk assessment, safe

2 mobility, and signage, as well as programs and the
3 implementation of new laws, such as the use of space
4 like access to restrooms and other resources the City
5 offers, including updates on structural changes.

6 Thank you. (TIMER CHIME)

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

8 Right on time. Ben.

9 BEN FURNAS: Good afternoon. Thank you,
10 Chair Brooks-Powers and the Members of the
11 Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for
12 holding today's hearing and for your leadership on
13 these issues. My name is Ben Furnas, and I'm the
14 Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives, an
15 organization that fights for safe, livable, and
16 accessible streets across the five boroughs.

17 We're here to testify in support of a
18 fully funded and fully staffed Department of
19 Transportation. As you all know, DOT does critical
20 life-saving work, but it can't be successful without
21 the resources that it needs. When the City Council
22 passed the Streets Plan, it laid out a bright vision
23 for the future of our city. The City Council demanded
24 serious investments in expanded pedestrian space,
25 dedicated bus lanes for fast and reliable service,

2 and a high-quality bike network for people of all
3 ages and abilities from all walks of life. And while
4 DOT has been doing some noble work with the resources
5 available, they have failed to meet most of these
6 legal mandates, partially because they don't have
7 sufficient funding and staffing. According to the New
8 York City Independent Budget Office, DOT does still
9 not have the necessary resources to make the Streets
10 Plan a reality. DOT staffing has remained stagnant
11 since the bill's passage. Its vacancy rate is twice
12 the citywide average, and its budget has grown only
13 to keep up with inflation, but not with new resources
14 and new capacity necessary to meet the ambitious
15 goals that the Council set. Hiring freezes, delays,
16 and underinvestment have limited progress, and New
17 Yorkers are paying the price. Last year, tragically,
18 253 New Yorkers were killed in traffic crashes,
19 including 16 children, and more pedestrians were
20 killed than the year prior. This is more than just
21 safety. DOT funding supports community-building
22 programs like Open Streets, an incredibly popular
23 program that is in desperate need of more funding
24 from DOT, and organizers are asking for 48 million
25 dollars over the next three years to keep these vital

2 neighborhood programs in place. When DOT goes
3 underfunded and understaffed, intersections remain
4 deadly, bike lanes don't get built, and bus lanes
5 don't get painted. It's dangerous for everyone in
6 every neighborhood from all walks of life. DOT has
7 lifted the two-out, one-in hiring freeze for
8 engineers, which is an important first step, but the
9 Department needs to end the hiring freeze for all
10 divisions and get these safety (TIMER CHIME) projects
11 moving. Thank you for your leadership.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

13 Next is Jackson.

14 JACKSON CHABOT: Good afternoon. Thank
15 you, Chair Brooks-Powers. Today I'm going to testify
16 on three specific topics. First, daylighting. There's
17 clear momentum around daylighting in New York City,
18 and our budget should reflect this. We ask the New
19 York City Council to please ensure that the New York
20 City Department of Transportation has the resources
21 to implement daylighting and, most importantly,
22 hardened daylighting, which DOT, at common today, has
23 been shown to provide the most profound safety
24 benefit citywide to people walking, biking, and
25 driving. The Mayor's allocation of 3.85 million for

2 daylighting infrastructure is a welcome increase from
3 last year's allocation, but this is simply
4 insufficient to meet the needs on our streets. We
5 heard this today from Council Member Won's questions
6 of DOT. DOT even presented images today of their
7 daylighting at work to date, and we ask them to
8 continue this at a rapid pace. Based on the DOT
9 estimates of the costs for daylighting that they
10 shared today, we recommend an allocation of 10
11 million dollars to daylight 1,000 intersections this
12 year and to truly address the calls from community
13 boards across the city for safer streets.

14 Second, on Open Streets. Last week, Open
15 Streets operators called on the City to fully fund
16 the Open Streets program by allocating the 48 million
17 dollars over three years to expand the DOT's capacity
18 for supporting Open Streets. For too long since the
19 program has been formalized, Open Streets operators
20 have been fighting for scraps from the Department of
21 Transportation, and this Administration has routinely
22 touted the benefits of Open Streets on from a
23 commerce perspective, from a safety perspective, and
24 from a community perspective. However, they have not
25 allocated the proper funding to do this. The

2 Department of Transportation Commissioner today said
3 they love Open Streets, so where is the money?

4 In closing, I'd like to elevate the call
5 that Ben just said regarding staffing for the
6 Department of Transportation. It's quite clear with
7 no staff, the Department of Transportation cannot do
8 the necessary projects. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 Next, Darnell.

11 DARNELL SEALY-MCCROREY: Thank you, Chair
12 Brooks, Powers, and Members of the Transportation and
13 Infrastructure Committee for holding today's hearing.
14 My name is Darnell Sealy-McCrory and I am a member of
15 Families for Safe Streets. I currently reside in
16 Brooklyn, New York, with my family. I've never
17 testified at a City Council hearing before, but I'm
18 here to ask you to end the hiring freeze and fully
19 fund the DOT.

20 Families for Safe Streets is an
21 organization made up of people like me, and all of us
22 have either lost a loved one or ourselves been
23 injured in a traffic crash. We know that when our
24 streets and our intersections are deadly, we are the
25 ones who pay the price. Last year, 253 New Yorkers

2 were killed in traffic crashes, including my 13-year-
3 old daughter, Nayel McCrorey, who was hit by a
4 speeding SUV at West 110th Street and Manhattan
5 Avenue intersection, October 24, 2024. My beautiful,
6 intelligent daughter, Nayel, had a passion for
7 dancing, learning, and inspired many other friends
8 and teenagers via TikTok with her self-taught
9 choreographed dance routines. What amazed us most was
10 her determination to graduate middle school, becoming
11 a freshman in high school. Pardon me. I never thought
12 her mother and I would be burying our daughter so
13 soon after completing a four-year conservation within
14 the same year. Thank you. We prayed that her
15 intracranial pressure would decrease, but sadly,
16 seven days later, since being hit by that speedy
17 driver, she passed away in PICU from traumatic brain
18 injury. The day that we lost Nayel was the most
19 difficult time of our lives, and I know that her
20 death, just like all of the other 252, was
21 preventable. I wouldn't (TIMER CHIME) have to be here
22 today if we designed streets around our children
23 instead of cars. Unfortunately, the New York City
24 Department of Transportation doesn't have the funding
25 or workers to build safe streets. We need people to

2 design better intersections, present it to the
3 community, and then actually pour the concrete, and
4 all of those people need to be paid. Saving lives is
5 possible, but it isn't free. You must fully fund and
6 fully staff DOT so New York can make progress on
7 street safety and prevent the senseless traffic
8 violence that took Nayel and many others from us too
9 soon. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, and
11 I offer you my deepest condolences.

12 DARNELL SEALY-MCCROREY: Thank you for the
13 acknowledgement.

14 SALLY BURNS: Good afternoon, Chair
15 Brooks-Powers and Committee Members. My name is Sally
16 Burns, and I'm the Planning Associate for Union
17 Square Partnership, the non-profit business
18 improvement district stewarding Union Square and 14th
19 Street. Union Square is a key transit hub, a powerful
20 job center, an extraordinary residential community, a
21 center for culture and recreation, a home to notable
22 institutions, a burgeoning tech campus, and a favored
23 shopping destination. However, its park is outdated,
24 with infrastructure in disrepair, and the streetscape
25 on its main thoroughfare is under-invested, seemingly

2 temporary, and incomplete. The Union Square District
3 Vision Plan, USQ-NEXT, sets out to address these
4 issues by transforming the public realm in Union
5 Square Park and along 14th Street. Union Square lies
6 at the junction of the Broadway Vision Plan and the
7 14th Street Busway, the two most transformative
8 surface transportation projects Manhattan has seen in
9 generations, but 14th Street remains a work in
10 progress. When the busway was implemented in 2019,
11 the Administration stopped short of making permanent
12 streetscape upgrades to the corridor, limiting the
13 impact of the entire busway project. While the busway
14 carried almost 5 million riders last year and bus
15 speeds increased by 24 percent since implementation,
16 the pedestrian experience on 14th Street is
17 inconsistent, disorganized, and often desolate, with
18 deteriorating sidewalk sections creating poor
19 conditions for people with limited mobility. Our
20 Vision Plan would revitalize 14th Street with a
21 robust, green streetscape, delivering a best-in-class
22 pedestrian experience and a high-quality retail
23 environment. Union Square Partnership is requesting
24 10 million dollars to be allocated to the New York
25 City Department of Transportation, including 9

2 million from New York City Council and 1 million from
3 the Manhattan Borough President for an initial
4 capital commitment towards construction. This funding
5 will signal long-term support for the project, help
6 finance its implementation, and sustain future
7 phases. We would (TIMER CHIME) like to thank
8 Manhattan Community Board 5 for their letter of
9 support and Council Members Rivera, Bottcher, Powers,
10 Krishnan, and Manhattan Borough President Mark
11 Levine's staff for taking the time to meet with us
12 about this important project. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

14 Thank you to this panel.

15 The next panel will hear from Mamadou
16 Cellou Balde, Louis Cortez, Amanda Berman, Charles
17 Guthrie, Sharon Brown.

18 Mamadou, when you're ready, you can just
19 come off of mute and start.

20 And Leslie Davol.

21 MAMADOU CELLOU BALDE: Good afternoon. My
22 name is Mamadou Cellou Balde. I'm a migrant from
23 Guinea Republic in West Africa. I'm also a worker,
24 organizer, and member of the Work Justice Project.
25 I'm a food delivery worker, among many others in the

2 City of New York. As food delivery worker, it's time
3 to give us more respect, consideration for the work
4 that we're doing for the people of New York. We are
5 working under the sun, rain, and snow to provide warm
6 food for each of you. And while doing this job, we
7 feel every puddle of the street, every bike lane
8 blocked by car, every unclear traffic signal, and a
9 lack of protected bike lane. Day by day, delivery
10 workers are riding their bicycle, e-bike, and moped
11 on the street, and we are the first group of workers
12 affected by the street condition. We want safer
13 street, more protected bike lane, more street light,
14 better traffic signal, and a city that provides
15 adequate micromobility transportation. We have
16 carried out awareness campaign, street safety
17 initiatives, a training program to provide new bikes
18 with certified battery, and daily education in our
19 office. But much more is in need. We understand that
20 this work is the responsibility of the Department of
21 Transportation and Infrastructure. We understand that
22 for a DOT to do a good job, it's important to
23 increase the budget according to the necessities. We
24 support more funding for this important Department,
25 and we are ready to keep working with them in order

2 to provide safer street and better infrastructure for
3 the 65,000 delivery workers in this city. I want to
4 thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify
5 today, and for recognizing the important role of
6 delivery workers playing in moving the city. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
9 Louis?

10 CHARLES GUTHRIE: Oh, no, I'm Charlie.

11 AMANDA BERMAN: Good afternoon, Chair
12 Brooks-Powers, and esteemed Committee Staff. My name
13 is Amanda Berman. I'm the Senior Director of Court
14 Reform at the Center for Justice Innovation. I'm here
15 today to speak about our efforts to make our city
16 streets safer and our justice system more fair and
17 effective and equitable and, in particular, I want to
18 highlight three initiatives for which we are seeking
19 support from Council in the upcoming Fiscal Year.

20 First, our Driver Accountability Program,
21 which is a diversion program for people arrested on
22 low-level offenses that are vehicular in nature.
23 Thanks to the support of Council, we have served over
24 7,000 drivers throughout New York City over the past
25 decade. The program encourages behavior change

2 through self-reflection and collective norm-setting
3 through facilitated group discussions. Instead of
4 relying on punitive responses such as jail or fines.
5 I'm proud to report that a recent evaluation of our
6 program that was published just a couple months ago
7 in Brooklyn and Staten Island found a 50 percent
8 reduction in recidivism for these drivers in Brooklyn
9 and a significant reduction in Staten Island as well.

10 Second initiative we launched in 2022
11 called Circles for Safe Streets, which was an
12 expansion of our Driver Accountability Program in
13 partnership with Families for Safe Streets. This
14 program addresses crashes that result in serious
15 injuries or fatalities using a restorative justice
16 model that brings together drivers and victims.
17 Through the process, victims have an opportunity to
18 tell the driver about the impact of their actions and
19 to hear the driver take accountability for the harm
20 they've caused.

21 The last initiative I want to highlight
22 is our Bronx DWI Initiative, which provides screening
23 and assessments for individuals charged with driving
24 while intoxicated in Brooklyn Criminal Court. These
25 are folks who might be in need of alcohol and

2 substance use treatment, and they are mandated..

3 (TIMER CHIME) Can I just have a moment to conclude,
4 Chair?

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If you could
6 wrap up, please.

7 AMANDA BERMAN: Okay. These three
8 initiatives collectively play a critical role in a
9 holistic approach to street safety that reduces the
10 harms caused on our roads as well as those caused by
11 the systems that respond. Thank you for the
12 opportunity.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
14 Charles, I assume that's you.

15 CHARLES GUTHRIE: Hi, Chair Brooks-Powers.
16 Thank you for having me. I've never been here. This
17 is a beautiful place. So, I have to watch my two
18 daughters closely when we walk down any sidewalk in
19 this city because one wrong step into the street can
20 be fatal so it's such a vacation when I can let them
21 roam freely and safely in an Open Street. I live on
22 Fifth Avenue in Brooklyn, which has been the site of
23 a wonderful Open Streets program, and like other Open
24 Streets, it's transformed our avenue into a
25 neighborhood gathering place, improving safety and

2 supporting local businesses. However, the program has
3 relied on dwindling volunteer organizers who stretch
4 very small reimbursement grants and put in hundreds
5 of hours of unpaid labor. So due to lack of funds,
6 we're now at risk of losing it completely. Other
7 cities invest far more. Montreal, for example,
8 dedicates 12 million dollars to pedestrianized
9 streets over three years with up to 700,000 dollars
10 available per program. A similar investment in New
11 York City would yield incredible benefits, boosting
12 local economies, reducing traffic injuries, improving
13 air quality, and expanding community programs. So
14 please fully fund Open Streets by allocating 48
15 million dollars over the next three years to
16 strengthen City support and directly fund the
17 organizations running these programs. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

19 Sharon.

20 SHARON BROWN: Hello. My name is Sharon
21 Brown. Before I begin, remember Israel. Remember the
22 hostages. Release the hostages. Let Yahweh's people
23 go.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Please stay on
25 topic.

2 SHARON BROWN: Yes. Defend Israel. Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Last warning.

4 Please stay on topic.

5 SHARON BROWN: Yes. I believe that we
6 should have all the roads, bridges, tunnels, trains,
7 sidewalks, and streets, and if I've missed anything
8 concerning the infrastructure, we need to have those
9 all surveyed and tested to see if they need to be
10 fixed and fix all in the five boroughs. It shouldn't
11 be only if someone makes a complaint or something. It
12 should be that we are steadfast and we go and look
13 and find out where there are cracks. I've gone up
14 certain streets and the road looks like it's sinking
15 and there are so many that to try to make a notation
16 of every single one would be too timely and costly.
17 We should just have a whole survey. With all the
18 funding that people are getting, they should be out
19 there surveying the different streets, making it safe
20 so that people are not running over potholes and
21 different things like that, and the streets are
22 sinking and different things like that. I've had a
23 death in the family. My sister was run over. She
24 worked with the CCRB. She was in a different state,
25 but it's happening here too. It happened to her in a

2 different state that she was run over by a driver,
3 and here I'm hearing that it's happening very often,
4 and I think that the streets should be safe. Safe
5 streets has been something that's been there for a
6 number of years. I think that it should continue.
7 Safe streets. I believe that we need to make sure
8 that Rikers Island closes. It's a death trap.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 SHARON BROWN: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Leslie.

12 LESLIE DAVOL: Thank you, Chair Brooks-
13 Prowers and the Committee. I want to talk about one
14 thing to follow up on what some other people have
15 said about Open Streets and funding the City's Open
16 Streets program, and I want to tell a little bit of a
17 different story based on the work that my
18 organization has been doing in the city, the impact
19 of this program in the city's low-income
20 neighborhoods, particularly in the Bronx. We've been
21 doing a lot of work in the Bronx. I run a non-profit
22 called Street Lab that's been around since about
23 2012, and we've been working ever since then with
24 communities across New York, the majority in low-
25 income areas, and with the City DOT to activate

2 public spaces, and the number one reason that groups
3 reach out to us for such activation is neighborhood
4 safety, and I'm not talking about traffic safety in
5 this case. I'm talking about just a feeling of
6 safety, general sort of safety. And more recently,
7 these same neighborhood groups have been approaching
8 us to help create Open Streets. Now, they don't come
9 to us saying, I want an Open Street. They don't even
10 know about the program, but they come to us telling
11 us that parks are too far or they feel too dangerous
12 and they want space for community and space for kids
13 to play. So, I'm thinking of a group of older
14 residents that we're working with now on Decatur
15 Avenue in the Fordham area of the Bronx where the
16 Block Association came together. They remembered
17 having a play street. They wanted to bring that back,
18 and we worked with them, and with funding from DOT,
19 they were able to enter the program, get some
20 funding, and bring back the play street, and I can
21 tell you that quotes from one woman saying, I was
22 ready to move out of this neighborhood, and this
23 makes me feel hopeful. I want to stick around and
24 help make the neighborhood better. So, they're having
25 an incredible impact. What's remarkable about the

2 program is it's the way it gives groups agency to
3 take control over their neighborhoods and shape the
4 very neighborhood that they move through every day in
5 a way that's pretty quick. It's a pretty quick
6 turnaround. It's pretty efficient, and it's a
7 remarkable way for everyday citizens to partner with
8 government (TIMER CHIME) so I hope that it can
9 continue to be a part of the City's budget. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
12 Thank you to the panel.

13 Next, we'll hear from Lisa Daglian. And
14 is Christopher Grief here? He went home? Okay. Thank
15 you.

16 MICHAEL RING: Hi. My name is Michael
17 Ring. Today, I'm representing Disabled in Action. I'm
18 the Second Vice President, also a lifelong New
19 Yorker. I've had a driver's license since I was 16
20 years old, but I'm also an Access-A-Ride user. And
21 this is the place where people look at the big
22 picture, and I just wanted to remind everyone here
23 that Access-A-Ride outsources a great proportion of
24 their rides to TLC vehicles, broker services, and
25 other Uber-type vehicles, which are not supervised by

2 the MTA. And there are two regulations that are
3 coming down that you guys need to pay attention to.
4 First, not all TLC drivers, there's no requirement
5 for speaking English but, when people with
6 disabilities get into a car, there needs to be some
7 sort of communication going on, and it's very
8 frustrating for disabled people to get into a TLC
9 vehicle and not be able to communicate. I sometimes
10 need help operating the seatbelt, and the driver just
11 doesn't understand me. It's kind of dangerous.

12 Also, there's new regulations coming
13 forward about increased ticketing for rideshare
14 vehicles that might be in bus lanes or bus stops. A
15 lot of disabled people are using rideshare and can't
16 always get to the corner or can't find the vehicle if
17 it's not right in front of the address where they're
18 being dropped off so there needs to be some leniency
19 for the drivers. They're not running into a bodega
20 and getting a bagel. They're helping a person with a
21 disability get into their vehicle, and the ticketing
22 agencies need to be aware that they're right there. I
23 also understand how important it is to keep the bus
24 lanes and bus stops clear, but there's got to be a
25 little bit of middle ground.

2 That's all I have today, and thanks for
3 sticking it out on this long day.

4 LISA DAGLIAN: Good afternoon. It's good
5 to see you, and thank you, Michael. Michael is a
6 strong advocate for riders all across the system, so
7 thank you, as are you, and we appreciate all of the
8 work that you do. I have given you my testimony. I am
9 not going to even come close to reading it, and I've
10 also submitted it. I'm happy to send it to anybody
11 who's interested, and it'll also be on our website.
12 So, I'm Lisa Daglian, and I'm the Executive Director
13 of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the
14 MTA, PCAC. PCAC was created by the State Legislature
15 in 1981 to represent riders on New York City subways,
16 buses, Staten Island Rail, and on the Long Island
17 Railroad and Metro North, and all of those systems do
18 operate within New York City, and it's critically
19 important that they all be funded so that they can
20 continue to serve the millions of riders who use them
21 every day. I know that the MTA was here this morning.
22 They're obviously having some interesting times. I
23 wish I didn't live in quite so interesting times, and
24 they're under barrage from a lot of different
25 directions. One of the most important things that we

2 as transit riders and advocates can do is support
3 them in their call for a fully funded capital plan. I
4 know that that is not what we're here to talk about
5 today, although the City is on the hook for 3 billion
6 dollars, and we support that. I know that they asked
7 for 4 billion. We supported that, too. It just makes
8 a bigger hole to fill. We are so happy to be working
9 with you toward an expansion of Fair Fares to 200
10 percent of the federal poverty level. Something I
11 know is important to so many of us in this room, and
12 to bringing it to the railroads within New York City,
13 too. We've gotten that, in fact, into the Senate One
14 House again this year, and we're hoping that that
15 will move. It's also in the (TIMER CHIME) Assembly,
16 and we'll hope to move that there, and the City
17 Ticket weekly, too. Thank you for your support, and
18 let's build more bus lanes.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
20 Thank you so much to the panel.

21 We're going to now go online. We will
22 next hear from Glen Bolofsky.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Next, we'll
25 hear from Christopher Schuyler.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

3 CHRISTOPHER SCHUYLER: Good afternoon,
4 Chair Brooks-Powers. My name is Christopher Schuyler.
5 I'm a Managing Attorney of the Disability Justice
6 Program at New York Lawyers for Public Interest. I'm
7 a person who stutters. Thank you for hearing my
8 testimony today. So, I wanted to cover, starting with
9 MTA, and in recognition of the enormous funding that
10 the City contributes to the MTA, I want to really
11 urge that the City push the MTA on accessibility
12 improvements to its system, not just in the form of
13 elevators, but in making subway stations more
14 accessible in terms of the gaps between the platforms
15 and the trains, and other accessibility improvements.
16 We also would request that the City urge the MTA to
17 settle its outstanding lawsuits, which use up
18 enormous amounts of taxpayer money, which could be
19 better used toward actually making accessibility
20 improvements. Additionally, in addition to subways,
21 the MTA oversees the Access-A-Ride paratransit
22 program. And as Chair Brooks-Powers noted earlier
23 today, MTA is expecting 80 percent of its funding to
24 come from the City, and so we really urge the City to
25 push the MTA to address service issues, to shut down

2 assessment centers. This would save a lot of money,
3 and paratransit providers throughout the state do not
4 force people to actually show up in person at
5 assessment centers. They accept medical
6 documentation. And lastly, expand the on-demand
7 program, which is... (TIMER CHIME)

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.

9 CHRISTOPHER SCHUYLER: A life-changing
10 program. So, thank you, Chair Brooks-Powers, and I
11 will submit the rest of my testimony in written form.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

13 Next, we'll hear from Elizabeth Denys.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

15 ELIZABETH DENYS: Hello. My name is
16 Elizabeth Denys. I'm a resident of Flatbush. Thank
17 you for this hearing today. First, I wanted to speak
18 in favor of a fully staffed, fully funded Department
19 of Transportation, in particular to ensure street
20 safety projects like the Streets Plans' legally
21 mandated protected bike lanes and other pedestrian
22 safety improvements like hardened daylighting get
23 done swiftly to make sure that our streets truly can
24 be safe for everyone. We also need this funding and
25 staffing to ensure we don't fall further behind in

2 the Streets Plans' legally mandated number of bus
3 lanes to create every year to make sure that bus
4 riders, many of whom are low-income, aren't left
5 behind.

6 Second, I wanted to speak in favor of
7 making sure that Open Streets are fully funded. NYC
8 DOT's Open Streets Program has been a vital resource
9 for numerous neighborhoods. They've created
10 incredible new public spaces and opportunities for
11 community connection, especially for
12 immunocompromised and other high-risk folks who are
13 trying to avoid respiratory viruses. They also
14 improve street safety in the area and help local
15 businesses that are along and nearby them. Open
16 Streets rely really, really heavily on volunteer
17 organizers to make sure that very small amounts of
18 reimbursement grants go a very long way, and these
19 volunteers are already putting in hundreds of dollars
20 of unpaid labor to make this program successful. I'm
21 so impressed by all the volunteers behind the Newkirk
22 Avenue and Vanderbilt Avenue Open Streets I frequent
23 regularly. Their work has really touched my life. But
24 funding has already been decreasing over the years,
25 and it's already jeopardizing the future of Open

2 Streets Program. Without this critical funding, Open
3 Streets may, you know, open less, but it's possible
4 they'll just disappear completely. And this is the
5 opposite of what we need. We need to expand this
6 program's funding to make sure that every
7 neighborhood can have equitable access to Open
8 Streets, and make sure that we allocate 48 million
9 dollars over the next three years to directly fund
10 these organizations running these programs and making
11 sure that their Open Street programs can continue to
12 be a success. This investment in Open Streets would
13 boost local economies, make our streets safer by
14 reducing traffic injuries, improve air quality, and
15 expand community programs and opportunities for
16 connection. Thank you so much for considering my
17 testimony.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

19 Next, we will hear from Saskia Haegans.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

21 SASKIA HAEGANS: Thank you, Chair Brooks-
22 Powers. My name is Saskia Haegans, and I'm one of the
23 organizers of the Vanderbilt Avenue Open Street in
24 Prospect Heights in Brooklyn. I'm here to ask the
25 City to fully fund the Open Streets Program by

2 committing 48 million dollars over the next three
3 years. We are hoping to start the sixth season of
4 Vanderbilt Open Street in May. This program has
5 brought us much needed new public space, has made our
6 streets safer, has supported our local businesses,
7 and most of all, it has allowed our community to
8 reimagine how we use our streets. Countless surveys
9 and petitions show the widespread support for Open
10 Streets. The Council passed legislation to make the
11 program permanent in 2021, and last year, DOT amended
12 the traffic rules to further formalize the program.
13 One key piece is missing, though, and that is the
14 money to pay for all of this. Instead, the program
15 relies on endless unpaid volunteer labor by
16 organizers such as myself. It relies on non-profit
17 community organizations scraping together money to
18 run bare-bones operations. This is not sustainable.
19 Since pandemic financial support ended, the City has
20 decreased the funding to community partners, and the
21 consequences are that the program has shrunk in size
22 and become less equitable. Meanwhile, the Adams
23 Administration is touting the great safety, health,
24 and economic benefits of Open Streets. Relying on
25 provisional equipment and volunteer labor is not

2 sustainable. Long-term, these great street
3 improvements need to be implemented with
4 infrastructure. Infrastructure investments reduce the
5 amount of labor required and thereby reduce the
6 opportunity costs. However, many of the promised
7 street improvement projects and capital redesigns
8 have stalled due to lack of staffing and resources at
9 DOT. Without new, dedicated funding, the program
10 won't survive. We need 48 million dollars over the
11 next three years to protect and expand the program.
12 This will cover staffing of DOT positions that
13 support the Open Streets work, directly funding
14 community organizations that operate open streets,
15 and fast-tracking the implementation of street
16 improvement projects in Open Streets corridors. Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

19 Next, we'll hear from Natasha Elder.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

21 NATASHA ELDER: Hi, good afternoon. My
22 name is Natasha Elder, and I am the Regional Director
23 with NYPIRG, representing our Straphangers Campaign.
24 Since 1979, NYPIRG's Straphangers Campaign has
25 advocated on behalf of millions of subway riders and

2 bus riders for faster and better bus service. Thank
3 you, Committee Chair Brooks-Powers and the Members of
4 the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
5 for the opportunity to testify today.

6 Today, we urge the Committee to support a
7 fully staffed and funded DOT along with the expansion
8 of Fair Fares program to cover households up to 200
9 percent of the federal poverty level. This expansion
10 is not only necessary for low-income families, but
11 also for the communities, for the countless college
12 students in New York City who struggle to afford
13 basic transportation costs. The Fair Fares program,
14 as you know, has been a lifeline for many since it
15 was started in 2019, but the cost of living and
16 transportation continues to rise. We need to continue
17 to ensure that most New Yorkers, especially students,
18 can access the essential benefits it provides. Nearly
19 three-quarters of community college students in New
20 York City live in households earning less than 30,000
21 dollars a year, with many of these students juggling
22 work and school to make ends meet. According to
23 Economic Policy Institute, 52 percent of students in
24 the group are working more than 20 hours per week,
25 often at low-wage jobs. These numbers continue to

2 highlight the undeniable truth that transportation is
3 not just a convenience, it is a necessity for access
4 to education and work. Expansion of Fair Fares to 200
5 percent of the federal poverty level will not only
6 benefit low-income families, but would also empower
7 thousands of college students to complete their
8 education and enter the workforce without the
9 financial strain of commuting costs. I also will
10 submit my full testimony to the Council. Thank you so
11 much.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

13 Next, we'll hear from Laura Sewell.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

15 LAURA SEWELL: Good afternoon. I'm
16 speaking on behalf of Loisaída Open Streets Community
17 Coalition. We're the community partner for the Avenue
18 B Open Street in Manhattan. We are a temporary local
19 access street on Avenue B that really provides
20 traffic common on what's only a two-lane street with
21 three blocks adjacent to a park, six schools, and a
22 public housing complex so this is no place to be
23 speeding. It's very busy. Yet drivers exiting the FDR
24 are fed onto Avenue B, which the old-timers refer to
25 as the Avenue B Speedway, so we really feel the

2 difference that the Open Streets Program has created
3 in terms of safety on our street as well as providing
4 a place for our community to gather for the
5 programming that we can provide through the DOT
6 program. You may be wondering why so many Open
7 Streets organizers are here speaking with you today,
8 and it's because we really have no guarantee. We
9 support these programs out of our own pockets, wait
10 for reimbursement and, right now, we're supposed to
11 be planning for April, but we're only now finding out
12 that we have some funding for this year so our real
13 ask from you is that there be a dedicated line item
14 for Open Streets, plazas, and the maintenance of Open
15 Streets, plazas, and bike lanes. I think others have
16 spoken very eloquently to the benefits of these
17 programs, and I know this Council supported it and
18 has legislated for it, but what we really need is to
19 see a dedicated line item to provide 48 million
20 dollars over the next three years so that we can
21 proceed in confidence to give our time and deliver
22 programming... (TIMER CHIME)

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

24 LAURA SEWELL: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

3 Next, hear from Tal Litwin (phonetic).

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Next, we'll
6 hear from Jim Burke.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

8 JIM BURKE: Chair Brooks-Powers, thank you
9 very much for this meeting. I just want to echo what
10 a lot of the other speakers are saying. Open Streets
11 is a clear home run that DOT has implemented. If you
12 look at commerce, it's way up along where Open
13 Streets exists. If you look at safety, it's anywhere
14 from 40 percent to 71 percent less injuries, any way
15 you look at it. But a lot of that hard work is borne
16 by volunteers. I'm a volunteer for the largest Open
17 Street here in New York City, it's 26 blocks long,
18 34th Avenue Open Streets, and we have volunteers that
19 have to buy their own chess sets and jump ropes and
20 materials. We teach English as a second language a
21 couple of times a week. That money often comes out of
22 people's pockets who are already volunteering on the
23 Open Street. We really need dedicated funding for
24 these safety programs and a line item in the budget
25 directly for the Open Street partners as well as for

2 all the people that work in DOT to get these Open
3 Street open and to really help with the
4 infrastructure that keeps them safe. So, I really
5 appreciate if you would put your attention to that
6 because New York should be leading the nation and the
7 world and, unfortunately, we're not. People have
8 leapfrogged ahead of us, and we just need a little
9 bit of funding. Our Open Street, 7,000 kids use it to
10 go back and forth to school safely. I think they
11 deserve a tiny bit of... it's .000017 when I looked at
12 it in the budget, so if you could really make sure
13 you allocate that money, I promise you that we will
14 deliver the services and make you proud (TIMER CHIME)
15 and I think that everyone...

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

17 JIM BURKE: So thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

19 Next, we'll hear from Bobby Feltault.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

21 BOBBY FELTAULT: Thank you. Thank you to
22 the Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is
23 Bobby Feltault. I'm a Queens resident and Vice Chair
24 of the all-volunteer 31st Avenue Open Street
25 Collective, which has operated the Open Street on

2 31st Ave. since 2020. The Open Streets program has
3 been transformative for New York as it's reimagined
4 how we use our public space to serve local residents.
5 We're incredibly grateful to the DOT, City Council,
6 and our elected officials for the support that
7 enabled this, but I'm speaking before the Council
8 today because this support and the program at large
9 is in jeopardy. According to New York City open data,
10 roughly 50,000 people are injured in collisions with
11 motor vehicles every year in this city. This is not
12 okay. DOT reports show that Open Streets make our
13 community safer with notable drops in vehicle
14 collisions where they've been implemented. They are
15 also making our neighborhoods quieter and cleaner.
16 They bring more customers to our local businesses,
17 and they are a platform for providing programming and
18 vital services close to home. Most of these benefits
19 have been possible thanks to the free labor from
20 local volunteer groups, but this is not sustainable.
21 We are all running bare-bones budgets today and often
22 need to wait much longer than promised for
23 reimbursements, which puts an undue burden on
24 volunteers and individual donors who help make sure
25 we can still pay our bills. I, along with 17

2 representatives from volunteer-run Open Streets,
3 Shared Streets, and Public Plazas, call on the City
4 to fully fund this program by allocating 48 million
5 dollars over the next three years in capital
6 resources and staffing so the DOT can complete more
7 street improvement projects, which reduce the amount
8 of labor and money required to run these services and
9 a direct line item in the budget for the community
10 groups on the ground so that we can make New York
11 City a better and safer place for all. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

13 Next, we'll hear from Eric McClure.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

15 ERIC MCCLURE: Good afternoon, Chair
16 Brooks-Powers. My name is Eric McClure. I'm the
17 Executive Director of StreetsPAC. In preparing our
18 testimony for today's hearing, we looked back at the
19 testimony we delivered in 2023 and 2024 and
20 discovered that, unfortunately, simply repeating
21 those testimonies would be largely appropriate given
22 the disappointing lack of progress in several
23 critical areas, most notably in the installation of
24 protected bus lanes and bike lanes mandated by the
25 Streets Plan. As the IBO reported last month, funding

2 and staffing for the Streets Plan's mandates have not
3 met the need and, "without targeted investment and
4 strategic hiring, DOT's ability to deliver on the
5 Streets Plan remains severely limited." Additionally,
6 DOT's staffing vacancy rate is double that of City
7 government as a whole, further undermining the
8 agency's ability to deliver these crucial and legally
9 required projects. It's a fact that streets with
10 protected bike lanes are safer for everyone who uses
11 them, so the failure to meet the Streets Plan's
12 benchmarks makes it harder for us to make progress
13 toward Vision Zero, another critical program for
14 which progress is stalled. And with DOT reporting
15 that City buses got slower for the third consecutive
16 year in 2024, something robust progress on dedicated
17 bus lanes could help rectify, it's no wonder bus
18 ridership appears to have dropped last year while
19 subway and commuter rail trips continued to recover
20 and cycling and other micromobility trips boomed.
21 It's imperative that we meet the mandate for bus lane
22 miles. Having called for the City to make a
23 significant investment in safe, secure bike parking
24 in both 2023 and 2024, we were excited by the Mayor's
25 announcement last May that the City would begin work

2 on a network of 500 such stations this year. However,
3 more than 10 months after the City issued its RFP, it
4 has yet to identify a partner, and there's been
5 conflicting information about the status of funding
6 for the program. With a quarter of city households
7 having lost a bike to theft, we know the lack of
8 secure storage options is a huge barrier to unlocking
9 the full potential of bicycles as transportation. A
10 robust, secure bike parking network would also help
11 rectify the lack of sufficient charging
12 infrastructure for e-bikes and will contribute to
13 reducing the dangers of residential battery fires.
14 Given how big a game changer this program could be
15 for New York City, it's essential that the Council
16 and City Hall (TIMER CHIME) work together...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
18 has expired.

19 ERIC MCCLURE: Appropriately funded. We
20 will submit our full testimony. We also wanted to
21 point out the importance of subsidizing the bike
22 share program and capitalizing on congestion pricing
23 space dividend. Thank you for your time.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
25 Eric. Next, we'll hear from Chris Leon Johnson.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

3 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah. Hello,
4 Chair Brooks-Powers. My name is Christopher Leon
5 Johnson. I believe you're a great Chair and you
6 should not resign. You should stay as Chair. Don't
7 let TransAlt and don't let (INAUDIBLE) bring you
8 down. Don't let them bring you down, Selvena. You're
9 doing a great job as the Chair.

10 While I'm here, I want to talk about
11 making sure the DOT stay funded. It's because I know
12 there's a lot of people that want DOT to get defunded
13 because of the Commissioner. Yeah, he's a bad
14 Commissioner, but if you defund the DOT, guys, what
15 do you think is going to happen? A lot of people will
16 be laid off from their jobs if the DOT can be
17 defunded. Now, so you can't be defunding DOT because
18 of like one person and one organization. I don't like
19 TransAlt, but that's a different thing. But I want to
20 talk about this right now that the two non-profits
21 need to keep funding the City Council, which is
22 called the Worker Justice Project and the Street
23 Vendor Project. They do a lot of great work for the
24 members. They do a lot of great work for the city.
25 They do a lot of great work for the migrants, and

2 they need to keep making sure that they're going to
3 be secured in the City Council. I'm calling on the
4 City Council to make sure that they get funded over 1
5 million dollars through the City Council, both non-
6 profits, they keep on getting their funding through
7 the City Council. I want to make sure that the City
8 Council put that deliverista hub outside of City
9 Hall. Why does deliverista hub not outside City Hall?
10 I don't know why, but let's make that clear. So like
11 I said, don't defund the DOT. Protect our
12 deliveristas. Protect our street vendors. Fund the
13 DOT. Fund the Worker Justice Project. Fund Street
14 Vendor Project. Protect the migrants. And protect
15 NYC.

16 And I want to make sure that, like I
17 said, the City Council should not be, the budget
18 should not be weaponized against these two non-
19 profits because the speakers run for mayor. And let's
20 make that clear. Please do not defund these
21 organizations because they don't want to support
22 Adrienne Adams for mayor.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
24 Chris. Thank you.

2 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you so
3 much. Thank you. Enjoy your day. Thank you. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Glen Bolofsky,
6 are you there?

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Tal Litwin,
9 are you there?

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If we have
12 inadvertently missed anyone that has registered to
13 testify today and has yet to have been called, please
14 use the Zoom hand function if you are testifying
15 remotely and you will be called in the order that
16 your hand has been raised. If you are testifying in
17 person, even though the Chamber is empty right now,
18 please come to the dais.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL CHEN: Let's give them
20 like 30 seconds.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you to
22 everyone who joined in today's hearing, which started
23 at 10:15 a.m. with four agencies talking about our
24 transportation and infrastructure, and for those who
25 were unable to testify today one way or another but

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 304

2 are watching the recording, we encourage you within

3 72 hours to submit written testimony. Thank you,

4 everyone, and this meeting is now adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 10, 2025