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**HEARING BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
JUNE 21, 2007**

Good afternoon, I am Michael Primeggia, Deputy Commissioner for Traffic Operations at the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) and with me here today is David Woloch, DOT's Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs. Thank you for inviting us here today to discuss Intro 12 and 581.

Intro 12 would require DOT to replace or repair stop signs or to make a determination that no repair or replacement is required, within 48 hours of receiving notice, as well as to maintain a stop sign database. The bill also mandates that where a determination is made that a replacement or repair is not required, DOT shall immediately notify the complainant in writing of that determination. Intro 581 broadens the scope of signs to be repaired or replaced to include all Priority Regulatory Signs, defined by the bill as including stop signs as well as one-way, yield, do not enter, evacuation route and school zone signs.

As we all know, the street signage that DOT maintains in the City of New York is vast. There are currently 1.3 million signs including everything from Stop signs, to parking signs to street names signs. DOT operates crews of between four and ten people in each borough that are responsible for maintaining all signage within their respective boroughs. Of the 1.3 million signs out there, there are 139,922 of what we call Life Protecting Devices located Citywide.

Our definition of "Life Protecting Devices" differs from the Council's definition of "Priority Regulatory Signage" in Intro 581 in that it does not include coastal evacuation and school zone signs. While we recognize that these signs are certainly important, they are what we call

“cautionary” or “way finding” as opposed to “regulatory” signage. Regulatory signs serve a particular function, alerting drivers to regulations specific to that location.

Currently, we complete the vast majority of repairs or replacement to Life Protecting Devices within three business days of receiving notification. In fact, in fiscal year 2007, 61 percent of these signs were repaired or replaced before the end of the third day (following notification). This covers a range between 58 percent of all yield signs and 64 percent of all do not enter signs repaired in that period. Additionally, 99 percent were completed within six business days.

While we believe our current record is a good one, given our resources and the vast universe of Life Protecting Devices posted across the City, we find the Council’s goal to further minimize response times laudable. However, mandating a 48-hour turnaround as proposed in Intro 12 and 581 would adversely affect DOT’s overall traffic safety operations.

Currently, sign repair and replacement operations are bundled together, largely for geographic reasons, to maximize efficiency. If a sign in need of repair is located far away from a cluster of locations that are also in need of repair, we will first send the crew to the area where it can do the most work in the least amount of time. Being under legal obligation to repair such a large universe of signs in such a brief time frame would impair the efficiency of our entire operation.

The inefficiency that would result from a 48-hour turnaround time would also have significant financial implications. We estimate that the additional cost to the DOT would be approximately two million dollars annually. In addition to staffing increases and administrative costs, a 48-hour mandate would require significant amounts of overtime related to weekends and holidays. We would have to ensure that crews, supervisors and technical staff be available seven days a week to repair or replace signs. In FY 2007 8,023 signs were repaired. Presumably, a required 48-

hour turnaround time would not increase the number of signs in need of repair, but would require additional staff to be made available on weekends and holidays, incurring significant costs while actually lessening the productivity of the overall operations. Ideally, we would like to repair everything from signage to potholes immediately after they are reported, but as the Council appreciates we are bound by fiscal constraints which require us to prioritize our efforts where the safety imperative is the greatest.

That said, however, I believe we can take steps to achieve our shared goal – of focusing on where the safety concern is the most imperative – while at the same time, recognizing the need for us to use our limited resources effectively. We are exploring the possibility of repairing or replacing stop, do not enter and yield signs within four business days. We are currently in discussions with OMB and the Mayor's Office on this proposal, but this would ensure a quick turnaround time for the safety signs that matter most. Additionally, we will need to consider the fiscal implications of these bills and any proposal, as without a means for providing for the additional resources required to comply, the installation, repair or replacement of other types of signage would all fall to the wayside as we concentrate solely on these signs.

We have excluded one-way signs from this proposal as they differ from the other three Life Protecting Devices identified. In addition to the fact that frequently more than one exists at any given approach, there are other indications that a street is one-way, even absent a sign. The direction cars are parked is a clear indication of the direction drivers should travel. Currently, we have a very high response rate for one-way signs, as 97 percent are repaired within six business days.

Additionally, we would be interested in incorporating into the bill our current process for tracking and responding to notices of damaged or missing signs. The logging and notification requirements in Intro 12 and 581 are redundant and conflict with the procedure which is used uniformly throughout the City.

In sum, we are confident that we can work with the Council to address their concerns and maximize public safety while giving DOT the required flexibility to conduct our operations in the most efficient and effective manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.