

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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January 30, 2026
Start: 10:21 a.m.
Recess: 10:49 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 1

B E F O R E: Shaun Abreu, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Shahana Hanif
Shekar Krishnan
Farah N. Louis
Christopher Marte
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Phil Wong

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Rita C. Joseph

A P P E A R A N C E S

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

Rick Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner for
Intergovernmental and Community Affairs at New
York City Department of Transportation

Theo Chino, First National Secretary of the
Social Democrat of America

Glen Bolofsky, Chief Executive Officer at
parkingticket.com

Saskia Haegens, volunteer Open Streets organizer
in Brooklyn

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. This is a
3 pre-recorded sound test for the Committee on
4 Transportation and Infrastructure. Today's date is
5 January 30, 2026. This hearing is being recorded in
6 Hearing Room 1, and it's going to be recorded by
7 Kimberley Smith-Thomas.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. Welcome
9 to today's New York City Council hearing for the
10 Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

11 Please silence all cell phone electronic
12 devices.

13 If you wish to participate in today's
14 hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the
15 Sergeant-at-Arms.

16 Moving forward, no one is to approach the
17 dais.

18 Chair, we are ready to begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [GAVEL] Good morning,
20 and welcome to today's hearing of the New York City
21 Council's Committee on Transportation and
22 Infrastructure. I am Council Member Shaun Abreu,
23 Majority Leader and Chair of this committee.

24 As I said during our first hearing on
25 Wednesday, I am committed to running an effective,

2 efficient, and equitable Committee that advances
3 thoughtful policies to improve the lives of all New
4 Yorkers. We are quickly getting to work to fulfill
5 that commitment.

6 At today's hearing, we will be hearing a
7 bill that would improve the Open Streets Program so
8 that this bill can advance without unnecessary delay.
9 The Open Streets Program was initially created in the
10 spring of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and then
11 was made permanent by the Council through Local Law
12 55 of 2021. The program has remained popular and
13 effective in the nearly six years since its launch,
14 helping communities across the city transform their
15 streets into public spaces for all. When streets are
16 safely open to people, neighborhoods become more
17 walkable, local businesses see increased foot
18 traffic, families have places to gather, and
19 residents have opportunities to be active and
20 connected. This is especially important in
21 underserved communities that have historically
22 received less support for and access to high-quality
23 public space. The bill we are hearing today would
24 improve this program by providing opportunities for
25 Open Streets special activations on certain holidays,

2 and time periods when pedestrian traffic is
3 predictably higher. Specifically, Introduction Number
4 257, sponsored by Council Member Joseph, would
5 require the Department of Transportation to offer
6 special activation opportunities for Open Streets
7 participants to expand operating hours on designated
8 holidays, including Memorial Day, Juneteenth, the
9 Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Halloween, as well as
10 on other holidays or days with significant pedestrian
11 traffic. It is important to acknowledge that this
12 bill builds off of the work the Department of
13 Transportation has been doing to expand Open Streets
14 over the last few years, such as part of its now-
15 annual Trick-or-Treats initiative around Halloween.
16 Today, the Committee looks forward to hearing from
17 DOT about its experience offering special activation
18 opportunities as part of the Open Streets Program.

19 Before we begin, I would like to thank my
20 Staff and the Committee Staff for their hard work in
21 preparing for today's hearing. Jalissa Quigley, my
22 Deputy Chief-of-Staff and Director of Legislation and
23 Budget; Ian Boldistin, my Director of Communications;
24 Amber Moore, my Chief-of-Staff; Mark Chen, Senior
25 Counsel to the Committee; Theodore Miller, Counsel to

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2 the Committee; Kevin Kotowski, Senior Policy Analyst
3 to the Committee; John Basile, Senior Policy Analyst
4 to the Committee; and Adrian Drepaul, Principal
5 Financial Analyst to the Committee.

6 I will now allow Council Member Joseph to
7 speak on her bill.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair
9 Abreu and Colleagues of the Committee on
10 Transportation Infrastructure.

11 Today, I'm pleased that you are hearing
12 my bill. I know the Intro. Number has changed to
13 T0165, which previously heard during the 2024-2025
14 legislative session when I first introduced it. The
15 legislation would require the Department of
16 Transportation to provide Open Street participants
17 with the opportunity to expand their operating hours
18 on certain holidays, including Memorial Day,
19 Juneteenth, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Halloween,
20 and other high-traffic days. It would also require
21 the DOT to accept suggestions from community
22 organizations to add additional holidays for special
23 activation. Applications for these special
24 activations would allow the same review process as
25 regular Open Street applications. Additionally, this

2 bill aims to support communities in celebrating
3 cultural holidays safely by making it easier to
4 request and receive Open Street's approval.

5 At last year's hearing, the
6 Administration expressed favorable support for this
7 bill, and I look forward to hearing their comments
8 once again. Passing this legislation will represent
9 another positive step towards progress and cultural
10 support of our diverse communities in New York.

11 Thank you, Committee Chair, for allowing
12 me to speak today, and I look forward to seeing this
13 bill pass the Committee. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
15 Member Joseph.

16 I'd like to recognize Colleagues who have
17 joined us today in person. We have Council Members
18 Wong, Marte, Justin Sanchez, and Louis, and remote,
19 we have Council Members Brooks-Powers, Hanif, and
20 Pierina Sanchez.

21 I will now ask the Committee Counsel to
22 swear in the Administration.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our first
24 panel will be from the Department of Transportation.
25 Eric Beaton, Deputy Commissioner for Transportation

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2 Planning and Management; Rick Rodriguez, Assistant
3 Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community
4 Affairs.

5 I will now administer the oath. Please
6 raise your right hands.

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

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
14 begin when ready.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Good morning,
16 Chair Abreu, and Members of the Committee on
17 Transportation and Infrastructure. I'm Eric Beaton,
18 Deputy Commissioner for Transportation Planning and
19 Management. I'm joined by Rick Rodriguez, Assistant
20 Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community
21 Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on
22 behalf of Mayor Mamdani and Commissioner Flynn about
23 Intro. 257.

24 I know we're here to testify on the bill
25 today, but I'd be remiss if we didn't cheerlead our

2 work. At DOT, we work with and support more than 200
3 Open Streets locations citywide, including a record-
4 high 72 Open Streets at schools across the city. The
5 Open Streets Program also includes temporary,
6 holiday-specific Open Streets such as Halloween and
7 harvest-themed Trick-or-Street events through
8 October, holiday Open Streets on Fifth Avenue, and
9 expansions of celebrated annual tradition of Summer
10 Streets, reaching over 400 blocks of car-free fun. We
11 partner with schools, community groups, and business
12 improvement districts to execute and program these
13 streets citywide. Our program empowers community
14 partners to steward their communities and create new
15 possibilities to reimagine public spaces for food and
16 culture, recreation, and education. We also partner
17 with local businesses to ensure that loading,
18 deliveries, and emergency access are coordinated
19 throughout. The Mamdani Administration and
20 Commissioner Flynn have a deep belief in supporting
21 this program and equitably expanding the use of our
22 streets as public space. We look forward to continue
23 growing our Open Streets Program.

24 Turning to the legislation before the
25 Council today, Intro. 257, sponsored by Council

2 Member Joseph. This bill would modify the Open
3 Streets Program to offer activation opportunities on
4 certain holidays outside of normal operating hours,
5 including Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Fourth of July,
6 Labor Day, Halloween, and other holidays or days with
7 significant pedestrian traffic. It also requires
8 procedures by which community organizations may
9 participate in or suggest new activation
10 opportunities, which may also be offered on other
11 days to the agency's discretion. We support this bill
12 as we already extend the opportunity for programming
13 on holidays and look forward to extending
14 opportunities for potential programming partners to
15 activate our streets on even more days. We welcome
16 the chance for additional conversations on how to
17 enhance our efforts to think boldly about public
18 space.

19 In conclusion, I'd like to thank the
20 Council for the opportunity to testify before you
21 today. We'd be happy to answer any questions.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Regarding
23 the expansion of holidays and Open Streets, how many
24 Open Street applications have been submitted for the
25 2026 application process?

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So, our
3 application process is currently open. At this
4 moment, we're at 103 applications for 2026, but the
5 first deadline is coming up very shortly, and
6 historically we've gotten a lot of applications on
7 the day or two before that deadline, so we expect
8 that number to be much higher.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How does that compare
10 during this time last year?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: It's roughly
12 the same as this time last year, and we've seen a lot
13 of returning Open Streets partners, but we've also
14 seen a number of new ones coming in. So, we don't
15 have a final number, but we think that it will be
16 similar, if not bigger, than last year.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And do you anticipate...
18 what is the number historically by the deadline date?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: By the
20 deadline date, it's over 200, and then there's
21 actually a second later deadline for schools who want
22 to start in September, so we can take a little bit
23 longer on those, but we expect it to be over 200
24 again.

25

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: And would you
3 say that these are mostly returning or new partners?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: The majority
5 are returning, but we do have a good number of new
6 partners as well. So, of the 103, 89 are returning
7 and 14 are new, but again, we expect both of those
8 numbers to go up in the next few days.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And what is the
10 Administration doing to encourage new partnerships?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yeah. We do a
12 lot of outreach around the city, particularly looking
13 at neighborhoods that don't have Open Streets or
14 other good open spaces. So, we work with our Borough
15 Commissioners, we reach out to community boards, we
16 reach out to religious and faith-based organizations,
17 and we try to make sure that they know that we are
18 able to support them. That if it's a relatively small
19 organization, we can either provide funding or we can
20 provide direct support services through our Public
21 Space Equity Program, and we have a deep commitment
22 to doing that outreach and make sure that we're
23 reaching any community in the city that wants to
24 participate.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Under DOT rules, Open
3 Street partners may request permission to operate a
4 full-closure Open Street during certain holidays. How
5 many of these requests did DLT receive last year, and
6 how many were granted?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So, Trick-or-
8 Street is sort of its own number because it's a lot,
9 but on most holidays we've historically not seen a
10 huge number. It's been one or two in a year, but I
11 think one of the good things about this legislation
12 is it helps raise awareness and make clear that
13 that's possible, and so we hope to engage even more
14 partners this year on those holidays.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And if this
16 legislation were to pass, and that certainly our
17 hope, what would the Administration do to encourage
18 the use of this permit during holidays?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: For sure, it
20 would become part of what we discuss when we reach
21 out to partners. We have a very active engagement, we
22 don't just say, go do your thing. We make sure that
23 they know about the resources available, they know
24 that we're able to give programming, and as part of
25 that we'll make sure that they know that the

2 opportunity is available to do these on the holidays
3 as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What are common
5 reasons for DOT to issue a denial if any were denied
6 in the past year?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. We
8 don't deny a lot, but some examples might be if
9 someone requests an Open Street on a major bus route
10 or truck route, where the diversion would cause other
11 issues in the community. So, there's often physical
12 issues. I would say that that's the most common issue
13 that comes up.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is there a formal
15 standard for approval or denial, or is that more of
16 an informal standard?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So, we do a
18 lot of consultation, if it's affecting a bus route,
19 we talk with the MTA, there's a process where we
20 reach out to elected officials and community boards,
21 and we take that back in helping make the decision.
22 So, at one point we discussed, should it be an
23 automatic denial if it's on a bus route? We thought
24 about it and said, look, there may be circumstances
25 where that's okay, we'll discuss with the MTA, we'll

2 discuss with the community, and so we do have a small
3 number of Open Streets that are maybe only one day a
4 week, but they would affect a bus route. And we think
5 that that level of thoughtfulness is more appropriate
6 than having a hard and fast rule.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So, would you say that
8 the acceptance rate is pretty high?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes. It's
10 very high.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And
12 just to put a finer point, a good reason why we have
13 so few denials is we work with those partners to find
14 locations that do make sense.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. Has DOT
16 considered expanding the list of holidays beyond the
17 11 federal holidays, and if so, what factors do you
18 take into consideration?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yeah. That's
20 a good question, because a few years ago, Halloween
21 was not something that we offered. It was treated
22 just like any other day, and we heard that there was
23 a big need, both communities requesting the ability
24 to close streets when children are out trick-or-
25 treating. We also thought there was an important

2 safety purpose, as we know that those are very busy
3 days on our streets, so we very aggressively pushed
4 that out there. And I think we're open to finding
5 places, and it may not be the same all over the city,
6 but where there's a community that's celebrating a
7 holiday, I think we're happy to work with them, even
8 if it's not the regular day that they might operate,
9 finding ways to do that. We want this to be a program
10 that works with communities.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Does DOT feel it needs
12 assistance from other agencies to enforce and carry
13 out special activations?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: At times,
15 yes. I think one of the great things about the Open
16 Streets Program is that a lot of it just runs in a
17 very straightforward way, where we provide the
18 support, and the streets are able to be open to
19 pedestrians, but there are places where there's been
20 crowds, and we work with NYPD. We certainly work with
21 the Fire Department to make sure that we meet their
22 requirements of having an open lane at all times. We
23 work with Sanitation and make sure that they're able
24 to clean the streets and do what they need to do. So,
25 we do work with other agencies, but thankfully we've

2 not seen it as a big imposition on needing to do
3 tremendous amounts of enforcement.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And do you find that
5 you need assistance from other agencies in most
6 situations? I know you said at times, do you just say
7 most of the time, some of the time?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: The
9 assistance is mostly the review up front, that we
10 review with them to give them a chance to flag any
11 issues that they have. Once the streets are in
12 operation, as I said, occasionally there's a special
13 event that needs more, but mostly we're able to just
14 run them through DOT and through our partners.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How will DOT ensure
16 emergency vehicle access during extended hours, and
17 what are the operational requirements for partners?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. We take
19 emergency vehicle access very seriously. We have a
20 set of requirements that all of our Open Streets and
21 all of our partners must obey at all times, including
22 keeping an 11-foot open path for emergency access,
23 and we create maps of the street and show where
24 things should be. We go out and inspect to make sure
25 that those are being followed. It's a core part of

2 anything on a street that emergency access must be
3 maintained.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And my last set of
5 questions are on playground access, which is more of
6 an interest area for me and hopefully this Committee.
7 I'm really interested in exploring ways we can
8 increase the number of and access to playgrounds in
9 the city, and I understand that DOT works with
10 partner organizations to support a range of
11 activities and programming at Open Street locations,
12 including for recess and outdoor learning at certain
13 full-closure school locations. Have playgrounds ever
14 been considered or implemented as part of any of
15 these Open Street locations, particularly full-
16 closure or full-closure school locations?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So, bringing
18 more play to our streets is something we've done a
19 lot of talking about. Certainly, Summer Streets has a
20 lot of this to it, too. The way the Open Streets
21 program runs, by necessity it is closed to traffic at
22 some times and then open at other times so it doesn't
23 work well with permanent infrastructure, but we have
24 a set of programming partners, some of which include
25 the ability to bring in play structures and other

2 things working with those schools. Now, it may be
3 that there's locations where a permanent closure is
4 appropriate and we work through our plaza program to
5 create those spaces. And then I think for a
6 playground, we would obviously want to work with
7 Parks and Recreation around creating and maintaining
8 that type of infrastructure.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Does DOT have any
10 thoughts on the potential of expanding playground
11 access through the Open Streets program?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So, one of
13 the things that we've done with a lot of Open Streets
14 is we have a lot of Open Streets near parks or
15 adjacent to parks to help sort of expand the park
16 into the community and make access easier and safer.
17 So again, we work with the Parks Department, we work
18 with local communities around that. But it's
19 something we've heard very clearly is that opening
20 the park into the community is part of what an open
21 street can do, and so we're interested in that, we're
22 certainly interested, we can talk more about lots of
23 ways that we can keep those conversations going.

24 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Joseph,
25 do you have questions on your bill?

2 You're good.

3 Council Member Marte.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Hey, how you doing?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Hey.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: So, there's a
7 20,000-dollar grant for reimbursement of non-profits
8 that have activities on Open Streets. Would that also
9 be cover for the specific holidays as well?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes. So, we
11 would work with them either to provide the direct
12 reimbursement or if they need more direct assistance
13 in terms of maintaining the space, that would apply
14 here too.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Great. Thank you. I
16 think it's going to be great, especially for holiday-
17 specific events, if that program can help offset some
18 of the costs that the non-profits do on the streets.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yeah. We
20 think that that's been a key part of the success of
21 the program, to make sure that it's not only
22 available in rich areas of the city, but that anyone
23 can participate without the money being the top
24 obstacle.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Awesome. Thank you
3 so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. This panel
5 is hereby excused.

6 I now open the hearing for public
7 testimony.

8 I remind members of the public that this
9 is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be
10 observed at all times. As such, members of the public
11 shall remain silent at all times.

12 The witness table is reserved for people
13 who wish to testify. No video recording or
14 photography is allowed from the witness table.
15 Further, members of the public may not present audio
16 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
17 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-
18 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

19 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
20 please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-
21 at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized,
22 you will have two minutes to speak on today's hearing
23 topic, specifically Introduction Number 257, a local
24 law to amend the Administrative Code of the City of
25 New York in relation to special activation of the

2 Open Streets Program on certain holidays and time
3 periods with significant pedestrian traffic.

4 If you have a written statement or
5 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
6 the record, please provide a copy of that testimony
7 to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written
8 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
9 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
10 will not be accepted.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our first panel will
12 include Theo Chino.

13 THEO CHINO: Hello, Councilman.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Hello.

15 THEO CHINO: Hi. My name is Theo Chino.
16 I'm the First National Secretary of the Social
17 Democrat of America, the socialist faction inside the
18 Democratic Party. I'm here today to request Intro.
19 165, but I think you change bill to be amended to
20 formally include the United Nations week as part of
21 the Open Street holiday calendar. Over the year, I
22 repeatedly reached out to my Portuguese socialist
23 comrade, the United Nations Secretary General,
24 Antonio Guterres, to encourage the inclusion of the
25 local Democratic and Republican county Committee

Member in drafting mitigation proposals for UN week.

The purpose of this outreach has been to alleviate both the disruption and the financial burden that the United Nations presence placed on the residents of New York City during General Assembly. The goal has always been simple, to reduce disruption to New Yorker and to address the significant financial and social costs imposed that week on our city residents.

As a socialist who believes wholeheartedly in the mission of the United Nations, an institution led by a fellow socialist, it pains me to say this, but when the security of international delegates is consistently prioritized over the daily life of New Yorker, we must speak honestly about the consequence.

The UN week place a heavy burden on our city and the visa denial imposed by our President routinely prevents full delegation from attending. At the same time, New York City absorbed enormous costs through NYPD overtime, extensive street closure, and economic loss to local business. The impact extends well beyond the boundary of Community Board 6. That's why it is essential that Intro. 165 explicitly recognizes UN Week as an Open Street holiday. This would allow the City to plan for actively manage (TIMER CHIME)

2 traffic responsibly and support special business
3 support business across the tri-state area.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much.

5 THEO CHINO: Thank you for your
6 opportunity to testify and for consideration on this
7 inclusion.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Second panelist remote, we're going to
11 start with Glen Bolofsky.

12 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Mr. Chairman, how are you
13 today, sir?

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Doing all right.
15 Yourself?

16 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Nice to see you again.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Your time has started.

18 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Well, we got a lot to do.
19 We got a lot to do. I know you're off to a great
20 start. I want to thank you so much for helping to
21 expand the Open Streets program.

22 But before I get into that, I want to
23 thank your team, yourself, the former Chair of this
24 Committee, Selvena, who helped a lot to improve
25 things, and our entire Central Staff Team as well,

2 and all the advocates out there. So, I want to thank
3 everybody for taking the time. That's first and most
4 important.

5 Open Streets are so important to the
6 vitality of our neighborhoods. Really thank Council
7 Member Joseph for introducing this and sticking to it
8 all this time, and the team here for supporting it.
9 We'd like more Open Streets and more parks. They're
10 essential. I grew up in Forest Hills. The park was
11 essential to my well-being. We played chess in the
12 park. We played checkers in the park. It kept us off
13 the streets. It was a very healthy environment. We
14 support that strongly, and we appreciate the
15 opportunity to be here today. Just want to mention in
16 passing, 30 seconds, there's a deadline Monday with
17 the Department of Finance. I've been sending that
18 around. Central Staff has passed it around to
19 everybody. Anybody who wants to reply to the
20 Department of Finance, their new program is expanding
21 discounts on illegally double-parked vehicles under
22 the stipulated fine program. It's not shrinking. It's
23 expanding. The Mayor probably doesn't know about it.
24 I've learned your team didn't know about it until...
25 DOF never told anybody. So, we're letting everybody

2 know that they're looking to expand that program, and
3 that will reduce the speed of buses, reduce, perhaps,
4 the improvements we receive from congestion pricing.
5 It certainly is reducing our monies available for
6 Open Streets and parks, because we're giving out
7 hundreds of millions in subsidies during (TIMER
8 CHIME)

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you for your
10 testimony. Time has expired.

11 GLEN BOLOFSKY: This budget process to
12 Amazon and other revenue makers. Thank you so much,
13 Mr. Chair. Great to work with you this morning and
14 your team. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much.

16 We next have Saskia Haegens.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

18 SASKIA HAEGENS: Thank you, Chair. My name
19 is Saskia Hagens, and I'm a volunteer Open Streets
20 organizer in Brooklyn. I support legislation that
21 further formalizes the Open Streets program,
22 especially if it helps make the program more
23 accessible and flexible. The proposed legislation
24 would facilitate running Open Streets outside of a
25 regular schedule, and it would be incredibly helpful

2 to add further flexibility and allow one-off days in
3 addition to designated holidays. One obvious example
4 that comes to mind is Pride in June, which is not
5 technically a holiday, yet certainly a significant
6 event in New York, especially for the queer
7 community. Currently, it's virtually impossible to
8 add one-off days to the Open Streets schedule outside
9 of certain holidays, and the proposed legislation
10 would codify and extend existing practice.

11 In sum, I strongly support this
12 legislation and want to emphasize the importance of
13 making sure that it's accessible not just for
14 designated holidays, but also for important community
15 events such as Pride. Furthermore, I would like to
16 take this opportunity to reiterate a point Open
17 Streets organizers and supporters have been making
18 for years now, which is that in order for this
19 program to survive and thrive, it needs to be fully
20 funded. Open Streets has allowed communities to make
21 our streets safer, to provide free programming,
22 maintenance, outdoor dining, and support local
23 businesses. There's countless of surveys and
24 petitions that show widespread support for the
25 program, and just today, the State Comptroller

2 released a report showing Open Streets lead to
3 substantial job growth. One key piece remains
4 missing, though, and that is the money to pay for all
5 of this. Instead, the program relies on endless
6 unpaid volunteer labor by organizers such as myself,
7 and this is not sustainable. Without new dedicated
8 funding, this program won't survive, and I'm asking
9 the new Administration and this newly installed
10 Committee to finally fully fund the Open Streets
11 program, and this should cover staffing of DOT
12 positions, directly funding community organizations,
13 and fast-tracking the implementation of street
14 improvement projects on Open Streets corridors.

15 All of this in order to protect and
16 expand (TIMER CHIME) this fantastic...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you for your
18 testimony. Time has expired.

19 SASKIA HAEGENS: Thank you. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 If we have inadvertently missed anyone
23 that has registered to testify today and has not yet
24 been called on, please use the Zoom hand function if
25

2 you are testifying remotely, and you will be called
3 in the order that your hand has been raised.

4 If you are testifying in person, please
5 come to the dais.

6 Seeing no one approaching the dais and
7 seeing no hands raised on Zoom, this hearing is
8 hereby 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 February 10, 2026