

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

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WASTE MANAGEMENT JOINTLY WITH
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JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
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February 27, 2026
Start: 1:07 p.m.
Recess: 4:40 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Justin E. Sanchez, Chairperson of
the Committee on Sanitation and
Solid Waste Management

Shahana Hanif, Chairperson of the
Committee on Disabilities

Shaun Abreu, Chairperson of the
Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure

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COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT:

Shahana Hanif
Kayla Santosuosso
Shanel Thomas-Henry
Sandra Ung
Inna Vernikov
Susan Zhuang

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES:

Tiffany Caban
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Rita C. Joseph
Sandy Nurse

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE:

Eric Dinowitz
Shahana Hanif
Shekar Krishnan
Farah N. Louis
Christopher Marte
Justin E. Sanchez
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Julie Won
Phil Wong

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Gale A. Brewer
Joann Ariola

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Jean Ryan, President of Disabled in Action in Metropolitan New York

Jonathan Hanon, self

Michael Ring, Vice President of Disabled in Action of Greater New York

Eman Rimawi-Doster, Senior Community Organizer for the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Javier Lojan, Acting Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation

Anthony Pennolino, Chief of Department of the New York City Department of Sanitation

Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner of Public Affairs and Customer Experience of the New York City Department of Sanitation

Mike Flynn, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation

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

Rick Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner of Intergovernmental Affairs of the New York City Department of Transportation

Emily Sweet, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel from the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

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

Mike Schweinsburg, President of the 504
Democratic Club

Dr. Sharon McLennon Wier, testimony read by
Arthur Schwartz, General Counsel of the Center
for the Independence of the Disabled New York.

Joe Rappaport, Executive Director of the Brooklyn
Center for Independence of the Disabled

Robert Acevedo, member of Disabled in Action
Metropolitan New York

Layla Passman, Atlantic Avenue Business
Improvement District

Jessica Scholes, Staff Attorney with Disability
Rights New York

Alex Gregor, self

Jackson Chabot, Director of Advocacy and
Organizing at Open Plans

Elizabeth Denys, self

Kathleen Collins, self

Paul Schreiber, self

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

Evan Yankey, Advocacy Director for Brooklyn
Center for Independence of the Disabled

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sound check for the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, Mental Health, Disability and Addiction, and Transportation and Infrastructure. Today's date is February 27, 2026. Being recorded by Danny Huang in the Council Chambers.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for the Committee on Disabilities joint with the Committee on Transportation and Sanitation.

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices.

Moving forward, no one is to approach the dais.

Chairs, we are ready to begin.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Council Member Shahana Hanif, Chair of the New York City Council's Committee on Disabilities. Today, the newly created Committee on

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Disabilities convenes its very first hearing. This is a historic moment and one long overdue.

I also want to share something personal. I live with an autoimmune disease, lupus, and as a result, I have experienced disability. I was diagnosed at 17. I'm now 35. I'm in remission, but I remain under the care of several specialists. Living with lupus shaped my path. It propelled me into transit activism. If it weren't for our city's low floor buses, I may not have graduated from Brooklyn College. Mapping subway elevators and escalators wasn't an inconvenience. It was a necessity. That's why today matters. Accessibility is not a luxury. It is infrastructure, dignity, and survival. Disabled New Yorkers are the largest minority in our city, yet their needs are too often treated as secondary. This Committee exists to change that. Today, we begin an important chapter. Our work starts here with a clear commitment to centering the voices of New Yorkers

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with disabilities and ensuring their experiences lead to meaningful and lasting change. I am proud to serve as the Committee's first Chair and to help lead this work forward.

I want to thank Chair Justin Sanchez and Majority Leader Shaun Abreu for joining us for this critically important oversight hearing on pedestrian and transit accessibility during winter weather. I also want to recognize Council Members joining us in person and remotely, Council Members Zhuang, Santosuoso, Sanchez, Abreu, Vernikov, Louis, Nurse, and Sanchez, remote. That's Pierina Sanchez, right? Okay. Oh, she's here. Oh, she's here. And Brewer.

During the February 2026 blizzard, New York City experienced sustained winds and heavy snowfall that blanketed our streets. As temperatures dropped in the days that followed, snow hardened into ice across sidewalks, corners, and bus stops. This came just after the January 2026 winter storm, when

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the city saw up to 15 inches of snow followed by freezing temperatures that turned even cleared paths into sheets of ice. We are grateful to the Sanitation workers, first responders, and City staff who worked under extremely difficult conditions to protect New Yorkers, and we honor the lives lost during and in the aftermath of these storms.

At the same time, disability advocates and community members have raised serious concerns about persistent accessibility barriers following both storms. Their advocacy highlights the reality we are here to examine. For many New Yorkers, accessible routes remained obstructed long after the snowfall ended. When daily mobility is compromised, participation in economic, civic, and community life, including attending hearings like this one, is constrained. We take that frustration seriously. The fact that access remains inconsistent is precisely why this conversation cannot wait. Accessibility

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during and after winter storms is not peripheral. It is urgent, ongoing, and consequential. For many New Yorkers with disabilities, older adults, and families with strollers, the question was not how many streets were plowed. It was whether they could leave their homes at all.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City is required to maintain accessible pedestrian infrastructure in operable condition. While temporary disruptions may occur during extreme weather, prolonged obstruction of curb ramps, sidewalks, bus stops, and paratransit pickup points raises serious civil rights concerns. Accessibility is not optional, and it is not seasonal. Across the five boroughs, we received repeated reports of curb ramps buried in compacted snow, sidewalks narrowed to impassable widths, bus riders forced into the street, and paratransit users unable to reach pickup locations, in some cases days after plowing

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concluded. When accessible routes are blocked, the result is not inconvenience, it is exclusion. Back-to-back storms have exposed the limitations of the City's current approach. Snow that is partially cleared but not fully removed becomes compacted, freezes, and compounds with subsequent snowfall, further constricting already limited accessible pathways. Our current system relies heavily on private property owners to clear sidewalks with enforcement largely complaint driven. That model may address individual violations, but it does not ensure continuous accessible routes. A single unclear ramp can sever an entire path of travel.

So, today we are asking straightforward questions. Are winter response practices centered on accessibility from the outset or treated as secondary to roadway clearance? Are responsibilities clearly defined across agencies? Are performance standards

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measurable and time bound? And when accessible routes remain blocked, who is accountable? Accessibility cannot be an afterthought once roads are clear. It must be treated as essential infrastructure and a civil rights obligation. As we recover from Monday's blizzard, we are reminded that no New Yorker should be isolated in their home because the path outside was left inaccessible.

I want to thank the Administration for being here today as well as the advocates and members of the public here to testify and those who have and will submit written testimony. I also want to thank all the Staff who made today's hearing possible, including the Disabilities Committee Staff, Senior Legislative Counsel Sara Sucher, and Senior Legislative Policy Analyst Chloë Rivera.

I will now pass the mic to Chair Sanchez for his opening statement.

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I also want to recognize that Council Member Marte has joined us on Zoom and Council Member Phil Wong.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Council Member Justin Sanchez, and I'm the Chair of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management.

First, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the several New York City residents who have passed away due to the sub-freezing temperatures here and after Winter Storm Fern. We continue to keep them in our thoughts. Next, I would like to thank Councilperson Shahana Hanif, who is leading these oversight operations here today, as well as Majority Leader Shaun Abreu, and the rest of my Colleagues who have joined us. Thank you all for being here. I'd like to also thank a very warm welcome to the representatives here from the Department of

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Sanitation. I know we're coming out of a few recent snowstorms, you know, light and simple these first few weeks, and I really want to thank the men and women of the Department that have been working day in and night to clear our public spaces of snow and ice. Thank you for making the time to be here and to keep us informed. I'd like to also thank each member of the public who is here, who made the time to be here either in person or virtually. We welcome your thoughtful input.

Welcome to the oversight hearing on pedestrian transit accessibility during winter weather events. The City's Administrative Code requires DSNY to submit to the Council and to make public an annual snow plowing and removal plan for each of our five boroughs. This hearing will examine those borough-based snow plans and seek to understand how our City agencies are addressing the latest

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influx of winter weather. I am particularly interested to learn about the Department's removal of snow and ice in pedestrian areas like bike lanes and sidewalks, as well as how the Department plans for efficiency despite year-over-year differences in winter weather. I look forward to hearing from DSNY and other interested individuals.

I would like to thank everyone on my team and in the Legislative Division for their work preparing for today's oversight hearing.

And now I would like to turn it back over to Chairperson Hanif.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Chair.

I will now pass it to the Majority Leader for his opening statement.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Good afternoon, and welcome to today's joint hearing of the New York City Council's Committees on Disabilities, Sanitation and

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Solid Waste Management, and Transportation and Infrastructure. I am Council Member Shaun Abreu, Majority Leader and Chair of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

To start, I would like to thank Chair Hanif for leading today's critically important oversight hearing, which, as Chair Hanif mentioned, represents the first-ever hearing of the newly created Committee on Disabilities. I also want to thank Chair Justin Sanchez for helping organize this hearing and for joining us today.

As my Co-Chairs have discussed, we're going to examine New York City's response to the recent snowstorms and what it revealed about the City's ability to keep New Yorkers safe and moving, especially when it comes to pedestrian accessibility and transit access after a major weather event. During the storms, the City experienced widespread

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and significant snowfall across all five boroughs. Following the first storm, freezing temperatures slowed melting and contributed to lingering snow and ice conditions, meaning the City's work could not end with initial plowing and had to include thorough followup. For the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the core issue is not just how quickly streets were plowed these past two storms, it is whether New Yorkers could safely walk, cross, and access transit in the days that followed. In many neighborhoods, snowbanks narrowed sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalk approaches were blocked by compacted snow and ice, and re-freezing created hazardous conditions. For New Yorkers who use wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, and other mobility aids, and for older adults and those with limited mobility, these conditions turned every trip into unsafe, difficult journeys. Access to public

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transportation was also impacted after both storms, but particularly for the first storm, especially at bus stops. When snowbanks remain at curbside stops, riders can be forced into the street or onto uneven, icy surfaces to board a bus, and this is not acceptable. Buses are a lifeline for many New Yorkers, and we must ensure that these areas are cleared and remain accessible as follow-up work is performed.

Today's hearing will also focus on the City's snow and ice removal framework. Although the Department of Sanitation largely leads snow-clearing operations, the Department of Transportation plays a critical role, providing plow truck operators, participating in interagency coordination at the Snow Command Center, and supporting snow hauling operations. The Department also has several specific snow-clearing responsibilities, including with

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respect to bus shelters, the Four East River Bridges, and the Triple Cantilever portion of the BQE. At today's hearing, we will also review how the City manages performance and compliance in its public-private arrangements, including the Citi Bike system, the role of contractors responsible for bus shelter maintenance, and how complaints are tracked, routed, and resolved. We intend to examine what worked, what did not, and what we can change going forward, including clearer performance standards for accessibility restoration, stronger interagency coordination, better data, improved complaint response, and more consistent enforcement across private properties and City-controlled locations.

Before we begin, I would like to thank my Staff and the Committee Staff for their hard work in preparing for today's hearing. Jalissa Quigley, my Deputy Chief-of-Staff and Director of Legislation,

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and Budget; Mark Chen, Senior Counsel to the Committee; Theodore Miller, Counsel to the Committee; Kevin Kotowski, Senior Policy Analyst to the Committee; John Basile, Senior Policy Analyst to the Committee; and Adrien Drepaul, Principal Financial Analyst to the Committee. I would also like to thank again my Co-Chairs and their respective Committee Staff.

I will now turn it back to my Co-Chair, Chair Hanif.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Majority Leader.

I'd like to recognize Council Members De La Rosa and Ung.

Before we hear from the Administration, we will hear from a panel of community members directly impacted by today's issues to help center lived experience and ground our oversight in the realities

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that they face. Jean Ryan, Jonathan Hanon, Michael Ring, Eman Rimawi-Doster, who is remote.

When you're ready, you can begin.

JEAN RYAN: Sure. I'll be first. My name is Jean Ryan, and I'm President of Disabled in Action in Metropolitan New York. We work to get civil rights for people with disabilities. This is our 56th year. We believe in nothing about us without us. But today, most of the seniors and people with disabilities who wanted to attend could not get here because of the snow. Disability rights groups asked to have the hearing postponed. What is the emergency? But the City Council refused to postpone the hearing by two weeks. It's terrible that you would want to hold the hearing about us without us. Where is the justice in that? Today you are putting the dis to disability civil rights. I am a wheelchair user and a senior. I almost was not here today because someone on my block

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did not shovel their property so I could not get off my block. That is my lived experience and everybody else's. Thank you to whomever shoveled three days after the storm instead of four hours. The longest I have been stuck at home was six weeks straight when no one shoveled the curb cut. It's a helpless feeling. Melting should not be the plan. It's so stressful to be stuck at home and not know when we will freely and safely be able to go where we need to go. We have spent weeks being stuck at home this year, like COVID time, without the disease. But the City prioritizes cars, not pedestrians. We need to have a better system to correctly shovel out bus stops and curb cuts. It should not be the property owner. We need a clearinghouse so property owners can find people to shovel and shovelers can earn money. We need the City to shovel sidewalks that are un-shoveled and bill the property owner. Now 3-1-1

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takes complaints and gets money in fines, but the snow and ice are still there and we are still stranded. Melting is not a solution. We need access now, not wait until after the snow melts.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Go ahead, Jonathan.

JONATHAN HANON: My name is Jonathan Hanon. I have Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome and use a rollator. I'm an Access-A-Ride customer and a resident of Inwood, Manhattan. In the aftermath of the most recent blizzards, many New Yorkers with disabilities are still stranded at home and cannot navigate the city due to the snow and ice on the ground. With this hearing scheduled today, many are unable to get to City Hall to testify to hold the Department of Sanitation accountable for its mismanagement of this winter storm. For every empty seat in this room, there is a disabled New Yorker with a story to tell,

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but an inability to tell it. Although my mobility is greater than some others, such as that I can walk short distances without my mobility device if necessary and can lift my mobility device up a curb if necessary, I'm also aware that many in the disabled community have far less mobility than I and if there are instances when I cannot safely cross the street, there are so many more when an individual in a wheelchair cannot and, because of this, cannot even leave their houses. In terms of transportation, including paratransit, with many curb cuts, including bus stops also piled with snow, to the point that vehicles cannot reach the curb to safely get to or leave us on the sidewalk, we also cannot board a bus or even our paratransit vehicles, even if we wanted to. To make matters worse, whenever the plow passes by any cleared crosswalks, curbs, curb cuts, and bus stops, all progress is undone and the streets become

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uncrossable again. In neighborhoods where some streets were not plowed even once in the first two days of our most recent storm, we can see gaps quickly arise in our system. Given this, on January 30th, I'd filed a 3-1-1 complaint against the Department of Sanitation for their mismanagement of the situation for not properly cleaning curb cuts, crosswalks, and bus stops. To my surprise, about two weeks later on February 10th, after the first snow was mostly melted, Sanitation replied to me claiming that the shoveling of curb cuts, crosswalks, and bus stops are the responsibility of the property owner adjacent to them, and that I should tell the City to give these property owners a ticket. However, when looking into New York City Administrative Code Section 16-123 and 124, I found that property owners are not responsible for removal from curb cuts, pedestrian medians, as they're called, and bus stops.

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These are the responsibility of the Department of Sanitation. However, 3-1-1 seems to follow the instructions told to them by Sanitation, despite the fact that that isn't what the law says, and because of this, innocent New Yorkers are being ticketed for something that isn't their responsibility, while Sanitation shirks this responsibility to assist disabled New Yorkers. It is for these reasons that I hope the City can hold DSNY accountable for their mismanagement of this winter storm, and for the future, to enforce the law so that the people of New York City, and especially people with disabilities, can navigate the city safely during the aftermath of a winter storm, and move on with their daily lives. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Michael.

Do you need help?

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MICHAEL RING: I got it. My name is Michael Ring. I'm Vice President of Disabled in Action of Greater New York. If anyone needs a verbal description of my appearance, I'm a 62-year-old white guy who needs a shave, and my hands don't really work, and what you can't see is that I'm wearing ankle-foot orthotics, so I don't trip over my feet. I have an acquired immunity. About 12 years ago, I became somewhat paralyzed, but I wasn't always paralyzed. I grew up here. I grew up in Brooklyn. I grew up in Sheepshead Bay, and when I was 16, I was one of those guys that would get a shovel and go out and make some money. And I remember getting two shovels. I had a good snow shovel, and I had a coal shovel, and I'd ask people what they wanted. You know, do you want me to get the whole sidewalk clear, or do you want to save some money and make a six-inch runway? And a lot of people went with six inches, and

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I've later learned that that was called MVP, minimum viable product. They just wanted to get the snow shoveled so you could, like, walk easily through it. This is before the ADA, and I was 16. It was 1979. But years later, I became a wheelchair user 12 years ago, and I learned that I didn't go out at all when it was snowing. Even if it was clear in front of my house, I didn't know if it would be clear at the next corner. I learned that a wheelchair user or someone using a mobility device needs the confidence to know that everything is clear and everything has four feet of width, because if you get halfway to where you want to go, and then the curb is not cleared of snow, you're stuck. Right now, we have a lot of technology. We have the ability to have a clearinghouse of where are the problems. Right now, on the Park Slope Facebook page, one of the running clubs in the neighborhood just announced that they're not running

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tonight. They're going to go out and shovel, and they want to know where to go. It's that easy. People are putting on Facebook, this corner, this corner, go out and shovel. But that's just working for Park Slope. The 3-1-1 app isn't working for that. People need to get tickets. People need to know four feet is what you've got to do, because people are leaving.. people are stuck at home. Jean was stuck at home for weeks, and you need to know it's done, not it should be done or it might be done. Thank you for your time.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Michael.

Now, I'd like to call on Eman, who is with us on Zoom.

EMAN RIMAWI-DOSTER: Hi. Thank you, everyone. Good afternoon. My name is Eman Rimawi-Doster. I'm the Senior Community Organizer for the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Thank you for the

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opportunity to present my testimony today. NYLPI's Disability Justice Program works on, among other things, reducing barriers for people with disabilities around our city, and we support those seeking better access to subways, sidewalks, curb cuts, transportation, and businesses. The winter has been especially bad with the cold weather, and the snow and the ice has been especially brutal for those of us with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses. As an above and below knee amputee with lupus, which causes chronic pain and chronic fatigue, navigating the city is already difficult, one of the reasons why I'm not there in person. Adding snow and ice makes it even harder. My husband, who doesn't have a physical disability, had to travel with me the first three days after the first snowstorm because we knew that my metal legs and walker were no match for the ice and the snow, and I couldn't even leave the

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house for the second storm. It doesn't have to be this way, and the City must do a better job. We have met with City Hall officials multiple times over the years and have found that we haven't been listened to. How can the City talk about how much they want disabled New Yorkers to work, but not make sure that they make sure we can get to where we have to go? Getting to work isn't just about transportation or workplace accommodations. It's also about making sure streets, sidewalks, and curb cuts are clear for us in every borough. In addition, there are many other things we're missing out on, like school, events, dinners, and so much more. I missed everything this week. Couldn't go. These issues are not just minor inconveniences. They are immediate threats to public safety and violations of disabled New Yorkers' rights to access streets and sidewalks. We need a holistic, intersectional, proactive, and intentional approach,

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and we have a number of solutions that we think that would be great to implement, and I will save that for the testimony that I submit. So, thank you for your time.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I appreciate that, Eman, and thank you all for joining us and for your testimonies.

First, I'd just like to apologize. We were unable to postpone this hearing, and I take that criticism very seriously, and that feedback is important to me and to all of us. So, I'm sorry. We're going to do better. We're going to do better. We're going to make mistakes, but we will always try to do better.

I have a couple questions for you all. I know, Jean, you mentioned you were unable to leave your home for six weeks. What specific barriers did you all encounter, and if Jonathan and Michael, you

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want to tell me how many weeks or days you were also unable to leave your home, that would be great. But I'd like to hear from you all, what specific barriers did you encounter, and I think some of it was raised, but I'd like to know sort of like what is at the top, and then did you attempt to report it, and what happened after reporting?

And then, Eman, I know you mentioned that you didn't do anything this week. You couldn't go to any of your civic and social life events, so could you talk a little bit more about the conditions preventing you from either working, attending doctor's appointments, voting, grocery shopping, et cetera? So those are a lot of questions, but you can pick, and I'd like to hear from you all, and then we're going to go into speaking with the Admin, unless my Colleagues have questions.

Go ahead, Jean.

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JEAN RYAN: Well, I need some peppers and zucchini, but I can't get to the grocery store, so I'll just have to, you know, go into my freezer and see what I cooked before, because the thing I wanted to cook, I can't get to the grocery store. If we go out and we see that we can't go past our building, and we have members who have that, that they can only go 12 feet each way from their building door, well, there's nothing there 12 feet on either side, so we are literally stuck in our homes, and if our block is cleared, mine wasn't until late yesterday afternoon, it was so stressful, and if we do, then we don't know what we're going to hit all the way to wherever we're going. I can't see to the bottom of the block. I live near the top of one, but the other end, I don't know what's happening down there, so if I think I'm going to go shopping, or go run an errand, or go to a doctor, or go to a meeting, I might start out and

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then just not be able to move. I can't do anything about snow piled up in front of somebody's house, or an apartment building, or across from a park, or, you know, anywhere, and the curb cuts, so even a week ago, the Monday before this bad storm, some of the curb cuts still weren't shoveled three weeks after the first storm, so if you can't go on either one, then you're not getting up on that block or getting off of it. And, okay, so I had an eye doctor appointment during those three weeks, and it was really important, and it's only three blocks from my house. Why wouldn't I just wheel there, you know? I can go anywhere. Well, because I didn't know what the condition was at the other end. There's no way you can report something at the other end unless you're there, so that uncertainty keeps us at home because we've had so many bad experiences just trying it and not being able to succeed. I don't want to go in the

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street where the cars are because then I have to hope that they're going to be watching out for me, and they don't know where I'm going to go, so they're, you know, if they even see me, or any of us, so we don't want to go in the street. So, I took Access-A-Ride for three blocks, figuring, okay, no matter how bad it is between my house and my doctor, you know, and I'll get there, and I hope I can get up on the curb cut by my doctor. Well, that's the thing. We just don't know. We can't report something three blocks away if we're not there and not able to get there. It's just really a dilemma. That's why everybody needs to shovel.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Jean.

JEAN RYAN: And every curb cut needs to be cleared.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

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MICHAEL RING: The word Jean said a few times was uncertainty. I can't walk on uneven or icy surfaces, so I don't know what's it going to be like down the block between my house, and I live on 8th Avenue, I just want to go to 7th Avenue to go shopping, and the problem is with the edges between private property and public property. Someone might shovel in front of their house, or someone might not shovel at all. So, I'm going to walk halfway down the block, and I'm going to have to make a U-turn and walk around the block the other way just to go shopping. But someone might shovel, and then there'll be a pile blocking, you know, the edge between someone's private property and the street. Someone might have pushed all their snow into the crosswalk. A lot of people are only out for their own spot, or as you enter Prospect Park, the Parks Department's doing a lot of work in the park, but then there's the

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edge of the park where the DOT is doing work, and then there's a mountain separating the park from the street. And the same thing happens at bus stops or areas that, you know, the MTA isn't even here, but they do a lot of shoveling, and they might make a pile of snow where the DOT has to move it away from. So, there needs to be a coordinated effort to make a straight path.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, have either of you reported it to 3-1-1, and how long did it take to see action? Did you see action?

MICHAEL RING: I didn't see the point in reporting it, honestly.

JEAN RYAN: At 3-1-1, only, they say right on their website, took a screenshot of it yesterday, they say that they don't do any shoveling. So, what's the point? You know? So, somebody gets a fine, but what good does that do us, especially at the moment?

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We don't need something that something's going to happen way down the line. Our needs are immediate. I can't call 3-1-1 and say, you know, I can't get off my block, please shovel it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Jean, the Majority Leader also has another question for you, and I'm going to pass it to some of my Colleagues who I know have questions for you all.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How did you do grocery shopping for those six weeks that you were home? My husband was still alive so he could go out and do it, but now I live alone..

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sorry about that.

JEAN RYAN: And nobody, you know, I mean, so during those three weeks, I did order something.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So, you incurred more financial cost than you would have otherwise.

JEAN RYAN: Oh, yeah.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Can you speak about that?

JEAN RYAN: And I couldn't get the things I wanted because somebody else is doing the shopping, you know, when you order online, and they don't always know what you really want or it's not available or they can't find it or something. So, I was trying to, you know, get specific things, and I only got some of them. And you know, then there's a minimum, too, so you have to spend more and get more stuff that you may not need. Or you don't get the size of the thing that you want, so you want 14-ounce can, but you get the 26-ounce can, you know, stuff like that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much for answering my question.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And now I'd like to pass it to...

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JEAN RYAN: But I just want to say that many seniors and people with disabilities can't order anything online. They don't have the ability, they don't have the tools, they don't have the know-how, or maybe their hands don't work..

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Jean, let's go to Jonathan, and then we'll wrap.

JONATHAN HANON: So, as I mentioned in my testimony, because I have more mobility than a lot of others with disabilities, I've been able to navigate with difficulty throughout the neighborhood. With the curb cuts that aren't fully shoveled, I've been able to get assistance from well-meaning strangers to be able to help me get across them and, in the end, I've been able to navigate with difficulty. When it comes to getting groceries, like Jean said, I've been ordering my groceries online because it's just not feasible to be able to get all the way to the grocery

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store and then bring groceries home with all of this snow and ice and all the crosswalks being completely covered. But when it comes to filing the complaints, like I mentioned in my testimony, I filed an agency-wide complaint against the Department of Sanitation, and the response from the Department of Sanitation was just, oh, we're going to give a ticket to the property owner so that doesn't help us as people with disabilities, especially in things that, as the law says, are the responsibility of the Department of Sanitation, that they're pushing off on the population. Even though, yes, people who are property owners should be shoveling the curb cuts in front of their properties in order that it can be easily accessed, because the ADA requires curb cuts to access the properties, New York City law also requires the Department of Sanitation to address that. That's the responsibility of the Department of

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Sanitation. So, as it stands, the Department of Sanitation needs to do more for people with disabilities, because with my day-to-day difficulties that I'm sure are far less than many others, it's just not acceptable.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you all.

We will hear from many more individuals who have been directly impacted as well when we move to public testimony.

I will now pass the mic to the Committee Counsel to administer the oath to members of the Administration prior to their testimony, and I'd like to recognize Council Member Krishnan.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay. Members of the Administration, will you please raise your right hand and then respond verbally?

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before these

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Committees, and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

ADMINISTRATION: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay. Thank you. You may begin your testimony when ready.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairs Abreu, Hanif, and Sanchez, and Committee Members. I am Javier Lojan, Acting Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation, and I am joined today by the Chief of Department, Anthony Pennolino; Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner of Public Affairs and Customer Experience. I am also joined by colleagues from the New York City Department of Transportation, including Commissioner Mike Flynn; First Deputy Commissioner Margaret Forgione; and Assistant Commissioner of InterGov Affairs Rick Rodriguez, as well as Emily

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Sweet, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel from the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

In my 27 years with the Department, I have learned firsthand that no two storms are alike. We plan all year for all possibilities, revising routes, evaluating performance, and overhauling equipment so that we have a playbook for every possibility. Long before there is the slightest chill in the air, we have more than 2,200 vehicles ready to be turned into snowplows, more than 700 salt spreaders, 47 pieces of specialized equipment to clear protected bike lanes, 7,000 uniformed Sanitation workers trained for snow clearing, and 700 million pounds of salt on hand. We also have in-place agreements with other City agencies and contracts with private vendors to provide snow clearing assistance if needed, and every year we build a roster of emergency snow shovelers who can be dispatched on a day's notice.

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By the time you see the temperature dropping, we transition operations to a winter schedule known as a night plow, with additional employees working overnight hours to allow for quicker and more effective snow operations work. We are also constantly tracking weather with forecasts from three different vendors, as well as our colleagues at New York City Emergency Management. When forecasts dictate a possibility of winter weather, we fill salt spreaders citywide at our 42 storage sites, and if we anticipate the slightest possibility of two inches of snow, we will attach plows to collection trucks. We also have the capability to pre-treat roads with brine, a saltwater mix that helps prevent accumulations and prevent bonding to the road. If forecasts continue to predict snow, we dispatch spreaders so they are ready to go at the very first sign of precipitation. The same

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goes with plows. The minute snow depths reach two inches, we are ready to begin plowing. Our Plow NYC map allows anyone to go online and see when their block was last visited by a plow.

At the same time, as we remind New Yorkers every year, plow blades are not designed to scrape the pavement clean. Streets aren't even, so the plow blade is generally an inch or two off the ground. A plowed street will not show blacktop. Thanks to our recent commitment to something we call snow equity, all streets are on a route, no more waiting for the days of so-called tertiary streets to be plowed. We also service vehicle travel lanes and bike lanes at the same time, so that New Yorkers who use bikes to get to work or to do their work can continue to do so safely, even as we operate vehicle travel lanes for emergency vehicles and other motorists.

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We hold ourselves accountable with a state-of-the-art tracking and management system for snow operations known as Blade Runner 2.0. This gives us a real-time insight into both salting and plowing operations in every corner of the city, allowing us to dispatch resources as needed. This is all outlined in the Department's Borough-Based Snow Plan submitted to the City Council at the end of September, pursuant to Local Law 28 of 2011.

As we have seen over the course of the last month, Winter Storm Fern on January 25th and Winter Storm Hernando earlier this week, each storm has unique conditions and challenges, and we must address our operations accordingly. First, Winter Storm Fern, our forecasters told us that this was going to be a significant snowfall, and we knew that temperatures were going to remain below freezing for at least several days. Hour by hour, we monitored

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forecasts, put into motion our snow plans, and made adjustments as forecasts became clearer. Senior leadership started our days with 5 a.m. in-person snow meetings, with teams working around the clock to execute snow operations. Given that this was not a rain-to-snow event, we pre-treated all major roadways and protected bike lanes with salt or brine on Friday, January 23rd. We also began messaging to all New Yorkers in sync with the Mayor's Office and other City agencies, asking New Yorkers to stay off the roads so that Sanitation workers could clear them. We filled all salt spreaders, attached plows to trucks, and activated 2,600 Sanitation workers to be on split 12-hour shifts. That meant that over 2,600 Sanitation workers working in the field from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., and over 2,600 Sanitation workers 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. On Saturday, as we stood with the Mayor at our Spring Street Salt Shed for the Administration's second

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daily in-person briefing, we had a clearer sense of the forecast and began activating emergency contracts with outside vendors to assist with shoveling, plowing, and hauling. When flakes started to fall, we ran the playbook, monitoring, and making adjustments in real time. We salted the entire city at the first sign of precipitation, and our snow plows were out as soon as depths reached two inches. We notified our emergency snow shovelers as early as Saturday that they should report to their local Sanitation garage on Monday morning, right after the snow, to clear public areas like bus stops, crosswalks, including pedestrian ramps, fire hydrants, and step streets. And, unlike previous storms, we activated an extremely rare night shift for our emergency snow shovelers to give more people the opportunity to do this work. By Monday morning, nearly every street and protected bike lane in the city had been plowed at

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least once, and by Tuesday, at least twice. Our Sanitation workers plowed, salted, plowed, salted, repeatedly as needed around the clock, and we began to clear snow and ice from pedestrian infrastructure. Property owners had an important responsibility here. By 12:30 p.m. Monday, they were required to clear a four-foot path on the sidewalk to allow pedestrians, including people using wheelchairs and strollers, to pass safely. They were also required to clear around fire hydrants, unsheltered bus stops, and paths to crosswalks, including pedestrian ramps and catch basins. We issued more than 4,500 summonses to property owners who failed to meet this responsibility.

Due to unprecedented cold temperatures that turned the snow to ice, making it more difficult for property owners to remove, we took on much of this work ourselves. With a focused commitment to

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making the city safe for all, we cleared 13,278 bus stops, 78,087 crosswalks, 16,031 hydrants, and readdressed some of these locations additional times. This was by far the most the City has ever cleared, even compared to storms with significantly more snowfall. To help us with this work, we hired 500 emergency snow shovelers and got assistance from over 500 employees from our sister agencies each day. In determining where to focus our efforts, we prioritized commercial corridors with the most pedestrian traffic, and along bus routes, as well as locations where we received complaints from people with disabilities.

In the two weeks following the storm, the average high temperature was just 24 degrees, meaning the snow was not going anywhere. While snow was still falling, we began activating snow melting operations so that by Wednesday morning, we had snow melters

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active in all five boroughs. Sanitation workers and private vendors worked around the clock to break up and haul snow from every neighborhood in the city. In the four weeks following the storm, we melted more than 600 million pounds of snow, more snow than we have ever melted previously, and impossible without having plans in place months before winter.

During snow operations, New Yorkers continued to put out 24 million pounds of trash and recycling every day. The same Sanitation workers who collect trash also drive plows and salt spreaders, and historically, this has meant frequent collection delays during winter weather operations. For this snowfall, we had the people in place to resume collection operations just two days after the first flake, while continuing with massive ongoing snow operations. Compare that to 2021, when we resumed collection four days after the first flake, or to the

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Boxing Day storm of 2010, when we resumed collection eight days later. We prioritized trash and compost and encouraged property owners to hold recycling when able.

Turning to winter storm Hernando, which blanketed parts of the city with over two feet of snow earlier this week. The forecast for this storm ramped up rapidly, and what was first projected to be one to two inches of snow quickly escalated. On Friday afternoon, we started calling in emergency snow shovelers, notifying them that we would be mobilizing them starting Sunday night. Also, on Friday afternoon, we initiated our contracts with private vendors for additional equipment starting Sunday night as well. On Saturday, as the forecast continued to grow worse, we recognized that we may need additional mechanized equipment and initiated the process to gain approval to activate our

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emergency contracts. Starting Sunday morning, DSNY went into full force mode, with over 2,600 Sanitation workers working 12-hour shift after 12 hour shift. 700 salt spreaders spread more than 150 million pounds of salt, and 2,200 plows worked across the city to clear every street. But with very high winds causing heavy drifts, many areas needed to be readdressed over and over for several days. This storm had unique challenges, particularly in Staten Island, where hilly and narrow streets posed challenges for our larger equipment, which required us to deploy smaller equipment, which is more time intensive.

This is what it means to be prepared, not just having plans in place, but being ready to pivot whenever and however needed. We also went out and cleared pedestrian infrastructure earlier than ever before. With the help of 1,500 emergency snow

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shovelers working both day and night shifts, including during an active storm, as well as over 500 pieces of equipment from outside vendors, we have cleared snow from 40,000 crosswalks, 1,300 bus stops, and 10,000 fire hydrants so far in the five basins of the storm.

Winter Storm Fern showed how critical prompt removal from these important pieces of infrastructure is, and we have since geocoded bus stops and crosswalks to help us track this work. We also took steps to increase the number of emergency snow shovelers, including offering increased pay and easing restrictions to become one, such as allowing walk-ins without an appointment. And we deployed vans to distribute shovelers more efficiently. Thankfully, the warmer temperatures made this work faster than the last storm, but we are still continuing melting operations given the significant quantities.

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And of course, property owners continue to play a critical role in ensuring the city is accessible for all. By 8:30 p.m. Monday, property owners were once again responsible for clearing a four-foot path on the sidewalk, as well as around fire hydrants, unsheltered bus stops, and paths to crosswalks and catch basins. So far, we have issued nearly 600 summonses to property owners who failed to meet this responsibility.

Thanks to the unprecedented number of emergency snow shovelers, Sanitation workers were able to continue salting and plowing while resuming collection Wednesday night. Trash and compost collection is underway, and New Yorkers should follow their normal schedule, even if the material is collected at a different time of the day than they are used to. We are again asking New Yorkers for

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their patience and to hold their recyclable material until next week, if possible.

Together, these two storms demonstrated what we already knew, that no two storms were alike. And that our response must be tailored to specific conditions. Having served with the Department for seven out of the ten biggest storms in the City's recent history, I have continued to be impressed at how we are able to address operations to meet the needs of each new storm.

Lastly, we are grateful to our partner agencies for working with us on snow removal, especially NYPD, DOT, MOPD, Parks, DEP, and NYSEM. Together, we work around the clock to ensure that the city never sleeps, can run smoothly and safely after a snowfall. We also appreciate the Council relaying constituent concerns and hope that we are able to address them quickly. Our storm response was the

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culmination of years of planning and refinement to our operations, coupled with a new commitment to clear more areas of the city. We know New Yorkers can't wait for the snow to melt, so our workers went above and beyond to make it easier for all New Yorkers to get around this great city.

Of course, there is always more to do, and I look forward to discussing next steps as we answer any questions you may have about our work, after you hear from my colleague from the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Can you hear me now? Okay.

Good afternoon, Chairs Abreu, Hanif, and Sanchez, and Members of the Committees. I'm Emily Sweet, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel of the New York City Mayor's Office for People with

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Disabilities, also known as MOPD, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The role of MOPD is to work across City government to ensure that accessibility considerations are integrated into planning, coordination, and implementation efforts that impact New Yorkers with disabilities. Winter weather events highlight how accessibility intersects with infrastructure, public space management, and emergency response systems, and they provide important opportunities to assess how well our systems support all New Yorkers. While winter weather affects everyone, people with disabilities often experience disproportionate impacts, as you heard from the panelists earlier. This can include pedestrian ramps or pedestrian crossings blocked by snow accumulation, narrowed sidewalks that prevent passage of people using wheelchairs and other

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mobility aids, inaccessible bus stops or transit entrances, and increased fall risks for individuals with mobility or vision disabilities. These challenges can reduce independence, limit access to employment or essential services, and increase social isolation when travel becomes unsafe or unpredictable. Even temporary barriers can significantly disrupt daily life for people with disabilities who rely on consistent and accessible routes.

We appreciate the extensive planning and operational work undertaken by agencies such as the Department of Sanitation and DOT during these weather events. Accessibility outcomes during winter weather require collaboration across operational agencies, policy makers, elected officials such as yourselves, community-based organizations, and other community stakeholders.

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The Administration was in communication with advocates after Winter Storm Fern to hear concerns and recommendations and, based on that, several concrete steps were taken with respect to the second storm. First, the Mayor explicitly mentioned the four-foot corridor required on the sidewalks for property owners and mentioned people with disabilities when speaking about snow removal, reminding people that people with disabilities are affected by this particularly. The Administration also increased communications about responsibilities of private property owners, not just Mamdani and his speech, but also individual agencies. And finally, additional organizations were added to New York City Emergency Management's community-based briefings on winter weather.

MOPD remains committed to supporting the work of our sister agencies by providing disability

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expertise during planning and response discussions, facilitating stakeholder engagement, and supporting accessible communications and outreach. We thank you again for the opportunity to testify and look forward to continuing collaboration with City agencies and the Council to improve accessibility outcomes for all New Yorkers during winter weather events, and I welcome your questions.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, and a big thank you to Sanitation for Commissioner Lojan explaining the extensive and complex snow removal process. I think it's important that the Council Members understand that and recognize that you all are handling something that I don't understand so thank you because we are really grateful.

I'd like to start by asking, what's the City's formal definition of cleared in the context of snow removal, and does that definition require

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ADA-compliant passability at curb ramps, crosswalks, bus stops, boarding areas, or only that snow has been moved?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, our definition is a four-foot path. You know, we also recommend salt or, if salt is not available, sand or some kind of traction aid for pedestrians on those four-foot paths, but that's our definition of cleared.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then when a curb ramp or accessible route remains blocked beyond the required timeframe, who's ultimately accountable for correcting it, and how is that accountability enforced?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, the adjacent property owners are responsible to clear that path, and we may issue violations if we see that it's not cleared within the required timeframe. But I

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know this is going to come up a lot, but I'll keep stressing it. Our goal is not to issue violations, just to get the path cleared for whatever responsible property owner. But we always tell our supervisors or field personnel to use discretion when possible.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And certainly also don't want folks to get violations and have to pay fines, but are you all tracking which households or property owners are bad actors, and is there anything beyond fining folks?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, we don't track particularly within storm. We primarily rely on 3-1-1 complaints, and that's how we respond to those situations. I think beyond that, I think we're open to discussions with the Council on seeing what else we can do to make sure that if there is that kind of issue and the property owner is not being responsive multiple times, any actions that we can do to make

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things, obviously, as the previous testimony said, just because we issue the fine doesn't fix the problem so we can explore paths on making that, you know, something a reality for future storms.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I appreciate it.

Going to MOPD. Could you share the operational role that MOPD plays during a snow emergency? At what threshold does MOPD intervene? Does it have the ability to compel corrective action when accessibility failures persist?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Thank you. That was a multi-part question, so I might ask you to, okay.

But we obviously, and I don't think you're suggesting this, we don't operate plows or perform snow removal. Our role is to ensure that disability-related impacts are identified quickly and elevated to the appropriate operational agency. So,

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we function as a coordination and escalation point. So, we're involved from the beginning. We are on the multi-agency calls, the twice daily multi-agency calls and any other calls that are called, and we have an open line of communication with the operational agencies.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, are New Yorkers who are disabled calling MOPD? Is that how you're collecting information, or how are you all able to share any adjustments or plans around accessibility?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, when we do get calls and emails from constituents with disabilities or complaints from advocates, those will be shared with the operational agencies.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Does MOPD, or how does MOPD collect and track recurring winter accessibility complaints, and how is that data communicated to operational agencies in real time?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Okay. So, the complaints are received and in real time they're relayed.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And that's through 3-1-1, or does MOPD have a different hotline?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, no, we reach out to our contacts generally at DSNY.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm talking about folks with disabilities.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: Correct. Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Oh, so you rely on Sanitations complaints?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: We do receive some complaints and calls directly from members of the community.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah. I'm just trying to understand the function of MOPD, and it seems like, if I can clarify, that Sanitation is

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receiving the 3-1-1 complaints, and then you all are in communication with MOPD to then get some assistance or support.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, I can clarify that. So, we receive 3-1-1 complaints. They're broken up into different categories. Bike lane, 3-1-1 complaints, pedestrian features, roadway, sidewalk. The pedestrian features are generally the ones that involve the issues with the curb cuts or like the bus stops. So, during Winter Storm Firm, we manually, me personally, manually looked at 3-1-1 complaints and looked for keywords such as wheelchair, access, ambulance, children, bus, senior, nursing, elder, school, hospitals. A lot of keywords that we were just kind of looking for, right. So, we prioritized those in real time, and there were about 3,500 complaints that we prioritized. We received over 27,000 complaints during the course of the

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storm. We recognized that was an effective tool, and then for Winter Storm Hernando, we quickly stood up a pretty impressive internal application where we were able to have a process with logic and have that automated, so we didn't have to rely on people wasting time just looking at key text words, and those same words were then put on a dashboard and our Snow Command Center then looked at the complaints by borough location, and we actioned them immediately prioritized through the borough commands and the districts.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And are you able to share the data with us? How many calls did you all?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, for Winter Storm Hernando, we've only received 8,253 3-1-1 complaints to date, but only 573 of those were roadway, and we didn't receive anything for pedestrian features of bike lane, and I think that

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was probably a reflection of all the different things that we did. As I mentioned on my testimony, the emergency snow shovelers actually working. Just want to back up a little bit. I know I said it in the testimony. Having an emergency snow shoveler during the height of the storm is something we've never done. I mean that that's something that I think was a big change for us. You know, normally as I mentioned, we would wait until the roads are cleared, bike lanes are cleared, and then we would initiate it. We actually had them come in at 8 p.m. the night, Sunday night. So, I mean, I also want to give credit to those people that wanted to come in and obviously, you know...

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: They were out there. Very effective. And then we had a day shift and then obviously we continue that on. So, I think

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that a couple things, and as I mentioned before, we called in our emergency and required contracts so there was a culmination of things that we did that you saw that that shows in the data, but I'm happy to share more, you know, with the Council.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. So, from what I'm hearing, Sanitation plays the main role.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Correct.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And so that means, does MOPD do any post-storm review, specifically on accessibility features, and then do you all call 3-1-1 on behalf of the disabled community's behalf when complaints are raised?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, we would not call 3-1-1 ourselves. So, we would report it to our contacts at DSNY, generally at DSNY.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then do you all do like a post-storm evaluation? I guess what I'm

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trying to get at is, you know, I want to understand the function of MOPD, and to me it seems as though MOPD should have a more expansive role that is evaluating conditions like storms that just took place and be able to help inform the disabled community and legislators so I'm just trying to understand. You know, this isn't criticism. It's just trying to understand exactly what the features of MOPD are and what role you are playing. So, the 3-1-1 calls, you don't make the 3-1-1 calls.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, we act in an advisory capacity, and we are really looking forward to working with our sister agencies in assessing, you know, continuing to have conversations about what improvements could be made and we do happily have a new Commissioner starting on Monday so we're all looking forward to that.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. So, and this is how MOPD's been since its inception?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: I can't speak to what MOPD has done since its inception, but yes, we generally do have an advisory role and provide technical expertise where we can to other agencies.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So then, are there people from the community who are calling or asking for certain accessibility support or services?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: The snow-related complaints generally were mostly about sidewalks not being cleared.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. So, there's nothing that is proactive from MOPD that goes out to New Yorkers sort of sharing, you know, for people with disabilities, here's what you need to know. New Yorkers who are not disabled, like here's what you

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need to know about snow cleanup for accessibility features.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, we would amplify messages of other agencies on our social media.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. I have a lot more questions, but I'm going to go to our Majority Leader.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much, Chair Hanif.

I'm going to transition now to questions for DLT. DLT, through its contractor JCDecaux, is responsible for clearing snow from bus shelters. How does DLT monitor and assess their performance, and what performance metrics, if any, govern these responsibilities under the contract?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank You, Majority Leader. Yeah. So, we work proactively with JCDecaux

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before every storm event to agree upon a clearance plan basically, and basically, they go out and they do a first pass of all the bus shelters and then based on 3-1-1, based on our inspectors, based on hearing from yourselves, your Colleagues, and other elected officials, we'll issue them directives to do follow-up clearing, which they're required to do within 24 hours.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What is your assessment on how JCDecaux handled the January storm with respect to snow removal at bus shelters?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: The January storm, the bus shelters were cleared, I believe, within about four days for all bus shelters, and some were cleared sooner and they prioritize bus shelters along routes with higher ridership. And in the more recent storm that was two days, so it was just about half as much time. We worked really closely with them to kind of

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figure out a game plan to be more proactive and actually bring on additional resources, subcontractors, to help with the snow clearing because that was really the major constraint.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Were there more resources the second time around than the first time around that brought it down from four to two days?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Can you elaborate on what those resources were?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah. Basically, they have snow clearing subcontractors and they both had additional contractors and they activated them sooner for the second storm, so we saw a pretty substantial improvement.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

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Are bus shelters meant to be cleared of snow proactively or primarily in response to 3-1-1 complaints?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes. They are required to be cleared immediately. They are not waiting on complaints. And just to elaborate a little on what the Commissioner said, JCDecaux will always pre-treat the shelters, applying salt prior to a storm, and then they are required to go out immediately. In this case, they were out in the more recent storm during that time itself, but of course they're required to get out there immediately after the storm normally.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And obviously two days is still, for folks who rely on mass transit, right, it is still not desirable. It's obviously an improvement from the first storm to the second storm,

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which I'm grateful to see, but for the folks who are here and testifying, it needs to be done immediately.

What are the contractors required response times and what percentage of complaints were resolved within 24 to 48 hours after each storm? Sure.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay. So, JCDecaux, by contract, is required to complete the work within four hours of the storm unless it is the kind of storm such as the ones we've been experiencing, in which case we talk with them and we plan with them ahead of time on how they're going to attack the storm. What they do is they deploy people and they deploy additional resources with vendors throughout. A lot of times they'll do one pass, then they'll go back and they'll refine that if any snow has been pushed up or if it requires clearing a second time.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So, does the contract stipulate a four-hour response time for a certain type of storm?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: They are supposed to clear within four hours, but again in many, many storms, it's 3,400 bus stop shelters. That is not quite feasible. So, as we look at this contract going forward, you know, we may adjust the responses accordingly with more detail.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How would you modify a such contract for future storms?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: That's something we're going to need to dig in and evaluate.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. If we can get some pointers on how you're going to approach that modification so that we can prepare for this in the future, that would be extremely helpful.

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How does DOT ensure that JCDecaux clears bus shelters in such a way as to maintain accessibility, including a clear path to the sidewalk and an accessible boarding area?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: So, the requirements are for them to clear both inside the bus shelter, but also a three-foot zone around the edge and then the path to the curb basically to the roadway.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Property owners are responsible for clearing the sidewalk at bus stops without a bus shelter. Does DOT do anything to inform property owners proactively prior to and during snowstorms to ensure that they understand their responsibilities with respect to clearing the sidewalks at such bus stops?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: So, we work very closely with Sanitation to amplify messages that do go out to property owners during these times. That

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may very well be a good suggestion, something that we can do more of in the future. But I think that it's been very clear to property owners that do not have a shelter, that a bus stop is just sidewalk and just sidewalk that you are responsible for.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I think there are a lot of property owners who are still very much unclear on what their obligations are. I think one of my staffer's parents was like I just learned about the four-foot rule the other day, and I feel like that's the sentiment among a lot of New Yorkers. So, to the extent that there's a lot that we can do prior to the fact, I mean, I think that would go a very long way. And whether it's done by DOT or Sanitation, just making sure that there's inter-agency coordination, I believe that that would go a long way for maintaining accessibility at our bus shelters.

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I have another set of questions, but I can turn it over.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We'll pass it to Council Member Sanchez.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Thank you, everyone.

Can you guys hear me properly? Great.

I just want to, you know, start from the very beginning. Who has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring curb ramps and crosswalk access are passable following a snow event, and can you clear up any confusion about responsibility and how that contributes to, you know, access?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, the curb ramp is part of the sidewalk so that's the adjacent property owner's responsibility. Anything in the street is DSNY's responsibility, and that's really, you know, the line there.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And then I want to dig into finance. What was the total cost of Sanitation snow response to the most recent major snowstorm, including overtime, if you have those numbers?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, so there's a few pieces there. There's the PS costs, the OTPS costs on everything. But it's very preliminary because a lot of the work, we hired a lot of the vendors, so those records are still getting reconciled, and we order salt so our salt, you know, usage is pretty heavy so we're ordering salt to make sure we replenish for the next storm. Thankfully we did for, you know, Fern going into this storm because, so there's a lot of things we have to reconcile in order for me to give you an accurate number. So, I can definitely get back to you on that once we have a final number on that.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: When it came to bus shelters, did the Department of Sanitation take a lot of time or use any resources to clear these bus shelters?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, the bus shelters are the responsibility of the vendor, JCDecaux, but we were not just ignoring them, once we got into them, you know, going to the corridors where all the bus stops were, we were just addressing whatever we could, whether it was with mechanized equipment or, you know, hand shoveling. Hand shoveling took a very long time. That's why we relied heavier on the mechanized equipment.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: In a rough estimate, how many of the bus shelters do you think that the Department of Sanitation as opposed to JCDecaux actually cleaned themselves?

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Well, the way the breakout is, approximately over 3,000 bus shelters are the JCDecaux ones, and then the rest are unsheltered. So about like a little over 9,000 are unsheltered so that would be, you know, the ones that they're not responsible for.

I would say a lot of things had to be readdressed for multiple reasons, so I don't have the data on, like, if they cleared something or didn't, and then we had to readdress it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And can you explain a little bit of the cost differential between overtime snow operations and hiring like a seasonal or a part-time staff?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, the overtime costs would be, you know, uniform personnel, depending on what pay scale they are, you know, a newer Sanitation worker's entry level just about

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50,000 dollars, and then a top pay one is, you know, closer to 90,000 so depending on, you know, what pay scale they're at, and then the overtime rate, you know, it's time and a half to double time, depending on, you know, the situation. And then a seasonal snow shoveler in Winter Storm Fern starts at \$19.14, and then after 40 hours it goes up to 28 dollars. And then for Winter Storm Hernando, the Administration made adjustments to try to have more shovelers come in for the storm, and then that got increased to 30 dollars an hour for, you know, obviously to the severity of the storm anticipated.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And from your experience, when you are dealing with some of these bus shelters, the street furniture, you know, Citi Bike, for example, and you have to help clean that out, is it usually an overtime worker doing that

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job, is it a seasonal hire, or is it a part-time snow shoveler?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, the Citi Bike, and I'll defer to DOT, I believe it's done by a contractor, and so I believe the street furniture, and I don't know if DOT wants to, but that's not something we would normally handle.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: But as you were dealing with during the storm, you know, what kinds would usually be dealing with that?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, the only ones we would have addressed would have been the bus shelters, and it's really hard to break out who's and what. I mean, depending on where the resources are, we're just, you know, putting them there, so it's really hard to isolate who's on straight time and overtime, or who's a seasonal snow shoveler or not so it's a little difficult to kind of break that out.

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But I'd be glad to, you know, work with you if there's something that you maybe look interested in the future, or we can maybe look to see if we can isolate that and maybe report up in the future on that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: From the testimony today, would it be a valid assessment, then, to say that a certain amount of City money and dollar and resources were spent, you know, covering things that we were not necessarily meant to be in charge of?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: I'd be inaccurate to give that statement firmly, Chair. I'm sorry.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: That's great. Thank you.

Does the Department believe that the Charter mandate requiring snow budgets to be based on

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a multi-year historical average limit the effectiveness of snow response in years like this year, where we have multiple storms and multiple storms on the way?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. So, as you mentioned, it's based on a five-year average, and we work closely with OMB on any adjustments. So, I mean, this year was a heavy storm where we had to order a lot of salt and things like that, and it's never been a challenge working with them. Obviously, you know, we have to, you know, show that the need is there, which obviously this year it is, but that has not been presented as a challenge working with OMB and getting appropriate funds for any kind of storm response so I don't see that as a challenge.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And can you talk a little bit about the current condition in the

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average age of our Sanitation fleet, including our plows, our salt spreaders, and our front-end loaders?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. I don't have those specific numbers with me, but the life cycle of most of our collection trucks is generally about eight years. And then there's CPs that we, you know, work with OMB on every year to make sure that as it reaches the end of the life cycle, we're replenishing and getting new trucks in. But I'd be happy to gather that information specifically by vehicle type and get that over to you, Chair.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: That'd be great.

And you spoke about how you had to hire outside vendors. Can you talk to me about the efficacy of these outside vendors, you know, from the first storm to the second storm, when you called, were they able to provide what the City needed or

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what was in those vending contracts, or was there some sort of delay, pitfalls, what were any, if any, issues there?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, there's two different types of contracts are the emergency contracts, which we have a five-year term with different vendors. We put out an RFP, and that's to have, we call our piling hauling contracts. And we, you know, in the contract there's front-end loaders, the skid steers, which are, people kind of know them as Bobcats. They're like the smaller ones. And then we have dump trucks, and then we have tow trucks. So, they're required to have a certain amount, set amount of pieces available to us once we call them. For the first storm, they initially had challenges getting the full amount of pieces to us in the initial days. Eventually, they did get the remaining pieces to us.

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Then there are the emergency contracts, and those are usually only initiated during extreme situations, but these two storms were extreme. So those are basically contingent on what's available within the available roster of contractors. We have to go through steps first with Law and Comptroller to make sure we get approval on for those. And then once we get approval, then we're able to then call them in. But then that's more of just what's available at the time. For Winter Storm Hernando, as I mentioned in my testimony, we were extremely proactive. We gave them two days' notice. So, on Friday afternoon, actually, no, Friday morning, we contacted our requirements contract and said, you're coming in Sunday night, and normally we wait until we get closer or later, but we knew that this was going to be a storm where we needed them, and then they did pretty much fulfill their obligation. And then, as I

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mentioned again in my testimony, the emergency contracts, once we saw the storm had some huge amounts of potential snowfall in their forecast, I decided to then go through the process of getting approval for those emergency contracts before the storm even hit. And we got approval, and then we started working on getting those pieces in to the city because, and thankfully we did, because those were definitely a critical piece to making sure the city was reopened in the time it did. So, those are the two pieces of the emergency contracts that I referred to, Chair.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And then just for everyone to get some kind of clarity in terms of staffing and how the Department runs during these winter storms, can you describe the rationale for having the staff schedule adjustments for 12-hour shifts during these winter storms? Starting there.

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, we have, as I mentioned, 700 salt spreaders, 2,200 plows, and then there's garage support personnel. So, you know, we have garages where these equipment is housed, and they need to be (INAUDIBLE) up, maintained, so that's the universe of 7,000 Sanitation workers. And in order for us to be able to meet and staff all that equipment, that's why we have to go into split shifts, because if we go into a three-shift operation, we wouldn't be able to do it because there'd be a lot of overlap, and it would be a little bit challenging as far as continuity goes. You know, when we're talking about, you know, routing and, you know, a lot of times when we're in certain types of situations, we're not completing everything on one shift, right, so, having the other shift come in, the continuity, knowing exactly where we left off, and picking up where they left off is one of the

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things that's good about the 12-hour shifts. But that's basically the 2,600 and 2,600 are just the field personnel, and then the remaining are, you know, garage and other support personnel that we have that they're necessary to support the snow operation. But that would be the rationale of making them the split shift.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And then, just going into accountability before moving on to DOT, how many violations did you give out during these past two storms?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, for the Winter Storm Fern, we issued about 4,500 violations, and for Hernando, we issued a little under, close to 600 violations.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And is there any mechanisms to making sure that the

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violations that you issue are actually paid, held to account? What does that look like?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, once we issue the violation, then the property owner is able to either pay the violation, and then, or they can contest it, but that's all handled by OATH, the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings, so we do not handle that piece of the summons once we issue it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And I believe, if I'm not mistaken, the current price of the summons is at 250 dollars. Do you feel, I don't know if that's the proper way to ask this, but do you believe that that is enough of a deterrent from what you have seen and the number of violations that you're giving out? Do you feel that the 250-dollar price has been enough of a deterrent for property

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owners to actually take responsibility over the sidewalks that they're supposed to be clearing?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, just so I can clarify, the violation fee schedule is 100 for the first violation within the 12-month period, 150 dollars for the second violation in a 12-month period, and then the 250 is for the third and subsequent violation in a 12-month period. As far as if it's as much of a deterrent, I think that's something I'd like to evaluate, because, look, I think, as I mentioned before, our goal is not to issue violations, right? I mean, if we come out of a storm and don't issue any violations and the streets are cleared and everything's great, I mean, I personally think I'm happy with it. The goal is to get the job done. But that might be necessary in certain situations where there's certain chronic, you know, property owners, unresponsive, things like

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that. So, I'm happy to work with, you know, you and Council on finding what that appropriate solution is because we don't want to be seen as now we're just, you know, fining property owners and then they may have challenges.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Thank you so much.

Moving on to DOT. Speaking of accountability, right now, as the mechanism stands, there is no ability for the Department of Sanitation or any other City agencies to conduct real oversight on the maintenance of bus shelters, street furniture, etc., except for the liquidated damages clauses that DOT negotiates within their contracts. I'm curious to know, during these last two storms, how much, if any, liquidated damages have been assessed or collected from any of the companies that are responsible for street cleanings of our street furniture?

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COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Sure. So, I think our focus was really on working closely with both of these contractors to come up with a plan to clear out these assets as quickly as we could. And to learn from the first storm, from Fern, which had some really unique challenges, as we've talked about, and then to be responsive as we hear complaints or as we go back, right? One of the recurring themes is this kind of temporal challenge, right? You may clear a bus shelter or you may clear, you know, another area of the street and then a plow comes through and it's just kind of how it works. And so, now you have to go back and clear it again. So, a lot of our focus was really on having almost constant communication with them to work together to clear these assets as quickly as we can.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Just for clarity, as the homeowners and property owners

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received nearly 5,000 violations, have there been any assessments of liquidated damages towards any of the companies just for complete clarity?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We don't have liquidated damages, but as the Commissioner said, we have seen both companies that we're working with have a very concerted commitment to improving response times and coverage. So much so, as the Commissioner mentioned, the response times and the clearing went down very significantly in this last storm and both entities brought on a lot more resources.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: So, just to make sure that everyone is aware, so that there have been no assessment of anything towards any of the companies that are responsible for clearing our bus shelters or any of our street furniture.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: That's correct.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Thank you. I can pass this over back to Chairperson Hanif. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. We'll go to Council Member Vernikov. I'd like to recognize Council Members Thomas-Henry and Ariola.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you very much, Chairs. First of all, before I go to my questions, I just really want to thank the Department of Sanitation for being just a really responsive and great agency in general. Our office has only had very, very positive interactions and also just a special thank you to Josh Goodman, who throughout the storm has been updating and alerting us. So, really, thank you.

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And now to my questions for the
Commissioner. Commissioner, knowing what we know now,
how many snow shovelers do you estimate that we need
for a snowstorm of this size?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Council Member,
are you referring to the first storm?

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: The one in
January.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: The one in
January. So, I think that's one of the things that
we're assessing. We have what we call quotas, meaning
that each location we allocate a certain amount of
snow shovelers to each district, right, which is, you
know, the community board and the district are, you
know, the same boundaries. So, it's about an
1,800-snow-shoveler quota that we think that's
appropriate for a storm like that, and that's what I

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think would be sufficient enough for a storm like Fern or, you know, one like that we had.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. I'm just asking because it was reported that in 2015 there were 3,600 snow shovelers during a snowstorm that I guess was a pretty big size and this year was only 500. I know you added more later on in February, but for January it was only 500. Could you explain the discrepancy there and why it was such a small amount?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, the snow shoveler program is not, we don't have a contract. There's no obligation with anybody to come and, you know, make the money. I think one of the things we recognized, because we did see that data going back in storm storms, and there's, you know, we're looking at that and trying to figure out why in 2015 and '16 we had that amount, you know. I mean, we can't come up with a definitive answer. Was it the

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unemployment rate? Was it the, you know, the gap in minimum wage versus what the pay scale was at the time? You know, different things that I can't definitively say. But then we looked at when we saw, we got on average 500 snow shovelers in the January storm. That's when we amplified messaging. It was the one thing we did. We called way ahead of time.

Normally, we would wait a little longer to call the snow shovelers. So, on Friday afternoon, we had about 2,200 snow shovelers registered. So, we have a roster of registrants that come in and they register. There was 2,200. We called all 2,200 and asked them to come to report either Sunday night or Monday morning, and then the step that we feel increased the bandwidth and the people to come in was the increase potentially in pay, and that's why we raised it to 30 dollars.

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COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Thank you. It just seems like we may need a better strategy for the next snowstorm.

And I know you mentioned we've been hiring the emergency snow shovelers, and I think the wage went up to 30 dollars an hour. Has that always been the process for hiring snow shovelers throughout the years? How long have we been doing this?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: The snow shoveler program?

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Yes.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: I want to say it goes back at least 30 years. I'd have to get back to you on a definitive date.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: That's fine.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: (INAUDIBLE)

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Well, Gale would know.

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What is the focus of the emergency snow shovelers? I'm asking because we've seen a lot of these videos going around with like 15 or 20 of these... we don't know... I don't know who they are, but it looks like it's the emergency snow shovelers who were hired, who are like standing in one corner and shoveling the snow. It just seems like, and again, I don't know, just based on the videos that we've seen, maybe you can clarify, but it just seems like a very inefficient use of taxpayer dollars to have like 20 snow shovelers in one corner when we have the whole city that has needs.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, they are placed into squads, and they're given a length of road or different corridors to clear, and they're supposed to be clearing the crosswalks, any bus stops, any fire hydrants, or anything in general that they see that's impeding, you know, any areas, and

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they are required to then work in tandem going up a certain corridor. The challenge is if we spread them out too much, then they're not supervised, so they have to be supervised in order for them to obviously work. So, that's the challenge, but we are looking at ways to make that, you know, better and more efficient.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. And during the snowstorm in January, as you know, people's (TIMER CHIME) cars and bus stops and crosswalks were plowed in. Traditionally, who issues the directive on which locations to prioritize in terms of crosswalks and bus stops? Is it DSNY or Mayor's Office?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So...

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Wrap it up.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: The responsibility of clearing that is the adjacent property owner, but yeah, obviously, with, you know,

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going back to, as I mentioned previously, something we recognized was the challenges, because it became really rock-hard. The snow was like ice. So, then we have routes that we have established in each location, and that's all prioritized under commercial corridors, and those are the ones we prioritize and try to do first.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: But who issues the directive to prioritize?

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm sorry. Your time is up.

Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. First, I want to thank Frank LaTerra and Margaret Forgione. You're all great, but they are fabulous. I just want to make that very, very clear.

I just want to understand the bus shelters. You know, I understand it's JCDecaux, but

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is that all of them and how they get cleared? Second, I want to understand crosswalks. I think Sanitation did a great job, but I have pain-in-the-neck constituents who don't think so. So, my question is the crosswalks. Also, Parks is not here, Parks Department, but they're supposed to do the median, meaning the malls, and the playgrounds. So, the medians got goat paths, my constituents call it a goat path, and then the jointly operated playgrounds did not get cleared. Department of Education did a great job. The sidewalks near the schools and the school-based playgrounds got done. So, Parks isn't here, but that is another piece of this snow clearing. So, just be a little bit clearer about 3,400 bus shelters, but 9,000 total. and then who is... I understand that the crosswalks are supposed to be by the owner. I shoveled in my constituent office. I went viral because I was shoveling, so I like that

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part very much. But the chain store restaurant on the corner didn't do anything. I was damned if I was going to shovel them, so I left them. And they didn't do the crosswalks, so people were stumbling over their mess, and then the crosswalk was a mess. So, I just want to understand, because then public, I think, needs to be hammered. It is your responsibility. X helped me for the crosswalk. That's my concern. So, bus stops and crosswalks.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Council Member, I just want to, the initial question you had was about the shelters.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah. To understand, are there just 3,400 bus shelters in the whole city, and that's JCDecaux, or are there more, and is that somebody else? Because I didn't realize it was JCDecaux. I thought it was you stuck with it,

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the bus stops, or the MTA. It's not clear to the public.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Right. So, the sheltered bus stops are JCDecaux.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, they're supposed to clear them, all of them?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Correct. All 3,400 of them, and then the remaining ones are, the ones that are not sheltered, are the adjacent property owner.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. But I don't think they know that. That's the thing. So, in other words, the one that is not Decaux might have a bench, or might have nothing.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So that's the property owner. I don't think they know that. I'm just saying.

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. Understood, and I think that we need to do a better job on outreach and amplifying those messages so people are aware of that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. All right. So that's clear, but not clear to the property owner.

Then this crosswalk is a problem. Who's supposed to clear the crosswalk? When you say property owner, that's the property owner, the commercial store, who?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Right. So, if there's a residential property owner, then it's the owner of that residential property.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: If it's a, you know, business that they have that property, either the landlord that that business is operating out of,

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or the company itself has the obligation, but whoever's in there is responsible to clear the path.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Maybe because we haven't had these big storms in a few years, people have dementia.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: I think that's a big part of it.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They have dementia, and they have forgotten. So, I'm just saying, they say they're not responsible when I ask. This is terrible. So, what you're saying is that, because then people complain that the Department of Sanitation has not cleared the crosswalk. I heard that over and over again. So, it's not your responsibility to do the crosswalk.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: The adjacent property owner is responsible to do the crosswalk

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into the street. Once it goes into the street, then it's the Department of Sanitation.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah. I think you've done a good job in my area of the bike lanes and the street. It's the crosswalk getting to the street.

Okay. I will be honest with you. I have all these emails that say the Department of Sanitation has never been in my area to do the crosswalk. So, we have to make that a whole lot clearer that it's their responsibility, and that's where I would give out summonses if they're not going to do it.

The other quick question I have is, of all those, we'd heard earlier that the 3-1-1 complaints were not satisfactorily answered or it wasn't clear that 3-1-1 took the complaint. So, how are you addressing the 3-1-1 issue? I guess what percentage

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did end up in an inspection? Because people do rely on 3-1-1. They think it's going to produce results.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, a couple things. Once we start, the snow event begins, 3-1-1 does not intake any 3-1-1s because it's actively snowing. So, 3-1-1, once we stop plowing, salting operations, then 3-1-1 accepts those complaints. For the first storm, there were a little over 15,000 sidewalk-related complaints, which then triggers us to go out, inspect it, and then potentially issue a violation or any other action. Or if there's no violation found, maybe, you know, you know, once the call was made (TIMER CHIME) to when an inspection was already taken care of, it's no longer a violation. But we did issue 4,500 violations mostly directly because of a 3-1-1 complaint.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Council Member
Santosuosso.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Thank you so
much, Chairs. Thank you for being here. I wish I had
more time to give you more of my gratitude, but I
don't have that much time. So, I also need to shout
out Assistant Chief Frank LaTerra and also Patrick
Harkin, the Brooklyn South Borough Director, who have
just been phenomenal to our office.

I want to push this line of questioning a
little bit further on the crosswalks because my
understanding is that it's the property owner's
responsibility to clean up to and including the
pedestrian ramp and where the pedestrian ramp meets
the street. But I think a particular problem happens
when you all are so diligently cleaning the streets

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where you're plowing to the sides and then it effectively creates a barrier of snow that blocks the entrance to the pedestrian ramp. So, what is your approach? And again, I know these were outrageous storms, but I saw that over and over again in my District where even in schools or, you know, they were having trouble. The property owner actually did do the pedestrian ramp, but nobody could cross because of the mound of snow there so what's the thought?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Understood. I think that's one of the things that coming out of this winter we have to assess and evaluate. I think there's a couple of things. Our operators are always reminded it's not just the crosswalks, it's people's driveways. You know, it's a point of frustration that we get complaints all the time and, you know, obviously it's not something we want to get into when

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we're done with active snowfall, you know, we do not try to go out and plow the streets because there's no need to. What happens is sometimes we get people that are clearing out their driveways, clearing out the snow from their cars, and they're putting it right on the street. I get it. There's very little real estate in most parts of the city, even though we ask them to, but it's got to be realistic. They got to put it somewhere. We'll get complaints about my streets not plowed, hasn't been plowed. So, we have to go back and the plows turn to the right and we're plowing them back in. So, it's like one of these things that we have to do a better job internally to our operators and make sure they're not doing that. And I think... go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: I'm sorry.
Just for time.

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Do you have a way of tracking the crosswalks that are clear leading to the pedestrian ramp?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, that's one of the things we're working at. We geocoded all the bus stops and the pedestrian crosswalks in commercial corridors, and we're working on a solution of tracking that better.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay. All right. Great. And I don't mean to rush you. I just want to get my questions out.

And sorry, just to clarify on the unsheltered bus stops, bus stops span typically multiple storefronts. If I'm a business or an adjacent property owner and I'm required to shovel a four-foot path, I'm likely to do that towards the entrance of my building, not necessarily towards the curb where there is needed to be an entrance to the

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bus stop. So, are you saying it's also their responsibility to create a separate path?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: And I would just echo that there's a messaging problem there because it spans multiple storefronts or property owners most of the time so people, you know, it's sort of like a game of chicken of who's going to who's going to actually take care of that. So, I would just offer up that.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: We have to do a better job with that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Schools and DOE coordination, I felt in Hernando was a lot better than in Fern in terms of making sure that pedestrian access to school properties was better and that the sidewalks were clear. What do you attribute that to, if anything?

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: I think that was part of the, you know, NYCEM had after action assessment after Winter Storm Fern with all the agencies, and I think that we, the Administration, amplified that schools or City property had to make sure that if you had a corner like that, you had to clear that, too. I think that was a big part of it, that the focus was on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Better coordination.

Okay. A couple more. Did we have any problems with downed equipment?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. I mean, we always have downed equipment, but, you know, our Bureau of Motor Equipment, they do a great job, and we have mechanics on the same 12-hour shifts. And, you know, not one particular issue that hampered our operation. I can't speak to one issue.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Were there more melters that were available that weren't operational?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. So, we have 27 snow melters in our fleet. After Winter Storm Fern, we deployed eight snow melters across all five boroughs. And then the way the snow melters work is that we have to have enough snow piled up and ready to, we call it feed the melter and maybe feed the melter. There's a hopper with water going in and it melts the snow. If we don't feed that enough and have enough snow ready to go in there, it overheats the motor.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: I see.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: And then we can't operate it so we have to have enough snow built up there. And then as we get more and more snow, we open up more sites. So, then we expanded to 13 snow

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melters after Winter Storm Fern, because that's enough snow that we had to build up.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Got it.

Is there, in your opinion, a need.. there was a report around fewer longstanding qualified Sanitation workers available for these (TIMER CHIME) storms versus prior ones. Is there a need, in your opinion, for more qualified Sanitation workers on specialized equipment for snow removal specifically?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Council Member.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: A few years ago, we invested in making sure that any Sanitation worker that comes through the training center is trained on skids, holder, front end loader, and mechanical broom. Yeah. So, we train them on that and then as necessary, we train them on the skid steer,

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but that's something that we're going to look to expand every year as necessary.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Council Member Zhuang.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you, Commissioner. And I have to tell you, in my area, the Deputy Chief from Brooklyn South, Grace Lopez, this woman is amazing. She replied my text 12 o'clock at night.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Good.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: I have a couple of questions. The first question for Sanitation. Over 17 percent of New Yorkers are 65 and older, and approach 5 percent people younger than 65 with a disability. Almost 20 percent of our seniors living in poverty. A lot of seniors cannot going outside to shovel their

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sidewalk. Do we have a program to help seniors and the disabled people to shove their sidewalk for their property? Because for seniors, they live in fixed income. They cannot afford to hire people.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, the Department of Sanitation itself does not have that kind of program. I will say that I don't know specifics, but I was aware that there were some Council Members that had used some of the discretionary funds to use like ACE or some of these other organizations to help that in that effort. So that might be something that, you know, as you might may want to consider but, right now, we don't have that available as part of our purview.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Okay.

I have another question for DOT. My office also got complaint this morning in this area Fort Hamilton Avenue and the 62nd Street. I think this is

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DOT property near a train station. There's not... definitely City-owned property. There's five people in 10 minutes fell there. And even the sidewalk is shoved. No, no salt it. No one put a salt there, and a lot of people fell in that property. So, who is responsible? What's the plan to deal with this type of situation?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah. I think if, assuming it's one of our assets, you know, we do an initial pretreatment. We clear it. We go back if we need to salt it. I guess, you know, if you could let us know the specific location...

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: It's Fort Hamilton Avenue and the 62nd Street. I got a complaint a lot this morning. This particular location, one of the constituents sent me the picture.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah. We can definitely get out.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: And this type of situation is very often, even shovel the snow. No one salt it. Is that possible you guys give salt to some business owner nearby or families have someone help or community people to help with this? Because it's not like difficult job.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I mean, if it's really a recurring thing, then we want to be aware of it. You know, I don't know if you work with our Brooklyn Borough office, Borough Commissioner Keith Bray, but we have a great team. And please, you know, by all means, let us know and we'll make sure it gets looked.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: And it's not only for DOT. It's also Parks also have the similar issue. Why have people fell on Park sidewalk?

And also my office was in for, even though that school still open, there's a lot of bus not

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running, and that there's only one bus from my District is still will go to Council Member Kayla's District, go to Mark Twain. The whole bus stopped and then no one, no parents knows about it, and no one give notification and all the sidewalk was not cleared and the school is open. Kids need to go to school. Is any clear communication between DOT and the Education Department?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Sorry, Council Member, could you clarify the issue with the bus?

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: The bus stop not cleared and a lot of bus not running that day. And the school is open. Is anyone have communication between Department of Transportation, MTA, and also School Chancellor's Office?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, I can speak to the question of it's a bus stop. We have communication. At the EOC, there are representatives

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from all agencies, including DOE, but DOE does a great job of communicating with our Operations Office and even me. I'm in contact with Kevin Moran, who's the Vice Chancellor of Facilities. And there have been issues where there's a bus stop nearby and we go out and we prioritize it. So, there's constant communication within NYCEM with the EOC and then also if there's an issue with if it's an unsheltered bus.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Do you guys give recommendations to Department of Education if there is bus like canceled? Only one bus from one location to the other location. And the kids need to go to school.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: DSNY does not give them recommendations.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: I'm not sure about DOT.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Council
Member.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I would just
quickly add all of that is coordinated at EM, the
Office of Emergency Management, as Commissioner Lojan
said, and there are multiple meetings constantly
throughout the day for all of these storms and all
the entities collaborate on these issues. So that one
site, I don't know exactly what happened there but,
overall, there is quite a bit of collaboration
amongst the agencies and decisions and
recommendations are made.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'd like to
recognize Council Member Cabán.

And we'll go to Council Member Pierina
Sanchez.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you, Chair.
And it does not cease to be confusing. Sanchez in the
house.

Good afternoon. Thank you so much for your
testimony today. I want to start with gratitude to
the agencies, but in particular, Commissioner Lojan,
just appreciating the folks at Sanitation. Every time
I call, it's like within a half hour, an hour. Thank
you, Chief LaTerra and Josh, everyone, just thank
you.

So, I have three questions. I'm just going
to ask them to get them all out, and then I'm going
to listen to you and go pick up my kids. So first on
snow equity, just very curious to... thank you, Josh,
for the history lesson in one of the briefings, but
curious when that approach began and what
evaluations, if any, the agency has been able to do
regarding changes in number of complaints and all of

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that. I have to say, I think it's working in my District, but I'm curious about that.

Second, I know we've been talking a lot about property owner compliance. You mentioned 600 summonses, but in the cases where other agencies are responsible, so DOT aside, I'm thinking about Parks, New York State DOT in terms of properties or sidewalks that are above highways. I have a couple of those in my District, as does anyone that has a lot of highways zigzagging through their Districts. Is there any coordination there with the Department of Sanitation? Is the Department of Sanitation sort of serving in a role that is looking at snow clearing operations holistically, or are you only focused on your assets, your responsibilities? And if the answer is just you're focused on your assets and your responsibilities, is there any other part of the City that is monitoring overall compliance? Because I have

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a lot of challenges with Parks, but a couple of other agencies with sidewalk clearing.

And then my third question is just the PSA question. I know, Josh, I think we were talking about this or texting back and forth around the education for people who are throwing their snow into the street or are letting their dogs poop on the snow. What do they think is going to happen? What do you think is going to happen to this dog poop once the snow? It will melt. But anyway, just wondering what Sanitation does in terms of public education around these matters. And those are my questions. Thank you.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. Thank you, Council Member.

So, you asked about snow equity. We'll start with that. So, going back to I mentioned my testimony major storm so like 2010 storm was the highlight of some of the issues with the way

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Department of Sanitation used to route and operate. It used to be primary, secondary, tertiary. And a lot of people that lived in some of these dead-end blocks in our streets were left to be done last. And then it was then when we started looking at how we do things differently. We introduced what we call the snow equity, but it's essentially our sectoring program of how we redefined all of our routing. And then obviously the Administration at the time then helped us invest into additional equipment. Our fleet of salt spreader used to be 365 salt spreaders. We doubled that. And I think that was a big piece of that. And then we were able to then redefine the snow equity piece. And then every year our team does a phenomenal job of working with DOT and other agencies on the streetscape changes. There's different things that come up. Do we have to revise our routes? We look after the season and look to see what worked

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well, what didn't, and we obviously want to be more efficient. And those are one of the things we look at. And so that's evolving every year.

You asked about summonses or things for other City agencies. And, you know, generally where DSNY is mostly looking at our own assets and our responsibilities. If we get complaints, 3-1-1 complaints, and we investigate, then we will refer them to the agency. But the NYCEM EOC is a big piece of that because they have State agencies there. They have MTA. They have every agency there. And I think that's the key centerpiece of, like, forming out any complaints.

And then the PSA, I agree. I mean, it was a challenge. You know, I mean, it's crazy. I couldn't believe how much dog poop was out there. One of the things that I know the Council has been, you know, my time when I've testified at hearings in my tenure as

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Acting Commissioner has been that, not just during snow, but I think throughout the year. And I think, you know, we're always trying to come up with different ideas. The fine does not work, and I think fining people doesn't work because we have to observe somebody in the act, and it takes a lot of resources to sit in an area and see if somebody doesn't pick up the waste after their dog. So, I think, yeah, more communication needs to go in. And one of the things we're going to try, and, you know, obviously we're very limited, is we have these little dispensers that we want to try to affix to our Better Bins. It's locked. And then maybe it'll attract people to take dog bags. There's a couple of Council Members that are partnering with us. The only thing is we would need somebody to commit to replenishing and purchasing the bags. It might be worth, you know, trying to explore and pilot across anybody's District

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to see if (TIMER CHIME) that works in the Better
Bins.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

Chair, I want to clarify that I understood
correctly. So, there is not a singular entity within
the City that is looking at the holistic snow
response? Every agency is focused on its own assets?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. So, yeah,
we're generally only responsible for, you know, as I
mentioned DSNY, there's not one that covers every
other entity.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

Council Member Nurse.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chairs.
And also thank you all. You did a great job. I
actually think the second version of the storm was
the best.

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I'd love to get kind of a post-assessment on bringing on those shovelers for 30 dollars an hour. I think that's like we should just do that moving forward because I noticed quite a bit of difference in how fast things moved. I don't think we can rely on homeowners, and people can't pick up their shit. They can't clean up the sidewalk. I think we should just move forward and put some cash in people's hands, put some shovels in their hands, and just get these intersections and curb cuts clear because even listening to all of these questions, it's just like it seems overly complicated to just get shovels and get things cleared and who does what. Like, I just think we can't rely on individuals. We should take it up as a public good and just deal with it.

That being said, and sorry, I think I'm just hangry because I haven't had my lunch. But that

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being said, how many people are handpicking through the 3-1-1 complaints during these winter events?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, we have our Snow Command Center, which is staffed up by a couple dozen people on different shifts, but it's not just them. Every district and borough command receives those complaints at the same time so everybody's supposed to be looking at that and monitoring the 3-1-1 complaints.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. Understood.

And at your Command Center or at the garages, can people, it's kind of following up on another Council Member's question, can you all see what intersections are cleared?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. So, what we will be able to see is when the responsible supervisor will go out and action the complaint. Once they action the complaint and enter the response into

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dynamics, whether it's cleared, violation issued, or NOL, which is not on location, meaning they didn't find anything. That's how we'll know what was the action taken.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah. It might be another layer to add on to your PlowNYC thing.

And then does the inspector who goes out for sidewalk complaints walk with a shovel or have a shovel in the car?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. So, they're generally either done by a Sanitation enforcement agent, Sanitation police, or field supervisors, but they do have the ability to dispatch a crew if necessary, if there's something that's just like a life safety issue.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah. Especially in this kind of particular event. I mean, if they're going all the way out there, they issue a ticket, we

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might as well just have a shovel in the car so they can just deal with it as well.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: That's something to consider.

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: That's it, Chairs. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Council Member Wong.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Question to the Sanitation Commissioner. Thank you. Thank you for everybody. It's a lot of snow. It's a lot of work. I appreciate all the work you've done.

I do have a couple of questions, nice and short. Why are the plow trucks push the snows only to the right, and what happened to, like, the wedges, the plows that push to both sides? I don't see them.

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I mean, is there a problem putting them on or?
Because the complaints we have are all from people
that are living on the right side of the street. Can
you talk about that first?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure.

Absolutely. It's one of the biggest complaints we get
every year about plowing to the right. We plow to the
right because if you take a two-way street, like a
Fresh Pond Road, if we plow to the left, now that
snow is going on to oncoming traffic, so we have to
plow to the right. You know, one of the things we
have looked at as far as equipment and technology is
articulating plows. We've looked at some of that and
see if that's something that's effective, maybe for
part of our fleet, because then the operators have
the ability to shift when necessary. As far as the V
plows, we used V plows in the second storm. That's
primarily used for when we have higher amounts. That

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plow is raised four inches off the ground. It doesn't trip. And it's meant when you have heavy snow and you have to clear both sides and it opens it up. Pickup truck plows have those, but those are the smaller pieces of equipment that have that ability to have a V.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: All right. Thank you.

Next question. How do you get into a street, like an open street that's closed, you know, like 34th Avenue, 26 blocks that's closed so how do you plow that street? Can you talk about it?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, part of the street, we coordinate with DOT. They open part of that up when we're in a snow event and we're able to clear it. And as far as the closed piece, you want to take on the closed part? I think everything's opened up, correct?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes.

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. So, we work with DOT on making sure that we're coordinating opening up that street and we'll clear it when we have a snow event.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.

Last question. What happened to the snow emergency route that I used to hear about? Like, is it like no such routes anymore? What happened?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Correct. So, going back into the early 2010s, the Administration at the time, DOT and DSNY, felt that it was not necessary for a few reasons. I think it's one of those things that, because of the way we've revised all our routes, as I mentioned, there's no more primary, secondary, tertiary. We're treating all the roads the same. We don't feel it's necessary to just get the primary roads cleared first. The second thing is we don't want, you know, part of our operation,

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the biggest hindrance when it comes to plowing and salting is cars on the road. So, anytime we go into a snow event, we stress, you know, keep off the roads if possible, stay off the roads as possible. So, we don't want motorists moving their cars, looking for parking, and then maybe, you know, now that creates another hindrance for us when we're in snow operation. So, I think it's, as far as we're concerned, it's not an effective tool anymore, the way our operations works, and I don't know if DOT wants to add anything to that.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Well, I would just add also that we would have some, you know, safety concerns around the idea of asking drivers to kind of go and move their car during a snow event. I think like Commissioner Lojan said, it's safer for everyone and it's more efficient if everyone stays off the roads.

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COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Yeah. Final question. Do you think the Sanitation should get more flatbed trucks to take the snows away? Because clearly most of the complaint is about this, there's no place to put them, and you can keep plowing, plowing, the snow is still there.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. There's two pieces. The DOT helps us greatly post storm, like once the storm's finished and we're, you know, not just clearing things, DOT provides assets to us of dump trucks so they give us a good part of that and we have our own. And then if it's a bigger storm, that's when we have our contractors then with dump trucks as well. So, I think that's part of what we do when we're making these piles or if there's piles that are created already, we're hauling them away. If it's a situation like we've had the last two storms, we're putting out the snow melter and then we're

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melting it. Sometimes we'll just put it in a snow dump, but typically we'll melt the snow. But that is something that we are currently engaged in.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

I'd like to go to one of my favorites, pedestrian bridges. Following Storm Fern, how many pedestrian foot bridges for which DOT is responsible for were cleared within 24 hours of the end of precipitation and how many were left unserviced?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay. So, DOT has about 600 locations that we're responsible for clearing.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The foot bridges?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: That includes pedestrian bridges, overpasses, underpasses, you know, areas along service roads, things like that. So, I don't have the exact number of pedestrian

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bridges, but we do have them all in our snow plan. And what we have done with our 600 locations is we have prioritized them with a system of one, two, and three, and what we have looked at are concentrations of pedestrians, transit, disability communities, things like that in order to be able to give them a priority. So, we obviously start with the ones, we move on as quickly as possible to complete the twos and the threes. So, if there is a specific bridge, we can go back and look at our records for the last storm, the January storm, and we can get you more information on that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, that would be great. It took a while to get the bridges cleared, and so you don't have the number about how many were cleared within 24 hours. Are those numbers available?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We can look up specific bridges, yes.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

And then is that data shareable with us, as in like the bridges in our own districts? Because obviously, as a Council Member, even though we're not the Sanitation worker, we're getting a lot of heat.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Absolutely. Yeah. We can look in the future whether we can have better information sharing with the public and with the Council as we're clearing.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: One particular footbridge at Fort Hamilton Parkway remained uncleared for more than 48 hours after the storm, and there were people with disabilities. It's a school route, PS 130. There's a subway station, which was also not shoveled. DOT indicated there wasn't sufficient capacity to clear all pedestrian bridges within 24 to 48 hours. What operational staffing or policy changes are needed to ensure that the

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pedestrian bridges are consistently cleared within 24 hours after a snowfall and treated with the same urgency as adjacent roadways?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Of course. So, when we have a snowfall, it's all hands on deck at DOT. Every operational person, even if snow is not normally one of their primary duties, or even if they do totally different types of work, we put them all on snow. We go to extended days, 10- or 12-hour shifts, and we watch very carefully how quickly we're getting through our snow plan of the 600 locations. We also use snow laborers. We don't have as many as Sanitation, but we had well over 100 for this past event, and they were extremely helpful. So, we methodically get through our list as quickly as we can, and I'm sorry we didn't get to the Fort Hamilton bridge more quickly. That was a priority two

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location, and we did get to it as quickly as we could.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I believe there were volunteers from District 39 who had helped clear that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I had heard that, yes.

I'll go back to Majority Leader.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

Regarding DOT coordination with the MTA for subway station areas and elevated structures, how does DOT coordinate with the MTA ahead of and during predicted snowstorms? In DOT's view, how did the coordination with the MTA go with respect to January and February snowstorm?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay. So, the understanding with the MTA is they clear around their subway station entrances, but then the adjacent

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property owner, or it could be a City property, that's where the rest of that area is picked up. So, if you're looking at a location like we were looking at a Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn subway entrance, the area immediately around it, the MTA would clear, and they do clear, but the rest of that area would have been parks because it was adjacent to Prospect Park, for example. So, if we ever see something, we do have a good relationship with the MTA. We know who to call. We will call and alert them we're not seeing something done, but we do have coordination with them, and they also participate in EM meetings, the ones that I mentioned earlier.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are there any recurring problem locations near subway stations where snow clearance is inconsistent or responsibilities are unclear?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I'm not aware of that, no.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: When plowing operations block access to subway stations or bus stops, how are those barriers identified and resolved? What role does the MTA play?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: So again, it's something Commissioner Lojan talked about earlier. At times, an area is cleared, and then the Sanitation plows do come through. That is something our partners at the MTA are aware of. I've seen many times that they will come back, and they will create a pathway into the street or off the curb when that occurs.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Does DOT track recurring problem locations near transit hubs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I know our Borough Commissioners have on their radar in storms,

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there are certain areas that are more sensitive to the community or we need to focus on, and often we do come back to those so there is some, I would say, informal tracking of that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Informal tracking.

Got it.

And then what percentage of subway entrances were fully cleared within 24, 48, and 72 hours after each storm?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I don't have that information. Sorry.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. The MTA should have that?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. If we can collectively work with the MTA and DOT to get that information, that would be very helpful.

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I have questions on Citi Bike. What are Lyft's contractual obligations regarding snow clearance at Citi Bike stations, and how does DOT monitor compliance? I understand that in the first storm, Citi Bike stations remained obstructed for more than 10 days, some 11 days. I know that this past week has been different, but very much concerned about the response for Citi Bike with respect to the first storm.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yes. Understood. And I think the fact that so many New Yorkers rely on Citi Bike now, in a way, it's a success story, but it's definitely brought to light that it's just as critical a piece of infrastructure in the city as other aspects of our transportation system. So just for context, there's about 2,200 Citi Bike stations with a total of around 30,000 docks, and clearing them is pretty painstaking work because you have to,

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it's basically hand, you have to do it by hand, right? You're working between the bikes, there's electronic equipment, so that's something we've learned, is just how labor-intensive it is. The system's basically doubled in size since we first established clearing standards, and obviously, Winter Storm Fern, again, had some unique challenges, but we work closely with Lyft to prioritize their work, to come up with a plan, and basically, in the initial time after the storm, what that consists of is focusing on the top 15 percent of stations in each borough, and clearing a critical mass of each station, so maybe not necessarily the whole station the first time around, but the goal is to get as many bikes up and running and have basically a critical mass of a network that's available. As of today, all stations are clear since the last storm, and I guess, yeah, it was a notable difference, as you said, and I

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think that reflects us really sitting down with them and working together to learn from the first storm and apply that to the second storm. They cleared 700 stations within 24 hours in the most recent storm. That took 11 days in Fern, so pretty remarkable, but we're always looking, and definitely we're taking a hard look at further improvements beyond that going forward, understanding how important this is, and that even includes looking at what some of our peer cities do who get a lot of snow and have had long-established bike share systems.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Got it. What actions can the City take if Lyft fails to meet its snow removal obligations? And can you expand on also what is Lyft's actual contractual obligations regarding snow clearance?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Sure.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay. So, contractually, Lyft is not obligated to have a station cleared by a certain amount of time, although financially, they have a large incentive to do so, of course. What they are obligated to do is to create pedestrian paths around the station, and they're obligated to do that within 12 hours of the snow ending, and then the City has an ability to issue liquidated damages. I believe it's 50 dollars per 12 hours per station going forward.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So, it's fair to say that Lyft was not in violation because there wasn't a time restriction inside of the contract. Is that an area where the Department would seek to make sure that we're providing timeframes in these contracts so that...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Exactly. I think that's absolutely something we'd want to

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consider when we put the contract out, renew the contract in the future.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Oh, I would love to see that as well, so that our folks who are very reliant on our Citi Bikes can be able to use them and have a lot of folks rely on them to get to work or for childcare arrangements, what have you, runs the gamut on the needs for it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yeah. And, Chair, but one thing I will add is that we did see Lyft very aggressively pursuing clearing out the stations, and they shared our sense of urgency to make that happen in this storm.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah. I can attest to the fact that I've seen, again, this past week was a much better response, and whatever you did this past week, we would like to see you applying that same pressure in the future.

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My last question on this set of questions is, what operational changes and deadlines will DOT commit to before the next major storm to prevent stations from remaining obstructed?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Citi Bike stations specifically?

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I think that's something that we can look into.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right. Chair.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. And just building on the Citi Bike cleanup, this is the first time hearing that you all have a tiered sort of priority stations that get cleaned first in each borough. It would be great to have more information just about Citi Bike cleanup, because not just during the snowstorm, but I think on the regular, there are stations in my District that don't get cleaned up,

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and similarly, I'd like to understand who at that point are we reaching out to as legislators?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank you, Chair. We'd be happy to sit down. I think, in the scheme of things, it's a newish program, and certainly a rapidly growing program, and we're all for ideas about how we can tweak our approach. Again, we saw that when we work together and we really focus, it can make a difference, so we're absolutely open to more feedback.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Especially because it's so expensive.

I'll pass it to Chair Sanchez.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: First and foremost, I want to thank all of you for being on the panel for so long already and answering all of our questions. I'm just going to close my questioning all about improving processes and transparency.

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So, the first thing I want to ask about is I know there is a volume of requests and 3-1-1 ticket numbers and things that come in, especially during these storms, especially like a Winter Storm Fern, and I understand that because of the overwhelming amount of 3-1-1 tickets that are usually about the same exact thing, that there tends to be a pause in the collection of 3-1-1 ticker requests. Would there be an opening by the Administration to still continue to take 3-1-1 complaints but not having to necessarily respond to them during these high volume of storms so that folks can at least feel that their voices are being heard, even if it is quite understandable that you're not going to answer 500 people about the same cardboard box on the street?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, thank you for that question, Chair. We actually have that process in place. It's a rapid response complaint

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when we're in an active snow operation. Deputy Commissioner Goodman's team staffs people in our Customer Service Unit, and when people call 3-1-1 during an active snow event, those calls get routed then to them, and they are essentially auto-closed, but then they are sent to our Snow Command Center for situational awareness. Most of the times, they are complaints of my street hasn't been plowed, and we are in active snow operations. One of the things, going back to the snow equity piece and our sectoring piece is that we used to, before that, we used to divert the trucks all over the place. Like, there's a complaint here, you're playing whack-a-mole, and it wasn't efficient, and it actually created a lot more problems. So, to stay away from that, we auto-close them, and then where we're in our active plowing operations, there's a process and routes that we have to adhere to, otherwise, then the system doesn't

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work. So, we do use them for situational awareness. If there's clusters in a particular place, that's helpful to us, because there may be something else that we're not aware of, so we don't action them as far as responding to the customer, but our supervisors and field personnel are made aware of them, and then they go inspect them, and then if there's any action that needs to be taken, we will take it.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Would you be open to doing, I know that's via the phone, if we're able to find a way to do that on the 3-1-1 app, that would allow folks to also do that mobily as well?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I believe, thank you, Mr. Chair, I believe they come in online as well. We'll double check. I never would have doubted that they did until you just asked, and now I

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want to be 100 percent sure. But we staff that customer service unit on those same 12-hour shifts, and we put together district reports, we action them out to everybody. I know from the constituent standpoint, it looks like, oh, they closed out my complaint, but it's because it was sent directly to the right team to address any active snowfall, and we'll confirm that it's online and via the app as well.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

Continuing on in terms of processes, prior to 2013, there were designated snow routes where folks couldn't park on designated streets so that it could ease for plowing, sanitation, etc. That was discontinued. Is there a reason why it was discontinued, and is there any appetite to bringing that back permanently or on a pilot basis?

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, we mentioned this before that this was, you're right, around 2013, it was discontinued. It just wasn't an effective tool for Sanitation. We worked in coordination with Department of Transportation at the time because of how we route our operation. And I believe also Commissioner Flynn did mention it is something we don't want motorists actively moving their cars off main roads into side streets for safety reasons if there's going to be a big snowfall. Not only that, parking, finding parking, we don't want people then trying to squeeze into spots, trying to park in front of a fire hydrant. So, I think just having that, the way we have our operation now, we think it's not necessary, and that's why it was discontinued.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Awesome.

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And then would the City consider, and please be frank if you think that this is getting too much into the weeds, too pedantic, publicly reporting post-storm accessibility metrics such as curb clearance rates, bus stop rates, timelines, borough level complaint data, and compliance re-inspection outcomes?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. I think that's something we're open to discussing. Obviously as I mentioned, we've evolved during my time here. I'll give you just an anecdotal story. My 27 years, I remember being on a snowstorm, working on a snowstorm, somebody came up to me and said, when do you think you're going to get to my block, and I said, you're lucky if you get it by the end of the week, and they were so happy. Now if I have to tell them that at the end of the week, it's not going to be pleasant, right? Same thing with the bike lanes.

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We had issues with bike lanes, and now we plow the bike lanes at the same time. So, there's evolving things that I think the Administrations at the time, and this Administration has recognized that, and that's something I think we're definitely committed to. Obviously working with, there's a lot of things that have to go into it, but I think that's something that we would love to work with you on and seeing what's appropriate for, now that this is magnified going forward in the next 27 years, this will be already a set plan that is efficient and acceptable by the public, so.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Thank you.

And shifting slightly over to DOT, kind of the same question, but just to cap off, after a major snowstorm, does DOT do any of these after action reviews, and if so, how did the review from the January storm inform the February storm, and are

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there any additional changes that DOT sees from these two storms that you potentially look to implementing for the storm that might be coming in next week?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Absolutely. Yeah. I would echo Commissioner Lojan's theme of continual improvement. That's absolutely our approach. We had many discussions and meetings following Winter Storm Fern, and that informed our approach to the more recent blizzard, and likewise, we'll be doing that again. I think Commissioner Lojan mentioned one thing that we're doing, and we're working together with Sanitation, NYCEM, and others to create a GIS, or like geocode, right, to actually get maps and to have a much better grasp on what all these assets are that have, you know, they're the kind of gray zone in a way, right? It's where we're seeing these challenges with crosswalks and ped ramps and bus stops in terms of what we're seeing out there. So, the first step to

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manage it better is to actually have a grasp of that information. So that's one thing.

Here at DOT, internally, we've been continuing to enhance the way we track performance, like in real time just about, during these events. You know, how many sheltered bus stops have been cleared, how many Citi Bike stations are cleared, how many ped bridges or other assets, all those things. So absolutely, we're always looking to improve the way we're working to do it more efficiently.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: And I know I said that was my last question, but you just brought up a really good point, using all this data. One of the things that I didn't touch on earlier is I believe the Department of Sanitation, maybe all the agencies, use three different weather systems to understand, you know, the upcoming and pending storms. Can you explain to us and to people in

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general why we use these three systems? Are there other systems that we can be using that would be more effective, or is there one major system, or is there a reason why we're using all three of these and why we need them?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: You're referring to, Chair, as the forecast, the vendors?

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Yeah.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, yeah, we pay for three weather vendors, AccuWeather, Metro, and CompuWeather, and there's also NYCEM who relies on National Weather Service. It's just more of just seeing what, you know, predicting weather, obviously, is not a perfect science, and we prepare for the worst case scenario. Som if we have, you know, two weather vendors that are saying we're going to get a coating to an inch, and then I have one that says you're going to get six inches, I'm going to prepare

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for six inches. So, that's really why everybody, you know, how they model, they analyze it and interpret it is one thing, but if it's a published thing and they're saying this is what it could be, I have to prepare for it, it's the worst case scenario. So, it's really more of just saying, expanding, you know, what the view is, and obviously just preparing for the worst case scenario. So, it's just another set of eyes, so to speak, in the world of forecasting.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Again, thank you, thank you to everyone.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Can I just...

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Yes.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: I want to just correct the record. I know Council Member Pierina Sanchez had asked me a question previously about is there one entity that oversees kind of like the entire portfolio, so to speak, of snow removal? I

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want to correct for the record, City Hall and the Deputy Mayor of Operations oversees all aspects of the snow removal across all agencies, and then NYCEM holds daily weather calls with all the agencies when we are in a snow event, so I just wanted to correct that for the record.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Thank you so much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

Could you clarify about the schools, the crosswalks near schools, and if there was collaboration?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. I could speak to that. So, yeah, I think DOE did a phenomenal job of making those adjustments. The second storm, I think there were challenges across all parts of the agencies, and I think one of the things that, going back to the January storm, NYCEM had an after-action

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meeting with all the agencies, and DOE being one of them, and that was one of the things that was stressed and focused that all those corners near properties hadn't being cleared, and we did see that, and there was coordination with DOE and us regularly on those kinds of things if there was something that we could have done to help, but they have a phenomenal staff. They have, I think, 8,000 people for facilities, so they definitely did a great, better job this time compared to the last time.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah. We had some challenging areas near schools that we were able to send volunteers to, but we also know that the attendance was abysmal, and so I think this is another just piece of the storm-related consequences that we should be thinking about more thoughtfully.

Recognizing Council Member Joseph, and then passing it to Council Member Vernikov.

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COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you.

Question for MOPD. Is there anything that could be done to identify the homes of disabled individuals so that maybe you guys can advocate for an exemption during a snowstorm?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: So, that's a complicated question. We could look at whether something could be done on a voluntary, it would have to be on a voluntary basis, of course.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: When you say voluntary basis, you mean?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SWEET: I mean, I think probably people, I mean, there's complicated issues with any kind of registry for any kind of vulnerable population, including people with disabilities so it's something we could look at, but it's likely a complicated issue.

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COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Yeah. I would love to discuss that with you as well because we all understand the difficulties of disabled individuals to have to come out and shovel their snow, and we have the same issue with trash, you know, when they're fined for not picking up their trash, and I know that it's complicated, but I would love to find something for them. You know, they shouldn't have to pay for their challenges. Thank you.

My other questions are for Sanitation, if I could just pick up where we left off. Could you just, Commissioner, again, who issues the directive on which locations to prioritize during a snowstorm? Is it the Mayor's Office, or is it DSNY?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: DSNY, as far as what you mentioned before.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Thank you.

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And then, which other City agencies, other than DSNY, were engaged in snow shoveling and trash removal during the snowstorms?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, as far as snow shoveling and things like that, we had great partnership with DOT, Parks, DEP. Those were the main agencies that assisted us in snow removal efforts.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: So they actually assisted you in snow removal?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. I feel like it would be nice to see like the MTA and the DOT more engaged. I feel like that would kind of help out the Department of Sanitation.

Okay, and then in terms of snow melters, I think you mentioned that the City has 2,700.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: 27.

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COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Oh, I'm sorry.

27. Do you think that's sufficient, or do you think that we need to increase the amount?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. It's sufficient. So, one of the biggest misconceptions that we saw when we broke out the snow melters after the first storm, because we hadn't had a snow melter operation since 2021, was that a lot of people felt that the snow melters were only melting snow directly near where the snow melters locations were located. The snow melters locations are just staging areas. There's two parts to it. A, we have to bring enough snow to that location to feed, you know, to run the operation so there's a lot of snow we're bringing there. So, we're closing down the block for weeks at a time in some cases so we don't want to shut down a block that has, you know, businesses or residents in the block so we have to carefully select that. And

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the second piece is that the sewer needs to be able to handle the amount of liquid that's going in there as you're melting. The water's going into the sewer, and we coordinate that with DEP pre-season. So, we can't just pick any location. But we're taking snow from all 59 community boards. It's not that we're only melting snow in that area. And the 27, I do believe, is sufficient enough for the amount of snow that we need to melt.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay.

And then last question. Where do you think the City missed the mark with these two snowstorms because, I mean, obviously something went very wrong here, even though there were obviously many efforts from a lot of agencies, but something was different from the other snowstorms so where do you think the city could have done better?

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, I think the City did a great job, and I think that one of the things we do recognize is the communications on the crosswalk piece, the bus stop piece, adjacent property owner, we could do a better job in, and then obviously now prioritizing the pedestrian infrastructure piece, which we did in the second storm, right? As I mentioned, we've never brought in snow shovelers the onset of a blizzard. I mean, that was crazy. If you ask anybody that was on this job 20 years ago, that would have never happened. So that's one of the things that we immediately recognized, and then we adjusted. And then obviously some of the other things that I mentioned, just geocoding all the bus stops and the ped ramp, things like that. There's things that now we recognize and we're going to evolve better to continue to do that for future storms.

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COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

If a complaint is made through 3-1-1, but with the wrong address, does that wrong address get the violation?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. It's all based on inspection. So, if it's like 123 Main Street and the real violation is 130 Main Street, if the inspector or the supervisor goes to 123 Main Street, if there's no violation, they're not going to get a summons. But if there is a violation, we would. It wouldn't just be based on the 3-1-1. It just drives us to go inspect the area. That's all 3-1-1 does.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Oh, got it. So, the inspector then is, while they're there inspecting.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Right. They can inspect anything in that area. It might not just be the one address. It could be multiple addresses. They

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have the latitude to issue violations to any location on site.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. That's great to know.

I'll pass it to Council Member Kayla.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Me again. Sorry.

But I'm going to ask Commissioner Flynn just a few questions. Congratulations, first of all.

And just echoing Council Member Hanif on the pedestrian overpasses. I have a few in my district that are real sticking points where typically it requires DSNY notifying DOT multiple days after a storm in order for DOT to clear it. It's around 3rd Avenue and Wakeman Place. It's important because it connects to our only Mitchell-Lama housing in the District. It's quite large and it's a walking

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path for families to go to schools. So, I will follow up with you, but not having to nudge would be great.

And I want to unfortunately inform you that you have inherited a boondoggle of a situation in terms of pedestrian overpass bridges. The 17th Avenue Bridge, which is taking now five years to complete even though it's being prefabricated off-site so I will talk to you more about it, but can't miss the opportunity to do it now.

Turning back to Commissioner Lojan, very quickly, fire hydrant coordination for digging those out. I understand it's, again, the responsibility of the abutting property owner, but I also know that FDNY was stepping in at certain points to do that. Was that at the request of DSNY? What did that look like and how can we improve to make sure that the safety of cleared fire hydrants is there?

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. I don't know, did you want to, the DOTs first or my?

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Oh, no, no, I was just getting him sort of.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I look forward to connecting.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Sounds good.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. No. That wasn't at the request. I don't want to speak for FDNY. That might be something they regularly do.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: But that is one of the priorities when we do go out and supplement the crosswalk, bus stop, and fire hydrant, and that is something that we do look as well as for when we go inspect for violations so it's in parallel, but yeah, FDNY, I believe might just do it on their own.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Yeah.

Unfortunately, several years ago, we lost constituents in my District to a fire that was blocked in code blue situations, and so we definitely want to make sure that's prioritized.

Do you know if citations, actually, I know of at least one situation in which a citation was given out to a homeowner who put out trash in bags as opposed to in bins, even though there were massive snow mounds that were blocking bins from being there. Was that protocol or?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, typically what we do, and we've done in these last two storms, so if you want to please give me that location.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Will do.

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, our summonses are not handwritten. It's through an application called Novus.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: All the supervisors are issuing summonses through that application. We have the ability to turn on and off violations. And when we get into those kinds of post-snow operations, when we know we're delaying collections, we suspend them so the supervisors can't even write that summons if they want to, and it's currently suspended.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: It was suspended.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: They shouldn't have been able to write that violation.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay.

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, I'm happy to please pass that on to my staff and we'll look at it and see what the issue was there.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: I'll double check that.

And then last question for me, with regard to the emergency snow shovelers, which I think was a resounding success. My question is, do they report, like what is the chain of command and what's the reporting structure with the emergency snow shovelers? And do you feel that there was enough supervision for those snow shovelers? Recognizing, of course, that this was kind of thrown together.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. I think that's one of the things we have to assess.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, the hierarchy is basically, it's not just one, ideally it

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would be one of our uniformed supervisors, right, but those supervisors have other things that they're responsible for. So, we employ Sanitation enforcement agents to be a squad leaders, Sanitation workers, that they can be squad leaders. There's different people that can be squad leaders. But, yeah, I think one of the things that we have to evaluate and assess is that appropriate enough for this size of, number of shovelers.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Awesome. Okay.

And sorry, one more, and then I really am done. When it's split shifts, the 12-hour shifts, do Sanitation enforcement get detailed to something else or is Sanitation enforcement Sanitation enforcement the whole time?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. So, they're aiding us in operation. So, one of the biggest things they help us with is traffic control, the snow

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shoveler program. Now that we're doing that in parallel, they'll act as, yeah, but it's mostly traffic control because when we have to dispatch out of some of our locations like the commingle locations that have two or three garages in one, we need to get our trucks out so we have traffic control and make sure our trucks are being dispatched quickly so there's different areas that they're working with us on.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: So, fair to say that Sanitation enforcement doesn't usually ramp up until immediate operation...

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: No. They go on split shifts also and they're all employed into different parts of the operation.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: But in terms of issuing citations, it ends up...

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Correct.

Correct. That does come a little later.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay.

Understood. Thank you so much.

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: You're welcome.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Majority Leader.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I want to be the fourth Council Member to say on the record that Mr. Frank LaTerra is the most responsive human being in the world. I'm confident that if I texted the man, Assistant Chief, sorry, at three in the morning, he would respond and deliver, so I want to thank you again for that.

Two questions, brief questions. The vehicle travel ban proved to be very effective. How many crashes were reported compared to regular travel? Do you have that?

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ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, I don't have that data. I think that's probably more, NYPD might have that. I can just tell you just my.. I was out there the entire night. The travel ban went into effect at 9. There were quite a few cars still on the road at the time. NYPD was out there patrolling the areas. I think the goal was not to give citations and things like that. They just wanted cars off the road. I think an hour, a little bit an hour after that ban went into effect, we did see a lot of cars then actually listen and they were off the road. I didn't see too many collisions, thankfully, compared to the previous storm where there were some collisions.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Would you recommend more regular use of the vehicle travel ban in future storms?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: It depends. So, there's an impact, a cascading effect. Businesses,

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now you have trucks that can't get goods delivered to businesses and that's a big impact that I think we have to consider. Something severe as another blizzard like this, yeah, it's definitely one of the things that as far as plowing, salting operations goes, it's one of the biggest factors as far as how effective we can be or can't be. If there's a lot of traffic out there, our trucks are sitting in that same traffic and they're not as effective. So yeah, I mean, anytime we have severity of something like this, I think it's effective, but then there's that cascading effect.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Right. I mean, and to the extent, I mean, I would consider that essential travel if you have goods getting across our city though, right, so there's always ways to limit that.

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My last question is, could policies such as intersection daylighting or designated snow storage zones improve safety and prevent snow from being piled into pedestrian crossings?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I think that's an interesting idea. It's something we could definitely take a look at with our colleagues.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah. We see hardened daylighting or non-hardened daylighting as effective tools for several things so I just wanted to put that out there.

Thank you so much. That wraps up my round of questions.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

And my final question about polling sites. We've received written testimony from a constituent concerning the January 24th snow event when early voting for a special election was underway. One early

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voting site in Assembly District 36 was located on 29th Street, yet the intersections leading to that site, including Ditmars Boulevard and 23rd Avenue were ineffectively cleared. In the event of a special election, can you walk us through the coordination by City agencies to ensure seniors and disabled New Yorkers do not lose access to their right to vote?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure. So, we were aware of the, as you recall that polling, I believe the early voting was supposed to happen the weekend and it got postponed. We were aware of those sites and we prioritized clearing of those. I'd have to look to see where the breakdown was because that was something that I and then our night Chiefs were very aware of and made sure that we prioritized it so I'd have to look and see where the breakdown was, but it is something that we look at closely when there's any kind of election or things like that where we

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know people need to get there, we're prioritizing that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Wonderful.

Well, thank you so much. And I just have to give another shout out to Frank as well. I thought I was special. Hearing from other Council Members that you were so responsive is also just incredible. Thank you. Thank you all so much. Commissioner Lojan. Oh, wait. Go ahead.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Again, I want to be the fifth one on the record to thank Frank. And now I also feel a little like, oh, so I'm just one of many? Okay.

But no, my final question, and I promise this is my final question. Is there any appetite from the Administration into heated sidewalks, understanding on how that can be used in future storms or any thoughts that y'all might have on the

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deployment of heated sidewalks or pilot programs thereof within the city?

ACTING COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah. I mean, I could speak to that a little bit. I think any kind of advancements or improvements is worth exploring. Obviously, we'd have to discuss internally with the Administration because I'm sure there's a financial impact to that. But I mean, I think not knowing too much about it, it may be something worth exploring just like anything else, but I don't know if you have anything on that.

CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Justin is ahead of our time, maybe.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: And just, I know a little bit about the topic. I'll just add that we should coordinate with DEP on those conversations because many cities that do this, it's by running the existing hot water pipes under the sidewalk. So, if

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you want to have those conversations, we should just make sure to include the Department of Environmental Protection.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: There is also using heat from waste and sanitation that uses to be able to heat sidewalk so it could be a self-fulfilling heated prophecy.

Does DOT have any comments on that?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Well, it's a very big idea. I think we should always be open to looking at new ideas and better ways of doing things. I think that in particular, definitely there's a lot of complexities to work through. Generally, that's the private property owners' responsibility so you have to think about that and maintenance costs, etc., but like I said earlier, we're always open to learning from our global peers and we could take a look.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Thank you so much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you all so much, Commissioner Flynn, Commissioner Lojan, Margaret, Emily. Let me just make sure I say everybody's name because you all are incredible for staying. This is a great chain, Chief of Department Anthony Pennolino, and Deputy Commissioner Joshua Goodman. Just thank you so much. I learned a lot and I know my Colleagues did too. And for those who are watching and will watch later, this is such vital information for New Yorkers to understand and we really appreciate the partnership.

I now open the hearing for public testimony. I want to remind members of the public that this is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times.

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

If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will have three minutes to speak on today's oversight topic. If you have a written statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted.

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I'd like to call the first panel. Mike Schweinsburg, Dr. Shannon McLennon, Robert Acevedo, and Joe Rappaport.

Whenever you're ready, Mike.

MIKE SCHWEINSBURG: Okay. So, I'm Mike Schweinsburg. I'm an old man with graying brown hair, brown glasses, sort of rust-colored jacket, and a blue shirt. I've been a disability rights and disability justice advocate for over 25 years, and now President of the 504 Democratic Club, which is the nation's first and largest advocating for the civil rights of people with disabilities. We are proud to boast a non-partisan membership, and our first Vice President is a Republican so everybody's happy. We are very, very pleased with the formation of the standalone Disabilities Committee, and certainly couldn't be happier with the makeup of this Committee. We recognize so many of you as trusted

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allies and friends of the disability community, and Chair Hanif is remarkably dedicated. Thank you kindly. So, we look forward to working closely together throughout your term as Chair, and while this Committee's there.

Now, we appreciate the various, Committees, Sanitation, Transportation, and Disabilities for coming together to call this very timely hearing. As this is likely the last snowstorm until next winter, we hope that provides ample time for City agencies to develop a comprehensive plan so that the disabled and the non-disabled can actually enjoy the winter wonderland that is New York City just after a snowfall. People with disabilities are the largest minority by far, with well over two million in New York City alone. Yet we are rarely acknowledged when marginalized communities are enumerated as targets for protection. So, our issues

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are rarely brought up. We were very pleased to hear the Mayor and then the Commissioner both speak for the very first time about the need for four-foot-wide paths and the clearing of curb cuts. Of course, we wish that message had gotten through to the Sanitation workers and emergency shovelers. You will hear a lot today about the detrimental impact on so many people with disabilities as well as non-disabled folks. Too many have told us how they were in effect snowed in because they realized that the patchwork shoveling done along many blocks might necessitate the only other method of travel, rolling down the street, which is, of course, quite dangerous. I will leave it to other members of the community who are most severely impacted by this to better describe the terrible effects and perils this places before them.

Chair Hanif's opening statement shows her thorough understanding and her commitment to change.

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We appreciate the attendance and comments of the Chair's (TIMER CHIME) oh, my goodness.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Finish that sentence. It's okay.

MIKE SCHWEINSBURG: Thank you, thank you, thank you. And thank all the Disability Committee Members and other Council Members who attended.

But my question, how is it that they have special devices to clear bike lanes, but nothing for pedestrian ramps? 98 percent of Acting Sanitation Commissioners' testimony clearly just trotted out his standard comments largely directed at the non-disabled community. All disability-related provisions were shunted off to the property owners. This is seemingly okay with MOPD, but in our experience, that just didn't happen. So now, what precisely will change? Because this complaint violation procedure clearly is not getting the

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disabled out of our homes. 5,000 violations issued, as mentioned in the commissioner's testimony, nowhere near the approximately 300,000 pedestrian ramps throughout the five boroughs.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Can you wrap?

MIKE SCHWEINSBURG: I am wrapping. All right, then just Citi Bike, Lyft, all that, great priorities, but not us. Not the largest minority. Oh, finally, my recommendation. Hire more emergency shovelers. With just the responsibility of going from intersection to intersection to shovel those pedestrian ramps. 5,000 violations, 300,000 pedestrian ramps. Do the math. You need a better solution.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Mike.

Please keep to the three minutes. We've got...

MIKE SCHWEINSBURG: I'm so sorry.

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ARTHUR SCHWARTZ: I do have a written statement, which I gave out.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We will read the testimonies.

ARTHUR SCHWARTZ: My name's Arthur Schwartz. I'm the General Counsel of the Center for the Independence of the Disabled New York. I'm here for Dr. Sharon McLennon Wier, who wasn't feeling well today, but this is a statement that she prepared.

The Center for the Independence of the Disabled New York, CIDNY, is New York State's largest independent living center. Over the last 12 months, we have serviced over 70,000 New Yorkers with disabilities and have an ever-deepening understanding of the needs of disabled New Yorkers. There are nearly two million of us, over one out of every four New Yorkers. We are not a special interest group. We are people critical to how New York City functions,

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but we are not always treated that way. The City and State dedicate far too few resources to the disabled, which is why we have to bring lawsuits all the time. It took us five years to get the New York City Transit Authority to agree to install elevators at most stations, and even that win will take us until 2055 for 90 percent of the stations to be accessible. And one of the biggest problems we have to recognize is the failure of mayors and the City Council for decades to not put money that is needed into the hands of the disabled community. We have fewer and fewer heavy snowstorms in New York City, but we have had two in four weeks. Our phone rang off the hook with people calling not to complain, sent over by the City, by the way, but for help. Based on those calls, I can address some of the critical ways New York City must address snowstorms in the future. The recent snowstorms have created dangerous, impassable

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conditions for people with disabilities. Key issues include unclear, narrow, and icy sidewalks, blocked curb cuts, and inaccessible bus stops and shelters. We have several recommendations. One, uneven, icy, and insufficiently cleared sidewalks, less than four feet wide, prevent wheelchair users and those with limited mobility from navigating, often trapping them at home. New York City has forever followed a rule which does a disservice to the disabled. Building owners and homeowners must shovel their own sidewalks. Here is what the New York City website says. The City does not clear snow or ice from sidewalks in front of residential or commercial property, does not clear snow or ice blocking access to sidewalks, vehicles, or driveways, even if that is caused by plowing. In fact, other than around city parks and municipal buildings, the City does not clear sidewalks. The city relies on property owners,

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but many property owners don't do that, or they only clear at the width of a shovel, and if they are older and disabled, they don't do it at all. Theoretically, these property owners are subject to a 250-dollar fine, but in a major storm, that doesn't work. What would work? Handling snow in the way they do it in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, using specialized compact sidewalk plows to clear snow, prioritizing pedestrian safety. And if you look at Toronto's website (TIMER CHIME) they will say they do this in three days. They clear every sidewalk in the city.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Arthur.
We will read all of the statements.

ARTHUR SCHWARTZ: I just want to say one other thing. What Michael talked about, about the specialized plows that now plow bike lanes, those same kind of specialized plows that clear a path for bikes could be used on sidewalks, and why bike paths

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get more priority than where pedestrians walk is something that puzzles CIDNY greatly. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

JOE RAPPAPORT: Good afternoon. My name is Joe Rappaport. I'm the Executive Director of the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled. Thanks for having us. And we agree that sidewalks should be more of a priority, and we hope that that is something that the City and the Council will look at. We really appreciate the chance to talk about snow removal, which has been a longstanding issue for disabled New Yorkers, pretty much everybody else for decades. And my colleague, Susan Scheer, said in the City newspaper on Wednesday, I brought up this problem in 1988, '86, '87, '88, and I've brought it up every year since then. And it's like a surprise every year that it snows and that everybody has to

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think all over again about how they're going to do this. This is the first public hearing on this question that I know of, and I appreciate that. We're also pleased to welcome the Committee, and we look forward to working with you on this and other crucial issues. My colleague, Jean Ryan, mentioned our disappointment that this hearing wasn't scheduled. I had asked a CID staffer who uses a wheelchair to testify here today as our representative. She couldn't come because she is unable to leave her apartment yet. And you had a cute Instagram video that perfectly illustrated the barriers that still remain around City Hall and around the city, and that's one of the reasons that the hearing should have been rescheduled. I know that might not have been your decision, but I hope you convey to your Colleagues, including the speaker, that this was not

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a great start for the Council, though this has been a valuable hearing.

We met last week with Deputy Mayor Kirsten's (phonetic) staff and made several recommendations, including getting the word out about the responsibility of the public and property owners and business owners. And they did, as we heard, do a much, much better job in getting that out, and we appreciated that from the City. I think there's a lot of work to do. I made four recommendations. I wrote three, but whatever. First, that the Department should review and change its own snow clearing practices. They often plow snow right into crosswalks, and we're talking about the part that is their responsibility to clear. It's the business owner or the property owner's responsibility to clear to the crosswalk, but not the street. They've got to change that. It must coordinate its response much

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better, creating a clearinghouse for snow clearing. It's got to do a better job of monitoring, not have it be complaint-driven, which it seems the Department said that's how they handle things. And it really has to get the word out much earlier to property owners. And we propose that there be a network, text and otherwise, that connects property owners, supers, and real (TIMER CHIME) estate agencies, so that they know when snow is going to be cleared and also when garbage is going to be picked up. There's plenty of recycling still on my block. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

ROBERT ACEVEDO: My name is Robert Acevedo. As a wheelchair user and member of Disabled in Action, first of all, there's only two people in wheelchairs at this meeting. Very sad, very sad. Again, as a wheelchair user and member of Disabled in Action Metropolitan New York, I am appalled with the

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decision to defer this meeting, as was said before. This meeting has to do with policy that affects a part of New York City that our Mayor maintains is a part of our great city. There are many of us from the other boroughs that cannot attend this meeting, either in person, some of us work, or virtually, some of us are not tech savvy or have smartphones. I am representing those who are prevented from attending in person. I'm going to get to my experiences. During the immediate aftermath of the first storm, I remember calling 3-1-1 in order to complain of the deplorable condition of the bus stop on 27th Street and 6th Avenue. Incidentally, in the early days of the first storm, I remember needing to wait on the street in front of the bus. I also remember being told by the bus driver that all the bus stops on his route on 6th Avenue were covered with snow and that I would be let off on the street. Remember that this is

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my experience in Manhattan. I think in the other boroughs, it's even worse. The current second storm brought more snow. This past Monday, I remember the path to the pavement on the northwest corner of 27th Street and 6th Avenue was too narrow for my chair. I needed to cancel my Tuesday Amtrak early morning trip because I could not get to Penn Station. Again, this was Manhattan. So, just ending by saying something about us without us. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you all.

And again, I'm very sorry that the circumstances didn't allow us to postpone this hearing once again. I take that feedback very seriously. I feel very strongly about that criticism and I want to make sure that moving forward, while we'll still have changes that we might not accept or like, I will try our best to mitigate as will the rest of my Colleagues in the Committee. Thank you.

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Do you guys have questions?

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: I just want to echo the Chairwoman's response in terms of understanding how difficult it was to get to the hearing today and understanding all the challenges you face with accessory ride, with mobility in general and making sure that I echo my Colleague's sentiments that we will continue to make sure that we try and do better and continue the work that we need to help move all New Yorkers forward.

ROBERT ACEVEDO: I just wanted to mention something. It was mentioned over here that many of the bus stops are cleared, that space. How can a person using a wheelchair get in that space? Doesn't make sense? During these storms or, yeah, like a few days afterwards, and the bus should go to the crosswalk in the corner for that, but they never do. They just go toward that clearing, that space, which

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we can't even get through. I have to go back on the street again.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you for specifying that.

I'd like to recognize Council Member Dinowitz on Zoom and calling the next panel. Layla Passman, Jessica Scholes, Alex Coregor, and Jackson Chabot.

LAYLA PASSMAN: Hi. I'm Layla Passman from the Atlantic Avenue Business Improvement District. The Atlantic Avenue BID provides beautification, sanitation, and marketing to our 380 businesses on Atlantic Avenue from the BQE to Fourth Avenue in Brooklyn. In 2025, our supplemental sanitation team cleaned up 671,895 pounds of trash, which is over about like 50,000 pounds per month. During Winter Storm Fern, our clean team preemptively removed the snow from corners and in the aftermath, shoveled snow

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and broke through ice at corner crosswalks to attempt to facilitate safe pedestrian circulation on Atlantic Avenue. Despite the efforts of our clean team and the labor of DSNY, intersections along Atlantic Avenue remained impassable for pedestrians due to the accumulation and persistence of snow, as well as deep slush puddles at corners. These conditions resulted in pedestrians stepping into the roadway in close proximity to moving traffic and strollers walking into the roadway against traffic to avoid intraversable puddles. Atlantic Avenue has been a DOT Vision Zero priority corridor since 2014 due to several pedestrian deaths, vehicular crashes, and bodily injuries. Thus, it is not a street where people should be forced to step into the roadway for any reason. While the conditions just described along with buried fire hydrants characterize most of the city, we specifically want to bring attention to the

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non-existent efforts to clean our mid-block crosswalks. These crosswalks were in essence erased and the resulting vehicular behavior became dangerous. As the crosswalks were impassable and remained so due to the low temperatures in the ensuing days and weeks, drivers consciously chose to glide through red lights and idle in the crosswalks, totally ignoring them. Further, the impeded access to mid-block crossings changed the circulation patterns of pedestrians, exacerbating the use of the corners and compounding these problems. In short, it was only safe to cross the street during these storm conditions if you were inside a vehicle. If you were on foot, in a wheelchair, or pushing a stroller, the conditions were untenable at best and perilous to life at worst. Going forward, we need a proactive approach to salt and clean corners and crosswalks prior to freezing conditions. The pedestrian movement

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of humans in New York City should be as much of a priority as the flow of vehicles. Thank you for listening.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

JESSICA SCHOLES: Good afternoon. My name's Jessica Scholes. I am a Staff Attorney with Disability Rights New York. Disability Rights New York is a non-profit organization in the Designated Protection and Advocacy System for New York State. We provide representation and legal services to people with disabilities, and we assist thousands of New Yorkers each year on a wide range of disability-related issues. We've emphasized the accessibility of pedestrian pathways in New York State for many years, and as we've heard today, snow and ice on pedestrian pathways create the same insurmountable barriers for people with disabilities as an intersection without a curb cut at all or a car

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parked blocking a sidewalk. Since we've heard a lot of testimony already about people's lived experiences, I'm going to focus on the legal side of things today. Both federal and local civil rights laws require New York City to remove snow and ice in a manner that allows people with disabilities accessible pedestrian pathways around the city. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA, which applies to public entities such as New York City, provides that no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the public entity or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity. And the Department of Justice, which creates regulations interpreting the Americans with Disabilities Act, has explained that the Americans with Disabilities Act includes the maintenance of

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pedestrian pathways. So, New York City must make sure that the pedestrian pathways comply with the accessibility requirements of the ADA. And similarly, the New York City Human Rights Law also requires that New York City maintain accessible pedestrian pathways. New York City has the ultimate legal responsibility under the ADA and the New York City Human Rights Law to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, which includes the removal of snow and ice from sidewalks and curb cuts. And that is even where New York City delegates the certain snow removal responsibilities, such as to property owners or business owners, the City maintains the ultimate legal obligation to make sure that pathways are fully accessible to people with disabilities. New York City must enforce its snow and ice removal requirements equally across the five boroughs. And if property owners fail to meet their obligations, New York City

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must ultimately remove the snow to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. Accessibility needs to be citywide and leadership must hold the City ultimately accountable. The January and February 2026 storms demonstrated the real consequences that snow and ice create for people with disabilities. New York City must prioritize accessibility for all in its snow removal response. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

ALEX GREGOR: Good afternoon. My name is Alex Gregor. I'm a Brooklyn Court Street resident. I'm a former highway superintendent from South Hampton, recently retired safety instructor for Cornell Local Roads. The City continues to hide behind Administrative Code 16-123 to shift the responsibility to clear sidewalks to the homeowner. Under the federal ADA Title II, the maintenance of

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sidewalk system is a non-negligible municipal duty. The U.S. Department of Justice affirms this, that sidewalks are a government service. I am resubmitting my September 2023 testimony as Exhibit B. The City has held actual notice for over two years that its reliance on private citizens is a failure. Whether it's a new road diet or a traditional setting, the City is failing its standard of care. The road designs really dictate how the roads get cleared, and some of the new designs are more complicated. I'm a cyclist in Brooklyn as well, but the protected bike lanes add another spectrum of difficulty for cleaning the snow off the roads. The sidewalk plow or the bike lane plow does not go as much as the traditional truck plows go. As it goes by the curb, it throws a snow moat, it throws a snow wall on the left side against the curb, and in my instance on Court Street, it throws a snow wall against the floating parking.

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How are people supposed to cross that? We talked a little bit, or you all talked a little bit about the crosswalks. Remember that we only cleared to the road edge, but what about these pedestrian refuges? A lot of people are walking during the snowstorm. I don't see many cyclists, and I'm not one of them cycling, during or immediately after the snowstorm, because even after the plow goes through, there's a film and a slush. Why can't that same plow push back some of the pedestrian crossings? I have included photos in here from the various storms with the dates and times, and it shows you people walking in the roadway. That's dangerous. When you have a 30-inch snow wall... I had to clear my fire hydrant from the roadside. I couldn't get to it from the sidewalk side. The bus stop unsheltered across from my, you'll see a picture, it was 31 inches deep. You had to go from the roadside. Where do you put the snow?

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Tradition, when you get past six to eight inches of snow, you have to shift more into digging out and getting rid of it, trucking out that snow. Just don't keep throwing (TIMER CHIME) up that 36-inch snow wall. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

JACKSON CHABOT: Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Jackson Chabot. I'm the Director of Advocacy and Organizing at Open Plans. Our core priority is streets and sidewalks that are clean, safe, and accessible for all New Yorkers, and certainly the recent snowstorms exposed persistent gaps in our snow removal system, particularly the imbalance between roadway clearing and pedestrian or sidewalk access. Most critically, our approach prioritizes clearing streets for vehicles while relying heavily on individual property owners, as

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we've heard today, to clear sidewalks and the city from a complaint-based perspective. In a dense transit-reliant city such as New York, as well as one that relies heavily on sidewalks for mobility purposes, this limits mobility, as we've heard time and time again today. So, I'd like to focus on what worked and a vision for the future that relies on one where we can take care of public space as a municipal service. The most recent storm, the City expanded the use of temporary workers in a coordinated municipal sidewalk approach for clearance, albeit with many gaps in there, and we saw a real difference between the first storm and the second storm from our point of view. Clearer pedestrian paths, more consistent conditions, and certainly not perfect, but it gets us towards what could be a holistic and systemic approach. The points of progress are an important lesson when snow removal is treated as a shared

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municipal responsibility rather than one left primarily to individual property owners. The outcomes are more consistent, equitable, and more accessible. While we recognize and appreciate the approaches for the first storm and the second storm and the improvements there, it demonstrates that a more centralized, City-led sidewalk snow clearance model is not only possible, it is effective. Building on that progress would strengthen the safety and mobility of all New Yorkers. And so, looking forward, this lesson should extend beyond winter operations. Just as snow clearance is more equitable and reliable when the City takes a coordinated lead, the same is true for year-round public space management. This is true in warmer months where sidewalks, bus stops, plazas, bike lanes, amongst other things that the City is adding to its ecosystem depends on a patchwork of adjacent property owners for clearing

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and cleaning and upkeep for the resulting and often inconsistent and equitable outcomes and conditions across different neighborhoods. Public space is essential civic infrastructure and it should be stewarded accordingly. A stronger municipal role in cleaning, maintenance, and oversight would ensure accessibility, safety, and dignity not contingent upon individual capacity or resources, both for snow removal as well as for other pieces. This could be a jobs program, similar to how many of you and your Colleagues fund the ACE program in your Districts to clean up. Also, something that I've seen based on the Twitter and BlueSky feedback, New Yorkers would celebrate this. Many folks were saying, yes, it is a great investment in our city to hire folks for 30 dollars an hour and this is something that went bonkers across social media in the past couple of days. Therefore, we should take a much more nimble

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approach to both snow removal as well as public space management going forward, one (TIMER CHIME) that all New Yorkers can benefit from. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

Do any of my colleagues have any questions?

I might have one question.

ALEX GREGOR: Thank you for your time.

CO-CHAIRPERSON JUSTIN SANCHEZ: Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We will now go to the remote panel. Please wait for your name to be called to testify and select unmute when prompted. Elizabeth Denys, Kathleen Collins, Matthew Torres, Paul Schreiber, Christopher Leon Johnson. Elizabeth Denys.

ELIZABETH DENYS: Hello. My name is Elizabeth Denys. I'm a relatively able-bodied person who is currently recovering from surgery. I've fallen

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too many times in this past month, twice in just this past week, on uncleared and uneven snow sidewalk stretches in the city. I'm lucky those falls have only caused significant pain and embarrassment, and I am here today in solidarity with those whose mobility is more limited during and after snowstorms. New York City is egregiously inaccessible during snowstorms and, as we've all seen this past month, can remain egregiously inaccessible for weeks. This current system depends on the threats of fines to encourage private property owners to clear snow on sidewalks, but fines and reporting aren't the same as sufficient timely clearing. My household knows from personal experience that it's often impossible to hire a service or a person who can clear our sidewalks. Luckily, my husband has been able to take care of this for us, but this is still a group project that fails if anyone fails to do their part and without

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reliable and timely clearing, disabled people pay particularly unfair prices when it snows. Some have to opt for pricey cabs to get to work or medical appointments, but for many, no amount of money can make it so that they can get over the sidewalk into a cab through the mound of snow. When a friend of mine was recovering from surgery and has since had limited mobility with walking, she has struggled to get out of her house on these days and had to take vacation days whenever it snowed because she couldn't get to work safely due to the inadequate snow removal. And she felt lucky because not everyone has paid time off for these situations. This is on top of all of the existing and significant inequities in pay and economic security that exists between abled and disabled people, and it doesn't begin to cover the stress, uncertainty, and isolation these policies create. This problem extends beyond negligent private

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property owners. Many City-managed sidewalks have been inaccessible for weeks due to inadequate snow removal. Sidewalks around NYC parks have been particularly bad, many not being cleared for over a week after the first snowstorm, and lots of medians seem to have no one responsible for clearing them. As this is a Committee on Disability hearing, the primary concern here needs to be about ensuring access. The current system does not ensure access. Year after year after year, it has failed to provide reliable access for all. We need a system where the City manages clearing sidewalks, bus stops, and pedestrian crossings at intersections, and actually has the capacity to make sure that this happens as soon as possible whenever it snows. Having the City own all of the snow clearing would allow for coordination between the roads and sidewalks so that mounds don't block crosswalks and bus stops. Yes,

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sidewalks need to be widened in neighborhoods where they're too narrow to enable small plows to clear, a benefit that would help year-round. And we'd also benefit greatly for implementing universal daylighting and removing some parking near bus stops so that the plow can get closer at these locations, so instead of piling the snow into the places people need to be to get into pedestrian crossings at intersections and allow buses to reliably reach the curb. These past few weeks have really illuminated how New York is not built for everyone, but it should be. I'm asking Council to please create a much more equitable system to proactively ensure sidewalks, bus stops, and (TIMER CHIME) crosswalks are actually cleared so that everyone has full access to our city at the same time. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

Kathleen Collins.

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KATHLEEN COLLINS: Sorry to keep you waiting. My name is Kathleen Collins. I am a congenital quadruple amputee. I use a wheelchair and sometimes prosthetic arms. I grew up in Queens, New York in a private home and have been living in Manhattan for more than 20 years, first in a rented apartment and then in a cooperative apartment that I own. Snow and ice have consistently made my travels difficult. Further, the need to shovel snow and remove ice in the sidewalk made me opt for an apartment over owning a private home because I knew I could not independently remove snow and ice. I would strongly urge the City Council to consider the following recommendations. One, designate a single person to be responsible to oversee all the other departments and agencies with respect to snow and ice removal throughout New York City. I know we have like a rat tsar. Why not have a snow tsar, snow and ice

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tsar? Because as we all know, too many crooks spoil the broth. If everybody's responsible, nobody's responsible. Second, create an accessible website, telephone and text number where you can make an appointment with a properly trained person to have your sidewalk, pedestrian ramps, and crosswalks cleaned for a reasonable fee within a reasonable time after snowfall or just have the City do it and bill the property owners a reasonable fee. Third, establish improved communications among your agencies and departments with respect to snow and ice removal. Four, create a simple accessible complaint system where the complaints go directly to the new Commissioner of Winter Events and their staff for direct follow-up and resolution of complaints. I have proof of this not happening right now. Five, create an accessible ad campaign to truly get across to the public their civic responsibilities to clean the

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sidewalks, pedestrian ramps, and cross streets adjacent to the property if we continue to want to go down this road. Though I think we should change the road and make it the City's responsibility since it is a civil right that you're violating. Six, establish better training for departments and agency staff regarding snow and ice removal. And seven, improve the enforcement of the laws regarding snow and ice removal.

Finally, I'd like to address what everybody else has addressed here of the disability community and that is that there are many in our community that cannot navigate technology or do not have access to computers to appear at this hearing online and they are being denied their civil right to be heard today. I know you said that it was impossible to change this but I don't see what the problem is, I really don't, and I just don't

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understand how you start... you kick off the Disability new Committee with inaccess and it's nonsensitivity. I hope that the Council will be more cognizant of the needs of others in the future.

And just one last thing, this problem is a systemic issue that's been ongoing for over 40, 50 years since I've been, well actually 69 years, I'm going to be 69 this year. And all my life, this has been a problem so (TIMER CHIME) we really need to change this now because it is a civil right to be able to travel. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

Paul Schreiber.

PAUL SCHREIBER: Good afternoon. My name is Paul Schreiber. I live in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. I'm going to talk about four things today. I'll talk about my experience of the storm in downtown Brooklyn and Boerum Hill, problems with bike lanes and

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sidewalks, a summary of what I learned from researching 3-1-1 service forecast data and what we can learn from other cities.

So, as I walked through the city, I noticed almost every intersection was blocked with big piles of snow. As we've heard much testimony of how inaccessible it was, here you can see many pictures of this, and this was all within a half mile area so citywide is a huge problem. I filed several service requests with 3-1-1 reporting snow and ice on the sidewalk. On average, it took nine days for them to respond. And in every single case, they claimed to have found no violation at this location. I found this curious and it turned out that starting on January 27th, there were 19,349 complaints filed for snow and ice and on sidewalk. Of those, 12,000 are closed, which means a third remain open. Of the 12,000 that were closed, 82.6 percent of the time

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Sanitation claimed they found no condition at the location. That meant in only 10 percent of the time did they issue any sort of violation. And in 81.4 percent of the time that Sanitation failed to meet its 24-hour service level agreement, which is the amount of time they claim they were responding to this type of report. We can see through the disposition that again, the overwhelming majority of the time they found nothing. And there are very small numbers of times where they attempt to remove or remediate the condition. Bike lanes continue to be a huge problem. This is supposed to be a two-way protected bike lane on Schermerhorn Street and 3rd Avenue in Brooklyn. This was after it was supposedly cleaned and only part of it had any snow removed. And this was not just at this one intersection, but it was all along Schermerhorn from 3rd Avenue westbound to Boerum Place.

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The other problem we have is that snow, when it melts, makes very large puddles, and those also make the streets difficult to cross. Here at Atlantic Avenue and 3rd Avenue from a week ago, we see this huge problem. This is a problem with the Department of Transportation. They have pitched the roads incorrectly. The crosswalk should be the high point and water should drain off of the crosswalk into a storm drain. Instead, water drains into the crosswalk, making this difficult for people to pass.

We do not have to invent a new magic system. We can look at what other cities that get more snow and how they handle this properly. And in Montreal, the City is responsible for both the roads and the sidewalks, and they manage (TIMER CHIME) to do so successfully. There is a video here, which I will submit to you...

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Paul.

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PAUL SCHREIBER: In my written testimony,
and an in-depth article covering what they do.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

We'll now go to Christopher Leon Johnson.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah. Hello. My
name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I want to be on the
clear that the City Council need to disclose to the
people that one of the previous speakers, Liz Denys,
is a lobbyist for Transportation Alternatives. She's
an organizer for Transportation Alternatives, so
there's a big time conflict of interest when it comes
to her pushing things under her personal capacity,
but it's really a Transportation Alternatives lobby
push. Liz Denys, just keep that clear.

I want to keep it clear that I support
that Lyft start and all these companies start paying
dues, like paying fines if people start blocking the,

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like they don't clear up the airwaves, but Transportation Alternatives that get money from Lyft, they're going to be the biggest adversaries when it comes to this type of idea by Shaun Abreu. I support Shaun Abreu, what he said. That would be a big time adversary in that idea, Mr. Abreu, just to keep that 100 percent here. I want to say this right now that the deliveristas need to be counted as essential workers, and that the deliveristas needs to be getting hazard pay when it comes to doing this type of work. I believe that there should be a law where anytime there's snow, deliveristas should start getting a little, get a hazard pay, like how a cop would get paid or a construction worker would get paid in the city, like a fairly wage pay, when it comes to hazard pay. These guys and gals put their bodies on the line for us because a lot of us are lazy, and we don't want to get our food at the store

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so that they get our food for us. They should be treated with the same respect as the cops, the firefighters, and the members of DOT, and the people, all these, including Emergency Management and the Sanitation Department. I believe in that, but I want to keep it, I want to say this right now that, like I said, I know Crystal (INAUDIBLE) the last time, I'll keep this clear, that the way that Transportation Alternatives, Ben Furnas and Mrs. Elizabeth Adams, made it to where that, a Citi Bike racks are more obligated and more viable than the 20 lives that was lost in the snow, was really disgusting. And I think that the Chairs of both the Disability Committee, Mrs. Shahana Hanif and Mr. Shaun Abreu, should be on the record in condemning Ben Furnas and Elizabeth Adams for making that obligation, like a Citi Bike rack is more viable than the 20 lives that got lost in the snow. It's just disgusting. But I'm just, it's

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like, snow we can't control. You cannot control snow at all. But I'll make this right now, that going forward, the City Council is throwing you, Mr. Shaun Abreu, because I know you work with the deliveristas, or Workers Justice Project, Ligia Gualpa, that the Mayor, Mr. Zohran Mamdani, removes the requirements to start for emergency snow shovels. How many illegal immigrants, how many people that are illegal immigrants that you recently posted on your pages of them clearing snow in your District, wasn't able to work for the City (TIMER CHIME) as a temporary day laborer? I say, Mrs. Shahana Hanif...

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, thank you. We appreciate your testimony.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Okay. 30 more seconds, please.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, I'm going to call out some names for the record who have signed

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up. Eric McClure, Bushra Lacerda, Matthew Torres, Geoffrey Thomas, Evan Yankee, Brian Swift, Jennifer Seda.

Thank you to everyone who has testified. If there's anyone present in the room or on Zoom that hasn't had the opportunity to testify, please raise your hand. Oh, if you're here, then. Did you fill out a witness slip for the Sergeants?

EVAN YANKEY: I didn't. I didn't intend to say anything, but I will say something.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. I think you just need to quickly fill one out before you testify. Thank you.

EVAN YANKEY: Hi. I'm Evan Yankey. I'm Advocacy Director for Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled. My colleague, Joe, spoke earlier. And I just wanted to use a minute of time to respond. There was some discussion of MOPD

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earlier, and we appreciated their testimony. Our position is MOPD should have more resources to coordinate this. There were some questions about what happens when people call MOPD with complaints. And I will say MOPD did reach out to our organization and other independent living centers before the storms, and said please reach out to us if people with disabilities are having issues. So, MOPD does a lot of work trying to interact with other agencies to get things solved. They were not able to get a lot of things solved through 3-1-1. Sometimes when they get complaints, it goes back to us, independent living centers. We don't get paid to help solve things, but we try to help solve things for people with disabilities. In fact, during the testimony, I got a request from MOPD to help with someone who is having a housing issue. But it is our organization's position that MOPD can do a lot more here if they had

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more staff, if they had more money, and if they had more ability to interact with all the different agencies. We've talked a lot about jurisdictions today, and there's a lot that can be done across many different agencies. But MOPD has had more of a budget and more staff in the past, and we think that should be true again. That's it. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Thank you for that.

Seeing no one else, I would like to note that written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by Committee Staff, may be submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

And I'd like to remind everyone that the Disabilities Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing is on March 19th at 9:30 a.m. right here in the Chambers. Thank you. [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, 2026