

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 1

2 CITY COUNCIL
3 CITY OF NEW YORK

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5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

6 Of the

7 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
8 INFRASTRUCTURE

9 ----- X

10 June 28, 2022
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13 HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
14 - CITY HALL

15 B E F O R E: Selvena N. Brooks-Powers,
16 Chairperson

17 COUNCIL MEMBERS:
18 Joann Ariola
19 David M. Carr
20 Amanda Farias
21 Ari Kagan
22 Linda Lee
23 Mercedes Narcisse
24 Carlina Rivera
25 Althea V. Stevens
Nantasha Williams
Kalman Yeger

2 A P P E A R A N C E S

3 Ydanis Rodriguez, Commissioner, Department of
4 Transportation
5 Sean Quinn, Assistant Commissioner for Street
6 Improvement, Department of Transportation
7 Yogesh Sanghvi, Assistant Commissioner for Grants
8 and Fiscal Management
9 Ben Smith, Director of Legislative Affairs,
10 Department of Transportation
11 Sarah Neilson, Chief of Policy and Long-Range
12 Planning, Department of Parks and Recreation
13 Adam Meagher, Senior Vice President of
14 Neighborhood Strategies, New York City Economic
15 Development Corporation
16 Mark Levine
17 Jackson Chabot
18 John Orcutt
19 Carlos Castell Croke
20 Laura Shepard
21 Theodore Segal
22 Joby Jacob
23 Michael Cass
24 Chauncy Young
25 Chris Sanders
Robert Fanuzzi
Kevin Jones
Glen Bolofsky
Eric McClure
Thomas Mituzas
Nabil Khatri
Osendy Garcia
Tyler Taba
Julie Chou
Roy Smith
Matthew Clarke
Remy Schwartz

2 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: This is a mic check
3 for the Committee on Transportation and
4 Infrastructure. It is June 28, 2022. We are in the
5 City Council Chambers. It's Owen Kotowski.

6 Good morning, and welcome to the hybrid
7 hearing on Transportation. Will Council Members and
8 staff please place electronic devices on vibrate or
9 silent?

10 Testimony can be submitted to
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that's
12 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

13 Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [GAVEL] Hello,
15 and welcome to this hearing on the Committee on
16 Transportation and Infrastructure. My name is Selvena
17 Brooks-Powers, and I am the Chair of this Committee.

18 During today's hearing, we will conduct
19 oversight on the administration's plans for managing
20 the city's public space. We will also be hearing 3
21 important pieces of legislation, Intro 258 sponsored
22 by Council Member Rita Joseph, Intro 291 sponsored by
23 Council Member Carlina Rivera and myself, and Intro
24 293 sponsored by Council Member Althea Stevens.

2 Thriving public spaces are critical to
3 the future of our city. New Yorkers have always
4 valued the vibrancy of our streetscapes and parks,
5 but the COVID-19 pandemic in particular has prompted
6 us to rethink how we use these open spaces. In many
7 areas of the city, what were once spaces reserved
8 only for traffic became vibrant places that gave
9 communities safe ground to eat, exercise, and
10 interact with their neighbors. As we've emerged from
11 the worst days of COVID-19, we've now seen the
12 importance of not just creating places for people but
13 also maintaining them. Resilient public spaces are
14 key to building safe and healthy communities,
15 providing opportunities for art and culture, and
16 supporting the growth of our local businesses. In my
17 short time as Committee Chair thus far, I've sought
18 to make equity central to all of our Transportation
19 and Infrastructure discussions. Today will be no
20 different. We can't help but notice that some
21 neighborhoods seem filled with public space
22 amenities, things like landscaping, seating, bike
23 racks, and plazas to name a few, and other
24 neighborhoods these most basic facilities are
25 missing, and where these core public resources do

2 exist, they are often plagued by poor maintenance and
3 other quality-of-life issues. One reason advocates
4 argue this may be the case is that over the last few
5 decades our city has increasingly relied on private
6 organizations like Building Improvement Districts to
7 deliver and maintain these decidedly public
8 resources. Of course, community organizations can
9 provide wonderful public services that are responsive
10 to the specific needs of their neighborhoods, but the
11 implications of this system are obvious when only 2
12 percent of the city is covered by a BID, and, when we
13 think about the vast disparity in resources among
14 community organizations across the city, while city
15 agencies have sometimes argued that this arrangement
16 does not impact the delivery of or the distribution
17 of infrastructure resources, it's clear that this
18 situation has benefited some communities more than
19 others. The Council has recently sought to address
20 this issue including through requirements that the
21 city provide resources more equitably to operate Open
22 Streets in underserved areas, but it's up to this
23 Committee to ensure that efforts like this are
24 undertaken and to push the administration to continue
25 building systems that prioritize equity,

2 accessibility, and inclusion. Managing public space
3 is one of the core functions of a city, and it's time
4 that we think holistically how our many city agencies
5 are coordinating responsibilities for the significant
6 task. New Yorkers deserve to know which agencies and
7 institutions are responsible for delivering and
8 maintaining public amenities so that they can hold us
9 public servants accountable.

10 Today's hearing is about the task of
11 holding our city agencies accountable for planning
12 and maintaining our streets, sidewalks, plaza, and
13 parks. I hope to hear from the administration
14 regarding their plans for programs like Open Streets
15 and about the lessons they've learned from the
16 dramatic expansion of public space uses and programs
17 over the last 2 years. I'm extremely proud of the
18 work that our agencies have done to deliver these
19 innovative responses to the pandemic, and I want to
20 make sure that we build on these successes and learn
21 from any failures. Perhaps more importantly, I want
22 to use this opportunity to ensure that equity is
23 central to the way we think about the public realm
24 moving forward.

2 Finally, I'm excited to hear from
3 advocates who have tirelessly worked to improve our
4 public space policy and to hear from my Colleagues
5 about the 3 pieces of legislation on the docket today
6 related to the use of public space by community
7 organizations, the installation of public bathrooms,
8 and creating a comprehensive greenway network to
9 connect our communities.

10 Before we move on to the administration
11 and the public, I will now give the bills' sponsors
12 an opportunity to give a brief statement on their
13 bills. First up we will hear from Council Member
14 Althea Stevens.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon.
16 Local Law 293 to amend the Administrative Code of New
17 York City in regulations requiring the Department of
18 Transportation to establish a program to allow
19 community centers, schools, and art and cultural
20 institutions and religious institutions to use
21 adjacent outdoor space. As you know, the Bronx has
22 not benefitted as much as other boroughs in terms of
23 greenways, bikes, parks, and outdoor space. It is
24 vital for the Bronx that there is equitable access to
25 outdoor space. Being able to utilize community space

2 will work to strengthen the relationship of our
3 communities by allowing the opportunity for
4 individuals to experience each other's culture. The
5 first step to creating a strong community is
6 understanding and properly educating each other of
7 where we come from, what kinds of traditions we
8 practice, and, most importantly, we are passionate
9 about. This legislation will ensure that young people
10 across the city have access to space to play, learn,
11 grown, and community institutions will be able to
12 step outside to connect with the community and take
13 advantage of the underutilized space. I often say
14 that our strength is our unity, and utilizing all
15 space in our neighborhoods to build community is key
16 and vital to the success of building unity. Thank
17 you, and I'm very excited that my bill is being heard
18 today.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
20 those remarks. Next, we will hear from Manhattan
21 Borough President Mark Levine.

22 MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT LEVINE: It is
23 good to be back. Thank you so much, Chair Brooks-
24 Powers, for the opportunity to testify. Thank you for
25 holding this hearing on the important topic of public

2 space. I'm here to speak in support of Intro 258. The
3 lead sponsor is Council Member Rita Joseph. This is a
4 bill which addresses a persistent public policy
5 failure in New York City, our failure to provide an
6 adequate number of public bathrooms for the people of
7 this city. If you are a New Yorker, you have
8 experienced this. Being out and about on the street,
9 needing to go, and being unable to find a functioning
10 and open public bathroom. It's happened to all of us.
11 This is a matter of public health. It's a matter of
12 equity. It's a matter of dignity. It impacts
13 everybody, whether you are a parent with young
14 children, whether you are pregnant or menstruating,
15 whether you are an older New Yorker or someone with a
16 unique medical condition that impacts this, whether
17 you are a street vendor or a delivery worker or a
18 tourist. It impacts all of us, and there's no greater
19 symbol of the failure of the city to address this
20 crisis than the fact that there are currently 15
21 fully functional, ready to install, automated
22 bathrooms sitting in a warehouse for Queens where
23 they have languished for years. This bill seeks to
24 fix this problem. This is a bill, Intro 258, that
25 will require the Department of Transportation

2 together with the Parks Department to give us a plan
3 for installation of at least 1 publicly accessible
4 bathroom in every ZIP code in this city. The plan
5 names Community Boards as partners in this effort
6 because we understand that every community needs a
7 different solution. There are some Boards that might
8 prefer to have units on the roadway or on the
9 sidewalk, some who might want to focus on a new
10 comfort station in a park. We can look at publicly
11 owned private spaces as well as another venue for
12 adding these facilities. There are many ways to do
13 this, but it must be done. That's why a very broad
14 coalition has come together, to once and for all
15 change the narrative on access to public bathrooms in
16 New York City.

17 Finally, I just want to push back on one
18 common criticism of this policy, which is that it
19 "facilitates homeless people." I want to strongly and
20 strenuously disagree. I believe that this is a basic
21 amenity that all of us need including New Yorkers who
22 are experiencing homelessness, that this is better
23 for the individuals who, themselves, are experiencing
24 homelessness and better for communities. This really
25 should be universally embraced, and it's why I'm

2 thrilled you've brought it to a hearing today, Madam
3 Chair. I appreciate this opportunity to testify on
4 behalf of Intro 258.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thanks so
6 much. I get to have remarks from you and my other
7 former colleagues shortly, the Commissioner of DOT,
8 which is great so thank you so much for that.

9 Next, we will hear from Council Member
10 Rita Joseph.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Hi. Thank you so
12 much, Chair. This bill is very important to us. As we
13 mentioned so many times, we rank 93 out of 100 places
14 around the country that have access to public
15 bathrooms so this bill is important. We ask that you
16 pass this bill for us to get us to the first step to
17 just examine where and feasible that this report that
18 we can build accessible bathrooms in all 5 boroughs.
19 Thank you so much for listening to this bill here.
20 Thank you, Mark, for being a champion of this and
21 thank you for being a great partner, and I look
22 forward to voting yes on this bill.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
24 much, Council Member. Next, we will hear from Council
25 Member Carlina Rivera.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so much.
3 Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to speak on my
4 bill very briefly. New York's first greenway was
5 created over 100 years ago, and the city last issued
6 a greenway plan in 1993. Thirty years later, the
7 majority of New York's 100 miles of greenways only
8 exist on paper. The Greenway Master Plan Bill, Intro
9 291, is primarily focused on a comprehensive master
10 plan, a vision for the future of greenways in all 5
11 boroughs. For far too long, investment in green
12 infrastructure has been reserved for only the
13 wealthiest neighborhoods. Historically, low-income
14 communities of color have seen the least investment
15 in greenway infrastructure. This bill seeks to
16 disrupt that pattern and ensure that every
17 neighborhood is involved in the development of a
18 master plan. The most critical part of this
19 legislation is the requirement that we build a
20 citywide greenway plan from the ground up with robust
21 community engagement. The bill also requires
22 communication and planning among city, state, and
23 federal agencies that have overlapping areas of
24 jurisdiction on greenways. Along with Council Member
25 Brooks-Powers, I look forward to working closely with

2 the Mayor and all involved city agencies and, of
3 course, the advocates on their feedback on Intro 291
4 so that together, along with this goal of more
5 equitable public space that's accessible to all is so
6 important so that we can deliver New Yorkers a
7 Greenway Master Plan and a city for future
8 generations that leaves no neighborhood behind. Thank
9 you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
11 much for that, Council Member. Next, we are going to
12 do things a little bit differently in this hearing.
13 We are going to take 2 testimonies from the public.

14 First, we will hear from Jackson Chabot
15 with Open Plans. I'll just call, in the interest of
16 time, John Orcutt from Bike New York also.

17 We just ask that we respect the time
18 because the administration does have a tight window,
19 and we want to make sure we have them here for as
20 long as we can.

21 JACKSON CHABOT: Wonderful. Thank you,
22 Chair, and hello, Council Members. You took the words
23 right out of my mouth, Chair. With that, good
24 afternoon. My name is Jackson Chabot, and I'm the
25 Director of Public Space Advocacy at Open Plans, an

2 over 20-year-old nonprofit dedicated to safe and
3 livable streets. Thank you for this opportunity to
4 speak.

5 First, I would like to voice Open Plans
6 full support for Intro 258, 291, and 293, as well as
7 speak today on managing the city's public space.
8 Streets and sidewalks are much more than places for
9 drivers to park and drive. They are public spaces
10 where life happens, where neighbors meet, children
11 play, commerce occurs, and people pass the time. By
12 creating an Office of Public Space Management, the
13 city can oversee the equitable day-to-day operations
14 of our streets, prioritizing care and activation.
15 However, right now, 27 percent of New York City is
16 streets, and 75 percent of that space is allocated
17 toward the movement and storage of vehicles when most
18 New Yorkers don't own or use a vehicle. This
19 distribution and use of space is not equitable nor
20 proportional. Far too much is asthma-inducing,
21 traffic jammed, and dangerous to walk and bike. Most
22 concerning is our epidemic level rates of traffic
23 violence. People are dying as a consequence of our
24 continued car-dominant culture. We know public space
25 with no vehicles is the safest space in the city. An

2 Office of Public Space Management to manage car-free
3 space would enable the city to scale and create a
4 network of open streets and plazas. In 2020, the city
5 went into lockdown and launched the Open Streets and
6 Open Restaurants programs. Many people suddenly
7 appreciated, some for the first time, the vast
8 potential swaths of public space that is right before
9 our eyes and often right in front of our homes and
10 apartments. In some areas, volunteers created systems
11 to make their Open Streets a colossal success, some
12 with hundreds of volunteers and a robust schedule of
13 community activities, but this model continues to
14 rely on extensive volunteer labor and organizing.
15 Communities are responsible to manage barricades,
16 program activities, develop relationship with
17 businesses, and clean the street. We are encouraged
18 by the Department of Transportation's Public Space
19 Units unwavering commitment to iterating and
20 expanding the program as shown by the collaboration
21 this year with Street Lab, the recently released
22 Public Space Program and Catalogue, and providing
23 funding. Equally, community partners are exhausted,
24 burnt out, and carrying the lion's share of
25 responsibility to plan and execute events, manage

2 open streets and plazas, and keep people safe from
3 traffic violence while doing so. We need a framework
4 that supports and empowers volunteers while
5 fundamentally equitably providing the care,
6 maintenance, and management of our streets and
7 sidewalks. As I wrote in a Gotham Gazette op-ed
8 yesterday, every open street, block party, or
9 neighborhood safety initiative is the product of
10 intense volunteer effort, organization, and
11 coordination. Too often, city agencies and
12 departments are working in isolation instead of
13 focusing on collaborative problem-solving. We need an
14 Office of Public Space Management. Thank you.

15 JOHN ORCUTT: Good afternoon. Thank you,
16 Chair Brooks-Powers, for the opportunity to speak
17 this afternoon. I'm going to address primarily Intro
18 291, the Greenway Master Plan bill, which Bike New
19 York, my organization, wholeheartedly supports, and
20 I'm joined later today by many, many members of the
21 New York City Greenway Coalition who are equally
22 behind the legislation.

23 We've had a greenway plan, as Council
24 Member Rivera mentioned, since 1993. That plan was
25 created by the City Planning Department during the

2 last year of the Dinkins' administration. City
3 Planning doesn't build or maintain things, and I
4 think having that plan there was kind of a misplaced
5 effort. The Greenway Master Plan Bill before you
6 would move responsibility for the citywide plan to
7 the agencies that actually build and maintain the
8 greenways, City DOT, Parks Department, EDC, and
9 perhaps some others. We have other types of rights-
10 of-way in the city. We have the Hudson River Park and
11 the Trust that manages it and other state rights-of-
12 way that may be key to the greenway network
13 ultimately. Greenways are the best use, the most
14 popular of the bikeways and corridor parks in the
15 city. Regional Plan Association recently did a public
16 opinion poll just last month, and they asked New
17 Yorkers what they about a bunch of streetscape
18 changes, and there was a good majority for the kinds
19 of things the city does like bike lanes, busways,
20 etc., but greenways were the most popular, over 80
21 percent of New Yorkers responding thought that fully
22 protected, fully separated bike and pedestrian multi-
23 use paths with green space were the things they like
24 most about re-envisioning and thinking about new
25 forms of streetscape in the urban areas. That

2 notwithstanding, the work to build additional
3 segments and connect them and to keep them in good
4 shape has been really slow and very halting and
5 incredibly uneven across the city. I think it's very
6 true in any complex undertaking that you cannot
7 manage what you don't measure, and, today, we don't
8 measure progress toward a citywide greenway network.
9 Today, we don't measure equity of access to
10 greenspace and waterfronts and a greenway network
11 among our people. I would direct you to some of the
12 work recently done by Trust for Public Land on access
13 to greenspace and measuring some of the key metrics
14 like can you get to a park within 10 minutes from
15 different pieces of the city. They've done some
16 really important work and looked at open streets in
17 that regard. We don't measure what kind of usage
18 we're getting on our greenways. We don't have bike
19 counters on most of them. We don't measure what are
20 the key networks that will allow greatest usage to
21 proceed and prioritize our greenway projects. As I
22 said, progress has been very uneven. Some of it's
23 squeaky wheel. Some places have gotten well-
24 organized, Brooklyn Waterfront, Hunt's Point, Bronx
25 River Corridor, and seen good progress. We had the

2 very slow-motion downsizing of the Westside Highway
3 that resulted ultimately in the Hudson River Park.
4 Those things have all been kind of odd one-offs and
5 we need steady progress and a steady program. A
6 Greenway Master Plan that needs to be regularly
7 updated by the implementing and maintaining agencies
8 will get that done. We think the bill is excellent in
9 its current form. We think there are a few
10 improvements that could be made. One of them is in
11 the definition of greenways, which today in the bill
12 says recreation, many people use these for
13 transportation, and we would also call attention to
14 the inconsistent policies practiced by City DOT and
15 Parks Department regarding electric assist bicycles
16 and possibly in the future other smart electric
17 vehicles. It's not fair to New Yorkers to say you
18 need to understand whose jurisdiction you're under
19 when you pass from Hudson River Park Trust into the
20 Parks Department part of the...

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I hate to cut
22 you off. I'm trying to let you go but...

23 JOHN ORCUTT: That's my last point. We
24 would like you to take a look at the definition of
25

2 greenways in the bill, and we have some other things
3 that we'll submit in testimony. Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
5 much.

6 I'm going to now turn it over to our
7 Committee Counsel, Elliott Lynn.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. We
9 will now turn to testimony from the administration.

10 First, from the Department of Transportation,
11 Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner
12 for Street Improvement Sean Quinn, Assistant
13 Commissioner for Grants and Fiscal Management Yogesh
14 Sanghvi, and Director of Legislative Affairs Ben
15 Smith, from the Department of Parks and Recreation,
16 the Chief of Policy and Long-Range Planning Sarah
17 Neilson, and from the New York City Economic
18 Development Corporation Adam Meagher, Senior Vice
19 President of Neighborhood Strategies.

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

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

2 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. You
4 may begin when ready.

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: It's so great to
6 be here. It's like looking at a Colleague that we
7 served together before, look at the new one,
8 listening to this topic, all bills are a good bill.
9 Things that I've advocated before. This thing that
10 we've been able to do in the last 5 months. I worked
11 with Bike New York and (INAUDIBLE) Bike New York
12 couldn't get additional hour for the bike tour, and,
13 working together, we were able to persuade this
14 administration so I'm all about what Mayor Adams says
15 (INAUDIBLE) Thank you for the great work that now on
16 your responsibility being the leaders in this
17 legislative body that I have the honor to serve for 3
18 years. We are in the same boat. We have to work
19 together. Everything that we do on this cause should
20 be seen from the lens of equity (INAUDIBLE) New York
21 City as a city, the only thing we have to do with the
22 greenway is to bring to the working class community
23 what we have done in the upper class community and in
24 the middle class community. We know how to do it.

2 It's about the goodwill, and this is what this
3 administration is all about.

4 Good afternoon, Chair Brooks-Powers and
5 members of the Committee on Transportation and
6 Infrastructure. I am Ydanis Rodriguez, Commissioner
7 of the New York City Department of Transportation.
8 With me today are Sean Quinn, Assistant Commissioner
9 for Street Improvement Programs, Yogesh Sanghvi,
10 Associate Commissioner for Grants and Fiscal
11 Management, and Ben Smith, Director of Legislative
12 Affairs. In our first in-person hearing, in the room,
13 I have here also all my DOT Borough Commissioners so
14 if any Council Member has any issue beside a question
15 related to those bills, I want to be sure that
16 following the mandate from Mayor Adams, the 51
17 Council Members should know that in each borough,
18 there's a Commissioner that is there to hear from
19 your need, they are here in your room, and they will
20 be sure again that after the hearing is over that you
21 can connect, even though all of you know from Staten
22 Island to Brooklyn to Queens to the Bronx and
23 Manhattan that no agency has better Commissioners. In
24 each borough, we have a DOT, and they have been

2 working 24/7 to be sure that they listen to your
3 needs.

4 We are happy to be here with our partner
5 agencies, the New York City Department of Parks and
6 Recreation and the New York City Economic Development
7 Corporation.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
9 today on behalf of Mayor Eric Adams on managing the
10 city's public space and on Introductions 251, 291,
11 and 293.

12 All New Yorkers, all, must have access to
13 safe, welcoming, and attractive public spaces close
14 to where they live, and every New Yorker must have
15 access to active transportation options, that's a
16 human right. We also need to be sure that all of them
17 are connected to parkland and the city's 520 miles of
18 shoreline.

19 Open, green space should not be a luxury.
20 Being able to walk, jog, or bike to nearby parks and
21 other neighborhoods is a necessity and a public good.
22 In the pandemic, many New Yorkers took up biking for
23 the first time leading to a historic bike boom.
24 COVID-19 also underscored the value of open space,
25 parks, and biking and walking networks as more people

2 looked for opportunities for outdoor recreation and
3 active transportation, but, for too long, some of our
4 communities, particularly the Black, Latino, and
5 Asian and working-class communities in general, have
6 been cut off from green spaces and paths for biking
7 and walking. Under Mayor Eric Adams' leadership, DOT
8 and our sister agencies are committed to creating a
9 greener, more connected, and more livable city for
10 all New Yorkers. I fought for that in my previous 4
11 years as a Council Member, Member of the Committee on
12 Transportation, and (INAUDIBLE) years of those as a
13 Chairman on this Committee and I wouldn't stop
14 advocating for my role that I have now leading the
15 DOT department.

16 On public space, earlier this year, DOT
17 launched the 2022 Open Streets program through which
18 New Yorkers will be able to enjoy more vibrant public
19 space at over 150 locations, 21 new, covering a total
20 of approximately 300 blocks. The program prioritizes
21 equity with a focus on Priority Investment Areas
22 identified in the NYC Streets Plan. We will announce
23 additional locations this summer and encourage
24 Council Members to please connect us with community
25 organizations that are interested in becoming public

2 space partners, including smaller grassroots groups,
3 which may be eligible for financial and operational
4 support. I instructed my team to spend weeks
5 contacting each Council Member's office to be sure
6 that you help us to identify other locations where we
7 can create more Open Streets.

8 The Executive Budget included funds that
9 will allow us to advance permanent redesigns of
10 popular Open Streets, including 88 million dollars to
11 further transform 34th Avenue in Queens.

12 New York City's Open Streets program, the
13 largest in the United States of America, first
14 launched in May 2020 as a way to give New Yorkers
15 space to social distance and safely get outside, and
16 they became a source of inspiration and community, a
17 role model to the whole nation. As we recover and
18 emerge, we are working to build them into sustainable
19 community amenities with city resources and community
20 support.

21 Based on lessons learned over the past 5-
22 plus years of our One New York City Plaza Equity
23 Program and our recent Open Streets collaboration
24 with City Cleanup Corps, we are restructuring our
25 program to be more supportive of a wide variety of

2 public spaces and partners across the city. To
3 support new, vibrant public space in areas that would
4 not have had it otherwise, DOT will receive 5.4
5 million dollars in funding in FY-23 and beyond for a
6 Public Space Equity Program on top of existing
7 baselined Open Streets and Plaza Equity funding,
8 bringing our total annual funding to over 8 million
9 dollars. Thank you, Chair and the Speaker and all
10 Council Members for also working with the
11 administration to add this additional funding. This
12 comprehensive approach to public space support and
13 management includes partner reimbursements and a
14 contract for maintenance, landscaping, and technical
15 assistance for public space partner organizations in
16 greatest need. This will allow us to continue
17 providing direct support to over 20 Open Streets,
18 over 30 plazas, and more in the future.

19 Turning to Intro 293, the Open Spaces
20 bill sponsored by Council Member Stevens. This
21 Administration supports the spirit of this bill and
22 is committed to using new ways to transform streets
23 into vibrant public space. This includes building
24 upon the Open Streets and Open Restaurants programs,
25 while also learning from the Open Culture, Open

2 Storefronts, and Outdoor Learning programs. These
3 programs began in response to the pandemic, and, as
4 we are transitioning to programs that will continue
5 beyond the crisis, we have found that more oversight
6 is necessary to ensure the many demands for street
7 space are balanced. In addition, schools and
8 community-based organizations are able to apply for
9 an Open Street which is either a street with limited
10 local access or a full closure. We don't have the red
11 tape that we had in the past, that there were so many
12 requirements to apply to get a permit when any CBOs
13 or members of the community wanted to close a block.
14 Right now, we want more applications to come to DOT,
15 and we are ready to expedite the process so that we
16 can give back to the community those spaces that are
17 so important for them. Organizations can also apply
18 to the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination
19 and Management's Street Activity Permit Office to use
20 a sidewalk or curb lane. We look forward to
21 discussing with the Council how to continue
22 transforming streets while better understanding how
23 this proposal would relate to our existing suite of
24 public space programs and other street uses.

2 On Intro 258 sponsored by Council Member
3 Joseph, this administration is committed to
4 increasing access to public bathrooms. There are a
5 number of challenges around public bathrooms that we
6 look forward to discussing further with the Council.
7 Under DOT's jurisdiction are the Automatic Public
8 Toilets, or APTs, installed and maintained by
9 JCDecaux pursuant to its citywide coordinated street
10 furniture franchise agreement. I got one of those
11 bathrooms in Plaza de las Americas at 175th between
12 Broadway and Wadsworth, and I know that I had to
13 fight back with some people in the community that
14 didn't want it. I fought it, I got it, and I'm ready
15 to work with you and the rest of the Council to see
16 more public bathrooms in the City of New York,
17 especially in those communities who need it the most.

18 There are a number of challenges to
19 finding locations for those public bathrooms. These
20 include that the bathrooms are large, heavy, and
21 require water and sewer connections. Therefore, they
22 cannot be sited on overpasses, bridges, or any other
23 insecure site. In addition, as a part of the
24 franchise agreement, all locations need to be
25 approved by the Mayor and the Council Speaker, along

2 with consultation with affected local elected
3 officials and community boards, as many neighborhoods
4 do not want them. We are happy to work with the
5 Council on locations where those public bathrooms
6 could be located and look forward to discussing the
7 specifics of this legislation further. Even when I
8 explain those challenges that we have, as you know, I
9 don't end it with a no. We are going to focus on how
10 to get it done.

11 On greenways, turning to greenways and
12 Intro 291 which would require DOT to create a
13 greenway master plan, provide updates on budgets and
14 construction, and engage with communities on such
15 plans. New York City currently has more than 150
16 miles of greenways across the 5 boroughs, and we are
17 working to maintain and grow this system. This
18 administration welcomes this bill, which is in line
19 with both our vision for a greener and more connected
20 city and ongoing efforts to achieve this vision.
21 Historically, the city's greenway network has mainly
22 consisted of pedestrian and cyclist paths in parks.
23 While the Parks Department has continued to expand
24 important corridors in their properties, in recent
25 years DOT has also implemented transformative

2 separated bike and pedestrian paths in our rights-of-
3 way, connecting New Yorkers to their waterfront and
4 green spaces. To give an example, DOT recently
5 completed two segments of the Brooklyn Waterfront
6 Greenway, one in South Williamsburg along Kent Avenue
7 and another in Sunset Park connecting to the Brooklyn
8 Army Terminal and Owl's Head Park. Working closely
9 with our agency partners, we are expanding the vision
10 of what New York City's greenway network can be. A
11 comprehensive citywide greenway network will enhance
12 bike and pedestrian safety, promote affordable and
13 zero-emission mobility options, increase access to
14 open space, enhance public health, and provide access
15 to jobs and essential services. Expanding the
16 greenway network will also provide opportunities to
17 connect both residents and visitors to many rich
18 historical and cultural tourist destinations as well
19 as regional hiking and biking trails. Low- and
20 moderate-income New Yorkers will especially benefit
21 from a more comprehensive greenway network, as non-
22 motorized transportation modes have lower costs to
23 purchase, operate, and maintain. Further, a large
24 body of research shows that cycling is correlated
25 with improved health outcomes, so the expansion of

2 the greenway network will improve health and well-
3 being by encouraging more cycling. As I was riding a
4 bike with the Minister of Transportation (INAUDIBLE),
5 he said if you ride a bike half an hour every day,
6 you will add 6 years to your life. We have to educate
7 ourselves and educate our communities so that they
8 can know about the benefits of cycling and walking.

9 Finally, expansion of the citywide
10 greenway network and its ability to connect people to
11 where they live, work, and play will encourage a
12 shift to non-motorized transportation options,
13 resulting in less driving and reducing air pollution
14 and greenhouse gas emissions.

15 Building out a citywide greenway plan is
16 in keeping with several of the city's guiding
17 strategic documents. In OneNYC's transportation
18 section, New York City pledges to increase
19 connectivity of the bike network through on-street
20 bike lanes and greenway expansion. Roadmap to 80 by
21 50, the city's climate change and emission reduction
22 plan, calls upon NYC DOT to increase the mode share
23 for bicycling to 10 percent of all trips by 2050. And
24 finally, in the cycling portion of the Council-
25 mandated NYC Streets Plan, DOT committed to

2 developing the next generation of greenways that
3 would be the backbone of a high-capacity, separated
4 network for both recreational and commuter trips as a
5 transformative idea.

6 Greenways improve the physical health and
7 mental well-being of every New Yorker. They create
8 new jobs, decrease our dependence on private
9 automobiles, help absorb storm water, increase our
10 tree cover to help reduce heat islands, and create
11 new habitats for wildlife. They are a win for the
12 economy, a win for nature and environmental justice,
13 a win for our physical health and mental well-being,
14 a win for transportation, and a win for every New
15 Yorker, regardless of their social, ethnic, and
16 economic background.

17 Turning to ongoing and future work to
18 build out the greenway network, Deputy Mayor Joshi
19 and I had the privilege to attend the NYC Greenways
20 Summit last month along with Council Member Rivera,
21 Senator Schumer and state-elected greenway champions
22 such as Assembly Member Gallagher and State Senator
23 Gounardes. We congratulate the NYC Greenway Coalition
24 for their advocacy, and they are an important partner
25 in achieving our vision. At the summit, the Adams

2 Administration committed 47.6 million dollars in
3 greenway funding for Parks and DOT to implement
4 projects in Brooklyn and Queens developed through the
5 Destination Greenways community planning process last
6 year.

7 DOT and the Parks Department partnered
8 with community members and stakeholders to determine
9 local needs and the amenities along each route. The
10 funding will go towards a total of 6 projects, led by
11 Parks with on-street work by DOT. In Brooklyn, work
12 will improve access to the waterfront by building new
13 greenway segments in Leif Ericson Park and
14 reconstructing the existing greenway in part of Shore
15 Road Park. In Queens, we will build a new segment in
16 Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Kissena Corridor Park,
17 and Kissena Park, helping to close greenway gaps in
18 neighborhoods that have been historically
19 disconnected. The city is also partnering with
20 residents in other boroughs to make important
21 greenway connections, such as the new greenway
22 connections in the Bronx. For example, as part of
23 daylighting Tibbetts Brook, an exciting environmental
24 restoration project, DEP and the Parks Department
25 will work together to incorporate greenway elements,

2 and work is currently underway with full funding
3 allocated to complete a 32.5-mile greenway loop
4 around Manhattan in conjunction with our partners at
5 EDC, focusing on the UN Esplanade, Harlem River,
6 Inwood, and Esplanade Gardens sections. Parks
7 recently received additional capital funding for
8 safer greenway connections on Randall's Island and
9 upgrades to the Pike and Allen Street bike path and
10 pedestrian malls. In Brooklyn, we recently completed
11 two segments of the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway I
12 mentioned earlier, and work is also underway on one
13 of the most critical segments the Gowanus Connector.
14 Currently planned for completion late next year, this
15 project will create a safer, separated bike path
16 connecting Sunset Park to Red Hook and Gowanus on
17 Hamilton Avenue.

18 Additional pedestrian safety,
19 landscaping, and accessibility enhancements will help
20 realize the vision of a connected waterfront greenway
21 for the borough.

22 DOT is also working to fill on-street
23 greenway gaps through in-house Street Improvement
24 Projects, including at the following locations in
25 2022 and 2023: Emmons Ave, Jamaica Bay Greenway;

2 233rd St, Bronx River Greenway; Cropsey Ave Bridge,
3 Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway in development; Richmond
4 Terrace, North Shore Greenway in Staten Island in
5 development; Lafayette Ave, Bronx Waterfront
6 Greenway; and East 180th Street, Bronx River Greenway
7 in development, and the following additional DOT
8 greenway capital projects were recently funded: 25.2
9 million in the April plan for a new grade separated
10 two-way path along Utopia Parkway from Cryders Lane
11 and Little Bay Park to the Cross Island Parkway and
12 seawall upgrades further north along the Parkway; 16
13 million for a new connection to the Bronx River
14 Greenway at East Tremont, including redesigning and
15 reconstructing a complex intersection to transform it
16 into a major gateway to the Bronx River Greenway,
17 this project is now fully funded at \$33 million; and
18 \$19.8 million in the April and September plans to
19 build out and improve segments of the Jamaica Bay
20 Greenway through Marine Park and down Flatbush Ave
21 towards Floyd Bennett Field.

22 On the RAISE Grant: Filling the Gaps:
23 NYC's Greenway Expansion Plan, in order to further
24 advance our vision for greenways, and in line with
25 the goals of Intro 291, DOT recently requested 7.2

2 million in United States Department of Transportation
3 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with
4 Sustainability and Equity, or RAISE, funding for
5 Filling the Gaps: NYC's Greenway Expansion Plan. This
6 RAISE grant application is part of the city's effort
7 to go after every dollar available from the
8 bipartisan Infrastructure Law to advance projects
9 that will benefit New Yorkers for decades to come.

10 Filling the Gaps will be a collaboration
11 between DOT, Parks, and EDC to increase walking and
12 cycling for commuting, leisure, and exercise by
13 planning for a comprehensive network of greenways.
14 This RAISE funding will be used to review previous
15 plans and studies, engage community partners, develop
16 analytical tools for determining priority corridors
17 including a micro-mobility demand model, and complete
18 a citywide gap and opportunity analysis.

19 The outcome of Filling the Gaps will
20 include a vision plan that articulates the city's
21 principles for completing the greenway network, up to
22 5 Early Action corridor plans for greenways across
23 the 5 boroughs, and a set of Future Action corridor
24 candidates for further development.

2 Taken together, these plans will enable a
3 major expansion of the New York City greenway network
4 with a focus on under-developed greenway sections
5 located in chronically disenfranchised communities.

6 The aim of Filling the Gaps is to prepare
7 for ushering in a new era of multi-modal
8 infrastructure investments focused on greenways,
9 capitalizing on the nation's changing priorities and
10 increasing investment in active transportation and
11 open space infrastructure, pandemic recovery and job
12 creation, climate action, and equity.

13 As Intro 291 moves forward, DOT and our
14 sister agencies look forward to discussing the
15 details of its requirements further, to align it with
16 the aggressive pace of our planning efforts and
17 federal resources we hope to bring to bear and to
18 structure the reporting, updating, and community
19 engagement requirements to make them as effective and
20 efficient as possible and aligned with our existing
21 mandates.

22 In conclusion, I would like to thank the
23 Chair, the Speaker, and all Members of this Council
24 for the opportunity to testify before you today. I
25 look forward to working with you to enhance access to

2 public space for all New Yorkers and build a more
3 connected greenway network that will benefit New
4 Yorkers for generations to come. We would be happy to
5 answer any questions after you hear from our sister
6 agency colleagues. (SPEAKING SPANISH) Thank you.

7 CHIEF NEILSON: Good afternoon, Chair
8 Brooks-Powers, Members of the Transportation
9 Committee, and other Members of City Council. I am
10 Sarah Neilson, Chief of Policy and Long-Range
11 Planning for New York City Parks. I'm happy to be
12 testifying together with our partner agencies, New
13 York City Department of Transportation and here with
14 New York City Economic Development Corporation.

15 I want to start by noting our
16 appreciation for the Council's continued advocacy for
17 our city's open spaces, of which parks play a vital
18 role. Without your continued support, much of the
19 important work we do would not even be possible.

20 I would like to first address Intro 291,
21 which is concerned with creating a citywide Greenways
22 Master Plan. New York City Parks firmly believes that
23 all New Yorkers deserve access to quality public
24 space, and we are committed to increasing equity and
25 access. We see greenways as an important step in

2 achieving this. Greenways connect communities to our
3 city parks, bike paths, and waterfronts. They serve
4 as both destination and thoroughfare. They provide
5 access to nature and offer options for safe physical
6 activity among diverse users, serving as vital green
7 spaces, especially for New Yorkers who don't live
8 next to a big park.

9 Expanding New York City's greenways has
10 been a key priority for the city, and there are now
11 more than 150 miles of greenways throughout the 5
12 boroughs. We at New York City Parks believe that all
13 New Yorkers deserve beautiful green spaces. We are
14 working with our sister agencies to expand the
15 citywide greenway network across all 5 boroughs so
16 that we can strengthen the connections between our
17 parks. We are proud of our recent work with DOT on
18 the Destination Greenways study. In this study, our 2
19 agencies embarked on a conceptual planning process
20 for 2 key corridors. One was in Queens, one was in
21 Brooklyn. Our goal was to connect the small greenway
22 segments within existing parks by making those vital
23 connections from park to park to park. We gathered
24 community input to focus on filling gaps in those 2
25 existing routes. Currently, we are working to expand

2 this model of determining greenway improvements to
3 additional routes in other boroughs, noting that
4 Bronx is very high priority. The Destination
5 Greenways study strives to make greenways safer and
6 more inviting for all New Yorkers and will enhance
7 treasured open space in many neighborhoods. Community
8 involvement was essential to this study. We are
9 pleased to share that approximately 1,000 individuals
10 registered for our virtual community input meetings.
11 We spoke to about 200 people last summer out along
12 the greenway routes during our on-site outreach
13 events, and we also received about 800 comments on
14 the interactive project website while the study was
15 ongoing.

16 New York City Parks also works regularly
17 with EDC, adding new greenway miles to the Manhattan
18 Waterfront. We are currently in the process of
19 wrapping up the design for the Harlem River Greenway
20 from 125th to 132nd. This project will add 7 new
21 acres of waterfront open space along that stretch of
22 waterfront and will connect miles of greenway to the
23 north and to the south. These steps will close a
24 major gap in the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway,

2 providing New Yorkers with easier access to vibrant
3 new spaces.

4 In the Bronx, we were pleased to open the
5 Putnam Greenway in 2020. This project built 2.8 miles
6 of new greenway that connects Van Cortlandt Park with
7 the South County Trail System in Westchester County
8 and the Empire State Trail all the way to Albany and
9 beyond. There are plans to extend the greenway
10 further south as part of DEP's project to daylight
11 Tibbetts Brook. That long-awaited project is in
12 design now, and we are working closely with DEP.

13 In Queens, we are fully reconstructing
14 the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway and Joe Michaels Mile.
15 Both of these vital greenways are being renovated in
16 separate 2-phase projects. For both, phase 1 has
17 already been completed, and we're pleased to announce
18 that phase 2 is currently underway. These routes make
19 up key segments of the overall Destination Greenways
20 routes as well. As part of that project, we are also
21 closing greenway gaps in Flushing Meadows Corona
22 Park, Kissena Corridor Park, and Kissena Park.

23 In Brooklyn, we're building new greenway
24 segments in Leif Ericson Park and reconstructing
25 existing greenway segments in Shore Road.

2 As these projects move forward, New York
3 City Parks will continue to collaborate with partner
4 agencies and work with key stakeholders to
5 holistically plan for in-park and on-street greenway
6 improvements and help strengthen connections between
7 our parks. New York City Parks is thrilled that Mayor
8 Adams and the Council have advocated funding for
9 greenways in the budget. This investment will fill
10 gaps in the existing routes with the focus on
11 connecting communities to parks overall.

12 I would also like to take a moment to
13 address Introduction 258 and note, as Commissioner
14 Rodriguez stated, that this administration is
15 committed to increasing access to public restrooms.
16 New York City Parks is extremely proud that we
17 currently operate 680 comfort stations, that's what
18 we call bathrooms in the Parks Department, and public
19 restrooms across the 5 boroughs. We are actively
20 increasing that number to this day. We recognize that
21 there are certain challenges around building public
22 restrooms, but we look forward to continued
23 discussion on this issue with the Council and with
24 our sister agencies.

2 I thank you for the opportunity to
3 testify alongside DOT and EDC today, and I look
4 forward to answering any questions you may have.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
7 that. I'm hoping that the project you spoke of will
8 also look to connect Southeast Queens and the
9 Rockaways to some of those amazing assets in Northern
10 Queens as well.

11 Before I go into my questions, I would
12 like to acknowledge my Colleagues in the Council that
13 are present in today's hearing, Council Members
14 Rivera, Yeger, Ariola, Farias, Kagan, Lee, Narcisse,
15 Stevens, Williams, and Carr.

16 In the Mayor's Economic Recovery
17 Blueprint released at the beginning of March, the
18 administration committed to launching an interagency
19 working group to coordinate city initiatives and
20 programs in our public spaces. What is the status of
21 this group and has it held a meeting?

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The Public Realm
23 Interagency Working Group led by City Hall is already
24 meeting regularly to address better coordination,
25 activation, and management of public space for Open

2 Restaurant to (INAUDIBLE) work is already on the way
3 across agencies including the agencies that has come
4 together in that planning process are DOT, City
5 Planning, Department of Sanitation, Parks, and Small
6 Business Services, SBS.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
8 Will the working group produce a report?

9 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: That's a goal.
10 Not necessarily commenting on the report but
11 definitely we are coming together, working on
12 producing the results of this meeting and more than
13 happy, of course, to follow up with you to share that
14 information of that result of that work.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The report
16 mentions that the working group, which as you
17 mentioned is composed of city agencies, are working
18 in coordination with BIDs, businesses, and residents.
19 How will this working group coordinate with outside
20 stakeholders, how will the BIDs and residents be
21 identified to participate, and how will the
22 administration work to ensure these groups are
23 representative of the entire city.

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So far, the
25 interagency working group has been focused on

2 representatives for the agencies coming together. As
3 a former Council Member, I also understand
4 (INAUDIBLE) the importance of getting the input of
5 different stakeholders outside the agency so we will
6 identify where and how to get the feedback, but, so
7 far, we're just doing the interagency meetings to
8 learn on how we can come up with a plan but
9 definitely we are committed to getting input from
10 other stakeholders including elected officials,
11 Community Boards, and other leaders from the
12 community that are related to those agencies.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
14 that. I think it's important that we're centering the
15 voices of the residents and finding a way to engage
16 them and identify them accordingly so that it is
17 reflective of the different corners of the city. I
18 definitely encourage or welcome the opportunity to
19 coordinate that outreach with the Council Members of
20 the various districts, especially the areas that have
21 historically been under-resourced.

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Of course.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Starting
24 during the pandemic, the Department of Transportation
25 has been tasked with operating an increasing number

2 of public space related programs. How does the
3 administration believe public space decisions and
4 responsibilities that cut across agency boundaries
5 should be coordinated?

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: DOT is working
7 closely with our sister agencies to manage public
8 space, all under the direction of Mayor Adams and
9 Deputy Mayor Joshi. This includes working closely
10 with, again as I said, some of the agencies that I
11 mentioned, the Department of Sanitation, Fire
12 Department, NYPD, Parks, and more. You heard from
13 Mayor Adams during the time of campaigning, after
14 winning election, and now as Mayor, he truly believes
15 that we have to reimagine the use of public space.
16 This is important for this administration. This is
17 important for me as a Commissioner, and this is the
18 direction that we are taking the city, reimagining
19 the use of more public space, basically thinking
20 about the pedestrians and cyclists as a top priority.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do you think
22 that DOT should assume the role of primary
23 responsibility for public space planning?

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Definitely yes.
25 This is the agency that has decades of experience.

2 After being chosen to be Commissioner of DOT, in my
3 second day what I did was connecting with all the
4 previous Commissioners because one of the things that
5 we have to celebrate in this city is the level of
6 continuity that we have, and I think that when we
7 look at DOT, (INAUDIBLE) the team at DOT takes this
8 job with a lot of pride. Many of them have dedicated
9 decades serving under many Commissioners, listening
10 to voices of the community, thinking about how to
11 reimagine the use of public space, so DOT has a lot
12 of experience when it comes to monitoring the public
13 space. As someone who also had a role of oversight of
14 a city agency in my 8 years, now having the role that
15 you have, which is a great leadership opportunity
16 that we have, I was there questioning DOT, going
17 after those questions. What I can tell you about as
18 my previous 8 years as Chairman of the Traffic
19 Committee. What I heard about expertise, and I think
20 that's one of the reasons why the DOT Commissioner
21 became now to be the second one nationwide because
22 other municipalities, they want to learn about the
23 expertise that we have in New York City so this is
24 the agency, again, that has developed more

2 experience, more knowledge, and knows how to run
3 public space.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Would the
5 administration support the creation of a new office
6 responsible for managing the city's public space and
7 coordinating across agencies?

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I can start
9 sharing a little bit and Sean can also add anything
10 more. What I can say is I think the idea is a great
11 one. Those of us who served before COVID, we know
12 that a lot of the Open Streets, Open Restaurants,
13 Open Schools, we were having this discussion before
14 COVID. We were asking the previous administration
15 about give more space or street to the community. I
16 believe that COVID helped us, for us to get there, to
17 go to that line where we were able to start many of
18 the Open Streets, it's the biggest one in the nation.
19 Open Restaurants is the biggest one in the nation.
20 Any measure we use, we are the role model, and I feel
21 that this is what we have seen at DOT and we do have
22 a team at DOT that runs open spaces, who are
23 responsible for open spaces, who've then identify
24 opportunity to turn more space in the streets into
25 pedestrian plaza, into Open Schools, so more than

2 happy to continue this conversation with the Council
3 Member who carried this bill, with as the Chair, and
4 the Speaker to see how we can get to the finish line,
5 but I think at the end of the day we share the
6 importance to continue having a space where we
7 control, we run everything related to open spaces,
8 but DOT has been doing it and been doing a great job.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Staying in
10 line with your comments on the pandemic, what does
11 DOT believe it has accomplished with regard to public
12 space since the start of the pandemic and what
13 enduring changes would it like to see based on what
14 the agency has learned?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: A lot. First of
16 all, when we talk about the importance to identify
17 Open Streets, we thought it was important to identify
18 locations where, during COVID, New Yorkers wanted to
19 have more space within walking distance to each
20 other. By the type of open spaces we had during
21 COVID, was more having barricades in those
22 (INAUDIBLE) that we closed. After COVID is again
23 hopefully over, as we are today, we are doing more
24 programming Open Streets. What we have today is 156
25 Open Streets (INAUDIBLE) corridor, but all of them

2 have a partner of DOT is running those Open Streets,
3 full of programming on arts, cultural, and education
4 so this is something, again, that was started as
5 something temporary and became permanent when it came
6 to Open Streets. We can look at Open Restaurants.
7 Other things we did, Pedestrian Plaza, (INAUDIBLE)
8 Plaza was under COVID when (INAUDIBLE) couldn't open
9 a restaurant in (INAUDIBLE). I went there to visit
10 the owner every day. She was closed. I went there to
11 give her hope that she will be able to reopen. I was
12 able to turn (INAUDIBLE) between Broadway and
13 (INAUDIBLE) as something that started as an Open
14 Street today to be a permanent plaza so I know how to
15 get those things done. I did it in my district, and I
16 will be doing it in any Council District that any of
17 you represent that would like to identify an Open
18 Street and even thinking about how we can turn Open
19 Streets as something more permanent.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Staying in
21 line with the plazas, I want to pivot over to
22 maintenance. Could you tell us about DOT's plans for
23 ensuring public spaces under its jurisdiction like
24 pedestrian plazas are maintained? I will just make
25 mention, as you know, I've been doing my citywide

2 tour district to district, and an example is in
3 Council Member Francisco Moya's district where
4 there's a plaza there and some concerns in terms of
5 the upkeep of the plaza so I'm interested in
6 understanding the plan for ensuring that public
7 spaces under your jurisdiction are maintained.

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: My team here will
9 give more details about the day-to-day support that
10 DOT provides in those plazas who need more resources,
11 but I can tell you that I was sitting back there when
12 the Times Square Plaza Alliance came here asking for
13 support on some bill related to the (INAUDIBLE). I
14 took that advantage as I was working with them to
15 (INAUDIBLE) Times Square, and I told them I will
16 support you. However, will you adopt a plaza in the
17 underserved community? Not each plaza is composed by
18 Board Members that represent the New York Times, the
19 Daily News, the (INAUDIBLE), the big corporations so
20 the way I did it was not only asking DOT can you
21 please help with the (INAUDIBLE) Plaza, for them to
22 have the resources that they need to keep this street
23 clean, but I also went to Times Square Plaza and said
24 can you also adopt another plaza that you can also
25 help them with the programming. I personally had that

2 experience, but I would like to pass to the team to
3 explain a little bit more about how we are supporting
4 those plazas.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: Sure. Thank
6 you for the question. Corona Plaza is absolutely one
7 of our more challenging locations. We do provide a
8 lot of support for that space through our NYC Plaza
9 Equity Program, which through the support of the
10 Council, we've been able to fund over the past 10 or
11 so years that the program has been in existence.
12 Using that plaza as an example, we're working to hire
13 a Plaza Manager, someone who is thinking about it
14 every day. We are working to bolster our partnership,
15 doing trainings with our partners to help them grow.
16 We are working on programming the Plaza like the
17 Commissioner as a huge piece of the puzzle of how to
18 activate a space and make sure that it's not being
19 overrun with undesirable uses but becoming a real
20 place for the community to gather. We have 31 plazas
21 in our 85-plaza system that receive direct support
22 through this Plaza Equity Program, 17 of those high-
23 need plazas receive a full suite of maintenance
24 services that includes sweeping, cleaning, bagging
25 trash, power washing, pest abatement, snow clearance

2 so that's all funded through our programs in a
3 partnership that we have with the Horticultural
4 Society of New York. We also partner with other city
5 agencies to tackle some issues that we may not be
6 able to tackle through our resources, but we have
7 all-hands-on-deck examples in Fordham Plaza in the
8 Bronx and Corona Plaza. We are meeting regularly with
9 other city agencies to tackle some of those issues. A
10 lot of those issues in Corona Plaza and other places
11 where they're pre-plaza did create a place for people
12 to gather and a place where people want to be so I
13 think it sort of creates a problem but also creates a
14 solution for the community at the same time. With us
15 really helping and pushing and having these resources
16 funneled to those spaces, we think we can solve those
17 problems and manage them over time.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Just staying
19 on this for a little bit because in my District also,
20 I have a similar issue with the Beach 20th Street
21 Plaza in Far Rockaway that is largely overrun by
22 unhoused individuals that are not having certain
23 needs met and so that's become a space. There's also
24 a lot of criminal activity that's taking place there,
25 and it's resulting in local merchants closing and not

2 being able to get the foot traffic that they like
3 because of people being fearful of passing it. When
4 you talk about, for example, community partners, if
5 community partners are utilized for this purpose,
6 what is DOT doing to ensure that cleaning and
7 maintenance is equitable, especially in areas with
8 limited resources. As I said in my earlier statement,
9 not every community has a BID, and so, even when we
10 have these amazing pilot programs that come out of
11 the administration, communities like the one that I
12 represent often miss out on the opportunity,
13 sometimes they don't even come until way down. I just
14 noticed a new Link Kiosk in Southeast Queens recently
15 and look at how many years that project has been in
16 place, and that's just an example of how long it
17 takes the city administration to get to some of these
18 pockets of the city that need a little bit more
19 resource and support so when I ask what is DOT's
20 plan, understanding you do have the Times Square
21 Alliance and very strong BIDs across the city, but
22 when DOT opens up a plaza, I feel like there needs to
23 be a plan to be able to regularly have eyes on these
24 plazas to see what's going on so that it can be more
25 proactive instead of reactionary because the Beach

2 20th Street Plaza, the condition that it's been in,
3 it's been in there for several years now. I used
4 extra expense funding for it to be cleaned up. My
5 predecessor had to do that as well so you're talking
6 about 2 administrations that had to put money towards
7 it, not to mention our local community organizations
8 put resources towards it also, but it's a plaza, it's
9 under the jurisdiction of the Department of
10 Transportation.

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: It is, but, as
12 you heard, we have 17 high-need plazas. They receive
13 a full suite of maintenance services, sweeping,
14 cleaning, bagging trash, furniture setup, graffiti
15 removal, snow clearance, (INAUDIBLE), power washing,
16 and more. (INAUDIBLE) plazas received financial
17 subsidy of up to 20,000 yearly to support
18 maintenance, operation, and programming so more than
19 happy, again, to follow up with you if there's any
20 particular one in your district, by any Council
21 Member that you feel that they have not taken
22 advantage of that opportunity, to please let us know
23 and we're more than happy to connect with those
24 services.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Absolutely. I
3 would just say that I'm looking for the
4 administration to take a more active role in dealing
5 with the quality-of-life issues in public spaces
6 currently also managed by private organizations as
7 well so just having a full plan of action because, as
8 you said, Department of Transportation has been doing
9 this for a long time so I really want to understand
10 what those plans are and how we are addressing the
11 needs of these challenges that we see with the
12 plazas.

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Right.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How does DOT
15 coordinate with other agencies to ensure upkeep of
16 street or sidewalk adjacent spaces that aren't under
17 its jurisdiction? This is something that also comes
18 up often because it's really hard to decide if you
19 have a street, little island, that has trees and
20 stuff, is it Parks, is it DOT, and regular community
21 folks won't necessarily know. Sometimes we assume
22 it's Parks. Sometimes it ends up being DOT. How does
23 DOT coordinate with other agencies around this?

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: First of all,
25 this administration is focused on efficiency, and

2 that's why under the leadership of Melanie La Rocca
3 appointed by Mayor Adams as the Chief of Efficiency,
4 one of the goals this administration has is to be
5 sure that all agencies continue identifying different
6 ways of how we share responsibility. For me, when it
7 comes to any space related to (INAUDIBLE) for any New
8 Yorkers in any neighborhood, especially my heart is
9 on the underserved community, that we feel that
10 there's not attention necessarily given that requires
11 for DOT to coordinate with Parks or Sanitation or any
12 other, just let her know. That's a priority of Mayor
13 Adams. This is a priority that I have as a
14 Commissioner because I was trained in this body
15 (INAUDIBLE) to be sure that, even though my role is
16 not a legislator but now it's doing the management
17 part, to be sure that I continue focusing on what I
18 fought for for those (INAUDIBLE) years. I live in the
19 underserved community. I've been living in the
20 underserved community since I arrived here in 1983 so
21 no one has to teach me outside this room about, what
22 I'm challenging me is about those who live in
23 privileged communities to know here we have
24 underserved community that requires this attention,
25 that requires (INAUDIBLE) services, so this is

2 priority for this administration. This is something
3 that is so deep in my consciousness so any area that
4 you feel is important for any community that you feel
5 is related to Transportation but that interacts with
6 Parks, Sanitation, and others, that you feel no one
7 is leading, bring it to us. That's why I brought each
8 Borough Commissioner here so that anyone knows, the
9 Council Member knows that not only are we here to
10 testify on behalf of this administration, but they're
11 listening. The instruction I got from the Mayor is
12 work around equity, and the instruction that my
13 Borough Commissioners and Director over each division
14 has is we want to continue turning New York City as
15 the safest and most efficient transportation system
16 in the whole nation. That's our goal, and I know that
17 we can accomplish that goal together.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What is the
19 total funding in Fiscal Year '22 and Fiscal Year '23
20 for the Plaza Equity Program?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Sean, you want to
22 take that one? We have the information here. Give me
23 one second.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: We recently
25 received 5.4 million dollars for the Plaza Equity

2 Program on top of existing funding that we had from
3 previous administrations. Between the Plaza Equity
4 Program and other funds that we have to service our
5 Open Streets program, we have over 8 million dollars
6 a year for those programs. That money goes directly
7 to support these spaces and our partnerships.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

9 Next, I want to talk about equity issues around the
10 BIDs. The BIDs cover around 2 percent of the city and
11 do not exist in neighborhoods with limited resources
12 or residential areas. Does DOT believe that our
13 current system for providing public amenities through
14 private partners like BIDs is a sufficient model for
15 all neighborhoods?

16 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: No, it doesn't,
17 and that's not the approach that we have at DOT, to
18 rely on BIDs to organize any plan for public spaces.
19 This is not the way I got Plaza (INAUDIBLE). There
20 was no BID involved. It was about bringing together
21 the small business community. It was about bringing
22 together the local leaders of the community. We are
23 focusing more on the need. We are focusing more
24 around any group, first of all, we as the DOT, we are
25 working 24/7. This is how hard the team works at DOT

2 to be sure that (INAUDIBLE) DOT Ambassador that we
3 have and the Borough Commissioners that we identify
4 that be turned as a public space, as a public plaza,
5 as an open street, but we also rely on the voice of
6 the community. We rely on the faith community. We
7 rely on the (INAUDIBLE) that we have at DOT. We rely
8 on you as the Council Member. We will continue
9 expanding. The numbers (INAUDIBLE) Open Streets
10 closed with barricades. We will be working with you
11 to be sure that as we have any plaza that they have
12 in numbers of BIDs, working with them, which is
13 nothing wrong, but then we have the older outer
14 boroughs areas that they don't have those BIDs, they
15 just rely on DOT being able to identify where we
16 should bring those Open Streets, those Open Plazas,
17 and we work with the stakeholders of those
18 communities and, of course for me, working with the
19 Council Member is a top priority.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: I would
21 just add that only about 50 percent of our plazas are
22 managed by BIDs, and those BIDs range from, of
23 course, the Times Square Alliance to much smaller
24 BIDs throughout the Bronx, the 3rd Avenue, Willis BID
25 in the Bronx, for example, and only 22 percent of our

2 Open Streets are managed by BIDs so a large majority
3 of our public realm and public spaces are managed by
4 non-BID partners.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What about the
6 resources to ensure that they are properly
7 maintained?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: That goes
9 back to the Public Space Equity monies and funds that
10 we have. That goes directly to those spaces funded by
11 the agency. We partner with the Horticultural Society
12 to do a lot of the work plus with our sister
13 agencies. We have a great amount of funding for that.
14 We also offer to our Open Streets partners, for
15 example, up to 20,000 dollars annually in
16 reimbursement for programming and other types of
17 resources that they pour into a open space so we do
18 have a lot of ways to directly support and fund
19 partners, be it a small community group to a larger
20 community-based organization.

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We have Yogesh
22 here, who also works around the division (INAUDIBLE)
23 Assistant Commissioner for Grants and Fiscal
24 Management. The team that he leads also is so
25 committed to identify other sources of funding to see

2 if there is any grant opportunity that will come in
3 the future. When we think about any particular big
4 project that we can apply for any grant, we're also
5 thinking about can we include any piece related to
6 any innovative way of how to use public space so I
7 feel that, as I said, I got a plaza in (INAUDIBLE)
8 because DOT went there and said let's build a plaza.
9 I got a plaza as a Council Member. I called DOT, said
10 we need to add a plaza here. I just feel that as we
11 are all together in this, as DOT goes and identifies
12 a potential area to have a plaza, we have the
13 resources to help to keep the plaza clean but also I
14 would like to see more Council Member (INAUDIBLE)
15 saying here at Yankee Stadium, you are here in the
16 Bronx, can you also be partners with this plaza, here
17 with have Citi Field, can also Citi Field be a
18 partner with any plaza that is around there
19 (INAUDIBLE) at 168th and Fort Washington, but I
20 called on them so I feel that definitely creating
21 more green space for especially those underserved
22 communities is something that we will see more of
23 them coming, but I also feel that it's important
24 that, as DOT identifies resources, I don't know if

2 you want to add a little bit on potential grants that
3 we are looking to see in the future, you share that.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SANGHVI: Actually,
5 the Infrastructure Bill that was recently passed by
6 Congress along with prior bills have provided some
7 sort of funding for work of this kind. It's not
8 necessarily money that is just for plazas, but we do
9 get monies that would allow for implementation, which
10 still leaves the maintenance question the way the
11 Council Member asked, but we do get federal funding,
12 a portion at least, to do work of this kind, plazas,
13 to implement, to design, to construct.

14 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: This is something
15 that we're thinking about. If there's any grant as
16 they come out in the future, to see any potential of
17 those grants that also can be related for some
18 funding on capital expense that will allow us to
19 continue expanding our plazas.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
21 that. In terms of the community partners, for many
22 public space improvements DOT requires that a local
23 partner maintain a liability agreement and insurance.
24 Other than Open Streets, which public space programs
25

2 and amenities require a community partner and what
3 about street safety improvements?

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Again, Sean also
5 can add any other details with this. You heard other
6 details about Plaza, and so I'm not going to repeat
7 again the 20,000 funding that anyone can apply for
8 that will help those that run the plaza. I also
9 mentioned about how DOT worked with those plazas who
10 had more need to also get other resources for them to
11 keep it clean. With Open Streets, most of the Open
12 Streets are an initiative where most of them are CBOs
13 that they identify a block that they would like to
14 apply for and we've been, like I said, supporting
15 most of them, but I don't know if you want to add
16 anything more on this.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: Sure. I
18 know the liability insurance is a piece of the puzzle
19 that is sort of evolving in part due to the
20 experiences we had during the pandemic with Open
21 Streets. We recently, for example, relaxed some of
22 those requirements around bike corral installments,
23 and the city is taking on that responsibility more
24 directly. I know we've been speaking with some of the
25 BID partners around this specific issue and trying to

2 figure out ways that we can reduce that requirement
3 over time. Our Open Streets, we require very little
4 of the partner in terms of liability. It's a very
5 basic agreement we have them sign, but some of our
6 spaces do require a bit more including our Plazas
7 and, again, that's something that we're in discussion
8 with with a lot of our partners as we speak.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Does DOT
10 believe burdensome liability and insurance
11 requirements are inequitable?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: I think
13 that's a good question, and I think that's what we're
14 working through right now. I think there's some, for
15 example, however, some of the funding that we give to
16 partners, that 20,000 dollars, for Open Streets
17 partners or some of our Plaza partners can go to
18 cover any sort of insurance that the partner is
19 required to hold as part of partnership with the
20 city. We look for ways to reduce some of that burden,
21 especially for our partners that don't have the
22 resources like our larger BIDs for example. We
23 understand that it can be a barrier, but we have been
24 working to find ways to reduce that.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. I'm
3 going to try and run through my last few questions as
4 quickly as possible so we can get time with you all
5 and other Members present.

6 BQE, the Mayor announced that the city
7 will start construction on a permanent fix for the
8 BQE in 5 years rather than implementing short-term
9 fixes. What is the administration's timeline for
10 deciding on a plan for the BQE, how will the
11 community be engaged in this process, and how will
12 DOT ensure the roadway is safe prior to construction?
13 This is something that, as you know, is very
14 important to Council Member Restler but also myself.
15 We've seen in other major cities where critical
16 infrastructure that has gone unmaintained has
17 resulted in literally crumbling while they have
18 commuters on there so I have strong concerns about
19 the conditions of the BQE, and I'm very interested in
20 your response to these questions as well.

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: First of all, the
22 BQE will be the most important infrastructure project
23 led by New York City under Mayor Adams and DOT. As
24 you know, when the BQE was built, they had a time of
25 how long they can leave, they can stay, they can be

2 safe. Based on the engineer that we have, as we're
3 speaking right now, we're confident this is a safe
4 place. The question now is BQE being a vital part of
5 the transportation system and our economy, we can
6 most immediately start working with the community on
7 a plan for the safe, modern, and resilient structure
8 we need. We are not going with the short version. We
9 are going for taking advantage of mega-infrastructure
10 potential grant out in D.C. This is something that we
11 need to do not only for our generation but for
12 generations to come, to be sure that we plan together
13 with the community and we have met on a number of
14 occasions with a number of elected officials,
15 including Council Member that represents that area.
16 We have been going also to meetings of Community
17 Boards. We cannot wait 2 decades and unnecessarily
18 spend hundreds of millions of additional taxpayer
19 dollars from 700 million dollars. That's what the
20 prior plan would have done. We are taking a bold,
21 corridor-wide approach to address the entire
22 structure and reconnect communities who need it the
23 most that have been divided by this highway. I can
24 assure you the road, as I said before, is safe. We
25 are moving forward with all of the necessary repairs,

2 and the structure is constantly monitored. We have a
3 once-in-a-generation opportunity to access the
4 federal funding. We need to reimagine and rebuild the
5 BQE for the post-pandemic city economy. Definitely
6 for the community, the stakeholders that represent
7 those communities will be part of this process.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Moving to
9 Intro 258, the Report on Suitable Locations for
10 Public Bathrooms. In 2006, the city agreed to a
11 franchise agreement with JCDecaux to install 20
12 public toilets. Only 5 have been installed more than
13 15 years later. In 2020, DOT indicated that 2 new
14 public restrooms "will be installed soon." What is
15 DOT's current timeline for installing these 2
16 bathrooms, and where will they be located? What are
17 the challenges that have led to such a significant
18 delay? Is there anything the Council can do to make
19 it easier to install public bathrooms? Does the
20 administration have a plan for increasing the number
21 of public restrooms across the city? Lastly, on this
22 bill, has the administration explored other options
23 for increasing bathroom access such as providing
24 incentives to businesses that open their facilities
25 to the public?

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: As I said in my
3 opening testimony, this administration led by Mayor
4 Eric Adams is committed to increasing access to
5 public bathrooms. There are a number of challenges
6 around public bathrooms that we look forward to
7 discussing with you, Chair and the Speaker and the
8 rest of the Council Members. DOT resources for
9 installing public bathrooms are the automated public
10 toilets, JCDecaux installs and maintains all those
11 toilets pursuant to a citywide (INAUDIBLE) street
12 furniture franchise agreement. There are, as I
13 mentioned before, numerous challenges to siting those
14 public bathrooms including the bathrooms are too
15 large, heavy, and hard to find locations for, they
16 need water and sewer connection, and cannot be sited
17 on overpass, bridges, or any other insecure sites.
18 However, as I said, those are not excuses that I'm
19 ever going to be using, because of that (INAUDIBLE) I
20 did it, again, in my district, but I also know that I
21 had to fight with some people. Even though I had the
22 support of DOT to do it, some people didn't want it
23 so I feel that definitely continuing conversation
24 with you and the rest of your Colleagues is

2 important, especially in those areas when it comes to
3 (INAUDIBLE) more than happy to work with it.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Moving to the
5 Department of Parks and the comfort stations, a
6 recent report by the city found that, in addition to
7 the city what I know firsthand, that the standard
8 bathroom facilities installed by the Parks Department
9 cost between 3 to 5 million dollars. Why is it so
10 expensive to install bathrooms in Parks, to what does
11 the Department attribute these massive cost
12 increases? In the article, the city specifically
13 mentioned simple bike racks that retail for 475
14 dollars online costing 6,000 dollars to install. Why
15 have these costs ballooned out of control, and what
16 is the Department doing to address this?

17 CHIEF NEILSON: Thank you, Chair, for the
18 question. We are very interested in this bill. We're
19 very eager to find ways to provide more restroom
20 access for New Yorkers across the city. I don't have
21 the specifics on the examples that you gave as far as
22 the cost of providing new comfort stations.
23 Generally, as Commissioner Rodriguez mentioned,
24 utility access can tend to be a real cost driver in
25 those so that's sort of a general statement there.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. For
3 Intro 293, Program to Allow Community Centers,
4 Schools, Arts and Cultural Institutions, and
5 Religious Institutions to use Adjacent Outdoor
6 Spaces, how do current DOT Open Space Programs such
7 as Open Streets incorporate community organizations,
8 how would the program created by this bill interact
9 with the city's other plans for making COVID-era
10 public space programs permanent?

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We want more.
12 We've been asking for it. As I said before, before
13 getting to the summer, I told my team to contact each
14 of the 51 Council Members' staff, we contacted
15 Community Boards, we contacted faith community, we
16 worked with schools, CBOs, anyone that has any
17 interest of using any area near their location, we
18 are more than happy to work with them to support them
19 to reimagine the use of those public spaces. You want
20 to answer anything?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: I think the
22 programs that we have, like the Commissioner said,
23 we're always seeking out any type of partner. We have
24 the tools to support those partners. We have a very
25 active Open Streets School program where we're

2 partnering with schools to activate their streets. We
3 have a Street Seats program where we can activate
4 sidewalks and curb lanes with local businesses and
5 partners so we're always looking to partner. We're
6 looking for even just location suggestions where
7 maybe DOT or other city agencies can take on that
8 role but very much open to that. We also work very
9 closely with our sister agencies at SBS and SAPO to
10 ensure permitting and access to these programs are
11 streamlined and easy, especially for community-based
12 organizations to get involved.

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: One of my
14 suggestions, and this is something that, again, that
15 I've been discussing with my team, I would like to
16 see more Open Streets or the other reorganizing of
17 the public space to also be a structure around a
18 particular thing. I've been speaking to Ken Podziba
19 from Bike New York, and (INAUDIBLE) Bike New York
20 using space at Inwood Park, which I've been working
21 with her since I was a Council Member. I hope to see
22 one of those blocks that is closed used to
23 (INAUDIBLE) I think it is so important, again, any
24 CBOs, I want to see (INAUDIBLE) Carnegie Hall, also
25 to be expanded, the talented program that they have

2 besides being in the Midtown, for them to expand to
3 the outer borough. I can say, especially to the
4 Council Member, because this is the moment where
5 (INAUDIBLE) as any cultural institution comes to the
6 Council, as I do as DOT, bringing us a partner. I
7 feel that it is a commitment of this administration
8 to reimagine more space that has been used only for
9 cars to be used for pedestrians, to be used for New
10 Yorkers in our community, and most people that died
11 during COVID not because COVID killed, they died
12 because of asthma being one of those factors so I
13 think it is important that reimagine how to turn some
14 of that space near a school, near CBOs as something
15 can be useful then so DOT is ready to support anyone
16 that is interested to turn any adjacent area as an
17 Open Street or other use, we're here to support it.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Does DOT
19 support giving community organizations the right to
20 utilize adjacent public space?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The answer is
22 yes. There's a process. Remember that we started as
23 temporary Open Streets and Open Restaurants was
24 temporary, but then we are still in the process of
25 figuring out how to make it permanent. For me, it's

2 all about for any CBOs and institutions that want to
3 use the space to know that we're here to support. We
4 are not dealing with red tape. We're not here to say
5 no. We are here to turn it to a yes. We are here to
6 be guided by Mayor Adams who says get things done,
7 and this is our approach, this is our commitment.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: I would
9 just make a quick example. Last summer, we partnered
10 with the Brooklyn Public Library to create 2 outdoor
11 reading rooms in the curb lane and sidewalk space for
12 the public to use. It's that adjacent space right
13 next to the library. It provided extra room outside.
14 Very little red tape as the Commissioner was saying
15 so that Street Seat Program and the Curbside Programs
16 that we have are open for anybody who's interested in
17 the program.

18 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT MEAGHER: I think
19 one thing we're trying to say is that a lot of our
20 existing program that we want to make even bigger and
21 better could achieve some of the goals of the bill.
22 It does propose this model where you can print out a
23 form online and sign it and just start programming
24 right away. We do think that as we're moving forward
25 and making these programs permanent that more

2 coordination of the kind we're talking about with the
3 agency is more appropriate for accessibility, for
4 sanitation, for noise, for making sure that they can
5 complete other transportation projects so that sort
6 of just down a form, sign it, and start programming
7 is a model that we have used, but we think that,
8 moving forward, a little bit more coordination and
9 oversight and partnership with the agency is
10 beneficial.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In terms of
12 the School, Open Streets, and community partners,
13 there was a city program that was giving schools
14 outdoor space on the neighboring streets. What is DOT
15 doing around the loss of schools in the program?
16 There's a lot of resources needed to make it work on
17 the school's end, and it's contributing to
18 disparities where community partners are lacking.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: When the
20 Outdoor Learning Program was initially launched, it
21 was a direct need for these schools to have outdoor
22 spaces during a time when being indoors was
23 challenging so the program was initially a lot
24 larger, but it definitely had a different purpose. As
25 the COVID pandemic evolved and changed, a lot of

2 those schools no longer needed that space and they
3 declined to re-apply to the program. However, the
4 door is open to any school who wants to apply. We
5 will apply the resources and the barricades and
6 signage and elements to any school that's willing to
7 do it. I think right now we have 40 schools. It
8 fluctuates throughout the year. We have a bunch of
9 school programming and summer camps, for example,
10 this summer with the Fresh Air Fund coming online.
11 When the school season is out, we sort of shift our
12 focus to these summer camp type Open Streets, and, in
13 the fall, we anticipate the school numbers to pick
14 back up as school comes back into session. We're
15 willing to work with any sort of school
16 administration or parent organizations to even
17 organize an Open Street outside of the school that
18 might not be affiliated with the school if those
19 parent organizations want to get involved.

20 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: In my 15 years of
21 teaching that I was before being a Council Member for
22 12, I learned that teaching doesn't happen or
23 learning doesn't happen only in the classroom, so I
24 feel, again, that there's a lot of things that a year
25 from now we are going to be talking about things that

2 we learned during COVID. There's another teacher here
3 too. We also know that it is important to use the
4 outdoor space not only as a sitting area but also you
5 can learn math, you can learn science, there's
6 different things that you can do. However, now it's
7 going to be under Chancellor Banks as the Chancellor
8 of DOE to decide how they will continue using those
9 outdoor spaces around the school, and, of course as
10 we know, as a Commissioner of color, we also know
11 that usually those schools in the underserved
12 communities are the ones that also would like to
13 continue to see more use of the outside street in
14 front of the school because of that's one of the
15 (INAUDIBLE) that we have. If you are a public school,
16 which is more in the upper class, you do a lot of
17 things outside the classroom so I hope that, again,
18 this is something that we will continue seeing not
19 only during the time of COVID but also as COVID is
20 over.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

22 Now, I'm going to turn it over to my Colleagues, but,
23 first, I'm going to ask questions on behalf of
24 Council Member Althea Stevens.

2 Although Destination Greenways selected
3 the Harlem River Greenway as the project in the Bronx
4 with long-time resident support, DOT and Parks
5 decided the project was too complicated and abandoned
6 it. Since the Bronx has seen consistent
7 disinvestment, why was it not a priority to ensure
8 equity and see this project through?

9 CHIEF NEILSON: Thanks for the question.
10 We are looking forward to, optimistically, that we'll
11 be receiving the RAISE grant, and we'll be working
12 with DOT and EDC on the citywide buildout of a
13 Destination Greenways style Filling the Gaps of
14 greenway projects. When we chose the 2 routes for
15 what we were looking at in Destination Greenways as
16 the first ones, we really wanted to focus on where
17 there were existing greenways within parks that we
18 could connect parks to parks to parks with
19 partnership with DOT so that we could make those
20 continuous destination-type routes. The Queens Route
21 and the Brooklyn Route enabled us to achieve that.
22 The one in the Bronx didn't have as many city
23 properties that would be as readily available for
24 that so we do look forward to working on that in the
25 Filling the Gaps RAISE grant program.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Why do Bronx
3 residents have less waterfront access and less on-
4 water recreational activities than any other borough?
5 What steps are you taking to rectify this?

6 CHIEF NEILSON: Thanks for the question. I
7 think that's a really broad question for the scope of
8 the Greenways conversation we're having right now so
9 I think we do have all kinds of Parks projects
10 ongoing in the Bronx. I wouldn't know if I could just
11 catalog them all in a TikTok for this conversation,
12 but I appreciate the question.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In the same
14 vein I think, in terms of the Greenway conversation,
15 at a very minimum I would imagine that Parks knows
16 how much of that borough has access to their
17 waterfront, correct?

18 CHIEF NEILSON: Do you mean...

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Just access to
20 it. The Bronx, as a borough, has probably far less
21 access to utilizing their waterfront spaces than
22 other boroughs in comparison.

23 CHIEF NEILSON: I appreciate the question.
24 We haven't done a study to compare access in that way
25 so I'm not sure I can speak to that in a clear way.

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: One thing that, I
3 don't want to speak on the waterfronts related to
4 Parks but I can say on the greenway, this is priority
5 for Mayor Eric Adams. He's been explaining on the
6 correlation between the Bronx dealing with a lot of
7 violence from the shooting and pedestrian and
8 cycling, people losing their lives, in a borough that
9 was left behind in the past, when it comes to
10 receiving the necessary investment as many other
11 underserved communities in other boroughs went
12 through the same thing. In this administration, what
13 we have seen already is this administration working
14 with the local Council Members in that borough as we
15 will be doing in each borough of our city to be sure
16 that (INAUDIBLE) more attention that we're
17 translating the dollars into the investment so that
18 the residents of the Bronx will be seeing how we are
19 going to be expanding the greenway in the great
20 borough of the Bronx.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
22 that. I will say considering that we always hear from
23 agencies talking about the administration's
24 commitment to equity, something as it pertains to
25 access to the waterfront and borough by borough,

2 community by community, I think it's important that
3 the agency has a read on that so that when we're
4 having a conversation we know we can maximize the
5 opportunity to really get to the heart of the equity
6 conversation so I would love to see a report to
7 understand better where the access is, where they're
8 not. I know some of the community partners have
9 already done their own assessments and can probably
10 give you a head start, but I think it would be
11 helpful for the conversation in the long term.

12 With that, I'll pass it over to Council
13 Member Joseph.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. I have
15 so many questions I don't know where to start. I
16 probably won't have 5 minutes. One is around Newkirk
17 Plaza in my district. This is one of the worst parent
18 relationships between MTA and the city. I want you
19 guys to figure it out. Get together, have a beer or
20 something, and figure it out, how we're going to take
21 care of Newkirk Plaza. It's been in despair, run
22 down, and every time you talk to one agency they
23 point to the other, the other one points to it, so
24 I'm looking for some answers on Newkirk Plaza, how
25 we're going to fix. Rats have taken over. I was at

2 the Plaza visiting. There were rats running around,
3 trash, so we need to fix it. That's one.

4 Two, street safety around schools.
5 Erasmus Hall, Flatbush Avenue is one of the worst
6 streets where students, a lot of accidents have
7 happened during pick-up and drop-off, and that's in
8 the heart of my district, that is right next door to
9 the school I taught at for so many years.

10 Next, how many public bathrooms are in
11 the city? If possible, I would love data on breakdown
12 in borough possible or a later time, and how many are
13 needed. I know there's barriers. We're going to work
14 through those barriers for more public bathrooms. Has
15 the administration considered reopening the bathrooms
16 in the MTA? I know it's a lot of questions. I can
17 always come back if that's okay with you, Chair. How
18 we will maintain them? Once we have them up and
19 running, we do have to work around maintaining them
20 and making sure they're safe and well-maintained
21 bathrooms. That was a lot. Sorry.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: We
23 definitely understand the challenges around Newkirk
24 Plaza, and I don't want to point the finger the other
25 way. It is MTA property. We at DOT and other city

2 agencies have stepped in to help clean the space
3 regardless, but I think that's something we are also
4 very interested in working out so we will continue to
5 have those conversations.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: When it comes to
7 improving safety around the school, recently, and I'm
8 more than happy to follow with you and my team, Kyle
9 is here, the Brooklyn Borough Commissioner, and the
10 rest of my team here, weeks ago, we announced the
11 initiative to focus on improving safety around the
12 schools. We did it from (INAUDIBLE) but we have
13 hundreds of those locations that we have identified
14 that are going to be also (INAUDIBLE) the school.
15 More than happy to follow up with you to see if that
16 corridor is part, and, if not, if we also can include
17 it in there.

18 With the toilets, you heard the breakdown
19 that we gave about how many we have right now. We
20 explained the challenge that we have, the breakdown
21 of each borough. Let's follow up with you with that
22 information. Again, more than happy to work with you
23 not only around the bill and continuing to discuss on
24 the bill but also if there's any particular need of
25

2 any borough in your area that you think that we
3 should be working with you, let us know.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. And the
5 MTA bathrooms regarding reopening, or maybe that's a
6 conversation we can have with our Colleagues in
7 government, but I thought it was also important to
8 reopen the bathrooms in the transit system, upgrade
9 them at least as well so they can also be available
10 for use.

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let's bring it to
12 the MTA. More than happy to use our relationship that
13 we have with them and then also follow up with you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
15 you, Chair.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you so much for
17 being here. Thank you, Chair Brooks-Power, Majority
18 Whip, and also our awesome Commissioner. My question
19 just for background is going to be framed mostly
20 around the different silos, and I can definitely
21 appreciate, because whether it's health or mental
22 health doesn't matter, the topic, I think for me, my
23 interest is always the intersectionality of the
24 different agencies, whether it's city or state, and
25 how we can sort of make inroads into getting certain

2 things pushed forward. For myself and my district,
3 I'm all the way out in Eastern Queens, and my
4 predecessor always made this joke that if you look on
5 a subway map and you look at the key of the map,
6 that's my district because we have no railways. I'm
7 one of the few districts that has no subways or no
8 Long Island Railroad so we do rely heavily on buses,
9 cars, bike lanes in order to get around and this is
10 all very much interconnected and I know that the
11 jurisdiction of these are sort of in different areas
12 so I definitely appreciate and don't envy the
13 position you guys are in to try to make all of this
14 work in terms of the transportation of such a big
15 city. Quick question, just going into that point is
16 for the MTA bus redesign process because obviously
17 that's not you guys and I understand that, I know
18 that they had their series of hearings so since
19 they've connected those hearings and the public, have
20 you been engaged in conversations, do you know what
21 the feedback is, do you know what DOT's role in that
22 bus redesign is going to be because if we're trying
23 to get cars off the road, more people using public
24 transportation, I think we need to make sure that,
25 especially for parts like my area that the buses are

2 in fact and indeed working for the communities so I
3 just wanted to see if you guys had any conversations
4 after they've had those series of public hearings and
5 testimony?

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The answer is
7 yes. We do sit with MTA and we have a permanent
8 planning section when it comes to the future of the
9 buses in the City of New York. Recently, we had a
10 summit led by Mayor Eric Adams, Chairman of the MTA
11 Janno, myself, the (INAUDIBLE), and others, and we
12 agree. We feel that when it comes to especially
13 communities that they don't have the best train lines
14 as anyone who lives in Manhattan. You can be
15 connected to the east to the west and going north and
16 south and have a good transit system, but many
17 communities don't have that, and we know how
18 expensive it is to buy land for a train so we are
19 working with MTA to be sure, again, that the future
20 of the buses is focused on safety, it's focused on
21 efficiency. One of the things that we have seen in
22 any of those areas that we have worked together with
23 them around the bus lane, we have seen an increase in
24 the efficiency of those buses, but this is one of
25 those areas that as the MTA being an independent

2 agency, more controlled by the Governor, that I can
3 say that we have more permanent planning together
4 between the MTA and we at DOT.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Also, I think
6 when they say efficiency, sometimes that can be
7 misleading because I know they cut a lot of the bus
8 stops, but when we have so many elderly in our
9 district as well as just those that are disabled I
10 think that does cause problems because then there's
11 not as many places where they can get onto the bus so
12 I just wanted to put that point in there.

13 I know that every 5 years you're supposed
14 to revisit the Transportation Master Plan, and I
15 appreciate the fact that you mentioned you guys have
16 been reaching out to the Community Boards and the
17 different Council offices, and, just out of
18 curiosity, what's the feedback or the results of
19 those conversations that you've been getting back and
20 how is that going to be factored into some of the
21 updating the Transportation Master Plan?

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: It is working
23 together that we get better results for our
24 communities. I can say that I have seen and am happy
25 to see new voices, new faces, new leadership. In some

2 Council Districts in the past, they were not open to
3 these core issues related to Transportation and push
4 us off. I think that I can tell you my own example. I
5 supported the bus lane at (INAUDIBLE) with opposition
6 of most voices on (INAUDIBLE) from elected to other
7 sectors who believed that by having the bus lane that
8 business would be hurt, and we proved that that was
9 not the case. We showed that most New Yorkers rely on
10 public transportation. More than 6 million of the 8.9
11 million New Yorkers rely on trains and buses and bike
12 so I feel, again, that we need to, again, work
13 together with the Council, the Community Board
14 Advisory Board. We will always get and take the
15 feedback. At the end of the day, we need to take the
16 feedback, we need to work with us as the Council, and
17 (INAUDIBLE) DOT and execute the best plan that we
18 feel that will improve the bus transportation system
19 in each borough, especially in those communities that
20 didn't get the same attention that other upper-class
21 communities received in the past.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: It would be great
23 because I would love to work with you on the timeline
24 of that because I love data, I think it's super
25

2 important, and so whatever information we can collect
3 and then sort of report back on would be great.

4 Chair, is it okay if I could ask a couple
5 more questions?

6 Okay. As Chair also of the Mental Health,
7 Disabilities, and Addiction Committee, one thing that
8 I'm concerned about is the access for the disabled
9 and elderly community in New York, especially in
10 districts like mine, we have a lot of retirees as
11 well as folks that have ADLs and need assistance and
12 also who live in transit deserts so how does the
13 Transportation Master Plan account for those that are
14 trying to get connected from where their residences
15 are to different transportation hubs and making it
16 more easily accessible?

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: As you say, we
18 have close to 1 million New Yorkers with physical
19 challenges, and one of the biggest divisions that we
20 have DOT is the Division of Sidewalks that it has
21 around 850 individuals. We had a former Chief of the
22 Office of Disability, Quemuel Arroyo, who now is the
23 Chief of Disability for the MTA, a great friend of
24 mine. He did a lot of great job together with the
25 rest of the team at DOT so what we are doing at DOT

2 is working around a plan to connect all New Yorkers
3 with the best mode of public transportation, and
4 we're doing it through buses, we're doing it through
5 trains, we're doing it through connecting some
6 communities that they can be able to use the Metro
7 North and expanding those Metro North. We are using
8 (INAUDIBLE) an option that we have, but, again, we
9 are more than happy, again, to continue going back to
10 your district and having conversation (INAUDIBLE)
11 that is not only about here I go and I go back and go
12 around to do something different. I feel at the end
13 of the day Mayor Adams is committed to continue
14 expanding the best working relationship with each
15 Council Member. This is what we do, and your voices
16 are very important to work with us around what is the
17 future of connecting New Yorkers who, as you say,
18 those who live in transportation deserts. I advocated
19 for my community when I represented Inwood where
20 people had to travel an hour and a half in average to
21 go to work so I know that reality and that's what I
22 bring again. What I bring to DOT, as I said before,
23 is not that I'm only the first Latino Commissioner,
24 but I'm the first working class Commissioner and the
25 first non-native-English-speaking Commissioner, but I

2 also am a Commissioner that have been living in the
3 underserved community so what is important for your
4 constituency to connect it (INAUDIBLE) going, take a
5 train or other mode of transportation, and this is
6 something, again, that we will make a lot of
7 progress, a lot of good work there.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Nice. The (INAUDIBLE)
9 for the Bronx and Queens and Brooklyn, that still
10 doesn't hit our side of Queens and so whatever we can
11 do also to bring folks closer to the major
12 transportation hubs would be great.

13 Real quick about the greenways, because I
14 have 2 awesome parks including, thank you so much for
15 talking about the Joe Michaels Mile and also the
16 Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, and it's great to know that
17 Phase 2 has started because we've been getting a lot
18 of questions on that so I just wanted to make sure
19 moving forward that the conversations to include, if
20 you could speak a little bit more in detail, I know
21 that you guys have worked really closely with the
22 community, but I think the concern we always hear is
23 how do we make sure that the voices of the community
24 and advocacy groups which I know are here as well as
25 the Community Boards are being reflected in all of

2 these plans moving forward because I think that there
3 are so many greenways that need to get interconnected
4 and so I just want to make sure that there's a real
5 concerted effort to make sure that we're bringing
6 those different voices to the table.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, that's a
8 top priority for me. This is something that those of
9 you who know me, if you go backward to what I have
10 said on this floor, I always have said that we need
11 to have diversity in the voices, and New York City is
12 not a city that we had in the 1900 census, and I feel
13 that those of us who really are committed to bring
14 the voices of advocates, we need to bring Asian, we
15 need to bring black, we need to bring Latino, we need
16 to bring working class. Time is over for someone to
17 be speaking on behalf of another group unless those
18 groups are invited to be part of the conversation so
19 this is something that I have dedicated my whole
20 life, and, for me, this is about, when you look at
21 the cyclist community, (INAUDIBLE) in some places
22 where you see cycling going in Midtown, there's not
23 diversity in that community, and we have to be sure,
24 it's not because of lack of effort from the advocate
25 but this is about what is going with the City of New

2 York that getting to a bike has been seen more
3 something of the middle class and upper class so,
4 speaking to someone that we are in the same line of
5 commitment so what we would see again, during my time
6 as the Commissioner and the team here at DOT, they
7 know, and everyone that has been working with me
8 knows is about we want to reflect the City of New
9 York, let's (INAUDIBLE) diversity at the level of
10 advocates and the level of the community that we
11 have. New York City today is 27 percent Latino, it's
12 24 percent African-American, it's 15 percent Asian.
13 Those groups were not there in the 1900s, and I think
14 that under this administration, what we have seen
15 again, an administration that creates the first in
16 the nation, the Office of Ethnic Community Media
17 where 30 percent of the (INAUDIBLE) and advertising
18 now must be used using our ethnic media (INAUDIBLE)
19 in Mandarin, in Cantonese, in Spanish, in
20 (INAUDIBLE), in other languages, in those communities
21 who English is not their language, we will be also
22 advertising, educating those communities, inviting
23 those communities to things that we're doing, and
24 they will be part of the process as we all workshop

2 and we plan the future transportation for the great
3 City of New York.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Next, we will
6 hear from Council Member Williams.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Hello. I have
8 some questions on Intro 291. I guess they're similar
9 to Council Member Rivera's questions. Greenways can
10 create and extend healthy open spaces into every
11 corner of the city, aid with social distancing,
12 greenway construction and upgrades will create jobs
13 that can take advantage of new federal infrastructure
14 funding. Does the city currently have sufficient
15 resources to conduct the necessary repairs and
16 engineering solutions for our aged greenway
17 infrastructure that this bill would identify?

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I will let Sean
19 to get into the details, but I can say that when it
20 comes to resources, there's always opportunity for us
21 to identify new ways of more resources, but, as you
22 (INAUDIBLE) this budget and the Council negotiated
23 the budget with the administration, we know that
24 there's a ceiling, but when it comes to how we feel,
25 having the additional 905 million dollars that was

2 added from Mayor Adams to DOT, having DOT increase of
3 13 percent of our budget, we feel that we have the
4 necessary resources that we need in order to do our
5 job.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: I would say
7 a large chunk of that money that the Commissioner
8 just mentioned is going toward building new greenway
9 segments in the city. It's a huge undertaking. The
10 gaps that remain in our greenway network are
11 challenging locations that will require a lot of
12 planning and conversations with the community members
13 to identify the best way to fill those gaps and then
14 working with our grants and budget teams how we can
15 capitalize on those newly available federal dollars
16 to really go after monies to further build out those
17 gaps. Our RAISE grant that we're asking 7.25 million
18 dollars from the federal bill will help us identify
19 those gaps and to start in really identifying where
20 we need to be pouring our resources and asking for
21 more resources to fill the gaps.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. What
23 are the challenges that DOT currently faces when
24 seeking to communicate with relevant jurisdiction
25 such as New York State Department of Transportation,

2 the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and
3 greenway-specific institutions such as the Hudson
4 River Park Trust?

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We have good
6 relationships with all those agencies and
7 institutions, and I feel that, especially these days,
8 there's a new, more positive relationship between
9 Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams that also
10 translates into a better level of coordination so, of
11 course, we always, again, want to continue
12 identifying different ways or how to create
13 mechanisms to (INAUDIBLE) to plan together, but I
14 feel the New York City DOT has (INAUDIBLE)
15 conversation when it comes to a project that we're
16 doing, collaborating information on how we build
17 bridges, how we apply for grants so I can say that we
18 don't have, I cannot talk about any negative
19 experience about how we coordinate with other
20 agencies.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. I know
22 Intro 291 would essentially compel you to look at
23 additional greenway spaces, and it seems that you've
24 already been doing work prior to this bill so do you
25 have a strategy, timeline for really assessing or are

2 you just going to wait for this bill to pass to
3 create a plan? I feel like you guys seem to have
4 somewhat of a plan already. Do you have a timeline
5 because I'm trying to figure out how to assert myself
6 into this timeline as it pertains to my Council
7 District?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: Sure.

9 You're right. We're not waiting around for the RAISE
10 grant to come to us. Hopefully, we get it. I think a
11 lot of Council Members have written letters of
12 support toward us getting that funding so we
13 appreciate that.

14 Destination Greenways is a really good
15 example of our next step in how the city is working
16 to fill those gaps. We've been talking a lot to a lot
17 of greenway advocates, some of whom are in the room
18 today, especially in the Bronx as a place that we
19 want to be focusing next, but we are open to hearing,
20 part of our next steps is to identify maybe 5 key gap
21 areas and 5 large study areas where we want to focus
22 so, if any of those gaps...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Do you have a
24 timeline for that, like when you identify those
25 areas?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: Yeah. So if
3 we go down the timeline of the grant process, that
4 would be something that starts in hopefully the fall
5 and would take about a year to identify. We have some
6 thoughts upfront that we're working on, and we're
7 definitely open to hearing those now from you if
8 there's locations in your district.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. I'll send
10 you the locations. Just one more thing. Just because
11 I have the privilege of talking to you right now on
12 the record for you to really consider shortening the
13 Bus Lane Pilot Study on Jamaica Avenue, and I'll just
14 leave it there. Thank you, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
16 bringing up Jamaica Avenue. That's a big problem in
17 Southeast Queens. It's all 4 lanes and people cannot
18 access our local businesses.

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: More than happy
20 to follow up (INAUDIBLE) with you. As I said before,
21 in order for us to continue reimagining the way of
22 how we connect New Yorkers who live in underserved
23 communities, those that don't have access to the
24 train, our buses are, for many of them, the only
25 resources that they have. We also know that we have

2 to hear, sometimes we can work around the time, that
3 bus lane goes up to 10 p.m., goes to 8 p.m., but I
4 feel that definitely when you look at the need to
5 have more bus lanes across the 5 boroughs, this is
6 the only resource that we had to connect those
7 communities.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I think the
9 issue is that the study is set for a year, and I just
10 don't think you need a year to make your assessment
11 so the bus lane's already taking place, it's already
12 been 6 months plus, I don't think that the agency
13 needs a full year to make a determination. Another
14 thing that I have an issue, I guess it's a question
15 and/or a statement, is a lot of times when DOT is
16 actually going out to survey and ask questions,
17 they're not asking specific questions to other built-
18 in environments, they are only asking targeted
19 questions to bus riders, which I get is the priority,
20 but there is no assessment on the impact of the bus
21 lane to the businesses that are along the corridors
22 and other people that actually drive into the area. I
23 know I'm going to be a broken record and probably
24 will be sort of tagged as this on the Council, but my
25 community is a car community. I am happy to look at

2 other modes of transportation. I'm a huge proponent
3 of micro-mobility and trying to figure out ways
4 actually to get more bike lanes and other modes of
5 transportation and improving the fact that we are a
6 transit desert, but we are a car community and so my
7 fear is that there is only 1 metric of success for
8 the bus lane and not looking comprehensively as to
9 how it's actually impacting the community.

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: More than happy
11 to continue conversation with you and even walking
12 through your district. I have done it in a number of
13 Council Districts, and, for me, this is again the
14 mandate I have from Mayor Adams to be sure that we
15 connect with each Council Member, especially walking
16 around the districts and see what are the needs so
17 let's follow up.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
19 Commissioner, and I know you're short for time. I
20 just ask if we can have our final Council Member ask
21 questions, Council Member Amanda Farias.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: I was going to
23 say, Commissioner, you have to let me ask questions.

24 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Of course.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: I appreciate it,
3 and I will be quick. I just first want to state thank
4 you to Chair Selvena Brooks-Powers for asking the
5 questions regarding the Harlem River Greenway and
6 questions around waterfront access in the Bronx. As
7 you know, I'm a peninsula, my district, and we have a
8 waterfront community that folks needs more access to,
9 and I want to be a partner in figuring out how we can
10 do that.

11 I want to ask some questions around Open
12 Streets, if possible, regarding specifically how the
13 role of local partners are at play in planning and
14 operating the Open Streets and also the operated SBS
15 program or grants opportunity of 50,000 dollars used
16 for it. I have a new BID, our first BID in my
17 community that has come to the Castle Hill community,
18 and we don't have an Open Street there yet, but we do
19 want to see a robust BID and we want to see them
20 working with you folks in that partnership. I also am
21 receiving an Open Street but have not received a
22 timeline on start or end date, which is a little
23 concerning for me, on Taylor Avenue between Story and
24 Lafayette in the southeast portion of the Bronx, and
25 so I just want to get a better idea of how we're at

2 play with including partners and planning and
3 decision-making, maintenance, how are BIDs included,
4 things like that. If I have any followup, I'll try to
5 be short.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: As I said
7 earlier, New York City has the largest Open Streets
8 program in the country and different from the type of
9 Open Streets that we did during COVID, 2020, which
10 was more putting barricades and closing some of the
11 streets because New Yorkers needed more space to walk
12 during COVID. This time around, what we have is an
13 (INAUDIBLE) Open Street, they have programming
14 related to art, culture, education. This year, we
15 have 159 locations citywide, 21 new, that in total
16 covers over 300 city blocks that are set to open for
17 New Yorkers to enjoy. The 2020 program will
18 prioritize equity with a specific focus on providing
19 resources in the priority investing areas identified
20 by the New York City Street Plan that we passed at
21 the Council, and we will be announcing additional
22 locations this summer. We want more. We want
23 partnership. We want to be sure that in some cases we
24 can run it from DOT perspectives with the resources.
25 In other cases, each community is different, and we

2 are more than happy to work with each of you to see
3 which one fulfills the needs of that community. We
4 have the resources to support those Open Streets in
5 any Council District.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: We're
7 actually doing a walkthrough with the new BID coming
8 up.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Great.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: They've
11 applied. They are interested in a lot of different
12 things so we're going to walk through with them and
13 see what we have to offer for them.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Please include me
15 in that. Just because that area primarily is one of
16 our largest commercial strips. There's a lot of
17 traffic. It's a major busway, major and minor truck
18 routes, lots of last-mile logistics that happen, and
19 so I'd love to be included in that and figure out
20 ways to be supportive.

21 Just a followup around the plan on
22 replacing moveable light-weight barriers with higher
23 quality safer objects for Open Streets, the Open
24 Street that I'm getting Taylor Avenue is adjacent to
25 a park and the back part of a mall so it's just a

2 regular street and so I'm just trying to better
3 understand is there a partnership with the local
4 organization or are you folks going to come out and
5 remove those barriers or what kind of Open Street,
6 what's it going to look like, and what does it mean
7 to keep those hours and bring it back to normal on a
8 regular day?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER QUINN: I'm not
10 totally familiar with this application so that's
11 something I can find out, but it is a range, either
12 we'll be doing it with our Horticulture Society
13 contract or if the partner has capacity we would ask
14 them to do it so I'm not sure exactly where it falls
15 in that range, but there's definitely a range, and we
16 can find out more details.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, great.

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Council Member,
19 at DOT we have a lot of respect for the new
20 leadership that you brought to this (INAUDIBLE) your
21 commitment to promote public transportation and new
22 innovation so whatever we do in your district, we
23 definitely will be also bringing you on board to be
24 part of that conversation.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Absolutely. We
3 have a great partnership. Thank you. I'm looking
4 forward to the Open Streets, looking forward to Open
5 Greenways. We need more of that in communities of
6 color so thank you for coming today and testifying
7 and thank you, Chair, for giving me time to ask
8 questions.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Now, we will
10 turn to public comments. We will ask that the public
11 keep their comments to no more than 2 minutes, and I
12 will kick it over to the Committee Counsel.

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Before I leave,
14 I'd like to say thank you to Elliott for all those
15 years that he helped me with my previous role. I know
16 that he's doing a great job and (INAUDIBLE) back
17 there so thank you, guys, also for continuing to
18 serve the city and to the advocates, your voices are
19 very important. I really mean it. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
21 much, Commissioner.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. We'll
23 now turn to public testimony. Each panelist will be
24 given 2 minutes to speak. Please begin once the
25 Sergeant has started the timer.

2 For panelists testifying in person,
3 please come to the table as your name is called and
4 wait for your turn to speak.

5 For panelists who are testifying
6 remotely, once your name is called a member of our
7 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-Arms will
8 give you the go-ahead to begin on setting the timer.

9 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce
10 that you may begin before delivering your testimony.

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: (INAUDIBLE) but
12 we will have a representative from DOT in the room to
13 be sure that if anyone testifies they know that we're
14 going to be following their testimony. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Carlos Castell
16 Croke, Laura Shepard, Theodore Segal, and Joby Jacob.

17 CARLOS CASTELL CROKE: Good afternoon. My
18 name is Carlos Castell Croke. I'm the Associate for
19 New York City Programs at the New York League of
20 Conservation Voters. NYLCV represents over 30,000
21 members in New York City, and we are committed to
22 advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our
23 people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier
24 and more resilient. I'd like to thank Chair Brooks-
25 Powers for the opportunity to testify today.

2 In a densely populated city like New
3 York, access to affordable clean transportation is
4 more than an economic driver and hard sought-after
5 resource. It is a fundamental right. We know that
6 transportation is a leading source of emissions in
7 the state and in the nation, mainly due to personal
8 automobiles and heavy-duty vehicles burning fossil
9 fuels. Furthermore, our frequent acceptance and
10 perpetuation of car culture constantly undermines the
11 safety of pedestrians and effectiveness of
12 alternative forms of transportation. In order to
13 effectively fight climate change and protect public
14 health, we need to reimagine how people live and move
15 in the city. An undeniable crucial part of that will
16 be creating an interconnected greenway system that
17 provides people with safe, low-emission patches
18 throughout the boroughs while providing numerous
19 other environmental benefits through green
20 infrastructure. NYLCV therefore supports Introduction
21 291 to create a Greenway Master Plan. Greenways
22 connect parks and open spaces, easily providing
23 access to these resources for communities that can't
24 walk to them. Green infrastructure along these paths
25 also helps to fight the urban heat island effect and

2 absorb stormwater. However, our greenways now are
3 disjointed and unfinished. A Master Plan can help to
4 get us back on track and build a truly interconnected
5 network.

6 Lastly, I just want to add that NYC DOT
7 has already applied to a federal RAISE grant for a
8 Greenways Expansion Plan, and we really support this
9 application, hope they receive it to work in
10 partnership with this legislation. Thank you.

11 LAURA SHEPARD: Good afternoon. My name is
12 Laura Shepard, Queen's Organizer with Transportation
13 Alternatives. Thank you, Chair Brooks-Powers, for
14 convening this hearing. Today's bills will work to
15 make our public space more inclusive, accessible, and
16 sustainable for New Yorkers. For nearly 50 years, TA
17 has fought for safe, equitable, and livable streets
18 in New York City. Coming out of the pandemic, we need
19 to re-examine how we use our public space to serve
20 our communities. New Yorkers are calling for public
21 spaces that serve people, not just moving and storing
22 cars. If we convert just 1/4 of current car space
23 into space for people, every New Yorker could live
24 within a 1/4-mile of a protected bus lane, protected
25 bike lane, and public green space, the vision of TA's

2 New York City 25 by 25 Campaign. Better use of
3 streets and waterways can reduce car emissions, clean
4 the air, and improve public health. We must
5 prioritize black and brown neighborhoods that have
6 been under-resourced and underinvested in for
7 decades. TA strongly supports Intro 291 to build a
8 public greenway network, connecting all 5 boroughs to
9 increase public access to our waterfront, and connect
10 our communities. Greenways provide significant
11 infrastructure benefits. They create jobs, safer
12 travel options, provide flood protection, and outdoor
13 space and improve air quality and public health
14 outcomes. However, significant gaps must be filled to
15 create an equitable greenway network. The current
16 piecemeal approach has been slow, inequitable, and
17 resulted in substandard sections. Plans have existed
18 on paper for greenways such as in Southeast Queens
19 but never come to fruition. A hundred miles of
20 dedicated space still need to be developed with
21 robust community engagement and upgrades in
22 connectors are needed throughout the network. In some
23 areas, families cannot safely access nearby parkland
24 without a car because of the lack of continuous
25 connections. No one should have to dodge speeding

2 cars on a highway on/off ramp to access parks and
3 greenways as too many residents do now, especially in
4 Queens. Plans to close gaps and expand greenways must
5 also include strong community partnerships. It is
6 critical that frontline communities most impacted by
7 flooding and air pollution from environmental abuse
8 lead the way on local resiliency and transportation
9 planning.

10 We also support Chair Stevens' Intro 293
11 and Chair Joseph's Intro 258. Thank you.

12 THEODORE SEGAL: Hi. I'm Teddy Segal, and
13 I'm the Creator of Got to Go NYC where I document
14 sanitary and accessible bathrooms throughout all 5
15 boroughs. I'm here today to not only speak on my
16 beliefs but as a representative of my Got to Go NYC
17 community, which currently has a cumulative of over
18 150,000 followers across all social media platforms.
19 I have learned from my followers that the issue at
20 hand is twofold. As well as being a public health
21 crisis, the lack of sanitary accessible and public
22 New York City bathrooms is an equity crisis.
23 Marginalized groups are bearing the brunt of the
24 city's failures. In February 2022, a man commented on
25 my page "as a black man who does deliveries at night,

2 I don't even both trying at this point." I understand
3 that as a cis white straight woman, my appearance
4 gives me an inherent privilege. I can walk into most
5 hotels and use their lobby bathroom without being
6 questioned or told to leave. This is not the case for
7 the majority of New Yorkers. I've had the privilege
8 of speaking with a homeless couple who were denied
9 the bathroom code to a café based on their appearance
10 even offering to buy a drink with their limited
11 funds. This is New York City. Why are we ranked 93rd
12 in the nation when it comes to bathrooms per capita?
13 Why was a 27-year-old New York City resident forced
14 to bleed through her pants in a CVS while holding a
15 box of tampons she bought begging to use the
16 restroom? Why does a 22-year-old camp counselor at
17 Prospect Park have no choice but to change children
18 in a bathroom where human feces was smeared on the
19 walls and floors for days on end despite having
20 reported it to the Parks Department? Why did a
21 tourist from London have to witness her elderly
22 friend wet herself because they couldn't find an
23 accessible restroom in time? While this bill is only
24 one tiny step in the right direction to fix this
25 issue, I believe that it could positively impact the

2 lives of millions. It is of the utmost importance for
3 New Yorkers and tourists alike to know where to go
4 without needing to take out their wallet.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
6 that. I know I can speak firsthand to how crucial in
7 those moments they are so thank you for advocating. I
8 don't think some people realize how important the
9 conversation is.

10 JOBY JACOB: Hi. I'm Dr. Joby Jacob, and
11 I'm an Associate Professor of Biology at LaGuardia
12 Community College and co-founder of both the Motor
13 Parkway East and Eastern Queens Greenway Advocacy
14 Groups here to speak in favor of a new Master Plan.
15 In Eastern Queens, we have a lot of high-quality
16 trails like the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway and Joe
17 Michaels Mile. These trails are part of a contiguous
18 emerald ribbon of parks that stretch across Queens.
19 Plans to fill in the gaps between the trails have
20 existed since the '70s but nothing was done so
21 greenway users had to mix with traffic. My friends
22 and I have been advocating to fill in those gaps to
23 create a continuous 12-mile trail system that better
24 connects our community. We filled in some of these
25 gaps with protected bike lanes and through the

2 Destination Greenways program and, thanks to funding
3 allocated by the Mayor and the Council this budget
4 cycle, we're closer than ever to our vision for a
5 family-safe, car-free path from the Unisphere to the
6 end of the trail in Little Bay Park, but there are
7 more connections needed. I petition on our greenways,
8 and we run into people from all over the city. In the
9 past few weeks, I ran into folks from Glen Oaks,
10 Cambria Heights, Jackson Heights, and Manhattan, all
11 areas that should have had greenway access by now who
12 came to ride our trails but there's no safe way to
13 get to those trails from those places yet. I want to
14 highlight the Destination Greenways process. The
15 process brought together DOT, Parks, electeds,
16 Community Boards, activists, and the public to figure
17 out a consensus on how to fill in those gaps. What
18 the city released in 1993 is a fine framework, but,
19 to my knowledge, these master plans just sat on a
20 shelf. We need a new plan and a commitment to see it
21 through. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
23 your testimony. Next, we will hear from Neile
24 Weissman, Sara Lind, Miriam Dawn Tabb, and Daniel
25 Ranells.

2 NEILE WEISSMAN: (INAUDIBLE) I'm Public
3 Relations Director for New York Cycle Club for whom I
4 have organized 1,000 rides. I'm here to speak in
5 support of Intros 291 and 258 to introduce grayways,
6 a proposal which calls on Transportation and Parks
7 and Recreation to designate 500 miles of recreational
8 bikeways to connect city parks. My extended remarks
9 is a one-pager which you have. The full proposal
10 includes 18 routes with GPS directions and maps
11 totaling 600 miles, they span the 5 boroughs, and
12 they comprise existing bikeways, quiet residential
13 streets, and commercial areas that are empty on
14 weekends. They feature neighborhood food stops and
15 points of interest. The first iteration of the
16 network can be implemented quickly and cheaply by
17 hosting GPS data on city websites. The immediate
18 beneficiaries are the hundreds of thousands of New
19 Yorkers that are already comfortable riding in
20 traffic and neighborhood food stops would see a surge
21 in tourism. As the routes are upgraded with safety
22 improvements, greater numbers of New Yorkers will
23 take advantage. Because twice as many people bike for
24 recreation as transportation, a network that embodies
25 that will grow the constituency twice as fast and you

2 still get the connectivity, the equity, and the
3 resilience and sustainability. The grayways' tie-in
4 with Intro 258 is obvious. Yes, you want beautiful
5 roads and unique destinations, but you must ensure
6 that they're adequate rest stops because you can't
7 assemble a human-powered transportation grid without
8 providing places to go. For this reason, grayways
9 routes pass parks and playgrounds at regular
10 intervals to ensure that the network has good
11 coverage. Grayways has the support of 16 cycling
12 organizations representing thousands of cyclists.
13 Thank you.

14 SARA LIND: Hi. Thank you, Chair Brooks-
15 Powers, for holding this hearing. My name is Sara
16 Lind. I'm the Director of Policy at Open Plans, a
17 non-profit focused on creating a more livable city.
18 All of the bills presented today will help further
19 our vision of a city where the streets, sidewalks,
20 and other public spaces are safe, accessible, and
21 joyful, and where every neighborhood has equitable
22 access to services and programming. Intro 291 calling
23 for a citywide Greenway Master Plan is a critical
24 step in providing every neighborhood with the
25 opportunity for active transport that is safe and

2 sustainable. A truly connected greenways network will
3 enable so many more people to utilize these wonderful
4 spaces. Similarly, we support Intro 258 because
5 public bathrooms are an equity issue and will allow
6 people to move around our city freely without needing
7 to worry about where they can use the restroom. We
8 would, however, encourage the city to move more
9 expeditiously on these projects, and, rather than
10 taking years to create reports, we urge the city to
11 act now.

12 We're also enthusiastic about Council
13 Member Stevens' bill, Intro 293, to allow community
14 organizations to use curbside space for programming
15 and activities. We know that this space can be put to
16 amazing use by institutions such as these and have
17 enormous public benefit, helping to build community,
18 provide outdoor space for play and gathering, and so
19 much more. None of this is possible when that space
20 is used for the free storage of private cars.

21 On the topic of public space management,
22 our city is essentially not doing it right now. I
23 have seen too many public safety improvements, such
24 as bollards at dangerous intersections or curb
25 extensions denied because the community could not

2 provide a private maintenance partner. Safety
3 improvements to the city's public space should not
4 require a private partner. An Office of Public Space
5 Management such as Open Plans has proposed could
6 solve this problem. Such an office could also address
7 the current systemic discrimination against
8 pedestrians that was created under former Mayor
9 Bloomberg when he privatized the maintenance of
10 sidewalks. Sidewalks are public space, and the city
11 should be responsible for clearing snow, fixing
12 cracks, and otherwise maintaining these spaces just
13 as they do for our streets. This is an equity issue,
14 an accessibility issue, and a safety issue.

15 MIRIAM DAWN TABB: Hello. Good afternoon.
16 My name is Miriam Dawn Tabb. I am the Director of the
17 Friends of Mill Pond Park, and I am also a television
18 host for a show on BronxNet Television called Uptown
19 NYC, where we highlight culture, cuisine, and other
20 good stuff that happens in the Bronx. My reason for
21 being here today is to ask you to please move forward
22 with the Greenway Master Plan. It is something I feel
23 that has been overlooked when I go through other, and
24 pardon me for being emotional, when I ride along the
25 Westside Highway and we don't have what they have

2 although we've been asking you over and over again,
3 whether it was you as an individual. As a person
4 color, not only do we need this but this we deserve
5 this to better our healthcare, to bring families
6 together. Not having green space is also a form of
7 dividing us from having outings so I ask you to
8 please move forward with this and move forward with
9 this bill to make sure that we have the green space,
10 the piers, the walkways to roller skate, to just move
11 forward with being included. We have been overlooked
12 too long and include us. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
14 much for that and for elevating the inequities that
15 continue to persist and I'm looking forward to the
16 day that we pass this legislation so thank you.

17 MIRIAL DAWN TABB: So do I. Thank you,
18 Madam Chair.

19 DANIEL RANELLS: Hi. My name is Daniel
20 Ranells. I'm representing the Bronx River Alliance
21 here today. I'm a lifelong New York City resident.
22 I've lived in the Bronx for about 20 years now, and
23 I'm the Director of Programs at the Bronx River
24 Alliance.

2 We have a couple of advocacy teams, the
3 Greenway Team and the Ecology Team, that I'm here
4 voicing support of a Greenways Master Plan. We do
5 applaud New York City DOT. They've had bicycle
6 working groups that have done community outreach and
7 included a lot of Bronx folks, as you heard the Bronx
8 mentioned a lot today. We're (INAUDIBLE) to protect,
9 restore, and improve the communities and the natural
10 environment, and, while we've benefited a lot from
11 federal funding and federal collaboration, people
12 can't get to the Bronx River Greenway and Waterways
13 so we're wholeheartedly in support of connecting
14 every part of this in terms of the Destination
15 Greenways. That sounds amazing. We're an
16 environmental organization so this is also about
17 critical climate resiliency infrastructure. We need
18 this. We need to maintain rain gardens. We need to
19 manage our combined sewage overflow. It's all
20 related, and we can solve multiple problems with
21 greenways like the Tibbetts Brookway daylighting and
22 definitely in support of public bathrooms. We work
23 closely with Parks, and our conservation group has to
24 deal with the impacts of not having public bathrooms
25 accessible. We're also very much in support of what's

2 been said as a director of the public realm so we
3 would ask that there be a holistic view of all these
4 public spaces. We thank you for having this hearing
5 and for allowing us to speak.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

7 Before we move on, I just want to take a moment to
8 acknowledge the Children's Aid Shadow Day
9 Participants up in the balcony area. Welcome to the
10 New York City Council. We hope you're enjoying
11 yourself watching today's hearing on the Committee on
12 Transportation and Infrastructure so welcome.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Next, we will
14 hear from Michael Cass (phonetic), Chauncey Young,
15 Chris Sanders (phonetic), and Robert Fanuzzi.

16 MICHAEL CASS: Hello. My name is Michael
17 Cass, and I'm a cyclist from the East Bronx, and I
18 volunteer for the Friends of Hutchinson River
19 Greenway. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to
20 speak. Today, I'm speaking in support of Intro 291,
21 the citywide Greenway Master Plan, which will require
22 DOT and the Parks Department to develop a master plan
23 for the city's greenways. As a cyclist in the Bronx,
24 I rely on the Pelham Parkway, Mosholu Parkway, and
25 Hutchinson River Greenways to quickly get from one

2 corner of the Bronx to the other. That's how I'm able
3 to quickly show up when our elected officials hold
4 events in the Bronx. But there are parts of the Bronx
5 which do not have easy access to greenways or where
6 there are significant gaps. There is so much
7 potential in the Bronx, and I believe it is not too
8 far off that riders will be one day able to bike from
9 Manhattan to Westchester almost entirely on
10 greenways. I believe a citywide Greenway Master Plan
11 will keep long-delayed projects on the radar and on
12 track. I think we heard today about a project at East
13 177th Street and Devoe Avenue that has been fully
14 funded to fill gaps in the Bronx River Greenway. This
15 is an example of a project that had been long-delayed
16 and sometimes felt forgotten for years at a time. A
17 master plan will keep DOT and other agencies
18 accountable. Along the Harlem River, there is so much
19 potential for a complete greenway, but we need a
20 master plan to ensure that there is a coherent vision
21 as the waterfront is developed. To keep my remarks
22 brief, I urge the entire Bronx delegation and the
23 City Council to support this legislation. Greenways
24 are a lifeline for our city, and we should plan like
25 it. Thank you.

2 CHAUNCY YOUNG: Good afternoon, Chair
3 Brooks-Powers and the New York City Council Members.
4 I'm presenting today on behalf of the Harlem River
5 Working Group, a member organization of the New York
6 City's Greenway Coalition. The Harlem River Working
7 Group was formed in 2009 and represents over 50
8 community groups, park advocacy groups, Community
9 Board representatives, and elected officials
10 throughout the Bronx along the Harlem River, and many
11 of our partner organizations have been organizing to
12 connect the neighborhood to their riverfront for over
13 3 decades. The Harlem River Working Group and many
14 other greenway and parks advocacy groups form the New
15 York City Greenway Coalition in conjunction with
16 Brooklyn Greenway Initiative because we need an
17 expanded greenway network for New York City and
18 because, for us, the Bronx and many other less
19 affluent communities throughout New York City have
20 not benefited from the same level of parks and
21 greenway infrastructure throughout New York City. We
22 hope by standing united that we'll be able to address
23 this. The example shared today, Destination
24 Greenways, the Harlem River was included in that but
25 was removed because it was seen as too complicated,

2 but, in the time of the working group, we've seen
3 that we've lost huge portions of the waterfront that
4 were once public property have been sold to Public
5 Land. At the same time Mayor De Blasio committed
6 nearly a billion dollars to redo the entire Manhattan
7 waterfront, we lost 4 acres of park land when De
8 Blasio turned that future park land of Mill Pond Park
9 into low-income, moderate-income housing. It includes
10 the Hip Hop Museum which we're happy about, but we
11 shouldn't have lost 4 acres of park land to get that,
12 and we haven't gotten it back. We also lost 30 acres
13 of park land that was sold from CXX to a private
14 developer that is a friend of ours, can I use a few
15 more moments, a friend of ours, Dynamic Star and who
16 wants to see the greenway happen, but that could've
17 been public park land and that is what the community
18 wanted to see that property for decades. What we'd
19 like to see is we'd like to see a complete network
20 that would include all the greenways throughout the
21 Bronx as was mentioned earlier and would connect the
22 Bronx to the rest of New York City. The Empire State
23 Trail, which is the key trail for New York state,
24 runs through the Bronx, but, instead of taking the
25 Putnam Line which Parks mentioned and taking the

2 Harlem River Greenway which would create a separate
3 off-street system, it just jumps through the Bronx as
4 many projects do to get to the Hudson River Greenway
5 so putting development into the Putnam Greenway is
6 really essential, into the Harlem River Greenway. The
7 question you asked, the Bronx has access to less than
8 50 percent of their waterfront while the rest of the
9 boroughs is over 70 percent. That was New York City
10 Planning Department. They shared that in a meeting
11 just recently. We have the least access. There's
12 actually zero on-water recreation activities for the
13 Bronx along the Harlem River. It used to be the
14 center of recreational space along the waterfront.
15 There were over 50 boathouses prior to our friend
16 Robert Moses building the Harlem River Drive and the
17 Deegan Expressway. There were over 50 boathouses, the
18 heart of recreational space in the city. We've lost
19 that now. All these were part of the original
20 greenway plan. We really support your Master Greenway
21 Plan bill because it's not only updating that
22 greenway to include changes but also to hold the city
23 accountable and to update the progress and
24 development and to show the equity where the Bronx
25 has been left out for decades. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

3 CHRIS SANDERS: Good afternoon and thank
4 you, City Council, and thank you, Chairwoman Brooks-
5 Powers. My name is Chris Sanders, and I am a Harlem
6 volunteer with Trans Alt, the organization who tries
7 to create green transportation and infrastructure in
8 New York City. The reason I'm here today is because I
9 wanted to lend a black voice to supporting the
10 Harlem, Bronx, all of the greenways, and I believe
11 that's bill 291. I noticed that when I'm traveling
12 along the Hudson Greenway on the west side, it's
13 beautiful. When you go down past 72nd Street, but,
14 above 72nd Street, it's crumbled, it's kind of janky,
15 destroyed, and, on the east side, you can't even
16 really use it at all. I would love to see that built
17 out because I can't go over there right now.
18 Especially during the summer, I like to use my bike
19 for transportation instead of the train or the bus or
20 my car, and I don't always feel comfortable with it
21 because we have no protective bike lanes in Harlem at
22 all, and, in the Bronx, whoa, they don't get
23 anything. They get even less than Harlem, and we
24 don't get anything. Community Board 10 makes sure of
25 that. I want to support efforts to bring Harlem and

2 the Bronx up to speed on the latest green
3 transportation infrastructure like the Central Harlem
4 Bikeway and the Greenway Master Plan. Additionally, I
5 also support public bathrooms all over New York City
6 as I've had my own issues and also Open Streets near
7 schools, that is 293, Althea Stevens brought that up
8 earlier. Thanks.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 ROBERT FANUZZI: Thank you. I'm Robert
11 Fanuzzi. I'm President of the Bronx Council of
12 Environmental Quality, an all-volunteer environmental
13 organization. We're here to speak in favor of 291.
14 The Bronx Council played a leading role in the first
15 Bronx Greenway Master Plan, also commissioned in
16 1993. Nearly 30 years in, we can speak with authority
17 about the environmental and civic needs for 291. BCQ
18 members sat on the first Bronx Greenway Plan in 1993
19 and its update in 2007. They led efforts to clean up
20 the Bronx River, now the Bronx River Greenway. We
21 know from firsthand experience the environmental,
22 recreational, and transportation benefits that
23 building greenways bring. Building greenways, green
24 greenways, with zero discharge and green
25 infrastructure built in is a foundation of our

2 citywide sustainability, resilience, non-coastal
3 flooding mitigation, water quality, and parks
4 management. I would add as a recommendation to this
5 bill to include green infrastructure in greenway
6 planning because, as I know from my experience
7 leading the fight for the Putnam Greenway and
8 Daylighting, greenway planning and greenway funding
9 is rarely a straight line. You actually have to go
10 through agencies that serve one of the many co-
11 benefits I just listed to greenway planning so this
12 bill really should be looking for multiple sources of
13 funding and project leadership in addition to the 2
14 leads, DPR and DOT, mentioned. The Bronx side of the
15 Harlem River is the next frontier of greenway
16 planning, but time is running out. BCQ was the lead
17 in getting the Bronx side of the Harlem River
18 designated as a brown field opportunity area from the
19 state of New York with plans for continuous greenway..
20 may I continue?

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes, but
22 please briefly. We have a whole crew of folks online.

23 ROBERT FANUZZI: 20 years into this
24 effort, we're concerned. The Harlem River Greenway is
25 growing in fits and starts. Every day we make phone

2 calls to multiple city agencies, state, and federal
3 about the overlapping jurisdictions. There is also a
4 leadership of open space planning along the Harlem
5 River Waterfront, and it's not city agencies. It's
6 private developers. As my colleague, Chauncy,
7 mentioned, we are seeing acres of waterfront being
8 turned into nonconnected, non-greenway open space
9 requirement from Bloomberg-era DCP zoning. It's a
10 huge loss for the Bronx side of the Harlem River. I
11 will not improve upon the stirring cry for equity
12 that everyone here has made. I will only say that our
13 organization is one of many who have toiled for
14 decades, in our case 30 years, for integrated
15 synergistic greenway planning. We do have plans from
16 Columbia, from MIT. We've chartered our own plan. I
17 urge passage of this with the proviso that not only
18 Community Boards be consulted but also community
19 organizations and that they play an active role in
20 planning alongside city agencies because we have been
21 out in front of the city for 30 years now. We really
22 need you to listen to communities and the desired
23 pathways that they've already created and just need
24 your help. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. As
3 we move to our online folks testifying, we ask that
4 you each please respect the 2-minute timeline so that
5 we can allow everyone to express themselves. Thank
6 you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Next, we will
8 hear from Kevin Jones, and Kevin will be followed by
9 Glen Bolofsky and Eric McClure. Kevin.

10 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

11 KEVIN JONES: Good afternoon, Chair
12 Brooks-Powers and Members of the Transportation
13 Committee. My name is Kevin Jones. I'm the Associate
14 State Director for Advocacy at AARP New York,
15 representing 750,000 members of the 50+ community in
16 New York City. Thank you for providing me with the
17 opportunity to testify at today's oversight hearing
18 to discuss the city's public spaces and Greenway
19 Master Plan.

20 Older adults represent the city's fastest
21 growing demographic. The 65+ age group is growing 12
22 times faster than the under-65 population. Given this
23 reality, the city should pay significant attention to
24 the needs of older adults in the planning and
25 management of public spaces. Our older adult

2 population build this city and made it great, and we
3 owe it to them to make it a great city for them to
4 live in as they age. Green spaces are key to a
5 livable city that supports aging in place, and
6 livable cities go hand-in-hand with being age-
7 friendly. AARP has long supported and pushed for
8 livable communities which include safe, walkable
9 streets, a healthy environment, opportunities for
10 residents of all ages to participate in community
11 life and more. We published a Livability Index by
12 neighborhood, and, if you're curious how your
13 neighborhood stacks up, you can look it up on our
14 Blueprint for Action which we sent to all the Council
15 offices earlier this year or you can find it on
16 aarp.org/ny. While green spaces are vital to
17 livability, improving physical health, increasing
18 life expectancy, improving mental health, and the
19 environment, very few older adults can access these
20 spaces. A 2014 study of 174 neighborhood parks in 25
21 major U.S. cities found that although older adults
22 age 60 and over account for 20 percent of the general
23 population, they represent only 4 percent of total
24 park users. Mobility issues can have a lot to do with
25 that. According to a 2015 National Health and Aging

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2 Trend study, 16 percent of seniors use a cane, 11.6
3 percent use walkers, about 6 percent use wheelchairs,
4 and 2.3 percent rely on scooters. Improving mobility
5 access...

6 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

7 KEVIN JONES: Ensuring proper maintenance
8 of paths will encourage more adults, especially those
9 with mobility issues, to utilize greener spaces. Any
10 master plan should reflect the needs of the community
11 as the city moves forward with the Greenway Master
12 Plan (INAUDIBLE) older adults should be paramount.
13 The plan should not only follow the existing ADA and
14 NYC disability laws but also create an age-friendly
15 environment.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

17 KEVIN JONES: Thank you for giving me the
18 opportunity to testify, and I'm happy to answer
19 questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
21 much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Next, we will
23 hear from Glen Bolofsky, and Glen will be followed by
24 Eric McClure and Thomas Mituzas.

25 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

2 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Good afternoon, Majority
3 Whip and Council Members and Central Staff. Hope
4 everybody's doing well today. Exciting meeting today.
5 Learned a lot. I want to thank everybody for that.
6 I'd like to talk about bus lanes and the usefulness
7 of the bus lanes, especially the new ones that DOT
8 just introduced in the Bronx that we all now are much
9 needed and long-awaited. As we have in Jamaica Queens
10 and as we have in many areas where there's a
11 transportation desert, we're giving discounts still,
12 even more discounts this year than last year for
13 people who are illegally parking and blocking bus
14 lanes throughout the city, and I know Majority Whip
15 and Finance Chair Justin Brannan had inquired with
16 the Department of Finance as to the logic behind
17 this. I was wondering if the Council had any
18 responses yet from the Department of Finance.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Glen, I'm
20 sorry. If you could just repeat that last question.

21 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Sure. No problem. Thank
22 you for the time, Majority Whip. I was just simply
23 saying that there's new bus lanes announced in the
24 Bronx recently, long overdue and greatly appreciated
25 by the residents and the Council Members who

2 represent those different districts, but, whether it
3 be in the Bronx, in Westchester Square or in Jamaica
4 or in other transportation deserts throughout our
5 great city, we all know that the Department of
6 Finance saw fit to increase parking tickets discounts
7 for people blocking those bus lanes in the Stipulated
8 Fines Programs, even greater discounts this year than
9 prior years, and I know this Committee and the
10 Finance Committee jointly wrote a letter to the
11 Department of Finance inquiring as to their logic and
12 the gravity of the situation as to why they would do
13 that. I was wondering if anyone got a response.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes. I'm sorry
15 about that. I missed that. Yes, we did receive a
16 response. We can share that with you offline. I'll
17 have Alex send it to you.

18 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Thank you, Majority Whip.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: It's always
20 great seeing you, Glen. Thank you.

21 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Okay. Next, we
23 will hear from Eric McClure. Eric will be followed by
24 Thomas Mituzas and Nabil Khatri.

25 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

2 ERIC MCCLURE: Thank you, Chair Brooks-
3 Powers, Council Member Farias, for your stamina,
4 sticking around to hear us out. Apologies if my cat
5 walks back and forth. It's getting close to
6 dinnertime for them.

7 StreetsPAC is strongly supportive of this
8 Committee's assessing of the large and crucial task
9 of managing the city's public space. Welcoming
10 dynamic, easily accessed, and equitable public space
11 is critical to the health of New York City and its
12 citizens, and we believe the creation of a high-level
13 entity within city government to coordinate and
14 manage the city's public spaces is urgently
15 necessary. The pandemic has underscored just how
16 important access to open space is to New Yorkers and
17 just how immensely popular and good for business
18 welcoming, strollable, and sittable areas are across
19 communities. We urge this Committee and the full
20 Council to prioritize improvement in the city's
21 management of public space.

22 As to the 3 bills before the Committee
23 today, we support all of them. Intro 291 which would
24 require creation of a citywide Greenway Master Plan
25 is long overdue. The last Greenway Plan was done in

2 1993, and, while some advances have been made toward
3 creating a connecting network of paths crisscrossing
4 all 5 boroughs, it hardly resembles a robust network.
5 Large gaps persist, many existing segments have been
6 poorly maintained, and the environmental justice
7 communities that need these greenway segments most
8 have seen the least progress. As New York City's
9 population grows, more and more people seek
10 opportunities for active recreation and the number of
11 people commuting by bicycle booms, demand for
12 greenway access will continue to rise. An updated
13 master plan will build public support and provide a
14 roadmap for the significant amount of federal funds
15 now available for these types of projects. We support
16 Bike New York's suggested amendments to the bill
17 including the need to address the use of electric-
18 assist bikes and other small electric vehicles,
19 highlighting agency jurisdictions, and including
20 specific detour provisions when construction or
21 maintenance necessitates temporary closure of a
22 greenway segment. We along with our many partners in
23 the NYC Greenway Coalition urge passage of Intro 291
24 out of Committee and to a quick support of a full
25 vote by the Council.

2 We also support Intro 258, which would
3 facilitate the creation of more public restroom
4 facilities across the city. New York City trails far
5 behind most peer cities in providing ready access to
6 clean, safe..

7 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

8 ERIC MCCLURE: Will require identification
9 of suitable restroom locations in every neighborhood.
10 Access to restrooms is an equity, health, and
11 sanitation issue, and it's inexcusable that we
12 haven't done at least what other leading cities have
13 in providing such facilities. At the same time, we
14 strongly urge the MTA to open all closed restroom
15 facilities in the transit system.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
17 much.

18 ERIC MCCLURE: In the interest of time,
19 I'll just say that we also support Intro 293 and,
20 again, grateful for the opportunity to testify.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thanks so
22 much. We appreciate you. We just again ask folks to
23 please respect the 2-minute timeline. We do have
24 another member of the public in person that we'd like
25

2 to hear from also so we're just trying to be able to
3 accommodate everyone. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
5 your testimony. Next, we'll have Thomas Mituzas
6 followed by Nabil Khatri and Osendy Garcia.

7 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

8 THOMAS MITUZAS: Greetings today, Chair
9 Brooks-Powers and the New York City Committee on
10 Transportation and Infrastructure. I'm grateful for
11 the opportunity to speak with each of you today. My
12 name is Tom Matuzas, resident of the Blissful section
13 of Long Island City/Queens, Secretary with the
14 Blissful Civic Association, and co-Chair of the
15 Transportation Committee of Community Board 2 of
16 Queens. My family has called Blissful home since
17 1907. Our community at Blissful/Long Island City is
18 part of the 1 percent of New Yorkers who do not have
19 access to green space, parks, or playgrounds. We are
20 part of New York City who must travel greater than 15
21 minutes to get to green space. In fact, the one area
22 that served as our park, a small triangular sandlot
23 that I played in as a child, was taken from us by DOT
24 and now stores vehicles and equipment owned by DOT.
25 More land in Blissful has been recently taken by DOT

2 for storage of equipment despite our cries for green
3 space. New York City found our community an excellent
4 site to host 3 homeless shelters, all of whom we've
5 welcomed with open arms, yet, despite our cries for
6 infrastructure improvements, we've seen none.

7 Blissful section of Long Island City has not been the
8 recipient of awards despite sharing the same zip code
9 as Long Island City. In fact, we have none of the
10 amenities that the other Long Island City has. In
11 District 26, I've calculated 50 million awarded green
12 space over the last 4 years, we have seen 500,000.
13 The 500,000 was awarded to us by our prior Councilman
14 after a 10-year fight with DOT to restore our
15 century-old veteran's memorial that sits on land
16 owned by DOT. DOT Commissioner, the DOT you spoke of
17 today, I do not know. New York City Parks, thank you.
18 Last week, we saw the final plans for the restoration
19 of our veteran's memorial, and you did a fine job.
20 Thank you.

21 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

22 THOMAS MITUZAS: We only ask that you
23 speed up the delivery.

24 Today, we support and are testifying in
25 respect to 291, and we come before you to ask for

2 support for the inclusion of the Blissful Greenway.
3 In the interest of time, we were awarded a number by
4 DOT, DOT 484255K7Q6, 2 years ago and have heard
5 nothing since. We ask for the Chair and this team to
6 look into, we want, respectfully, the Blissful
7 Greenway to be included in the Master Plan. Our
8 greenway will connect the Kosciuszko Bridge to the
9 Greenpoint Avenue Bridge to the Pulaski Bridge,
10 connecting 3 of the gateways between Brooklyn and
11 Queens.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Great. Thank
13 you so much. We need you to wrap up, and please be
14 sure to submit that written testimony.

15 THOMAS MITUZAS: Yes, I'll submit the
16 entire written testimony. Thank you, Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
19 your testimony. Next, we'll hear from Nabil Khatri
20 who will be followed by Osendy Garcia and then Tyler
21 Taba.

22 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

23 NABIL KHATRI: Hi. My name is Nabil
24 Khatri. I live in Flushing Queens. Thank you for the
25 opportunity to testify. I'll keep it short. I'm

2 expressing support for Intro 291, the Greenways Bill.

3 I would like to also emphasize that it's important to
4 build safe connections to this greenway. Imagine the
5 New York City highway and there was no way to get a
6 car to the highway. The highway wouldn't be used. It
7 would be a waste of money. The same applies here. We
8 can build the greenways, but we need good connections
9 from different neighborhoods.

10 I also support previous comments that
11 urges the Parks Department to make their laws on e-
12 bikes more consistent with New York City laws. E-
13 bikes are a great way to give access to people of
14 different abilities and ages to our greenway network.

15 The last comment is during the
16 implementation stage, space will need to be reclaimed
17 from cars. There's no way to build this greenway
18 network without reclaiming space from cars, and I
19 urge the city not to compromise too much when it
20 comes to prioritizing cars over people. I think this
21 bill is great. It will make New York City one step
22 closer to being a world-class city when it comes to
23 micro-mobility. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What an angel.
25 Giving us back a minute. Thank you so much.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. Next,
3 we will hear from Osendy Garcia followed by Tyler
4 Taba and then Julie Chou.

5 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

6 OSENDY GARCIA: Good afternoon. Thank you
7 so much for allowing me to testify in support of
8 Intro 258 and Intro 291. My name is Osendy Garcia.
9 I'm a community organizer in East Harlem, a member of
10 Community Board 11 as well as the Neighborhood
11 Advisory Board in the Department of Youth and
12 Community Development. I've been an advocate for the
13 homeless and transient population since 2014. One of
14 the largest issues that I came across during my
15 outreach work was access to restroom facilities. Once
16 COVID started, all the facilities closed that were
17 typically accessible to individuals who were living
18 in the streets. Community members exhausted nearly
19 every resource to provide masks, hand sanitizers, and
20 other items to counter the lack of facilities. With
21 urgency, I advocated at Community Board 11 in the
22 public safety interest (INAUDIBLE) distressing
23 conditions that a lack of access to restroom
24 facilities meant for an already vulnerable population
25 in the pandemic. I believe this legislation can serve

2 as a preventative measure that could impact the
3 quality-of-life issues as well as reducing budget
4 restraints across Oasis-led facilities, local
5 organizations, and committees. Collaborative efforts
6 between the city, state, and federal could have a
7 ripple effect on how we interact and support the
8 homeless and transient populations. I am grateful for
9 this opportunity because, as everyone before me has
10 mentioned, this is an equity issue. This is a human
11 rights issue. I'm here advocating for the 80,000+
12 people that do not have access to these meetings and
13 to our committees, and I beg you to please allow this
14 bill to pass. For other members and individuals who
15 are...

16 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

17 OSENDY GARCIA: Please fill out the 2022
18 Community Needs Assessment survey from the Department
19 of Youth and Community Development. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
21 much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Okay. Next, we'll
23 hear from Tyler Taba, and Tyler will be followed by
24 Julie Chou and Roy Smith.

25 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

2 TYLER TABA: Thank you. My name is Tyler
3 Taba. I'm the Senior Manager for Climate Policy at
4 Waterfront Alliance, an alliance of more than 1,100
5 organizations, businesses, and individuals. We also
6 convene the Rise to Resilience Coalition, which is a
7 coalition of more than 100 organizations calling on
8 government to make climate resilience an urgent
9 policy priority.

10 Healthy open spaces provide tremendous
11 benefits to New Yorkers, and we support the
12 legislation calling for a Greenway Master Plan. The
13 New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan released
14 earlier this year acknowledges the need for a 5-
15 borough greenway plan and specifically includes the
16 goal of completing planned waterfront greenway
17 improvements that leverage the unique opportunities
18 and community needs available along various stretches
19 of waterfront. We're proud to have worked with DCP on
20 this plan and could not agree more with the goal of a
21 completed waterfront plan.

22 We recommend that a Greenway Master Plan
23 consider development of a uniform user experience
24 between greenways, parks, sidewalks, bike paths, and
25 ferry landings. Greenways are a catalyst for change,

2 connecting communities, creating new recreational
3 opportunities, fostering outdoor experiences that
4 lead to better health outcomes, and implementing
5 resilient infrastructure that addresses climate
6 hazards.

7 Greenway infrastructure is a critical
8 part of climate-resilient infrastructure that can
9 also bring multiple benefits. Further, greenway
10 investments foster better connections for residents
11 to existing parks and waterfronts as well as new
12 ferry landings, providing further access to all parks
13 for more communities. Low-income communities and
14 communities of color continue to lack public access
15 to the waterfront, and these communities have seen
16 the least development and investments in recent
17 greenway expansions. Waterfront Alliance studied a
18 mile and a half stretch of waterfront along the
19 northeast shore of Staten Island with limited
20 waterfront access, poor roadway conditions for
21 cycling and pedestrians, and repeat flood incidents.
22 Local community members agreed there is a glaring gap
23 between the New Stapleton Waterfront and Fort
24 Wadsworth, which, if activated, could provide
25 connectivity, resilience, recreation, and economic

2 development to local residents in the borough as a
3 whole.

4 We look forward to advancing Intro 291 to
5 meet these critical needs for the city and waterfront
6 communities. Thank you so much. I don't know how I
7 ended up getting pushed back, but it was probably my
8 fault so thanks for getting me in.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
11 your testimony. Next, we will hear from Julie Chou.
12 Julie will be followed by Roy Smith, Matthew Clark,
13 and Remy Schwartz.

14 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

15 JULIE CHOU: Hi. My name is Julie Chou. I
16 serve on Manhattan Community Board 5, and I'm part of
17 the Public Bathroom Working Group between 4 Community
18 Boards in Manhattan. I helped to publish a report
19 with the Urban Design Firm in 2019 that stated there
20 are only 1,100 public bathrooms in New York City with
21 only 2 public bathrooms available 24/7. This is not
22 enough for a city of 8.4 million people with annual
23 tourists over 66 million. Our study found that there
24 are only 680 comfort stations out of the 1,700 parks
25 in New York City so more than half of our parks do

2 not have access to public bathrooms. We ask the Parks
3 Department to address the parks that do not have
4 comfort stations as part of this legislation.

5 We also ask DOT to make transparent all
6 the sites that have been considered for APTs to
7 better understand why it has been so challenging to
8 find viable sites for these units. A public bathroom
9 is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and we want to
10 make sure that the public bathrooms that are sited
11 for the different zip codes work for each community
12 and are safe and well-maintained. We ask the
13 Interagency Working Group to meet with local
14 Community Boards and BIDs throughout the study. We
15 also ask that bathrooms be sited in areas with high
16 pedestrian traffic, (INAUDIBLE) crime prevention
17 through environmental design principles. We ask that
18 they will be regularly maintained by the Parks
19 Department or a local BID, preferably with full-time
20 attendants.

21 Manhattan Community Board 5
22 wholeheartedly supports the legislation to propose a
23 public bathroom site for each zip code and applauds
24 the City Council for addressing this need. Manhattan
25 CB5 has also passed a resolution asking for more

2 public bathrooms in the city with at least 1
3 additional 24/7 public bathroom with full-time
4 attendants in our district, easily identifiable for
5 public bathrooms, and technology to help people
6 locate all publicly accessible bathrooms in New York
7 City. Thank you so much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. Next,
9 we'll hear from Roy Smith followed by Matthew Clarke
10 and Remy Schwartz.

11 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We're having a
13 difficult time hearing you.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Roy Smith, can you please
15 turn off your mic and then maybe restart it? We
16 cannot hear you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We'll just ask
18 if you can submit a written testimony. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: We can circle
20 back and see if you get the audio figure out. Next,
21 we will hear from Matt Clarke. Matt.

22 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

23 MATTHEW CLARKE: Thank you, Chair Brooks-
24 Powers and the Committee, for having me today. My
25 name is Matthew Clarke, and I serve as the Executive

2 Director of the Design Trust for Public Space. Our
3 organization has spent the past 27 years unlocking
4 the potential of New York's public space. I'm
5 testifying today to support public space in the 3
6 bills under consideration. However, my primary
7 message to this Committee and to the Council at large
8 is in regards to the context in which these programs
9 can be successful. Over the past 2 years, we have
10 worked with hundreds of organizations from large BIDs
11 to small place-based advocates, with thousands of
12 individuals, and with many of you on projects that
13 reframe what public space means to New Yorkers. This
14 ranges from Neighborhood Commons which is with SBS to
15 identify new ways to manage and support commercial
16 corridors in public spaces that don't have BIDs, with
17 Turn Out New York City which is testing a new model
18 of public space arts infrastructure that centers
19 power in place, particularly BIPOC and historically
20 marginalized communities, and with Alfresco NYC which
21 is working to imagine the long-term development of
22 Open Restaurants in New York City. These efforts have
23 made 2 points abundantly clear. One, we are meeting a
24 generational moment to rethink how public space can
25 serve every New Yorkers, and, two, that our

2 government is not yet structured to take advantage of
3 this opportunity. New York needs a centralized voice
4 to address public space management with 3 critical
5 capacities: being able to vision, plan, and
6 coordinate our parks, streets, plazas, and corridors;
7 providing a clear and inclusive regulatory process
8 such that non-governmental entities have centralized
9 and simple procedures for permitting and licensing;
10 and directing existing and future resources like
11 grants and maintenance in a coordinated and equitable
12 way to small businesses, CBOs, and other public space
13 managers.

14 Design Trust recommends that the
15 Interagency Public Space Working Group be
16 strengthened to serve as a forum to design a long-
17 term, more formal structure to address these
18 capacities. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Next, we will
21 hear from Remy Schwartz. Remy.

22 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Looks like we may
24 have lost Remy so we can go back quickly to Roy
25 Smith.

2 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

3 ROY SMITH: Is this better?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Yes, we can hear
5 you.

6 ROY SMITH: Okay. Thank you. I'm here to
7 speak in support of 291. I have submitted written
8 testimony. In the interest of time, I'll just
9 summarize that. Retrofitting a modern greenway
10 network into our existing car-oriented infrastructure
11 is not easy, but it's made even more difficult
12 because of interagency turf wars at the expense of
13 getting things done. I'll mention 2 examples in the
14 Bronx where I live.

15 One is 177nd Street near Starlight Park,
16 which I believe several other speakers have mentioned
17 earlier this afternoon. Plans to construct a green
18 space with bicycle and pedestrian paths have been
19 stalled there for over a decade. The allocated land
20 is owned by New York State DOT. That's sitting behind
21 a chain link fence collecting junk cars and weeds
22 while the street remains one of the most dangerous
23 locations for cyclists in the entire borough.

24 Second project is, there's a East River
25 Pilot Project in the Bronx which just in the past

2 week has been expanded to include the area around
3 Ferry Point Park Ferry Terminal, but the pilot
4 excludes a route to the terminal itself because Parks
5 won't allow access into the park to a scooter so they
6 can't actually get to the ferry terminal.

7 The common theme here is that New York
8 City DOT, New York State DOT, Parks, New York State
9 DEC, and other agencies are all finger-pointing
10 instead of getting the job done.

11 Additionally, over the last bunch of
12 years, there's a range of micro-mobility options have
13 appeared. There's a wide range of electric and hybrid
14 electric/human-powered devices, some can go 20 miles
15 an hour, some are (INAUDIBLE) being tested by UPS now
16 are so wide as to obstruct the entire width of a
17 typical bike lane. Of course, we all know the cargo
18 bikes are the foundation of the delivery networks
19 supporting our restaurant industry. These devices are
20 essential. They're alternatives to full-size motor
21 vehicles...

22 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

23 ROY SMITH: I'm almost done. But they
24 don't fit in with either vehicular traffic or the
25 greenways designed for bicycles and pedestrians. We

2 need a network which will safely support these not-
3 quite bicycles, not-quite-a-motor-vehicle modes of
4 transportation. 291 will mandate the various agencies
5 to work together on these issues, and I strongly urge
6 its passage. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
8 much for that testimony and thank you to all of
9 today's participants in this hearing. I think it was
10 tremendously to hear from the administration
11 firsthand their plans as it pertains to open spaces,
12 the management and oversight and accountability of
13 it, as well as the several bills that we had under
14 consideration today. I thank the public for coming
15 out in such large numbers to share their thoughts and
16 to be able to weigh in on the conversation which is
17 critically important as we move to create greater
18 access for communities, especially those that for
19 many, many years have been under-invested in.

20 With that, I will officially close out
21 today's hearing and wish everyone well. Thank you.

22 [GAVEL]

23

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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 August 15, 2022