

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Jointly with the
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
And the
COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
And the
COMMITTEE ON AGING

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May 12, 2022
Start: 9:07 a.m.
Recess: 5:18 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 1)

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Charles Barron
Gale A. Brewer
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
David M. Carr
Amanda Farias
Crystal Hudson
Ari Kagan
Farah N. Louis
Francisco P. Moya
Chi A. Ossé
Keith Powers
Pierina Ana Sanchez

Marjorie Velázquez
Eric Dinowitz
Kristin Richardson Jordan
Linda Lee
Sandra Ung
Lynn Schulman
Christopher Marte
Darlene Mealy
Francisco P. Moya
Carmen De La Rosa
Rita Joseph
Lincoln Restler
Kalman Yeger
Shahana Hanif
Shekar Krishnan
Mercedes Narcisse
Carlina Rivera
Nantasha Williams
Joann Ariola
Althea Stevens

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

Ydanis Rodriguez
Commissioner
Department of Transportation

Eric Beaton
Deputy Commissioner for
Transportation Planning and
Management
Department of Transportation

Elisabeth Franklin
Associate Commissioner of Budget
and Capital Program Management
Department of Transportation

Yogesh Sanghvi
Associate Commissioner for Grants
and Fiscal Management
Department of Transportation

Charles Ukegbu
Assistant Commissioner for
Regional and Strategic Planning
Department of Transportation

Rebecca Zack
Assistant Commissioner for
Intergovernmental and Community
Affairs
Department of Transportation

Manuel Castro
Commissioner
Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs

Colette Samman
Deputy Commissioner
Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs

Tom Tortorici
Director of Legal Initiatives

Mayor's Office of Immigrant
Affairs

Anne Montesano
Executive Director of Interagency
Initiatives and Language Access
Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner
Department For The Aging

Michael Ognibene
Chief Operating Officer
Department For The Aging

Jose Mercado
Chief Financial Officer
Department For The Aging

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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2 SERGEANT SADOWSKI: Okay, I see the live stream
3 is up. Just confirming.

4 SERGEANT BIONDO: That is affirmative. We are
5 rolling.

6 SERGEANT SADOWSKI: Thank you. And sergeants, at
7 this time will you please start your recordings?

8 PC recording has started.

9 SERGEANT BIONDO: Rcording to the cloud on the
10 way.

11 SERGEANT SADOWSKI: Thank you and good morning,
12 and welcome to today's remote New York City Council
13 physical 2023 Executive Budget hearing of the
14 Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and
15 then later the Committees on Immigration and Aging.

16 At this time, would all council members and staff
17 please shut on their video.

18 To minimize disruption please place electronic
19 devices on vibrate or silent mode. All public
20 testimony is set to be given on May 25 at 10 a. m.
21 but if you would like to submit testimony, you may do
22 so at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again,
23 that is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

24 Thank you for your cooperation. We are ready to
25 begin.

2

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. [GAVEL]

4 Good morning, and welcome to the first portion of
5 today's executive budget hearing. This is our fifth
6 day of executive budget hearings, and today, we
7 welcome our former counsel colleague and now
8 Commissioner of the Department of Transportation,
9 Yidonis Rodriguez.

10 I'm also joined by the chair of the Committee on
11 Transportation and Infrastructure, Majority Whip
12 Majority Whip Selvena Brooks-Powers.

13 Quickly the department's fiscal 23 budget of \$1.
14 4 billion represents 1. 4% of the city's proposed
15 fiscal 23 budget in the Executive Plan. DOT's fiscal
16 23 budget increased by \$100. 7 million, or 7. 6%
17 from the preliminary plan of \$1. 3 billion. The
18 increase is the result of a number of actions taken,
19 most significant of which is a new need of \$53. 2
20 million added through the transportation streets
21 plan, an adjustment of \$17 million in state funding
22 for the Staten Island Ferry, \$3. 9 million in
23 federal funding for the traffic management center,
24 and \$1. 3 million in federal Coronavirus response
25 and relief supplemental appropriations act funding.

2 Commissioner Rodriguez, I'd like to welcome you
3 and your team to today's hearing. I plan on focusing
4 my questions on the Transportation Master Plan, Citi
5 Bike, street resurfacing, transit signal priority,
6 and some other issues. I look forward to forthright
7 answers from the department to learn about how DOT's
8 fiscal 23 dollars will be spent, and more
9 importantly, where. Issues like street resurfacing
10 Citi Bike placement, the master plan and other
11 critical issues must be equitable to neighborhoods
12 across the five boroughs and every zip code.
13 Underserved areas must be prioritized. This Council
14 will fight for a fair and equitable overall budget,
15 and that goes for the DOT budget as well. I want to
16 take a moment to thank John Basile, Chima Obichere,
17 John Yeddin, and the entire finance division for
18 their work on today's hearing, and all the hearings
19 up until now.

20 I'll now turn to majority whip and Chair of the
21 Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
22 Councilmember Brooks-Powers for her opening remarks.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Good morning, and
24 thank you, Chair Brannan, and welcome to the City
25 Council Finance Committee and Transportation and

2 Infrastructure Committee's joint hearing on the
3 fiscal 2023 Executive Budget. My name is Selvena
4 Brooks-Powers and I have the privilege of chairing
5 the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

6 Today we will be hearing from the Department of
7 Transportation. I would like to thank the Chair of
8 the Committee on Finance, Councilmember Justin
9 Brannan, for his leadership and partnership
10 throughout this budget process and during these
11 hearings.

12 A reminder to those watching that members of the
13 public are invited to testify on Wednesday, May 25,
14 and you may visit Council.NYC.Gov to learn more.

15 Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to
16 recognize that tragically, 8 New Yorkers have died
17 from traffic accidents in a span of just 4 days.
18 Traffic fatalities are now at their highest level
19 since Vision Zero was launched in 2014, at a total of
20 254 people. These deaths are preventable and the
21 city has committed billions of dollars to Vision Zero
22 in order to stop these deaths from occurring.

23 Today and moving forward, we hope that the
24 Department of Transportation remains committed to the
25 goals of Vision Zero, and addresses this tragedy by

2 promoting safer streets in all communities. The
3 mayor's recent announcements look promising, and I
4 hope to be a part of this important ongoing work. We
5 are here today to continue the fiscal 2023 budget
6 process. In March, this committee held its
7 preliminary budget hearing, and we confronted the
8 reality that transportation policy in this city has
9 vastly under-invested in transportation deserts and
10 ignored the needs of people with disabilities. Since
11 then, I have continued my tour of all 51 council
12 districts to hear directly from local communities,
13 advocates, and elected officials on the
14 transportation issues affecting New Yorkers so that
15 we can work to reverse decades of underinvestment and
16 neglect.

17 Today, we are here to continue the fiscal 2023
18 budget process with this subject in mind, and it is
19 my hope that this budget process will lead to the
20 adoption of a budget that is equitable and fair to
21 all communities citywide. The Department of
22 Transportation's executive expense budget for fiscal
23 2023 is approximately \$1.4 billion. In addition,
24 \$12.1 billion is budgeted for the department's
25 capital program. As a result of our preliminary

2 budget response, which called on the administration
3 to add \$3.1 billion to the city street plan, the
4 administration has included an additional \$904
5 million to enhance the... to enhance the plan. While
6 I welcome the new funding, it's still falls short of
7 the council's budget response proposal.

8 Additionally, one-time fiscal 2022 Council
9 discretionary funding remains missing for Vision Zero
10 education campaign.

11 We look forward to receiving an update on how
12 this new funding will be used, and whether it is
13 sufficient to meet the peoples'... excuse me the
14 plan's legislative benchmarks. We also hope to hear
15 how the Department of Transportation is addressing
16 the needs of neighborhoods like mine that are
17 suffering from high rates of traffic fatalities and
18 crashes. It is my hope that the department will look
19 to invest in these communities in order to transform
20 city streets into safe and usable infrastructure.

21 Finally, we look forward to the commissioners
22 updating the Committee on the department's efforts to
23 maintain the city's roadway infrastructure,
24 particularly in regard to its four-year capital plan.

2 I would like to thank the committee staff who
3 have helped prepared this hearing, John Basile, the
4 Principal Financial Analyst, Chima Obichere, the unit
5 head and also a constituent of mine, Elliot Lin,
6 Senior Committee Counsel, Jessica Steinberg-Alban,
7 Senior Committee Counsel, Rick Arbello, Senior Policy
8 Analyst, Kevin Katowski, Senior Policy Analyst, as
9 well as the members of my own staff, my chief of
10 staff, Sydney Renwick, and my policy director Alex
11 Hunter. I will now pass it back to the Finance
12 Council to continue our hearing. Thank you.

13 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Chairs Brannan and
14 and Brooks-Powers.

15 Good morning and welcome to the first agency
16 hearing for May 12, the Department of Transportation.
17 My name is Malcom Butehorn, and I am counsel to the
18 Finance Committee.

19 I would first like to acknowledge council members
20 present for the record. We are joined today by
21 council members, Brannan, Brooks-Powers, Ariola,
22 Velázquez, Farias, Yeger, Louis, Ossé, Kagan, Hudson,
23 and Lee.

24 Unlike in past council members and members of the
25 mayoral administration will have the ability to mute

2 and unmute themselves. When not speaking. Please
3 remember to mute yourself. If you forget to do so
4 when we hear background noise, we will go ahead and
5 mute you. Council members who have questions should
6 use the raise hand function in zoom. I will call on
7 you and the order with which you raised your hand.
8 Councilmember questions will be limited to five
9 minutes.

10 The following members of the administration will
11 testify and or answer your questions. Commissioner
12 Ydanis Rodriguez, Eric Beaton, Deputy Commissioner
13 for Transportation Planning and Management, Elisabeth
14 Franklin, Associate Commissioner of Budget and
15 Capital Program Management, Yogesh Sanghvi, Associate
16 Commissioner for Grants and Fiscal Management,
17 Charles Ukegbu, Assistant Commissioner for Regional
18 and Strategic Planning, and Rebecca Zack, Assistant
19 Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community
20 Affairs.

21 I will first read the oath and after I will call
22 on each member from the administration individually
23 to respond. Do you affirm to tell the truth the
24 whole truth and nothing but the truth before these
25

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

13

2 committees and to respond honestly to Councilmember
3 questions? Commissioner Rodriguez?

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I do.

5 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Associate Commissioner
6 Franklin?

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Yes, I do.

8 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Deputy Commissioner Beaton?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes, I do.

10 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Associate Commissioner
11 Sanghivi?

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SANGHIVI: Yes I do.

13 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Assistant Commissioner Ukegbu?

14 And I apologize if I'm mispronouncing

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: Yes, I do.

16 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: And Assistant Commissioner
17 Zack?

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Yes.

19 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Commissioner
20 Rodriguez, you may begin when ready.

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Good morning. Buenas
22 Dias, Chair Brooks-Powers, Chair Brannan, and members
23 of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
24 and Committee on Finance. I am Ydanis, Rodriguez
25 Commissioner, the New York City Department of

2 Transportation. With me today are Eric Bateson,
3 Deputy Commissioner for Transportation Planning and
4 Management. Elisabeth Franklin, Associate
5 Commissioner of Budget and Capital Program
6 Management, Yogesh Sanghvi, Associate Commissioner
7 for Grants and Fiscal Management, Charles Ukegbu,
8 Assistant Commissioner for Regional and Strategy
9 Planning, and Rebecca Zack, Assistant Commissioner
10 for Intergovernmental Community Affairs.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on
12 behalf of Mayor Eric Adams on DOTs FY 23, Executive
13 Budget, and FY 2231 capital plan. I'm proud to be
14 here for my first executive budget hearing on this
15 side of the table, as DOT Commissioner after my four
16 years serving on the Committee on Transportation, and
17 8 years as Chair and look forward to partnering with
18 you all.

19 At the first 100 days address Mayor Eric Adams
20 unveiled his vision for our shared future, and this
21 budget that reflect those values.

22 As a mayor said, these values this budget puts
23 people front and center, especially those who have
24 often been left behind. Despite the massive shocks
25 to our system in the past two years, our city entered

2 fiscal year 2023 on a strong financial footing, which
3 was the result of effective planning and fiscal
4 responsibility. This budget will allow the DOT to
5 fight the rise in reckless driving, and hence safety
6 with intersection upgrades, provide more public space
7 in communities across the city, and speed up buses,
8 expanding our bike lane network, and make the city
9 more accessible for all New Yorkers, including people
10 with disabilities, maintain our infrastructure, and
11 continue to transport about 25 million passengers
12 each year on the Staten Island Ferry. And even
13 further to Mayor made a commitment to focus our
14 investment in working class communities that have
15 received less investment historically.

16 DOT's \$1.84 billion FY 23 expense budget that, as
17 you can see include \$150 for bridges \$147 for
18 ferries, roadway \$260, sidewalk and street management
19 and other \$304, traffic operation \$450, and
20 transportation planning and management \$194 million.

21 DOT proposed 26 capital commitment plan totals
22 include bridges \$12 billion, street reconstruction \$4
23 billion, resurfacing \$2.9 billion, sidewalk \$3.2
24 billion.

2 First, as the mayor announced, this
3 administration is making a historic investment of
4 \$904 million to advance the goals laid out in the New
5 York City street plan and rapidly build out critical
6 street safety and public transportation
7 infrastructure. These investments include nearly
8 \$580 million in capital funding as well as expense
9 forming that ramps up to more than \$65 million
10 annually, or \$328 million over five years. These
11 will find positions to conduct outreach and community
12 engagement as well as manage, monitor, and coordinate
13 agency efforts to meet the plan's benchmarks. This
14 funding is both an important downpayment for the NYC
15 street plan benchmarks and also fills critical
16 shortfalls in other ongoing work.

17 This investment is critical for furthering Mayor
18 Eric Adams and my commitment to create a more
19 equitable city in our goal on making your city the
20 safest city for pedestrians and cyclists in the
21 United States of America. OSI testified before this
22 committee previously that the NYC street plan laid
23 out priority investment areas that will help focus
24 our investment to where they can have the greatest
25 impact.

2 DOT will continue to invest in communities across
3 the entire city, but going forward a street design
4 investments as a whole will be prioritized in higher
5 need neighborhood based on the DIA tiers while still
6 being guided by data such as crash histories and
7 _____. The Citizen Foundation Network must meet
8 the needs of all New Yorkers regardless of race,
9 ability, or economic status in a safe, efficient, and
10 sustainable manner, and these historic investments
11 will help push us closer to that goal.

12 Far too many New Yorkers have lost their lives to
13 traffic violence. The new NYC street plan funding
14 builds on ongoing budgetary commitments to curb
15 traffic deaths. The Total Vision Zero investments in
16 DOT's current 10-year capital plan is nearly \$3
17 billion in addition to an average yearly investment
18 of about \$250 million in expense budget.

19 This street plan investments in the mayor's
20 executive budget goes with funding for our previous
21 announcements that we are redesigning 1000
22 intersections to enhance safety. Thanks to funding
23 in this budget, we will make intersection safety
24 enhancements in areas near Southern Boulevard and
25 Boston Road in the Bronx, Bay Water Park in Queens,

2 the New York Public Library Main Branch in Manhattan,
3 and new Utrecht Avenue in Gowanus in Brooklyn. This
4 budget includes \$195 million in capital funds to help
5 us install raised crosswalks city wide in partnership
6 with the Department of Design and Construction.

7 When it comes to bikes, turning to bikes, our
8 bike lanes make roads safer for all road users, and
9 we are focused on improving the cycling network
10 coverage and connectivity across the entire city by
11 building our bike lane network.

12 The street plan investment in this expense budget
13 includes \$27.8 million in FY 23, increasing to \$33.5
14 million in FY 26, and the other years to expand the
15 city protected bike lane network.

16 On the capital side, this budget includes nearly
17 \$26 million that will go towards creating a raised
18 and protected two-way bike lane on Willis Avenue in
19 the Bronx, connecting the Willis Avenue Bridge and
20 Roberto Clemente Plaza, which will also include
21 accessibility, safety, and bus stop improvements.

22 We also include funding for destination greenways
23 to improve access to parks in Brooklyn and Queens,
24 \$30 million to Utopia Parkway in Queens that will
25 allow us to initiate a new greenway connection from

2 Little Bay Park in Joe Michaels Mile to the wider
3 bike network in this part of Queens. The funding
4 will also allow us to bring significant pedestrian
5 and bike improvements while protecting the waterfront
6 on the parkways northern end.

7 In Brooklyn, work is on the way on one of the
8 most critical segments of the Brooklyn waterfront
9 greenway, currently planning for completion late next
10 year. This project will create a safe, separate bike
11 path connecting Sunset Park to Red Hook and Gowanus
12 on Hamilton Avenue. Additionally, pedestrian safety,
13 landscaping, and accessibility enhancements will help
14 realize the vision of a connected waterfront greenway
15 for the borough of Brooklyn.

16 The budget also includes funding for hardening
17 existing bike lanes to enhance safety add in \$6.6
18 million in FY 23 and FY 24, and \$500,000 in FY 25 and
19 the outer years. DOT crews have already begun work
20 to meet the administration commitment to upgrade
21 physical infrastructure on 20 miles of bike lanes by
22 the end of 2023. Mayor Adams recently announced an
23 additional five bike lanes that have been selected to
24 upgrade, keeping the city on track to complete 30
25 mile of bike lane upgrades in 2022 and 10 more miles

2 in 2023. This includes 20 and Grand Street in
3 Brooklyn, Northern Boulevard in Queens, 60th Street
4 in Manhattan, and southern Boulevard in the Bronx.

5 When it comes to busses, our Better Buses
6 Program will speed up busses and shorten commutes
7 through dedicated bus lanes and bus ways. These
8 budgets fund approximately \$15 million per year
9 starting in FY 23, increasing to \$23 million in FY
10 26, and the outer years to build out more protected
11 bus lanes. It also includes \$29 million in capital
12 funds to install bus lane cameras.

13 It is not enough to just speed up buses. We need
14 to continue to improve the bus riding experience for
15 New Yorkers. Annual expense funding is provided in
16 this budget for bus stop staff upgrades at \$1.5
17 million in FY 23, increasing to \$3.8 million in FY 26
18 and the outer years. Capitol funds are provided in
19 this budget to fund safer and more accessible bus
20 stops on 79th Street in Manhattan, as well as a
21 number of projects in the Bronx tied to the MTA bus
22 network redesign, such as bus improvements on White
23 Plains Road.

24 In Brooklyn, we will start construction next year
25 on improvements to the B-82 bus route, one of the

2 largest street projects in our 10-year capital. This
3 project will provide many benefits to bus riders,
4 including _____ accessible bus stops, as well as
5 safety benefits for all _____ users throughout the
6 route.

7 Through this project, DOT will also reconstruct
8 the medians along Kings Highway to a state of good
9 repair. I would like to thank Councilmember Louis
10 for her financial support for this project.

11 For bus stop real time passenger information,
12 this budget includes \$74 million in capital funds for
13 installation, as well as \$840,000 in FY 23,
14 increasing to \$1.2 million in FY 26 and the outer
15 years for maintenance and operations. These
16 investments will allow us to enhance the experience
17 of bus riders throughout the whole city on New York.

18 And related to buses and other public
19 transportation, as Mayor Eric Adams and Speaker Adams
20 announced the Fair Fair Program will be expanded and
21 made permanent. This budget baselines \$75 million in
22 funding for discounted MTA riders, and is the first
23 time that the city has guaranteed annual funding for
24 this program. This is especially personal to me,

2 since together with a previous speaker, we also
3 championed the Fair Fair Program.

4 On accessibility, DOT is committed to making the
5 city more accessible for all New Yorkers. Many of
6 the bus projects I mentioned include accessibility
7 enhancements and the agency continues to work with
8 the MTA to make bus stops physically accessible for
9 all users growing from a long-standing program to
10 upgrade bus stops, on to elevator subways, to now
11 addressing all kinds of physically inaccessible bus
12 stops. These budget also includes \$1.5 billion in
13 capital funding over the next four years to continue
14 pedestrian ramp installation and upgrades citywide.

15 Our accessibility pedestrian signal APS program
16 provides access to traffic signals for pedestrians
17 with vision disabilities, and is the largest and
18 fastest expanding in the whole nation. This budget
19 includes \$232 million in capital phones for APS
20 installation and expense funds to support these
21 installations, \$11 million in FY 23, growing to a
22 baseline of \$16.8 annually. DOT will install APS at
23 400 intersections this year, 500 next year, and
24 eventually over 1000 intersections annually, with
25 10,000 intersections equipped with APS by the end of

2 2030. That's how we are taking care with a great
3 community of close to 1 million New Yorkers that have
4 physical challenges.

5 Together, these works will make it easier for the
6 approximately again 1 million New Yorkers living with
7 that reality.

8 On open space, all New Yorkers should also have
9 access to safe, welcoming, and attractive public
10 space close to where they live. In the lead up to
11 car-free day last month, DOT launched their 22 Open-
12 Street Program through which New Yorkers will be able
13 to enjoy more public space on 150 streets, covering a
14 total of 300 blocks. This budget includes funds that
15 will allow us to advance permanent redesign of
16 popular open streets, including \$88 million to
17 transform 34th Avenue in Queens.

18 And to support a new vibrant public space in an
19 area that would not have had it otherwise, this
20 budget includes \$5.4 million in FY 23 in the outer
21 years for the Public Space Equity Program. This
22 comprehensive approach to public space support and
23 management includes partners reimbursements and a
24 contract for maintenance, landscaping, and technical
25 assisting for public space partner organizations in

2 greatest need. These will allow us to continue
3 providing direct support to over 20 open streets,
4 over 30 plazas, and more in the future. We encourage
5 council members, my colleagues, to connect us with
6 community organizations that are interested in
7 becoming public space partners.

8 When it comes to trade, to reduce congestion and
9 contain competition for limited curb space, the DOT
10 will be exploring and partnering micro-distribution
11 centers, location of facilities for transferring
12 goods from large commercial vehicles to a smaller,
13 more sustainable, last mile delivery model. This
14 budget includes \$959,000 in FY 23 and baselined
15 \$154,000 in FY 25 to support the freight industry
16 engagement report and pilot required by local law 166
17 of 2021. We are excited about the potential of these
18 centers to enhance safety, efficiency in the public
19 right of way, while accommodating the growing number
20 of deliveries.

21 When we look to education awareness, media
22 campaign, DYSMO, the DOT unveiled "Speeding Ruins
23 Lives", a public awareness campaign directed at
24 drivers that aims to counter speeding in New York
25 City. The campaign, which used baseline Vision Zero

2 media following, is widespread across the five
3 boroughs and includes billboard, bus shelters,
4 LinkNYC kiosks, gas station pumps, radio, TV screens,
5 and digital ads are featured in multiple languages.

6 To ensure New Yorkers continue to hear for us
7 this budget's baseline has an additional \$960,000 in
8 funding that will allow us to expand our education
9 and media and promotional events going forward.

10 These will enable us to reach more New Yorkers and
11 spread important news and educational information to
12 the diverse communities across the city. A sample of
13 this type of work includes amplifying the city's
14 efforts to expand automatic enforcement programs,
15 announcing new and enhanced bike lanes, and
16 celebrating car-free events.

17 On federal funding, turning to federal funding,
18 as the agency testified as well, DOT is working
19 closely with city hall and our sister agencies to go
20 after every dollar available from the bipartisan
21 infrastructure law to advance projects that will
22 benefit New Yorkers for decades to come. Our team
23 has a history of successfully competing for federal
24 grants. I'm very proud of the great work that they
25 have done.

2 Some of our recent success includes winning a \$2
3 million race planning grant to reimagine the Cross
4 Bronx Expressway last year in partnership with New
5 York State DOT and the Department of City Planning, a
6 \$10 million grant in 2020 for bus stop improvements
7 along BX-8 selectable services route, which connects
8 Washington Heights in Manhattan to South Bronx, and a
9 \$9 million grant in 2019 for a safe route to transit
10 project, to make infrastructure, pedestrian safety
11 and accessibility enhancement for transit riders
12 along 86th Street in Brooklyn. I am happy to say
13 that this budget funded the additional headcount for
14 our grant unit to assist with the coordination,
15 completion, and review of build grant application.

16 On state of repairs and other capital safety
17 programs, this budget adds \$185 million to fund
18 dozens of capital projects to address a state of good
19 repair and to enhance safety. So an example includes
20 street and sidewalk reconstruction upgrades in Far
21 Rockaway and South Jamaica in Queens, South Shore in
22 Staten Island, and in Clason Point and Harding Park
23 in the Bronx, following a DEP project to upgrade the
24 sewer system. Many critical projects are also
25 ongoing. We recently started construction for the

2 next phase of our grade street program for Atlantic
3 Avenue between Conduit and Rockaway Boulevard in East
4 New York and Ozone Park in Queens. This project will
5 continue important safety enhancements along the
6 corridor as well as introduce project protected bike
7 paths along a new planted median.

8 We are starting the construction on many critical
9 capital projects. This year we will begin
10 construction on a project to make access to Canarsie
11 Pier in Brooklyn safe. Next year, we will partner
12 with the Department of Environmental Protection to
13 bring much-needed street repair and flooding relief
14 to dozens of neighborhoods and streets in South
15 Jamaica. Streets will be brought to DOT standards
16 and we will be making safety accessibility
17 enhancements. This project is part of the larger
18 southern Queens initiative and will bring critical
19 investment to a part of the city that has received
20 less investment historically. This is how we're
21 dealing also with equity.

22 We are also planning to start construction next
23 year on one of several large school safety contracts
24 city-wide. This project will create safer pedestrian
25 crossing near aging schools in Brooklyn and Staten

2 Island, which will particularly benefit our school
3 aged children.

4 Turning to our bridges. This budget funds the
5 reconstruction of the bridge at Carey Grant street
6 over Newton Creek. For upcoming consumption, we plan
7 to start construction zone on the Williamsburg
8 Bridge, continuing the goal of maintaining the iconic
9 East River bridges in a state of good repair. This
10 contract will extend the service life of the bridge
11 for up to 60 years, and will include rehabilitating
12 the floor beams and structures supporting the subway
13 tracks, and more.

14 This fall, we plan to start construction on the
15 Fifth Avenue Bridge over the Long Island Railroad and
16 subway track, which is an important north-south
17 connection between Sunset Park and Bay Ridge in
18 Brooklyn. This project will modernize the 160-year-
19 old bridge to the current design standards and
20 address the factors that are contributing to its
21 decline.

22 Of automated safety enforcement. Before I close,
23 I must once again take this opportunity to emphasize
24 Mayor Eric Adams and my call on the state to please
25 allow the City of New York to expand and enhance our

2 Automated Enforcement Program. We are speaking for
3 the \$8.6 million New Yorkers who are tired and fed up
4 to losing so many great New Yorkers.

5 Our safety projects are critical for enhancing
6 safety on our street, but we need every tool
7 available to us to save lives and fight the rise in
8 reckless drivers.

9 And we need your support, councilmembers,
10 including a whole roll message: Without action by
11 the legislature, the council and the governor who has
12 expressed her support, these life-saving cameras will
13 go dark on July 1. We can do it together. New York
14 City deserves to have the expansion of speed cameras
15 and automatic enforcement, we can save lives.

16 There's too much blood on our streets from people
17 all ages, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.
18 Together, we must do everything in our control to
19 keep New Yorkers safe.

20 In conclusion, I would like to thank the Council
21 for the opportunity to testify before you today,
22 especially the two Chairs who are my friends, as they
23 were my colleagues. We should all be proud that New
24 York City has the largest transportation network in
25 the nation, and we have great leadership in DOT that

2 they've been working for decades to improve our
3 transportation system. I look forward to partnering
4 with you as we work together to make this network in
5 our city safer, more equitable, and accessible for
6 all New Yorkers for generations to come.

7 Gracias por la oportunidad de testificar ante
8 usted. Hoy estamos presentando el presupuesto del
9 alcalde Eric Adams, de la administración, donde
10 nosotros buscamos tener todos los recursos necesarios
11 para collacion de Nueva York, así asceindo la ciudad
12 más segura de los Estados Unidos de América.

13 We will now be happy to answer any questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Commissioner.
15 It's good to see everybody. I... I have to give a
16 special thanks to folks that I talked to quite a bit
17 who were very helpful in the Brooklyn office,
18 certainly Commissioner Bray, Leroy Branch, Claudette
19 Workman, and Rebecca, who I see is there with you
20 today. Very, very responsive and helpful. And that
21 doesn't go unnoticed. So I appreciate that very
22 much.

23 We got a lot to do. So let's get into this.

24 Before we begin, the committee may not get to all the
25 questions or... or we don't have hope for this. But

2 if you don't have the responses sufficient, we will
3 send a follow up letter for any unanswered questions.

4 So Commissioner, fatalities among bicyclists have
5 increased from 14 in 2014, to 25 so far this year
6 2022, so almost an 80% increase. Moreover,
7 pedestrian fatalities increased from 107 to 123
8 between fiscal 20 and fiscal 23. Overall, it's
9 unclear at the present pace if the city will achieve
10 its goal of Vision Zero, which is what we all want,
11 by 2024.

12 What largely does DOT attribute this increase to?
13 And then what is DOT doing to address the issue of
14 these increasing traffic fatalities?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you chairman. And
16 you know, that there is no doubt that, you know, we
17 have bad years. Especially we had a one of the worst
18 weeks. In the last two weeks we had the... those
19 numbers or more than 10, you know, a pedestrian that
20 unfortunately... in cycling though, we are losing. A
21 doctor... a future doctor studying NYU, a mother
22 originally from Nigeria that in her _____, her
23 daughter was watching her how she will die.
24 Chairman, reckless drivers is the cause of this
25 epidemic. The DOT is doing the necessary

2 investments. The council is working with this
3 administration to provide, you know, all the
4 financial support that we need. The 10-year is doing
5 a great job of redesigning and looking at any
6 intersection that we need to reorganize the signal
7 light. We are creating bike lanes, both lanes, open
8 streets, everything that is required from the
9 perspective of redesigning has been doing... is
10 something that DOT has done. There's a trend
11 nationwide, when it comes to, you know, those
12 individuals who are killing pedestrians and drivers,
13 most of them they are drunk when they driving, most
14 of them they are speeding, most of them are not
15 obeying the law, most of them are behaving in a way
16 that is unacceptable. So, so far, you know, speed
17 was a factor in at least 78 fatalities in 2021, up to
18 61% from the 2018 and 2020 average. This year, the
19 number doesn't look good, and then main cause is
20 related to violent drivers that we have seen. The
21 speed camera makes them reduce the speed, because
22 when we have a speed camera we have seen a reduction
23 of 14% injuries, and we also are seeing a reduction
24 of crashes in more than 60%. Those crashes are
25 happening and intersection where the speed camera

2 must be turned off by state law. And they also
3 operate from Monday to Friday. That's why we need
4 your support to expand speed camera and automatic
5 enforcement, so that we can have it the whole year,
6 and the city should have the power to decide where do
7 we install those cameras, and following the data on
8 crashes that happen in location, that right now we
9 are not allowed to install those cameras.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm with you there. I
11 gotten my share tickets from speed cameras, and it's
12 made me a better driver 100%. That's the bottom
13 line. And that's why I support them. I supported
14 their expansion, and we certainly support it now.

15 You'll remember you were our colleague back in
16 2019 when we passed the Transportation Master Plan.
17 It is legislated to take effect in FY 22. As you
18 know, the master plan calls for the installation of
19 at least 250 protected bike lanes, 150 protected bus
20 lanes, bus stop upgrades, the redesign of at least
21 2000 intersections, and other major transportation
22 projects that we support.

23 Last month, the council called on the
24 administration to add an additional \$3.1 billion to
25 the streets plan in our preliminary budget response.

2 So far, the mayor has announced that an additional
3 \$904 million in funding would be allocated.

4 Can you give us an update on the status of the
5 Transportation Master Plan? And in focusing on
6 equity, how will the DOT ensure that the master plan
7 projects are funded and equitably distributed across
8 the five boroughs?

9 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I... first of all,
10 thank you Chair. And I'm proud not to just be
11 standing here, you know, collaborating knowledge to
12 share information, but also to celebrate, you know,
13 that, you know, probably I'm the first DOT
14 Commissioner that has been a councilmember that
15 understands the need that each _____, and to advocate
16 not only for the constituency that you represent, but
17 also the role that you play balancing this budget.

18 I feel that, you know, when we look to where we
19 are today, I think that you know the \$905 million
20 that the Mayor designated is a down payment to this
21 program. Even when we look... and of course as a
22 Commissioner, I always want more. So not only I know
23 that the Mayor always, and OMB, will be able to work
24 with us or to identify where or how, you know, we
25 always continue getting funding that we need to build

2 more protected bus lane, to build more bike lanes, to
3 build more open restaurants, open street. But you
4 know, this is an opportunity. I hope also, you know,
5 each councilmember has ideas, you know. I note that
6 they also... they help us with the capital raising
7 money, to identify any particular project that is
8 important in those ways. When it comes to the role
9 that you have, as Chairman of Finance, Speaker Adams,
10 and the Chairman of Transportation are doing, you
11 know, advocating, continuing this conversation about
12 identifying needs that we have to always add more
13 funding. You know, the \$905 million is... is
14 additional funding that will allow the different
15 divisions here at DOT to have the resources that we
16 need to redesign dangerous intersections, to
17 accomplish our goal of the numbers of bus lanes that
18 Mayor Adams committed, and also had those goals,
19 including the Street Master Plan, so I believe...
20 I... we are in a good place. We always will be happy
21 to get more money. We will work with OMB to identify
22 needs and how to get support from City Hall. And of
23 course, the support of the council is always very
24 important.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Citi Bike: Can you
3 update the committees on the status of the Citi Bike
4 Share Program, and have there been any discussions
5 with the administration and Citi Bike operators on
6 the possibility of using city funds to further extend
7 its reach citywide?

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Uh, we are... I feel
9 that because we... we were there together in 2020,
10 when we saw the expansion of Citi Bike to Northern
11 Manhattan, to South Bronx, and other locations, and
12 we looked not only at Citi Bike, but also we look at
13 micro-mobility, you know, expansion of other bike
14 share programs and scooters that also are covering
15 areas. We feel that working together with all those
16 types of micro-mobility, including Citi Bike, we will
17 see more expansion in... in our... this moment right
18 now. It started as Citi Bike only covering a
19 downtown Manhattan. We have seen expansion of
20 Brooklyn, Queens, Northern Manhattan, South Bronx,
21 and other places, and we will continue again a
22 conversation with our partners _____ to identify
23 where and how we continue expanding this great
24 program. And more than expansion, Chairman, it is
25 about making this program always affordable. It has

2 been shown that as the program provides a discount to
3 the residents of NYCHA, we also want to work together
4 to educate, you know, our especially working class
5 community about the benefits of cycling, so that
6 beside creating the infrastructure, we also want to
7 be sure that those New Yorkers who can get a
8 discount, the residents of NYCHA and others who live
9 on the poverty line, also take advantage.

10 But our goal is to expand Citi Bike, is to
11 continue to span other types of micro-mobility until
12 we cover every single community in our city on New
13 York.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I appreciate that. Yeah, I
15 mean, I think it would be great to see, you know,
16 some other bike share companies being allowed to set
17 up here, certainly in areas like mine, where we've
18 basically gotten to the doorstep of our district.
19 But because Citi Bike has a monopoly in large parts
20 of the city, and because they're so reliant on the
21 dock-to-dock network, it makes it much harder.
22 And... and what we've seen is that the, you know, is
23 the company is concentrated its docks in
24 neighborhoods that are already pretty well served by
25

2 public transportation, but ignored a lot of the
3 transit deserts. So that's something that...

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I agree with you. I
5 feel that, you know, we have a great opportunity to
6 continue expanding. I love the partnership. You
7 know... you remember that... because we were there
8 together when Commissioner _____ was very helpful to
9 renegotiate, you know, the Citi Bike Program that
10 almost failed. And I think with the negotiation
11 between DOT and... and the new stakeholders of that
12 industry, and then the last one, Elite, we are seeing
13 a level of expansion, but we are not there, but we
14 should be. And we should be able to work together.
15 Look, I... I think that first of all, I appreciate
16 you know, Citi Bike was there on the car-free day.
17 They provide, you know free membership, they've been
18 great partners with DOT. But Mayor Adam was also
19 saying that he was open to explore other partners in
20 the City of New York. I feel that, you know, we will
21 continue conversation, and we hope again that not
22 only we will see Citi Bike where they are, expanding
23 to the areas, but also we need to be sure that we
24 don't build any second tier or users of the bike,
25 that we only got one tear, and that the service be

2 accessible and affordable for all New Yorkers. As
3 you know me for years. No one will be fighting more
4 on equity, especially to be sure that Citi Bike is
5 affordable to working class New Yorkers than me,
6 because that's what I have done my whole life.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I appreciate that
8 Commissioner.

9 Quickly on resurfacing streets and pothole
10 repairs. So DOT previously had a goal to repave 1300
11 lane miles annually, which was reduced to 1100 lane
12 miles per year in fiscal 2020 and 21. The reduced
13 paving level was acceptable at the time because of a
14 mild winter and reduction in traffic at the beginning
15 of the pandemic, which... which caused less wear and
16 tear on the city streets. In our budget response,
17 the council urged the administration to increase
18 baseline funding of street surfacing by \$45 million
19 in the Executive Budget to allow DOT to repave up
20 1300 lane miles annually, which was the... the
21 original goal back in 20, and 21. So given that the
22 executive budget only provided funding to repave 1100
23 lane miles, is the resurfacing of 1100 lane miles
24 adequate to meet the city's need or has DOT noticed
25 additional damage to city roads after this winter?

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I will start answering
3 the question, and I will pass it to my colleagues
4 here, Elisabeth or Eric, they also can complement all
5 the information that you need.

6 One thing that I... you know, first of all,
7 resurfacing and paving usually as everyone, we need
8 to remind all Councilmembers in the audience and
9 members of the public, mainly take place during the
10 spring and the summer, because we have four different
11 seasons. And this is one thing that... you know,
12 that we also want to remind everyone especially...
13 you know as we go directly to the equation, but when
14 people look for areas that we have that we will be
15 resurfacing or... or paving the street, I want for
16 people again to understand that in spring and the
17 summer is the time where most of the work is done.
18 But let me pass it to Elisabeth so that she can
19 follow your question, and probably Eric will want add
20 to anything else.

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure. The 1300
22 lane miles that we did for a few years was certainly
23 extremely helpful to get our streets in good
24 condition. But a big problem in our resurfacing
25 program over time was that we didn't have steady

2 funding. Every year... the budget was very
3 underfunded in the out years, and every year -- some
4 council members might remember this -- we had to get
5 more funding for the next year. What we have now is
6 a fantastic situation -- I can't overstate it --
7 where we have baseline funding at 1100 resurfacing
8 lane miles per year plus another 54 bike lane miles
9 specifically. And so that's... that's really...
10 we're in a good position right now to keep a steady
11 funding level for resurfacing.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sorry, thank you. For
13 pothole repairs in the first four months of FY 22 DOT
14 repaired a little over 36,000 potholes. I think
15 about 30,000 of them are in my district, 33% more in
16 the same period than last year. The average time to
17 close a pothole work order increased from two to four
18 days.

19 These changes are related to a 15% increase in
20 pothole work orders, which the DOT correlates to a
21 doubling of 311 complaints for pothole repairs
22 compared to fiscal 21, you know, coupled with staff
23 shortages and fewer DOT crews during the pandemic.

24 So how much funding does DOT allocate towards
25 pothole repairs? And how many potholes does the DOT

2 plan to fix this year and how many were done last
3 year?

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The DOT currently paid
5 over \$25 million to street repair other than
6 resurfacing per year which includes pothole repair.
7 Our crew response follows demand, which is driven by
8 various factors including freeze-thaw cycles, wear
9 and tear on pavement, and long term capital
10 investment in railway. In the last fiscal year, FY
11 21, we fixed around 175,000 potholes total. This
12 fiscal year we have already fixed more than 160,000
13 potholes, including 11,000 _____ last month when 150
14 pothole crews worked all day Saturday. I want to
15 thank all of them, because I also joined them on that
16 particular... one of those Saturdays, where we
17 arranged to join with other members on the roadway,
18 and they were doing a great job.

19 We want also to remind all of you that we always
20 will be taking care of the pothole. We have a goal to
21 respond to any pothole in a 3-day timeframe. But the
22 more resurfacing and paving we do, the less potholes
23 we will have. And that's what we want to do. And
24 that's what we want to focus on. However we know
25 that potholes are something that we have to take care

2 of, and we've been doing that thing here. Thank you
3 to the great workers that we have at DOT roadway
4 division, they are doing a great job taking care of
5 the potholes.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, they do. So they...
7 you know, they're very... again, your Brooklyn office
8 and Rebecca have been super, super responsive. I
9 can't thank you enough there. I can't make any
10 complaints there. So you said... I heard you on the
11 radio the other day, but you just said it now. I
12 want to get it on the record. For the amount of
13 time... if someone calls in 311, what are we saying?
14 How long until that pothole gets... gets filled?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We're doing three days.
16 However, there is a moment and situation where
17 there's no need to cover the pothole, if there is any
18 code that related to (crosstalk) (inaudible)

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yup.

20 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... the situation. And
21 again, as... I also want to reinforce what I said
22 before: You know, in many places... especially, you
23 know, the country where I was born and raised, it is
24 always worn in the Caribbean, Dominican Republic.
25 But here we have to deal with four different seasons.

2 So the winter is a challenge of take care of the
3 pothole, but our commitment is to fix the pothole in
4 less than three days, with a later challenge related
5 so underground _____ or other agencies.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it. We'll work on the
7 weather. We'll do our best.

8 Open restaurants. In response to the pandemic,
9 open restaurants program was launched to expand
10 seating outdoors for restaurants in select corridors
11 city wide. I wanted to get an update... which was
12 first launched in 2020 as a temporary pilot program,
13 Open Restaurants was given year round permanent
14 extension by the de Blasio administration in
15 September of 2020. How many businesses are currently
16 enrolled in the Open Restaurant Program? And do you
17 have numbers for the total enrollment in each
18 borough?

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We do. In total, and we
20 launched in June 2020, to get New Yorkers space to
21 safely dine out outside. And again, this is an
22 initiative that The Council must take credit,
23 because this initiative also came together as a
24 result of the council and the previous
25 administration. That's where the decision was made

2 for DOT to run the Open Restaurant. As the council
3 codified in the Law 114 of 2020, DOT is working in
4 partnership with our sister agencies to make this
5 program permanent. So far we have 4000 open
6 restaurants, and we have say 100,000 jobs. And as
7 you know conversation continue with the council
8 hoping that this program will be permanent, and we're
9 hoping that DOT, with the _____ that the agency has,
10 taking care of the roadway resurfacing and working
11 with the utility program, doing open pedestrian
12 _____, we hope that DOT is in a great position to
13 run this program permanent, hopefully by 2023.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do we know...

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Sorry chairman. Let me
16 also give you the breakdown per borough, as you asked
17 that question. So the... on percentage, as I say
18 over 2000 restaurants are part of the Open Restaurant
19 Program, compared to 1200 sidewalk cafe in the
20 consumer... in the Department of Consumer Affairs
21 program prior to the open restaurants. So before
22 Open Restuarants, we only had 1200 sidewalks. After
23 COVID... during COVID and after, through this
24 program, that number having has increased to 12,000,
25 being the largest one in the nation. The breakdown

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2 is Manhattan: 6000 with 48%, Brooklyn 3000 and 24%,
3 Queens, 2400 and 20%, Bronx over 600 and 5%, and
4 Staten Island close to 200 and 2%. Many of those
5 areas, are areas... are working class community New
6 Yorkers never had the opportunity to enjoy a dinner
7 with a family member on a sidewalk or an open
8 restaurant before COVID struck.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And I know the answer...
10 and again, your team has been great on this,
11 especially Rebecca... but what is the procedure... or
12 what will be the procedure going forward to remove
13 the shelters that have become damaged or abandoned
14 and are no longer in use? Because we hear about
15 that... for as many restaurants are taking advantage
16 of it, there's some that that look like abandoned
17 shipwrecks out there. So what's... what's the plan
18 going forward in there? Is there a proactive plan?
19 Or is that still going to be sort of complaint
20 driven?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: No, no. It is... it is
22 a proactive effort. DOT has given... has done more
23 than 60,000 inspections in those 4000 restaurant
24 operations that we have. This program... DOT has
25 since ramped up in up its enforcement, removing over

2 60 non-compliant structures, and issuing 24 summons
3 so far. So for us, quality of life is important.
4 While we also know that we started something
5 temporary, you know, doing COVID. Now that we're
6 moving, hopefully, with a plan to be permanent, now
7 we have a direction...

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: (inaudible) Sorry, go
9 ahead.

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: No, I say now... we are
11 we working at DOT to be sure that, while we started
12 something temporary, as we move in, hopefully to make
13 this program permanent, now we have a director, now
14 we move in to hire a dozen men and women, that they
15 will be working in the Open Restaurant Division, so
16 that we can add the structure that we need to
17 continue stepping on enforcement. We agree with any
18 community board, we agree or any council member that
19 if there has been a structure that a restaurant
20 owner, they... they have left it empty, that they are
21 not helping us, but we feel that... that percentage
22 they are a low minority, that the vast majority of
23 the restaurants, they taking care of the structures.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright, let's talk about
25 the BQE. I hope to live to see the day that we tear

2 that thing down and build a tunnel, but I'm not sure
3 we have the money for that currently. I'm looking
4 for it though.

5 Two years ago, the council released the findings
6 of a report titled The future of the BQE, and it was
7 to look at alternatives to repair the BQE,
8 specifically the triple cantilever. The de Blasio
9 administration commissioned a panel to evaluate the
10 reconstruction of the BQE. The DOT currently
11 anticipates spending \$1.5 billion on this project
12 between fiscal 22 and fiscal 2031.

13 Can you provide us with an update on the status
14 of the BQE cantilever project and does DOT plan to
15 move forward with its plan to fix the BQE cantilever,
16 or is there an alternative plan that we're looking
17 at?

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The BQE is a... Chair,
19 the BQE is critical roadway for moving people and
20 goods, and we need to ensure that it is safe, and
21 that's what Bridge Division works on 24 hours, and
22 they are doing a great job to ensure that it is safe.

23 The new administration has been taking a close
24 look, and remains committed to addressing this issue
25 in the long term. We look forward to engaging local

2 elected officials and community stakeholders soon...
3 or more elected officials. We already are soon
4 starting a conversation with Councilmember Lincoln,
5 the Brooklyn Borough President, and also Antonio
6 Reynoso, and hoping to continue engaging with more
7 elected officials, and most important members of the
8 community.

9 In addition to DOT... In addition, DOT has
10 continued to monitor the BQE structure between
11 Atlantic Avenue and _____ Street to identify any
12 areas that need to be addressed in the near term.
13 The two spans identified as being in need of repair
14 in the near term, along with the structure unit will
15 be addressed via an oncoming construction contract to
16 be advertised shortly.

17 Where we are today right now is that conversation
18 is going on between City Hall and the State. We hope
19 to have a good plan to reconstruct the BQE, but we
20 are looking to that to that area, from the north to
21 the south... to the south to the whole area. And the
22 conversation will continue. I know that you, in your
23 role and the Chairman of Transportation, and also the
24 Speaker Adams, and the stakeholders especially in
25 this area, they will be engaged in conversation not

2 only with us at DOT, but also with City Hall as we
3 are moving forward planning for the future of the
4 BQE.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure. Just a question
6 about the funding, and I know obviously this is very
7 important to my colleague, Councilman Restler. So
8 funding for the cantilever project was actually
9 decreased by \$76, almost \$77 million in the
10 preliminary plan when compared to the adopted plan.
11 And in the executive plan 180 million in capital
12 funding was shifted out of fiscal 23 and moved
13 further out in the plan period, which ultimately
14 reduced the plan capital spending for FY 23 from \$225
15 to only \$44 million. So I guess my concern is... has
16 it been determined that, you know, with the
17 cantilever reaching the end of its useful life
18 expectancy, is shifting the plan work from 23 into
19 the out years safe? Have we determined that that's
20 safe?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, let me let me pass
22 that part of the question on the money to Elisabeth,
23 our Budget Director. I can... we can assure already
24 all New Yorkers that that area is safe. But let me
25 pass it to Elisabeth for her to explain it.

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure. You
3 know, we are doing the ongoing monitoring and the new
4 motion... the legislation to... the legislation to
5 allow for automated enforcement of overweight trucks
6 is really going to help us with that. And so we're
7 going to start issuing violations. We aim to issue
8 violations by the end of this year. So between that,
9 and then the ongoing monitoring of the structures,
10 we're keeping a close eye on the BQE. And so the
11 funding that we need for the structures in the near
12 term, we have. That is we have left the funding in
13 the inner years to do the contracts that we know we
14 have to do now. And so the... the funding in the
15 outer years can be moved back in as our monitoring
16 continues, as we find work we need to do earlier.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I'm sure my
18 colleagues will dig in on that and put a finer point
19 on that later on.

20 Let's see where I want to go here.

21 Some of the transportation deserts. You know,
22 for decades, the city has really under-invested in
23 transportation deserts, including in my own district
24 where we've got the R train, and that's about it. It
25 took me about nine hours to take the R train to city

2 hall today. And this has led to an inefficient and
3 inequitable transportation system, which I know the
4 commissioner knows and certainly cared about, as a
5 council member. Additionally, surging gas and auto
6 prices as a result of inflation compounds these
7 effects, and it's increasing the financial strain on
8 working class New Yorkers who already suffering from
9 the pandemic and have no choice but to own and drive
10 cars as their only means of reliable transportation.
11 You'll often notice that, you know, the folks that...
12 that talk about driving cars are the ones that are in
13 transportation deserts. I mean, that's... that's how
14 they get around.

15 So what is the DOT specifically doing to reverse
16 this decades-long under investment in transportation
17 deserts? And where are these investments reflected
18 in the 23? Budget?

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I'm going to start
20 to answer the question, and then I will also pass it
21 to Eric so that he also can add more information.

22 Look, I... it's not only about transportation
23 deserts. We have inherited a city that also has
24 social investment deserts. So... so it I feel that,
25 you know, those of us who are in leadership,

2 regardless of the role that we play, you know, from
3 Council, Commission, and staff has a great job to do
4 when it comes to address deserts that we have created
5 in the city, lack of investment, in a city though
6 they also has prioritized investment in a few areas,
7 and they have left all the area behind. This is the
8 gap that Mayor Adams will be closing in his
9 administration. So when it comes to transportation
10 deserts, I know that... the... the our busses is like
11 one of those things that we are looking to... to
12 use... to expand. In those areas that we need to
13 provide riders more opportunity, not only to take the
14 buses, but to go to places faster, to know that our
15 buses are more efficient. But I think that, you
16 know, we have investment priorities all the time to
17 do more infrastructure on protected bike lanes in
18 those communities, on bus lanes, to also be sure that
19 we use our water to connect more New Yorkers, when it
20 comes to transportation deserts, but let me pass it
21 to Eric also, that he can add more information to
22 that question.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And we fully
24 agree that this is a place the city needs to be
25 investing in historically underserved communities.

2 And that's why in the Streets Plan, as the
3 Commissioner said during his testimony, we explicitly
4 put out these priority investment areas. And when
5 you when you look at that map, it is clearly parts of
6 the city that have been under invested in over the
7 years. And we're going to be very focused there.

8 We want to make sure that people all over the
9 city have good options that, you know, if you drive
10 we want to be providing electric vehicles that you
11 can drive in an environmentally friendly way. We're
12 going to be doing better bus service, working in
13 partnership with the MTA as they do their borough
14 redesign doing bus lane signal priority, improved bus
15 stops to try to make buses a better option. We want
16 our protected bike lane network to be a city wide
17 protected bike lane network, and not just in the
18 historic core of the city.

19 These are all things where we want to get those
20 investments all over the city. We also know that
21 that means working very closely with local
22 communities who haven't always had that type of
23 engagement. We certainly look forward to working
24 with you and with all of your colleagues in these
25 historically underserved communities to make sure

2 that as we want to do these investments, we're doing
3 it in a way that is sensitive to the local needs of
4 the community, and that we can do it in a way where
5 we can all support it together.

6 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Chair Brannan had
7 to step away. So we're now going to turn to Chair
8 Brooks-Powers for her line of questions for the DOT.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
10 And it's great to see you Commissioner Rodriguez and
11 your team. I appreciate the work that your team has
12 been putting in and being responsive to my staff.

13 So in terms of some of my initial questions, I'm
14 going to start around city cleanup corps
15 underspending.

16 Due to the projected agency underspending,
17 federal funding to the Department of Transportation
18 for the city cleanup corps was reduced by \$1.8
19 million in fiscal 2022. Why does the Department of
20 Transportation project underspending for the city
21 cleanup corps this year? And what kind of
22 maintenance and support has the city clean up corps
23 provided? Has the cleanup corps assisted with
24 graffiti removal and power washing?

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Through the city cleanup
3 corps program, we clean up litter, remove trash, and
4 perform vegetation control, and out on the highway,
5 the DOT uses the same resources of funding in several
6 ways. We employ people to help out... help our in-
7 house _____ maintenance crew. As a result, they
8 remove over 8500 cubic yards. So we know how
9 important it is, this funding. We have expanded our
10 _____ service and train people in the basis of
11 Horticulture and Landscaping.

12 This is a city-wide initiative involving multiple
13 agency. Sorry. We are looking right now to see how
14 we will be _____ this program. But let me also pass
15 it to our budget director so that she can also add
16 more information.

17 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure, the
18 underspending this year was because we encountered a
19 few procurement delays. But as Commissioner
20 Rodriguez explained, there was a tremendous amount of
21 work we did get one.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
23 And then the cleanup corps are entirely financed by
24 federal funding. How will the city fund cleanup and
25

2 sanitation of the Open Streets Program after fiscal
3 2022 when federal funding ceases?

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: So the federal
5 funding... I mean, this is a citywide initiative
6 involving multiple agencies, and so the extension of
7 the whole program is still under discussion.

8 However, DOT is part of this plan funding... well
9 as part of the investment, it did receive about \$5
10 million to do what... to maintain public spaces. So
11 that will help us.

12 And Chairman, as you know, we are all about
13 equity, as you are. We're in the same boat. And...
14 and we will be sure that any funding... any program
15 that we have is done... is planned to underserved
16 communities. So as we will be planning how to use
17 the funding, you have my word and my commitment, and
18 the commitment of the team here that we will be
19 giving priority to the underserved communities.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
21 And as far as the Coronavirus Response and Relief,
22 Supplemental Appropriations ACT, initially \$4.4
23 million in federal funding from the Coronavirus
24 Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act
25 grant had not yet been allocated from the original

2 award. The Department of Transportation has since
3 identified items in their budgets that qualify for
4 this funding. As such, the executive plan includes
5 an adjustment of \$3.1 million in fiscal 2022 and \$1.3
6 million in fiscal 2023 As a part of a federal grant
7 modification.

8 What projects has the Department of
9 Transportation specifically identified that qualify
10 for the CRRSA funding? What does the Department of
11 Transportation hoped to accomplish with this
12 additional federal funding? And how much funding has
13 the Department of Transportation received from the
14 CRRSA to date?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: This funding here is
16 restricted to transit activities. And so DOT will
17 use... will use it for area operations including
18 staffing costs, cleaning, and security contracts,
19 dry-docking and marine electronic maintenance and
20 repair. The DOT received \$79 million of this funding
21 and \$190 million American Rescue Plan funding. So we
22 are using this funding to all those areas that where
23 we can apply and they have been very successful for
24 us.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And then
3 shift into the ARPA Plan. Federal funding for the
4 American Rescue Plan was reallocated across multiple
5 agencies due to underspending. As a result, the
6 Department of Transportation Executive Plan includes
7 a reduction of \$6.2 million in fiscal 2022 only due
8 to this reallocation of ARPA funding. How will this
9 reduction in ARPA funding affect the Department of
10 Transportation specifically? And why does the
11 department of transportation project underspending
12 for ARPA funding?

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let me pass it to our
14 Budget Director here so that he can go deep in to
15 answer this question?

16 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure. Like my
17 answer last time: We did encounter some procurement
18 delays in some of the programs you were planning to
19 use the ARPA funding for, including Open Restaurants,
20 and we are... oh no... hiring. Yeah. Mainly, it was
21 additional hiring delays. And it's also that Open
22 Restaurants is in a transition phase now, as you
23 know, between the emergency program set up during
24 COVID and the permanent program beginning in 23,
25 that's pending legislation. So we've begun the

2 hiring process to prepare for the permanent program,
3 and additional hiring and purchase will be done as...
4 as it proceeds, the transition.

5 And then there was also for the Open Streets
6 Program, there were some procurement challenges and
7 hiring challenges, and so not all the funding has
8 been spent.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
10 I'm going to move over to the pedestrian ramp
11 program. So as an ongoing project DOT has been
12 installed on pedestrian ramps at street corners in
13 order to become compliant with the Americans with
14 Disabilities Act. The executive capital commitment
15 plan increased funding for sidewalk construction by
16 \$442.2 million when compared to the preliminary plan.
17 This is not new funding but rather funding
18 accelerated from outside the capital plan window to
19 support additionally legally required pedestrian ramp
20 work to make city sidewalks ADA compliant.

21 Can you please provide the committee's with...
22 with an update on DOT's ongoing project to make
23 sidewalks ADA compliant? How many street corners are
24 currently compliant with the act? How many pedestrian
25 ramps does DOT project it will complete as a part of

2 this funding acceleration? And what is DOT's... what
3 is DOT doing to ensure that funding for ADA compliant
4 sidewalks are distributed equitably across all
5 neighborhoods? Can you please provide a breakdown of
6 pedestrian ramp installations by borough?

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. Let me start with
8 the last, and then I will pass it to my team here to
9 answer the other part of the question. One thing
10 that is clear, as you know, is a commitment that I
11 have for my three years as a council member, always
12 working with the community that have physical
13 challenges to make our streets accessible. We have 1
14 million New Yorkers that have physical challenges.

15 In this amount of time, you've got allowed to
16 live long, at some point all of us we need to rely on
17 some level of... of accessibility when it comes to
18 our streets. So you know working together, the DOT,
19 the administration, and especially with the council
20 and the advocate community have been making a lot of
21 progress.

22 I think the New York City is a role model. No
23 one has done the same work that we have done here,
24 using the technology, redesigning intersections, you
25 know, to be sure that our New Yorkers who have

2 physical challenges get the respect by being able to
3 have accessibility in our streets. The breakdown of
4 corner constructed, installed grades in July 2017 is
5 Bronx 5235, Brooklyn 11,016, Manhattan, 2932, Queens
6 11,217, Staten Island 4167, to a total of 33,667.

7 But let me also call on Eric, so that he also can
8 add a list of _____, when it comes to what it is that
9 we have done in the street to be sure that we're
10 wheelchair accessible?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And just to
12 go to the question, one of the things that... the
13 reasons that we need this accelerated funding is
14 because the things that trigger us to need upgrade
15 the pedestrian ramps, primarily resurfacing, but also
16 all of our street safety redesign projects are also
17 being accelerated. And it's very important to us to
18 make sure that those accessibility upgrades _____
19 work that we're doing on the street. So by
20 accelerating this funding, we can keep up that... as
21 we resurface more streets, as we do more of these
22 intersection safety redesigns, the accessible ramp
23 program can keep up at the same time. So we're
24 absolutely committed to that. And we are continuing
25 to put in the money, so that as we do this other

2 work... as we do our safety work, as we do our state
3 of good repair work, the accessibility works keeps up
4 with it and stays right in tandem.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
6 I'm gonna move to talk about a project that's
7 actually in my district, Bayswater Park pedestrian
8 access.

9 So Bayswater Park is green space that is vital to
10 residents in my district. This park is scheduled to
11 receive capitally-funded pedestrian access work,
12 which is managed by the Department of Transportation.
13 However \$12.6 million in capital funding between
14 fiscal 22 and fiscal 26 was not included in the
15 executive capital plan. Has this project been
16 canceled? Or was this funding moved beyond the plan
17 period? Past fiscal 2026? If the project has been
18 cancelled? I'd like to know why.

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Chairman, let me... let
20 me figure... let me find out here with the team,
21 and... and I will... I will get back to you, you
22 know, as soon as we finish the hearing, with any of
23 the... but I don't know, if here, if Elisabeth
24 something to share now. If not, then we can follow
25 up with you after the hearing. But more than happy,

2 as I say, not only with you, but with every
3 councilmember, that if they have something specific
4 that is important for them, for the constituents that
5 we are here to work together. This is the new day
6 with this administration for Mayor Adams and here at
7 DOT, we are going to be working closely with all
8 Councilmembers.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that
10 Commissioner.

11 Next, I want to pivot over to the electrical...
12 electric vehicle charging stations. So last year's
13 budget included funding for the installation of
14 electric vehicle charging stations. How many
15 charging stations will DOT install and what is the
16 average cost of each charging station?

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Our goal is to get 1000
18 by 2025 and 10,000 by 2030. DOT is doing a great
19 work on advancing that. But let me also pass it to
20 Charles, who is a person that oversees that
21 particular portfolio.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: With regard to
23 the Electric Vehicle Program, we have... the work we
24 have done so far... Actually, let me just set the
25 stage and say we have different levels of

2 infrastructure. There's the fast charging, and then
3 there's... where you can charge your vehicle 80% in
4 30 minutes or so. But then what we're doing at this
5 point... what we've focused on so far is the level
6 two, which is really the on streets curbside
7 charging, which we're putting on the streets as well
8 as in our _____ garages. Thus far we have 86 level
9 two chargers that have been installed... there are
10 86, but then there are two per side, one facing on
11 the other with a long cord, if I may describe what it
12 looks like. And then we have 8 fast-charging
13 stations that have been installed under this program
14 so far. We have a plan for a much broader level
15 of... we have a plan to install more locations city-
16 wide. There will be another 14 level two chargers to
17 start construction this spring, curbside, and 1000
18 level two chargers by 2025. That's part of the
19 vision citywide to a particular number of places.
20 There's a broader vision that we can go into great
21 detail on what exactly it is. But the DOT is very
22 committed with regard to the level two charging...
23 electric vehicle charging also.

24 In terms of the costs of each of the chargers.
25 For fast chargers, one hub of installation is about

2 four chargers is around \$1.75 million. And these
3 locations are capital eligible locations. For level
4 two chargers and municipal garages, each charger
5 costs approximately \$20,000 for installation. And
6 then at the same time also we're building an
7 evaluation plan for each of these chargers so that we
8 can have a monitoring plan and we can report on what
9 their status is.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Where
11 will the charging stations be located?

12 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well, we are in...
13 Charles, you want to start?

14 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: With regard to
15 the charging stations, we did an analysis. We worked
16 with the each of the community groups, and so we have
17 an equity that is guiding our efforts with regard to
18 most of the privately funded EV chargers in the city
19 are located in Manhattan, and the others are in
20 Brooklyn and Queens. We're seeking to expand access
21 access in charging to areas where the private market
22 is not investing so that we can fill the gap so that
23 it's not only those who can afford it, or who have
24 their homes, have access to garage, because we know

2 that 50% of New Yorkers park their cars on streets
3 and they don't have access to a garage.

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So you know, equity is
5 the top priority on where we will continue installing
6 those electrical chargers. And you know, having an
7 electric car is not a luxury. This is a way of how
8 we can say that... not to say... this is one of the
9 ways of how we can contribute to save the planet.
10 And we need to combine both: One, hopefully
11 electrical cars will be affordable to continue
12 looking for incentive for people to get into
13 electrical cars, but also to install those electrical
14 chargers besides middle and upper class neighborhoods
15 to also the underserved community. So... so equity
16 is a guidance for effort. Most of the privately
17 funded electrical chargers are in the city, located
18 in Manhattan in the inner ring of Brooklyn and
19 Queens. DOT is seeking to expand access to charging
20 in areas where the private market is not investing,
21 including low and moderate income communities.

22 One focus is on our _____. Across the city we
23 are seeking to create charging hubs with both L2 and
24 DC fast charging. Most of these facilities are in
25 our outer borough areas. So we're looking to

2 identify municipal properties working with in any
3 party that we can have, because electrical chargers
4 cannot be only... and will not be only in upper
5 middle class communities. We will see they put in
6 all communities across the 5 boroughs, especially
7 giving attention to the underserved communities, who
8 people suffer the most when it comes to asthma, when
9 it comes to obesity.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And thank you for
11 that, Commissioner. That was a great segue into my
12 next question. Because I guess you all know that I'm
13 always going to go down that lane for equity.

14 And so I wanted to know what the department is
15 doing to ensure that charging stations are installed
16 across five boroughs equitably? And what DOT
17 considers installing... or would DOT consider
18 installing additional charging stations in
19 neighborhoods with high asthma rates? I also want to
20 take a moment to say, you know, my observations have
21 been a lot of the pilot programs which I'm going to
22 get to a question on that as well, have not
23 necessarily been centered in transportation desert
24 communities. And so with the electric vehicle
25 charging stations, as we are encouraging New Yorkers

2 to begin to use electric vehicles, we want to make
3 sure that it is convenient for them to be able to use
4 those type of vehicles so that they have a more
5 environmentally friendly means of transportation.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, well, you know, we
7 are funded to do a study. We will look to... we will
8 look at neighborhoods where a large proportion of
9 drivers park on a street, and where there are limited
10 off-street parking facilities, and we welcome any
11 feedback...feedback from councilmembers... any input
12 that you and the rest of the councilmembers may have,
13 we are more... more than welcome to sit down with
14 you. But definitely, we will see the expansion of
15 electrical chargers from the lens of equity, and it
16 will mean that we will pay attention to those
17 communities, that they have not, and even I can say,
18 that this is conversation that I even had as a
19 commissioner here, you know, with my colleagues. You
20 know, there are some electrical charges that I have
21 in my district, but even in my own district, those
22 electrical charges had to be spread to the working
23 class area that I have in my district. So, as a
24 commissioner, I am working here with the team to be
25 sure again that we spread those electrical chargers

2 across the five boroughs, but specially paying
3 attention... not paying attention... putting many of
4 them in the underserved communities.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.

6 Next I'm going to pivot over to the camera fines.
7 I know that chair Brannan mentioned it. You spoke
8 about the home rule. I also am a supporter of it...
9 the camera... the cameras as well. I'm someone who's
10 been impacted by it also. But I do want to talk
11 about the... the revenue that comes from it.

12 And so we know over \$200 million in revenue was
13 collected from the city's bus lanes, speed, and red
14 light camera programs, and are collected by the
15 Department of Finance.

16 All revenue collected goes into the city's
17 general funds, which is then later distributed across
18 city agencies as needed. Does the Department of
19 Transportation receive back any of the revenue
20 generated from the city's bus lanes, speed, and red
21 light camera program? If so, how much?

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, no... I... As
23 someone that has been there for 12 years, and it is
24 likely my experience that I had as a teacher before
25 becoming a councilmember. I tell people when you

2 work as a teacher, you will act as a teacher forever.
3 So when you've been a councilmember, I cannot
4 disconnect myself. Now being a commissioner for what
5 I know the role that you have to play to be sure that
6 agencies are accountable. To be sure that when we
7 raise revenue, we use always... we reinvest those
8 revenue in our community. So what I can say is that
9 the city invests significantly more in Vision Zero
10 than the revenue generated from the speed cameras.
11 From FY 14 to 21, the city has spent more than... in
12 the city, meaning the council and the administration.
13 So he's not always saying that, you know, we are the
14 one doing it. This is the budget at the end of the
15 day will be the handshake as a result of both the
16 council and the administration agreement.

17 So whatever source of revenue we have, regardless
18 if we go to the general fund or not, the question
19 will be: How do we use the money? So when we look
20 at how we use the money, again, the city has paid
21 more than \$1.7 billion in capital... in expenses in
22 furtherance of Vision Zero, which is allocated to the
23 areas that need it most based on Vision Zero Borough
24 Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. Over the same period
25 revenue from the speed cameras totaled \$555 million.

2 So when you look about the investment that we
3 have made on redesigning our streets, following our
4 Vision Zero goal of \$1.7 billion, and you compare
5 years we raised \$550 million during the same period
6 of time, from 14 to 21, definitely we are reinvesting
7 the money. Because in order for us to earn money,
8 the \$900 million that the mayor was able to allocate,
9 you know, whatever additional funding we can get,
10 that money has to come from somewhere. We don't have
11 unlimited resources.

12 So I know as someone that lives in northern
13 Manhattan since 1983, that question comes, when it
14 comes to equity related? How are we spreading those
15 cameras? How is the money coming back to the
16 community? The answer is first, the camera are
17 spread almost equally across all communities. The
18 morning that we raise are re-invested on improving
19 safety, in this case \$1.7 billion that have been
20 invested as part of Vision Zero from 2014 to 2021.
21 And when it comes again to... because I want to
22 appeal again... We are in in in the in the stretch
23 where it essential governing is almost done. That
24 will be done very soon. We need a home rule. We
25 need to be sure that we work in partnership with the

2 U.S. Chairman of Transportation and the colleagues
3 from the state, that we need to expand the speed
4 cameras, that that is _____. Those 70% of crashes
5 are happening in area where the speed cameras are off
6 from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. It is something that we can
7 reduce. Anytime that that camera is off, there's
8 beautiful New Yorkers, and smart New Yorkers, can be
9 a child, can be a senior citizen, can be a daughter,
10 you know, who lose their mother in any part of the
11 city, because someone is a reckless driver. So,
12 again, having a home rule where the city should have
13 a speed camera, 24 hours, the whole years, speeding
14 is speeding 25 mile per hour saves lives. Anyone
15 go... and again... and people get a ticket when they
16 go north of 26 or 27. They just get a ticket when
17 they are at 35. So we are even given some space for
18 those drivers. So someone who got a ticket because
19 they driving 50 miles an hour. If you see the car,
20 an investigation is still going on. But I... I was
21 there close to NYU, holding the press conference
22 where a 21 future doctor lost his life.
23 Investigation is going on. There's no conclusion
24 yet. But when you see that car. That car has to be
25 going more than double of the 25 miles an hour. So

2 we need again, the city hall for the state to allow
3 to expand the camera to 24 hours, also the whole
4 year, and the other part is about, Chair, that, you
5 know, we started this program, putting those cameras
6 around the schools. But we have many areas that they
7 are out or the quarter mile from a school where we
8 can install these cameras. So the speed cameras save
9 lives, we need to get home rule, and the council is a
10 great partner. We need to support every council
11 member to be sure that by the end of this session,
12 not only we pass a bill for home rule, you know, at
13 the council but also the state, so that by July 1,
14 not only will the camera will continue on, but to
15 expand the program. So I appreciate your support.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
17 And I just want to stay on this for a little bit...
18 for a moment longer, just because I really want to
19 zero in on how that money comes back.

20 So when you look at the communities that have the
21 highest traffic fatalities, because you mentioned
22 that the money gets distributed equally across the
23 city. But there are some communities that have a
24 higher traffic fatality. And so I'm interested in
25 understanding if DOT has been investing more than how

2 you sprinkle out the general money, recognizing that
3 there's a need to invest further in the
4 infrastructure, such as speed bumps, and daylighting,
5 and other means in the toolbox to be able to slow
6 traffic down in the communities.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let me let me correct
8 myself. Probably I didn't... you know, I wasn't
9 clear.

10 I said, the cameras are equally distributed
11 across all neighborhoods. And I say that because I
12 know that sometimes, you know, as someone also who is
13 part of the black and Latino community, and Asian
14 community, we know who... an immigrant myself... we
15 have that reality that sometimes those working class
16 neighborhoods, they have felt that they've been
17 targeted. But the first thing that I want to assure
18 that, no, the speed cameras are everywhere. We
19 are... and the reason why is because we have to
20 change the culture on how we drive in the city of New
21 York. Then down the street by _____, when someone
22 gets a second ticket, most of the time, they don't
23 get a third or fourth one. And at some point people
24 get it. It's like, you know, any of us can get a
25 ticket. The question is, if you get it, can you

2 change the way we drive? You know, and so we are...
3 we are equally distributed. But when it comes to,
4 you know, the money part... how we invest the money,
5 let me also... beside what I said, dependent,
6 that my point was, the speed camera has allowed us
7 here in New York to raise \$555 million from 2014 to
8 2021. But we have invested \$1.7 billion, you know,
9 three times more on Vision Zero initiatives. That's
10 my point, that when we count it at the end of the
11 day, it doesn't matter from where it comes, if the
12 administration needs the money, we need to get
13 revenue in order to do the project. So we have... we
14 don't have any intention to raise \$1 from a speed
15 camera. We hope that we can get a day where there's
16 no one ticket, but in order for that to happen, we
17 need to change the quarter. The revenue that comes
18 is our revenue is reinvested on Vision Zero
19 initiative.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And I appreciate that
21 and I want to get to a point where there's one day
22 where there's not a traffic fatality. And I think to
23 get there, we have to make sure that we are also
24 investing in the communities. So I would love to see
25 a breakdown of the districts... the council districts

2 in the order in which there's traffic fatalities.

3 And how much money, in terms of Vision Zero, is going
4 to those districts to address these traffic
5 fatalities.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'm more than happy,
7 Chair, to follow with you. And that's what we want
8 to get. As you heard my testimony, you know, all the
9 data that we share, as there are a lot of projects
10 that we have done, or that... that we are on line to
11 be done, that included redesigning dangerous
12 intersection, creating protected bike lanes and bus
13 lanes, but... and we also have a data that also we
14 can share with any council member about all projects
15 that we have going on in their districts.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No. Thank you for
17 that, commissioner. I'm looking forward, as I've
18 said plenty of time to working with you and the
19 administration to being able to create safer streets
20 for all New Yorkers.

21 Switching over to the bus lanes: Funding of the
22 city's bus lanes is a key component to reducing
23 private automobile use and alleviating traffic
24 deaths. However, implementing a successful bus lane
25 system takes coordination between DOT sister agencies

2 and most importantly local communities. Is the
3 Department of Transportation working with the state
4 and MTA to ensure city bus routes and lanes are
5 benefiting local communities? Does the Department of
6 Transportation solicit feedback and conduct outreach
7 with local communities and businesses... and business
8 improvement districts to ensure that bus lanes are
9 not disrupting neighborhoods and businesses? And
10 I'll just say that, as the Department of
11 Transportation knows, I've been convening a city-wide
12 transportation infrastructure... infrastructure tour,
13 and visiting the districts, especially where there
14 are merchant corridors like in Councilmember
15 Williams's and Gennaro's districts, we have received
16 feedback that our small businesses have been, in some
17 cases negatively impacted, and they have ideas of how
18 we can reach a middle of the road. So I'm just
19 interested in seeing how the sister agencies are
20 working, so we're not addressing one issue, but
21 creating another issue for a sister agency.

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, so DOT is
23 supporting MTA efforts to redesign the bus network to
24 better match the traveler needs on New Yorkers, but

2 let me also pass it on to Eric, so that he also can
3 expand it the answer to this question?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And... and
5 you're exactly right: That these projects work
6 correctly when they work with the city, and the MTA,
7 and local communities all working well together. And
8 when we do our bus lane projects, we work very hard
9 to do that. So as the Commissioner said, as the MTA
10 is doing their borough wide redesigns, we're working
11 hand in hand with them. They run the buses. We know
12 that nothing works without them. So with bus stop
13 placement, making sure that they run the buses
14 quickly, trying to provide more service, they are
15 good partners in all the work we do.

16 We also work within the city family with all of
17 our sister agencies, Small Business Services has been
18 very involved in a lot of the bus work that we've
19 done, but also sanitation... all of our other
20 agencies come well together. And we know that bus
21 corridors are often the very busy business corridors
22 in neighborhoods. And we know that... that, you
23 know, we don't just want people taking the bus
24 through a neighborhood. The buses needs to be part
25 of a vibrant local economy as well. So we... we work

2 very closely... we have a team that will go door to
3 door and talk to businesses about their parking and
4 loading needs. We try to make sure that we very
5 carefully design the street, that where parking is
6 needed, where truck loading is needed, we can
7 accommodate that. But we also don't do these
8 projects and then walk away. We put them in and then
9 we stay in very close contact with businesses, with
10 B.I.D.s. And if adjustments are needed, we always
11 are willing to go back and talk about that, to do
12 that. We've measured these projects over the years.
13 One of the first ones we did on _____ Road, we
14 looked at tax revenues, and we found that overall, we
15 think these projects are not harming businesses. But
16 we also know that it's a terribly tough retail
17 environment out there, and anything that... that can
18 push a business over the edge can be a problem. So
19 we do want to stay in very close touch as we do these
20 projects to make sure that we're providing the
21 benefit for the two and a half million New York
22 _____, but we are also doing it while being
23 responsive to the very local concerns on a particular
24 block or a particular business. So it's... it's a
25 lot of work. We spend a lot of effort on it, we

2 think mostly we get it right, but where we don't we
3 want to keep working and make sure that that we can
4 improve what we have out there.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And I'd
6 encourage you to reach out to Councilmember Williams
7 to meet with her and her B.I.D.s in her district
8 because there were some specific concerns there.

9 Switching over to the scooter share pilot: Last
10 spring, the Department of Transportation launched a
11 scooter share pilot program that was scheduled to
12 last at least one year. Can you please provide the
13 committee with an update on the on the pilot? What
14 vendor was selected? And how DOT decided what
15 neighborhoods would be selected for the pilot
16 program?

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We did a competitor
18 selection process, and Bird, Lime, and Veo were
19 selected as operators. The pilot launch was 3000
20 Scooters in phase one, including Eastchester,
21 Wakefield, Trenholm Parkway, and Coop City. So over
22 530,000 rides were taken in the first 8 months. DOT
23 operators plan to expand to phase two including
24 Throggs Neck, Parkchester, Sunview, and increase the
25 total pilot fleet to as many as 6000 scooters in June

2 2022. DOT selected the East Bronx as a pilot service
3 area based on population density, assisting traffic
4 and bike infrastructure, and relationship to the Citi
5 Bike service area. And this is something that
6 will... micro-mobility is something that we're
7 looking to continue expanding as a pilot project
8 showing... showing how successful they are.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yeah, I think we need
10 to make sure it is getting and reaching the
11 communities that have a great need for it. I know,
12 like in my district, we don't have that ability in
13 some parts of the Bronx, but I just want it. I would
14 love to see that expand out.

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'm more than happy,
16 Chair, to work with you and... and the partners in
17 the micro-mobility. And let's also include it as one
18 of the items, as I say that you know, we can have our
19 bi-weekly conversation of things that is important
20 for the members under your leadership that we can
21 talk about it. So yeah, let's follow.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Awesome. I'm just
23 going to ask one more question on my end, but then
24 I'm going to ask a question on behalf of
25 councilmember Narcisse.

2 So truck parking and idling. Parked, idling
3 trucks adversely affect the health and well-being of
4 neighborhoods like mine, and others across the city.

5 (1) What is DOT doing to address this issue? And
6 (2) Would DOT be open to looking at unused parking
7 lots as areas where trucks could idle?

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. So Charles is the
9 best person to answer that question, with him being
10 our leader in that area here in DOT. I can say that
11 for us, it remains as important as any councilmember
12 that has to deal with a number of trucks parked in
13 the residential area. I personally have one of those
14 trucks parked on the same corner where I live, in the
15 same block. And I had to you know, take their photo,
16 push, do whatever, call the person, do anything. Now
17 as a resident. I'm going to share the photo when we
18 meet, so that you can see, you know, how I also deal
19 in my community. But this is something that you
20 know, we had to deal, but Charles can also expand on
21 this.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: Last year, we...
23 DOT released the Smart Truck Management Plan that
24 covers most of the scenarios that we understand...
25 the feedback that we received from various segments.

2 The concern you have with regard to truck parking and
3 idling trucks is really one of those things that has
4 been brought to our attention from various
5 neighborhoods as well as what you just raised in this
6 case.

7 One of the issues we're working... we do you have
8 a task force with NYPD. Our freight unit does have a
9 taskforce with NYPD where we meet every quarter to go
10 over issues as they come up and we also go on site
11 visits to the... these communities to address the
12 issues. One challenge we have regard to truck
13 parking is we do know that trucks -- commercially
14 plated vehicles -- are not supposed to be parked on
15 the streets. So we need a partnership with NYPD in
16 order to adequately enforce. We do have adequate
17 signage, but if there are any locations that... where
18 there's a concern we're about to maybe there's
19 some... will be willing to address that. Of course,
20 if any observations such as those are brought to our
21 attention, we'll investigate but we do need an active
22 partnership with the police department in order to
23 effectively enforce, and we're having that dialogue
24 as we go.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And then in terms of
3 the second part of question for unused parking lots
4 to be used as areas. What about that?

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well, let's say, we've
6 been meeting with... also with the Trucking
7 Association. This has to be a combined effort. And
8 that you know, should include only the pre-initiative
9 has been very successful. Also DOT has been running,
10 which is to bring incentive for a delivery that uses
11 those heavy trucks to do delivery a night, a but also
12 when it comes to respecting the law or no parking,
13 residential area, this is something that we express,
14 you know, have expressed to the industry that we need
15 their support to, where they need to be sure that
16 they work with their drivers and, and for those who
17 can stay in the Thruway, in the Jersey area, they
18 should stay there and not come here, not come to the
19 city when they don't have to. And also not only for
20 exploring together potential areas is that we have
21 on... in the city, but also... there's also members
22 or... there's the other private sector, that they
23 have big parking garages, that they also use those
24 trucks. So we have again that conversation continues
25 with the truck industry, and we work with NYPD on not

2 only enforcement but also to identify all the area
3 where they should be able to park not to... and not
4 to use residential areas.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, definitely I'm
6 looking forward to working with you on that too. I
7 actually met with someone recently that spoke about
8 an innovative way that I believe Seattle has adjusted
9 their infrastructure that can wait the trucks, and
10 has an app with how they can find parking and
11 everything. So we should explore and see what other
12 cities are using also, so that we can find a
13 resolution.

14 So the last question that I have for...
15 (crosstalk)

16 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: If you don't mind... if
17 you don't mind, I'd add also to Charles to also
18 explain a little bit why EDC is also... how we also
19 are speaking to another sister institution in the
20 city, and see how they can be helpful.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: So, yes, I also
22 wanted to add: Yes, we're working with the EDC,
23 Economic Development Corporation, to... they do have
24 private property also, not necessarily city
25 properties, not a public right of way, but they do

2 have relationships with the real estate industry,
3 that they can help us with that kind of dialogue.

4 Also, the precipitant of this whole issue with
5 regard to overnight parking, we need to understand
6 the broader... broader challenge. It's true that the
7 federal government passed a law that requires
8 electronic data logging, whereby truckers are not
9 supposed to drive more than 12 hours at a particular
10 time. We do lack public parking solution...
11 locations here. There's only one, and it's actually
12 in the district by JFK Airport. It's really one we
13 helped to fund, working with Port Authority and
14 working with...

15 And so part of our plan is to see how we can
16 expand those types of opportunities across the city
17 to other areas. But there is a challenge with regard
18 to the value of real estate. But we're working with
19 all the partners to ensure that we can do that.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, absolutely. And
21 I think that it needs to also be a part of their
22 business model to include an additional driver, my
23 dad was a driver for many years for Greyhound buses
24 and comfort buses, and when he drove long distances,
25 they put an extra driver on there so that they could

2 be able to continue the course. So we do want them
3 to get the rest that they need so that they can be
4 safe and return home to their families. But... um,
5 you know, they shouldn't shortcut it, and then put
6 the burden on these communities where the trucks are
7 parking.

8 Okay, so I'll ask the question on behalf of
9 councilmember Mercedes Narcisse. She indicated the
10 last two years have been incredibly deadly on our
11 streets and we know that fatalities and injuries are
12 higher in areas that have not received as much
13 investment. DOT has a large budget and we know what
14 kind of treatments will improve safety, but so often
15 these investments are not made or take years to
16 implement. What are the holdups and obstacles to
17 quickly and efficiently invest in safety
18 infrastructure?

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Look, I again... Eric
20 also can expand on this one. But while we can say
21 that we are more than happy to share with any
22 councilmember, as I have done, and with any of those
23 that I have met, or physical, or walking the
24 district, or having some Zoom meeting, or as I did
25 with Councilmember Williams, I also I met here at 55

2 Water. So we are engaging directly with myself and
3 the rest of the team with councilmembers to talk
4 about what are the specific needs that they have.

5 We are following crashes. We are following data.
6 We are proactive. The investment that Mayor Adams
7 did, and I as we will finish this budget
8 collaboration between Speaker Adams, you, and
9 Chairman Brannan, and the Mayor, I know that all of
10 us have the same commitment to provide DOT the
11 financial support that we need to continue investing
12 in dangerous intersections, dangerous areas in the
13 city. So I can say that I personally have been able
14 to spend these four months expanding my knowledge
15 that I have as a previous chair, knowing that DOT
16 with the support of the council, also will be getting
17 the funding to address dangerous areas that we have
18 in our community. Again, if any councilmember has
19 any particular need, if they have seen any area that
20 they... in numbers of injuries, a numbers of crashes,
21 and they believe that we have not responded, they can
22 call me directly, they can call my team, they can
23 call the intergovernmental division, or they can call
24 the Bureau Commissioner. We are here to save lives.
25 But let me pass it to Eric so that he can also start.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: The commissioner
3 said it well. We are absolutely data driven and
4 spend... spend our days going after the places that
5 have the most crashes. What... what we've added to
6 that, as part of the streets plan is those priority
7 investment areas where we make sure that we're not
8 only looking at high crash areas in in sort of the...
9 the central parts of the city, but that we're
10 addressing those safety needs absolutely all over the
11 city. And, as the Commissioner said, you know, we
12 are happy to go... to be with any councilperson to go
13 through the... the borough's safety plans in their
14 district, talk about where the crashes are in their
15 district, and what we're doing to address them.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, and I'm
17 going to kick it back to Counsel so that we get
18 questions from my colleagues.

19 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you chairs. For the
20 record, we just want to also acknowledge, excuse me,
21 that we've been joined by council members Sanchez,
22 Stevens, Ayala, Carr, Barron, Narcisse, Rivera,
23 Brewer, Restler, Williams, Ung, Krishnan, and Joseph.
24 Hands have gone up and down, but I've maintained an
25 order. So the order for questions is as follows:

2 Barron, Brewer, Rivera, Carr, Ossé, Ariola, Sanchez,
3 Restler, Ayala, Stevens, Lee, Hudson, and Williams.

4 I want to remind council members that questions are
5 limited to five minutes. When the sergeant calls
6 time we ask that you please wrap up your comments, so
7 we can move on to your fellow colleagues, as we do
8 have two more agencies that the Committee on Finance
9 has to hear from today. But we'll first turn to
10 Councilmember Barron.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much. Good
13 morning, all. You know, we always have the right
14 rhetoric, particularly when a black or Latino gets in
15 a high position, how much the commitment is, but if
16 you say you're following the data, then the data
17 shows that East New York has some of the highest
18 fatalities and accidents, yet we don't receive the
19 highest amount of resources. And this is long before
20 you've come in. We've talked to prominent
21 transportation on certain street issues. But the
22 rhetoric... the resources have to reflect the
23 rhetoric. It can't be just talking commitment. The
24 resources has to show the commitment. So I thank
25 Chair Brooks-Powers for bringing up the fatalities

2 and accidents, because we have some of the highest in
3 the city. And we need to sit down and talk you need
4 to come out to East New York and see the situation
5 for yourself. I know Chair Powers is coming and we
6 appreciate her.

7 Secondly, we have a lot of elevated trains and we
8 need elevators for these elevated trains. Our
9 seniors struggling to go up to the elevated trains,
10 and for years. Oh, an elevator cost \$20 million. It
11 costs \$10. When I was asking for it, it was \$12
12 million. Now it's \$20-some-odd million. We need
13 elevators for our elevated trains, because our
14 seniors are having difficulties. The resurfacing and
15 the fixing of potholes: they need to have a kitty on
16 the side to give to residents whose cars were almost
17 destroyed by potholes, particularly the rims of their
18 tires. And sometimes the resurfacing and the fixing
19 of potholes is a shabby job, because they seem to
20 just fill it up with something. And then about a
21 month later, the pothole is back. So we need to look
22 at that. We need more lights, traffic lights and
23 stop signs, particularly in those intersections near
24 our schools to bring down the dangerous
25 intersections, the redesigning, we need that to

2 happen more in our communities. And we need a way to
3 extend some kind of train service or something out to
4 the Gateway Mall. The buses go out there, but I know
5 when they wanted to go to JFK Airport, they extended
6 and put another train out there to go. So in the
7 Gateway area where we have a bunch of housing coming
8 in, and new commercial businesses coming there, we
9 need to look at train service to Gateway, and also
10 the transportation... Well, the MTA deals with the
11 buses, but to that train station out there, it stops
12 at Astrid and New Lots, and it ends there. But to
13 this whole new community coming out there, we need to
14 look at transportation as it relates to that.

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Councilmember is nice to
16 see you.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Yes, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And thank you for your
19 leadership and the great work that you do also,
20 always standing and fighting for social justice, you
21 know, that it is all my respect to you, and my great
22 colleague, former councilmember Barron too. So I
23 agree with you. And first of all, I'm more than
24 happy to schedule a walk in your district. And more
25 than happy to, you know, sit down with you identify,

2 you know, areas that we feel that we have to give
3 priority that we cannot pay attention. So, so I, you
4 know, that's... that's... you've got my commitment is
5 on those two, following... following in those two
6 directions. One walk through there and see, like,
7 you know, whatever challenges we have in your
8 district, as we're doing in the 51 Council district
9 the same thing.

10 We have an ongoing transportation study, of the
11 Gateway area. Their recommendation later will come
12 this year. I feel that, you know, everything that
13 you mentioned, you know, looking at traffic lights,
14 let's follow... let's get our team from the office,
15 from our team to identify areas near the school that
16 you have seen. We're doing the best we can, that's
17 in here doing a great job. But if there's any
18 particular area that you can help us by bringing to
19 our attention that we haven't seen, let's do that.
20 On the elevator part, you know, that's on the MTA.
21 So... so... I believe your experience, as it took me
22 years and years to get an elevator when I was a
23 councilmember at 129th...

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: but... I am more than
3 happy again to advocate together with you to bring
4 into the MTA attention, but MTA are the ones who do
5 the elevator. But overall, I think the summary that
6 you have made is something that I agree with when it
7 comes to identifying area that you have in your
8 district, and lets schedule a walk that I will do
9 together with you.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: looking forward toward it.
11 And one particular block between New Lots and Hagaman
12 on Pennsylvania, we have cars that are up on the
13 sidewalk, I had to ask the police department not to
14 give them tickets, because we have a narrow two way
15 street and the cars were getting this... you know
16 damaged when they were parking on the side of it so
17 that one I'll bring you to when you come out to the
18 district.

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you Councilmember.

20 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Excuse me. Thank
21 you Councilmember Barron. Councilmember Brewer?

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay, she may be away from the
24 computer. I will circle back. I don't see

2 Councilmember Rivera on any more. So next we'll turn
3 to Councilmember Carr.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Councilmember Carrington Oral
6 Wound Rinse? You're up.

7 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: I apologize.

8 Thank you Commissioner for being here today.

9 Thank you to our chairs. I just wanted to ask a few
10 questions relating to road resurfacing piggybacking
11 off of Chair Brannan. You know in in FY 21, we...
12 DOT was only able to surface around 900 plus lane
13 miles citywide which was far less than the great
14 strides that we made earlier in the decade. I can
15 criticize the past administration for a lot, but they
16 invested a significant amount in road resurfacing. I
17 think 1300 lane miles was the peak in FY 16. And so
18 you know, given that we're still staying at baseline
19 levels, I'm wondering why we're -- and I know you
20 touched on it earlier -- why we're not going to push
21 through to the 1300.

22 Because in the previous decade, under the
23 Bloomberg administration, DOT lost a lot of ground
24 because it couldn't resurface roads faster than they
25 were crumbling. And we had to catch up. That's why

2 we had those significant investments in the past
3 several years. And after the COVID budget in FY 21,
4 we were only able to do 900-plus, far lower than the
5 1150 you're looking to do now. We have an
6 opportunity to kind of make up lost ground while we
7 have revenues.

8 And so while I understand baselining funding is
9 great. So it's wonderful that we don't have to
10 haggle below that. But I'm wondering, you know, if
11 we can get a commitment, so really try to reach for
12 that 1300 lane miles per year. And in the event that
13 we do, will we get over 200 lane miles resurfaced on
14 Staten Island as happened previously when we had
15 those numbers. And will you also commit, if we're
16 only going to be at the 1150 that we will at least
17 get the 155 to 160 lane miles for Staten Island if we
18 if we maintain the baseline levels of funding.

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: First of all,
20 Councilmember, Staten Island is now the forgotten
21 borough anymore under Mayor Adams' administration.
22 And whatever is important for your constituents and
23 for the whole borough, is something that we will be
24 giving attention to, because we want to be sure that
25 the residents of Staten Island know that your

2 priority in that borough is something that is a top
3 one for Mayor Adams and here at DOT.

4 Let me pass it to Elisabeth to go into more
5 detail on that question.

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Um, 1300 is...
7 is good, but it... to sustain that level of
8 resurfacing, we would likely need more equipment,
9 more facilities. And also a lot is tied to the
10 resurfacing program like all the pedestrian ramps.
11 The upgrades have to be done with that. And as we've
12 discussed, I think over \$400 million had to be
13 brought back into this five year window for
14 pedestrian ramps. So there's a lot more that's going
15 into resurfacing. So it's 1150 is a... is a high
16 level that is more than what we had been doing
17 previous to the 1300. And it's a really... it's a
18 good sustainable level for us.

19 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: So are we are we on track
20 for 155 lane miles this fiscal year? And if we do
21 get the baseline funding, again, is that what Staten
22 Island will at a minimum expect to receive?

23 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: We are on
24 track for the 1150 this year. Yeah.

2 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Not... not the 1150, but the
3 155 specifically for the borough.

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Oh, for Staten
5 Island? Let's check.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We can get back to it.
7 Let me assure you that we are committed to, you know,
8 do everything that we are committed to. But let's
9 see where we are with the number, and we can also
10 follow with you and your team.

11 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Okay, I appreciate that.

12 I also want to ask about local law 52 of 2017.
13 Commissioner, which you supported, during your
14 tenure. Former Councilmember Mizel offered that law,
15 and required DOT to do a study of private roads in
16 the city and make up a report about, you know,
17 potential roads for acquisition. You know, Staten
18 Island has a number of private streets, we have a
19 number of streets that, for all purposes are public
20 roads that were CCO'd, and then there are private
21 roads that are you know, in the middle of public road
22 beds, that, you know, we reach out to the agency for
23 resurfacing and we're told they can't be resurfaced,
24 even though they're effectively a highway service
25 road.

2 And so I'm wondering, you know, where are we in
3 terms of the city looking at acquiring title to roads
4 that have been in the public domain for some time,
5 and that DOT has been responsible for in the past?
6 And can we kind of pick up that conversation, you
7 know, after this hearing and in the weeks to come?

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let's follow the
9 conversation. We... This is something that we've
10 been discussing internally here. I'm more than happy
11 to follow up with you.

12 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: I appreciate it. Thanks so
13 much. I yield the balance of my time.

14 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thanks.

15 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember Carr.
16 Next we'll turn to Councilmember Ossé followed by
17 councilmember Ariola. Councilmember Ossé?

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you so much and good
20 morning slash afternoon to everyone.

21 Commissioner, I know we haven't officially met in
22 person however, you have a great opportunity to meet
23 me. I'm throwing an event on Saturday, the 14th at 2
24 pm. We're doing a bike day right here in Bed-Stuy at

2 Restoration Plaza. I would love for you to be there.
3 I hope I can put that on your radar.

4 But in terms of my questions: District 36, the
5 district that I represent is naturally... is a
6 naturally occurring retirement community, NORC, and I
7 represent many seniors in our city. The biggest
8 concern I get from my constituents is a lack of
9 accessible transit options for seniors, and those
10 with mobility needs. And while I know that many of
11 those issues pertain to MTA, such as Access-A-Ride
12 being inaccessible, many seniors feel unsafe on these
13 streets, whether it's, you know, how cars drive,
14 whether it's delivery drivers on E bikes going down
15 the street. So I wanted to ask how much of the DOT
16 budget will go towards expanding safety for our
17 seniors on a city level?

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well, as you know, the
19 \$905 million allocated from Mayor Eric Adams to DOT
20 will be directed to invest on improving the safety of
21 our roadways and our sidewalks, and the street, and
22 for the agency to have all the resources that we need
23 in order for pedestrians and cyclists to be safe.

24 I think that it is important that, you know, as
25 the team here works, you know, redesigning dangerous

2 intersection, that also we address the issue related
3 to reckless drivers. Because in an areas where we
4 have, especially our senior citizens, they are the
5 ones that when they are hit by the cars at
6 intersections, they make 50% of the fatalities. So
7 we need to be sure that we protect our senior
8 citizens, and this is one of the priorities that we
9 have.

10 Let me also call on Eric here to also add other
11 information to that question.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. As the
13 Commissioner said, seniors are a special focus for us
14 from a street safety perspective, because they're not
15 necessarily more likely to get struck by a car, but
16 when they are struck, they're much more likely to die
17 from it. And so we really need to focus on making
18 sure that people are not hit in the first place. It
19 sounds obvious, but it is an incredibly important
20 thing to do. And so we are focused on things like
21 turn timing so people turn at slower speeds, and the
22 speed camera program. Everything we can do to
23 increase the ability to react, not as the car strikes
24 the pedestrian, is really where we need to focus and
25 to spend an extra effort in those senior heavy areas

2 to focus on that type of safety program. So we're
3 happy to talk more with you and...

4 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Absolutely. Maybe... maybe
5 on bike day on Saturday at 2 p.m., Restoration Plaza.

6 Another question that I have is, you know, lights
7 are critical to ensuring public safety for our
8 communities, and my constituents in North Crown
9 Heights are often concerned about the lack of
10 lighting in our parks, like Brower Park. I
11 understand that the Department of Transportation is
12 looking to install new bulbs and park lights that
13 will bring in more illumination to the parks. And I
14 wanted to ask what is the progress on this
15 installation? And where have the bulbs been installed
16 in the city? Is the Department of Transportation
17 prioritizing neighborhoods that have previously been
18 under-invested in, especially neighborhoods where
19 parks need the most illumination?

20 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, let's get Rebecca
21 from the Intergovernmental...

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Yeah,
23 Councilmember, I'll... I'll reach out to our lighting
24 in the Brooklyn office and follow up with your
25 office.

2 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: That would be wonderful.

3 And then the final question that I have is...

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: I'm sorry... what
5 was the park again? What was the park?

6 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Brower Park.

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Thank you.

8 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Yes. And the final question
9 I have is, you know, the district that I represent is
10 unfortunately home to the third largest number of
11 traffic fatalities. This is due to the lack of
12 enforcement of motorists. There are constantly
13 vehicles at speed on our streets which pose a risk
14 for pedestrians, especially our seniors, and
15 motorists who double park and block protected bike
16 lanes, making it unsafe for cyclists.

17 What part of the budget is DOT allocating to
18 enforcing Vision Zero priorities and what is DOT
19 doing to further ensure that our streets are safer
20 for our communities?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Councilmember, as you
22 can see in the back here, this is like you know our
23 focus. This is about, we know, we... our focus on
24 Vision Zero following the mayor's goal, which is to
25 build a safe city. We want to build a safe city when

2 it comes to looking at traffic fatalities, not so far
3 from a traffic violence is not so far from gun
4 violence. So definitely you know, speeding is an
5 epidemic. There is coordination... there is a trend
6 that we have on numbers of pedestrians and
7 cyclists... the cyclists losing their lives because
8 of those drivers. So we are you know... not only are
9 we investing...

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... for the Location
12 Awareness Campaign, but we are teaching drivers that
13 they must slow down. _____ try to say over and
14 over, 25 miles per hour is the speed limit in New
15 York City. Drivers who drive at 25, they will be
16 able to stop if they see a pedestrian, same thing, a
17 cyclist. If by any chance they hit anyone, the
18 probability that a person has a major injury is so
19 low, the probability that person dies is so low. So
20 what we are doing is (1) educating the drivers, but
21 also letting them know there's consequences. And
22 Mayor Adams also is calling on the N.Y.P.D., together
23 with all them, and he put a message. There is going
24 to be step up in law enforcement, because we want to
25 be sure that, you know, working together with NYPD,

2 DOT, New York City, New York has to see... and they
3 have seen already that we are stepping up
4 enforcement, but please also help us you know,
5 calling your senator, calling your Assemblymember,
6 who are our friends, who already have expressed many
7 of them that they will be working with us to ensure
8 that we expand the speed camera and automatic
9 enforcement, so that by July 1, we should be able not
10 only to renew the program, we should be able to
11 expand it so that we get this speed camera automatic
12 enforcement 24 hours the whole year and lift the
13 restriction that they only can be installed a quarter
14 mile from school.

15 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you, Commissioner. I
16 hope to see you... I hope to see you on Saturday.

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'm gonna try. Okay?

18 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Okay.

19 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.

20 Next we'll turn to Councilmember Ariola.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you, chairs. Thank
23 you, Commissioner and your team for coming to... to
24 testify.

2 I want to talk about the bike racks. So last
3 year you received 10... you received funding for
4 10,000 new bike racks over two years. So in the
5 portion of my district -- that's Rockaway Peninsula -
6 - we've had some areas where bike racks were
7 installed, especially along Shorefront Parkway,
8 which... which runs along the beach.

9 Most recently, actually, in March, early March,
10 we had a meeting with the Queen's team from the DOT
11 to... to note, a number of issues along that strip
12 that needed to be addressed, one of which were the
13 bike... the bike racks. What's happening with the
14 bike racks is anytime there is a snow of any
15 magnitude that needs removal, the bike racks get
16 plowed away. And then they get replaced in the very
17 same spot. That is a tremendous waste of taxpayer
18 dollars. We mentioned to the DOT team that had come
19 down, gave them alternatives to where the bike racks
20 could be placed, because they were they were broken,
21 you know at the point when we met. And they came
22 back and replaced the bike racks exactly where they
23 were, only adding enormous boulders, which I will
24 email to you commissioner in an area which is
25 considered... it's almost to be like a buffer for the

2 for the bike racks. But this area is an evacuation
3 route for the rockaway peninsula in the event of
4 another superstorm. So I don't know what kind of
5 thought was put into that and why the DOT did that.
6 They did that without any notification not to my
7 office, not to the community board, not at the civic
8 associations.

9 We've also talked to them about the protected
10 portion of the bike lane, where cars just... just
11 naturally park there, and it is no parking. And we
12 had asked for zebra stripes in those areas because a
13 portion of it is where Parks Department has their
14 facility, and once cars park there, they're unable to
15 leave their facility with their vehicles and their
16 machinery.

17 None of those questions not speed humps at
18 entrances to large multifamily dwellings where it
19 should be... should be installed, not the bike racks,
20 not any type of remedy for the illegal parking and
21 the fact that Parks Department cannot either access
22 or... or leave their... their facility because of
23 illegally parked cars, nothing was ever responded to.
24 We have ramps that still need to be painted that go
25 up and into where our concessionaire areas are. And

2 we're 16 days away from being from our... our beaches
3 opening. 16 days. None of the things that were on
4 our on... our list which the community board
5 chairperson, Dolores Orr, detailed in an email so
6 that... so that your team from Queens would know
7 exactly what was discussed, and what needed to be
8 addressed, and what they would need to answer, you
9 know, yes, no, or maybe Joe was sent, we never
10 received anything back.

11 And that's really... that is... that's
12 unacceptable in and of itself.

13 But what was done was to poles got fixed. And as
14 I said, the bike racks were put in the exact same
15 spot, and then these enormous boulders were put side
16 by side in what is considered an evacuation route.

17 So my question is, why aren't we getting a timely
18 -- we're here at May 12th now, that was back in
19 early March -- why aren't we getting timely responses
20 from the borough office? That's number one.

21 Number two, why aren't we being notified and/or
22 considered when making such decisions, like putting
23 boulders in emergency evacuation routes?

24 And number three, why does DOT tend to be in many
25 instances, reactive and not proactive when community

2 people... community people, community boards, elected
3 officials are saying to them, this is what we need
4 here. This is what we need to protect the community,
5 people who are riding bikes, four way stop signs at
6 this corner, zebra parking... zebra stripes so that
7 no one can park, and this way there's not an accident
8 with a beat a beach vehicle coming out of the Parks
9 Department and a bike lane to cross, and then we have
10 parked cars in that lane. I don't understand why
11 everything goes back for a study, and never ever...
12 and I'm asking you to really reach down because you
13 were a councilmember, so you get this...

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: ... why not use us as the
16 real study... the real expert as to what's needed in
17 the communities?

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So Councilmember,
19 definitely I will... I will be following with you.
20 And as I have done it, you know, with the other
21 colleagues, I am more than happy to schedule my team
22 here to walk in your district. You know, being...
23 being on the other side, so I understand, you know,
24 the level of advocacy that, you know, that you are
25 bringing on behalf of the residents of the district

2 that you represent. At the same time, I can say
3 that, you know, we have a great team. You know, one
4 of the things that I have seen being 4... 4 months
5 here in this agency is that the team that I inherited
6 here, you know, they have they be running the largest
7 transportation system in the whole nation. And...
8 and even though we definitely will pay attention to
9 the needs of different, you know, realities, because
10 each community are different. But you know, when it
11 comes to expanding our micro-mobility, expanding our
12 bike lanes, is important for us, because we also want
13 to connect all New Yorkers, you know, all those
14 additional access to transportation, but in those
15 particular needs that you have mentioned, I am more
16 than happy to get you our team to be following up
17 with yours, and also to schedule a walk in your
18 district.

19 COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Commissioner, I welcome
20 that, and I will have my office reach out to yours to
21 set that up. Thank you for that.

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

23 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.

24 Still not... Councilmember Brewer, are you there?

25 Okay, next on my list is... Oh, there we go.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I'm here. Thank you.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: I appreciate. I'm in a cab.

4 You know how I am. I have three quick questions.

5 And first of all... Ydanis is doing a great job. I

6 didn't know... but everybody likes you. I'm

7 impressed.

8 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: You say it. I take it.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: It's an ongoing joke for

10 those who don't know. And then secondly, Ed _____

11 is fabulous.

12 Three questions.

13 One is... I think you've given me before, but the

14 status of the accessible pedestrian signals.

15 Number two, the data on... I think years ago, we

16 had the data on incoming traffic to the Central

17 Business District. Are you keeping track of that? If

18 not, should you I don't know.

19 Then third, I know that you talk, to your credit,

20 about figuring out on a pilot basis how to deal with

21 the Amazon parking, the FreshDirect, the _____, the

22 UPS, and so on. With... I know you're going to try

23 to get some... rid of some of the 18 wheelers, do

24 something different. I just want to get a little bit

25 more on that because you can imagine, Westside, they

2 all order online. I never do but they all do. And
3 it's a... it's a big problem.

4 And then finally the the intersection issue where
5 you know, people park and then nobody can see and
6 then somebody kills somebody. Is there something
7 else we can do on that... on that front?

8 So those are my questions and thank you so much
9 and congratulations.

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Thank you.
11 Thank you, Councilmember. You know that all My
12 respect to your dedication also to be known only now,
13 back as a council member in your previous role as the
14 Borough President, that's something that I learned
15 from you, is that you knew how to take care of the
16 need that we have in all communities from the top to
17 the bottom of Manhattan. So I'm more than happy to
18 follow all the same, you know, commitments, as we
19 paid attention here at DOT to all the needs of all
20 five boroughs. So I'm going to be sharing the
21 information, one on the intersection, say something
22 and then on the on the APS and then the rest of my
23 team also will add... answers to the other questions.

24 Look, I'm more than happy to do anything of the
25 daylighting, anything that I can to identify

2 intersections where we have to remove cars. We are
3 committed to use all the tools to improve safety.
4 Most crashes happen at intersections, and normally,
5 we are the team here that they are looking at
6 redesigning the intersection. You know, in some
7 cases separated the time for pedestrian to cross and
8 driver to turn, but in other cases about the
9 daylighting. So removing the car from the
10 intersection that they block the visibility. So on
11 the... on the on the accessible... accessible
12 pedestrian signal, I've got to say that as of March
13 31, 2022, DOT installed APAs at 1004 intersections
14 citywide. In calendar year 22, DOT planned to
15 install APAs are 400 locations, almost double our
16 high-water mark over the last two years when we
17 average just over 200 intersections. And in calendar
18 year 23, DOT plans to increase to 500 per year, and
19 we plan to continue ramping up to eventually
20 installing more than 1000 intersection per year with
21 a target or having 10,000 intersections equate with
22 APA... APA by the end of calendar year 2030.

23 Let me pass it now to Elisabeth, who will also
24 answer the other questions.

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: The other... I
3 can't remember the other questions.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: So we have
5 neighborhood loading zones. (crosstalk) Hold on one
6 second. So it's great to see you Councilwoman. So I
7 think Eric could talk a little bit about neighborhood
8 loading zones. And that... Oh, Charles too sorry.

9 And then... Could you could you repeat one of
10 your questions, because I tried to write them all
11 down, but you were too quick for me.

12 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: One was a APA. The
13 other one was the intersection.

14 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Yeah...

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. Which were the
16 other...?

17 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: You're muted, Councilmember
18 Brewer.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Sorry, I'm trying to...
20 the data of incoming vehicles to the Central Business
21 District? I think we used to keep track but I don't
22 know that we still do.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes, we do. We work
24 closely with NYMTC, the Metropolitan Transportation,

2 Council, and we do collect that data every year and
3 it gets published.

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Do you want to
5 talk about the loading zones?

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, the... your other
7 question has to do with loading zones, especially
8 with regard to you mentioned... specifically
9 mentioned Amazon. I would say that we do have a
10 partnership with... uh, major delivery companies.
11 Amazon does have a cargo bike program by which they
12 try to deliver, uh, the kinds of things that you did
13 mention that people order online. But our goal with
14 regard to encouraging the cargo bike pilot program
15 was really to take as many substitutes...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 ...from our trucks from delivery, you know, to
18 make sure that that delivery goes in the most
19 sustainable and environmentally friendly method, from
20 the last mile, in some cases the last foot of
21 delivery.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: What we did is we're
24 working with Amazon... and not just Amazon but any
25 other operator who wants to use our cargo bikes, we

2 do have a pilot program whereby we can designate
3 specific areas on the... on the... on the curb... on
4 the sidewalk... I'm sorry, on the curb, on the main
5 driving lane so that these vehicles can park and so
6 that people can receive their deliveries in the most
7 efficient manner. Ultimately, also, we're
8 integrating some of the cargo bikes also include our
9 electric assist, pedal assist bicycles that has
10 over... your... you attended the launching in
11 December of 2019 when it was launched, and we're
12 pleased to report that it's been a very successful
13 pilot. We're trying to make it permanent expanded
14 across the city.

15 The other components actually a neighborhood
16 loading zone program whereby we are also designating
17 spaces whereby drivers of taxis, Ubers, even personal
18 vehicles can load and unload in a designated area so
19 that this reduces double parking. We found that this
20 reduces double parking by up to... more than 73% of
21 double parking in areas. And that's significant
22 for... for us.

23 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank... thank you very
24 much. Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.

3 Next, we'll turn to Councilmember Sanchez.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Hello, hey Commissioner,
6 and hi, everybody at DOT. So great to see you all.

7 Very, very excited to be in this version of things.

8 So my question is around street safety and micro-
9 mobility. So very, very excited to see the deep
10 investment that the administration has made in the
11 New York City Streets Master Plan. But I think as
12 you all know, and many people know, I was personally
13 hit by a moped over the summer. We know that they
14 are driving on the sidewalks, we know that they are
15 not... they're posing a safety risk to a lot of our
16 seniors and elderly people and all of that. And so
17 in the Streets Master Plan, you know, the Bronx has
18 3%... currently has 3% of the New York City's bike
19 infrastructure, that we are severely behind. You
20 know, it's not representative of, of our population,
21 and more and more people are needing the safety and
22 security that could come from the... from extension
23 of bike lanes. So can you just tell me a little bit
24 about DOT's approach to safe micro-mobility, right?,
25 to... you know, I am not one to push for enforcement,

2 these, a lot of these folks are working, they're
3 delivering and all of that. But they're also using
4 the sidewalks largely because they don't feel safe on
5 the streets, because our streets are so... so
6 dangerous. So can you tell me a little bit about
7 plans for improving bike lanes, improving micro-
8 mobility options? What are the tools in DLTs toolbox
9 to address this issue?

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. First of all,
11 congratulations, Councilmember as we saw each other
12 yesterday, you're expecting the baby. I know that.
13 That, as you know is the very important for you and
14 your partner, so congratulation.

15 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much. We're
16 excited. And I feel like... I think that... we all
17 know that we have to continue expanding micro
18 mobility. You know, we have our consciousness and
19 our hearts that go together when it comes to ensure
20 that the working class community gets all the modes
21 of transportation, so that they can that can use the
22 mopeds and the bicycles and busses, you know, to move
23 around. Those of us who know what it is to be living
24 in in a community, that they have a transportation
25 desert. Pursuant to Local Law 67, that prohibits the

2 operation of a moped sharing system in New York City
3 without prior written authorization of DOT, it
4 required operators to adhere to the DOT rules
5 regarding operation safety and data sharing.

6 So we at DOT also make those who are the
7 operators of the mopeds accountable to our... to the
8 law that already passed by the Council. Moped share
9 systems are a network or sub-service and publicly
10 available electric Class B or C, limited use
11 motorcycle. An operator must pay a permit fee of
12 \$1000 for the initial, six-month permit, and
13 permit... they they have to be sure that, you know
14 mopeds should not be on the sidewalk, and it is not
15 legal for them to do. So if there's any particular
16 cases that you know that you have seen, that you have
17 experienced, or their constituency bring to your
18 attention, be sure that you bring it us. Be sure to
19 let us know which operators are the one that has any
20 mopeds used by any riders on the sidewalk. And we
21 take that very seriously. You heard from my
22 colleagues here, and I, senior citizen are the one
23 who are dying in larger numbers when they are hit...
24 not only by car, they also can die by being hit by
25 mopeds.

2 So we want to be sure that as we expand micro-
3 mobility we also take care of the more vulnerable
4 population, which are our senior citizens.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: We absolutely agree
6 with you that the investment in the on-street
7 infrastructure is a big piece of that, and there is a
8 very big focus on bike infrastructure in the Bronx
9 this year. In the Fordham area, we have University
10 Avenue going on right now. There's the whole Fordham
11 area bike network that we're implementing, and we
12 know that... we don't want it to just be an
13 enforcement solution. We want to put in the
14 infrastructure that lets people feel safe in the
15 right places on the street.

16 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, no thank you, and I
17 just want to clarify we don't have... we don't have
18 any operators here in the... in the West Bronx yet.
19 What we have is individuals who are using these
20 different devices.

21 And I understand, and maybe DOT can clarify, I
22 understand that if your... if your moped is
23 underneath 100 pounds, then you don't need a license.
24 But if it's above 100 pounds, then you do need a
25 license, and so there's... there's kind of like, just

2 a very confusing and, you know, difficult-to-enforce
3 regime going on. But I think that's one part is the
4 enforcement question, and...

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: ...laws are there, but
7 the other part is really about, you know, how we're
8 making the streets safer so that folks can feel
9 comfortable and feel like they can be on Fordham Road
10 and, you know, not... not going through the parks,
11 which they're doing and not being on the sidewalks

12 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I'm more than
13 happy to follow with you, councilmember, to share
14 more details when it comes to what is the weight of
15 those moped that are allowed in the city, in which
16 are not. But, you know, definitely I understand why
17 you bring to the table that question that you asked,
18 because that is something that affects your district,
19 and that also affects us on the other side of the
20 street in Linwood, in many other areas, in
21 underserved communities.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: And I think I don't
23 think I'm lying when I say this. I think we have a
24 one-pager that clarifies the mobility of the mopeds,

2 so I can get that to your office. And
3 congratulations.

4 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so
5 much. And congratulations, everyone.

6 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.
7 Next, we'll turn to Councilmember Restler.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Councilmember Restler, are you
10 there? Okay, I will circle back. Next, we will...

11 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I'm sorry.

12 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay.

13 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I'm sorry. I'll come
14 back later, when... when I can. I apologize.

15 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Next, Deputy Speaker
16 Ayala.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay, next, I'll try
19 Councilmember Stevens.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Hello. Good afternoon,
22 everyone. I just have a quick... a few quick
23 questions. And it was something that the
24 Commissioner said earlier. Hello, Ydanis, how are
25 you? I know, you said that the turnaround time for

2 like potholes and things being addressed is like a
3 three-day turnaround. That hasn't been my experience
4 in my district. And so I would love to work with
5 your office to get... have that turnaround happen,
6 because we have a number of platforms that are
7 growing, and a number of sinkholes that have just
8 been developing throughout my district. So I
9 definitely would love some time to talk with you and
10 your team about how do we get those things addressed
11 in a... in a much more adequate manner and faster
12 manner, especially since in other places, I guess
13 it's happening in three days. So let's set some time
14 for us to talk about that.

15 And then I think you touched on this earlier as
16 well, just talking a little bit about how are we
17 prioritizing transit deserts? And what are we doing
18 other than the bus lanes and bike lanes? Because my
19 district is... it's a unique one, right?, because we
20 have a number of very steep hills and bikes always is
21 not necessarily an option. And even with the bus, we
22 design in some of those areas, they remove bus stops.
23 So this is a much greater distance between stops now.

24 So just thinking about how are we prioritizing
25 these transit deserts and what does that really look

2 like? And are we... do we have any monetary
3 investments that we're thinking about?

4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I will start and
5 probably the team... not probably... the team here
6 also will complete.

7 Look, I feel that you know, all of us being have
8 been fighting on the issue related to transportation
9 deserts. That didn't happen overnight. No, it
10 happened as a result when major investments in the
11 city only happened in a certain area. It is not
12 investment only in transportation. Like when you
13 have an area, and you know I got _____ that the...
14 the state comptroller is doing a study on Inwood, I
15 guess, with a councilmember about what is the average
16 time of a resident in Inwood to go to work, and you
17 find out that 80% of the residents in my district,
18 they have to travel an hour and a half to go to work.
19 So I feel that besides you know, addressing...
20 connecting our community with buses, with trains, you
21 heard, like right now the MTA is working with
22 Governor Hochul's leadership to, you know, connect
23 all the trains to... using trains to connect Queens
24 and Brooklyn, and we feel that, you know... we
25 definitely had to have our long vision about thinking

2 about connecting underserved communities, those who
3 live in transportation deserts with new train lanes.

4 However, we also know how expensive and hard it
5 is to build those trains. And I think that the
6 immediate resources that we have are our buses. And
7 that's why we also want to be sure that we all work
8 together to be sure that we redesign our bus system.
9 This is the opportunity that we have to use, what I
10 call the above-the-ground train system, into
11 something that can move New Yorkers faster, where we
12 can turn our bus services more safer and efficient.

13 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Yeah. And I was gonna
14 say that's where my issue comes in. Right? Even
15 with the bus redesign, the solution was to remove
16 stops. So now we have longer walks in between the
17 stops. And so you know, even with that assumption,
18 it's like, I'm hearing this, like, Oh, we're
19 improving time, but no one was really talking about
20 how these long distances are really hard for the
21 disabled and seniors who live in the community, who
22 are really struggling for those things. And then a
23 lot of times the push is, "Oh, they can take a bike."
24 That is not always an option, especially with our
25 seniors, people with young small children, and so

2 that's why this is my question, because I don't hear
3 any real investment around what... what the
4 alternatives are, especially when they're removing
5 stops. So I had... you know, I don't have much time,
6 but I think that we should definitely spend some more
7 time just kind of exploring that, because I don't
8 really hear what that... what that plan is.

9 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, and we will follow
10 with you. And again, as I said before, with any
11 council member that we have to spend more time, you
12 know, visiting the district. We... my team and
13 myself are more than happy to do it.

14 But you know the... when it comes to the buses,
15 you know, we build the infrastructure. The MTA runs
16 the program.

17 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely.

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So I feel that it is
19 important also that, you know, we engage with the
20 senators, assemblymember and can, you know, for them
21 to bring their input to the MTA when it comes to
22 buses. But again, as you say: Yes, we are
23 expanding... we are concerned in the interest of
24 connectivity, to connect more New Yorkers in
25 underserved communities in different types of

2 transportation. We need to expand... we need to
3 bring them the protective bus lanes...

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Because on the _____,
6 most people who die, they were coming from a
7 community such as the one that you represent, and the
8 one that I used to represent, and most of the time
9 because of asthma and obesity, and diabetes, and we
10 feel that, you know, connecting those communities...
11 our communities with bike lanes, bus lanes is
12 important, but I see that question. And yet there is
13 an interest in this administration, led by Mayor
14 Adams, when it comes to figuring out how we can
15 connect those New Yorkers who live in transportation
16 deserts with additional source of transportation,
17 modes of transportation.

18 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: And just one last
19 statement, because I've heard a lot of talk about
20 Citi Bikes again. And I just want to say I think
21 that we have a missed opportunity where we could be
22 investing and having a shared bike program led by
23 people from the community and young people that
24 really have a career pathway. And I think that we
25 need to really be exploring those options of

2 having... and making sure that we don't have
3 monopolies in our... throughout our city that we're
4 supporting. But I think it's a missed opportunity.
5 That is something that we should be thinking about
6 moving forward with our young people. Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.

9 Next, we'll call on Councilmember Lee.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi, everyone, thank you so
12 much, Commissioner, and to all the DOT staff that are
13 here, as well as the Chairs, Brannan and our majority
14 with Selvina Brooks-Powers. I just wanted to ask
15 more specifically about the resurfacing, not so much
16 with the pothole filling, but when there are repairs
17 that are being done, my understanding is that the
18 resurfacing, you know, once it's milled... the
19 streets are milled, there's about a four to six week
20 time period, before you guys do the resurfacing of
21 those streets. And my understanding, and please
22 correct me if I'm wrong, is that it is to allow for
23 you guys to coordinate with DEP if there needs to be
24 any other work that's done underneath the surface and
25 to allow for that time, but I know that with some of

2 the you know sewage being replaced and the
3 resurfacing, and the streets being torn up, some of
4 the major thoroughfares in my district were torn up,
5 and to the point where like a residential driveways
6 were being blocked, and they didn't even have access
7 to their own driveways for months. This was actually
8 a very long time, and you know, when they inquired to
9 the city, like it was... they were just kind of
10 talked back and forth between DEP and DOT. And I
11 think there was just a lot of frustration there. So
12 I guess if you could speak a little bit more to how
13 that coordination is happening in terms of the
14 efficiency, and... and how we can help address our,
15 you know, our residents', you know, our constituents'
16 questions around... because it really is impacting,
17 you know, just the noise, the fact they can't access
18 their house, or where they live, their residence.

19 And so if you could speak a little bit more to
20 the time period in between, after the milling happens
21 and when the resurfacing happens, and how the
22 coordination with DEP can be more efficient.

23 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yep, I cannot say what
24 happened in the past. As you say, we can talk, I
25 know that this is something that we agree on. We can

2 talk about the present and the future, and learn from
3 things that were not done correctly in the past. So
4 definitely, you know, in the interest of the
5 residents, and the street where they live is very
6 important for this administration.

7 But let me... let's hear now from Rebecca, who
8 also expand with more concrete details.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: So I think the DEP
10 project... that's a [top-o] project. That's not a
11 milling project. So when we mill the streets, we do
12 keep them milled for a handful of weeks so utilities
13 can do work, and like... ConEd can get... get in and
14 do that. And then we don't usually leave streets
15 milled for months at a time. I think what you're...
16 I think the other project that you're talking about
17 is a capital project that DEP is doing, and we issue
18 the permits for that. And I think the Queen's office
19 has been... and I think the blocking driveways I've
20 heard before. But we can... I can follow up with
21 your office in terms of how we coordinate on capital
22 projects. But I don't think that's a milling
23 project, if I'm... if I'm... if I have that right.

24 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well, and just to be clear,
25 but that's just one example. But like, there are

2 other streets where you know, after the milling takes
3 place, it's about four to six weeks minimum, before
4 it gets resurfaced. And so just wanted to know, the
5 reasoning for the time lag. And if there actually is
6 coordination happening with the DEP. Sorry, I'm
7 having...

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: We do extensive
9 coordination with utilities. I hope you're okay.
10 But... so it's an... it's an opportunity. So before
11 we put fresh asphalt down, we have the street open.
12 So utilities can do work. And they know that there's
13 a period of weeks that the street is going to be open
14 that they can do the work. So hopefully we can avoid
15 -- that doesn't always happen -- the streets then
16 getting cut into after they have just been paved. So
17 that's the reasoning for the street milling. I know
18 it's not pleasant when it's like that, but at the end
19 of the day, you hopefully get a bunch of utility work
20 done, you get a freshly paved street that doesn't get
21 cut into for a period of time. That's the reasoning.

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And definitely we will
23 look on... on, you know, let's be sure that we
24 communicate... continue communication and see, like
25 any specific thing that we can do to, you know,

2 addressing what we can do better, faster. It is
3 important for us here at DOT too.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: So I really appreciate that.
5 And I just wanted to reiterate, I think what council
6 member Brewer said earlier about, you know, we have a
7 lot of folks, you know, we're a transit desert. And
8 we have quite a number of disabled in our community.
9 And so the signals and the lights... if we can get
10 that... or if you could let us know how we can
11 implement those more so in our district, that'd be
12 great.

13 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

14 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember Lee.
15 Next we'll turn to Councilmember Hudson.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Hi there. Thank you
18 chairs and hello, Commissioner. A lot of my
19 colleagues have already asked some of the really
20 pertinent questions I had in mind and thank you to
21 Councilmember Ossé for uplifting the needs of older
22 adults as it relates to transportation.

23 I wanted to ask a question about residential
24 parking permits. I'm wondering if DOT has considered
25 the effectiveness of such a program like what many

2 other municipalities including Washington DC have,
3 and... or what the city would need in order to
4 implement and enforce a potential residential parking
5 permitting program.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, so what I can say,
7 you know, we at DOT are always open to look for any
8 new innovation idea. There have been some concerns,
9 you know, that DOT has done on other programs can
10 operate but we will be more than happy to discuss
11 with you further on these ideas.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Great. Thank you so much.

13 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember
14 Hudson. Next was Councilmember Williams, but she
15 hopped off for another meeting, so she hopefully will
16 hop back. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Louis.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Good afternoon. Thank you
19 Chairs Brannan and Brooks-Powers for this hearing.
20 Good to see you Commissioner Rodriguez.

21 Just... most of the questions I had were asked,
22 but.. and I don't know if you've covered this
23 already. I apologize if it was, but I wanted to have
24 a quick conversation about the Interborough
25

2 Express. Though the Interborough Project is an
3 MTA project, I wanted to know if DOT could comment on
4 their role and how... how you all will be able to add
5 funds in FY 23 budget regarding research or any type
6 of... any part of the project.

7 The second question is in regards to Kings
8 Highway. I want to thank DOT for their unwavering
9 support for Kings Highway, and for applying for
10 federal funds. I wanted to know if DOT could outline
11 its Vision Zero investments regarding Kings Highway
12 and how the agency will continue to support one of
13 the biggest and most integral arteries that we
14 believe in Brooklyn that goes between many council
15 districts. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Let me get
17 into the first one. And then Eric will also take on
18 the second one.

19 Governor Hochum announced this transit expansion
20 proposal in January 2022, which would connect the
21 Jackson Heights with Sunset Park using existing
22 freight rail right of way, and the MTA is currently
23 exploring goals of Rapid Transit, light rail, or
24 conventional... conventional rail similar to LIRR,
25 each of which will have different costs, service

2 level, and performance. Currently, ridership
3 estimates can go from 74,000 daily riders to... for
4 BRT, 85,000 for conventional rail and 88,000 for
5 light rail. The MTA anticipates choosing one of
6 these to advance to environmental review process by
7 the end of 2022. So they are the leading one, but we
8 are more than happy to, again, to follow with you and
9 make the connection with MTA.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: And then on Kings
11 Highway, we couldn't agree more... like we're
12 incredibly pleased to be investing in that corridor.
13 There's about \$82 million in the capital budget for
14 that. And, as you know, it's just it's such a big
15 wide street, it is challenging for people to cross,
16 there's tremendous speeding. And so a lot of what we
17 want to do is make that street easier to cross. So
18 you know, you see... we've done this already at a few
19 medians. But really do the whole corridor, expand
20 those into the crosswalks, so that pedestrians have a
21 place... of refuge if they don't make it all the way
22 across, slow down the turns, redesign all of those
23 bus stops to be accessible to everyone using them,
24 and use fencing to guide people to the crosswalks to
25 get to those bus stops. It's really going to be a

2 full-on redesign of that... of that whole avenue.
3 And we think it'll be better for safety, better for
4 buses, to really try to take that street from being
5 almost a highway through the community to being
6 something that is really safe and accessible for
7 everyone who lives there.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Alright. We look forward
9 to working on that with you all. Thank you so much.
10 Cheers.

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

12 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember
13 Louis. Councilmember Williams. I see you're on.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Councilmember Williams? Okay.
16 I will go to Councilmember Restler next.

17 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Hi. Can you skip over
18 me and come back after, because I thought I was way
19 last in the queue. So...

20 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: We will.

21 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

22 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Alright, we'll come back come
23 from. Councilmember Restler?

24 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much. And,
25 and thank you to my distinguished Chairs, Brooks-

2 Powers and Brannan. I really appreciate both of your
3 tremendous leadership. And I want to thank Justin
4 also for shouting out many of the great staff at DOT,
5 who are so responsive to us and helpful day to day.
6 He shouted out lots of great folks from the Brooklyn
7 office like Keith and Claudette, also, Rhonda and
8 Emily in our part, as well as Daniel Zuckerman, who
9 does so much to help our office day to day. I also
10 just want to commend Commissioner Rodriguez. I
11 really do believe that you care deeply about
12 addressing safety and violence in our streets and
13 that you're doing everything you can and pushing as
14 hard as you can to try and improve the situation. So
15 I want to thank you for your leadership there.

16 I want to commend some of the folks that City
17 Hall notably the Chief of Staff, Frank Coron and
18 Deputy Mayor Joshi and their teams for pushing to try
19 and think about the future of the... the triple
20 cantilever and think about a transformative and bold
21 plan. We're certainly eager to get more information
22 in my office, and my community is desperately seeking
23 more info here, and we're hoping that that will come
24 in the weeks ahead.

2 I do have to say that I have been really
3 disappointed though by the Department of
4 Transportation's lack of urgency in advancing the
5 preservation strategies to keep the triple cantilever
6 safe and functional for the 20 years that we're
7 hoping to have before renovations need to... or
8 transformation needs to occur.

9 And the dramatic reductions in funding by, you
10 know, upwards of \$180 million that should have been
11 spent this year, a reduction from \$225 million down
12 to \$44.6 million that the Chair Brannan rightly
13 shouted out earlier, is of grave concern. And,
14 frankly, is indicative of the lack of urgency the DOT
15 is placing on making the necessary repairs at this
16 location. And I am very upset about it. And
17 frankly, in my communications with DOT, I've been
18 underwhelmed by the response that I've gotten from
19 the agency. And so as it relates to the slowness of
20 _____ installation, the slowness of the sensors being
21 installed, the slowness of addressing water
22 infiltration issues where we've had major flooding
23 this very calendar year, I am disappointed and
24 concerned about the safety of our community, and
25 about our ability to preserve the lifespan of the

2 triple cantilever for these 20 years so that a
3 bolder, more transformative solution can take place.

4 So my simple question is this. Well, the
5 Department of Transportation, Commissioner Rodriguez,
6 commit to meeting with me on a monthly basis to give
7 critical updates on preservation strategies so that
8 we can be sure that we are holding DOT accountable
9 to... to extend the lifespan of the triple
10 cantilever?

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: First of all,
12 congratulations to you and Anna, as you got married.

13 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Yddanis, you're a good
14 man. I love you. What can I say? Thank you very
15 much. We're really happy.

16 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Listen, there is no one
17 who knows better City Hall than you. And you know
18 how much time you have spent in your previous role,
19 looking at the cantilever and the whole BQE, you know
20 that... you know as you've been engaged in
21 conversation with City Hall, and here we have
22 previous a conversation that we have talked about our
23 whole plan to... especially now that we have engaged
24 in conversation with... with the state, and we
25 believe that, you know, we have a big project to do,

2 we will do it together, we will continue doing the
3 planning. There is no issue related to safety here
4 at DOT, and Elisabeth can explain when it comes to
5 you know, how we move money. No decision to move any
6 money will put anything at risk. So we have a... our
7 team of bridges. They have the resources that they
8 need to be sure that safety is taken care of. But at
9 the same time... and you will be part, as you have
10 been in conversation, you know, with City Hall
11 directly, and with us here too, as we move forward
12 having planning conversation, we are looking to more
13 engaged... stepping on engaging not only the local
14 councilmember, but also the Borough President, and
15 all the stakeholders. So let's keep _____, you know,
16 be sure that when we follow the level of
17 coordination. This is going to be a big project.
18 But safety has never been an issue, when it comes to
19 the resources of DOT has designated to that point.

20 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that. And I
21 know that you're planning a briefing for us... for
22 myself and others soon about the future of the triple
23 cantilever, but the preservation of the structure and
24 is my concern. And if we don't do... act with
25 extraordinary urgency and haste, to preserve the

2 structure for 20 years, it's... we're not going to be
3 able to implement a bold, transformative solution
4 that we all know is necessary, and that I know the
5 mayor wants to achieve. And so that's why I'm
6 asking...

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: ...for monthly updates
9 with DOT on the progress that you're making on the
10 preservation strategies, particularly. This is the
11 area where I'm very concerned we're not getting the
12 responsiveness that we need. Is that a commitment
13 that you're prepared to make? We will continue to
14 meet. And as also we are trying to figure out, and
15 we are coordinating with City Hall, how we're going
16 to be bringing all the stakeholders not only the
17 elected but all the voices of the community on
18 discussing the future of that area, and this is
19 something again, that, you know, we will have the
20 time right, as you know, someone that happens at city
21 hall, you saw for many years, and know how we work
22 when it comes to the BQE, and the whole project is
23 something that, you know, very soon you will hear on
24 what is the next step on... on the community
25 engagement, and that also will include the elected

2 official. On the council meeting, monthly, whatever,
3 like I will have no issues again of coordinating our
4 meeting between your office myself and the team here.
5 But I... I prefer to say that we are working with
6 City Hall. Let's see how we plan the level of
7 coordination as we move forward. What I can tell you
8 that Mayor Eric Adams is having a conversation
9 directly with his team, and letting Albany know that
10 coming together... planning together is very
11 important for all to accomplish that particular big
12 project. One of the most important projects that we
13 have in our generation, when it comes to improving
14 safety there. But one thing I want to be clear:
15 Never has there been, or is there an issue of safety
16 in that area. Our bridges division, our engineers,
17 they have all the resources that they need in order
18 to keep that area safe.

19 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that. I
20 know my time is expired, I would have greater
21 confidence if there was if there was greater
22 communication. And so I'm not asking for meeting
23 with you every month Commissioner, but bridges... for
24 the bridges team and your external, your _____ team,
25 to sit with us every month and give us crisp updates

2 that I could share with my community would alleviate
3 and assuage many, many concerns. Because I'm hearing
4 every day from constituents who are freaked out. So
5 I... I'll follow up with you. But I... I appreciate
6 you answering the question.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember,
9 Deputy Speaker Ayala, I see your screen is now on.
10 You were on my list before, so I will turn to you.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. And good
13 afternoon, Commissioner. It's nice to see you. I
14 haven't had the pleasure of seeing since you entered
15 your new role. So congratulations to you.
16 Obviously, I'm really concerned about, you know, the
17 safety of our older adults and individuals with
18 disabilities who are having difficulty navigating
19 sidewalks that are in disrepair, and I wonder how
20 much of this year's budget has been allocated towards
21 sidewalk renovation and how much of that funding is
22 specific to public housing sidewalks?

23 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I can follow with a
24 specific about the public housing sidewalk, but I can
25 tell you, first of all, it is a... it's a great

1 honor, again, to be working with you, you know, in
2 our role. I am here to support anything that will
3 come to improving transportation in the whole city,
4 but especially you and I know, because we were there
5 together in previous, also speaker leadership at the
6 council, and I know that you also are going to be
7 doing a great job now working together with Speaker
8 Adams, but we've been there, and we know that we are
9 also committed, to be sure, that we protect all New
10 Yorkers, but especially our elderly. Like you know,
11 my mom was at 108 and Third Avenue, when they... when
12 my apartment used to live at 1738 Lexington Avenue,
13 where I did my swearing-in in 2019. So I will... I
14 will continue working, again, in this case, we
15 Commissioner AG, Lauren Cortez, who also always there
16 caring for the senior citizen. But when it comes to,
17 you know, the work that we're doing, the DOT had
18 previously committed \$4 million annually for sidewalk
19 repair on NYCHA properties. However, due to
20 procurement delays related to COVID in 2021, DOT will
21 increase this commitment to \$5 million for the
22 calendar year 2022. So yes, we will be working
23 together, the team here, you know, has the resources
24 that are needed. Mayor Eric Adams allocated, you
25

2 know, close to a billion dollars for us to take care
3 of a lot of the needs that we have in transportation,
4 and taking care of the roadways and sidewalks is also
5 part of her priority.

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: How much... how much of
7 the budget is that? And the reason that I'm asking
8 is because I represent, you know, the largest public
9 housing stock in the city. And not only... You
10 know, so not only is the work not getting done yet,
11 and I commend you're adding an additional million,
12 but when one sidewalk is costing, you know, \$500,000
13 to \$800,000, for repairs, then we know that this is
14 not going to really make a dent, right? The list of
15 priorities that has already been established of the
16 sidewalks that are in the most dire condition. So I
17 appreciate that. But I would always argue that we
18 need a lot more resources there. Because we, you
19 know, I find that the city is really quick to fix,
20 you know, sidewalks in front of private homeowners,
21 you know, spaces. But, you know, the public housing
22 developments would have the same condition ongoing
23 for years. And what... what's happening is that
24 we're seeing as a result that many of our seniors are
25 like crossing the street, like literally walking in

2 the street because they can't navigate walkers,
3 shopping carts, if they're a wheelchair users, they
4 can't safely navigate the sidewalk. So now we're
5 putting them at greater risk by forcing them onto the
6 street with vehicular traffic. And that concerns me.
7 And I would love to see some level of priority and a
8 budget for that, because I think that it's something
9 that isn't necessarily on, you know, anybody's radar,
10 at least not... not any... in any space that I've
11 heard it become a priority. So I really would
12 welcome that.

13 And then I also wanted to know, how much of the
14 budget is dedicated towards the highway and ramp
15 cleaning? You know, the highways I know,
16 specifically in the Bronx part, you know, going into
17 the Bruckner, are in pretty bad condition. Normally,
18 when I'm crossing over the Willis Avenue Bridge, I've
19 had to personally call several times to have the
20 bridge cleaned, because, you know, it's it hasn't
21 been. And I get it, we were in the middle of a
22 pandemic, but we have the resources to address these
23 issues now. So I wonder how much of the budget is
24 dedicated for that?

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. I will pass
3 it to our Budget Director here, Elisabeth, will that
4 explain that... answer the question, but definitely
5 taking care of the sidewalk is top priority because
6 we know how important is our sidewalk for New
7 Yorkers, especially for senior citizens.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Can I piggyback on
10 that, too, Commissioner? Councilwoman, if you have
11 priority locations, if you could send that to me or
12 to the Manhattan office or the Bronx office,
13 depending on where they're located. Then I would say
14 even if they're not scheduled for concrete repairs,
15 we could talk about maybe making some asphalt
16 immediate improvements.

17 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I will definitely do that.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Thank you so much.

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: And for the for
20 the cleaning of the bridges and highways,
21 unfortunately, I don't have that number at hand. So
22 we will have to get back to about that... that dollar
23 figure.

24 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay, and just before I
25 end... it's not really a question, but more of a

2 suggestion: You know, recently we went through a
3 situation in the South Bronx part of my district
4 where Jackson Avenue was converted into a bike lane,
5 leading to the connector that connects Bronx _____ to
6 Randall's Island, which is great in theory. However,
7 that street is very, very narrow. And it's also home
8 to three schools.

9 In the Bronx, we have serious retention issues
10 with educators, and most specifically, the highest
11 rates of educators that are coming from out of state,
12 from New Jersey, from upstate whatever, to teach in
13 our schools. We don't have adequate parking space,
14 and that was not something that was surveyed. So we
15 had great difficulty, you know, trying to mitigate
16 the impact of the bike lane.

17 So, you know, as we continue to have the
18 conversation of how we introduce bike lanes, you
19 know, into the city streets, we... we should also...
20 there should be some study dedicated to that
21 particular community to see what the impact is going
22 to be. For me, it would have been pretty serious.
23 And I... you know, I think that the idea that cars
24 are a luxury for everyone, specifically for people
25 that are living in, you know, in communities where

2 transportation is not as easily accessible, you know,
3 is a disservice to that community.

4 So I would love to have more conversation, you
5 know, with DOT around this, and I would welcome the
6 commissioner as well to come out to the district to
7 do a little tour so that I can show you some of
8 the... the issues that are of importance to us.

9 But I think that on a greater scale. You know,
10 as we're talking more and more about inclusion and
11 inclusivity of bike lanes, that there has to be an
12 overall assessment of what the impact of that bike
13 lane is going to be on the immediate community.

14 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I'm more than
15 happy, Councilmember, to follow with you, and to do,
16 you know, a walk-around and see what is important
17 there.

18 I also want to, you know, to encourage you and to
19 see how we can work together, because I feel and
20 again, I say because we know that we have many
21 conversation on things are related to the cycling
22 community and I feel that also we need to educate our
23 community about the benefits of cycling. I think
24 that, you know, it is not only to build the
25 infrastructure, as I said before, but it's about how

2 can we also you know, be able to work with a... with
3 a local institution for them also to do their part?
4 You know, teaching our... especially our youth about
5 how riding a bicycle, you know, is good for the
6 health tool. So... but when it comes to the
7 parking... and, you know, it is something that they
8 came around, and usually when we also expand our
9 bike... a bike lane, I'm more than happy to have
10 conversation with you.

11 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I appreciate that. Thank
12 you.

13 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember
14 Williams? I was told you're now ready.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: I am. Thank you so much
17 chairs and Commissioner, for your patience. I think
18 my colleague Councilmember Ariola, said it best, and
19 Commissioner, as a former council member, you know
20 that often we know our districts well. And for a
21 very long time Department of Transportation often
22 does this cookie-cutter model, where they have this
23 bright and amazing idea, which is probably bright and
24 amazing, but doesn't necessarily fit in every
25 community and the ways in which maybe the agency

2 intended it to fit. And so that said, one of the
3 first things I want to talk about is the bus lanes in
4 my district in the downtown Jamaica area, it is
5 absolutely horrific. We don't like them, and we want
6 to see some changes happen. It's my understanding
7 that the pilot is set to end a few months from now.
8 But that is way too long for so many of the
9 businesses that are losing business as a result of
10 the bus lane that still isn't being enforced and
11 isn't sort of offering the benefits that it was set
12 to offer outside of certain metrics that talk about
13 reduced time in buses actually getting through that
14 corridor.

15 And so I wanted to know, what type of indicators
16 outside of bus times are you using to really
17 determine whether or not the bus lanes are working in
18 certain communities?

19 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I can I can pass
20 it to Eric again, to add... answer your question. I
21 can think about my own experience when it comes to
22 buses, that one refers... a sometimes you know, how a
23 person feels when their bus lane is starting, but
24 they will be losing, and at the end of the day, what
25 happened is that they don't lose consumers.

2 Sometimes, you know, that bus lane ads, because more
3 people walk in those areas. But each community is
4 different. And again, you are the... you know your
5 community, and we are more than happy again to... to
6 hear from you, to work with you. And as you will
7 hear from Eric, the positive thing he says is that we
8 are always open to go back and see, you know, what
9 has been a strain. But I just want to encourage all
10 of us, irregardless on the side that we... that we...
11 that we are elected or in a Commissioner level,
12 that... understanding that, you know, when we bring
13 that bus lane, we are connecting those group of the
14 working class residents, who they don't have other
15 modes of transportation. But I also know that we...
16 that we also have to look for the small businesses
17 back.

18 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, it's not just the
19 small businesses. Yes, the small businesses are the
20 most harmed. But my district is a hybrid community.
21 We have cars. And so when I think about the
22 Department of Transportation, and maybe I'll just
23 leave... I'll do a Councilmember Barron. And I'll
24 just say a statement you don't really have to answer
25 so I can get to another question that I like you to

2 answer, which is we are a hybrid community. And I
3 think it's critical that the Department of
4 Transportation takes into consideration that people
5 do drive cars. We want to make sure that people that
6 use public transportation have the proper resources
7 to do that, that it's efficient, that they can get
8 around well, but I think we need to really look at
9 how we could make some small tweaks to ensure that it
10 is not disproportionately affecting one group of
11 people, one demographic of stakeholders over another
12 and that is the case.

13 And so again, there's other things that the
14 agency could be doing, resources that they could be
15 allocating to the district outside of like dumping a
16 bus lane that's still not enforced and still not
17 properly... properly regulated.

18 So the other question I have is around school
19 safety. I wanted to know if the Department of
20 Transportation anticipates receiving an additional \$1
21 million in state funding in fiscal 2022 to support
22 infrastructure improvement in school zone. So I have
23 a whole bunch of schools that talk a lot about
24 traffic safety. They have petitioned and lobbied for
25 speed bumps, stop signs and to no avail, while

2 children are getting hit by cars. And so I wanted to
3 know if there is going to be focused attention around
4 school safety.

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We are using all the
6 tools that we have to use in order to improve safety
7 in our city, especially the surrounding school. So
8 we go from redesigning dangerous intersections to
9 looking at any of the tools including to install the
10 speed cameras, like the level of New Yorkers,
11 especially they do that we are losing children around
12 the school, there are too many, there is too much
13 blood that we have, so we using all the tools, but
14 let me pass it...

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ...to Eric, so he can
17 also add to it.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Absolutely. I know
19 we've got some information on some specific schools.
20 We were working on PS116, we put in some new all-way
21 stops there. There is even more we can do PS176,
22 _____, IS59, PS134. We're working at all of those
23 places, because we agree, safety in and around
24 schools are incredibly important. We work directly
25 with the schools. We talk to the principals, we

2 talk... we work with students, we have a robust
3 school safety program, and we will make sure we
4 address those locations, and any others that you
5 bring to our attention.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We're more than happy
7 to... (crosstalk)

8 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: The pavers... the pavers
9 in the downtown Jamaica area, DOT issues permits to
10 different utility companies, and oftentimes, they do
11 not properly replace the brick pavers. And so we'd
12 love to know if any... how much it would cost to
13 remove the pavers and just put regular cement on the
14 sidewalks, so that... I don't know, I'm sure you
15 don't have the question now, but that is something
16 that I would like to explore, because it is a major
17 issue in the downtown Jamaica area.

18 Also medians. I'm wanting to understand who
19 oversees the maintenance and repair of medians, and
20 if there are any resources that have been allocated
21 in this budget to maintain the medians.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: I'll say this about
23 the medians. It varies from agency to agency.
24 Sometimes it's parks, sometimes it is us, so I think
25 we'd have to know a specific location. And I'll let

2 Elizabeth talk about the funding part of that
3 question. If you... If your office wants to send
4 either the Queens office or my office specific median
5 locations that you're discussing, then we can figure
6 out the jurisdiction.

7 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Thank you. I mean,
9 we could... (crosstalk)

10 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Yes, we did get
11 additional funding in this plan for maintenance of
12 various public spaces, including maintenance. I'm
13 looking for the exact dollar value, but that is going
14 to be something we're increasing.

15 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, just look for the
16 exact dollar value.

17 Just my last final thing about bike lanes. So
18 Southeast Queens really has no bike lanes, again,
19 because we're a hybrid community. A lot of our
20 community members are not huge fans of bike lanes,
21 but I do think there are spaces that we could have
22 more bike lanes. And so I'd like to work with the
23 Department of Transportation, especially an area that
24 has historic illegal dumping. That area could
25 quickly be turned into a bike lane, and I know The

2 Mayor and City Hall has committed to keeping bike
3 lanes clean. So I really want to have a conversation
4 with the Department of Transportation about how we
5 could expand some bike lanes into my district.

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: More than happy
7 councilmember to follow... follow with you on, you
8 know, we want to expand bike lane, I think that this
9 is not a luxury. This is something that is important
10 for the whole of New Yorkers. And we want to be sure
11 that, as we look at micro-mobility then also, we know
12 that is community, most _____ a bike lane, and I'm
13 more than happy to follow with you.

14 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you so much. And
15 thank you chairs, again, for your patience.

16 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next we'll call on
17 Councilmember Farias, followed by Councilmember Moya.
18 So Councilmember Farias then Councilmember Moya.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Thanks. Good afternoon,
21 everyone, and thank you Commissioner and Team DOT for
22 being here. I will be brief. I just have three
23 quick questions.

24 In the council's budget response we had requested
25 \$3.1 billion in DOT funding to transform our streets

2 to be safer, more accessible, and equitable. This
3 included 500 miles of dedicated bus lanes and 40
4 miles of car-free busways. Can you share, if you
5 haven't already -- and if you have, please tell me to
6 refer back to the record, because I have been hopping
7 in and out -- can you share what projects are
8 included in the mayor's \$900 million budget? And Will
9 any of the council's expanded goals be met? Are there
10 any potential cuts?

11 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. First of all, we
12 are we working with a goal of Mayor Adams on... on
13 building the numbers of bus lane that you mentioned.
14 We are happy with the support that we've been getting
15 also from the council, and we feel that the \$905
16 million... almost \$1 billion level that the Mayor
17 designated to DOT as a down payment. We allow our
18 division here to teach to other resources that
19 they... that they need in order to advance, you know,
20 the Street Master Plan, to have the bus line, the
21 bike lane, so as we always say at the beginning, we
22 always welcome more, but we feel that as we're going
23 to be working with OMB, they always will be there,
24 and working with us to make sure that we continue
25 having the resources in a city that we have limited

2 resources in order for us what we need, in order to
3 continue turning York City as a safer city when it
4 comes to pedestrians and cyclists.

5 COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so much. The
6 mayor's administration has also committed numerous
7 times to exceed the legal requirements of the NYC
8 Streets Plan by completing 150 miles of bus lanes in
9 just four years rather than five, which is great, and
10 we'd love to hear that. But we haven't yet seen a
11 plan for completing the 20 miles required in 2022.
12 Do we happen to have any bus projects planned for
13 2022 to meet that goal? And is DOT on track for
14 completing those 20 miles by the end of the year?

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We do have it and a
16 goal... we will get there. Let me provide the break
17 down. I think that we... I can share it with you
18 now.

19 So... so in some of the upcoming projects involve
20 University Avenue in the Bronx, with new bus lane and
21 new protected bike lane. For the role in the Bronx,
22 an initial community advisory board meeting was held
23 in March. For the role in the Bronx, the first SBS
24 project from 2008 was 21st Street in Queens, and also
25 BF6 in South Bronx, Crosstown Capital Project in

2 design in 2023. Yes, we are... we will be building
3 the numbers of the 20 bus lanes, and we are working
4 with... to accomplish that goal on the numbers of bus
5 lanes that Mayor Adams committed himself.

6 COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Great. Thank you so much.

7 And the last thing that I'd like to ask about:

8 Recently, Chair and Councilmember, Selvena Brooks-
9 Powers and I did a quick walkthrough of some of my
10 major corridors... transit corridors and arteries
11 throughout the district. One of the main concerns
12 that I have, and that I brought up, and I'm sure
13 we're dealing with city-wide as well, is the absence
14 of bus shelters throughout our communities. You
15 know, while we were touring through -- and I know
16 Commissioner, you and I want to do want to do a
17 walkthrough as well, so we'll be able to see this
18 when we plan on our walkthrough -- we have a lot of
19 elderly folks that are like leaning on hydrants or,
20 you know, sitting on the sidewalks kind of waiting...
21 waiting for the buses to make their way to that stop.

22 So I just want to know, going forward is there a
23 plan to look at aging communities or highly utilized
24 stops within communities to add any additional bus
25 shelters?

2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, Councilmember.

3 That's our goal. And... we are in conversation we
4 JCDecaux regarding a potential opportunity to add
5 additional shelters and that has been on hold since
6 COVID, but just for your information, we had 3,320
7 bus shelters in the JCDecaux design currently in
8 service, 3,558 bus shelters in JCDecaux, designs are
9 installed in some workplaces out of service to
10 accommodate construction or the stop being moved by
11 the MTA, and others permanently removed due to the
12 MTA service code. We... we know our community when
13 it comes to the _____, and we know that we need to
14 have more bus shelters, not in your district, but in
15 other areas...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... not in your
18 district, but in other areas, I walked in Queens, and
19 I know that it is important for the Queens residents
20 also to get more bus shelters. This is a need that
21 we have across the five boroughs. And this is
22 something again that as we are having conversation
23 with JCDecaux regarding potential opportunities,
24 we're looking to add additional shelters... bus
25 shelters _____.

2 COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Great. Thank you so much,
3 again for all of your testimony and answering the
4 questions. Thank you to the chairs for allowing me
5 the time. I won't take up any more. I appreciate
6 you folks. Have a good day.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you Councilmember
9 Farias. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Moya.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Thank you. Thank you,
12 Commissioner. Good to see you. Cómo tú estás?

13 Listen, I want to just quickly talk about the
14 open plazas. One: What is the budget for the direct
15 services that the DOT has for public plazas? Two:
16 What's the total cost of the contracts to external
17 organizations for operation maintenance? And then
18 also what is the average length of those contracts?
19 And what are the mechanisms in place that you have to
20 see if they are... they're actually fulfilling their
21 obligations with the public plazas?

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Give me one second
23 Councilmember. As I announce... Give me one second,
24 let me go back to... let me get the right
25 information...

2 So... so council member, the OneNYC Plaza Equity
3 Program addresses the need for NYC Plazas under the
4 resources for neighborhoods where community-based
5 partner organizations face challenges to maintain
6 high-quality public space. 31 plazas have received
7 support through the equity program, 17 high-need
8 plazas received a full a suite of maintenance
9 services. 14 medium-need plazas received financial
10 subsidies of up to \$20,000 per year to support
11 maintenance operation and programming, and all plazas
12 in the program received technical assistance to...
13 with fundraising operations, planning, and
14 programming. So we feel that, you know, we are in a
15 good place when it comes to providing those
16 communities that doesn't have the resources, to have
17 the technical and financial support to maintain those
18 plazas.

19 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: So let me ask... So wait, is
20 it... you said it's \$20,000 a year that DOT puts in
21 there to maintain these open plazas?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: This is... so it
23 depends on the need of the of the partner. If it's a
24 high-need partner, we take care of... (crosstalk)

2 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Define what's... what's a
3 high-need partner.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Basically if... if
5 the partner is not able to take care of the plaza
6 themselves, we still partner with them, but we end
7 our contractor will do the maintenance for them.

8 If the partner is able to take care of the plaza
9 themselves, but just needs some financial assistance,
10 then we do that up to \$20,000. So they... for a
11 high-need partner, we don't put a cap on it. We...
12 we do the services that are needed for that plaza.
13 If it's, you know, a partner that just needs some
14 financial assistance, we do that up to \$20,000.

15 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Okay, and... and what is the
16 average length of the contracts that you have with
17 these partners and the open plazas? And what are the
18 mechanisms that you have in place that you look at to
19 see if they're actually fulfilling their obligations?

20 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So through the...
21 through the OneNYC Plaza Equity Program, DOT has
22 supported a new public space, and based on the
23 lessons learned over the past 5 years, a of our
24 OneNYC Plaza Equity Program and recent street work to
25 have the city cleanup corps. Right now, we are

2 restructuring our program to be more supportive of a
3 wide variety of public spaces, and finances for the
4 city. And we... the question related to you know,
5 the funding, DOT was pleased to receive an average of
6 \$5.4 million for public space management and
7 maintenance on top of the system's baseline Open
8 Street and other funding.

9 So I feel that, you know, our... our focus on
10 providing the support, especially our... those plazas
11 who are mainly in the underserved communities, who
12 are in more need not only of technical support, but
13 also funding for programming too.

14 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: But I... what is the... the
15 length that that you have with... with these
16 operators? What's the average length of these
17 contracts? And what are the checklists that you have
18 that continues to renew the contracts with them?
19 What are those? What are those mechanisms that you
20 have in place to see whether they're doing their job
21 or if they're not doing their job? Because I have a
22 big problem. You came to see my district, Corona
23 Plaza, where, you know, the city invested over \$5.6
24 million in redoing that plaza a number of years ago.

2 And it is a problematic place there. I need to know
3 exactly like, what we're doing here.

4 You still haven't answered the question of how
5 you go about getting these contracts done, what is
6 the lengths of time. The one in Corona Plaza in
7 particular was given the nine-year contract. I've
8 never heard of that. That a nine-year contract is
9 given out to a vendor that comes in here with no real
10 community vetting whatsoever. It was just that I was
11 told that they had enough money for insurance. So I
12 really want to get to the core of this because this
13 affects our communities. Communities like mine.
14 They... you know, the people, the number one
15 complaint has been about Corona Plaza. The quality
16 of life that goes... that has gone consistently down.
17 So I really want to get these answers so I can
18 understand what is the process that the DOT has when
19 (1) they select the vendor, and their conversations
20 that they have with the community and the local
21 elected officials here.

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Councilmember, we will
23 follow with you with detail that... as it pertains
24 to, you know, the timeline and other needs that you
25 have as you follow from the work we did together in

2 the plaza. So, let's follow with your office when it
3 comes to providing the opportunity. One of the
4 things that I can tell you is about that it doesn't
5 matter for the numbers a year that a... any
6 institution will run a plaza.

7 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: I think that there would be
8 a requirement, just like the city that, you know, who
9 determines the amount of years that you give a
10 contract to? Like I've never heard of a nine year
11 contract being awarded just like that for a vendor.

12 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. So... so the
13 answer is that we will revise that particular length
14 of time that was given to the institution that...
15 regarding the plaza in your district, but what I can
16 say is about... I know that any institution running
17 any plaza, regardless of the years that they have to
18 run it, DOT and I will check... we will regularly
19 follow with you. We will always have the right to
20 revise any one that is running a program, and if the
21 program is efficient, we will go with a year that
22 they get a contract to run it, but if anyone is not
23 doing the job to run any plaza efficiently,
24 especially responding to the needs of the community,

2 we are the only will revise it. But I will follow
3 with you... (crosstalk)

4 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: I don't mean to... to
5 Commissioner, but you know this... this isn't
6 something I... This isn't something that is new to
7 you. I already spoke to you about this. You were
8 actually there. I still haven't heard what are the
9 mechanisms that you have in place that actually
10 determines whether or not they're doing their job.

11 Your response to me is, well, if they're not
12 doing their job, then we'll review that. Well, if
13 it's under your purview, and you've already heard
14 from me, the local council member, and the community,
15 I want to know what are the mechanisms in place that
16 you have already. That does spot checks on the
17 vendors that the city has actual contracts with?

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I will follow up with
19 you...

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... myself or the team
22 here at DOT, but I understand the need that you have
23 in the plaza and what happened, and I am more than
24 happy to continue to work with you. But I know that

2 you have a specific question, and I will be following
3 with you to provide the answer.

4 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Okay, I appreciate that very
5 much, Commissioner. And thank you Chair for allowing
6 me the extra time. I appreciate it. Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: And thank you for coming
9 with me to the district too, Chair. I really
10 appreciate that tour. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: It was a great time.

12 COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Thank you.

13 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Thank you everyone.
14 That concludes councilmember questions for the
15 Department of Transportation. I will now turn it
16 back to the chairs.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Majority Whip, Do you want
18 to take it?

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I just want to say
20 thank you to our colleagues and to the
21 administration. We clearly went way past our time,
22 but I think we were able to touch on a lot of
23 important issues concerning transportation
24 infrastructure across the city. And I believe with
25 the administration taking back this feedback and with

2 the body taking back this new information, we'll be
3 able to be in a much better place. So thank you so
4 much, everyone. And thank you, Chair Brannan.

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Majority Whip.
7 And, Commissioner, it's great to see you. I look
8 forward to working with you. We acknowledge that
9 this administration is only five months old. But...
10 but a lot of your team has been around, and they've
11 been very responsive, and we appreciate that. And...
12 and I think the breadth of questions that you saw
13 today just shows what... what a integral and
14 important agency the DOT is in... in the everyday
15 course of business that we do in our communities. So
16 we appreciate your time today and thank you so much.
17 We look forward to working with you going forward.

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you Chairs. And
19 you know all those questions were similar to the one
20 that I asked, right?, back when I was _____. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right on Commissioner.
23 Thank you so much

24

25

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: All right everybody bear with
3 us we're going to switch over to Moya, and then we
4 will get the second leg of our journey on the road.

5 [TWO MINUTES SILENCE]

6 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: And good afternoon to
7 Director torture Ricci if you'd like to test your
8 audio, you can do so now.

9 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Good afternoon Sergeant
10 testing.

11 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear.
12 Thank you.

13 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Thank you.

14 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: And Executive Director
15 Montesano if you'd like to test your audio as well.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: Testing.

17 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear.
18 Thank you.

19 And good afternoon Commissioner Castro if you'd
20 like to test your audio you could do so now.

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yep. Can you hear me?

22 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Thank you

23 And good afternoon Chair Hanif. If you'd like to
24 test your audio you can do so now.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. Thank you so
3 much. Good afternoon.

4 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear.

5 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: We are just waiting for Deputy
6 Commissioner Colette Samman.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I'm here.

8 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Ah, there we are perfect.

9 Okay. Okay, chairs. Are you both ready?

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're ready. I'm ready.

11 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Chair Hanif, let me
12 know when you're ready, and then we will hit the show
13 on the road.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm ready. Thank you.

15 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Good afternoon,
16 everyone. And welcome to the second portion of
17 today's hearing of May 12. We will now hear from the
18 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. My name is
19 Malcom Butehorn, and I am counsel to the Finance
20 Committee. And we want to make sure that we
21 recognize council members present for the record.
22 Councilmembers Brannan, Hanif, Barron, De La Rosa,
23 Farias, Joseph, Ossé, Restler, Sanchez, Ung, Yeger,
24 Ayala, and that's it. Chair Brannan, we will turn to

2 you for your opener, then Chair Hanif, and then I
3 will swear in the Administration.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Malcolm. We
5 will now begin the second portion of our day and hear
6 from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. For
7 those joining us for this portion, I'm councilmember
8 Justin Brown and I have the privilege of chairing the
9 Committee on Finance and I'm joined by councilmember
10 Shahana Hanif, is the Chair of the Committee on
11 Immigration. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant
12 Affairs. The projected FY 23 budget of \$818,000
13 represents less than 1% of the city's proposed fiscal
14 23 budget in the Executive Plan. MOIA's budget
15 resides within the budget of the mayor's office, but
16 this does not provide a full picture of MOIA's entire
17 funding as the office coordinates and collaborates
18 with various city agencies including DYCD, HRA, DOH,
19 all of which are managing MOIA programs found within
20 their agencies.

21 I welcome Commissioner Castro and his team for
22 being here today to answer these committee questions
23 on their proposed FY 23 budget. I'll focus my
24 attent... my questioning mainly on staffing, language
25 access, day laborers and other topics. I want to

2 thank Florentine Coboray and Kerlian Francisco, as
3 well as John Yeddin and the entire finance team for
4 the preparation for this hearing.

5 I'm now going to turn it over to Co-Chair Hanif
6 for her opening remarks.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. Good
8 afternoon and welcome to the fiscal 2023 Executive
9 Budget hearing for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
10 Affairs, MOIA. I'm Councilmember Shahana Hanif. I'm
11 the Chair of the Committee on Immigration. Today's
12 hearing is joint with the Committee on Finance and
13 I'd like to give a special shout out to my colleague
14 Councilmember Justin Brannan for co-chairing this
15 hearing with me. MOIA's proposed fiscal 2023 expense
16 budget totals roughly \$818,000 in city funding to
17 support seven full time positions, MOIA supports and
18 empowers over 3 million immigrant New Yorkers who
19 speak over 200 languages. The office collaborates
20 with various city agencies to deliver essential
21 immigrant services. However MOIA recognizes that,
22 "It cannot be the only office that seeks to serve our
23 immigrant communities. Furthermore, all city
24 agencies must think about the needs of immigrants
25 when engaging in their work." Funding for the

2 immigrant services in the fiscal 2023 executive
3 budget is fully allocated to several agencies'
4 budgets, including the Department of Youth and
5 Community Development, the Department of Social
6 Services, the Department of Education, New York City
7 Health and Hospitals, the Department of Citywide
8 Services, and the City University of New York.

9 At today's hearing, we will examine the
10 components of the immigration program budget with a
11 particular focus on, as mentioned, language access,
12 legal services, adult literacy, IDNYC, and health
13 care for all, because MOIA manages these programs
14 along with the agencies, it is my hope that MOIA
15 provides clarification on the funding included in the
16 Executive Plan. Additionally, due to the nature of
17 MOIA's mission, the committee is interested to know
18 whether MOIA's headcount limits the office's ability
19 to carry out its work efficiently. As we move closer
20 to the budget negotiations, the committee is calling
21 on the administration to restore funding for
22 Immigrant Services and to enhance the Adult Literacy
23 Initiative, all immigrant legal services and the Day
24 Labor Workforce Initiative. The committee urges the
25 administration to invest \$25 million in the Our City,

2 Our Vote to support community-based outreach to all
3 New York City eligible voters regardless of their
4 citizenship status. I look forward to working with
5 MOIA and all other city agencies to deliver adequate
6 services to immigrant New Yorkers.

7 I also want to thank Speaker Adams and Tanisha
8 Edwards for ensuring that we were able to host this
9 vital hearing. I want to thank our committee staff
10 for their hard work Kerlian Francisco, the unit head
11 Florentine Coboray, the financial analyst, and the
12 committee Council and my legislative and Budget
13 Director Alexander Yao and all others behind the
14 scenes. Thank you.

15 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you chairs and I just
16 want to remind everyone that unlike in the past,
17 Councilmembers and members of the Mayoral
18 Administration will have the ability to mute and
19 unmute themselves. We just ask that when you are not
20 speaking, to minimize disruption, to remember to mute
21 yourself, council members.

22 You've heard it before and I'm going to say it
23 again if you have questions please use the raise hand
24 function in zoom, you are limited to five minutes. I
25 ask that you please listen for the cue from the

2 sergeant. And when they say time is called to please
3 wrap up thoughts or comments so we can move on to
4 your next colleague that is waiting in line.

5 The following members of the administration are
6 here to testify and or answer questions.

7 Commissioner Manuel Castro, Deputy Commissioner
8 Colette Samman, Anne Montesano, Executive Director of
9 Interagency Initiatives and Language Access, and Tom
10 Totorici, Director of Legal initiatives.

11 I will first read the oath and after I will call
12 on each member from the administration individually
13 to respond.

14 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
15 and nothing but the truth before these committees and
16 to respond honestly to Councilmember questions?
17 Commissioner Castro?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I do.

19 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Deputy Commissioner Samman?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Yes.

21 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Executive Director Montesano?

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: I do.

23 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Director Totorici? And if I
24 pronounced that wrong, I apologize.

25 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: That's correct, and I do.

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Commissioner
3 catcher whenever you are ready.

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you. Thank you. And
5 thank you Chair Hanif and Chair Brennan and members
6 of the Committees on Immigration and Finance for
7 holding this budget hearing. My name is Manuel
8 Castro, and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's
9 Office of Immigrant Affairs, or better known as MOIA,
10 by its acronyms.

11 Since I may be speaking with many of you,
12 especially members of the Finance Committee, for the
13 first time, I would like to start with an
14 introduction, and also by reviewing MOIA's goals as
15 outlined in the charter.

16 So, you know, my testimony will be a little long,
17 but I thought that this was important, just to set a
18 baseline.

19 Prior to my appointment in January of this year,
20 I was Executive Director of New Immigrant Community
21 Empowerment, better known as NICE. I, myself am an
22 immigrant. I crossed the border with my mother when
23 I was five years old. I grew up undocumented here in
24 New York City, in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and I was
25 part of the early generation of Dreamers that began

2 to fight for an opportunity to an education and a
3 pathway to citizenship, and this is a community that
4 is still very much active in fighting for the same
5 things.

6 So I am incredibly proud to now serve New York
7 City in this role, and to be able to work with many
8 of you in addressing the many needs of the immigrant
9 communities that live here in New York City.

10 As it relates to the New York City Charter, it
11 explicitly outlines the importance of our office and
12 our work together for immigrant communities. It
13 notes that immigrant New Yorkers make up a large... a
14 significantly large percentage of the city's
15 population. 3 million New Yorkers, or almost 40% of
16 all people living in New York City are immigrants.
17 However, when including the children of immigrants,
18 this percentage goes up to nearly 60% of all people
19 living in New York City. So because of this, the
20 wellbeing of the city depends on our work together
21 and the willingness of immigrant New Yorkers to
22 engage with city government.

23 Given this reality, MOIA is not, and cannot be
24 the only office or agency that seeks to serve our
25 immigrant communities. All city agencies and offices

1 must think about the needs of immigrants when
2 engaging in their work. The charter, however,
3 recognizes MOIA's unique expertise as the mayor's
4 office that focuses on immigrant-related issues, and
5 it gives a special consideration in advising and
6 assisting the mayor, the city council in other
7 offices and agencies on developing and implementing
8 policies related to immigrants in limited English
9 proficient... proficient New Yorkers. MOIA is also
10 asked to track state and federal policy and law,
11 increase access to city programs, benefits, and
12 service through outreach... and services through
13 outreach, help advice in the legal service needs of
14 immigrants, and consult with the community and other
15 stakeholders and coordinate an interagency task force
16 on Immigrant Affairs. In addition, MOIA works with
17 revelant... relevant city agencies to address the
18 needs of immigrant crime victims and witnesses
19 including by working with agencies on the issuance of
20 U Visa certifications, and T visa declarations.

22 Finally, MOIA is also required to report annually
23 on its programming and on the demographics and needs
24 of immigrant New Yorkers.

2 That said, I am proud to report that MOIA has
3 been doing all of this and much more than what is
4 outlined in the charter. Whether it is responding to
5 the needs of immigrant New Yorkers during emergencies
6 like the devastating fires in the Bronx, and most
7 recently in Sunset Park, or assisting immigrants when
8 they are victims of crimes, such as the recent subway
9 shootings or a crimes against Asian communities and
10 delivery workers.

11 Our leadership and staff are committed to go
12 directly and be with communities on the ground.
13 Today's... today's testimony builds on my remarks
14 from our last preliminary budget hearing, and briefly
15 outlines MOIA's continued work to respond to the
16 challenges of immigrant New Yorkers. I'd like to
17 emphasize, however, that I am not covering all of
18 MOIA's current work in this testimony. The report we
19 published in March of this year includes descriptions
20 of the ways MOIA designs, proposes, implements and
21 manages a portfolio program, programs that directly
22 serve immigrants and are intentionally responsive to
23 their needs. The following overview touches on just
24 a few relevant pieces of our work, which focuses on
25 two main areas: (1) Responding to the unique needs

2 of immigrant communities, and closing the access gap
3 for immigrant New Yorkers.

4 So first responding to global crises and newly
5 arrived immigrants: From the outset of the Russian
6 invasion of Ukraine, the mayor and I called on the
7 federal government to extend temporary protective
8 status or TPS for Ukrainians already living here, and
9 to streamline the process to help forcibly displaced
10 Ukrainians come to the United States, particularly
11 those with families in New York City. The Biden
12 administration listened to our many calls for action
13 by announcing that the United States will extend TPS
14 to Ukrainians already... already living here, and
15 welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainians and others fleeing
16 Russia's aggression... aggression through the
17 established resettlement pathways, as well as
18 introduce a new process specific for Ukrainians. As
19 home to the largest Ukrainian population in the
20 nation, it was only right the New York prepared the
21 resources needed to welcome arriving Ukrainians and
22 meet their needs. So this past April, MOIA joined
23 The Mayor, elected officials and Ukrainian community
24 leaders to announce more than \$2 million in funding
25 to help currently residing and newly arrived

2 Ukrainian New Yorkers take advantage of the available
3 forms of relief and resettlement pathways including
4 TPS, humanitarian parole, and more. The initiative
5 will also include outreach, case management,
6 interpretation, and translation services, and direct
7 assistance for displaced Ukrainian families
8 resettling in New York City. The funding is a prime
9 example of how MOIA is proactive in responding to
10 global crises, and in particular those that impact
11 New Yorkers and their families, as well as the city's
12 continued and relentless commitment to all
13 communities... and to all immigrant communities.

14 Currently, the city is going through an RFP
15 process to determine which community-based
16 organizations will deliver these services. We plan
17 to give a more detailed announcement in the coming
18 weeks. In FY 23, we will also continue to fund and
19 coordinate the Haitian Responsiveness Initiative,
20 which is a coalition of community-based service
21 providers who were... who are equipped to provide
22 culturally and linguistically responsive services and
23 information to Haitian community members and newly
24 arrived Haitian immigrants, given the need... the
25 tremendous need that continues in these communities.

Second: Legal services. I recently was able to see the... the impact of the city's investment in naturalization support at John Jay College, where MOIA sponsored and tabled at a CUNY Citizenship Now application assistance event. This event helped over 200 green card holders to ascertain their eligibility for US citizenship. Many of them also qualified for fee waivers that will allow them to naturalize without charge. Immigration legal services are a tool of empowerment for immigrant New Yorkers and their families, and MOIA demonstrates its commitment here, not just by word but by deed. New York City leads the nation by dedicating more funding to immigration legal services than any other municipality in the country. We do this in partnership with legal service providers, community based organizations and city agencies, through initiatives including Action NYC, Immigrant Opportunity Initiative, and Rapid Response Legal Collaborative. We are grateful for community based and city-wide legal service providers who carry out this difficult work in service of immigrant New Yorkers every day. To date, we invested 10s of millions of dollars into immigration legal services.

2 MOIA overseas more than \$10 million in funding for
3 legal services programming, over \$8 million of which
4 is baseline funding. Action NYC makes up the lion's
5 share of the funding, with over \$8.7 million
6 allocated to that program alone. The Council can
7 find more details on Action NYC in our annual report,
8 as I mentioned, published in March of this year.

9 Third: Language access. While ensuring language
10 access is a large and significant undertaking, I am
11 very personally committed to language access. About
12 22% of New Yorkers have limited English
13 proficiency... proficiency, and about half of
14 immigrant New Yorkers have LEP. In addition, over
15 200 languages are spoken in the city. We will
16 continue to build on the city's infrastructure to
17 support the delivery of high quality language
18 services, advice, and provide technical assistance to
19 our sister agencies and offices to provide the way
20 city governments communicate with non-English speaker
21 New Yorkers, and serve as a lab to pilot and further
22 educate our partners on best language access
23 practices. We look forward to sharing more details
24 about this work through our forthcoming press
25 announcements.

2 And in conclusion, in the past couple of months,
3 I have had the privilege of meeting with diverse
4 immigrant communities across New York City's five
5 boroughs, to hear directly from them about their
6 needs, and what the city should be doing to meet
7 these needs. With every interaction, conversation,
8 and event I've attended, it is clear that New York
9 City is the city of immigrants, and we must do all we
10 can to support our immigrant communities to thrive so
11 that all New Yorkers are able to prosper together.

12 So with that said, thank you, again for calling
13 this hearing. I look forward to working with city
14 council on addressing the needs as the budget process
15 continues. And now I'm happy to answer any questions
16 you have.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you so much,
18 Commissioner, it's great to see you again. It's
19 great to see you leading MOIA, having someone who
20 knows what it's like to be an advocate and an
21 activist in the streets leading this, this Mayor's
22 office is... is certainly not lost on us or, or any
23 of my colleagues. So it's very meaningful. So...
24 but before we begin, I always say the committee, we
25 may not get to all of the questions, or we don't

2 anticipate it, but you may not have responses for
3 everything, so we'll send a follow up letter for any
4 of the unanswered questions.

5 So let's dive right into staffing. So MOIA total
6 budget is roughly \$818,000 to support seven full
7 staff positions. The New York City immigration...
8 immigrant population totals over 3 million and
9 continues to grow. The executive plan does not
10 include additional staffing for MOIA headcount. So
11 how is your office carrying its mission efficiently?

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: It's a great question. And
13 as you know... as you know, as I began my role here
14 that these are some of the first questions that I
15 asked myself, and in piecing it together, I've now
16 understood better, you know, how we partner with
17 different agencies in order to be able to address the
18 many needs that the immigrant community has. And so
19 in the in the last hearing that I participated in, I
20 mentioned that we had about anywhere between 50 and
21 70 staff lines. And, you know, those were the ones
22 that we rely on to do this work. And, you know, I
23 said it in my last time here, I always welcome
24 welcome additional funding and staff line to be able
25 to conduct this work.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, you said
3 five-oh or seven-oh staff lines... 50 or 70?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. Currently, the
5 headcount is at 72, but of course, there are many
6 vacancies that we are working to fill.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So have you... have
8 you requested an increase of staffing from OMB? And
9 if so, are there certain types of positions that you
10 need more than others?

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, we we've been working
12 closely together with OMB, you know, like I said, in
13 the first couple of months for me was just to go to
14 OMB and really understand what, you know, what kind
15 of staff lines we had and what needed to be
16 addressed. And, you know, they have provided a
17 number of staff lines for this next fiscal year.
18 And, you know, certainly language access is a
19 priority. And so that's what we're working through
20 right now.

21 And our outreach team is something that we're
22 also carefully rebuilding, which is, you know, a
23 core... or an essential part of our work. Because
24 we... we take pride in making sure that we have a
25 good representation of outreach staff so that we're

2 able to communicate and, and work closely together
3 with the many immigrant communities that we have.

4 So we're working through that, and we're
5 certainly, you know, happy to provide more
6 information. And, you know... you know, of our
7 approach in trying to fill these lines.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So let's talk a little bit
9 about language access. So in the preliminary budget
10 response, the council called on the administration to
11 include \$5 million to expand language access. We
12 were delighted to see even more funding of \$8.7
13 million in FY 23 for interpretation and translation
14 services. We also... in our... The council in our
15 budget response called for an increase in access to
16 language services across city agencies, which is
17 very, very important, improving the quality of
18 translation by creating a community interpreter bank,
19 and providing employment and business opportunities
20 for immigrant communities by developing worker-owned
21 cooperatives. So how will this... the \$8.7
22 million... How do you see this funding being
23 allocated, as far as these asks that the council had
24 with the community interpreter bank, increasing the
25 funding for language access to the city agencies, and

2 which agencies do you think need... are in greatest
3 need of language access services?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, thanks so much
5 for this, because it's been my focus in the last
6 several months. It's something that I understood was
7 a priority for advocates, having come from the from
8 the advocacy and community group world. And so I
9 tackled that first. You know, it's a tremendous
10 need, but it's also a tremendous undertaking, because
11 of the size of our... our city government. And, you
12 know, I'm happy that we're moving things along. This
13 is... this is a good amount to start working with.
14 And just to clarify, how much of it is going to the
15 Department of Education. You know, if you can... if
16 you take a look at the breakdown, I believe \$7
17 million is going to the Department of Education, some
18 of it is going to... some of it is going to DCAS and
19 so on. But...(crosstalk)

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, but Commissioner,
21 doesn't... doesn't... I mean, I worked at DOE.
22 Don't... Aren't they one of the only agencies that
23 currently has an in house translation office?

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I believe... I believe so.
25 Yes. You know, my understanding is because of the

2 size of... of the need there. And you know, of
3 course, you know, working with parents of...
4 immigrant parents, or even children... immigrant
5 children is quite... quite a significant need. And
6 it's important to the administration. So yes,
7 they'll be expanding that work. And I'll... I'll
8 certainly be involved for sure.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Because I think... I think
10 something that... I can only speak for myself, but I
11 think Chair Hanif feels similarly, in that what we
12 would love to see is something like this in every
13 agency, but... but also with a focus on instead of
14 outsourcing to vendors, if we're going to hire
15 vendors, it should be, you know, selections made
16 within the community for the... a lot of the
17 nonprofits that... that do this work already. Is
18 that something you are in alignment with?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. And that type...
20 that actually something that I'm excited to... to
21 look into, and I think it's come up in all of our
22 hearings, and, y k, something I've said that, you
23 know, I'd want to continue to explore, I now
24 understand the magnitude and, you know, the need to
25 also build capacity for... for these smaller vendors

2 and the nonprofits that want to do this work. So I
3 believe that is something that we're going to tackle
4 initially. And, you know, I'm certainly taking a lot
5 of... a lot of what we discussed in our hearings into
6 account, and also in meeting with some of the groups
7 that that have been working on this particular issue
8 -- and in fact, I have a meeting next week with the
9 Language Access Coalition to continue discussing
10 these things. So yes, I'm very excited to be
11 working, you know, along the same lines.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Great. Yeah, and we... The
13 Council wants to be partners there in that work. So,
14 please keep us... You know, think of us as a partner
15 and leverage us where you can.

16 I want to jump into emergency food assistance.
17 So food remains an issue amongst the immigrant
18 population, and the city has to ensure that
19 immigrants know that there's not any public charge
20 risk for them to apply for emergency assistance. Did
21 MOIA conduct any outreach to the immigrant community
22 regarding emergency home delivery meals and SNAP
23 benefits?

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Um, well, on the outreach
25 piece, yes, we're continuously, you know, informing

2 our different communities about these resources and
3 benefits. We integrate them into all of our Know
4 Your Rights, trainings and activities. On the food
5 access question, as I learn, you know, how we address
6 food insecurity, now, I see how the amount of funding
7 and work that goes into it, and how dispersed it is
8 throughout the city. In fact, I just had a
9 meeting... a really great meeting with the Department
10 of Parole. They also have a food program. And so my
11 emphasis now is understanding where these resources
12 exist, so that we can make sure that our communities
13 know where to connect to, to these resources.

14 But I'll definitely have to refer to the
15 Department of Sanitation that coordinates a lot of
16 this work. I know that they've been, you know,
17 thinking about this very, you know, strategically,
18 and, you know, they'll be addressing it together
19 with... with us.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And which... I mean, not
21 only for emergency food assistance, but just sort of
22 overall, what channels is MOIA utilizing to... what
23 are your go to channels to notify immigrant
24 population about any benefits or new information
25

2 coming from Washington or...? What have you found to
3 be the most effective channels to communicate on?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, certainly working
5 with community partners on the ground, which is why
6 that's been my focus initially, meeting with... with
7 our partners and actually visiting them because,
8 well, I have first-hand experience that, you know,
9 this is really the entry point for so many people,
10 especially newly arrived immigrants, and... but just
11 because I led one of these agencies doesn't mean that
12 it looks the same everywhere. So I've... I've began
13 to visit. My goal is to visit some somewhere around
14 200 agencies this year. And I've developed a list,
15 added many more to this list, you know, that... that
16 I am familiar and I have worked with in the past. We
17 have about 800 agencies that we work with. And yes,
18 you know, prior to me arriving, and certainly now, I
19 think the focus will be partnering with these
20 community organizations, community groups, faith
21 groups to make sure that they have the information to
22 pass along to their communities.

23 Aside from that, we have our own outreach and
24 organizing staff that provides Know Your Rights
25 trainings, that provide, you know, just outreach to

2 communities, whether it's tabling, or speaking with
3 community leaders about the services that that we
4 have, or that immigrants can access that are provided
5 by the state and federal government.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And as the city welcomes
7 new immigrants from the Ukraine and from Haiti, how
8 is the city... How are we ensuring that these
9 communities have access to food assistance?

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, on the on the Food
11 Assistance... you know, like I said it, piecing
12 together you know, the many resources that exist on
13 food assistance, but we partner closely with many of
14 the city... community-based organizations that have
15 food pantries, or have begun food pantries as a
16 result to have the pandemic, and you know, wherever
17 they do exist, this is where we channel you know, or
18 this is where we refer people to.

19 We also have a hotline that people can call for
20 any of this information, which we can provide to them
21 as needed. Of course, they can call 311. But we...
22 you know, we also encourage people to call us
23 directly to inform them of this... these resources.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I have some other
25 questions about recovery as relates to the pandemic,

2 but... but I do want to give ample time for my Co-
3 Chair at this hearing, Shahana Hanif, so I'm going to
4 hand it over to her now. Thank you, Commissioner.

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you. Thank you so
6 much.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much, Chair
8 Brannan, and it's always good to see you,
9 Commissioner Manny, and a pleasure to learn more
10 about you in each of these hearings, it is a deep
11 honor for our city to have you as the Commissioner of
12 the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

13 So I'd like to first follow up on language
14 access... and a yes or no would be sufficient for
15 this: Does the \$8 million, which is an incredible
16 amount for language access included in the executive
17 budget, include funding for the community interpreter
18 bank and worker cooperatives for language access?

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes and no. But more
20 details to come. We certainly want to, you know, sit
21 down with you and other councilmembers to discuss
22 what we're thinking. But certainly, you know, we
23 want to make sure that we're prioritizing, you know,
24 the needs on the ground and what we're hearing from
25 agencies... from community partners.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, just to clarify: There
3 is a plan... there is a plan and you'd like to
4 present it to the council and get feedback.

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Mm-hmm.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, we're working through
8 the details. You know, as you know, we... you know,
9 we also learned that we were able to secure these
10 funds. And, you know, we want to make sure to have
11 these discussions and continue to think strategically
12 about how to use these funds. But yeah, I'm happy to
13 report back on... on... on those discussions. And as
14 details are firmed up.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. That would be great
16 given I know that the bulk of this language access
17 funding is going to the DOE. So the initiatives that
18 advocates are pushing for, and which were included in
19 the council's preliminary budget response are more
20 comprehensive than just the DOE. So I just want to
21 put that out there as well.

22 So one other priority that I didn't hear you
23 speak about is Our City, Our Vote. So I'd like to
24 start my questioning with that. In the council's
25 response to the mayor's preliminary fiscal 2023

2 financial plan, that council recommended a \$25
3 million investment by The Administration to support
4 community-based outreach to all New York City
5 eligible voters and to effectively implement this
6 legislation. However, the executive budget does not
7 recognize any new funding for this proposal. Could
8 you share: What is the administration's plan on
9 implementing this legislation when the law goes into
10 effect in December of this year?

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah... no... and, you
12 know, one of the reasons I did not include this in my
13 testimony... in my remarks, even though it's
14 incredibly important, largely because it's still
15 under litigation. We're awaiting results on that.
16 But I'm also mindful that we need to start preparing
17 now, because this is something that we're very
18 confident will... will be a reality. And so I know
19 that my colleagues over at the Board of Elections, at
20 Campaign Finance Board, and at the Civic Engagement
21 Commission have been doing quite a lot of work,
22 particularly, you know, studying, you know, like the
23 different communities that this will be impacted how
24 to navigate, you know, some of the challenges. But,
25 yeah, I don't want to say something that, you know,

2 that perhaps, you know, I shouldn't be saying, while
3 this is under litigation. And, you know, as someone
4 who advocated for this for many years, as you know,
5 I... I shared this in previous testimony, I began
6 working on this issue in 2004. It is something that
7 is very important to me, and I... you know, it's
8 something that I'm definitely going to have a... an
9 interest in being part of, in making sure that all
10 communities impacted will be able to engage
11 appropriately with this... this initiative.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That is a little
13 disappointing to hear given December is merely six
14 months away. And so what I hear from your response
15 is that there isn't even a kind of preliminary plan
16 to ensure the success of this historic legislation.
17 And while you've mentioned that you are working with
18 some of the agencies, I'd like to know which agencies
19 and I don't want the litigation to be what pauses the
20 work that needs to get done.

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Mm-hmm. So, just to
22 clarify: I... I should have said that I defer to...
23 to our colleagues at the Civic Engagement commission
24 who... who is charged... Well, actually, it's the
25 Board Of Elections who is charged to implement this.

2 And I know they've been working with the Civic
3 Engagement Commission to come up with a plan. You
4 know, I don't want to disrupt their work by saying
5 anything, perhaps that they're not ready to say,
6 or... or that may impact litigation. But I know that
7 they... they've been working very diligently on this.
8 And, you know, my hope is that they will be able to
9 announce something soon.

10 But yeah, I'm happy to share, you know, more
11 about who's working on this, but like I said, Board
12 Of Elections, Civic Engagement Commission, Campaign
13 Finance Board, you know, we want this to be a success
14 once we're able to implement it. And I certainly
15 want to make sure that, you know, people are able to
16 register, you know, to be able to vote in municipal
17 elections and and address any challenges that they
18 might have.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. And I just want
20 to reiterate that the law is indeed in effect, and we
21 have got to be a city that treats it as such, and
22 move forward regardless of the... the nature of the
23 lawsuits being filed against this law. And so I urge
24 MOIA, I urge the other agencies to take this very
25 seriously, because you've mentioned you've been an

2 advocate, since before its passage, as have many of
3 us on this call and those listening in. It's... it's
4 vital on this city to be proactive about this rather
5 than regressive. So I had other follow up questions
6 on, get out the vote activities. We really need to
7 set aside more than six months to ensure adequate
8 equitable outreach, address all the language needs,
9 ensure that we are particular about the community-
10 based organizations selected to carry out the
11 outreach efforts, and then to of course, improve or
12 revise the Speak NYC videos to reflect this change.

13 Are you able to speak on whether MOIA plans to
14 update the Speak NYC videos to reflect the Our City,
15 Our Vote legislation?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, we are... we are
17 engaged in you know, new script... script development
18 for videos for the We Speak program, and, you know, I
19 would be happy for this one to be... for there to be
20 one dedicated to this, for sure. You know, a lot...
21 a large... large part of our preparation has been
22 around, you know, the mechanism, in thinking through
23 language access, but certainly, you know, this would
24 be one of the areas that I, you know, I'd love to
25 work on together with you.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I feel that this
3 is a given, that we include this historic legislation
4 and the... the nature of expanding our democracy for
5 a program that is utilized by our immigrant and
6 undocumented neighbors. And I ask this because I
7 know that the program had been, or continues to
8 promote, two unique videos in partnership with CUNY
9 and Census 2020, which portrayed census questions as
10 well as immigration status. And so I think this is
11 just in line with the kind of work that has been
12 lifted up through the We Speak Program.

13 So I won't go into further questioning about Our
14 City, Our Vote. I am disappointed, just to put that
15 out there again, that we haven't been doing our due
16 diligence to this... this fight that was brought to
17 passage by our immigrant community, and so this is a
18 disservice. This is us again regressing, and it is
19 unfair to our democracy.

20 I want to move into some more questions about
21 legal services. The council is experiencing
22 difficulties to receive clarification on immigration
23 services that are located in the other agencies'
24 budgets. Because your office collaborates and
25

2 coordinates with these agencies, I hope that you will
3 provide some answers to my following questions.

4 So could you share what is the current budget and
5 fiscal 2023 budget for immigrant legal services? I
6 know you mentioned that \$8.7 million is allocated to
7 Action NYC. I'd love a breakdown per budget cycle by
8 service.

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Just to clarify: Legal
10 services in terms of immigration, legal services?
11 Or...?

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Correct.

13 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Okay, so, let me... let me
14 pull up some of the data. Hmm.

15 So the current funding for... it's a long list...
16 but Action NYC, as I said, is \$8.7 million. New York
17 Citizenship is \$465,000. IOI is \$22.7 million. And
18 by the way this is for FY 22, not FY 23.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That... those numbers are
21 still under discussion, but I hope this gives you a
22 sense. Rapid Response Legal Collaborative is \$1
23 million. NYIFUP, you probably know this, \$16.6
24 million. Union Citizenship now receives \$3 million.

2 And am I missing anything? The ICARE Unaccompanied
3 Minors funding is at \$4 million.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And you're unable to share
5 how the budget is looking for 2023?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Uh, not... No, not really,
7 because things are still under discussion. So I
8 don't believe we have all these numbers for FY 23.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And have you had any
10 conversations with OMB on the need to enhance funding
11 for NYIFUP?

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Uh, not for NYIFUP? No.
13 You know, it's... as you know, we're... this is not
14 a... we don't have oversight over NYIFUP. And you
15 know, of course, you know, I have I have mentioned,
16 and I'm sure advocates have mentioned in their
17 testimony, how the limits of the funding and the
18 amount of casework that exists for immigration legal
19 services. And, you know, our continued advocacy for
20 the federal government to step in and make sure that
21 there's universal representation. But yeah, I don't
22 have the information for NYIFUP necessarily.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. And then The Council
24 calls for \$18 million to continue to respond quickly
25 to shifts in ICE surveillance and arrests, and to

2 ensure that all detained New Yorkers have counsel.
3 How much of an expansion do you think would
4 adequately meet the needs for legal services for low
5 income New Yorkers?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, and that, you know,
7 that's along the lines of what I had said, you know,
8 it's... you know, I don't have the data in front of
9 me about the complete needs for legal representation
10 of... of immigrants that... in the immigrant
11 community that is justice involved, where they might
12 need legal immigration representation. It's
13 certainly something that -- not just New York, but
14 all advocates across the country have been pushing
15 for -- you know, universal present... representation
16 of... of immigration, legal services. It's much
17 needed, and we will certainly use our platform here
18 in New York and through our Cities For Action to
19 advocate for them.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So are you able to share if
21 the \$18 million is in line with what the
22 administration will align with?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No. I don't... I don't
24 think I can... I can say that right now. But you
25 know, again, these... these are ongoing

2 conversations. And you certainly want to hear
3 from... from our current partners providing this
4 work... legal... legal representation to immigrants.
5 But yeah, I couldn't weigh on it right now. But
6 we're... we're in conversation with OMB about these
7 issues.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then you shared with us
9 at the first hearing about the budget, that you were
10 looking closely at removing the criminal carve-out
11 from city funded immigration legal services...
12 service contracts. As you know, this is a critical
13 racial justice issue. Could you give us an update?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Uh, no updates currently.
15 You know, I continue to look at this and other
16 issues. You know. I... as I said it, you know, as a
17 new commissioner, I want to revisit many of these
18 policies, and especially those that make the work of
19 our partners more difficult... unnecessarily
20 difficult. And, you know, certainly, we want to make
21 sure that all communities are able to... to be
22 adequately served. And yeah, but I continue to look
23 into this and having meetings with colleagues
24 internally to see... to see if this is going to be...
25 to explore how we can make this happen.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Commissioner.

3 When will we have answers to any of my questions?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: On this specific...?

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: On the numbers. On this.

6 You know, this hearing was close to not being... this
7 was not on the... on the schedule, and I pushed for
8 it to be on the schedule because we need... our
9 immigrant communities deserve answers to programs
10 that are meant to service them, particularly in one
11 of the most vulnerable moments in this city's
12 history. And to not have a single budgetary amount
13 on the biggest need for immigrants is a big blunder.
14 I'm disappointed. And I don't know how soon you can
15 get us the... the answers to this, but we'll be
16 following up proactively to make sure that the
17 initiatives across the legal services not only remain
18 up their baseline, but that... but that they're
19 enhanced.

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Mm-hmm. Yeah...

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I hope I can count on you to
22 be an advocate here.

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I certainly... I'm
24 also looking for... to have concrete answers and
25 concrete, you know, guidance, as it relates to fiscal

2 year 23. It always helps with planning. But as you
3 know, these... these negotiations and conversations
4 often, you know, go down... down to the wire. So,
5 you know, I'm hoping to be working closely with you
6 and, you know, with our community partners, to be
7 able to have, you know, more concrete answers for you
8 soon.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. So, in The
10 Council's budget response, we called for a doubling
11 of the baseline funding to \$27 million for Adult
12 Literacy Programming. This is not what we got in the
13 Executive Budget. Could you share how much is
14 included in fiscal 2022 and fiscal 2023 Executive
15 Budget for Adult Literacy Programming?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I'm trying to find this
17 information for you, although not to disappoint you
18 any further, but I think these numbers are often you
19 know, especially with adult literacy, it's something
20 that DYCD is overseeing. Perhaps... I don't know,
21 Tom, can you help me with these numbers?

22 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Thank you Commissioner. I
23 have FY 22 numbers, but we can't speak to FY 23 at
24 this time.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: When will you be able to
3 speak to FY 23?

4 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: As soon as the ongoing
5 conversations reach resolution.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then I know that... and
7 you've been very clear that... there are multiple
8 agencies servicing the programming that are geared
9 toward our immigrant neighbors. What is the
10 relationship that you have with DYCD? How do you
11 coordinate? Walk me through the partnership here.

12 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, as you know... you
13 know, currently I'm meeting with all commissioners or
14 interim heads of agencies. I know DYCD doesn't have
15 a commissioner currently, but will soon. Once that
16 happens, you know, I will be meeting with a new
17 commissioner and their leadership to make sure items
18 like adult literacy that relate back to immigrant
19 communities are, you know, areas we're working
20 closely with. Certainly the, you know, the programs
21 or funding that are directed to many of these city
22 agencies: We can weigh in on and advise on but, you
23 know, they're ultimately responsible for it. But
24 yeah, that is... that is something that, as we've

2 discussed in previous hearings, where we're trying to
3 navigate and working through.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. And then... so does
5 MOIA have a vision to ensure that the baseline
6 funding for adult literacy is directly allocated to
7 providers? Like how will MOIA be advocating on behalf
8 of the literacy... adult literacy programming to
9 DYCD?

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. I believe... I
11 believe that the... the adult literacy funding is
12 directed to nonprofit providers. But again, I don't
13 believe that will change. But I'll certainly, when I
14 have a chance to meet with the new commissioner, you
15 know, I'll... I'll share our perspective, and how we
16 work with nonprofit providers, and my experience,
17 having led an organization that received these adult
18 literacy funds to do the work on the ground. Yeah,
19 adult literacy is... is a huge component of... of, I
20 think, you know, what nonprofit immigrant service
21 providers do, and it's certainly something that I, I
22 want to be involved in.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm glad to hear that. And
24 I'm glad to know that you agree that adult literacy
25 programming is urgent. Do you agree that there is a

2 critical need to enhance funding for adult literacy
3 programs, as our immigrant population continues to
4 grow? As we bring in and resettle Ukrainians and
5 other communities?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, like I said, in
7 the past, you know, I welcome, you know, if it's
8 directed to MOIA, I welcome funding, you know, and
9 additional resources. Especially, you know, as we,
10 like you said, serve newly-arrived immigrants and
11 communities that are, you know, displaced due to
12 crises. Those services are always in high demand.
13 And again, you know, these funds go towards other
14 agencies as well, but I certainly, as relates to We
15 Speak, which is where, you know, we have oversight
16 over the literacy, I certainly welcome additional
17 resources.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sorry, a horn is going off...
19 a car is going off. So, you don't want to give me a
20 clear yes or no here?

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: About...? About more
22 resources?

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: About more funding more
24 resources to adult literacy programming?

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, yeah, no, I said
3 that, you know, I would welcome more resources.
4 Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. Thank you.

6 I want to move into MOIA's advocacy work. Could
7 you speak to how MOIA engages with the state and
8 federal governments on immigration issues, including
9 but not limited to closing immigration courts and
10 decreasing the number of people in ICE custody?

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, well, as you know,
12 we're very limited in... in ways that we engage with
13 the federal government. You know, we're... you know,
14 we limit the... the, the amount of collaboration or
15 no collaboration, right?. Let me rephrase that. We
16 are certainly advocates of improved laws that... that
17 are welcoming to immigrant communities. You know, we
18 do this in large part through our Cities for Action
19 Coalition of cities that are aligned with... with our
20 policy priorities. And so, you see that, you know,
21 reflected in the campaigns that we're engaged in
22 currently. We engaged in a campaign to lift the Title
23 42 policy, which was successful, although, you know,
24 there's been... there's been a delay in that. But
25 yeah, we have been tremendously involved in that.

2 It's an area that I'm very passionate about, and we
3 are certainly going to be focusing on that kind of
4 advocacy during my time here, for sure. And, you
5 know, I'm looking to grow our presence... our
6 leadership nationally, in being able to push for
7 these policies, especially for comprehensive
8 immigration reform, which is an ongoing issue. And
9 things change quite often. And we're certainly
10 monitoring and those changes and submitting...
11 submitting, you know, policy recommendations and
12 weighing in on these changes.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And what are the... Is there
14 a team that does this in MOIA? And could you give me
15 a breakdown of how this work is carried out?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We currently have a team...
17 a policy team. Of course, we we've had a number of
18 transitions. But you know, we're... we're staffing
19 up. As you might know, Cesar Vargas just joined our
20 team. He's someone who is taking on a big leadership
21 role in this area. He... for some of you who don't
22 know, he's a well-known immigrant rights advocate,
23 first, Dreamer, formerly... or first DACA recipient
24 to be allowed to access the bar in the State of New
25 York, and together with me, we're going to be leading

2 a lot of this work. We have a C4A team, the Cities
3 For Action team that is also growing. And, you know,
4 together with our policy team, we're going to be
5 making sure we have a leadership team, navigating
6 some of the complexities at the federal level and the
7 state level, when it comes to interacting with
8 immigrants.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. So will this
10 team be focusing more closely on removing people from
11 ICE custody, or providing support to families of
12 those who have family members detained by ICE?

13 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, we do a lot of this
14 work through our legal service partners. I've met
15 with a number of immigration legal service providers.
16 You know, we have a specific initiative called the
17 Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, which does great
18 work in addressing those most immediate needs from
19 urgent cases. And that's actually something that...
20 that I know the team is very proud about. Because of
21 you know, there's... there's so many cases and, you
22 know, we wanted to identify those immediate urgent
23 cases. And this is how we've been addressing them.
24 And, Tom, who just weighed in can share more. Tom,

2 do you want to give a bit of an overview of what our
3 LC does?

4 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Um sure. Thank you,
5 Commissioner.

6 The Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, is a...
7 is comprised of a coalition of immigration legal
8 service providers and provides critical support to
9 immigrant New Yorkers who are at imminent risk of
10 deportation. Oftentimes, these folks can't find
11 suitable services from other providers because it's
12 such a niche and intensive category of work. And so
13 it's a unique initiative that has helped a number of
14 New Yorkers to overcome the imminent risk of
15 deportation and remain together with their families
16 in New York.

17 And to the point of... so we are very proud of
18 that, and also that it is continued and there is a
19 baseline component to it, and we're grateful for
20 the... the intense work that those partners do.

21 With respect to advocacy. We, as Commissioner
22 mentioned, Cities For Action, C4A, is a key advocacy
23 tool of New York City together in partnership with
24 sister cities throughout the nation. Keeping track
25 of federal policies and advocating for those that are

2 pro-immigrant and supportive of immigrant New
3 Yorkers.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's good to know. Over
5 the last six months, what has the city's for action
6 campaign looked like? Could you share some specifics?

7 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: I don't have it right now,
8 but we can get back to you, Chair, with that
9 information.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

11 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: You're welcome.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, given that this is like
13 a core... it sounds like a core campaign of MOIA, and
14 a national campaign, it would be good to know, some
15 of the successes or some of the camp... like wins as
16 part of this work, and just how New York City is
17 contributing to this national campaign. So I'd be
18 happy to follow up about some specifics.

19 In your 2021 annual report, it was reported that
20 MOIA worked with city partners to support a bill that
21 expanded the availability of _____ for survivors of
22 trafficking. Could you elaborate more about that?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Let me see. Tom, do you
24 have any more specific... specifics to that, or any
25 followup to that?

2 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: I do. Yes, Commissioner. So
3 MOIA applauds the passage of the Start Act last year,
4 with expanded protections for survivors of human
5 trafficking, by allowing them to clear their records
6 of past conditions beyond those just related to
7 prostitution. In 2021, New York City submitted a
8 memorandum of support of the bills in the State
9 Assembly and Senate. And just for background, the
10 law gives survivors the fresh start they deserve. It
11 helps ensure eligibility for life saving forms of
12 immigration relief, such as T visas, by eliminating
13 criminal convictions that would otherwise ban them.
14 So we engaged in that advocacy and also advocated for
15 the passage of the Walking While Trans Ban, which was
16 passed in early 2021. We continue to monitor the
17 progress of that advocacy... or the results of that
18 advocacy, and the status of those pieces of
19 legislative... legislature, and will continue to
20 advocate accordingly together with our partners.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is your advocacy,
22 including informing immigrants about this piece of
23 legislation? Has there been any outreach done? And
24 could you explain what monitoring the legislation
25 means?

2 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Our policy team keeps...
3 keeps track of how legislation moves, obviously, and
4 then, you know, takes action where appropriate at
5 different points. To the point on outreach, and
6 public awareness, I don't have that information here,
7 but I can check with the policy team regarding any
8 public announcements that have been made, or
9 information distribution through social media, or
10 outreach efforts of MOIA.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: But given that MOIA
12 (crosstalk) I'm just asking one more question,
13 Commissioner. Given that MOIA played a role... a
14 vital role in in advocating and the passage of this
15 law, is it in line with the agency to be doing the
16 public awareness work as well?

17 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Uh, yeah. Public awareness
18 of policies and practices that impact immigrant New
19 Yorkers is squarely within MOIA's purview and
20 responsibility. I don't have specific information
21 with respect to this particular topic. But Chair
22 Hanif, we will get back to you more information about
23 the efforts to date.

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: And just to answer a little
25 bit of that, at least, you know, in my time here, my

2 approach is to partner and work closely with... with
3 the agencies that do have the responsibility to
4 conduct some of that this outreach and public
5 engagement work. And so I recently authored an op-ed
6 with the Commissioner of the Office to End Domestic
7 and Gender Based Violence, and I was doing sexual
8 assault awareness month last month. And we made sure
9 that this was translated into other languages and
10 placed in different news outlets to reach, you know,
11 different immigrant communities. And that's work
12 that will I will continue to do, partnering with...
13 with other commissioners to make sure that, you know,
14 this is getting out to the communities we in
15 particular work with.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, I'm relieved to hear
17 that the... there is some public awareness work
18 happening within your advocacy work, but I would like
19 to follow up about the particular legislation about
20 survivors of trafficking, and I want to make sure
21 that there is substantial amount of work being done
22 to... to get the information out in our city.

23 And then, you know, recently The Council passed
24 three pieces of resolution, New York For All, Dignity
25 Not Detention, and Coverage For All. Will MOIA

2 commit to championing these three resolutions? And if
3 yes, how so? And how can the council be supportive?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, definitely, you
5 know, we're, we use our platform whenever, you know,
6 we can to champion these... these different
7 initiatives. And, in fact, very similar to what I
8 just shared on Coverage For All, I wrote an op ed
9 with the Commissioner of the Department of Health and
10 Mental Hygiene. And, you know, we put out several
11 statements in support of Coverage For All and... and,
12 you know, how these... how medical coverage impacts
13 our communities. And, you know, unfortunately, well,
14 let's say that, you know, we were... we were very
15 involved until... until the last, you know, final
16 day, before the budget was approved at the state
17 level. So, yeah, I'll continue to look into these
18 many issues where we can advocate and be supportive
19 in that way.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Thank you for
21 that. We really need MOIA to step in and step up
22 when the state doesn't carry through with protections
23 for our immigrant New Yorkers.

24 I'd like to pass it back to Chair Brannan, or
25 give an opportunity to some of our colleagues to ask

2 questions before I move forward with some more
3 topics.

4 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: I'm going to turn to
5 Councilmember Barron.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much.

8 There's paraphrasingly, The Bible says where one's
9 treasure is soul lies their heart. This mayor has no
10 heart for immigration, because the treasure is not
11 there. This is an embarrassingly low budget for such
12 a powerful community and great need, and a powerful
13 community of immigrants, whether they're documented
14 or not, that provides a taxation base... they
15 provide taxes. I want you to let everybody know how
16 much tax the New York City receives from the
17 immigrant community. And they contribute
18 tremendously to the cultural and intellectual culture
19 of New York City. So I have a couple of questions
20 and you can answer them, and then I'm finished.

21 _____ tax base revenue comes from immigrants.
22 How many immigrants are covered, or need to be
23 covered, or are in need of coverage? And I think the
24 Chair answered the questions I had about ICE, and the
25 deportation and legal systems they need. _____

2 participation, I am honored to say I was one of the
3 original sponsors of the bill, which would allow
4 undocumented immigrants to vote in local elections.
5 That should happen. _____ nothing in that _____
6 but they use that to divide our communities. Often
7 you'll see these immigrants are allowed to vote.
8 These immigrants are taken our jobs and stuff like
9 that. There's a divide-and-conquer tactic that goes
10 there. I want to know how are you providing
11 education to our people to let them know we're all in
12 the same boat. And even... everybody's an immigrant.
13 This is the indigenous people's land, and everybody
14 came from somewhere. African people were forced here
15 against our will. And then there's racism in the
16 immigration struggle. You know, oftentimes, I see
17 they mention Haitians, but Haitians were treated very
18 different than the Ukrainians. The Haitians were
19 forced to sleep under bridges, and many of them were
20 forced to go back home. So the Haitian community is
21 disrespected. The African immigrants and the
22 immigrants from the Caribbean... Caribbean are often
23 neglected.

24 And then finally, if you could speak to _____ in
25 the state when I was an Assemblymember, to get the

2 \$1.2 billion for the excluded workers, which were
3 mainly immigrants, how has that money been... has it
4 all been you used? Has it been channeled in the
5 proper places? And is there more money in this next
6 budget to deal with that?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll start with the
8 Excluded Worker Fund. You know that this is a state
9 fund that was provided last fiscal year. That...
10 or... yeah, last fiscal year that those funds have
11 been used. And as the... as I mentioned, as the
12 executive director of NICE, I was able to, you know,
13 work to support many immigrants that had been
14 excluded from any COVID related benefits to access
15 this fund. Unfortunately, no money will go towards
16 this again next fiscal year. And, you know, we'll...
17 we'll make sure to find other ways to support
18 community members, I know that many didn't end up
19 benefiting from this program, because the funds ran
20 out. And it's certainly, you know, it's certainly
21 something that we want to continue to, to monitor,
22 because, as was mentioned before, COVID is something
23 that has not ended. And it's something that
24 continues to impact our communities, especially those
25 who permanently lost work and now have to rely on

2 other means to make ends meet. And, you know, I'm
3 happy to say that for next fiscal year, as I
4 mentioned in my testimony, that the Haitian Relief
5 Initiative was something included in FY 23. We're
6 very happy that we'll be able to continue to support
7 the community organizations addressing the many needs
8 of the Haitian community. Which, you know, I've...
9 In the last couple of months, I've been able to
10 visit, speak with many of the groups working with the
11 Haitian community, those who have family still in
12 Haiti, and those folks who continue to arrive. You
13 know, it's a big focus of ours to make sure that
14 communities in crisis get the support they need. And
15 so we're very happy about that.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I'll leave it there.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: No, no. You can... you
19 can finish, because I want to know, the amount of
20 money that the immigrants contribute to New York's
21 economy. And if you could speak a bit about that,
22 because that's very, very important.

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. No. It's... it's a
24 huge amount. I don't have the numbers in front of
25 me, but it's certainly significant. As I said, you

2 know, in my initial comments, you know, it's 40% of
3 New York City's population. They, as you said, they
4 support... they're a big contributor of our tax base.
5 And, and, of course, you know, they are the backbone,
6 in many ways of... of the economy, of many
7 industries, and so yes, I don't have that data in
8 front of me. But I (crosstalk)

9 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Well, I think you should
10 always have that data, because it's critical when we
11 making the case for immigrants, to have that kind of
12 data to make the argument.

13 And finally, to my colleagues. The mayor may
14 have not put any money in for our vote or for adult
15 literacy, but I just want to remind us, he does not
16 pass the budget. We do. So when there's an adequate
17 funding, and most of the agencies that I've seen so
18 far being on this Finance Committee, the funding isn
19 inadequate, because he's a concert closet
20 conservative, where he's doing the austerity budget,
21 and he's a cop looking at how he can use law and
22 order and cops to resolve everything. So we have to
23 check that and make sure immigration, 800-some-odd-
24 thousand dollars is an embarrassment. It's a shame.
25 And if you ever compare that to the amount of

2 taxpaying dollars, I know it's in the billions that
3 the immigrant community contributes, to say we have
4 an \$800,000 budget out of a \$99.7 billion budget,
5 woefully inadequate, totally unacceptable, and
6 unconscionable. Thank you.

7 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you Chair Barron...
8 uh... thank you Councilmember Barron...

9 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Hey, don't put me in my
10 buddy's chair, man. You'll get me in trouble now.

11 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: I'll turn it back to Chairs
12 Brannan and Hanif.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Chair Brannan might have
14 stepped away. I'm happy...

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm here. Sorry. Yeah,
16 I'm here. I mean, I... I appreciate that Chair Hanif
17 fought to get this this budget hearing included.
18 Typically, we don't do an oversight hearing for MOIA,
19 but we're disappointed with the lack of... of data
20 that was brought to this. It's nothing personal.
21 Manny, you've only been there barely five months.
22 But when we're doing a budget hearing, we got to talk
23 about the budget, and we got to hear about dollars
24 and cents, and we're not hearing that. And this is
25 an agency where the council really wants to partner

2 with MOIA to give you the tools that you need,
3 especially at a time like this. But it's hard for us
4 to advocate with OMB to get you what you need, if we
5 don't know what you've already got. So we'll be
6 sending follow up info, and I'm sure we could follow
7 up that way, and we'll get stuff done. But it's
8 disappointing that there just isn't... you know, I'm
9 sort of thinking about that old commercial from 9
10 million years ago. "Where's the beef?" You know, we
11 want to... we want to know the numbers so we can be
12 helpful here. This is... it's rare that we're not
13 grilling an agency because we think you're spending
14 too little. We want... we want to know, you know,
15 what we can do to... to advocate for you with OMB to
16 get MOIA the tools that they need. And I think...
17 I'm concerned that we've fallen short thus far today,
18 because there's just too many unanswered questions,
19 which I know we'll get in follow up. But tomorrow,
20 we get the next budget hearing, and the day after
21 that the next budget hearing right. So you know, and
22 the train keeps rolling on. So.

23 But I'll hand it back over to Chair Hanif if she
24 has additional questions. Otherwise, we, you know,
25 we will move to the next agency.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I do have many more
4 questions, but I'm afraid that I won't have answers.
5 And, you know, I'm not one to yell. I deeply respect
6 to Commissioner Castro. I don't throw tantrums, when
7 things don't go my way. It's just not my style. But
8 I'd like to make clear that what we're getting from
9 MOIA today... what we've heard so far, is a lack of
10 preparation. And I'm just not... I'm failing to
11 understand why that is. And what this is showing to
12 the council and to folks listening in is an
13 administration abandoning immigrants. And we did
14 that through COVID. And we saw very clearly who
15 stepped up: Our community partners stepped up,
16 neighbors stepped up for immigrants, and it is high
17 time that this administration steps up for
18 immigrants. So I'd like to move now into learning a
19 little bit more about small business services support
20 for our immigrant businesses. In March 2022, Mayor
21 Adams signed an executive order establishing a Small
22 Business Advisory Commission.

23 How is MOIA coordinating with city agencies in
24 the Small Business Advisory Commission about language
25 access and access to grants to immigrant business

2 owners who are limited in English? In the past SBS
3 did not translate the grants and a lot of the
4 immigrant businesses were not able to apply on time.

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: On... on the SBS side, I've
6 been working on a number of things with the
7 commissioner, Kevin Kim, and on the language access
8 piece, so let me ask Anne on the call if she has any
9 more information about ways we support SPS on these
10 areas.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: So yeah, generally
12 we work with SBS as well as other agencies. We
13 support them and provide them with technical
14 assistance. During COVID, we helped with you know,
15 providing faster translations of some of their
16 materials. So we do support them on the language
17 access front and work with them to ensure that they
18 are able to communicate effectively with the folks
19 that they serve.

20 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Just to build upon that.
21 MOIA's outreach partners with SPS outreach and to
22 immigrant small business owners, and even this past
23 week supported tabling at several locations to
24 actively engage in that outreach with them.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many languages are
3 included?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Anne, do you have that
5 info?

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: I don't have that
7 information. We can get back to you on that.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That would be great. And
9 Tom, you mentioned tabling. Could you share where
10 the resource tabling have taken place and who's out
11 there?

12 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: I don't have the calendar in
13 front of me but I can get back to you after the
14 hearing, Chair Hanif.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. And how can MOIA
16 connect the newly-created Small Business Advisory
17 Commission to community-based language professionals?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll make sure to, to
19 include that in our materials and coordinate with
20 Commissioner Kim on this.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. I'm looking forward
22 to more information about small businesses and small
23 business services. Small Business Services Chair, my
24 colleague Julie Menin and I are hosting a joint
25 hearing on small businesses and relating to our

2 immigrant communities in June, I believe. So we're
3 looking forward to having Commissioner Kim and you at
4 the table for... for more resources about this.

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. I think by then
6 we'll have more specifics. I know they... they have
7 been working on a language access specific
8 initiative. And so I think well, we'll have more to
9 share then.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great, I hope so. So
11 according to the street vendor project, there's
12 approximately 20,000 people selling on the streets.
13 And the majority of them, as you know, are immigrants
14 of this number 71% do not have permits, because the
15 city has made it absolutely challenging for food
16 vendors to obtain a permit. And as a result, vendors
17 have been victims of the administration's aggressive
18 enforcement. Has MOIA received complaints regarding
19 mobile food vending?

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Complaints from the street
21 vendors? Or other...?

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: From the vendors.

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO? Vendors? No, not directly.
24 Not... not that I'm aware of. Many of these
25 complaints go to our colleagues at the Department of

2 Consumer Affairs and worker protections. That's who
3 we usually delegate anything that comes in to... on
4 this issue.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Does MOIA do any work
6 pertaining to street vendors?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Aside from our you know,
8 general education work, particularly on... on
9 immigration issues. You know, I know many of the
10 folks that we reach out to are street vendors or
11 informal workers. So you know, informal work opens
12 up people to a lot of different challenges. So that
13 that is something that we're particularly aware of.
14 But again, you know, the DCWP is charged with running
15 education campaigns on these issues. So we often
16 defer to them on this.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then do you work closely
18 with DCWP around supporting how their materials are
19 shaped at all? Or is it very siloed?

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, they have... I think
21 that the commissioner was appointed before... or a
22 little after... or a little before our last hearing.
23 But yeah, I've had many conversations with
24 Commissioner Mayuga on this. I know it is an issue
25 that that she also cares quite a lot about, and I

2 expect that we'll be working very closely together
3 in, you know, the administration.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. You know, it's
5 unclear why the NYPD is doing street food vending
6 enforcement. Do you have any thoughts on that?

7 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Um, my sense... yeah, I,
8 you know, I, frankly, it's... it's an issue that I'm
9 very aware of having done a lot of this work at NICE
10 prior to joining. It is... it is something that I
11 want to be able to follow closely. I want to make
12 sure that there are no immigration consequences on
13 people that might be impacted by this. But yeah,
14 I'll be working closely with DCWP and make sure that
15 I weigh in, you know, wherever needed.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: With the recent incident of
17 Maria, a street food vendor in the subway harassed by
18 police: Have you had a conversation with DCWP to
19 discuss what took place or any... any plans to
20 provide support or speak up about how enforcement...
21 how aggressive enforcement is taking place and
22 hurting our immigrant workers?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I did reach out
24 with... Like I said, I've had several conversations
25 with our colleagues at DCWP and internally, you know,

2 I've weighed in, right?, from my experience and my
3 understanding of street vending and informal work
4 more generally. And also in learning, you know how
5 the MTA NYPD has different guidelines for street
6 vending inside the system, and how those
7 differentiate from how it's, you know, enforcement
8 outside. You know, these are ongoing conversations
9 and for sure, advising and helping, you know,
10 understand the issues, having done a lot of this
11 work, you know, prior to joining.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. I'd now like to go
13 into some questions about IDNYC. How accessible is
14 the IDNYC is online appointment scheduler?

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Accessible as in language
16 access? Or just...?

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: In language, in its
18 interface, and to be able to make an appointment.

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: My understanding is that a
20 lot of work has gone into this to create a very
21 accessible. Our deputy commissioner who oversees
22 this work is on the call as well. Collette, do you
23 want to weigh in on this? I do know that...

24

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Yeah. The minute
3 you asked about IDNYC, I put a handful of chocolate
4 in my mouth. Hold on a second.

5 Hi, yeah, so. The IDNYC website was specifically
6 designed and all of our centers are also completely
7 ADA accessible. And that spans for the website
8 regarding any vision impairments, if the need is for
9 hearing, and so the website's fully accessible. It's
10 accessible in 25 languages. And we're always adding
11 more languages. We do not use Google Translate, we
12 use our own built-in system. All of our newsletters,
13 any communications that go out, text messaging goes
14 out in the cardholders preferred language. So if
15 they have selected a different language at the time
16 of enrollment, which is also listed on their card,
17 any communication from us will go out to them in that
18 language as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's great. And can
20 participants walk into any site for enrollment and
21 renewal?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: So yes, with an
23 asterisk, right? So we are still in post-pandemic
24 recovery. Like that's just a reality we... I have
25 teams of people who work with CBOs, outreaching to

2 churches, any city agencies, anybody that is willing
3 to let us reopen. Currently, we have the largest
4 footprint that we've had, since 2019, 2020 when we
5 had to shut down. So we're at 17 sites right now.
6 And we're hopeful to have two more sites in Queens.
7 And so we're also hopeful that by the end of summer,
8 it will begin to resemble what it used to look like.
9 With that being said, we were pegged with staffing,
10 and we have attrition. So the ability to set up the
11 same number of enrollment stations at each site is
12 impossible at this point. So...

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you give me the
14 breakdown? How... what was the before? What is it
15 now?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I mean, we used to
17 have 29 sites, including five popups going anywhere,
18 right? And our command center. Currently we have 17.
19 Most of them... (crosstalk)

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many are permanent and
21 popup?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: They're all... No,
23 no, this is permanent sites. 17 permanent sites.
24 (crosstalk) Pop ups we're not counting in the number

2 we're providing you, because we popup when we're
3 invited and when we can, right?

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Given the staffing,
6 we try to have our command center out all of the time
7 in good weather. So that goes out frequently. We
8 consider that a popup, but because it's not a
9 standing popup -- it's sometimes only out for a day,
10 depending upon the event -- it's sort of classified
11 on its own.

12 But whereas we used to have in most locations,
13 three to four workstations where we could enroll
14 people, our footprint in each site has shrunk because
15 of COVID. And because people's need for space and
16 their... and their conference rooms back and things
17 of this nature. So now in most sites, it's at most
18 three enrollers, and many sites have one. So our
19 ability to do the numbers we used to do is lower but
20 we're still cranking it out and we fit people in
21 throughout, who come in for walk-ins, we still
22 encourage people to make appointments because we
23 don't want lines if people outside. That's not great
24 for anybody. We... If people come to renew, we try
25 to assist them while they're on the line, to actually

2 renew on an iPad that we have, or renew on their own
3 phone. Because, you know, many people can if they
4 haven't changed their name, or any of the identifying
5 information, by simply... even if they change their
6 address, they can simply upload a document. So
7 that... that significantly helps with... with those
8 numbers. And we're... (crosstalk)

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Given the shortage...

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Yup, go ahead.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Given the shortage of
12 enrollers, what's the wait time for an appointment?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I... it just... it
14 depends on what borough, right? In some boroughs we
15 have more centers than others. And so... (crosstalk)

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Which are... which boroughs?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: So Brooklyn has a
18 lot, because... and we have large enrollment centers
19 there. Large meaning two to three enrollers. Right,
20 Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza, it's the
21 center of that area. We have a location in Sunset
22 Park, always busy. We're at the Department of
23 Finance. We're in an HRA building in Coney Island.
24 We're in an HRA building in downtown Brooklyn.
25 That's a significant number, right?

2 We are... We need to build our Queens portfolio.
3 We spend an enormous amount of time doing that. And
4 wherever we can pop up in Queens, so if anybody here
5 is from Queens and wants us we will come. So it's...
6 I don't want to make it sound like it's such a
7 shortage of enrollers. It's also a shortage of
8 invitations. Because at this point, people are
9 trying to reopen their businesses, reopen their
10 offices, and we're extra and we bring in lots of
11 traffic and people are nervous about having traffic.
12 That's just a reality. I mean, we have scoured the
13 city for locations.

14 So and, you know, we've recently, I think,
15 collaborated with two more organizations that are
16 willing to have us in the coming month in Queens, so
17 that will be fantastic. We're still waiting for the
18 Flushing Library to finish its renovations, so we can
19 go back there. That was a huge site for us. The
20 Jamaica Library: We're back there, and it's
21 extremely successful. So I mean, that's, that's...

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's really... that's
23 really great to know. And I know that the number of
24 younger participants has increased. Could you share

2 what approaches has helped drive the number of
3 younger participants.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I missed the word
5 that you said. Can I show what?

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you share what
7 approaches have helped drive up the number of young
8 participants?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: So really gearing
10 benefits towards families, towards children, and
11 trying to get benefit partners that are exciting for
12 youth. And so we have done that in the last few
13 years. We have a whole host of benefits for kids
14 including like, Cartwright. Well, we have a huge
15 partnership that we leveraged right before the
16 pandemic with Sullivan County in Upstate New York.
17 So one of our plans was to go to each of the outside
18 regions where we could help both increase tourism in
19 New York State, but also for our card holders who are
20 traveling to get discounts there. So we had a whole
21 plan to do the beaches out in Long Island, which
22 would have been amazing for people but then the
23 pandemic, but we weren't able to partner with
24 Sullivan County and Sullivan County has Cartwright
25 Water Park and Resort, has all sorts of things. So

2 we spent a significant amount of time, at the same
3 time when we launched the middle school card for
4 IDNYC, which also launched that fall before the
5 pandemic.

6 So in conjunction, to really sort of get the
7 youth interested in both civic engagements, but also
8 interested in going and experiencing culture, staying
9 off the streets, and doing things that they... they
10 could also get discounts. Because if I'm an IDNYC
11 cardholder as a mom, and I am, right?, that doesn't
12 mean that when I go to a place with my kids, they get
13 included, but now they can, right?, because they have
14 their own ID on my SD card. So we did a lot there.

15 And also the IDNYC Middle School card, which
16 we're hoping come this fall, DOE will welcome us
17 back, and we know this was like a big year for them
18 to reopen themselves fully. And so we haven't really
19 pressed on that. And now we're towards the end of
20 the school year, and that's never a good time to
21 enter a school. But I'm sure you're aware that we
22 launched the middle school card, which is a vertical
23 card, which does not have the address and but does
24 have an emergency contact, which parents were like
25 super jazzed about because so many of the middle

2 school population travels the subways by themselves.

3 So I think those numbers will only skyrocket come the
4 fall when we are able to get back into the schools
5 and hopefully we can. I mean, that's really out of
6 my jurisdiction.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, that's fantastic news.

8 And I'd love to collaborate closely on making sure
9 that these numbers continue to rise. I really
10 appreciate that you're here with us, Deputy
11 Commissioner Samman. I'll wrap up here. I know
12 we've got other agencies on the deck. Thank you all
13 so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Counsel, do we have anybody
15 else?

16 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: No, we do not. So we're going
17 to wrap up with MOIA and we need everyone to bear
18 with us a few moments while we switch over to DFTA...
19 (crosstalk).

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I'm going to make
21 one last pitch. If you have an IDNYC card, renew it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Laughs. Thank you
23 Collette.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Thank you.

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Also the Councilmember that
3 joined us as well for the last portion were Carr,
4 Dinowitz, Richardson Jordan, Marte, Mealy, Moya,
5 Hudson, Louis, Brewer, Powers, and Schulman. So
6 we're going to check everyone in for DFTA and then
7 we'll get right started.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, Manny, thank
9 you so much.

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you everyone. Thank
11 you Chair Brannan. Thank you Chair Hanif. Goodbye
12 everybody.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Good bye.

14 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Good afternoon COO Ognibene
15 would you like to test your audio?

16 COO OGNIBENE: Testing testing? 123

17 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear.
18 Thank you.

19 COO OGNIBENE: Got it. Thanks.

20 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: And good afternoon,
21 Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez. Would you like to test
22 your audio?

23 [Silence]

24 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Good afternoon Chair Hudson.
25 Would you like to test your audio?

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

245

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Hello. 123 This is
3 Cortés-Vázquez.

4 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Yes, we can hear you
5 Commissioner. Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

7 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: we're just waiting on CFO
8 Mercado, and then we can begin with the Chairs. So
9 let's just give them a moment.

10 CFO Mercado, can you just see if you can unmute
11 yourself, please? We just want to make sure we can
12 hear you.

13 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, unmuted.

14 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Perfect and we can hear you.
15 Thank you.

16 Yes, members of the admin and councilmembers,
17 you'll be able to mute and unmute yourselves. We are
18 extremely behind schedule. Thank you, DFTA, for
19 being patient with us, councilmembers, when it comes
20 time for questions, use the raise hand function zoom.
21 When time is called. Please use your time
22 effectively and efficiently. Chair Brannan, we'll
23 start with you. Then Chair Hudson, we'll start with
24 you. Then I will swear in the admin, and we're
25 gonna get this train back on track.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Captain. Good
3 afternoon, everyone and welcome to the third and
4 final portion of today's executive budget hearings.
5 We'll be talking now to the Department for the Aging.
6 I'm joined by Councilmember Crystal Hudson who is the
7 chair of the Committee on Aging.

8 The Department for the Aging is projected fiscal
9 23 budget of \$479.2 million represents less than 1%
10 of the city's proposed FY 23 budget in the FY 23
11 executive plan. DFTA's fiscal 23 budget increased by
12 4.3% or \$19.6 million from the preliminary plan of
13 \$459.7 million. The increase is the result of a
14 number of actions taken, most significant of which
15 are a new need for home delivered meals and
16 associated case management services totaling \$14.8
17 million, and the reflection of baseline New York
18 Connects funding of \$3.7 million. There are no
19 changes resulting from the peg in DFTA's executive
20 plan. Despite the increased funding added for
21 certain programs, there remain key programs
22 highlighted by the City Council in its response to
23 the mayor's prelim that remain unfunded.

24

25

2 With New York City being home to approximately
3 1.6 million older adults, I look forward to hearing
4 from DFTA on why those priorities remain unfunded.

5 Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez, I'd like to welcome
6 you and your team. I plan on focusing my questions
7 on older adult centers and the end of the recovery
8 meal program. At our hearing today and throughout
9 budget negotiations, I want to make sure that the
10 needs of this vulnerable population are met by a
11 budget that is fair and equitable. COVID has exposed
12 many inequities and issues facing older adults in
13 this city, and with DFTA's budget representing less
14 than 1% of the city's proposed FY 23 budget, every
15 dollar must be used fairly efficiently and
16 effectively. I want to thank Daniel Kroop, Chima
17 Obichere, John Yeddin, and the entire finance team
18 for their work on today's hearing. I'll now turn it
19 to Councilmember Crystal Hudson Chair of the
20 Committee on Aging.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much Chair
22 Brannan. Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. And
23 thank you again for your patience. My name is
24 Crystal Hudson. I'm Chair of the Committee on Aging.
25 We will now hold the committee's joint hearing on the

2 fiscal 2023 executive budget for the Department of
3 the Aging, or DFTA. Thank you to chair Brannan,
4 again for your leadership and partnership throughout
5 this budget process. And during these hearings, I
6 know it's grueling. So thank you.

7 A reminder to those watching that members of the
8 public are invited to testify on Wednesday, May 25.
9 And you may visit council.nyc.gov to learn more.
10 Welcome back to Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez. Our
11 work continues to make New York City the best place
12 in the country to age, and to ensure that every older
13 adult can age with dignity, no matter what zip code
14 they live in. Older adults are the fastest growing
15 cohort of the city's population, and we must keep
16 pace with the strategic plan and targeted investments
17 to accommodate that growth. DFTA's fiscal 2023
18 executive budget is \$479.2 million, as was mentioned,
19 an increase of \$19.5 million or 4.2% from the
20 preliminary budget. Major actions taken include new
21 needs that baseline \$8.8 million for home delivered
22 meals, and \$6 million for case management serving
23 3000 clients each. Although DFTA was not subject to
24 new pegs in fiscal 2023 or in the out years, which is
25 a welcome reflection of the discussion we had in the

2 preliminary hearing, the executive budget still
3 proposes the termination of Get Food Recovery Meals
4 Program on June 30 at the end of the current fiscal
5 year.

6 A key question for today's hearing surrounds home
7 delivered meals and combating food insecurity. I
8 look forward to hearing updates on the current need.
9 How DFTA will ensure that no older adult misses a
10 meal, and the level of funding that must be added by
11 adoption. The council's preliminary budget response
12 also included calls for a range of investments and
13 services and supports that will help older New
14 Yorkers age in place and recover from the COVID 19
15 pandemic. In addition to \$30 million in funding for
16 home delivered meals. These include \$8.7 million for
17 geriatric mental health, \$7.5 million dollars for
18 technology, and new funding for home care services.
19 There were 421 eligible older adults awaiting
20 homecare in March. However, the executive plan adds
21 no funding to clear the homecare waitlist.
22 Additionally, one time fiscal 2022 Council
23 discretionary funding remains missing for programs
24 that serve LGBTQ older adults, immigrants, Holocaust
25 survivors, and support core operations and

2 programmatic enhancements and older adults centers
3 and NORCs across the city.

4 As we turn the corner into warmer weather, I hope
5 DFTA takes an aggressive approach towards attracting
6 more older adults to its network of programming. I
7 recently conducted a tour of two older adult centers
8 in Harlem, and while I was impressed by the
9 dedication of nonprofit staff, and the spirit of the
10 older adults, it's clear that further investments are
11 needed to strengthen the system, regain the levels of
12 attendance that exist in pre-COVID, and refurbish
13 centers. The capital plan at DFTA remains an
14 untapped opportunity. DFTA's capital plan totals
15 \$47.6 million across five years, which is the
16 smallest of any standalone agency in the city. DFTA
17 should review and invest in its capital plan to
18 promote center refurbishments, renovations, and
19 technology expansion for older adults.

20 It's a new day for older adults as we emerge from
21 the pandemic. The council's vision in the budget
22 response lays out a strategy for an equitable
23 recovery for older adults. I look forward to ongoing
24 partnership with the administration to match the
25 council's commitment and meet the needs of every

2 older New Yorker. I hope DFTA takes a page from The
3 Mayor's playbook and really gets stuff done this
4 summer.

5 I'd like to thank the committee staff who've
6 helped prepare this hearing, Daniel Kroop, senior
7 financial analyst, Chima Obichere, unit head, Dahimi
8 Sepura, Assistant Director, Chris Pepe, Committee
9 Counsel, Chloe Rivera, Senior Policy Analyst, and my
10 Chief of Staff, Casey Addison, and my Director of
11 Policy and Budget Initiatives, Andrew Wright. I'll
12 now pass it back to the finance council to continue
13 our hearing and thank you very much.

14 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you to both chairs.

15 The following members of the administration are
16 here to testify and our answer questions today.
17 Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Michael
18 Ognibene, Chief Operating Officer, and Jose Mercado,
19 Chief Financial Officer.

20 I will first read the oath and after I will call
21 on each member from the administration individually
22 to respond.

23 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
24 and nothing but the truth before these committees?

2 Excuse me and to respond honestly to Councilmember
3 questions?

4 Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I do.

6 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: COO Ognibene?

7 COO OGNIBENE: I do. Yes.

8 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: And CFO Mercado?

9 CFO MERCADO: I do.

10 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Commissioner, you
11 may begin when you're ready.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you so much.

13 Good afternoon Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and
14 the Members of the Aging and Finance Committees.

15 I am joined this afternoon, as you just heard by
16 Jose Mercado, our Chief Financial Officer, and by
17 Michael Ognibene, our Chief Operating Officer. And I
18 want to thank you for this opportunity to discuss
19 DFTA's executive budget for fiscal 2023.

20 Chair Hudson, we have common cause and the goal
21 to be the best and a model for aging in place in New
22 York in the United States. The Department for the
23 Aging administers a wide range of programs that
24 enhance the independence and quality of life for the
25 city's older population. The department's services

2 include adult... older adult centers, home delivered
3 meals, case management services, home care services,
4 transportation, caregiver services, mental health,
5 employment counseling, and placement for older New
6 Yorkers, and an array of aging services and programs.
7 DFTA also serves as an advocate for the city's older
8 adult population through legislative activity and
9 public policy initiatives. The Department for the
10 Aging's Fiscal Year Executive Budget, as you well
11 stated, provides an operating expense of \$479.2
12 million, of which \$288.4 million are city funds. In
13 addition, the department's 10-year capital plan
14 includes \$61 million.

15 DFTA's Fiscal Year Executive Budget responds to
16 the challenges faced by New York's older population
17 during the pandemic, and lays the foundation for the
18 future, including an extension for geriatric mental
19 health and home-delivered meals. These investments
20 reflect The Adams administration's commitment to the
21 Community Care Plan, and supports the necessary to
22 help older adults remain in their homes and age in
23 place. DFTA's geriatric mental health commonly known
24 as DGMH Initiative provides mental health services on
25 site at 48 older adult centers in the agency's

2 network. Through this program, licensed mental
3 health clinicians utilize engagement and workshops,
4 on mental health topics to destigmatize mental
5 health, screen participants for depression and
6 anxiety, and to provide on-site counseling and give
7 referrals. Overall participation in the program has
8 led to a self-reported reduction in depression and
9 anxiety. This program will expand to an additional
10 40 sites within three neighborhoods in fiscal 2023.
11 Three neighborhoods are those communities that have
12 been historically low income and are most affected by
13 COVID. This will result in a total of 88 sites
14 providing this service.

15 The fiscal budget for 2023 of \$6.4 million for
16 older geriatric centers almost doubled what it was in
17 fiscal year 22. The reach of the program exceeds
18 just beyond those of the 88 sites. DFTA is always
19 looking at how to innovate the provision of mental
20 health services and have a greater reach for these
21 services. As such DFTA is conducting a hub-and-spoke
22 model, whereby outreach through engagement activities
23 and assessment are conducted at other older adult
24 clubs within the community.

2 As you know, the geriatric mental health services
3 and the physical requirements are established by the
4 State Department of Mental Health. If a mental
5 health need is identified in a satellite site, the
6 client is provided ongoing mental health services at
7 the main older adult site that has been designated.
8 This allows all older adults access to the geriatric
9 mental health program, even if they are not a member
10 of that particular local center, or the program is
11 not located at a particular site.

12 Case management, which is the service that
13 connects homebound older adults to resources and
14 benefits so that they may continue to live
15 independently and safely in their homes and to
16 maintain the quality of life. That is the common
17 cause that we all have. Case management is the
18 gatekeeper for all DFTA funded in-home services such
19 as home delivered meals, home care, friendly
20 visiting, and the Bill Payer Program. All clients
21 that are receiving in home services funded by DFTA
22 will receive a comprehensive assessment from the case
23 management agents. Case managers provide assessments
24 to identify the strengths and needs of the older

2 person and work with the client to plan and
3 coordinate services and resources on their behalf.

4 Again, the case management agency services are,
5 again... most of them are dictated by the State
6 Office for the Aging. Older Adults can call the
7 agent connect hotline at 311 to be connected to a
8 case management agency in addition to the regular
9 outreach that's conducted. Additionally, many are
10 referred to case management providers from an older
11 adult center, meal providers, hospital, or other
12 community based social services and healthcare
13 agencies.

14 In 2023, \$44.1 million will support case
15 management services for approximately 35,000 clients
16 annually. Over 85% of the case management clients
17 benefit from home delivered meal services five or
18 seven days a week. DFTA contracts with community-
19 based providers to provide these nutritious meals to
20 homebound older adults aged 60 and older, and their
21 dependents if they have a disability. Participants
22 can choose if they would like frozen, fresh, chilled,
23 or hot meals, as well as a form of variety of
24 different cultural meals. This was very important
25 and an issue that was raised by the older adult

2 themselves, and we ensured that that was built into
3 the program. In 2023 \$60 million will support 5
4 million home delivered meals. This includes an
5 increase of \$2.3 million in FY 22 and \$9.4 million in
6 FY 23. So increasing the rate per meal to cover
7 increased food costs, fuel, and labor costs. We want
8 to thank the council and the network for the
9 partnership and making this possible.

10 As the recovery meal service sunsets, we also
11 project that up to 3000 additional older adults who
12 currently receive recovery meals will be eligible for
13 case management and home delivered meal services. As
14 such, the budget includes an additional \$14.8
15 million, \$8.8 million for home-delivered meals, and
16 \$6 million for case management to support this
17 increase in that. I will talk to you about the
18 increase in that. The pandemic has been challenging
19 for everyone, and the strain on caregivers has been
20 significant. DFTA's caregiver support program offers
21 support groups counseling, training, outreach and
22 caregiver services, and information to the many
23 unpaid caregivers. Many older adults are caretakers
24 for their aging parents, aunts, godparents, and other
25 family members. Many are caregivers who also have

2 full time jobs. The program aims to educate,
3 provide, or connect them to a wide range of supports
4 that they may need. The caregiver program offers
5 options for respite care, through home care
6 participation in quality social adult daycare
7 centers.

8 Without the respite care, many of these
9 caretakers would not have the financial means or
10 ability to leave the caregiver in someone else's care
11 while they take a needed break from their caregiving
12 responsibilities. Caregiver supports do not only
13 allow the older adults remain safely in their homes,
14 but they're also significantly less expensive, with
15 higher positive outcomes than institutionalization.
16 Caregiver support also provides a response to the
17 unique needs of the diverse aging population. In
18 addition, the program provides supplemental services,
19 which offer limited financial assistance with the
20 purchase of needed assistive devices such as walkers,
21 bathroom steps, and other caregiver related expenses.
22 These services help to ease the burden of families
23 and of the other unpaid caregivers. In some cases
24 the program helps connect caregivers to home health
25 aides. In other cases, the caregiver attends

2 workshops to better understand how to care for
3 someone with dementia.

4 Other support include connecting to additional
5 groups to reduce social isolation for the caregiver.

6 All situations are unique, and the caregiver program
7 seeks to support these diversities. In 2023, funding
8 for the caregiver program was \$8.1 million.

9 Caregiver supports positively impact the health and
10 well-being of older adults, while aligning with the
11 cultural background of the individual. As the aging
12 population continues to diversify, agent investment
13 and caregiver support are important and beneficial.

14 July 1 2023, will mark the official start of our new
15 and expanded portfolio for older adult centers and
16 supports the five boroughs, which was among the top
17 priorities of the community care plan. With new
18 contracts and additional sites, our dedicated network
19 of providers will even be better equipped to serve
20 older adults as they continue to recover from the
21 years-long pandemic. We are increasingly proud of
22 the hard work of the staff and the AG network that
23 has brought us to this point and let us really
24 survive this pandemic. Survive is a loose word.

2 I would be remiss not to mention also our
3 appreciation for the ongoing support of the City
4 Council, which in FY 22 awarded DFTA with roughly \$41
5 million in discretionary funding, allowing us to make
6 even greater investment in often underserved or
7 unserved communities. Through this expansion our
8 _____ and NORC portfolio, we effectively moved \$5.1
9 million of _____ investments into baseline
10 contracts. You've heard me talk about this with you
11 before, Chairwoman Hudson.

12 I urge you to continue your partnership to
13 support the enhancement of these services, such as
14 art programs and vehicles so that we can continue to
15 diversify educational, art, and recreational
16 programming for older adults. As I've always said,
17 needs always outpace resources. As such, we are
18 prioritizing several services that meet our priority
19 the primary mission of keeping people safe and
20 helpful at their homes and in their community, which
21 include case management, home care, home delivered
22 meals, caregiver services, transportation, and of
23 course, workforce development, to help older adults
24 attain financial stability, especially in the era of
25 inflation, when so many older adults are subsisting

2 on limited incomes. These services built on
3 investments made over the past years to provide older
4 adults with opportunities to socialize and connect.
5 [coughing]

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, do you want
7 to... do you want to just jump into questions?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, what?

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you want to just jump
10 into some questions?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Let me just finish.
12 I'm literally two lines away.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Including \$48
15 million in community care driven by the NORC
16 investments. And then thank you for your
17 consideration. And you can see that I'm struggling
18 right? As well as the technological investments that
19 help connect people with lesser mobility to virtual
20 and other programs. Through the support and advocacy
21 of important stakeholders. We have also advanced
22 many efforts to help older adults in the midst of the
23 pandemic. Last year, the challenge was: how do we do
24 more with our existing resources? But I am very
25 proud of our work and our work with the network.

2 There is always more that is needed to do more. As
3 always, we are grateful to you, the chairs of the
4 committee of your advocacy. I thank you. And now we
5 can go to questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Commissioner.
7 So let's just jump into it. So are all 308 of the
8 centers currently open, and what... and what is the
9 current utilization rate and daily attendance
10 overall?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. You know,
12 the good news is that yes, they're all open. Are
13 they fully operational each one of them? No, it
14 really is uneven. But I can say that we were real
15 pleased. Last week, the number went up to 20...
16 20,000 for a day. And the average has been, you
17 know, the average pre-pandemic used to be around
18 20... anywhere between 22,000 and 24,000.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's really good.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, yeah, a
21 movement. But as you know, and as you can tell from
22 my voice, that this pandemic and these situations are
23 ever changing, and always affect the participation
24 rates.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what is the breakdown
3 for how DFTA has used the \$2 million added for
4 marketing and outreach in fiscal 22 to attract older
5 adults back to centers?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for that
7 question. We knew as we... as we expanded to 36 new
8 sites... if you remember, at a former hearing, I said
9 it was 31 sites. My staff... the staff of DFTA
10 corrected me and made sure that it was really 36
11 sites. So we were able to use the money much more
12 judiciously than I thought. But because of that kind
13 of an expansion we've built in outreach dollars in
14 each contract. And... and as such, the goal was to
15 conduct a variety of different approaches at the
16 local community to... for outreach. That includes
17 things like special events dates, social media,
18 leafleting in the community, outreach through door to
19 door, and a variety of other... other ways.

20 And what we did, Chair, was to assemble a group
21 of providers to look at what some of the best
22 practices are, or have been in the outreach methods,
23 and we're using that work group to help inform how we
24 can help the rest of the network come up with state
25 of the art approaches.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: At how have we determined
3 that inflation is impacting costs that are associated
4 with the center operations? So how does the budget
5 accommodate rising costs in terms of fuel and
6 heating, cooling, personnel, food?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a... That's
8 a great question. And we... first of all, I want to
9 thank you, and the Chair and the entire council, for
10 our joint efforts to get the home delivered meals a
11 unit rate cost increase.

12 It is a conversation that we are having regularly
13 with OMB that, you know, food and fuel which are the
14 mainstays of older adult clubs in addition to... to
15 the home delivered meals program. So we're looking
16 at that right now. We... the inflationary rate
17 has... it went from 7% when we was first started our
18 discussion. It is now upwards of 8.7%. And so it's
19 a great concern. The outcome will be, Chair, will be
20 at the end of the year because programs have to cover
21 costs, we will probably see a decrease in services.
22 That said, given the slow uptake for full
23 participation, it may balance out at the end, but it
24 can't be sustained moving forward.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it. Um, so according
3 to the executive plan to Get Food Recovery Meals
4 Program, at a one year cost of \$53 million will be
5 terminated in June. The executive plan adds \$8.8
6 million to accommodate 3000 more home delivered meal
7 clients will be transferred to DFTA's baseline home
8 delivered meals program.

9 How many older adults of above to 3000 may still
10 want to receive a meal?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So I'm going to
12 answer that two ways. I'm going to have Micheal
13 Ognibene, after I make my statement, give you an
14 update on the recovery meals and where we are today.
15 We started out once at 199, by the time we took it
16 over in November it was I believe 13,000 or 19,000,
17 and that it went down to 13,000. Michael will give
18 you the correct numbers, alright? But what I will
19 say to you chair is that the 3000... we anticipate
20 that about 3000 will be transferred over... will be
21 home-delivered-meal eligible. But that doesn't
22 accommodate what we call the natural increase for
23 demand with the aging population and the aging in of
24 the older population. So we will find ourselves at
25 some point not... again, not being able to match that

2 increased demand. Michael, can you give the both
3 Committee Chairs an update on where we are with
4 recovery foods?

5 COO OGNIBENE: I'll just... Can you hear me?

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

7 COO OGNIBENE: Okay, good. So I'm just going to
8 back up a touch. In November, when we inherited the
9 program, it was 13,000 older adults receiving
10 recovery meals. These were both names of people that
11 we knew as well as there were a number of plus-ones
12 in the household. Since that time, in March, we
13 began our outreach to try to, you know, alert folks
14 that this was going to be ending in June.

15 So through the period of March and April, we've
16 seen 6500... Oh, sorry, when we took... when we began
17 the outreach in March, we were at 10,700. Right? So
18 we've gone from November to March from 13,000 down to
19 10,700. We began our outreach in March, on March 7.
20 Since that period, 6,500 of the 10,700 have found an
21 alternative. Those alternatives include going back
22 to groceries, shopping and meals preparation, older
23 adults center, or they've gone through the case
24 management assessment to determine their eligibility
25 for home delivered meals. So got me so far?

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, yeah.

3 COO OGNIBENE: Okay. All right. So for case
4 management assessment, we've moved about 3,600 into
5 the case management agencies for assessment. So far,
6 they've conduct... completed 2,700 or so. I'm
7 talking with yesterday's numbers, of which 1,700 have
8 either been determined not eligible for the meals,
9 and then they'll go to groceries or... or older adult
10 center, or find another means, and 1,000 or so have
11 moved into HDM. So we've got about 2,000 or so still
12 to solve between now and June 30.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do we have an idea of how
14 much it would cost to close that gap in your current
15 estimate?

16 COO OGNIBENE: To close what gap?

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So if there are folks who
18 are slipping through the cracks there. I mean, are
19 they... how... so tell me again, how many adults...
20 more than... over the 3000, have we identified how
21 many of those folks still might want to receive a
22 meal?

23 COO OGNIBENE: Of the 3,600 that we assessed?
24 1000 were assessed HDM so far, right? We've assessed
25 about 2,700, we still have a few to go.

2 So let me tell you what we've been doing. On
3 March 7th, we mailed a postcard to all of them,
4 right? Then we followed up that postcard with a
5 survey to everyone. And we asked them to complete
6 the survey, give it to the delivery person the next
7 time they come. Then we started making phone calls
8 to all of these participants. People would complete
9 the survey we would call a second time, we would call
10 a third time. Then we mailed surveys translated in
11 the nine most frequently preferred languages for
12 people we hadn't heard from, complete the survey,
13 give it to the delivery person. After three
14 unsuccessful attempts with a call. We sent them
15 another postcard, asked them to call us. Then we
16 made a fourth attempt. After that one, another
17 postcard was sent. So we at some point had six or
18 seven or eight attempts to reach these folks.

19 So little by little, we've seen a lot of them
20 say, "Yes, I'm ready to go back for groceries," "I
21 want to return to the older adult center." As
22 commissioner said, you've seen that that number has
23 ticked up. And so we're still solving one by one by
24 one. But every single one of these recipients is
25 getting touched multiple times. We're trying to

2 solve for every single one of them. And we're on...
3 we're on track to do that between now and June 30.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's great.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think the other
6 thing that's important is that there are about --
7 Michael, correct me if I'm wrong -- there's about
8 anywhere between 300 and 350 for which we do not have
9 telephone numbers. And we will be doing door to door
10 canvassing of those in the next few weeks to make
11 sure that they get a communication about the programs
12 and possible off ramps.

13 COO OGNIBENE: Yes. It's about 400. But we will
14 be going door to door. There is a meeting we're
15 having next week to discuss a strategy for that. So
16 these are folks that we don't have phone numbers
17 from. Remember a lot of these were transferred to us
18 from Get Food and we have names and... and no phone
19 numbers in many cases.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's great. I appreciate
21 that. I'm going to hand it over to Chair Hudson for
22 her line of questioning. Thank you Commissioner.
23 Thank you so much.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Chair Brannan. So
3 going to home delivered meals, which is obviously
4 related, is there any money for new meal delivery
5 vans in the budget and how much does the capital plan
6 include to fund home delivery vans? And can the
7 capital funding be used to accommodate these
8 investments?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You and I talked
10 about the need for the vans, and we have some
11 limitations. I'm going to turn that over to Jose
12 Mercado, who can tell you what it costs per van, and
13 what the need is. Jose, do you want to handle that
14 please?

15 CFO MERCADO: Sure. Correct. Currently...
16 currently there are no funds set aside in the capital
17 budget for HDM vans. So part of that, for example,
18 it costs roughly about \$55,000 per van. Now, if the
19 Council were to actually give the funding to the
20 individual providers, then naturally the providers
21 could purchase these vans, but we cannot purchase
22 vans for the providers. That is something that we're
23 not allowed to do under the current capital plan.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. And just
25 going back to the recovery meals for a quick second.

2 Is it possible to get a table with updated numbers on
3 exactly what you walked us through a moment ago?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure. We can give
5 you that table. And just remember that it'll be a
6 snapshot of that particular period, alright? So we
7 can give you a snapshot as of let's say yesterday,...

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, that's fine.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And walk you... and
10 give it to you compartmentalized as to who is... who
11 is in queue for case management and home delivered
12 meals, and who is not, and where we are. And what
13 the responses... we could also give you some of their
14 reason or rationale that they've shared with us as to
15 why or why not. Alright?

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. That sounds good.
17 Thank you for that. Okay, so home delivered meals.
18 Combating food insecurity, as you know, is a council
19 priority. And while the administration has included
20 \$8.8 million in the executive plan for 3000 more home
21 delivered meals, which I might note is 30% of what
22 the council has requested, weekend and holiday meals
23 remains funded by DFTA at a cost of \$3 million. And
24 the council called for another \$9.7 million to help
25 maintain meal quality despite rising costs. The

2 state comptroller's audit concluded in January that
3 DFTA did not provide adequate oversight of its home
4 delivered meals program, adding that, and I quote,
5 "There are no consequences such as punitive actions
6 for providers that fail to correct compliance
7 violations." End quote. What controls are funded in
8 the executive plan to ensure these issues are
9 addressed in the future?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, well, with
11 all due respect to my friend and dear colleague,
12 Comptroller... Comptroller DiNapoli, that is... that
13 is somewhat of an overstatement. But I will have...
14 but that is... that said, there were some findings
15 cited that are accurate. I will have Jose Mercado
16 talk us through that process, and where we are, and
17 what corrective measures we implemented before
18 that... before that audit was completed and what
19 we're doing moving forward. Jose?

20 CFO MERCADO: Sure. So as the Commissioner
21 pointed out, there were specific issues with the
22 audit itself. We basically... Again, we've actually
23 are trying to look at our current STAR Systems, which
24 basically is where we actually are... identify where
25 each meal is being provided, and so we're trying to

2 leverage that technology to put in more, I would say,
3 oversight of the way we actually monitor these
4 providers. So we're in that process right now of
5 actually reprogramming the STAR System to do that.
6 That is kind of a major thing that we're doing right
7 now. We also will have additional staff. We're
8 going to actually be doing more audits of these
9 providers, to ensure that they are actually doing
10 what they need to be doing as well. So there's two
11 major things that we're doing right now.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For example, Chair
13 Hudson, one of the things that they cited us, was
14 that we would not close a home delivered meals
15 program immediately whenever we found a negative
16 citation. And usually that was because the program
17 officer was working with the program, trying to
18 mitigate the situation. That is one of the biggest
19 findings that they gave us, which should have been...
20 they want... they recommended that we close
21 immediately on these findings, some to deal... deal
22 with health and cleanliness. Alright? I hope that
23 clarifies it for you.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. That does. And, you
25 know, if we have any follow up questions, we'll be

2 sure to reach out about that. We mentioned capital
3 funds earlier. So I do want to just jump to capital
4 funds quickly. And as I mentioned in my opening
5 statement, DFTA has a capital budget that averages
6 under \$10 million per year over five years. It's
7 relatively small size makes it hard to tackle the
8 repairs that many centers would benefit from, and if
9 I can just also, you know, make a note that with 1.6
10 million older New Yorkers, you know, DFTA has one of
11 the smallest agency budgets in the city. We have, by
12 comparison 1.1 million students in the in the school
13 system and a budget of \$31 billion. And we're
14 talking here, you know, a budget less than half a
15 billion dollars for older New Yorkers. So I just
16 wanted to make that point on the record. Because,
17 you know, this population is a growing population, we
18 all know that, and we should really be doing a whole
19 lot more to prepare New York City for, you know, the,
20 the older New Yorkers who live here and call this
21 home. So we're talking like any pennies here with...
22 with, you know, capital budget, expense budget in
23 terms of this agency. So I just want to just want to
24 make that clear for the record.

25 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. Chair, can

2 I make a comment also for the record?

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sure thing.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you. And I
5 heard Chair Brannan's statement in... in the previous
6 hearing, where he talked about resources being
7 dedicated to... a biblical reference about
8 priorities. And so I just want to say that you're
9 absolutely correct. But I also want to say for the
10 record, two administrations ago, this agency took an
11 incredible assault, meaning \$110 million reduction.
12 And so for the last few years, I would say that we
13 have worked very hard, both the former administration
14 and this administration, to get us to the point of
15 where we were before we were totally cut off from
16 before. So I want that to be in the record. Since
17 it's not a... it's not an indictment of the current
18 state. It is, it is really a reflection of the
19 historical cut that happened, you know, about...
20 years ago, and all we've been trying to do is to
21 catch up.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And I hear I hear that. But
23 catching up to a level that was already too low is,
24 by my... you know, from my perspective, it is too
25 little too late. And with all due respect to every

2 mayor, we've had, everyone who's been elected mayor
3 has been either an older adult or very close to an
4 older adult. And so this agency historically has
5 been underfunded. So this is not an indictment on
6 any one administration. It's an indictment on all of
7 us, you know, that we're just not valuing older
8 adults the way we should be. But anyway, I don't
9 want to get off track too much here.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And I want... and I
11 don't want to countermand what you said. I... we're
12 in total agreement, that given the explosive growth
13 that we project, you know, in the next 10 to 15
14 years, it's something that we need to look at.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, when... when there's a
16 baby boom, you know, we plan for additional school
17 seats, and... and all sorts of things. And we're
18 just not doing that for older New Yorkers. But
19 anyway, I can go off on that for a very long time,
20 and we don't have much time. So I want to get... get
21 to the question I was going to ask about the capital
22 funding. So does DFTA have a capital needs
23 assessment for the 308 centers that are now in its
24 portfolio?

25 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, Jose?

2 CFO MERCADO: We are actually doing assessments
3 now. So, I mean, we've done assessments all along.
4 Again, we have limited funding. The capital budget,
5 you know, we do have a small capital budget, but we
6 don't control that capital budget. We don't do
7 repairs. We don't do any of that. We basically work
8 with HPD, DDC to actually make renovations to any of
9 our sites. So we don't really control it. It's all
10 basically controlled by others. And the way that...
11 the way the current charter reflects that. So we
12 don't really control it.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So there is no needs
14 assessment for the 308 centers.

15 CFO MERCADO: No. We are doing assessments.
16 Again, we rely heavily on CDBG funds to actually
17 do... to actually do a lot of our work, which is the
18 Community Development Block Grant. That's the stuff
19 that we control. So we do all that. We do actually
20 look at kitchens. We look at, again, kitchens, roofs
21 and all that. So little by little, we are doing
22 assessments. We look at where we can. We focus...
23 a lot of our work is on city owned sites that we own.
24 So that's kind of where we do a lot of that.
25 Where... if they're if they're non-city... non-city-

2 owned sites, we try to, again, work with The Council
3 to actually get funding... capital funding, which
4 then DDC and HPD manage... manages those projects.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Will DFTA sit down
6 with The Council to examine where investments are
7 needed?

8 CFO MERCADO: Absolutely.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes. Absolutely,
10 because we do have, as part of our assessment, as you
11 mentioned earlier, Chair Hudson, it's that we've been
12 looking at the state of our kitchens in older adult
13 clubs, and where we need to go to bring them to
14 state-of-the-art, uh, kitchens.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright. Okay. And then
16 what investments in the executive plan -- either
17 expense or capital -- will ensure that cooling
18 centers operate widely and successfully this summer,
19 including with programming and elements that make
20 them attractive to older adults?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, as you know,
22 the cooling centers are operated with a partner, the
23 Office of Emergency Management, and I believe that
24 DFTA represents almost 35, if not higher, percent of
25 local centers. All of it is contractually obligated

2 for each one of our older adult clubs to serve as a
3 cooling center during the summer, particularly during
4 a heat emergency. And during a heat emergency, it's
5 to operate beyond regular service hours and on
6 weekends. And we are working out those plans as we
7 speak right now with each one of the agencies.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I'm going to ask just
9 a couple more questions and then I'm gonna kick it
10 over to my colleagues, and then I'll come back. But
11 for geriatric mental health, the pandemic and rising
12 hate crimes have shaken many older adults lives as we
13 know, and supportive counseling through DFTA's
14 geriatric mental health program, maybe many older
15 adults only touch point for mental health. However,
16 this administration has yet to add any funding for
17 geriatric mental health, instead relying on the
18 expansion funded in the previous administration.
19 What geriatric mental health services will be
20 available on July 1 of this fiscal year, and how many
21 by December 31?

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We are... we have
23 48 new sites, I mean, 40 sites that will bring us up
24 to 88 sites, and the plan is to begin that expansion
25 immediately. A lot of that work is underway as we

2 speak, by December 31, we expect it all to be fully
3 operational. And again, trying to expand services
4 through the hub and spoke model that I... that I
5 discussed during the testimony. Uh...

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, was there... did you
7 have something else to add?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, no, I was
9 looking to see if I wanted to give you some
10 statistics on the number of people that we serve, but
11 I'll give that to you later. I'm sorry.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Okay, because I know
13 that you... you did mention in your testimony, that
14 the budget was doubled for geriatric mental health
15 programs, and therefore 88 sites are providing, but I
16 guess we're concerned also about the hours and
17 providing full resources, not just partial resources
18 in.. in also the additional 20 sites of the 108, you
19 know, that wouldn't have any, any geriatric mental
20 health at all.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, no, we, you
22 know, we want to work with you on that. But we want
23 to focus on ensuring that we have a smooth rollout to
24 manage both of these programs, because they are
25 doubling. And we want to make you know... and just

2 given the, you know, the fact that the state is
3 interested in auditing the city, we want to make sure
4 that we roll that out for managed growth. And based
5 on that growth, and that experience, and informed
6 practice, it will lead us to say exactly how many
7 more sites we should have and where the gaps are.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and so, speaking of
9 gaps, how will older adults who don't live near
10 centers with services receive transportation or
11 virtual technology to connect to those centers.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The hub and spoke
13 model is... is what we rely on to make sure that it
14 is within proximity of the older adult and the older
15 adult center.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I don't I don't know
17 if... if I would classify that as sufficient for the
18 moment but let me move on.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. I... It is
20 one model and but it is not the only model. You're
21 absolutely right.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Let me move on to
23 my... my colleagues, and then I have plenty more for
24 you.

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: For the record, we just want
3 to say that we've been joined by councilmembers
4 Brannan, Hudson, Barron, Brewer, Carr, Dinowitz,
5 Louis, Ossé, Sanchez, Schulman, Ung, Ayala, Powers,
6 Richardson Jordan, Velázquez, and Lee. The first
7 hand that was up was councilmember Barron.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Alright, we will circle back
10 to him. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Brewer.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. And
13 I hope you feel better. You're a trooper to be here,
14 Commissioner.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

16 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: The first issue is the
17 staffing. Maybe I missed that. I try to pay
18 attention. But, when I visit and I think you'd feel
19 the same with the centers, the seniors have so many
20 issues, and they're just compounded. I think you
21 know that. So they need more case management. And
22 you can only do so many clients. I mean, some of the
23 centers have long, long waiting lists. You know, "I,
24 I have a problem. Can I come see you?" "Yes, we're
25 in May. You can come in July." I mean, that's

2 literally what they're doing. So maybe you're adding
3 money, and I'm missing it. That's very possible.
4 But I wanted to know what you think about that issue
5 of case... Those caseworkers are like the lifeline,
6 as you know, for the seniors. So how are we how are
7 we going to get more caseworkers? That's one of my
8 questions.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So... so we are
10 expanding case management services. Because, as you
11 well know, Councilmember, case management is the
12 gateway to home delivered meals, and you can't have
13 one without the other. And finally, that was clearly
14 understood by all. And so one of the things that we
15 are looking at -- and you're absolutely right, we are
16 also daunted by the waitlist -- one of the things
17 that we know that we are doing is we will expand the
18 number of case management units and the new RFP will
19 allow us to increase the number of case management
20 agencies. And one of the things that... that came
21 from an earlier hearing was we can't change the
22 requirements of case management agencies because
23 that's dictated by the state, but we can look at
24 where we place them, and how we can configure

2 increasing the numbers so that we are addressing the
3 cultural and ethnic needs of this growing population.

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay, so just helped me
5 to... so how many... so depending on the RFP, how
6 many more case management... or what's the amount?
7 And then... you know, number that this RFP might
8 bring to us? Is there a number? Because the reason
9 I'm asking... (crosstalk)

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There is \$14.8
11 million in new investment.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright? And of
14 that, there is the case management piece, and I'm
15 going to give you right now, how many more
16 agencies... Jose, can you...? Do you have that... how
17 many more agencies we...?

18 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. Right, so the possibility of
19 bringing on between 3 and 4 additional agencies.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Alright. So this is my
21 stupid question: Because when you say agencies that
22 means that...

23 CFO MERCADO: Providers. Providers.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Providers. ...so then
25 those, but that doesn't mean that Humpty Dumpty

2 Senior Center can hire more case managers. Is
3 that... or is that what it means? I don't
4 understand.

5 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. There's... that's different.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. I'm looking for
7 money for Humpty Dumpty Senior Center to hire more
8 case managers.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I don't want seniors at the
10 Humpty Dumpty senior center.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Right. I mean, I'm just
12 trying to not name them all, because I don't want to
13 get them in trouble, because they're all calling me.
14 Right? I'm trying... That's... (crosstalk)

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And... and we share
16 that concern, and it's one of the things that we are
17 in conversations with OMB.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I mean, it's one thing to
19 talk about food. It's another thing about the
20 eviction and all the other topics that they're
21 concerned about. So I'm trying to get more money for
22 the senior centers that currently exist (crosstalk)

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Existing but not
24 (inaudible) (crosstalk)

2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Yes. Okay. Second...

3 second question is: Where are we at with the
4 digital? To your credit, there was an allocation --
5 I think that you did it really well -- where you said
6 to the Senior Center, "How many do the seniors need?"
7 You didn't just dump a whole bunch of devices,
8 because that never works. So where are we with
9 the... in terms of technology, and funding, and
10 devices, and so on and so forth, with... with
11 technology?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So it's one of
13 those areas, Councilmember Brewer, that we constantly
14 expand. You know that we did the 10 million... I
15 mean, the 10,000 -- I wish it was 10 million -- the
16 10,000 for the NYCHA residents, and then we did
17 another 10,000 For those who are not NYCHA residents.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Right.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We just rolled out
20 1000 in the Bronx, we have another effort going to
21 happen in the next few weeks to do 1000 more tablets
22 in... in Queens. So it's one of those programs that
23 we continuously are rolling out and evaluating its
24 expansion, because we know... for two things: We
25 know that as senior centers are opening up and not

2 opening up fully, virtual programming is essential to
3 combat social isolation.

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We also know that
6 it's essential to stay in touch with family members.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I don't want to take more
9 time, but just I just with the technology, it will be
10 good for us to know where you're rolling it out for
11 two reasons: Number one, with all due respect, the
12 NYCHA didn't have any training with it. They weren't
13 necessarily getting training. The other one did...
14 the second one. The second round was good. The
15 second... the first round, in my opinion, I saw some
16 in closets and in the lobbies, and I don't want to
17 tell you, but the reason I asked is if you were if
18 you could let us know, when you're rolling these out
19 in our areas, then we could try to make sure that
20 they get the training that goes with it, et cetera,
21 et cetera.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I will... We will
23 definitely do that.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I have many more, but go
25 ahead. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you Councilmember.

3 Councilmember Barron, I see you on screen now. We'll
4 turn to you.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much. I'll
6 be very, very short. Boy, this mayor should be
7 ashamed of himself, cutting our youth, cutting
8 education, and now even though there was an increase
9 from the preliminary budget, when you look at FY
10 22... isn't it true there was a decrease of \$82
11 million?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't know if I
13 can answer that correctly. Jose, is there a
14 decrease?

15 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, that's a reduction as,
16 remember, we basically... that's the Get Food Program
17 that's expiring. Remember, so yes, there was a
18 reduction? Yes. (crosstalk) and stimulus funding as
19 well.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: The reduction (crosstalk)
21 \$82 million (crosstalk)... Yes, that's right. And
22 when the council acts with \$30 million for the meal
23 transition for older adults, the executive budget put
24 \$8.8 million in. When we asked for \$9.7 million and
25 \$3 million for weekend and holiday meals: Zero. For

2 Ge... geriatric mental health services: \$8.7 million
3 we asked for: Zero. I mean, I hope you can, you
4 know, make the adjustments for these cuts. But
5 this... it's a shame that youth have been cut, that
6 health is being cut... the department is being cut,
7 housing is being cut, education is being cut, while
8 we have a \$7 billion reserve in the budget, and
9 there's no reason for these cuts, particularly when
10 it comes to our seniors. So I wanted to make more of
11 a statement on that my colleagues asked a lot of good
12 questions, the chairs did, and you can respond to
13 that. But I just think that we could not allow for
14 these kinds of cuts to these social services, when we
15 have a \$7 billion reserve budget and a \$99.7 billion
16 expense budget. Thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you, sir.

18 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember
19 Barron. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Ossé.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Hi, good afternoon,
22 everyone. Hi, chairs. Hi, everyone. So the first
23 question that I have is: District 36 is a naturally
24 occurring retirement community, and a majority of my
25 constituents are seniors. There are two major

2 concerns that my constituents bring up when it comes
3 to senior issues. And the first one is transit
4 access. You know, many of our seniors in my district
5 have said that the city lacks real accessible
6 transportation for seniors. Although Access-A-Ride
7 exists as a senior transport program is often
8 inaccessible to most seniors due to factors like
9 ineligibility for the program, and making
10 appointments for rides. Although Access-A-Ride is an
11 MTA program, what is DFTA doing to ensure the
12 expansion and accessibility of the Access-A-Ride
13 program is more accessible. And furthermore, what
14 part of DFTA's budget will be allocated to expanding
15 transportation access for seniors, and what steps is
16 DFTA taking to ensure transit access for seniors?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for that
18 question. We are in constant communication with the
19 MTA not only to improve the services... services of
20 Access-A-Ride, but also to improve beyond demand.
21 And Jose, you can talk about what we've done with
22 transportation, and one of the things that we did
23 under the RFP that... from last year, about
24 transportation.

2 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. So part of the RFP... the
3 new... the older adult center RFP that was issued, we
4 basically expanded transportation within this area,
5 roughly a little bit more than a million dollars. We
6 also have... commissioner if you want to mention My
7 DFTA, My Ride, that's an initiative...

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes. Thank you
9 very much. Thank you very much. Councilmember, we
10 have a pilot program... a three-year pilot program
11 with the Department of Transportation and I believe
12 it is the Department of Justice -- son will correct
13 me -- and... where we have an on demand service in
14 select communities that are transit deserts, where an
15 older adult will get an allotment of, I believe,
16 anywhere between \$500 to \$900 for the year where they
17 can use that... those transportation services, for
18 family visits, medical visits, recreation, as well as
19 appointments and things of that nature.

20 It's a very limited program. It's a model, it's
21 a pilot, depending on its success, we will be working
22 with the feds to expand it.

23 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you so much. And the
24 second question that I have is affordable housing.
25 Unfortunately, my district is rapidly gentrifying,

2 and it is often seniors are most affected. In my
3 district, there are predatory realtors who prey on
4 seniors and fraud them into turning over their deeds,
5 and corrupt landlords who fail to address repairs,
6 resulting in mold, gas, heating, and water issues for
7 senior tenant tenants. What is DFTA doing to provide
8 housing support for seniors, whether that is
9 protection for homeowners, or ensuring that senior
10 tenants know their rights? And then also just to
11 follow up on that: What is DFTA doing to help
12 support agencies like HPD and DHS to help homeless
13 seniors find affordable or permanent housing?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It is one of those
15 challenges, as you know Councilmember, for all of us
16 in terms of housing... meeting basic housing needs.
17 We work very closely with HPD, and we also work very
18 closely with the Department of Buildings, it is a
19 challenge. It continues to be a challenge. But in
20 terms of tenant rights, we have a right to counsel,
21 although it's not legal services that we provide, but
22 we provide advocacy services for individuals who have
23 either been identified and also affected by a
24 landlord for... whatever you call those... those so-
25 called orders for evacuation. And so that is a small

2 program that we... that we have, and that we're
3 looking to expand. But it is a daunting, daunting
4 problem. We share that. The Mayor shares that. We
5 all share that concern.

6 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: I hope he shares that too.
7 And I really do hope the budget reflects that. You
8 know, I think Chair Hudson is doing a fabulous job as
9 chair of this committee and continues to bring up
10 points that our senior population is close to that of
11 our New York City public school population. Thus, I
12 truly believe that the budget should reflect that,
13 because this city day after day, year after year is
14 proving that it truly is not a city for you know, our
15 aging population.

16 So thank you for your work. And I'm hoping that
17 we at the Council can make sure that you can do your
18 work smoothly and more expansively to reach all of
19 our communities.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you. And I
21 really do enjoy the partnership and the leadership of
22 Chair Hudson. She minces no words on the needs and
23 her advocacy.

24 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Absolutely.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So we're very
3 pleased about.

4 COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you.

5 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember. I
6 am not seeing councilmember Carr on. We're going to
7 turn to Councilmember Sanchez.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Good afternoon,
10 Commissioner. It's very good to see you. And of
11 course, I want to shout out our Co-Chairs:
12 Councilmember Brannan for... for your endurance of
13 all these hearings, and compliment you on all of your
14 advocacy of for our seniors.

15 So Commissioner, I have... uh, two parts. I hope
16 I can get to them both. One is on recovery meals and
17 meals delivered to the homes. My district, which I
18 know you're very familiar with here in the West Bronx
19 is heavily Latino, heavily... we have a... an ageing
20 population as well, and I hear a lot of complaints
21 about not being able to access services. Folks that
22 are disabled, folks that are... you know, that should
23 be... should be eligible for receiving meals in their
24 homes. And, you know, on a case by case basis, I've

2 worked with your team, and I thank them for being
3 responsive.

4 But more broadly, what is the total budget for
5 the meals... Let's talk about the home delivered
6 meals in particular. And you know, do you have a
7 thorough breakdown of how those are distributed?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose, do we have a
9 thorough breakdown now? Or can we... (crosstalk)

10 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, we can... we can provide it,
11 but we can give you, for example, the total budget,
12 as of FY 22 is... for example... the budget is \$86.3
13 million. That includes the transition meals as well.
14 For fiscal year 23, we have a budget that basically
15 is \$60.1 million. We do have a breakdown by borough.
16 We can provide that shortly.

17 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: And how is that...
18 that... there's a clip there. There's a huge drop.
19 How is that going to... How are you going to select
20 who is coming off of the program?

21 CFO MERCADO: Michael, do you want to take that?

22 COO OGNIBENE: Yes. So the... well, the money
23 was... was given to us to run through June 30 of this
24 year. Since then, we've been finding off ramps for
25 those folks out there shouldn't be the need, and the

2 true money will be to support the home delivered
3 meals program.

4 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: That's, that's concerning
5 because, you know, folks kind of get used to... used
6 to these resources, and then they disappear. So, you
7 know (crosstalk)

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Councilmember
9 Sanchez, I don't mean to interrupt you, but it's one
10 of the... one of the statements we made earlier to
11 Councilmember... to Chair Hudson, which is that the
12 new money is... it is anticipated that about 3000
13 will be coming off just recovery meals onto home
14 delivered meals, but as you so aptly stated, and
15 Councilwoman and the Chair reminded us... or I
16 reminded that that doesn't address the natural
17 growth, given the population increases. So it is a
18 conversation that we constantly have with OMB and the
19 mayor's office regarding this... this potential
20 growth and we do not want to find ourselves a step
21 behind. Thank you.

22 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah. Absolutely. No, I
23 completely agree with you on that and look forward to
24 working with you. And so the second part of it is
25 about the state comptroller's audit of the home

2 delivered meal meals program, which found serious
3 deficiencies.

4 So first, how long does it take to resolve
5 complaints on average? And how many staff does DFTA
6 have to have working on the home delivered meals?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a good
8 question. I have that for you. Just let me find
9 that page. It takes us between one to three days to
10 handle a complaint, and the number of people we
11 have... Michael, do you have that number? I'm
12 trying to find it right now (inaudible).

13 COO OGNIBENE: It's about 4 to 5 people
14 depending.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For home delivered
16 meals?

17 COO OGNIBENE: Yeah. Yeah. Oversight.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. And that's
19 for... and that's for 26 programs.

20 COO OGNIBENE: It's actually 6... it's actually
21 15 contracts.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. So, probably
23 three contracts per staffer. (crosstalk)

24 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: (inaudible) a contract?

25 COO OGNIBENE: Huh?

2 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: And the size of a
3 contract is...?

4 COO OGNIBENE: Well, the contracts vary. I mean,
5 we have... they vary on average, between \$2 million
6 each, roughly.

7 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, that's a lot of
8 responsibility. I'm sorry, I'm about to run out of
9 time. So I just want to get this this last one in
10 and it's very, you know, it's very personal to you
11 and I, Commissioner, which is that the comptroller's
12 report also found that DFTA's satisfaction survey
13 methodology was poorly developed. And folks that
14 have limited English language proficiency were
15 excluded from participation. So, what changes have
16 been made to fix this problem, because that means
17 like, almost 70% to 80% of them...

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: ... were not able to give
20 their feedback. You know, what... what is DFTA
21 doing?

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That... that is an
23 outsized statement. I will... I can share with you
24 what kind of, you know, just not to take any more
25 time, but I can share with you what we have done in

2 terms of language and outreach. So as you know, that
3 is incredibly important to me, that people should not
4 be marginalized because of language or gender or any
5 other issues or geography. So it's one of the things
6 we're looking at.

7 I would say that the major citing was the amount
8 of time between... that we would keep working with
9 the nonprofit with the provider, trying to come up
10 with a correction... a corrective action plan, rather
11 than just stop the service. And so I think that's
12 where we have a major distinction between our
13 approach and... and the... you know, the esteemed
14 comptroller. But I just want you to know that it is
15 something that we have responded to, and we'll
16 continue to work with that.

17 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Wonderful, thank you.
18 And if as a followup, you can share some of those
19 efforts, I would really appreciate it. Oh, and I'd
20 love for you to come to my district. I emailed your
21 staff.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, I will do
23 that. I love the Bronx. I'm a Bronxite, so...

24 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: I know. Right. Thank
25 you. Thank you, Chairs.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE 300

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember. And
3 next we'll turn to Councilmember Lee.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi, everyone. Hi,
6 Commissioner. Hi, everyone. Thank you for... and
7 thank you for the Chairs, Justin and Crystal for,
8 yes, the endurance. [laughs] So you guys already
9 know, I'm a huge proponent, like supporter of older
10 adults, and definitely pushing for more money as
11 possible in the budget on the city council side. So
12 I have a few questions. I'll try to rapid fire them
13 so that we can let other folks go. But just out of
14 curiosity for the geriatric mental health program, I
15 know that there's 308 senior centers, correct?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And then how many
18 mental health clinic providers are there? And what's
19 the capacity of them to meet the seniors that need
20 services? Because I know that there was a
21 partnership where they got paired up.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There are... there
23 are currently 40. By July, we will have 88. And as
24 we said earlier, we have different methodologies to
25 make sure that their reach is beyond those 88 sites.

2 We are somewhat limited and constrained by the state
3 requirements, but it is something that we are
4 constantly looking at to mitigate.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Sorry, so 88 senior centers,
6 correct?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 88 new sites. 88
8 new geriatric mental health... it may serve more than
9 88 senior centers, because of that hub and spoke
10 model that I was talking about.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. But do you know how
12 many actual Article 31 outpatient clinics are
13 partnered with those senior centers? And could...
14 would you be able to provide us with a list of them?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can get that for
16 you Councilmember.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, and then the other
18 thing I wanted to drill down into... (crosstalk)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Give me your
20 question again. I want to make sure I answer your
21 question, rather than an assumption of what I think
22 you asked.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Sure, sure. No, I just
24 wanted to know, on the mental health provider side,

2 which are not necessarily different senior centers,
3 right.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. You want to
5 know the... (crosstalk)

6 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. How many providers
7 are there on the mental health side? And if you
8 could give us a list of who those folks are?

9 CFO MERCADO: Commissioner. So Commissioner,
10 there are five providers currently. We can give you
11 a list.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Five providers from
13 the state? Who are...?

14 CFO MERCADO: No five... Yeah, these are... these
15 are basically our geriatric mental health providers.
16 Those are the five. We can provide the specific
17 information you want. We can give you a list of who
18 they are. Yeah.

19 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And then of those
20 five, do you know roughly how many languages are
21 served through those mental health clinics?

22 CFO MERCADO: We can get to that information.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We'll get you that.
24 And it depends on... on the geographic location.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah. Okay. And then I
3 wanted to kind of piggyback off what councilmember
4 Brewer was asking before about the homebound meals.

5 So I know that you guys have done a good job in
6 terms of trying to put the 3000 seniors and assess
7 them. But it's a two part question, which is: What's
8 the... I know that those are the folks that we
9 already know about, that were on the Get Food Program
10 list and the current seniors that are at the centers.
11 But given that we have such an increase in the
12 population, how has the outreach efforts been in
13 terms of reaching out to seniors that may not already
14 be in the DFTA system?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, that is...
16 that is the role of the partnership between the Case
17 Management Agency, and the... and the home delivered
18 meals program as well as older adult clubs. You
19 know, there's a lot of entry points, but everybody
20 has to pass through the case management agency. And
21 what I said to Chair Hudson, and I think Chair
22 Brennan before was that the need outpaces the
23 resources, so that this 3000 accommodates those from
24 recovery foods. But we are looking closely with OMB
25 and the mayor's office on, you know, looking at how

2 we incorporate the natural growth for home delivered
3 meals that happens every year.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And that's a perfect
5 segue to my next part of the case management
6 question, which is... right in line... so I know that
7 the case... When is the contract supposed... When is
8 that terminating? The current contract for case
9 management again?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, hold on a
11 minute, I'll tell you. We've just put out the RFP.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we should be
14 releasing it -- let me get you that...

15 CFO MERCADO: I can provide it for you,
16 Commissioner.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. Thank you,
18 Jose.

19 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, it's... the current contracts
20 end this June 30th. We're extending them for a year.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, so extending them for a
22 year. So is it possible to... because just like you
23 mentioned, Commissioner, it's extremely difficult to
24 qualify to become a case management agency, because I
25 think we applied... we tried applying one year...

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Oh sorry. Is it okay if
4 I...?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Let me... let me
6 just take my time to answer you.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well, quickly... sorry.
8 Sorry. So is there a way... Is there room in the
9 RFP, given that new case management agencies may be
10 difficult to get right? So is there a way -- if
11 we're talking about addressing niche communities and
12 marginalized communities with various language
13 barriers -- is there a way to do the RFP with the
14 subcontractors in a way where it would allow room for
15 more growth... growth with the subs?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I want to let you
17 know, Councilmember, that I heard you loud and clear
18 at whatever hearing... whatever it was ago, where you
19 said that we need to do that. So we will be
20 expanding the number of case management agencies,
21 number one. Number two, we're using this year...
22 this year of expansion... this year of rollover, not
23 expansion... this year of rollover to do just that,
24 to identify who could be... using like an MTA model -
25 - I know if I say anything, MTA, somebody's going to

2 jump on me -- but using an MTA model where we can
3 have subcontracting to then build a capacity to then
4 ensure that moving forward in the following year, we
5 could be able to... to do that. So it's something
6 that we've been looking at very, very carefully. And
7 we are also holding several stakeholder meetings
8 during this period, so that we could... excuse me...
9 so that we could get some of the best thinking and
10 introduce those kind of concepts about
11 subcontracting. Alright?

12 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah. And definitely on the
13 mental health side, too, if that's possible, because
14 we need more... (crosstalk)

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a little
16 harder, because that is not only the state
17 requirements... oh my voice came back... that's a
18 little harder, because not only do we not only have
19 to state requirements, but we also have physical
20 location... physical requirements that that they
21 impose on us that our senior centers might not have.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: No, I agree. But the
23 satellite sites, just so you know, for Article 31's
24 are much less stringent.

25 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: And just one last question:
3 For the postcards that were sent out, could you let
4 us know which languages they were sent out in?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Michael?

6 COO OGNIBENE: Can I get that back? Can we send
7 that to them?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

9 COO OGNIBENE: I've got to look it up, meanwhile
10 while we're talking.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: While we're
13 talking. It was multiple languages. And then, uh,
14 Chair Hudson, I think, was the one that said, when
15 are we going to do door-to-door, and we decided to do
16 door-to-door. We're working in partnership with the
17 (inaudible), for those who have not responded to the
18 cards, or to the survey, and who do not have
19 telephones. Okay?

20 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, thank you. Sorry
21 for...

22 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: And if the answer comes while
23 we're continuing, Councilmember, we will still be on,
24 so we can address that in a bit. So we'll turn to
25 Councilmember Richardson Jordan next.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Hi, yes. Thank
4 you. Thank you chairs for making the time and the
5 space. I wanted to ask if... if there is anything
6 going on in particular for LGBTQ older adults. And
7 were in this budget, are we looking at services for
8 centers... either centers like SAGE centers where the
9 focus is LGBTQ older adults, or even within general
10 centers, programming that is open and available to
11 that... that part of the community.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.
13 Councilmember Richardson Jordan, I have to tell you
14 that for years, even before I got here, the
15 Department for the Aging worked very closely with
16 SAGE and Michael Adams to ensure that we did training
17 in every senior center so that older adults would be
18 able to be incorporated, and introduce, and welcome
19 at every senior center regardless of gender and
20 gender identity. And that was something that was
21 started before I got here. That continues. We've
22 been able, through the RFP, to expand the number of
23 services for SAGE. We're really pleased with the
24 partnership with SAGE so far. We had another one in
25 Brooklyn, but they opted out of services for variety

2 of reasons, and it was mostly physical plant issues.
3 But we have... that is our goal to make sure that we
4 provide training so that both staff and participants
5 are embracing the new participants coming into their
6 centers.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: I definitely
8 appreciate that effort. Do you have a sense of where
9 it is budget wise? Um... the...? (crosstalk)

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, I could... I
11 can tell you... I'll get it for you, how much we
12 invest in... in SAGE and not we support SAGE's
13 programs, and they also have been very instrumental
14 in doing specialized housing. So I can get you that
15 information after this hearing, alright?

16 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay, great.
17 I... I did also have just two other questions. I
18 wanted to ask about veterans, you know, in addition
19 to being on the aging committee, I'm also, you know,
20 I feel honored to be on the Veterans Committee and
21 those who overlap quite a bit. And in our district,
22 it skews older. And what I've been finding with a
23 lot of veterans is they don't know or understand
24 their... their benefits and the things that are
25 available to them.

2 So is there anything DFTA is doing, particularly
3 in that space of letting our older adults who are
4 veterans know what they have access to?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We've done two
6 things to that end -- and I agree with you, we should
7 be doing much more because of not only the overlap,
8 but the increasing number of older adults who are
9 veterans, right? And then the increasing older adults
10 who are veterans and homeless, and so it's one of
11 those areas that we're constantly looking at. Well,
12 we work very closely with the Mayor's Office of
13 Veterans Affairs. And last year, we started some
14 kind of exchanges, again, to train center staff...
15 older adult center staff and case management agency
16 on what the needs are of veterans. And it's one of
17 the steps that we took, I believe it was last year,
18 and have continued on.

19 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: And again, do
20 we have a sense of budget around that? Or is that...
21 that something I could possibly get in a follow up?

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't know that
23 there's a budget dollar that I can give you. What I
24 can tell you is time on task. And we can extrapolate
25 a budget dollar, alright?, because it's not a new

2 investment of dollars, but it's a use of resources.

3 So I can tell you the number of training sessions
4 that we've had, time on task, and extrapolate that
5 for you, if that's helpful if that... that, you know.

6 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: No, I would...

7 I would appreciate that. Thank you.

8 I just had one more question. And it's sort of a
9 technical one, and I'm not... I'm not even all the
10 way sure if DFTA would be able to help us, but there
11 has been some concerns in my district -- I mean, all
12 the centers do need support -- but there's been
13 particular concerns around two centers that are
14 inside NYCHAs and haven't been able to open. That's
15 Lincoln Houses Senior Center and St. Nicholas Houses
16 Senior Center. And, and I'm wondering if you can
17 give any insight into what would happen in terms of
18 capital funding, because I wanted to put in a request
19 for this, but then...

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: I've also been
22 told that when you when you put budget or you put
23 capital funds or you request to give to NYCHA that
24 it's very hard to get those dollars to truly reach
25 the right spaces.

2 I was wondering if you have any insight into that
3 in terms of wanting to be able to rehab these...
4 these senior centers.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you. It's a
6 challenge that we always have. You know, we... you
7 know, we have a strong partnership with NYCHA. But
8 we always tell NYCHA... we have an issue in Brooklyn
9 right now, and one of the things that we have is that
10 we tell NYCHA we're... we're responsible from the
11 wall out, and nature is responsible from the wall in
12 and the ceiling in. So we're responsible from the
13 ceiling and below. And it's those kinds of
14 challenges that we have, you know. The
15 infrastructure is a real problem in some of these
16 sites, because they are so aged, no pun intended.

17 What I will do is I will look at each one of
18 these sites, and tell you where are we, if anywhere,
19 with any of those renovations and (inaudible), you
20 know, alright?, so I can get back to you on both
21 Lincoln and St. Nicholas, alright? And I was just
22 informed that I can no longer talk about the CMA RFP
23 because it is still in its in... in an embargo state.
24 So I won't be... I can talk about CMA, but I will not

2 be able to talk about the RFP. Right. Thank you for
3 that and I hope you respect my limitations.

4 COO OGNIBENE: I have the nine languages.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, Michael, what
6 are the nine languages.

7 COO OGNIBENE: Okay, in addition to English we
8 sent out in Spanish, traditional Chinese, simplified
9 Chinese, Russian, Polish, Korean, Arabic, Bengali and
10 Italian.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

12 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: You should repeat that one
13 more time, just so everybody...? Please? Thank you.

14 COO OGNIBENE: Yup. English, Spanish,
15 traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Russian,
16 Polish, Korean, Arabic, Bengali, Italian.

17 And that was based on the preferred languages
18 that we received from Get Food. When folks
19 registered for Get Food, they were asked, "What is
20 your preferred language?" And this is... this was
21 what we were able to ascertain.

22 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Appreciate that.
23 And our final questioner is Councilmember Dinowitz.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. Hi,
3 Commissioner. Very good to see you.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Hello.

5 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Hope you're feeling
6 okay. We got some... you're, you're in the Bronx.
7 So you're in the best borough with the best deli with
8 best chicken soup. So we'll do that.

9 I want to quickly follow up on Councilman
10 Richardson Jordan's question. I really appreciate
11 that she brought up veteran services. It's the
12 committee that I previously chaired. The city
13 agencies are supposed to be on their intake forms
14 asking a question: "Are you are you or were you a
15 member of the armed services?" And I just want
16 clarity, if that question is being asked of all the
17 clients in the DFTA senior centers, because I think
18 that would help answer a lot of the other questions
19 about whether the information is available to ensure
20 our veterans, especially our older adult...
21 obviously, our older adult veterans are getting the
22 services and our... and we are able to give them the
23 information they need for the services, they are
24 entitled.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Councilman
3 Dinowitz, I'm really pleased to tell you that we have
4 a battery of questions that we ask older adults to
5 self-identify, and... and I can give you what those
6 are, but I will... I can almost guarantee that being
7 a veteran is one of them.

8 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay good. It was an
9 executive order. But we know sometimes it takes a
10 little while to comply. (crosstalk)

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But just remember
12 that in our survey, all of that is voluntary. So
13 individuals can opt out of answering the question.
14 We ask... we ask a variety of them and I would be
15 more than happy to share that with all of you.

16 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I would love that. I
17 think one of the challenges that we've discovered in
18 the veteran community is that not everyone does self-
19 identify as a veteran, especially if they were
20 discharged with other-than-honorable status, which,
21 is about 15% of our of our veterans.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Wow.

23 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, which... which
24 are... which are our veterans.

2 So I... I'm a little concerned, because I think
3 sometimes it's easy for... to forget that we're still
4 in a pandemic. And I'm wondering whether there's
5 money set aside or strategies being made in DFTA to
6 respond to the reality that centers may have to close
7 again or may have to shift if there's an outbreak
8 within a particular center. There's COVID surges
9 now, or older adults may see this -- what was it? a
10 yellow zone? -- they may be apprehensive about
11 returning to the center, and attendance may vary. So
12 I'm interested in knowing, again, the money and time
13 and plans that are being made to be able to make
14 those adjustments. And in that vein, what efforts is
15 DFTA making to vaccinate and boost older adults? I
16 think a lot of people are getting fatigued with this,
17 but it's really vital that we get boosted and maybe
18 boosted again. So those are my two questions.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right. So two
20 fabulous questions. I can tell you that we are
21 relentless in our vaccine and booster campaigns. And
22 we never tire of reminding people.

23 You know, we saw that many older adults are
24 getting the first shot but for us is that boosters
25 just as key. For the older adult center, we are

2 also... you know, we have had so many starts and
3 closures and starts and closures, that we have a
4 treasure trove of experience on what to do in those
5 instances. We did not let one lesson go unlearned
6 and not implemented during this pandemic. Grab and
7 go has become a state-of-the-art kind of approach.
8 And there's many other things. The recovery foods is
9 another one of those.

10 But I can tell you we constantly give out PPE to
11 older adult clubs to make sure that everybody is
12 adequately supplied. The protocols are -- and we're
13 constantly upgrading our protocols and having
14 conversations with the older adult providers just on
15 those kinds of issues. So to answer your questions,
16 in terms of emergency planning, we have three
17 protocols that we learned how to turn on a meal...
18 turning a congregate, to a grab-and-go, to a meal
19 delivery. We already had that practice. We had that
20 practice, and we've learned how not to do with some
21 of the earlier errors that occurred. And so we're
22 very confident about doing that.

23 But in terms of budget councilmember, we have
24 not... we have not reduced anybody's budget because

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2 of lack of services. So their budgets have been held
3 whole.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So people do have
6 the opportunity. Is that? Was that for me? I'm
7 sorry, what was that? Oh... that was for you
8 Councilmember. Okay.

9 We have the programs have been held (inaudible),
10 I'm sorry, in terms of budget, so that they have
11 flexibility within those budgets to... to address any
12 emerging needs that they, have given... given
13 COVID... a resurgence in their particular center.

14 COO OGNIBENE: Commissioner, can I add also...
15 (crosstalk)

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose and
17 (crosstalk), I understand you both want it.

18 COO OGNIBENE: Yeah. What are we doing about it?
19 What are we doing about vaccine and boosting? In
20 fact, today, at Frederick... Frederick Douglass
21 Senior Center, we had a mobile unit set up. We have
22 it today at James Monroe older adult center as well.
23 And tomorrow we'll be at SNAP in Queens with a mobile
24 vax.

25

2 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: And that is through...?

3 I'm sorry, I just want to make sure that that's a
4 sort of centralized thing, that that isn't an issue
5 of DFTA is taking on, because I didn't really see
6 where that would be in the budget. But I want to
7 make sure that that's not the initiative of an
8 individual center. That you're proactively reaching
9 out.

10 COO OGNIBENE: Yeah. We're doing... we're doing
11 it... that with Health and Hospitals and their test
12 and trace, and just setting up... coordinating for
13 them to come to our sites.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And then the other
15 thing that we do, Councilman Dinowitz, is that we're
16 still promoting the in-home vaccination program, so
17 that if anyone wants a vaccine at home, and any
18 family member, we're still drumming the beat on that
19 one. Jose, is there something you wanted to...?

20 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. I do want to mention
21 Rampage.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, yeah, we have a
23 public service announcement that we developed, a
24 little clever, mean, little virus called Rampage,
25 where he talks about... or it talks about the

2 vulnerabilities of the older person and encouraging
3 vaccination.

4 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I've seen him on your
5 website. And he... he talks in nine languages,
6 doesn't he?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: He talks in several
8 languages.

9 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay. I think... and I
10 would be remiss if I didn't thank you, you know,
11 the... as... as we were all struggling, and every
12 city was struggling in the pandemic, our seniors were
13 really held together as much as they could because of
14 the work of their older adult centers, and... and
15 the... the meal delivery and all the support they got
16 from our centers. And I know, that was in large part
17 due to a lot of the work that you on this call were
18 doing, so I want to take this moment to thank you for
19 that work.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for that.
21 And Rampage is a little nasty guy.

22 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, he's not cute.
23 I'm looking at him now. He's not.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay.

2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. And I will now
3 turn it back to the chairs as there are no other
4 hands raised.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Chair Brannan,
6 did you have anything before I jump in?

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Um, I mean, I guess sort of
8 anecdotally I represent a NORC out in Southwestern
9 Bayridge... Southwestern Brooklyn, Bayridge, Dyker
10 Heights, Bensonhurst. And we've had... we've had,
11 you know, primarily, I think we have one DFTA center.
12 The rest are seniors that get together and hang out,
13 you know, in a Catholic school gymnasium, and that's
14 their senior center. And we haven't had much luck
15 with getting DFTA to engage when we have folks reach
16 out who are looking to sort of make their center
17 legit and try to work with DFTA to become a provider.
18 And I'm just curious why that is.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't know why
20 that is. I can't answer you. But I can't tell you
21 what we did in our commitment to former Chair Drum
22 was to provide technical assistance to those small
23 local groups so that they could become older adult
24 clubs. And as a result, that's how we got the
25 additional 36, Councilmember. So we will continue

2 working with you. I will look at your particular
3 community and see if one of the gaps and services
4 between the NORC and those individual freestanding
5 progress, and we'll get back to you on that. Okay?

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Chair Hudson, I'm
7 good.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Thank you so much. I
9 just... I do have a few follow up questions, and then
10 I know you're aching to get out of here commissioner.
11 So I'll keep it as... as brief as possible. I think
12 we're all aching to get out of here. Honestly.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm literally
14 aching.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I understand. I do
16 understand. So, I just wanted to circle back to the
17 recovery meals, and just make sure we're clear. I
18 know you're going to send us the chart with the
19 numbers, but I just want to make sure... are you
20 still evaluating 2000 people? And if so, won't you
21 need to add another \$5 million or more if they come
22 back and say they need meals?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Michael, do you
24 want to take that and talk about the off ramps and
25 where... what are we doing? And then answer Chair

2 Hudson about "what if"... all right? What we're
3 doing in terms of the what if.

4 COO OGNIBENE: So, through the calls, the cards,
5 the surveys, et cetera, we've been able to get folks
6 to really clearly... be more clear in what their
7 needs are, and a lot of them overwhelmingly have
8 said, "I'm ready for groceries and meals prep."

9 Through the those first calls, we ask: "Can you
10 do groceries? Yes or no? Yes? Great. No? Do you
11 have someone that can? Yes or no? Yes? Great?
12 No?" Then we send them to a case management
13 assessment. Or we ask, "Are you ready? Can you go
14 to an adult... an adult center?"

15 So we do have a series of questions logically,
16 that leads to the point of case management. So far
17 of the 10,700, 3,600 have been sent to case
18 management for assessment. Of those, 2,700 had been
19 assessed, and 1,700 have found an off ramp and 1,000
20 are going to HDM.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry. 3,600 were sent to
22 assessment.

23 COO OGNIBENE: Right.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And of that...?
25

2 COO OGNIBENE: 3,600 were sent to assessment
3 they've reached so far 2,700.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

5 COO OGNIBENE: Right?

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

7 COO OGNIBENE: And so far to 1,700 found another
8 route, and 1,000 are headed to HTM eligibility. We
9 still...

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

11 COO OGNIBENE: Okay. In addition, we still have
12 2,000 that we haven't reached yet by phone, by
13 survey, by postcard.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

15 COO OGNIBENE: So we're going to continue our
16 outreach over the next days to get to those 2,000.
17 So of those 2,000, I imagine a big portion will...
18 maybe half will go to assessments, that's now going
19 to make it 4,600. Right? But they still have to
20 get through over the next couple of weeks. They're
21 trying to do 1,000 a week, and they hit... in the
22 first two weeks, they hit 1,000. And this week,
23 they're already on target to hit 1,000 again. So
24 they should get to 3,000 of those 3,600, alright?,
25 and we still have to go to 2,000. But we're going to

2 call... our initial call: "Will you go for
3 groceries? Will you go to the older adult center?
4 Or are you... do have mobility issues?" Then of
5 those 2,000, a certain percentage will end up for
6 assessment. We don't know yet.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right. But... but one would
8 presume that if there's any percentage that needs
9 home delivery... home delivered meals, then that
10 would mean more money, right?, for the home
11 delivering meals program.

12 COO OGNIBENE: Well, I think the money that's
13 already there, accounts for the... the transition
14 from recovery meals into home delivered meals. So
15 when we... back, months ago...

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's debatable.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, if we... we
18 anticipated... we anticipated that 3,000 would be --
19 you know, given the patterns and given the history
20 that we have -- we anticipated that 3,000 would be
21 home-delivered-meals eligible. The question now
22 becomes if they're interested and getting an
23 assessment and moving forward. But hypothetically,
24 you're absolutely correct that at some point between
25 if they are not off-ramped, and they do need home-

2 delivered meals, and in addition to that the actual
3 growth, which is what I said earlier...

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The actual growth
6 will probably put a demand... an increased demand and
7 pressure on the home delivered meals program.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And so this is... I just
9 want to point... this is why the Council put in for
10 an additional \$12.7 million to account for this
11 natural growth, right? Like, we know that this
12 population is growing. We know that people need to
13 be fed. People need meals. And so what the council
14 is trying to do is accommodate for those needs. You
15 know. So it would be great to see that money, you
16 know, in the Executive Budget.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. And I want
18 you to know, also, that we are in constant
19 conversation with the Deputy Mayor as well as OMB
20 around these issues, and the earlier issue that we
21 talked about escalating costs for the... the older
22 adult clubs. So it goes hand in hand, alright? So
23 it's not either-or, alright?

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: All right. Thanks for that.
25 And then... Has the retroactive FY 22 home delivered

2 meal reimbursement rate increase included in the
3 budget gone out to providers yet? And if not, what's
4 holding that up?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose?

6 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. So, it has not. I mean, for
7 example. Part of it, for example, is we've
8 amended... we are amending the contracts, we've
9 actually already amended, I would say, put the
10 separate budgets in what we call our (inaudible)
11 system. We're currently waiting for the providers to
12 resubmit their budgets for the rate increase. Once
13 they resubmit their budget, they can invoice. So
14 it's just a matter, I would say another week.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Another week? So I can tell
16 all the providers it's just one week? And
17 then...(crosstalk)

18 CFO MERCADO: Well, it's really on them. So
19 right now we're waiting for the provider...
20 (crosstalk)

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's on them,
22 Councilmember. (crosstalk)

23 CFO MERCADO: (crosstalk)

24

25

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: If they sign into
3 the system and put in their... their... what is it
4 called? PARS?

5 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, they have the budgets.
6 They... what their actually what they're doing is,
7 again, (crosstalk)

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: They put the
9 budget... to the extent that they input the budget
10 is... there's a fast turnaround. (crosstalk)

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so the... (crosstalk)

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We would love your
13 partnership in encouraging people to input their
14 budgets so that we can get this out the door.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I'll let them know.
16 (crosstalk)

17 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, so we've... we've...
18 (crosstalk)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And you might also
20 let them know councilmember, which is the companion
21 piece to this that I've raised at other... at other
22 hearings, is that we really need them to invoice on
23 time, because we also have... we find ourselves
24 sometimes at the end of the year where people have an
25 invoice and find ourselves with extra dollars that we

2 could have reallocated and repurposed, and then we
3 might be too late to do that. So I would love your
4 partnership in delivering those two messages to this
5 network that really is so key to both of us.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And you've got it. And I'm
7 not trying to be snarky here. I am genuinely curious
8 to know do you all pay on time?

9 CFO MERCADO: Absolutely. As soon as we get an
10 invoice.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have one of the
12 best on-time payment records in the city.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright. I'm going to hold
14 you to that then.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You hold me to
16 that. That one, I will take to the bank.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright, then I'll do the
18 work and try to get them to invoice on time, as long
19 as I know they're going to be paid on time.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, you got it.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright. Cool. Alright, a
22 couple more questions.

23 As of March 1, there were 421 individuals on the
24 homecare waitlist and 1,517 individuals on the case
25 management waitlist. You know, The Administration

2 has added \$6 million for case management to serve
3 3,000 additional clients, all of whom will need case
4 management as the intake to receive home delivered
5 meals. Is there an additional funding for home care
6 in the budget? And if not, how much would it cost to
7 clear the waitlist?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright, so I'm
9 going to take the wait list in two tranches. Okay?
10 The waitlist... Right now, we do have a waitlist,
11 but for food insecurity there is no waitlist, because
12 if anybody is identified, and Daniel Kroop knows
13 this. We go back and forth about wait lists. And,
14 um... (crosstalk)

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Because it is a bit
16 subjective, commissioner.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I know. I know.
18 got it. I acknowledge... I acknowledge that
19 distinction. And now we're even calling it a
20 waitlist. Alright?

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But as people are
23 triaged: Is he on there? I want to...

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, he's working parking.
25 Don't worry. He's with you.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: As people are
3 triage... oh there he goes. As people are triaging,
4 no one waits for home delivered meals, because we
5 have the default of recovery meals and other meal
6 programs, alright? So home delivered meals, if food
7 security is the primary issue, you get your meals,
8 but you're absolutely right. It's gone up to, I
9 forget, over 1000 people on the wait list, Daniel
10 will give you the exact...

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 1517.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's... yeah,
13 that's probably the number. Alright. So, yes. And
14 it's something that we are constantly looking at and
15 managing. We hope that this infusion of dollars in
16 case management may mitigate that a bit. we will
17 come back to you if it doesn't.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, hold on a second. I
19 don't know if you answered my question.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, what was
21 your... ask again.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. Okay. Um, is there
23 any additional funding for the homecare... for
24 homecare in the budget? And if not, how much would

2 it cost to clear the waitlist? So you're talking
3 about?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You're talking about home-
6 delivered... So for the meal stuff... I get your
7 point. Right? But then there's 421 individuals on
8 the homecare waitlist.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yep.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So is there additional
11 funding for homecare in the budget?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, you know, we
13 are doing that analysis right now for -- thank you
14 for that, I would... I thought we were still talking
15 about meals -- we're doing that analysis with OMB,
16 because it is... it is a most people are on the
17 waitlist for additional hours, not that they have not
18 received any homecare hours, alright. And so we're
19 trying to parse out councilmember and Daniel, the
20 distinction between who's not gotten any services and
21 who needs additional hours. And we'll give you that.
22 And we're... and we're also talking to OMB about
23 that. Because it is all part of a larger community
24 care program, you're not going to get any argument

2 for us that that is a major piece of the community
3 care for that.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So let me let me just ask,
5 When are these assessments generally done? Because
6 we're in the middle of budget negotiations. And on a
7 couple of occasions, you've said that you're...
8 you're either in the process of doing an assessment
9 or you will do an assessment. So is there a reason
10 why the assessments aren't done in advance of this
11 phase of budget negotiations?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know what?
13 If... When I look at all the competing demands, I
14 tried to parse out what... in my conversations with
15 OMB, and put them in order of priority. Is that a
16 satisfactory answer? I'm not sure. But that's what
17 we're doing.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I would I would
19 confirm and say it's not, but...

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. I got it.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'll take it for what it is.
22 Alright. So... so we don't know how much it would
23 cost to then clear the waitlist, I just want to make
24 sure that...

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We can get you
3 that. We've provided that in the past.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then how much
5 does it cost on average to serve a homecare client?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose?

7 CFO MERCADO: Give me one second. I'll have
8 that.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And while you get
10 that: Will the state-enacted budget include any
11 benefits for homecare workers contracted through DFTA
12 programs with private providers? And do you know,
13 what their minimum wage is?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The MSID You're
15 talking about the state SID's or the long term care?
16 I'm not quite sure I understand the question.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Will the state enacted will
18 the state enacted budget include any benefits for
19 homecare workers can contracted through DFTA programs
20 with private providers?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The home care
22 and... the home care... the long-term care programs
23 are... are not included in DFTA, and the DFTA home
24 care programs are not covered under that. Ours are
25 non-Medicaid eligible programs. Alright?

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, hold on. I'm going
3 to... I'm going to check with Dan on that one. But
4 I'll get back to you on that.

5 But Jose, did you have average cost to serve a
6 homecare client?

7 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, I was going answer the other
8 question before I did this one, but give me one
9 second. I'm doing it right now.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Go ahead, Jose.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so there are like
12 about five homecare providers that are contracted
13 through DFTA?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, one per
15 borough.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So I'm asking about
17 the benefits for those homecare workers: Will the
18 state enacted budget include benefits for them?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And do you know what
21 their minimum wages?

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: They vary by the
23 agency. Um...

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you give me a range?

25

2 CFO MERCADO: So they're basically... as the
3 Commissioner mentioned, they basically pay the
4 minimum wage up to 20 bucks. So just trying to get
5 you the same... trying to get the how much the cost
6 is.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So \$8 to \$20 per hour.
8 Okay.

9 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. It varies from place to
10 place. So.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And so you're still
12 working on how much it costs on average to serve a
13 homecare client?

14 CFO MERCADO: I actually have it. I'm just...
15 I'm looking at it while I'm trying to answer your
16 question at the same time as this one. I'll get it
17 pretty soon. Just give me... I'm trying to find a
18 spreadsheet. I have it. I do have it. Sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Should I continue on
20 and you'll just let me know when you have it?

21 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. Absolutely.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So then, regarding
23 technology, and I know we've talked a bit about this,
24 but I think earlier you gave quantities of devices
25 and things like that, but not actual monetary value.

2 So I'd just like to know, is there any new funding in
3 the executive plan to fund more tablets? And if so,
4 how much?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, there isn't
6 any.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No. Okay. And do you have
8 metrics or targets for closing the digital divide
9 among seniors? Like when... what... how are you, you
10 know, judging success on... or measuring success, I
11 should say, on, you know, closing the technology gap
12 among older adults?

13 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think, I think...
14 that's a good question. There's several ways that
15 we're doing that one of the ways that we've done that
16 is to create a lending library so that everybody's
17 level... level setting is at a minimum, they can have
18 access to programming. So we have... we have that
19 we... and all programs could access that.

20 It is difficult to look at the number of... so we
21 have all of these tech libraries, but it is difficult
22 to look at the number... One of the things we're
23 looking at is looking at who's using virtual
24 programming, and the... and the frequency of that,
25 but it is quite difficult, because it's so

2 individually... it's so individually targeted. I
3 can't think of the word. I'm at a loss for words.
4 But what we are doing is at least trying to get a
5 sense of who's providing virtual programming, the
6 number of virtual programs, but we cannot tie that
7 back to older adults using the service, alright?,
8 which is very different than we can if you are in a
9 physical space. We can count, an unduplicated count.
10 We can't do that for virtual programs.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we can't do
13 that because you and I could be watching a program, u
14 h, you know, doing chair yoga. And... and, but the
15 only thing that (crosstalk) (inaudible) and not a
16 video. So there's... there's a variety of ways that
17 we're looking at how to quantify that, and using the
18 tech libraries as a quality measure.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Alright,
20 um, we're in the hole.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Do you have the...
22 do you have the...?

23 CFO MERCADO: It's roughly about \$1,000.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: \$1,000 on average to serve
25 a homecare client?

2 CFO MERCADO: Yeah.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: For what?

4 CFO MERCADO: Per year.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Per annum?

6 CFO MERCADO: Per annum. Because, yeah. Because
7 it's basically you know, it's less than 20 hours per
8 week. So it's not a high cost.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You should be having a whole
10 lot more, if this only costs \$1000 per year.

11 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, this might be a little off.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, because...

13 CFO MERCADO: I'll double check my numbers
14 because I'm doing...

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: ...that's quite inexpensive.

16 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, like I said case management
17 is roughly \$2,000 per... \$2,000 a year. So this is a
18 little less.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It is an
20 inexpensive and yet essential service that keeps the
21 person in...

22 CFO MERCADO: Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. I'm just writing down
24 a case management number. \$2000. Okay. Yeah. I

25

2 mean, I would argue at \$1,000 a year we should be
3 serving everybody.

4 CFO MERCADO: No, no, it's actually I'm wrong.
5 Sorry. I apologize. It's \$12,000 or \$12,600. Yeah,
6 sorry. Yeah, that's what it is.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, that's more like it.

8 CFO MERCADO: It's just realized... I just
9 realized...

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's about \$1,000
11 a month.

12 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. I realized that I basically
13 was missing one provider. That's why I was like...
14 "Why are there 4. There are supposed to be 5?" So,
15 yeah, \$12,682.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Per year, per person. Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's still less
18 than \$184 in a nursing home.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh yeah, trust me. I'm...
20 I'm all about not institutionalizing people to
21 whatever extent, you know, we don't have to.

22 Alright, I want to talk a little bit about social
23 isolation and geriatric mental health.

24 Social isolation is a well-established correlate
25 of worsened health outcomes for older adults, as we

2 know. Improved mental health can... can help older
3 adults improve. Yet this administration has included
4 no new funding. What message do you think the
5 administration is sending by failing to enhance
6 geriatric mental health?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, we have
8 enhanced geriatric mental health. We're going from
9 48... from 40 sites... from 48 sites, to another 40
10 to 88 sites. We are enhancing geriatric mental
11 health. What we are... and we're also looking at,
12 you know, different models so that we can extend that
13 to as many people as possible. So we are doing that.

14 And we're also using this... this year as a time
15 of this growth period to see what additional
16 resources would be needed, and what additional
17 models, to have an informed approach to the next
18 steps, right?, and using this year of expansion to do
19 that, as we've done... as we're doing with the older
20 adult clubs and the NORCs.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, how much would it cost
22 to provide a clinician access in all 108 OACs that
23 have appropriate private rooms for counseling? So to
24 basically to provide access at every NORC? Or...

2 sorry, in addition, to provide access to... to every
3 NORC?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, the challenge
5 there, Chair, is: Does the facility have the room?
6 Right?

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So for the ones that do.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: None of these are
9 none of these are freestanding. They're all in older
10 adult clubs. So that is one of our challenges. Is
11 the physical layout and the physical plant of some of
12 our centers.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right. But for the ones
14 that do have the private rooms for counseling, how
15 much would it cost? To provide clinician access?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, yeah. We can
17 get you that number. You know, like, what, what
18 would it cost to go? If I understand your
19 question... I want to make sure I'm answering your
20 question and not my assumption of what your question
21 is. Right?

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: If your question is
24 beyond the 88, how many more sites could we
25 establish? And what would that cost be? To meet the

2 physical and all the other standards imposed by the
3 state? Is that your question?

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'll take that. Yeah.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. Great. I'll
6 get back to you on that.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then, the Federal
8 American Rescue Plan act ends in fiscal 2025 and
9 poses a stark \$64 million funding cliff. Much of
10 this funding supports the prior administration's
11 investments in the community care plan, and
12 particularly the creation of new OACs and NORCs.
13 What is DFTAs is plan to deal with this looming
14 fiscal cliff without service reductions. And, you
15 know, this just goes back to the historic
16 underfunding... chronic underfunding of the agency.
17 So we're anticipating this cliff. We know the money
18 is going to dry up by 2025. What is DFTA planning to
19 do about that?

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: To do exactly what
21 we're doing with you now, is constantly advocate,
22 show the pressing needs, and work with OMB. We're
23 aware of the growth in the population. And we will
24 work with you and... and the administration in
25 partnership to ensure that this... and we also have,

2 you know, the state, we've been advocating with the
3 state to give us additional dollars. And also, you
4 know, continue to advocate what the feds, uh, but
5 that's what... nothing short of that is what's going
6 to be required.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so... but I just want
8 to be clear, and you know, of course, always
9 appreciate your continued advocacy. But is there an
10 actual plan?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't believe
12 that we will hit that cliff. Jose, is there
13 something that we've looked at, to make up for the...
14 to make up for the... the continuation of... or lack
15 of continuation of...?

16 CFO MERCADO: I would say, for example, as
17 Commissioner pointed out much earlier, we've been
18 working with OMB on this. So I mean, this is again,
19 you right, it's a revenue shortfall. So we're
20 working with OMB on how to actually move... cover
21 that deficit.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So I trust that there
23 will be, you know, some sort of plan of action moving
24 forward.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right. And you
3 have to be an integral part of that.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, I will be.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You're not getting rid of
7 me anytime soon. So don't you worry.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we wouldn't
9 want to.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And so... just confirming
11 also... this is slightly different language, but I
12 just want to make sure we're all on the same page.
13 So DFTA is committed to backfilling this funding with
14 city funds?

15 CFO MERCADO: I'd say we're working with OMB to
16 determine how this is going to be covered.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we're also
18 working with Joaquim at... at the state and also
19 working with the feds. Right? So it's... it's...
20 most of our funding comes from three sources. And so
21 we have to continue working with each one of our
22 major funding partners.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I have a few more
24 questions, but I think we'll follow up via email
25 perhaps? Or with a letter? I know it's been a long

2 day for most folks who are on here and I know you're
3 not feeling at your best. So I really appreciate
4 everyone's participation and engagement and patience,
5 and we look forward to following up and receiving
6 some of the additional information that you weren't
7 able to provide here.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Great. Thank you.
9 And I just want to do one last thing before I leave.
10 And I usually stay here the public testimony. I
11 cannot do that today. But we will have staff people
12 there to listen to public testimony.

13 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: No this is it. We're done.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, you are smart
15 guys.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're doing all the public
17 testimony on one day, May 25.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, great. I
19 can... Good. Thank you for that. But I want to...
20 I want to encourage all of you to participate on
21 Tuesday, May 17, from 2 to 3 pm at the National
22 Museum of the American Indian on 1 Bowling Green.
23 We're going to have an Asian American Pacific
24 Islander Heritage panel, that's going to address not
25 only the... the some information on the API

2 community, but also to talk about some of the recent
3 incidents and what we all need to do. And so two
4 members of the council will be participating on that
5 battle, and my colleague from AARP, (inaudible), will
6 be leading that. So I really encourage all of you to
7 participate in this. It's going to be quite... quite
8 an education.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'll be I'll be on Zoom
10 during another hearing, but hopefully some of my
11 colleagues can join.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you for sharing that
13 with us. We will definitely...

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (coughing) Don't
15 make me laugh. Okay, thank you all.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Feel better, Commissioner.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Feel better. Take care.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Take care. Bye,
19 bye.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. And, chair, do you
22 have any closing remarks?

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Surely, I'll keep it very,
24 very, very brief. You know, and this is what I said
25 before: We just... we need to do far better by our

2 older adults, we know the population is growing over
3 the next decade or less. And this incredible, deep
4 lack of funding for the Department for the Aging is
5 unconscionable. And, you know, so that's... that...
6 those are my closing remarks. We just, we need to do
7 better. And everybody should be invested in making
8 sure that New York City is the best place to grow
9 older because if we're lucky, we will all grow older
10 right here in New York City. So thanks, Chair
11 Brannan.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right on. Thank you, Chair
13 Hudson. Thank you, Commissioner. And with that, we
14 will adjourn this this hearing. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you all. Bye
16 bye.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date 06/30/2022