

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID  
WASTE MANAGEMENT JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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NOVEMBER 29, 2018  
Start: 1:13 P.M.  
Recess: 4:33 P.M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: ANTONIO REYNOSO, CHAIR OF  
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID  
WASTE MANAGER

COUNCIL MEMBERS: CHAIM M. DEUTSCH  
RAFAEL L. ESPINAL, JR.  
PAUL A. VALLONE  
COREY JOHNSON, SPEAKER  
MARK TREYGER, CHAIR OF COMMITTEE  
ON EDUCATION  
I. DANEEK MILLER  
YDANIS RODRIGUEZ, CHAIR OF  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
INEZ BARRON  
VANESSA L. GIBSON  
BARRY GRODENCHIK  
RAFAEL SALAMANCA JR.  
DEBORAH ROSE  
BRAD LANDER  
MARK LEVINE

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

MARK GJONAJ  
DANIEL DROMM  
ERIC A. ULRICH  
ALICKA AMPRY-SAMUEL  
ANDREW COHEN  
COSTA CONSTANTINIDES  
JOSEPH C. BORELLI  
BEN KALLOS

KATHRYN GARCIA, Sanitation Commissioner  
DSNY Department of Sanitation

JOSEPH ESPOSITO, Commissioner Office of  
OEM, Office of Emergency Management

POLLY TROTTEBERG, Commissioner  
Department of Transportation

MITCHELL SILVER, Commissioner NY City  
Parks

TERRANCE MONAHAN, Chief of Department of  
NYPD

URSULINA RAMIREZ, Chief Operating Officer  
for Department of Education

KEVIN MORAN, Department of Education

LIAM KAVANAGH, NYC Parks

RANDI LEVINE, Policy Director for  
Advocates for Children of New York

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2 JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
3 COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION 3

4 SARGEANT AT ARMS: Che... mic check, mic  
5 check, one, two, three. Today's Committee is on  
6 Transportation joint with Education and Sanitation  
7 Solid Waste Management. Today's date is November 29,  
8 2018, being recorded by Jessica Pelligrino in the  
9 Chambers.

10 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Sargeant are we  
11 good? (gavel pounding). Good afternoon, my name is  
12 Antonio Reynoso and I am the Chair of the Committee

13 on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management.  
14 I am joined by the Chair of Committee on  
15 Transportation, Ydanis Rodriguez and the Chair of  
16 Committee on Education, Mark Treyger and we will be  
17 co-Chairing today's hearing alongside Speaker Corey  
18 Johnson. Speaker?

19 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Uhm good  
20 afternoon. I am Corey Johnson, speaker of the New  
21 York City Council. I want to thank you for attending  
22 today's hearing on the City's preparation for and  
23 response to Winter Storm Avery. I also want to thank  
24 Chairs Reynoso, Treyger and Rodriguez for holding  
25 this important hearing today. On November 15<sup>th</sup>, six  
inches of snow fell in New York City. Despite the

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1 relatively small amount of snow, this winter storm  
2 significantly impacted the lives of New Yorkers. The  
3 City was expecting one to three inches of snow, as  
4 was announced by the Sanitation Commissioner. I am  
5 very happy to see you here Commissioner Garcia, the  
6 day before the storm. This appears to have been the  
7 presumption by the City until early afternoon on  
8 November 15<sup>th</sup>, even though local news outlets like  
9 WPIX 11 reported early that day in its 6 to 9 a.m.  
10 forecast that six or more inches of snow was likely  
11 if temperatures stayed cold. We understand that on  
12 the day of the storm at 6 a.m. the Department of  
13 Sanitation sent out 290 salt spreaders to pre-salt  
14 high elevations and overpasses. By 11 a.m., 679 salt  
15 spreaders had been deployed throughout the City. At  
16 12:51 p.m. NYCEM, (New York City Emergency  
17 Management) issued a Winter Weather Advisory for New  
18 York City until 10 p.m., updating the forecast from  
19 one inch expected to two to five inches and stating  
20 that New Yorkers should "Use caution while driving."  
21 At 1:23 p.m. snow started falling on Staten Island.  
22 At 1:34 p.m. all Districts were ordered to begin full  
23 salting. By 3:00 p.m., 56% of City roadways had been  
24 treated by salt spreaders including all critical  
25

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1 routes. By the time snow began falling heavily, some  
2 zones had already put plows on the streets based on  
3 local conditions. At 3:25 p.m., the Department of  
4 Sanitation issued orders to all zones to deploy  
5 plows. By 10:00 p.m., 82% of the streets in  
6 Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island had been salted.  
7 As traffic began to ease in the Bronx, spreaders from  
8 Queens were re-deployed to the Bronx to ensure that  
9 roadways were cleared before rush hour. And by  
10 midnight a total of 1,400 salt spreaders and plows  
11 were deployed. By 8:00 a.m. on Friday morning 98% of  
12 the City had been salted. I understand that these  
13 were not normal circumstances for a snow storm. The  
14 forecast was for one inch and it was early in the  
15 season to have such a significant snow event. The  
16 heavy snow was also during rush hour and there were  
17 traffic accidents with significant consequences for  
18 the City. However, this City cannot shut down for  
19 six inches of snow. We should plan for the worst  
20 possible scenarios. We can't do, we can do better  
21 than this and we must do better. Children were stuck  
22 on school busses for more than 10 hours and their  
23 parents were not updated about their whereabouts or  
24 their safety. These children were not fed and sadly  
25

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1  
2 were not provided adequate bathroom breaks. The last  
3 student, with the help of the New York City Police  
4 Department, thank you, got home at 3 o'clock in the  
5 morning. New Yorkers were stuck in traffic for many  
6 hours, just ask Vanessa Gibson. They were tired,  
7 hungry and driving in unsafe conditions. Some  
8 commuters reported 13-hour trips. The Administration  
9 did not encourage people to leave their cars at home  
10 and take public transportation in advance of the  
11 storm. The City must be communicating with the  
12 public, during and after snow storms. There should  
13 be clear messaging to the public and contingency  
14 plans to keep people and all New Yorkers including  
15 school children safe. The Mayor has promised a full  
16 review of the City's handling of the snow storm and I  
17 am hoping to understand what went wrong and that the  
18 Administration will make whatever adjustments are  
19 necessary to respond to future storms. We can do  
20 better and we must do better as a City. New Yorkers  
21 should not have to go through this again. I know a  
22 lot of the conversation that day and the day after  
23 focused on a pile-up that happened on the George  
24 Washington Bridge and the ripple effects that that  
25 had on upper Manhattan and on the Bronx but there

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1  
2 were problems throughout the entire City in areas  
3 that were not affected by the George Washington  
4 Bridge and I look forward to hearing today what we  
5 can do, what we can do moving forward to ensure that  
6 the entire City is taken care of, New Yorkers were  
7 outraged, you saw it on Social Media, you say how  
8 people were talked to by the press and I want to  
9 understand how we can do better. Again, I want to  
10 thank you Chair Reynoso, Chair Rodriguez and Chair  
11 Treyger for co-Chairing this hearing today and I look  
12 forward to this conversation with my colleagues and  
13 the Council. Thank you, Commissioner Garcia, for  
14 being here.

15 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Speaker  
16 Johnson. Uhm again I am Council Member Antonio  
17 Reynoso and I am the Chair of the Committee on  
18 Sanitation and Solid Waste. We are holding this,  
19 today's hearing to do an analysis of why six inches  
20 of snow brought the City of New York to a standstill.  
21 A number of agencies have joined us to testify today  
22 including the Department of Sanitation, the  
23 Department of Education, the Department of  
24 Transportation, the New York City Police Department,  
25 the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the

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1  
2 Office of Emergency Management. We will also be  
3 hearing from Council Members whose Districts were  
4 affected as well as members of the public who dealt  
5 with the impact on the ground. Before we begin, I  
6 want to acknowledge that no one in the City of New  
7 York, not the meteorologist, the Mayor, the Agency  
8 Commissioners or myself was expecting a storm like  
9 this in the middle of November and it was not until  
10 the snow started to pick up in the afternoon that it  
11 became clear what we were dealing with. This was the  
12 greatest single day snowfall recorded in Central Park  
13 in 136 years. We were all caught off-guard. However  
14 rather than looking for a scapegoat it is my hope  
15 that we can focus today's hearing on how we can  
16 improve the City's response and operations to the in  
17 the face of unexpected weather events. Like many of  
18 you, I was initially appalled at the level of  
19 gridlock that occurred from what seemed to be a  
20 pretty normal snow storm. We have much worse, much  
21 better, however, as we began to dig deeper it became  
22 clear that this was a confluence of unusual and  
23 unexpected events that lead to huge problems in the  
24 City. The first issue was that our weather  
25 forecasters completely missed the mark. What had

1  
2 been predicted by a dusting up until the morning of  
3 the 15<sup>th</sup> turned out to be six inches of heavy snow.  
4 Additionally, the heavier snowfall began just at the  
5 start of rush hour creating some of the worst  
6 gridlock the City has ever seen. The George  
7 Washington Bridge was closed for a full two hours  
8 during rush hour, sending traffic into local streets,  
9 throughout the Bronx and upper Manhattan. These  
10 conditions made it impossible for DSNYs plows to  
11 clear the streets. A higher than average number of  
12 vehicular accidents resulted from the icy road  
13 conditions causing further traffic delays and  
14 impediments to snow clearings. Furthermore, as this  
15 was mid-November, many of the trees still had leaves  
16 on them. As the snow piled into the leaves, trees  
17 became so heavy that 150 of them were topped across  
18 the City. In addition to 300 down limbs blocking  
19 traffic in some cases. All of these factors combined  
20 to create a situation that made it very difficult for  
21 City Agencies to carry out their normal protocol.  
22 Now, while I do recognize that this was a freak  
23 event, we can't simply walk away from what happened  
24 without looking at ways to improve our response. We  
25 cannot tolerate children being stuck in traffic for

1 hours coming home from school, or our Emergency  
2 Responders being unable to cut through the gridlock  
3 to reach critical situations. I am frustrated that  
4 the Mayor's office was unable to provide an audit  
5 prior this hearing, so I am expecting a thorough  
6 breakdown of what occurred in the testimony delivered  
7 by the relevant Agencies. I will be looking at OEM  
8 today to better understand why they appeared to be no  
9 coordinator response to this event. This particular  
10 situation was an unexpected weather event but what if  
11 there had been a terrorist attack? Do we have plans  
12 as a City to tackle major calamities that affect that  
13 entire City. I also want to know that neither the  
14 Port Authority or the MTA are present today which is  
15 unfortunate as there were a number of incidents under  
16 the prevue, under their prevue that contributed to  
17 this difficult situation. It is my hope that we can  
18 learn from this event to improve inter-agency  
19 coordination which I believe was in the area in which  
20 the City's response fell short. To ensure that we  
21 are much better prepared for future events, we are  
22 the greatest City in the world and I know if we put  
23 our heads together, we can ensure that we are  
24 adequately prepared for another weather event, even  
25

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1 those that we don't expect. Thank you. Council  
2 Member, I also want to acknowledge the Council  
3 Members that are here with us today, Council Member  
4 Miller, Deutsch, Lander, Gibson, Grodenchik, Barron,  
5 Rose, Dromm, Cabrera, Levine and Gjonaj. Also, I  
6 want to recognize uhm our two co-Chairs, Rodriguez  
7 and Treyger. Chair Rodriguez?

9 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I don't think  
10 that unless you were living in that condition for  
11 those hours, if you were warm in your house, no one  
12 you know, I don't think that even the media knew the  
13 nightmare that a lot of people went through during  
14 those hours. On be... on behalf of the Transportation  
15 Committee that I Chair. I want to welcome all of you  
16 to this emergency hearing on what happened on  
17 November 15. New Yorkers have many questions and I  
18 have one thing to tell them, Yes, the Government of  
19 the City of New York and its Agency failed big time  
20 when thousands of residents, visitors, senior  
21 citizens, students with disability and working family  
22 were left in the street without any safeguard or  
23 assistance. Yes, the George Washington Bridge  
24 closed, there were traffic crashes throughout the  
25 five boroughs and supposedly we didn't know the

1 number of inches of snow for we were expected to  
2 receive that day. My question, and the frustration  
3 and the frustration of all New Yorkers is Why was an  
4 Inter-agency Emergency not activated that day? And  
5 how does it look like when they are activated? Why  
6 were the City Agency in charge of our streets,  
7 traffic and schools not see this as a big crisis at  
8 any point throughout the evening, during the night,  
9 on Thursday and early Friday? I wonder if some fire  
10 that we had that morning also was affected with the  
11 lack of fire trucks moving in the streets? Because  
12 of that condition and there was any death related to  
13 any fire that happened that morning? As someone who,  
14 that particular afternoon took my train to go to a  
15 meeting to Washington Street in Brooklyn, the A  
16 train, the first stop in Brooklyn. Ending my meeting  
17 at 4:50, 4:40 and my friend because when we came out,  
18 he saw all the snow and said should take a ride with  
19 me? And is said yes. We got into the car at 4:50  
20 and it took me from 4:50 that afternoon, Thursday to  
21 get in my house in Greenwood at 2:20 in the morning.  
22 No, I don't want to share this story because I'm the  
23 Council Member in (INAUDIBLE) 127 St. Nicholas, I  
24 look backward here so Council Member Andy King and I  
25

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1 heard that Vanessa Gibson, the GPA sent it to go to  
2 first avenue and all the Council Members and what I  
3 can tell you is that 127 St. Nicholas Avenue it was a  
4 chaotic situation. No cars were going north and  
5 south. All vehicles were only going north. Cars  
6 were on the sidewalk. People coming out from the  
7 busses. No one was there to support it. I was  
8 against sitting in a stand, in standstill traffic  
9 like to New Yorkers for those 10 hours. I saw busses  
10 without moving at 127 St. Nicholas Avenue for more  
11 than two hours. I saw senior citizens and children  
12 with their parents coming out from those busses and  
13 they were unable to walk in the street, ice, street,  
14 and ice snow that we had that evening. No one were  
15 there to guide them. No one were there to support  
16 it. Was I saw was a lot of vehicle crossing through  
17 the 127 jumping onto the sidewalk, even putting the  
18 lives of those children, families and senior citizens  
19 in risk? I traveled 20 blocks from 127 to 155<sup>th</sup>  
20 before I saw any law enforcement assisting traffic  
21 and the only location, I saw it was at 145<sup>th</sup> and St.  
22 Nicholas Avenue, only one person. I saw people  
23 vacating their cars and trying to walk home. This  
24 was a living nightmare, you would never imagine what  
25

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1 you went through unless you were there. My neighbor  
2 pal, who is a lawyer, a retired lawyer. She was  
3 telling me this story how she needed to pee in the  
4 street because she couldn't hold it. Children with  
5 disability, Francis Rojo going home like at 11:00  
6 p.m. crying to his mother because he couldn't  
7 understand why he was in that situation? We have the  
8 resources, we have the capacity, we have the men and  
9 women power to respond to the level of crisis that  
10 occurred that night on November 15 but we failed.  
11 And that's why I will be introducing a Language  
12 Legislation that I hope will be able to move forward  
13 that will ask for the report every year on how Inter-  
14 Agency responsiveness and which agencies are  
15 activated during a City Emergency. Whether if for  
16 inclement weather or a natural disaster. I thank all  
17 the members of this Administration for being with us  
18 today. I thank Speaker Johnson for his leadership to  
19 work with us and all for this emergency hearing and I  
20 look forward to hearing your testimony on the City  
21 Preparation, not only for that day please don't come  
22 with excuses of what happened at George Washington.  
23 The lack of not know how many inches, we know that  
24 that contributed a lot. Those New Yorkers here and  
25

1 while following the media want to know, why, what  
2 happened at 10:00 p.m.? What happened at 12? Why  
3 were those people from different Agency still sending  
4 home and not still in their place helping other  
5 individuals? (Speaker Spanish). Thank you.

6  
7 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Chair  
8 Rodriguez, Council Member Treyger.

9 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Good afternoon, uhm  
10 Council Member Mark Treyger, Chair of the Education  
11 Committee. I would like to, first thank Speaker  
12 Corey Johnson for joining us today and also thanking  
13 the Speaker for immediately taking ownership for what  
14 happened that day and the following day and what did  
15 not happen that day and the following day.

16 Immediately apologizing to New Yorkers and pledging  
17 accountability and changes moving forward. So, the  
18 Speaker's presence here today I believe is critical  
19 and important and I thank you and his office for  
20 being here. I want to also thank my co-Chair, Chair  
21 Reynoso and Chair Rodriguez for holding this hearing  
22 on the City's Preparation and Response to Winter  
23 Storm Avery. Uhm while the severity and timing of  
24 the storm was not accurately predicted in advance, we  
25 certainly don't blame the Department of Education for

1  
2 the road and traffic conditions that resulted. It is  
3 however hard to comprehend how a six-inch snowfall  
4 resulted in such disruption and hardships for  
5 children and families as well as school staff. It is  
6 particularly disturbing that it seems that DOE has no  
7 protocols or plans in place in the event of  
8 emergencies like this winter storm to ensure children  
9 stranded on buses for hours on end have access to  
10 bathrooms, water and food. This is unconscionable.  
11 Particularly when the great majority of school bus  
12 riders are young children, children with  
13 disabilities, and those who are medically fragile.  
14 On top of that, the lack of protocol for  
15 communicating with parents is unacceptable. DOE is  
16 causing parents to be frantic and worried because  
17 they cannot communicate with their children and have  
18 no idea where their busses are located. Just last  
19 month, the Education Committee held a hearing on the  
20 DOE's Office of Pupil Transportation due to the  
21 inexcusable management or mismanagement of school bus  
22 services that resulted in excessive delays and no  
23 shows at the start of the school year. At that  
24 hearing, we heard that the DOE is working on  
25 improving the use of GPS tracking on school busses

1 and expanding a pilot program to allow parents to  
2 track the location of their child's bus in real time  
3 using a mobile app. That technology would have been  
4 a huge benefit had it been in place for this November  
5 15 snow storm. We are glad that DOE is starting to  
6 expand this GPS tracking program but we can't wait  
7 for this program to be implemented uhm to find a way  
8 to communicate with parents. DOE must establish a  
9 way for parents to communicate directly with someone  
10 on the bus rather than wait endlessly on hold with  
11 OPTs Customer Service Line. Having a matron or  
12 attendant on every school bus will not only provide  
13 that point of contact for parents but it would also  
14 offer much needed assistance and supervision for  
15 students who ride the bus daily as well as critical  
16 support in the event of an emergency. This is why I  
17 just introduced a resolution calling on DOE to place  
18 and escort attendant on board all public-school  
19 busses. The aftermath of the snow storm created  
20 still more problems for our City schools. While a  
21 decision was made to open schools the day after the  
22 storm and this decision was communicated to the media  
23 and parents well before the start of the school day,  
24 the decision to cancel field trips and after school  
25

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1  
2 programs was not communicated until after the school  
3 day was already in session. This created tremendous  
4 hardship for parents and families who had to scramble  
5 to make childcare arrangements of very short notice.  
6 I am sure that many parents were unable to make  
7 alternate arrangements and those who already at work  
8 may not have received notice of the cancellation,  
9 leaving students stranded at school at the end of the  
10 day. Today I hope to learn more about how and why  
11 the decision was made to cancel afterschool programs  
12 and how it was communicated to parents. I also want  
13 to know how many students remained after school that  
14 day because their parents were unable to make other  
15 childcare arrangements? What was done to  
16 accommodate those students? We have a lot of  
17 questions for DOE today as we hope to learn more  
18 about DOE's plans for any future such emergencies. I  
19 would like to thank the Education Committee staff,  
20 Beth Golub, Kalima Johnson (SP?), Jan Atwell, Katelyn  
21 O'Hagan and Elizabeth Hoffman and also my staff Ann  
22 Scaife, Vanessa Ogle and Eric Fangberg (SP?) and with  
23 that I will turn it back to Chair Reynoso.

24 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you, I want  
25 to thank uhm the Agencies who are here today with us.

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1  
2 We have Commissioner Esposito from EOM, Commissioner  
3 Garcia from DSNY, Commissioner Trottenberg from the  
4 Department of Transportation, Commissioner Silver  
5 from New York City Parks, Chief of Department Monahan  
6 from the NYPD and the Chief Operating Officer for the  
7 Department of Education Ursulina Ramirez. We are  
8 also joined by Kevin Moran from the Department of  
9 Education and Liam Kavanagh from NYC Parks. I guess  
10 we will let you.

11 MALE: Yes.

12 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: We need to swear  
13 you in first and we will let the Counsel do that.

14 COUNSEL: Please raise your right hands,  
15 do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and  
16 nothing but the truth in your testimony today and to  
17 answer Council Member questions honestly.

18 ALL: I do.

19 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: We will allow you  
20 to choose the order in which you uhm to submit  
21 testimony. Thank you.

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm good afternoon  
23 Speaker Johnson, Chairmen Reynoso, Rodriguez and  
24 Treyger and Members of the Committees on Sanitation  
25 and Solid Waste Management, Transportation and

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1  
2 Education. I am Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner for the  
3 New York City Department of Sanitation. I am joined  
4 by Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, Transportation  
5 Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Emergency Management  
6 Commissioner Joe Esposito, New York Police  
7 Department, Chief of Department Terrance Monahan and  
8 Department of Education, Chief Operating Officer,  
9 Ursuline Ramirez. Thank you for the opportunity  
10 today to discuss the City's preparations for and  
11 response to Winter Storm Avery on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Let  
12 me say at the outset that the Department of  
13 Sanitation and I along with my colleagues empathize  
14 with the thousands of New Yorkers including many  
15 school children who faced excessively long commutes  
16 and dangerous roadway conditions on the evening of  
17 November 15. This event severely affected the entire  
18 tri-state region and it truly was a perfect storm of  
19 events that posed serious challenges for New York  
20 City as well as our neighboring states and  
21 municipalities. I would like to walk you through the  
22 timeline of this snow event, our preparation and  
23 response, the impediments we faced and lessons we  
24 have learned for future storms. The Department of  
25 Sanitation monitors weather forecasts through its

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1  
2 three contracted weather services around the clock  
3 and receives forecasts from the National Weather  
4 Service via New York City Emergency Management. When  
5 forecast called for a potential snow event, the  
6 Department issues a Snow Alert to inform our staff,  
7 other City Agencies and the public. DSNY received  
8 the first forecast of a possible snow event on the  
9 morning of Monday November 12<sup>th</sup>. On Wednesday  
10 November 14<sup>th</sup> meteorologists expressed increasing  
11 confidence in the likelihood of a snow event. DSNY  
12 issued a snow alert to media and City Agencies at  
13 1:40 p.m. that day and held a joint press conference  
14 that afternoon with New York City Emergency  
15 Management. The press conference was attended by  
16 nine media outlets including six major television  
17 stations. The forecast leading up to the November  
18 15<sup>th</sup> event called for a wintery mix with likely  
19 accumulations of zero to three inches predominantly  
20 on grassy surfaces. The morning of the storm, the  
21 National Weather Forecast called for one inch of snow  
22 for that afternoon. We know now that that forecast  
23 was off the mark. It was not until 12:37 p.m., less  
24 than half an hour before the snow started falling  
25 that the National Weather Service issued a Winter

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1 Weather Advisory calling for snow accumulations of  
2 two to five inches. By the time the snow ended,  
3 accumulations in Central Park measured 6.4 inches and  
4 parts of the Bronx had experienced brief periods of  
5 snowfall of more than two inches per hour. The storm  
6 was heav... was the heaviest November snowfall since  
7 1938 and the earliest November snowfall over six  
8 inches on record. The Department deployed salt  
9 spreaders to spread rock salt on the more than 19,000  
10 road lane miles across the five boroughs. Salt helps  
11 to reduce the accumulation of snow and prevent the  
12 formation of icy conditions. Salt spreading  
13 operations continue for the duration of snowfall.  
14 Once the snowfall accumulation is greater than two-  
15 inches the Department deploys its snow plows.  
16 Plowing operations continue until all of the City's  
17 traffic lanes are passible. Throughout the duration  
18 of a storm, Department Field Managers constantly  
19 monitor roadway conditions, equipment use and  
20 variations in weather patterns, our field officers  
21 report this information on an hourly basis back to  
22 their respective borough commands and on to our  
23 Central Operations Office. At Headquarters, DSNY  
24 deploys a variety of technology tools to maintain  
25

1  
2 situational awareness. These include GPS tracking of  
3 spreaders and plows, analytical tools to measure  
4 mileage completed, live feeds from DOT Traffic  
5 cameras, NOA weather grids, snow complaint data and  
6 data monitor First Alert, a real time social media  
7 alert system. Based on the forecast of Wednesday of  
8 zero to three inches on grassy surfaces, the  
9 Department suspended street cleaning regulations for  
10 Thursday, loaded 679 spreaders, attached plows to 150  
11 collection trucks and activated the Plow NYC Tracking  
12 System. Based on the forecast and the anticipation  
13 that salt spreaders would be the primary snow  
14 equipment required for the storm, the Department  
15 planned for a three-shift operation which included  
16 cleaning and collection and Refuse Center Cycling.  
17 At the start of this 6 a.m. shift, the Department  
18 sends 290 spreaders out to pre-salt high elevations  
19 and overpass which freeze earlier than streets. By  
20 noon, 1,024 miles of roadway had been pre-salted  
21 Citywide including 291 miles in the Bronx. While the  
22 National Weather Service did not change its forecast  
23 until 12:37 DSNYs in-house meteorologist had reached  
24 out to our Operations Staff shortly before 10 a.m. to  
25 indicate that the storm was growing and that the City

1 could now anticipated between three and five inches  
2 of snow. At this point, the personnel on the 6 a.m.  
3 shift were informed that they would work a 12-hour  
4 shift until 6 p.m. that night and Districts were  
5 directed to add additional plows to collection  
6 trucks. At 11 a.m. 679 spreaders had been deployed  
7 to their standby locations. At 1:23 as Field Staff  
8 reported snow starting to fall in Staten Island all  
9 Districts were ordered to assigned spreaders were  
10 necessary. At 1:34 p.m. all Districts were ordered  
11 to begin full salting as the storm came I quickly  
12 across the boroughs. Around the same time, DOT began  
13 treating the East River bridges. By 3:00 p.m. salt  
14 spreaders had treated more than 56% of roadway miles  
15 Citywide. With snow falling heavily the Department  
16 issued orders to all zones to deploy plows at 3:25  
17 p.m. Although some zones had already put plows in  
18 the streets based on local conditions. By midnight,  
19 we had a total of almost 1,400 salt spreaders and  
20 plows deployed in the field. Just as the City  
21 Council and the public have demanded to understand  
22 what occurred two weeks ago, the Administration has  
23 been assessing this snow event to determine what  
24 factors dist... distinguished this storm from others.  
25

1  
2 It is vital to understand the unique challenges posed  
3 by this storm that impeded our spreading and plowing  
4 operations. This storm would have been difficult to  
5 fight on its own due to the unexpected heavy snow and  
6 sleet and the timing at the height of rush hour but a  
7 series of cascading events that affected the region  
8 made effective snow removal in the City nearly  
9 impossible. These included a 21-car pileup on the  
10 George Washington Bridge, one of the busiest  
11 vehicular bridges in the world around 3 p.m. That  
12 led to the closure of the bridge to outbound traffic  
13 for several hours and caused gridlock on the cross  
14 Bronx Expressway and other interconnecting highways.  
15 In addition, the Port Authority closed the Bayonne  
16 Bridge for several periods between noon and 5:30  
17 which backed up traffic on the Staten Island  
18 Expressway and Route 440. The FDR and Harlem River  
19 Drive, upper level of the Queens Borough Bridge, Van  
20 Wyck, Major Deegan and Gowanus Expressway among  
21 others also experienced intermittent lane closures.  
22 The intense traffic conditions that occurred at the  
23 height of the storm which gridlocked roads and  
24 trapped cars and busses also gridlocked DSNYs plows  
25 and spreaders. Upper Manhattan and the Bronx were at

1 a complete standstill. As the major arterials became  
2 clogged drivers whether on their own or directed by  
3 Dynamic Mapping Apps took to local streets which  
4 quickly became congested as well. According to data  
5 from WAVES the number of traffic irregularities  
6 reported in the New York Metro area was 140% greater  
7 than the same day the previous year. In the Bronx,  
8 that number was 241% greater. Additionally, the  
9 storm caused damaged trees throughout the City. By  
10 midnight on Thursday, the Parks Department had  
11 received more than 1,200 reports of downed or damaged  
12 trees. Many of these left streets impassible for our  
13 spreaders and plows both during and after the event  
14 and some caused our plows to get stuck behind the  
15 downed trees. However, the City Agencies continued  
16 to fight the storm through the night. By 10:00 p.m.,  
17 82% of the streets in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten  
18 Island had been salted. As traffic began to ease in  
19 the Bronx, spreaders from Queens were re-deployed to  
20 the Bronx to ensure roadways were cleared before rush  
21 hour. And at the interconnection between the Major  
22 Deegan and Cross Bronx Expressway DSNY salt spreaders  
23 received NYPD escorts to travel the wrong way on  
24 certain on and off ramps to spread salt. By 8:00  
25

1 a.m., 98% of the City had been salted. In  
2 anticipation of the impending snowfall, the  
3 Department of Transportation began sending out pre-  
4 storm messaging in the early afternoon on the  
5 variable message board system. It operates on  
6 highways across the City. DOT updated the message to  
7 advise of a snow condition, to use caution, reduce  
8 speed, and avoid unnecessary travel and again  
9 regarding slippery conditions. As I mentioned  
10 before, a 20-car crash around 3 had blocked all lanes  
11 in both directions on the upper level of the George  
12 Washington Bridge what would not be fully re-opened  
13 for two years. From that point, reports began coming  
14 in of disabled vehicles including busses and tractor-  
15 trailers affecting travel lanes on multiple highways.  
16 What is apparent in our after-action analysis is that  
17 starting around 2:00 p.m. travel speed Citywide at  
18 the MTA, Port Authority and the 355 locations DOT  
19 monitors, all began to drop precipitously and  
20 continued to do so until around 6 after which they  
21 only began to recover very gradually and did not  
22 return back to normal until after midnight. While  
23 all of this was occurring, DOTs Traffic Management  
24 and Emergency Response Staff were primarily focused  
25

1 on addressing incidents identified through visual  
2 inspection via their Traffic Camera Network and calls  
3 placed into the Communication Center. An icy offramp  
4 or a steep section of roadway where trucks and others  
5 were getting stuck and working with its partners to  
6 direct either authorized tow trucks, New York Police  
7 Department and DSNY Resources to those locations. At  
8 the same time, data from Transcom, a coalition for  
9 coordination and cooperation among 16 Tri-State  
10 Transportation and Public Safety Agencies gives a  
11 regional picture. Between 2 and 3 p.m. major delays  
12 began appearing, first in New Jersey and the southern  
13 parts of the City and then spreading into upper  
14 Manhattan and the Bronx and all of Westchester.  
15 These delays created severe systemwide gridlock.  
16 This meant that once traffic on the George Washington  
17 Bridge started to flow again it had nowhere to go by  
18 that point. Whether coming into this City or headed  
19 into New Jersey and it remained that way for several  
20 more hours. It should be noted that it was mainly  
21 roads and bridges that got snarled across New York,  
22 New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. It is  
23 fortunate that MTA did do a good job that evening of  
24 keeping the subways running well during this event.  
25

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

29

1  
2 Over the course of the storm, the New York Police  
3 Department adjusted their Traffic Enforcement to  
4 accommodate worsening conditions. All Traffic  
5 Enforcement Agents on the 12:00 p.m. shift had their  
6 tours extended to 11:00 p.m. The Citywide Traffic  
7 Task Force deployed officers and supervisors to the  
8 East River Bridges and the approaches to the George  
9 Washington Bridge to help mitigate traffic. Extra  
10 officers were deployed to several major crosstown  
11 streets in Manhattan. Furthermore, the New York  
12 Police Department extended the tours of every Highway  
13 Command Officer in the first platoon and the four  
14 officers in each command for the third platoon which  
15 increased the manpower to respond to snow storm  
16 related events. On the highways in addition to the  
17 Authorized Tow Program, New York PD added two trucks  
18 to each of the four highway commands to supplement  
19 the Authorized Tow Program. An additional 60 tow  
20 trucks were deployed to help vehicles in need of  
21 assistance in other areas. All towed over 200  
22 vehicles were towed to improve traffic flow that day.  
23 School busses were significantly delayed due to the  
24 November 15 storm and road conditions. The  
25 Department of Education worked closely with bus

1 companies and across City Agencies to keep students  
2 safe while getting them to their destinations as  
3 efficiently as possible. Approximately 700 routes  
4 were delayed that evening, representing a little less  
5 than 10% of all routes. During the storm, the Office  
6 of Pupil Transportation prioritized communications  
7 with families making 665 individual phone calls to  
8 the families affected by the delays that evening.  
9 The OPT Hotline was operational through Thursday  
10 night into Friday morning, 15 staff members remained  
11 in the office until 5 a.m. to answer calls until the  
12 call center's morning shift arrived. As I mentioned  
13 earlier, this storm had the second highest  
14 accumulations for a November snow storm since 1882.  
15 When the storm hit, more than half of the City's  
16 trees still had some or all of their leaves. This  
17 led to significant tree limb failure as many limbs  
18 could not bear the weight of what heavy snow caught  
19 on their leaves. During the storm, staff from the  
20 Police and Fire Departments worked through the night  
21 to respond to emergency requests for downed trees and  
22 limbs blocking roadways. Late on the night of the  
23 storm, the Parks Department, New York City Emergency  
24 Management and the Mayor's Office called for the  
25

1  
2 activation of the Down Tree Task Force, an  
3 interagency effort to address storm related tree  
4 issues beginning Friday morning. Starting at 6 a.m.  
5 on the morning after the storm, Parks deployed 30  
6 crews into the field prioritizing block streets,  
7 trees on houses and leaning trees. These 150 Parks  
8 employees assessed tree damage, resolved dangerous  
9 conditions and begin the disposal of fallen trees and  
10 limbs. Park staff were supplemented by teams from  
11 the Fire Department, the Police Department, the  
12 Department of Environmental Protection as well as  
13 Parks Emergency Contactors. Both Parks and DSNY  
14 worked jointly to remove tree brush and log from the  
15 streets and reported tree debris was cleared within a  
16 week of the storm. Following the storm, the Park  
17 Department completed inspections of more than 3,300  
18 service requests made through 3-1-1 for downed trees,  
19 hanging limbs and fallen limbs across the City. From  
20 these inspections, Parks created more than 2,000  
21 unique work orders for fallen trees or limbs and all  
22 of those have since been completed and resolved.  
23 These efforts were coordinated through the Downed  
24 Tree Task Force and New York City Emergency  
25 Management. The City is currently performing a

1 review and assessment of its response to this snow  
2 event. Based on the results of this evaluation, the  
3 City will make operational changes and adjustments;  
4 however, we are prepared to share some preliminary  
5 lessons learned at this time. As a result of climate  
6 change, New York City will experience more frequent  
7 and intense storms of all types. Weather conditions  
8 are becoming increasingly variable and unpredictable  
9 and the storm on November 15 was one indication of  
10 this long-term trend. As a result, the City must  
11 adapt its preparations for future storms to account  
12 for this increasingly unpredictability. To ensure  
13 that we are prepared for future early season storms,  
14 DSNY will advance our Night Plow Operations to start  
15 at the beginning of November rather than in mid-  
16 November. In addition, for each individual weather  
17 event, DSNY will plan for additional staff coverage  
18 to increase pre-treatment of roadways. While this  
19 may mean in some cases, we will pre-treat roadways in  
20 advance of events that end up bringing little or no  
21 snow it will give us an additional jump start for  
22 weather events that turn to snow earlier or more  
23 aggressively than expected. In advance of storms  
24 like this one with high moisture content and an even  
25

1 small possibility of changeover to mostly or all  
2 snow, the Department will plan for significantly  
3 higher accumulations than forecast to prepare for the  
4 worse case scenario. Immediately, the day after the  
5 storm, Commissioner Trottenberg spoke to her  
6 counterparts at MTA, Port Authority, New York State  
7 DOT, New Jersey Transit, New Jersey DOT and Transcom.  
8 She can say that across the region, we all struggled  
9 and we can all do better and that includes regional  
10 communication. In addition, DOT will work with  
11 partner agencies and Transcom to identify recurring  
12 problem areas where icing and crashes occurred,  
13 especially at high volume crossings in order to pre-  
14 position assets at these locations and have Emergency  
15 Access Plans in place to be ready to address  
16 conditions immediately. And while DOTs Traffic  
17 Management Center generally focuses on incident  
18 response, DOT is exploring automated algorithm-based  
19 monitoring of traffic conditions that might alert us  
20 to the kind of precipitous drop in speed system wide  
21 in order to alert other Agencies and the public. In  
22 a similar event in the future, the City will be  
23 prepared to put out more information to the public as  
24 it is happening so that people better know what to  
25

1 expect as they are on the road or about to get on the  
2 road. It is clear that the sheer number of vehicles  
3 on the road was a major factor that hampered DSNYs  
4 ability to clear snow and ice from roadways. DSNY  
5 will work with NYPD and DOT to develop plans for  
6 emergency escorts and counterflow travel of  
7 spreaders, plows and tow trucks to ensure that we can  
8 get where they need to go if gridlock conditions  
9 restrict travel in the future. After the storm, the  
10 Chancellor convened an after-action group to review  
11 the response of this storm and ensure the best  
12 services for and communication with families in the  
13 event of future snow storms and emergencies. DOE is  
14 exploring improvements to Customer Service to better  
15 communicate with families in a more consistent basis.  
16 DOE has already created an OPT Twitter handle and  
17 brought the OPT webpage into the DOE website and is  
18 continuing to review their Call Center, Robocalls and  
19 how best to use Twitter and the website to  
20 communicate information. DOEs contracted school bus  
21 service have GPS devices on all Special Education  
22 buses as well as two-way radio communication with all  
23 buses. DOE is funding a pilot program to provide  
24 parents access to bus ETA information via an app and  
25

1 it is currently accessing this pilot for expansion.

2 Every storm brings different challenges that impacts

3 the speed with which we can clear the streets

4 including storm intensity, temperature, time of day

5 and total accumulation. We ask the public to heed

6 any notifications or requests from the City including

7 DSNY Snow Alerts and Travel Warnings from New York

8 City Emergency Management and DOT and leave their

9 cars at home or at work. Most importantly, I ask New

10 Yorkers to be patient and allow workers at DSNY and

11 other agencies who are performing under tough and

12 often brutal conditions to safely do their jobs as

13 quickly as possible. In closing, I want to assure

14 all New Yorkers that snow funding remains a core

15 component of the Departments Mission and our

16 workforce understands that their performance is

17 critical to keeping this City functioning 24 x 7. We

18 strive to learn from this event and to continue

19 improving our operations during future storms. My

20 colleagues and I are now happy to answer your

21 questions.

22  
23 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you for

24 that testimony, i just want to acknowledge that we

25

1  
2 have also been joined by Council Member Salamanca,  
3 Ulrich and Ampry-Samuel. Speaker?

4 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: I thank you Chair  
5 Reynoso. Thank you uhm Commissioner for that very  
6 thorough testimony giving us a tick-tock of what  
7 happened that day and also some constructive ideas on  
8 how to improve performance in the future. I  
9 appreciate it. I did want to uhm, uhm ask what now  
10 that this Operational Review is underway and you were  
11 able to share some preliminary results from it, what  
12 mistakes were made that day?

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I think that, that  
14 one of the things that we are looking back at and  
15 really, and really evaluating is our ability to  
16 message to the public and I think that we knew that  
17 we were having challenges in the late afternoon and  
18 our messaging primarily said something about exercise  
19 caution. Uhm that is not a strong enough message,  
20 uhm in terms of making sure that the public really  
21 understands the challenges that we are facing. Uhm I  
22 think that we are all reviewing that as we move  
23 forward but we are really focused on uhm should there  
24 be a situation where there is a major accident or  
25 that becomes a bottle neck how do we more effectively

1  
2 resolve that. We use some creative ideas during that  
3 night but we need to do more to pre-plan for this  
4 unexpected cascading set of events.

5 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Who decides what  
6 information is disseminated to the public? Who is  
7 the ultimate decider in that?

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I wouldn't say that  
9 it's a, it's a decider. Uhm so the Office of  
10 Emergency Management is providing much information  
11 through their Notify NYC through their other Twitter  
12 handle. They are usually are the primary persons who  
13 are putting out information about weather conditions  
14 or traffic conditions and they are trying to provide  
15 that in real time. Uhm and so I think that there  
16 wasn't, it was never coming up like should we make  
17 our message stronger now? I think that that is  
18 something that we realized as we are going through  
19 the analytics of this. So, there wasn't someone who  
20 said don't put out a message. Uhm I think that  
21 understanding the full extent of what was happening  
22 with traffic, uhm was that we were dealing with  
23 something in which the implications of what was  
24 happening regionally were not as clear in what was  
25 happening across the rest of the City. Uhm I would

1 say that from my personal point of view, I am  
2 watching them in operations and I know that we are  
3 slowing down uhm there is traffic and there are  
4 accidents and uhm across the City and we are clearing  
5 them and we are getting back on track. You know it  
6 is slowing us down and then we are getting back on  
7 track. That's happening continuously during the  
8 storm. The fact that we ended up in such an  
9 incredibly tough gridlock situation that even if it  
10 was cleared, when the Port Authority did clear that  
11 bridge that there wasn't flow coming off of the Cross  
12 Bronx or the Major Deegan or the FDR or the Henry  
13 Hudson. I also think that there, there is something  
14 that I, we could think jointly about in terms of when  
15 people are using mapping software. I think that when  
16 we ended up in that gridlock situation and certainly  
17 some of my colleagues can talk about some of their  
18 personal experience, some of that mapping software  
19 were telling them that it was going to take them two  
20 hours to get through the Bronx to Westchester. We  
21 clearly know that that was, that did not happen.  
22 That was not actually happening so I think that there  
23 were people who were still leaving from lower  
24 Manhattan, open up their map and it says oh it's

1 going to be bad but not catastrophic. Uhm so how do  
2 we sync all of these different pieces of information  
3 that people are receiving to make sure that it is  
4 very chris message, is it a takeaway that we have to  
5 try and improve.  
6

7 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: How come New  
8 Yorkers were not encouraged to leave their cars at  
9 home and take public transportation when it was  
10 realized that the storm a lot worse? I didn't see  
11 and I haven't seen any communication that went out  
12 during that time encouraging New Yorkers to leave  
13 their vehicles at home and to use public  
14 transportation.

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: So that was not, we  
16 always do serve the general message that we would  
17 prefer for you not to drive but uhm I don't, we  
18 didn't do the don't drive message uhm and so when we  
19 are talking in the morning and about when people are  
20 getting up and getting ready to go, we did not have  
21 information that this storm had significantly changed  
22 and so people drove in. I think the message we  
23 failed to give them is we actually want you to now  
24 leave your car in the City and go home uhm and use  
25 mass transit. There is a very difficult message but

1 that is something that I think we should have tried  
2 to message.  
3

4 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: In your uhm  
5 testimony that you just delivered to us you said uhm  
6 related to the weather forecast, the forecast leading  
7 up to the November 15 event called for wintery mix  
8 with likely accumulations of zero to three inches  
9 predominantly on grasses surfaces. You went on to  
10 say that the contracted National Weather Services  
11 that the Department and the City used call for one  
12 inch of snow. As I pointed out in my opening  
13 testimony WPIX 11 was accurately forecasting what  
14 actually happened and they did it the day before.

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: I mean I would, I would  
16 go back there. I do not have information that WPIX  
17 11 had actually said that we were going to get six  
18 inches of snow but I am happy to go back and look at  
19 what they were looking at and what their forecasters  
20 are. Uhm we are using Accuweather, Compuweather,  
21 Metroweather and the National Weather Service as well  
22 as our own inhouse and I don't, I don't believe that  
23 the forecast. I, we did not see anything that  
24 indicated from anything that we had seen that the  
25

1 forecast was going to be significantly different  
2 until mid-morning on November.

3  
4 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Uhm so I printed  
5 out a series of Tweets from random New Yorkers or  
6 people who were in the City and these are Tweets that  
7 are unrelated to upper Manhattan and the Bronx given  
8 the reason that has been stated was the pileup on the  
9 George Washington Bridge and the spillover effects it  
10 had on the Cross Bronx Expressway and the Major  
11 Deegan and these Tweets, a bunch of them are from  
12 Staten Island where at 407, the roads in Staten  
13 Island are awful, cars are sliding everything. I  
14 have not seen one salt truck. An hour later, clearly  
15 no plows on Staten Island. I saw one small truck  
16 going up a block that was literally spinning out of  
17 control. He beeped at me I thought it was to say I  
18 am salting in front of you, you will be fine, no, no  
19 salt, nada, nothing, your fire. Staten Island is a  
20 mess. I did not see a single truck salting or  
21 plowing. It took three hours to get from the  
22 Verrazzano Bridge to Westerly and more Tweets like  
23 this. Then, related to Brooklyn. My X28 bus was  
24 supposed to leave at 3:19 and drop me off at Flat  
25 Iron by 4:00 p.m. I am still on that bus with 18

1  
2 blocks to go. And I am reading all of these just to  
3 say that there were clearly issues outside of the  
4 impact area that was citing. There were issues on  
5 Staten Island. There were issues in Queens. There  
6 were issues in Brooklyn. Uhm and I want to  
7 understand separate and apart from the details that  
8 you gave us related to Upper Manhattan and the Bronx  
9 there were still many, many issues in other parts of  
10 the City.

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: So uhm Mr. Speaker I  
12 appreciate that, that question, uhm yes there were,  
13 there were issues across the other boroughs. In  
14 Staten Island the Bayonne Bridge was, was closed for  
15 a very extended period of time which did impact the  
16 arterial highways there. Uhm that was true, also in  
17 Brooklyn and in Queens. There were challenges across  
18 the city so it is not to say that there were only  
19 challenges in upper Manhattan and the Bronx but they  
20 were the hardest for us to get out of so our ability  
21 to get through and recover from those, uhm was the  
22 most challenging. So you are absolutely correct that  
23 at the height of the, that sort of hour in the late  
24 afternoon, we were seeing major traffic issues across  
25 the City uhm in all five boroughs but the difference

1 was that they did not end up in a gridlock situation  
2 where we could not then get back on track uhm and  
3 then be able to actually move pieces of equipment  
4 later in the evening from other boroughs into the  
5 Bronx.  
6

7 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: The, the, day  
8 after the storm, when there was a press conference on  
9 the other side of City Hall in the Blue Room to  
10 address what had happened the day before, did anyone  
11 apologize from the Administration to the public?

12 KATHRYN GARCIA: I think that as you  
13 certainly are and as much as the public is, we are  
14 equally as frustrated. We do not want this to happen  
15 again. DSNY really strives to exceed New Yorkers  
16 expectations but this was really a regional issue  
17 that was a unique set of circumstance and we are  
18 really trying to focus on figuring out how do we get  
19 better in a way that we are prepared for the  
20 unpredictable.

21 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: But what's wrong  
22 with apologizing? Even if there were factors outside  
23 of our own control, what is the problem with saying  
24 I'm sorry?  
25

1  
2 KATHRYN GARCIA: I am certainly sorry  
3 that we did not message this and that we were not  
4 able to make it so that people understood the  
5 challenge that they would face ahead whether or not  
6 they were commuting or in school busses or they were  
7 parents and what the issues were, but I really, want  
8 to uhm be forward looking and, and really think about  
9 how do we help our staffs, all of us who had people  
10 who worked very, very long hours to try and make it  
11 through and stay, stay focused on it. I mean this is  
12 the type of storm where you are trying to create uhm  
13 a new paradigm and so we are going to try and make  
14 sure that we are writing that out into additional  
15 plans for uhm going forward and trying to figure out.  
16 So, what do we do when we lose major pieces of  
17 infrastructure and it is sort of if there is a  
18 cascading event, how do we handle that? How do we  
19 come up with new ideas?

20 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: I just think  
21 there is nothing wrong with saying sorry.

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: I am, I am reluctant to,  
23 to phrase it in that direct way because of the, the  
24 challenges of trying to apologize for a storm and for  
25 traffic.

1  
2           SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: But again, there  
3 were other factors outside of that, that we have  
4 talked about.

5           KATHRYN GARCIA: I am, I am certainly  
6 sorry that we did not message appropriate. I am  
7 certainly sorry that we had not thought up of like we  
8 should be messaging to people that it is likely that  
9 trees could become dangerous in a heavy snowfall with  
10 leaves on them. Uhm you know those are the types of  
11 things that I think we are focused on trying to  
12 assess and we will continue to be uhm thinking about  
13 how to make it better. We don't want anyone to  
14 experience this again.

15           SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: Commissioner I  
16 think you have been an outstanding Commissioner for  
17 five years, I think you've done an exception job not  
18 just in uhm in snow related events but I think you  
19 have done an outstanding job on working with the  
20 Council on prioritizes of the Administration and  
21 other parts of the Sanitation Department's portfolio  
22 and I really believe that. I think you have uhm  
23 served the City very well and I'm glad that the Mayor  
24 chose you to be our Sanitation Commissioner so any of  
25 this criticism today is in no way personal or in no

1 way me seeing that I don't have confidence in your  
2 because I think we have shown through your work with  
3 Chair Reynoso and members of this Council the ability  
4 to work together and to get through the vast majority  
5 of these snow related events and other issues that  
6 have come up in a competent thoughtful uhm way and I  
7 think because of that track record you were chosen  
8 for another job. You were chosen for a very  
9 important job which is to led an effort on  
10 eradicating lead in New York City and to come up with  
11 a plan which is extraordinarily important for us to  
12 here on the Council for the City as a whole. We had  
13 a hearing a couple of months ago related to a package  
14 of Bills on lead in New York City and eradicating  
15 lead exposure and poisoning for children in New York  
16 City and I think you were probably chosen because the  
17 Mayor had a lot of confidence in you by seeing how  
18 you have run the Sanitation Department. But is it  
19 too much to be Commissioner of the Department of  
20 Sanitation and to lead this other extraordinarily  
21 important effort at the same time?

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm so I am truly  
24 humbled that the Mayor had the confidence in me to  
25 appointment to me do what I think is incredibly

1  
2 important work around lead. Uhm let me assure you  
3 that in no way during any snow emergency would I not  
4 be at headquarters in my Command Center making sure  
5 that we are managing the event moving forward and in  
6 through all of the planning and after action that  
7 occurs with that. Uhm but I think that there is  
8 ability to also focused on what is critical work  
9 around ending exposure of lead for children and I do  
10 not have to uhm depend on if my Department of  
11 Sanitation, my First Deputy Commissioner Costas as  
12 well as all my Chiefs who I think are handling the  
13 day to day operations of the Department very, very  
14 well.

15 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: So, it's not too  
16 much to do these two jobs and being assigned these  
17 two very important responsibilities at the same time?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm I have not found it  
19 to be to date.

20 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: So uhm I'm going  
21 to leave the questions related to the Department of  
22 Education, I know that Chair Treyger has many  
23 questions. I know that Chair Reynoso has some more  
24 questions on operations of the day and Chair  
25 Rodriguez as well as other members, uhm so I am not

1 going to ask any further questions, but I hope that  
2 when this full operational review. When is the full  
3 Operational Review going to be done?

4 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm I anticipate it to  
5 be completed sometime next week.

6 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: So uhm and when's  
7 the, is there any snow in the forecast over the next  
8 week?

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm not yet but as I  
10 would say that is always subject to change. We  
11 actually had snow in the forecast last night that was  
12 there and then went away.

13 SPEAKER COREY JOHNSON: So, we look  
14 forward to getting a copy of that full Operational  
15 Review when it is complete and uh taking the lessons  
16 from that review as well as uhm the lessons learned  
17 in your testimony today and implementing those for  
18 future storms later this uhm Winter Season. Thank  
19 you, Chair Reynoso.

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: Thank you.

21 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you  
22 Speaker. I am also going to be brief on my  
23 questioning to allow for my colleagues, uhm  
24 especially ones that experienced uhm uhm I guess the  
25

1  
2 log jam more than I did. Uhm Public Transportation,  
3 I want to be hon... the subways were working well. If  
4 you were on a bus you were probably stuck either  
5 waiting for it for a prolonged time or, or crammed  
6 into one when it finally did show up. My question is  
7 uhm in every scenario, there is a proactive and a  
8 reactive way to handle situations and problems. Uhm  
9 I am preaching in my local office, making sure that  
10 we are organizing and we are passing policies that  
11 affect that lives in New Yorkers every single day in  
12 a proactive approach. Then we have a reactive side  
13 of our office which is Constituent Services. If  
14 there is a fire in the community, how we react to  
15 that and my problem here was when the crisis hit, I  
16 didn't feel that there was a reaction. I think that  
17 what people saw was they didn't see putting hand in  
18 traffic, if we see that a school bus is stuck in the  
19 middle of traffic northbound into the Bronx and  
20 Manhattan why are there not police escorts allowing  
21 for the bus to go onto the opposite side of the road  
22 so they can get to their destination understanding  
23 that those kids need to get home? Uhm who is  
24 responsible for making decisions that make sense on  
25 the spot? Something that you probably won't do,

1 don't do but could do? Who can authorize that is  
2 happening? I want every single NYPD vehicle or  
3 officers to come out and take these busses out of the  
4 log job and allow them to go into the opposite  
5 direction to get to where they need to get to. And  
6 that, that's just one example, but who does, who does  
7 those type of things so allow for us to feel  
8 comfortable that there is a reaction to a crisis?  
9

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: Absolutely so I'm going  
11 to briefly speak from my perspective and then uhm uhm  
12 so the Office of Emergency Management would usually  
13 coordinate some of those requests uhm and those would  
14 go through PD to be dispatched down to their Precinct  
15 level. Uhm I am going to ask uhm Terrance Monahan to  
16 talk about whether or not he would give discretion to  
17 patrol cars because I think that one of the things  
18 that we want to do is also make sure that we are  
19 prioritizing that if it is a question of a City bus  
20 or a school bus, well maybe we are prioritizing the  
21 school bus over, over the City bus or maybe we are  
22 prioritizing the school bus over the spreader and  
23 usually that has to be done centrally to make sure  
24 that, that if there is a need for coordination among  
25

1 agencies but let me turn to Chief of Department to  
2 give his perspective of authorizing uhm Precincts?

3  
4 TERRANCE MONAHAN: That is something that  
5 we don't have to give note, they have it. Our cops  
6 have discretion to handle a situation as they, as  
7 they see it. And that was happening that night, I  
8 mean I was partially out there for four to five hours  
9 driving in the Bronx and upper Manhattan. I  
10 personally view on my Twitter account out there  
11 clearing intersections, pushing cars, cops were out  
12 of their cars at intersections. The issue being that  
13 once you cleared an intersection there was nowhere  
14 for those cars to go. There was that log jam, so you  
15 are out, you are clearing it. There were busses and  
16 I can give you a perfect example, right on Fordham  
17 Road, over by Crotona, one of those two-tier busses  
18 completely tried to make the turn on it and spun out  
19 across the roadway which blocked five other busses  
20 from going anywhere. There was nothing he could do  
21 at that point. If he tried to back, he was going to  
22 take out a light post that was on the sidewalk. So,  
23 you tried to move the busses, some of them because of  
24 the snow were unable to be moved, that they started  
25 to spin out. So, it wouldn't be a matter of taking

1  
2 them across the road because they would spin out  
3 across the road and block that side too. So, each  
4 and every situation had to be handled specifically  
5 and very cautiously as you did it. We, anyone who  
6 was in the Bronx that day knows exactly what it was  
7 like, upper Manhattan I know exactly what you are  
8 talking about, uhm Councilman Rodriguez, it was at a  
9 standstill, but that situation became there was  
10 nowhere for us to push them out. We had 370 Traffic  
11 Agents that we held on overtime, working the areas,  
12 but as they cleared an intersection, the next  
13 intersection was blocked. So, there wasn't a spot  
14 until people were able to start getting out of the  
15 City until we actually, I know you don't want to keep  
16 hearing it, but George Washington but once you  
17 started getting that roadway moving to allow the  
18 people that were trying to get on to those entrance  
19 ramps it wasn't going to happen. And then again,  
20 they mentioned the GPS things. You had GPS signals,  
21 like the waves telling people to get off of the  
22 highway onto these secondary roads and they were  
23 clear. I had it on myself when I was driving around.  
24 They were saying Tremont Avenue was clear, Tremont  
25 Avenue down by West Farms had to be one of the worst

1 intersections that I have seen. According to the GPS  
2 system, that was a clear way to get to the Cross  
3 Bronx so people were stuck there. People that had  
4 never driven in that area before. I was personally  
5 speaking to them and getting the out of the car, they  
6 had never been there and they are showing me the  
7 route, saying this perfect, I should be able to go  
8 here, what do I do? So, the cops were out, this was  
9 probably just one of the most challenging situations  
10 I've seen driving around in the 37 years I've been  
11 doing this.

13 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: And I appreciate  
14 your answer related to uhm it doesn't matter if you  
15 clear one intersection if they are running into  
16 another intersection and so forth. I just want to  
17 get to the reactionary; the kids were stuck on busses  
18 and think that's the story that a lot of people uhm  
19 are most is relatable to them. When a kid is stuck  
20 on a bus, what or who or what put us into a position  
21 to not figure out way to at least get those kids, if  
22 it was an emergency vehicle like an ambulance and  
23 they already know protocol and they can do whatever  
24 they want to make sure that they get to a hospital  
25 but a school bus operator what authority do they have

1 to figure out a way to keep their kid safe uhm and so  
2 forth? I just want to know reactionwise, who is  
3 giving people direction? Who is the leader that  
4 gives people direction so that we can at least take  
5 care of the most vulnerable people in our City which  
6 are our children?  
7

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm thank you Chair for  
9 your question. I do want to say that our bus drivers  
10 were doing uh the best that they could in those  
11 situations to keep our students safe to make sure  
12 that they got home safely. At that point, our bus,  
13 the bus drivers were making contact with the  
14 dispatchers, the companies and with ourselves at  
15 central and we were uh coordinating with both City  
16 Hall and NYPD to make sure that we can get escorts  
17 out there. We have a lot of lessons learned and we  
18 need to do a better job with communicating with our  
19 families and we need to do a better job of  
20 communicating and coordinating with NYPD but as both  
21 uh as the Commissioner said, folks were at a, a  
22 gridlock and so when we were even making contact with  
23 NYPD to do escorts you know they can see the bus but  
24 they couldn't get to the bus. So, we were doing,  
25 the, everyone was doing the best they could and I do

1 think our drivers did a tremendous job to keep our  
2 kids safe uhm that evening.

3  
4 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Alright I just  
5 uhm I hear your answer, I just don't know if the  
6 crisis had an equal level reaction. I think the  
7 protocol was being followed and no one was like let's  
8 break protocol and let's, let's really do something  
9 about this and I just want that, who can have the  
10 authority to break protocol so we can start doing  
11 things that are, that are more reactive to handle the  
12 situation? We have never seen this before. Whatever  
13 protocol you put forth was not adequate to deal with  
14 this crisis because it has never been seen before.  
15 Who gets in the room and says break protocol, do what  
16 we have to do to make sure that we can react to this?  
17 I just want to know who can do that because I know  
18 that did not happen. There is no way it can happen  
19 because obviously it took a long time for us to  
20 finally deal with this situation?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, so certainly in this  
22 sort of situation, any of the agencies could have  
23 moved to request either the Office of Emergency  
24 Management or someone to do sort of more outside the  
25 box thinking. Uhm and that is actually one of the

1 pieces from the After Action that we are taking away  
2 is how to make it so that we are doing more out of  
3 box thinking? Like taking spreaders the wrong way  
4 down highways. Uhm but that was something in which  
5 we had not assumed that we were preparing for it is  
6 definitely something that we are taking away, is how  
7 do we, how do we get faster and more creative more  
8 quickly?  
9

10 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Okay I'm going to  
11 hold my questions until after everyone goes around  
12 one time so that we can give them an opportunity to  
13 speak. I appreciate your answer to my question and I  
14 do genuinely see that there is an effort here to  
15 improve uhm and I'm looking forward to what that  
16 looks like and hoping to be a partner in making sure  
17 that we can get that done. I want to uh Chair  
18 Rodriguez questions and I'm after the Chairs speak,  
19 we are going to put a three-minute clock, we can go  
20 around more than once if need be. We are going,  
21 Council Members will be able to ask questions in the  
22 order that they arrived to the hearing as well and I  
23 want to acknowledge the fact that we have also been  
24 joined by Council Cohen and Constantinides. Uhm  
25 Chair Rodriguez?

1  
2 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I feel that this  
3 experience thinking to understand that we need to  
4 improve greatly the level of the role that we  
5 interplay watching out interagency align and execute  
6 in this level of crisis. Which is why the Deputy  
7 Mayor was responsible to coordinate with you that  
8 Thursday afternoon, evening and Friday morning.

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, so as you know you  
10 have all the agencies who are primarily responsible  
11 for each of our roles.

12 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Were there any  
13 of the pre-Mayor?

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, we, yes, so the  
15 Office of Emergency Management is obviously the one  
16 responsible for coordinating us across all of our  
17 different missions and to make sure if we have needs  
18 that we were.

19 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Who were, who  
20 were...?

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: We were briefing the  
22 Mayor and all of his Senior Staff to make sure that  
23 they had situational awareness of what was happening.

24 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Okay pre-measure  
25 was coordinating in this interagency coordination

1 that required a level of crisis that New Yorkers  
2 leave that Thursday afternoon after we were in  
3 crisis, people therefore 10 and 14 hours, where were  
4 you coordinating at a team? Who from City Hall was  
5 the personal coordinating with you?  
6

7 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I was, I was in  
8 contact with uhm the First Deputy Mayor's Office and...

9 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Who, who was the  
10 person?

11 KATHRYN GARCIA: Dean Fuleihand as well  
12 as the Deputy Mayor of Operations uhm to make sure  
13 that OEM and I and PD were coordinated and that  
14 everyone had situational awareness.

15 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Did you, did you  
16 give an order from the Deputy Mayor for the Deputy  
17 Mayor at some point that there was a level of crisis  
18 that required for you guys to active a level of  
19 emergency?

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm there was not an  
21 order because at that point in time uhm once we ended  
22 up in the gridlock situation there was not uh a lot  
23 that could be done.  
24  
25

1  
2 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: There was a lot  
3 that could be done. There was a lot that could be  
4 done and that's where we will disagree.

5 KATHRYN GARCIA: And that, and that.

6 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: No listen,  
7 listen, you can come out with this finishing.

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: I wasn't going to.

9 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: There was a lot  
10 that could be done. Even at some point, one at a  
11 regular station and I heard someone saying we  
12 understand that people in traffic, I was in traffic  
13 too. I was in traffic too. Like at the crisis was  
14 over at 11:00 p.m., and there was 12:00, there was at  
15 1:00, there was at 2:00 and there was at 3:00. How  
16 can you explain in those? I have a lot of respect  
17 for all of you, my question, my thing is about. And  
18 it's not because I had the opportunity to be in the  
19 street, being witnesses what was going on. And for  
20 me it was about, I wasn't made like in Puerto Rico,  
21 they pull out all the men and women and they work  
22 there 24 hours and they are sending people to help  
23 people, Commissioner, that was a level of crisis even  
24 at night there. There was no, the streets were out  
25 of control, there was no one controlling and I get

1  
2 it, I think that there is a lot that we have to learn  
3 from. We have unit that control crowd, that control  
4 tourists. How many of those units were put into  
5 action to say, you need to spend now the whole shift,  
6 the whole hours? I'm happy to hear that there were  
7 370 traffic outside working overtime to 11:00 p.m.  
8 What happened from 11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., I can  
9 tell you, I have photos on my cellphone, I saw it,  
10 the streets. Not in one block, St. Nicholas Avenue  
11 was not a two-way street and it was not because law  
12 enforcement was giving order, seeing cars move in the  
13 direction, it was because there was no one there. It  
14 was because it was only place from all of those  
15 blocks that I saw only one law enforcement helping to  
16 move cars was St. Nicholas Avenue at 145<sup>th</sup> so now  
17 that wasn't, and I understand it, I understand that  
18 the George Washington how it has an impact in the  
19 whole City. But no, I'm not talking about my  
20 experience at 181<sup>st</sup> and ... I talk about my experience  
21 driving all the way Manhattan from 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and it  
22 was only the GPS sent people to St. Nicholas and I am  
23 saying that it was 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, it was 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. For  
24 me I think it was very challenging and I hope that we  
25 can learn and that's what was later said but for me

1  
2 it was at night, all the personnel should be working  
3 until 5 in the morning, everyone from Sanitation and  
4 people we support. If leadership will be saying, we  
5 need to call the men and women who are already work  
6 at 6 and 7 p.m., people will be seeing support in the  
7 street. People were without any support.

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: No, no, Council Member I  
9 really appreciate your experience, I mean this is not  
10 a story that I haven't heard and it was really,  
11 really, I, I can only image a miserable experience  
12 and felt very chaotic but you are representing the  
13 public.

14 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: No, no, don't  
15 put it on me. Don't put it on me.

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: No, no but you, I am  
17 putting it on you.

18 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: That's it when I  
19 say it's not, I don't want no one to feel sorry for  
20 me. The opportunity that I had was to witness what  
21 people went through and what I know that there was a  
22 lot of people from different Agencies being home at  
23 11:00 p.m. already, 10:00 p.m., warm. When there  
24 were people there in the street, that's what is  
25

1 supposed to be and every 100% of everyone, that men  
2 and women of all agencies should be in the street.

3  
4 TERRANCE MONAHAN: And I can say that I  
5 had over 3,000 cops out. I was out on the street  
6 until after 2:00 a.m. in the morning so the men and  
7 women of the New York City Police Department were out  
8 there but it was every, as I said it's every  
9 intersection, every intersection that you went to had  
10 a gridlock situation and no there was a problem,  
11 there was nowhere to send them. So once clearing an  
12 intersection wasn't going to solve it because I had  
13 to get these bridges open and bridges moving before  
14 we were able to move people out there. So, the men  
15 and women of the NYPD had as much of an issue as  
16 everyone moving around those neighborhoods, trying to  
17 get around, even with lights and sirens and trying to  
18 push people, trying to get busses out. It was as  
19 challenging a night for us as it was for everyone  
20 else on that road but they were out there, in the  
21 cold freezing out of their cars, pushing cars through  
22 intersections. Cars were stuck in the snow for  
23 sitting there. So, to clear an intersection, you had  
24 to get out hands on and push and that's what the men  
25 and women were doing out there.

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
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1  
2 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Were 300 and  
3 traffic agents who worked overtime, at what time, at  
4 what time did they finish their overtime?

5 TERRANCE MONAHAN: They finished at 11:00  
6 o'clock.

7 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: At 11 o'clock?

8 TERRANCE MONAHAN: They were posted down,  
9 mainly they were in Manhattan but the radio caused,  
10 the men and women in uniform.

11 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Where in  
12 Manhattan?

13 TERRANCE MONAHAN: 238 of them are at the  
14 post that they are always at daily in Manhattan.

15 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: What happened  
16 from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.?

17 TERRANCE MONAHAN: Uniformed Members of  
18 the Service.

19 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: They were not in  
20 they were not in the streets.

21 TERRANCE MONAHAN: They were out there.  
22 I was out there with them.

23 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I saw it.

24 TERRANCE MONAHAN: I was out there with  
25 it. I saw it. I wasn't sitting warm in the house.

1  
2 I was sitting out there with the men and the women  
3 doing the job.

4 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Where did you  
5 explore those men and women because I can tell you, I  
6 didn't see them in the intersections and for me this  
7 is a lesson. What do we live through anyone who is  
8 planning a terrorist attack that they gridlock our  
9 streets in the rush hour, I hope that we can learn  
10 from this plan?

11 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Chair  
12 Rodriguez. Uhm just to follow up very quickly. Were  
13 there opportunities to have Auxiliary Police or OEM  
14 uhm Certified Volunteers, were they called upon or,  
15 or, or, it's to help clear. Well obviously, They.  
16 Go ahead..

17 TERRANCE MONAHAN: We, we had some  
18 Auxiliaries that stayed, obviously they are civilians  
19 and they, we don't want them standing out in a  
20 dangerous situation in the middle of an intersection  
21 uhm and even if they were, this wasn't about  
22 directing traffic. You were not able to direct the  
23 traffic, with that traffic at this point in time in  
24 the gridlock had nowhere to go. That was the biggest  
25 instrument. We really, if you are out there, no

1 matter what you try to do at that point, until the  
2 highway is cleared, there was nowhere in these  
3 streets for those cars to go.  
4

5 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you I would  
6 like to call on Chair Treyger. Oh, I'm sorry.

7 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Let me give you  
8 my example, at 153<sup>rd</sup> and St. Nicholas Avenue,  
9 traffic, the street was gridlocked around 1:30 as  
10 soon I passed 145<sup>th</sup> driving north, all drivers  
11 driving north because it wasn't about me. There was  
12 one police officer giving direction. I'm not  
13 questioning the men and women there. I question  
14 again what happened at 11:00 p.m., why does traffic  
15 when offered can you do two or three more hours  
16 because of that situation and I left, I at 150<sup>th</sup> St.  
17 Nicholas Avenue the traffic was already starting  
18 moving. So and what's my concern, as I was stuck in,  
19 drivers at 127<sup>th</sup> St. Nicholas Avenue I know there was  
20 no place to move, I was thinking about whose  
21 reporting from the bus drivers or trying to get  
22 someone to help to move those senior citizens and  
23 children who decide to come out from the bus because  
24 probably 20 blocks away, it would be helpful today  
25 given the assistance in the direction today. Back I

1  
2 was just started, we were gridlocked, no principal,  
3 when we reach St. Nick and 150 there was an area for  
4 cars to move. So, they were placed without having us  
5 in traffic and force me that at some point we could  
6 do better helping drivers to get direction so that we  
7 could review the level of gridlock that we had that  
8 day.

9 TERRANCE MONAHAN: I completely  
10 understand that and that was an that was an issue  
11 that I saw, is there was always an area, if you could  
12 go to the side street that people could move but they  
13 all had a general place they wanted to go to get to  
14 the highway so you have that two block opening that  
15 you would see and everyone would try and take that  
16 move to and then two blocks later that same gridlock  
17 situation occurred until we were able to get them on  
18 to the highways and get the highways moving.

19 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Okay thank you I  
20 would like to call on Council Member Mark Treyger,  
21 Chair Treyger.

22 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Thank you to my  
23 fellow co-Chairs. I am going to direct more of my  
24 questions now toward the Department of Education and  
25 I welcome the Chief Operating Officer Ursulina

1 Ramirez uhm I just want to point out uhm, the  
2 majority of the school children that were on busses  
3 that day are most our most vulnerable children. Uhm  
4 young children, students with IEPs, some medically  
5 fragile students so when I hear folks tell me that  
6 well only 10% of the routes or 10% of the, these were  
7 our most vulnerable kids. And regardless of a snow  
8 storm or regardless of where the lock on emergency,  
9 the fact is that these, some of these students have  
10 IEPs that have mandated services that were not being  
11 met. On a snow day or on a non-snow day and we just  
12 literally had a hearing about this recently with the  
13 DOE. So, I just want to kind of point that out for  
14 the record. I don't want anyone from Administration  
15 to minimize what happened to kids that day. Uhm so  
16 during the November 15 snow storm as we have heard  
17 and are aware that many students were stranded on the  
18 school busses for long ho... long periods of time.  
19 Some up to 10 hours according to press reports and  
20 according to media reports many of the stranded  
21 students were extremely frightened and distressed due  
22 to a lack of bathrooms, food and contact with family  
23 and some lacked what they needed access to, medical  
24 attention. What are the DOE's protocols relating to  
25

1 food, water, bathrooms and medical supplies or  
2 attention for students stuck on school busses?

3  
4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm thank you Chair  
5 Treyger for your question uhm and to your earlier  
6 point, I, I hope that I do not want to minimize the  
7 fact that we had some of our most vulnerable students  
8 on those, on those busses that evening and who are  
9 generally on our busses uhm every single day. Uhm  
10 our bus drivers were tremendous heros that evening  
11 and in addition to some of our attendants and our  
12 teachers and our principals who stayed at schools  
13 until the wee hours of the morning to make sure that  
14 our kids were safe. Uhm we are, our bus drivers are  
15 trained in emergency, you know in emergency  
16 protocols. None of our training would I think got to  
17 the level of what happened that Thursday in terms of  
18 the hours that they were on the bus with those  
19 students. Moving forward, we are looking to your  
20 point around getting emergency food and water on the  
21 busses or within school distance so that folks, our  
22 students can have water. Uhm we are also looking to  
23 see if, if possible, how do we open up the buildings  
24 nearby and staff them so that if there is an incident  
25 where we can say and the traffic was not in a

1 gridlock can we divert students to our own buildings.

2 So we are looking at all of those things, we have a

3 lot of lessons learned, a lot of ways in which we

4 communicate with families, uhm but I do think that

5 the bus drivers did the best that they possibly could

6 in the scenario and I do think I would want to thank

7 my colleagues at the NYPD because in those wee hours

8 in the morning when we needed them and where they

9 could get to our students, they were escorting

10 students and buses home.

11  
12 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Right well I will  
13 point out it is not the bus driver's responsibility

14 to come up with protocols and how to make sure that

15 kids have access to food, access to bathroom, it's

16 the DOEs responsibility so who was charged with

17 responsibility with making these changes or

18 improvements in the protocols?

19 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So as the Chief

20 Operating Officer I am responsible for making those

21 changes, obviously and in conjunction with the

22 Chancellor and we are looking at all of those things

23 right now, as you have mentioned, the Chancellor

24 called for an After Action Report and immediately the

25 next day, on Friday he was hosted a convening of our

1 group at 12 p.m. so that we can assess, what did,  
2 what lessons did we learn? And what can we do moving  
3 forward? Uhm to your point, getting water on those  
4 buses or nearby is incredibly important for us.  
5

6 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Uhm and what is the  
7 time frame?

8 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, we are, we are  
9 moving rapidly so that we could uhm contribute to the  
10 Mayor's Report which will be for next week.

11 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: And how do you plan  
12 to better communicate with parents? Because at the  
13 last hearing we just had we talked about the GPS  
14 devices, things we heard that there is a commitment  
15 to try to uhm you know fast track or advance this.  
16 We had legislation that is making its way in the  
17 Council but the breakdown in communication with  
18 families was once again so prevalent and and so  
19 glaring, where are we at? With better communication  
20 with parents during these types of events?

21 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, I do think that  
22 this storm exacerbated our, our communication issues  
23 with our GPS uhm system, so we are moving rapidly to  
24 get GPS in all of our busses and an effective GPS  
25 too, you know making sure that it is both

1 communicating with us properly but also with, with  
2 parents. Uhm and our goal is to get GPSs in busses  
3 as soon as possible but definitely by the beginning  
4 of next school year.  
5

6 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Despite, you know  
7 many of the Transportation problems that folks  
8 experience there is afternoon and evening. The  
9 decision was made to open schools on Friday November  
10 16h and this decision was communicated to the media  
11 and parents in the early morning before the start of  
12 the school day. Why was the decision to cancel field  
13 trips and after school programs not communicated  
14 until later that morning when the school day was  
15 already in session?

16 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, it's, as you know  
17 cancelling school or after school or anything within  
18 the school day is a really hard decision for us to  
19 make uhm and that morning we were really focused on  
20 our central services, getting our students to school  
21 and getting them home. We had bus drivers who were  
22 out uhm and didn't get their busses back into their  
23 depot until maybe 4 or 5 in the morning. We really  
24 wanted to make sure that we were keeping our students  
25 safe in busses that were with, drivers, with drivers

1 that were exhausted, staff who had stayed overnight  
2 in the building, so we were focused on our central  
3 services. Our goal is to always to overcommunicate  
4 and communicate earlier, uhm I mean that is again a  
5 lesson learned; how do we communicate faster and  
6 earlier uhm so that parents know well in advance?  
7 But I do have to say if a parent was unable to pick  
8 up their student and uhm our staff was at the school  
9 building with those students to make sure that they  
10 were safe.  
11

12 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: But you just  
13 mentioned that you were already aware that many  
14 busses got back at 4 or 5 in the morning. Why  
15 couldn't folks be alerted earlier, earlier that  
16 morning, because you know I've, I've heard such  
17 stories why the Chancellor issued a, issued a Tweet  
18 at 8:30, 8:30 in the morning, first of all, the  
19 school day already starts for most of our schools.  
20 Parents already have dropped off their children and  
21 have gone to work or gone with their day, why  
22 couldn't they make that call when they already knew  
23 that so any busses were coming back to their depots  
24 at 4, 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning.  
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URSULINA RAMIREZ: At that moment, we were still assessing the delays from, delays from the busses going into school that morning. Uhm I do wish that we would have called it earlier. I do and I I think like I said moving forward we have to do a better job of communicating, communicating faster to our schools and to our families, because I can't imagine as a, as a parent being told last minute that you have to go pick up your child or that you're after school is cancelled is really difficult, it is.

CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Respectfully these are the same parents.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: It is uhm and we want.

CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Respectfully these are the same parents that had to wait 8 to 10 hours for their kids to come home and wanted to move on from the very uhm traumatic experience and I was cont... I was, my office, many of my colleagues reached out as well, families, you know people can't afford just to take off work. This, you know, this was grossly irresponsible. I am, I am extremely disappointed in DOE how they handled that day. Now how were parents notified? If you can give me, what was the process? Who made the call? Explain to me

1 who made that call? What was the process like? And  
2 how were parents notified?

3  
4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, throughout the  
5 morning as we were having busses uhm uhm drop  
6 students off at schools we were assessing the delays  
7 that were happening uhm and the decision is made,  
8 with myself in consultation with the Chancellor  
9 around what we want to do for that day, assessing our  
10 services and how our busses are doing. Uhm in terms  
11 of communications to schools and to families, we  
12 notify schools uhm and let schools notify parents  
13 about the afterschool cancellation. Moving forward  
14 we need to better, we need better communication with  
15 families on how we make those decisions and when?

16 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: So, you left it to  
17 schools to notify the parents?

18 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Well we did do social  
19 media uhm I mean social media and Twitter but a lot  
20 of it is relayed through our school systems.

21 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: I just didn't,  
22 understand, I don't understand when the decision was  
23 made to go to the media not just the Twitter account.  
24 Because you can't Tweet your way out of these things  
25 but to go, when you went to the media to say school

1 was open the next day, why wasn't the decision just  
2 made there and an announcement made right there and  
3 then? You are saying, why couldn't they just say it  
4 at that one time when you already knew that there  
5 were problems with busses?  
6

7 URSULINA RAMIREZ: At that moment, uhm  
8 Chair Treyger, we were really looking to see still  
9 how many busses were still going into schools that  
10 morning. Like I said I think we have lessons learned  
11 on our time and how we need to notify parents  
12 earlier.

13 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Yeah, I believe, I  
14 believe that there needs to be an improvement to that  
15 pro... I mean if you could explain to me the process to  
16 close to close schools. I'm sure it is in  
17 consultation with Commissioner Esposito, with  
18 Sanitation and others and I, I just I am not clear on  
19 the process on how they decided you know just to  
20 announce so late in the day, uhm disrupting so many  
21 families and kids. Uhm I think that process needs to  
22 be straightened and I, I, I, we expect this to happen  
23 immediately. I have a quick question with regards to  
24 DSNY and DOE. Uhm what if any coordination and  
25 communication is there between DOE and Sanitation

1 Department? Does the Sanitation Department have  
2 information on the School Bus Routes? Are you? Does  
3 DSNY?  
4

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: No, we do not track  
6 the school bus routes, if they have a problem that  
7 usually is coordinated through the Office of  
8 Emergency Management or NYPD and they will call for a  
9 spreader to assist if a bus is stuck. Uhm however,  
10 in this particular case in many instances, where we  
11 got called to assist, for example, I know that PD  
12 called us because they were like, they called that  
13 the FDR was slippery uhm and I saw that flow and dump  
14 which is our largest piece of spreading equipment get  
15 on to the FDR North of 125<sup>th</sup> Street and then I  
16 watched it on the DOT traffic cameras for literally  
17 three or four hours. Uhm so we have a process by  
18 which if there is any issue uhm if people need a  
19 spreader or a sander that it goes through the Office  
20 of Emergency Management or through City Hall or  
21 sometimes even through your offices, we will hear  
22 information and respond. Uhm uhm but in this  
23 particular case it was, it was very difficult for us  
24 to get around.  
25

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JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
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2 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Commissioner I am  
3 not clear if you could help me understand, is there  
4 any reason why the Sanitation Department would not  
5 want to know the school bus routes and if there is a  
6 way to prioritize them during the snow removal  
7 process to make sure that children can come home at  
8 a, at a reasonable hour.

9 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So I absolutely, we  
10 could add that to the much, the different pieces of  
11 information but we do make su... what we are trying to  
12 ensure is that the whole City is moving and all of  
13 routes have schools on them as our most critical but  
14 obviously students are dropped off, usually if their  
15 homes could be on a busy street could be on a very,  
16 very narrow street. Uhm so we are willing to look at  
17 what that might mean for us operationally cause I off  
18 of the top of my head I can't tell you uhm and what  
19 impact that would have on our ability to clear other  
20 roadways as well. But there is almost no street in  
21 the City of New York that either hasn't been or  
22 couldn't become a school bus route, uhm so we would  
23 have to confer with DOE to see whether or not that  
24 would have been helpful.

25

1  
2 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Right I think it  
3 makes sense to have that information and I agree that  
4 we need to make sure the whole City is moving but I,  
5 we also have to, I think prioritize our most  
6 vulnerable and these were kids that were stuck on  
7 busses up to 10 hours that are very uhm medically  
8 fragile, have very special critical needs  
9 Commissioner so I think that is something that I  
10 expect, I think better communication and  
11 coordination. Uhm I also just uhm last week to the  
12 DOE I had a parent in my District uhm that informed  
13 me that the school, as you mentioned, there was some  
14 busses not in commission the following day. But I  
15 heard a particular case where the bus was out of  
16 commission because they had already violations and  
17 problems with it and the storm really did a number on  
18 it. Uhm which leads me to more questions. Uhm are  
19 school bus vendors allowed to operate school buses  
20 with open violations? Uhm and if so, what, which  
21 violations are allowed and does DOE keep track of the  
22 violations on those busses?

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, I'm going to have  
24 to get back to you on the specifics around what  
25 violations busses have what that process looks like

1 so I will get back to you as soon as possible on  
2 that.

3  
4 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: I, I would greatly  
5 appreciate that because when I am hearing that there  
6 are school busses that already have problems and I  
7 want to know who knows about it and why are they  
8 still on the road? And why aren't they being fixed?  
9 And as you mentioned, many busses were not in  
10 commission uhm the following day. Uhm I would be  
11 mindful of my colleagues and their time so I will  
12 turn it back to the Chair.

13 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Chair  
14 Treyger and I just want a quick followup it was a  
15 beautiful day the next day, it was sunny. Why was  
16 school cancelled for after school programs, like if  
17 you are a parent and you are at work and at 12:30 you  
18 got a message you got to come pick up your kid? Why,  
19 why was that decision made? What did the DOE need to  
20 do that was so important that everyone had to come  
21 pick up their kids for after school program?

22 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm.

23 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: And I just want  
24 to say this largely affects community of color that  
25 depend heavily on after school programming so they

1 can make money so they can stay living in this  
2 expensive City. I just want to be mindful that the  
3 afterschool programming is very important related to  
4 that and why that decision was made?  
5

6 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I completely agree  
7 with you Chair Reynoso of how important afterschool  
8 programs are. Uhm and they are uhm you know we think  
9 of them as an extension of our, almost of our school  
10 day because we know how important they are to our  
11 students but also to families. Uhm we made the  
12 decision and it was, and we didn't make it lightly  
13 uhm and it was around the safety of our bus league.  
14 I think moving forward and something we are  
15 considering is how do we differentiate afterschool  
16 programs? Those who don't need bussing and those who  
17 do? Uhm and how do we better communicate with the  
18 families.

19 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: So, your busses  
20 were destroyed because of the prior day?

21 URSULINA RAMIREZ: No, we.

22 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: So, we, you were  
23 concerned about the busses?

24 URSULINA RAMIREZ: It was the drivers.  
25 It was our drivers.

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CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: The drivers?

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URSULINA RAMIREZ: The drivers who were  
doing very late nights the night before and making

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sure they can get the mandated amount of rest that

6

they need. But as I mentioned to Chair Treyger we do

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need to do a better job of communicating with parents

8

earlier.

9

CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: This is the first

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time that I am hearing that it was because of the

11

drivers by the way. So, it's just this type of

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communication, we just want to know why things are

13

happening. I think people would be more empathetic

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to you, sympathetic to your cause if they just knew

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that the drivers were exhausted because they had been

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working until 2, 3 in the morning, trying to get

17

these kids home one day and that is just not

18

communicating. It's just like we are cancelling

19

afterschool programming, deal with it. Uhm I just

20

wish that communication would have happened. I think

21

Council Member Treyger has a follow up and after him

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we are going to go with Miller, Deutsch and Gibson.

23

CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Yeah, I I just want

24

to the communication piece, some busses have

25

attendants, some don't. Some attendants are will

1  
2 contact those parents if they have their information  
3 but many of them do not. Many parents do not have  
4 access to that so it was a real nightmare scenario  
5 and I do, and I'm waiting for those improvement  
6 protocols to be made. I have a quick, just follow up  
7 question with regards to, does DOE have data on how  
8 many students were left at school that day because  
9 parents could not make accommodations to pick up  
10 their kids or whatever?

11 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm that's a great  
12 question, I do not think we do because we would have  
13 taken the attendance in the morning, not necessarily  
14 attendance for the students who stayed but I will get  
15 back to you uhm to see how we can push that out but  
16 I'm not sure that we do.

17 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Because then that  
18 would require school staff to stay beyond their  
19 contractual day.

20 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Right.

21 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: As well because you  
22 can't leave kids alone during the school day. So, as  
23 you can see this entire process disrupted both  
24 family, schools as well as our school community.  
25 Alright thank you Chair.

1  
2 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Okay thank you so  
3 now we will start the clock. Uhm we are going to  
4 start with Miller followed by Deutsch and Gibson.  
5 Uhm, Council Member Miller?

6 I. DANEEK MILLER: Thank you Chair to all  
7 of our Chairs to for this important hearing and the  
8 being at it really quick. First of all, I want to  
9 thank all of our brave public service that were out  
10 that night and for the jobs that they have done  
11 because we are beating up on them but the men and  
12 women that are out there, they know what they are  
13 doing, they did a great job. Having been one for  
14 more than two decades, having managed and having  
15 represented many of those folks, I know that they  
16 that the job that they do. But I also know that some  
17 of the things that we are talking about now are  
18 decisions that are made that are, that seems to be  
19 falling back on those workers. 1) There, there,  
20 every agency has, had unusual occurrence, white books  
21 and plan contingency for these kinds of occurrences.  
22 It appears that we, we have not been following in  
23 those instances. Now, one of the things that we did  
24 not touch on with the DOE is why weren't parent-  
25 teacher cancelled for that night if we were asking

1 everyone to stay off the road, why were we  
2 encouraging parents to go out? And and to a parent  
3 teacher's night, the night before? As Chair Reynoso  
4 said, that the, the following day was a great day,  
5 the sun was shining and yet it was 11:40 before uhm  
6 Districts was notified. I got all the that from  
7 principals and PTA Chairs and all of that stuff.  
8 That it created a problem with being able to pick up  
9 children. There are provisions in place that govern  
10 how these employees and what the work force is to do,  
11 right? Whether it is industry standards of 19, 8-  
12 hour work rules, who stays, who goes and the majority  
13 of the afterschool programs are privately operated  
14 and including the pickup transportation, privately  
15 operated so to say that those bus operators were  
16 responsible for not having afterschool I think it  
17 disingenuous at best. So uhm why first off were we  
18 not cancelled the night before? Which kind of sets  
19 the tone and then secondly the next day, how, how do  
20 we get in a room and change protocol that has already  
21 been written, that we have been operating under this,  
22 under these guidelines and now we decide that we want  
23 to do something different where the workforce, the  
24 parents and everyone else knows that these are the  
25

1 provisions in which we work under under these  
2 circumstances and yet they were different and they  
3 were changed at the last minute at the most  
4 inopportune time where parents and others did not  
5 have an opportunity to respond?  
6

7           URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm thank you so much  
8 for your question Council Member. Uhm regarding  
9 parent teacher conferences, uhm when we got  
10 notification of the weather shifting in the  
11 afternoon, we had some parents who were already on  
12 their way to their parent conferences, some parent  
13 conferences were in the afternoon, some were in the  
14 evening so we did not make a change because we knew  
15 that parents were already out, headed toward their  
16 parent conferences. Uhm regarding the following day,  
17 around afterschool uhm you know the, the  
18 unprecedented storm we obviously we've never been a  
19 situation where we had a large number of our fleet on  
20 the road until the wee hours of the morning. Uhm  
21 we've had it where maybe one or two have stayed late  
22 but not the wee hours of the morning the way they  
23 had. To your question around, uhm you know blanket  
24 statement around afterschool everything is cancelled.  
25 That is something that we are looking at and how do

1 we differentiate because to your point some of them  
2 are privately operated and do not require bus  
3 services and we want to make sure for those, for  
4 those programs that we can possibly maintain open if  
5 it, if it's safe. So, we do that to heart and we are  
6 taking those recommendations because we know how  
7 important afterschool programs are for our families.

9 I. DANEEK MILLER: Alright so maybe just  
10 and, and I just want to forward the evening session,  
11 I think that certainly should have been cancelled and  
12 I understand that the day session, there was a  
13 problem with that but the afternoon session where we  
14 were encouraging people to stay off the road, should  
15 have been cancelled, and parents should have been  
16 encouraged to stay off the road as well. Having  
17 represented those bus drivers for a number of years,  
18 I will tell you unequivocally that this is not the  
19 first time that we have seen a situation like this  
20 and they have done work, they have done a great job  
21 and they would have been back within their 8-hour  
22 time frame to come back and do it. But again, more  
23 than 90% of the afterschool programs do not depend  
24 on, on that ridership. So again, I am not

1 understanding why schools had to be closed and  
2 parents had to be inconvenienced in that way?

3  
4 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Chair  
5 Miller. Council Member Deutsch from Brooklyn.

6 CHAIM DEUTSCH: Thank you, thank you very  
7 much. Yes, from Brooklyn. Uhm so anyway I want to  
8 thank you all for being here and I, I will be very  
9 blunt and honest. You all do a great job and I know  
10 that I could say to some of you, uhm Chief I could  
11 get ahold of you anytime 24-hours a day and your  
12 staff uhm Commissioner Garcia, uhm I had a number of  
13 conversations with you at 1 and 2 o'clock in the  
14 morning. Uhm OEM Commissioner, it is 3, 4 o'clock in  
15 the morning sometimes. Especially I live in the, in  
16 the Waterfront District and Commissioner Trottenberg  
17 I know where you jog so I know where to find you.  
18 And uh I usually contact my Borough Commissioner but  
19 I know when and kind of how to get ahold of you. So,  
20 I want to thank the DOE and everyone. So really, we  
21 entrust each, each and every one of you, uhm 8.6  
22 million New Yorkers in your hands when it comes to  
23 terrorism, when it comes to counter terrorism, when  
24 it comes to emergency situations. So first I just  
25 want to say we could sit here all day today pointing

1 fingers, uhm but we need to work in partnership.  
2  
3 Maybe this would have been better done offline at a  
4 meeting at a roundtable because I know we usually  
5 have a, a conference call anything there is a storm  
6 emergency, we have an interagency conference call,  
7 and I think firstly there was no conference call that  
8 day, maybe we should have had that interagency  
9 conference call with all the elected officials during  
10 the crisis to see what we need to do at that point  
11 during, during that situation. Now I sat in traffic  
12 for three hours, more than three hours, I went to  
13 good lesson so the good part is that I did take a  
14 subway twice this last week uhm just to get around  
15 but my 18-minute ride going from Chelsea Market to  
16 Water Street was 2.9 miles and 3-1/2 hours I didn't  
17 even get to my destination and it was really, really  
18 a bad situation out there. Uhm so the three issues  
19 uhm that I have seen actually four issues 1) One is  
20 that parents could not get ahold of their children.  
21 Uhm making sure that the children were safe. We did  
22 have a hearing about the by my Bill that I, I  
23 sponsored with Council Member Mark Treyger and Ben  
24 Kallos to, to require all busses to have GPS systems.  
25 I think that we need to push with DOE, uh we did have

1 a hearing on that. Secondly, accidents and disabled  
2 vehicles like you mentioned, the George Washington  
3 Bridge, you had a 20-car pileup. Currently I believe  
4 on all major highways, parkways, freeways, bridges,  
5 there is only one tow truck company that is allowed  
6 to respond. There is only one contract. I do have a  
7 Bill to expand that to at least two with a GPS system  
8 so this way when one is called, that closest tow  
9 truck would be able to go cause if you had a 20-car  
10 pileup I'm going to ask you in the second round, what  
11 measures were taken once we were notified that there  
12 was a 20-car pileup. We need to get those cars off  
13 of the road as soon as possible. We need to make  
14 sure that we have the tow trucks available and to  
15 respond to those calls but without having the, with  
16 the congestion it is very difficult for emergency  
17 vehicles to respond and uhm you know Sanitation you  
18 couldn't even get, you couldn't even get the salt  
19 spreaders in the area, so when something was wrong  
20 because of the weather predicament uhm I don't uhm I  
21 honestly I don't blame Sanitation because you  
22 couldn't even get there but we need to make sure we  
23 unclog the streets as soon as possible. We need to  
24 expand those tow trucks to two those disabled  
25

1 vehicles off of the street as soon as possible and  
2 also there was uhm trees down, 1200, I believe 1200  
3 trees down. Uhm some of the streets I went, I drove  
4 up, they had trees in the inse... blocking the road so  
5 you couldn't get by. We need to make sure that FDNY  
6 in on hand, Parks Department is on hand when we are  
7 in emergency modes and finally traffic control  
8 officers. I have honestly not seen traffic control  
9 officers until I did not reach my destination. I  
10 headed back to Brooklyn and I crossed over the  
11 Manhattan Bridge. That's when I first saw two  
12 traffic control officers. So, when we are in a  
13 crisis such as that, that day, that evening, we need  
14 to into emergency mode and I know that OEM always  
15 interacts with other agencies and I know after  
16 Hurricane Sandy when it comes to a crisis, I call OEM  
17 all the time. So, we know that there was failure on  
18 all parts and we need to move on and I'm going to get  
19 to my questions in the second round. So that's my  
20 uhm my thoughts on this.

22 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you for  
23 your testimony, uhm Council Member, Couns... I'm  
24 looking forward to your second-round questions. Uhm  
25 Council Member Gibson.

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

91

1

2

VANESSA GIBSON: Thank you Chair Reynoso.

3

CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Oh, I'm sorry,

4

I'm so sorry I just want to recognize that we have

5

been joined by Council Member Borelli from Staten

6

Island.

7

VANESSA GIBSON: Staten Island, alright.

8

CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: (laughing).

9

VANESSA GIBSON: Thank you Council Member,

10

thank you Chair Reynoso, Chair Rodriguez, uhm Chair

11

Treyger. Certainly, recognizing the speaker and

12

thank you all of the commissioners who are here;

13

Sanitation, NYPD, DOE, EOM, DOT, and Parks. Uhm

14

really appreciate your testimony, really appreciate

15

you being here uhm and certainly all of us are

16

extremely frustrated and you know while I understand

17

and appreciate the empathy and the sympathy, uhm New

18

Yorkers really want answers and that is the purpose

19

of today's hearing uhm and I like many others are

20

equally frustrated, uhm we you know rely on our

21

administration to provide service, sufficient service

22

to make sure that we are able to live and travel in

23

this City and you know that day November 15, uhm to

24

describe it was a nightmare. It was a hot mess. Uhm

25

New Yorkers were stranded, stuck walking, you know

1  
2 all sorts of things happen across the City and my  
3 entire adult life living in New York City, I have  
4 never experienced anything like that on November  
5 15<sup>th</sup>. It was traumatizing and it is upsetting to  
6 even talk about it again because I speak on behalf of  
7 all of my constituents in the Bronx and I recognize  
8 there were a lot of unintended, unexpected things  
9 that occurred. We certainly cannot control what  
10 Port Authority and what you know New Jersey may do  
11 uhm and out of the borough like the Bronx we are  
12 crippled if anything happens on the George Washington  
13 and I do understand that. Uhm but most of my travel  
14 and many of my colleagues, we were stuck and stranded  
15 in the borough of Manhattan and so before the George  
16 Washington was closed, we still are trying to  
17 understand what happened, uhm and your testimony  
18 provided a lot of content, a lot of detail, a lot of  
19 numbers, uhm but the reality is Commissioner, we did  
20 not see that staff uhm many of my constituents were  
21 talking about missing persons because they didn't see  
22 sanitation workers. We didn't see traffic  
23 enforcement agents. We just didn't see them and so I  
24 want to really commend the City workers and really  
25 all New Yorkers because somehow, we survived. We

1 lived to see another day, teachers and principals  
2 still showed up to work the next day, police officers  
3 showed up, the 9-1-1 call takers were still working.  
4 Sanitation workers showed up to work the next day  
5 despite it all but we really have to understand what  
6 the fundamental breakdown in communication was,  
7 something went wrong on that day, we have experienced  
8 much heavier accumulations of snow in the City and we  
9 have prepared for it. Uhm we have prepared for it  
10 well and we do it well and exceptionally well and so  
11 what many of us are trying to understand is what  
12 happened? Our constituents are asking us questions  
13 and sending messages and really trying to understand  
14 what happened on that day and not even just my  
15 personal story which during the second round I can  
16 get in to but just my children that sat on busses and  
17 what, what I would like to understand and, and one  
18 question I can get out is the communication to  
19 parents. So, parents, called the bus companies of  
20 which their children were on those busses to try to  
21 get the location of the bus so they can try  
22 themselves to meet the bus at the location. If they  
23 were in the Bronx, their child was stuck somewhere in  
24 the Bronx. The operators that answered the phone  
25

1 lines for bus companies did not give out any location  
2 information because we don't know why and so what I  
3 would like to understand from the DOE's perspective,  
4 the multiple contracts we have with hundreds of bus  
5 companies, what types of information are we allowed  
6 and should we give to parents so they can understand.  
7 It makes no sense that even with busses stuck in  
8 traffic, if a parent wants to try to get to her child  
9 why was she not give that information, or father so  
10 please help me understand what DOE is doing as it  
11 relates to the existing contracts and what we are  
12 trying to do to improve the communication with  
13 parents?  
14

15                   URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, thank you for your  
16 question uhm Council Member Gibson. Uhm our, so  
17 moving forward I will note that moving forward in our  
18 future contracts what we are trying to accomplish and  
19 that is that we have obviously GPS in all bussing and  
20 that there is a way to communicate around bus  
21 location and ETA. Uhm I am not sure, I will be  
22 honest, I am not sure why the dispatches did not give  
23 information on the bus location and I want to look  
24 into that right away I would love to kind of work  
25 with you to see what constituents were experience so

1 I can understand what bus companies that they were  
2 working with. Uhm we were doing our best to  
3 communicate with families exactly where students were  
4 at. Uhm obviously because of the gridlock uhm you  
5 know parents weren't able to get to their students  
6 uhm in many instances but I would love to know more  
7 details because uhm I want to work with our bus  
8 companies, like you said we have over 60 vendors who  
9 we work with uhm and there was a lot of gaps in how  
10 folks were com... how bus companies were communicating  
11 with families that evening that we need to address.

12  
13 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Council  
14 Member Gibson. Uhm following that would be Council  
15 Member Rose, followed by Cabrera and Gjonaj. Uhm  
16 Council Member Debi Rose from (INAUDIBLE). So uhm I  
17 am usually, good afternoon Commissioners. I'm  
18 usually a champion and very vocal supporter of DSNY  
19 and especially your snow removal efforts and I am uhm  
20 I know that you know we are the greatest City in the  
21 world and so there is no reason why six inches of  
22 snow, no matter how early in the season it was you  
23 know should have caused this, this much mayhem. You  
24 know the fact that it took me three hours to get home  
25 from St. George which is a 20-minute ride and my

1 constituents anywhere from six to eight hour to 10  
2 hours to get home in the evening rush. Uhm and while  
3 I understand that you know there were forces that  
4 were out of your control, nevertheless, the response  
5 of the administration was really woeful and lacking.  
6 You know the fact that the City Council Speaker felt  
7 it necessary to apologize for the failures of the  
8 Administration and the Administration did not step up  
9 and at least apologize and show any empathy to you  
10 know what the commuters were experience and uhm one  
11 of the things that used as a reason was the closing  
12 of the George Washington Bridge. Well you know we  
13 are really far removed from the George Washington  
14 Bridge and we were experiencing gridlock before and I  
15 know you are going to say the Bayonne Bridge was  
16 closed off and on but our interior streets were  
17 gridlocked well uhm before the George Washington  
18 Bridge and you know any impact that the closing of  
19 the Bayonne Bridge would have. So, we, we  
20 experienced gridlock you know slippery streets, trees  
21 that felt that could not be removed by Parks because  
22 uhm no one could get through and uhm and we were left  
23 with no way of even communicating with the people to  
24 let them know that there were these issues. So I was  
25

1  
2 wondering what is uhm due to your, you have a  
3 protocol in terms of situational uhm situational  
4 awareness so on what day and when did you realize  
5 that there was, that there was a drastic shift  
6 because I was uhm out at a meeting on Staten Island  
7 and by two o'clock, 2:30, it was apparent that this  
8 storm was going to be more than a dusting and it took  
9 me an hour and a half then to get from Richmond  
10 Avenue to St. George and so uhm I would like to know  
11 when did. Wow I didn't get to my question.

12 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: The second round  
13 is going to be for questions. Council member but go  
14 ahead I want you to ask your questions, I'm going to  
15 give you some more.

16 DEBORAH ROSE: Can I just ask my ques...

17 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: No, I do want you  
18 to do to do it I'm just foreshadowing for the next  
19 Council Members, I would appreciate questions in the  
20 first.

21 DEBORAH ROSE: Instead of commentary, I'm  
22 sorry about the commentary. Uhm so I just wanted to  
23 know when, when did you realize that it had changed.  
24 Because Staten Island was the first place that the  
25 weather was apparently had changed uhm and was there

1 a failure to communicate that there was a need for  
2 snow plowing equipment? Was there an error in  
3 monitoring these conditions? And did somebody fail  
4 to relay the message that the full effect that the  
5 storm was having? And were the appropriate  
6 procedures taken to notify DEP, DOT and DPR that  
7 additional resources were needed?

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm thank you Council  
10 Member and yes clearly this was now just the GW, the  
11 GW was just the worst piece of this. There were  
12 definitely traffic challenges across the City of New  
13 York including on the Staten Island Expressway and  
14 the 440 and the Bayonne Bridge. We, we became aware  
15 that the forecast was changing in the late morning on  
16 the day of the snow. It was formally changed by  
17 National Weather at a little after 12:30 in the  
18 afternoon and snow was beginning to start falling  
19 right around 1:00 p.m. This is when we were told  
20 actually by our employees on Staten Island, by the  
21 Sanitation workers that snow is starting and that is  
22 when we started spreading salt. Uhm and that salt  
23 was with every salt spreader that we have available,  
24 sent out across all five boroughs and they were all  
25 told to start salting by a little bit after 1:30

1 because the storm came in very, very fast. So, we  
2 had, we did not have a new forecast from anyone in  
3 the late morning. Uh we had conversations with our  
4 internal analysis and with National Weather Service  
5 about what are you seeing, is this shifting  
6 significantly uh and they then did put out a formal  
7 change in the forecast later. Uhm but we had begun  
8 moving and that was when, when we got to the point of  
9 where we thought we might have additional snow beyond  
10 the 1 inch we did start putting on additional plows.  
11 As you know it takes us between 12 and 18 hours to  
12 plow up the entire fleet. We eventually got to the  
13 point by around midnight where we had additional 700  
14 plows in addition to the nearly 700 spreaders that  
15 were working and I actually think that we are still  
16 in some ways very, very important because you need  
17 the salt to deal with slippery conditions. Uhm.

19 DEBORAH ROSE: But Commissioner by your  
20 own testimony you said 82% of all of the streets were  
21 salted by 10:00 p.m. but not plowed. And, and, and  
22 at that point, with that amount of accumulation, 6-  
23 inches, salting is not effective, we need it to be  
24 plowed.

1  
2 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, let me just clarify,  
3 spreaders all have plows on them, so they can spread  
4 and plow at the same time. And so that means that  
5 they had gotten.

6 DEBORAH ROSE: Our streets were not  
7 plowed, Commissioner, I'm sorry.

8 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, so let me clarify,  
9 this means when we are in snow fighting operations  
10 and why we design, how we design our routing is to  
11 make sure that we are doing multiple passes because  
12 one of the other things that was very I would say  
13 unanticipated about this storm is there, it was not a  
14 long, long duration storm but you had one, two inches  
15 of snow per hour and even if it was only for a few  
16 hours, so you, that is extraordinarily heavy snow.  
17 So, our spreaders did primarily stay on the Staten  
18 Island Expressway, on Hiland, on Victory and uhm on  
19 the 440 for longer and we were not able to push the  
20 into the sector routes as quickly because there was  
21 heavy snowfall and we were trying to make sure that  
22 all of those roadways were passable.

23 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you.

24 DEBORAH ROSE: Second round.  
25

1  
2 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Yes, thank you  
3 Council Member Rose. Uhm it's going to be Council  
4 Member Cabrera, Gjonaj and Salamanca. So, the Bronx  
5 is up for questioning and/or statements and  
6 testimony.

7 FERNANDO CABRERA: Thank you out to all  
8 of the Chairs, thank you for holding this uhm  
9 hearing. Commissioners I have the highest estimation  
10 and admiration for the work that you do. Uhm  
11 Commissioner Garcia you know at the very last hearing  
12 I commended you for the last years 40-inches worth of  
13 snow. But I have to tell I am still angry, I am, I  
14 consider myself a very peaceful kind of a person but  
15 I am upset, I am still upset about what took place.  
16 Uhm to be honest with you I am livid. You know I  
17 call you, I called everybody that I could call and I  
18 am still having a difficult time buying the rationale  
19 why we couldn't get this done when it was done. We  
20 talk about the bridge but if you go from west to east  
21 in the Bronx, we have epic level of traffic like,  
22 everyone has mentioned here that we had not seen.  
23 So, it wasn't going in the direction of the bridge,  
24 it was in the total opposite direction of the bridge.  
25 At the bridge nobody has spoken about the fact that

1 we have two levels so there was movement taking place  
2 or there should have been movement and then on top of  
3 that there has to be a protocol for moving from this  
4 day forward that whenever we have a situation at the  
5 bridge of any of the bridge that we move those cars  
6 asap. Not two hours later, not three hours later,  
7 however long, because it is just like an artery. We  
8 were having a heart attack in this City, at a  
9 dangerous level where we have ambulances, I don't  
10 blame the NYPD, they couldn't move, the ambulance  
11 couldn't move. They were going to trying to go over  
12 the sidewalks. It was just, it was just, we were  
13 literally having a snow heart attack in the City.  
14 The one-inch that I keeping narrative, when I saw the  
15 news, everytime was one to three. I would have went  
16 with the three and three demands a plow. I would  
17 have just put plows in all of my trucks and played it  
18 safe. We need to play it safe every single time.  
19 Why? We have less lanes than before, uh we were,  
20 some roads from three lanes to two lanes for back  
21 lanes and we are trying to improve the, the  
22 transportation culture where but that cause, again  
23 it's like arteries becoming smaller and smaller. Uhm  
24 we knew there was a problem in the morning. The the

1 inspectors at the Sanitation Department, some of them  
2 were saying that we were waiting for the call. They  
3 knew there was going to be a problem and then let me  
4 say this last, shame on the MTA for not being here  
5 and I commend you all for being here because I know  
6 we have some hard questions and hard statement but  
7 shame on them, shame on them for not putting the tire  
8 treads on the MTA busses and putting people at risk  
9 whenever I, whenever we see a one to three, we got to  
10 believe the worst. And the reason why global warming  
11 is here and people think that it is just  
12 automatically going to get warmer it has as you know  
13 the opposite effects in certain region and we are  
14 experience that and with that I will close and I will  
15 come back with the questions. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Council  
18 Member Cabrera and the only other person that called  
19 me more than Cabrera that day, Council Member Gjonaj.

20 FERNANDO CABRERA: You beat me?

21 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Yeah, he beat  
22 you.

23 FERNANDO CABRERA: How did that happen?

24 MARK GJONAJ: Thank you because I think I  
25 called. I want to thank the Chairs first for this

1 historic hearing of multiple committees as well as  
2 the multiple agencies. Uhm I spoke to many of my  
3 colleagues that night and the following morning,  
4 helped orchestrate the letter that called for today's  
5 hearings. I was on the phone with you Commissioner,  
6 as late as 11:30 I believe that night. Six inches of  
7 snow and a partial bridge closer shut down the  
8 greatest City in the world making us a joke  
9 throughout the nation. I and in hearing that we  
10 don't have a think tank for coming up with the worst-  
11 case scenarios and how do we respond? I wish we had  
12 the expertise or the think tank that helped many of  
13 you including this Administration. And coming up  
14 with ways not to apologize. I said I am sorry to my  
15 constituents. I said I'm sorry to anyone that called  
16 complaining but to hear skating around an apology.  
17 You can't apologize for the weather but to come up  
18 with ways not to apologize to New Yorkers, for having  
19 the greatest City brought to its knees is  
20 unforgiveable at most. I won't even begin to ask who  
21 do we hold accountable at some point? Is there  
22 anyone that is being fired for not doing their part?  
23 Will anybody resign? Because I know the answer to  
24 that one and this Administration refuses to fire  
25

1 anyone for what they do or for what they don't do.  
2  
3 My question is, when we begin, when, when we are  
4 going to decide whether or not there is a school  
5 closure, there is a whole protocol put in place and  
6 the Agencies and the Departments of bring the Mayor  
7 up to speed and there is a decision made. Why wasn't  
8 there a decision made that early morning to make sure  
9 that there is an emergency alert that goes out to,  
10 leave your cars where they are at? Parking  
11 regulations will be suspended. Don't leave the City.  
12 Stay where you are. Take mass transportation. Find  
13 shelter in hotels. Help keep our roads clear. I am  
14 going to ask a slew of questions, we've got 330,000  
15 employees currently working for New York City and I  
16 love my men and women in blue. You had six, you said  
17 370 traffic agents out there. What is the number of  
18 traffic agents that we have I total? Don't answer  
19 because I am going to go through, hopefully get a  
20 bunch more. The number of officers that we had, we  
21 had 3,000 out there. I was on 125<sup>th</sup> Street and  
22 Willis Avenue at 11:30 talking to you I got out of my  
23 own car to help cars go up. There wasn't an officer  
24 or a traffic agent or anyone in sight. You yourself  
25 admitted that you were waiting for NYPD so they could

1 help stop the traffic so a salt or a plow can get up  
2 past that bridge at that point. Once you got past  
3 that point, the roadways were open. That was the  
4 blockage. There was no one there at 11:30 at night.  
5 I have a slew of other question that I am hoping that  
6 I can get to round two and three. But you explain to  
7 me, to the people in this audience. The people  
8 listening to these hearings that want answers on a  
9 Declaration of Emergency? How is that done? How  
10 many times did you speak to the Mayor that day? Each  
11 and every one of you? What did you say to that  
12 Mayor? Why wasn't an Emergency Crisis called? And I  
13 will wait for round two after you answer these  
14 questions.  
15

16 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: So just to, to  
17 restate those questions, is uhm how many times did  
18 anyone on this panel speak to the Mayor? And uhm in  
19 those conversations why was there not uhm a request  
20 for an emergency a State of Emergency in the State of  
21 New York?

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I will speak. I  
23 spoke to the Mayor multiple times that evening and I  
24 emailed with him multiple times probably more than  
25 hourly. Uhm he was very concerned about what the

1 situation was, he wanted detailed information about  
2 where we were, he wanted to know what else we should  
3 be doing. At that point in time uhm I honestly  
4 thought that declaring an emergency when the traffic  
5 was already gridlocked uhm would not have actually  
6 helped anything. At that point in time I did not  
7 make that recommendation because I didn't think that  
8 it would be particularly useful in the morning. Uhm  
9 I certainly will turn to the colleagues from the PD  
10 or anyone else to add, to add to that answer.

12 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: As far as Emergency  
13 Management, we answer to the Deputy Mayor of  
14 Operations and that is who we were in touch with,  
15 with on that day.

16 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Can you state the  
17 name of that, of the Deputy Mayor of Operations?

18 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: I'm sorry?

19 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: The name of the  
20 Deputy Mayor of Operations?

21 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: Laura England.

22 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: We want to just  
23 make people know.

24 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: Yeah alright. You know  
25 an event like this is a unified command. Just to

1 answer your question from earlier. It's a unified  
2 command. A unified command is this weather event  
3 that is a number of agencies that deal with it  
4 together. NYPD, FD, my shop, uhm Transportation,  
5 Sanitation, we all make those decisions collectively.  
6 We will sit around see what the issue is and try and  
7 talk about the problem, how we are going to answer  
8 it. Uhm my office was in touch with the Deputy Mayor  
9 of Operations. That was the questions. My office,  
10 we did not talk to the Mayor. We spoke to the Deputy  
11 Mayor of Operations. Her office.

12  
13 MARK GJONAJ: Did at t... did at any time  
14 during that conversation was it suggested to call for  
15 an Emergency Alert so we can broadcast by all means  
16 possible stay where you are at?

17 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: No. It was at that  
18 point when I spoke to the Sanitation Commissioner, we  
19 thought it wasn't necessary at that time. We were  
20 already in crisis mode.

21 KATHRYN GARCIA: May I also put it in  
22 context I think this is something that we have, is a  
23 lesson learned that we have taken away. We want to  
24 be more aggressive. We are very sorry that we weren't  
25 more aggressive in our messaging and uhm and that we

1 weren't able to give people better or early warnings  
2 about the extraordinary challenges the region was  
3 facing, not only from traffic but downed trees, uhm  
4 so we, we think that there was more that we could  
5 have done at the moment in time. Uhm I did not make  
6 that recommendation. I don't think it came from OM.  
7 We were to use the Chairs we were bearing very  
8 reactive. It was like I knew that my spreaders were  
9 struggling and my plows were struggling across the  
10 City and as you know, like we are there at 125<sup>th</sup>  
11 Street, I can't get across an intersection. Uhm and  
12 how do I get it out? Because I know that those  
13 pieces of equipment are the most critical pieces of  
14 equipment to get the roads better once, they start  
15 uhm once the, the crashes are removed.

17 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: So just uhm, we  
18 are going to, we are going to be Salamanca, Ampry-  
19 Samuel and Borelli are the next three. I just want  
20 to I guess, part of the frustration comes from the  
21 fact that whether or not you thought it was necessary  
22 because the the activation of a emerge.. a State of  
23 Emergence would not have done anything I think it  
24 just would have made us feel that you took it as  
25 serious as it was. It was, it was a crisis and even

1  
2 if how do I, procedurally uhm it doesn't change  
3 anything it would have at least put the City on  
4 notice that you were taking it as an emergency.

5 KATHRYN GARCIA: So I, I certainly did  
6 not mean to suggest that I was not taking everything  
7 extraordinarily seriously and that when, in my  
8 communications both with the Mayor and with Senior  
9 Staff at City Hall that they were not taking it  
10 extraordinarily seriously because that is not at all  
11 the case, I'm just being and you are right, it might  
12 have been useful in terms of just messaging even if  
13 it didn't remove the number of cars. Uhm but it is  
14 actually not something I thought to ask for at that  
15 moment.

16 MARK GJONAJ: But Commissioner, I'm sorry  
17 I need to interrupt and I apologize Chair. You are  
18 admitting that the problem was the traffic and the  
19 log jam that didn't allow your vehicles to clear the  
20 plows now. And there is no alarm that rings or a  
21 flag that goes up to say hey this crisis is going to  
22 be addressed by having less vehicles on the road.  
23 That's not a call for you to make to say hey make  
24 this an Emergency Alert. Shut down, tell them park  
25 their cars wherever they are act, parking, suggesting

1 that we get the cars off of the road so you and your,  
2 the men and women that plow our streets can do their  
3 job. That didn't resonate with you?

4  
5 KATHRYN GARCIA: COu... Council Member I  
6 just want to say that, that, uhm we absolutely were,  
7 were thinking through how to make it so that the men  
8 and women of the Department of Sanitation could be  
9 more effective because they were effectively trapped.  
10 Uhm when we do something like close the City which we  
11 have done on more than one occasion, uhm it has to be  
12 something where it closes with a regional context.  
13 We have, you can't just shut this City without uhm  
14 having somewhere for the cars that are coming into  
15 the City from the outside highways to go. And  
16 perhaps my colleagues from either OEM or NYPD could  
17 share their perspective on it.

18 MARK GJONAJ: Commissioner, I am talking  
19 about them off the road.

20 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Council Member  
21 Gjonaj I'm just going to.

22 MARK GJONAJ: The percentage of those  
23 vehicles are, getting the off the road. That should  
24 set. That should resonate and be a priority. I'm  
25 sorry I'll wait for round two.

1  
2 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Yeah so, we can  
3 obviously tell Council Member Gjonaj's frustration  
4 and I don't want to uhm to minimize that but of out  
5 of courtesy for the rest of our colleagues we are  
6 just going to ask that we hold on to answer that  
7 question and we move on to the second round. I would  
8 like to call on Council Member Salamanca which would  
9 be followed by Council Member Borelli.

10 RAFAEL SALAMANCA: Thank you uh Chair  
11 Reynoso. Uhm Commissioners as I, as I look at this  
12 panel, I see extremely bright and highly qualified  
13 Commissioners and Chiefs. But on November 15<sup>th</sup> this  
14 Administration failed New Yorkers. Commissioner  
15 Garcia on Wednesday November 14<sup>th</sup> at 4:07 p.m. you  
16 uhm you held a press conference and you treated DSNY  
17 and OEM discussed prep for tomorrow's winter weather.  
18 Salt spreaders are loaded and ready to go. On  
19 Thursday November 15<sup>th</sup>, New Yorkers looked at your  
20 Tweet from the day before and questioned ready to go  
21 where? The City's response was a total disaster.  
22 Tremont and West Farms uh it is in my District which  
23 is the avenue to get to the Cross Bronx and the Bronx  
24 River as you mentioned Chief. Brocton Boulevard from  
25 138<sup>th</sup> Street to Bronx River is in my District. That

1 gets you to the FDR, to Sheridan, I-95 the Bronx  
2 River, the George Washington, the Throgs Neck Bridge  
3 and the White Stone Bridge. A total standstill in my  
4 District. The 401 Precinct which is on Brocker  
5 Boulevard and Longwood Avenue, in the middle of  
6 Brocker Boulevard was not out there controlling  
7 traffic from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A full  
8 disclosure of the 401 Precinct is my Precinct, my  
9 personal Precinct that I have the best relationship  
10 and you know that Chief. As I mentioned to you  
11 Commissioner Garcia that evening when we spoke at  
12 11:30 p.m. that around 4:30 that afternoon I was  
13 getting calls from my constituents and I called one  
14 of the depots in my District to question why were  
15 there not any spreaders or plows because the snow was  
16 accumulating and that supervisors response to me was  
17 that the spreaders and plows are in their depot and  
18 they are waiting for the higher ups to give them the  
19 go ahead so they a hit the streets. So, Commissioner  
20 is that true? Were there spreaders and plows in  
21 depots waiting for higher ups to give them the okay  
22 when the streets needed to be plowed?

24 KATHRYN GARCIA: Absolutely not, the  
25 orders went out uhm in the afternoon. The order from

1 Central was the same. They were not supposed to  
2 rethink it. The, when we said to go to full spread,  
3 you were supposed to go to full spread. They are,  
4 they do have to go back to get more salt, to get fuel  
5 and then there were shift changes that were occurring  
6 but the orders did not change and we did follow up  
7 with the borough and the Districts regarding this.  
8 Uhm obviously no one has any recollection of making  
9 this statement.  
10

11 RAFAEL SALMANCA: Of course not.

12 KATHRYN GARCIA: But that, those were not  
13 the, the orders from Central. Did not change during  
14 the course of this event.

15 RAFAEL SALAMANCA: Now do you, uhm in  
16 order to uhm I'm just going to wrap this up uhm Chair  
17 Reynoso because I want to get to this. You know,  
18 it's really, it's really bothering me that at 4:30 in  
19 the afternoon when snow was accumulating, it was  
20 standstill traffic. Obviously, the streets needed to  
21 be plowed and I'm getting word from a supervisor in  
22 the depot saying my salt spreaders are in my depot  
23 and they have not given me the okay so that they can  
24 hit the streets. How can you prove that otherwise?  
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Do you have GPS to reveal to me that that is not true?

KATHRYN GARCIA: We have GPS on all of our spreaders and our snow assigned plows and the Plow NYC Data is also on the data portal. The open data portal hosted by the City of New York.

RAFAEL SALMANCA: So again I'm.

KATHRYN GARCIA: I am happy to have you come in, we can uhm take you through all of them.

RAFAEL SALAMANCA: For that day, those hours?

KATHRYN GARCIA: For that day, and those hours and whatever location you want.

RAFAEL SALAMANCA: And how accurate is that information? Because at times when I am looking online to see when a street has been plowed, it says that it has been plowed within a certain time period and when you go outside and you look that is, that is inaccurate?

KATHRYN GARCIA: So, it is very, very accurate. There are some areas where it is inaccurate so what I am going to tell you is that if you are underneath the elevated highways the metal causes the signal to shift and we have put algorithms

1 in place to try and mitigate it or if you are  
2 underneath an elevated subway, we can have issues  
3 with the signal shifting. So, we have tried to  
4 compensate for it but that is two of the places where  
5 we have not figured out a way to compensate for those  
6 errors, just because of the metal content above. But  
7 we would love to have you come in. We would take you  
8 through that whole day uhm and have you look and see  
9 where the spreaders were exactly and how quickly they  
10 were moving. Uhm you know I had spreaders that  
11 literally spend their entire time sitting on the  
12 Sheridan or their entire time sitting on the Brocker  
13 and not moving at all.

14  
15 RAFAEL SALMANCA: Or their entire time  
16 sitting in depot?

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: I do not believe that  
18 was true.

19 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: So just uhm to  
20 follow up could there have been any opportunity for  
21 your order to out and it not be something that they  
22 not follow through on? Could it be just this  
23 individual garage decided not to go out? Is that a  
24 possibility?

25

1  
2 KATHRYN GARCIA: If they, if they had  
3 decided not to go out and to disobey orders, one  
4 there would be significant consequences and two we  
5 would have had some insight into that from  
6 headquarters based on our GPS data.

7 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: So, you will  
8 review and audit?

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: We will review and, and  
10 look at this because that is certainly and then when  
11 the Council Member raised it uhm that evening on  
12 November 15<sup>th</sup> it is certainly something we wanted to  
13 dig into because that would be completely and utterly  
14 unacceptable.

15 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you for  
16 that. Uhm now we have uhm Council Member Borelli  
17 closing up. Round one.

18 JOSEPH BORELLI: This is round one,  
19 right? Uhm. Commissioner Garcia just staying on  
20 what Council Member Salamanca said I just Tweeted out  
21 a timestamp picture from Plow NYC at 8:00 p.m. which  
22 shows nearly all of the streets in my portion of  
23 Staten Island had not seen a plow at all by 8:00 p.m.  
24 that night. So, 9 hours after 679 spreaders had been  
25 deployed with plows, 7.5 hours after after snow began

1 to fall on Staten Island. 4-1/2 hours after all 1400  
2 vehicles were ordered to put plows on and go plow.  
3 How was it that the majority of at least my District  
4 in Staten Island and I believe if I could scroll  
5 through my phone, I could find other parts of Staten  
6 Island. How is it that no none of these streets had  
7 been plowed?  
8

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: What is the, what is the  
10 time frame that you are asking?

11 JOSEPH BORELLI: This is at 8:00 p.m. on  
12 the 15<sup>th</sup>.

13 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm so there is as you  
14 know Staten Island is uhm uhm it is larger than  
15 people think of it and we did stay on your critical  
16 highways you know, I know, we did stay on your  
17 critical highways for a very long time. We did not  
18 want to get off Hiland. Or.

19 JOSEPH BORELLI: Is that because there  
20 are not enough spreaders? Out of 679 spreaders, how  
21 many are on Staten Island roughly?

22 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm on Staten Island  
23 that day you had 87 spreaders.  
24  
25

1  
2 JOSEPH BORELLI: 87, okay is that I mean  
3 in your opinion is that enough. I mean is there  
4 enough to then hit all the streets?

5 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm so we divide our  
6 spreader fleet based upon the mileage and the  
7 critical mileage in each District and I do think that  
8 we should have sufficient resources when we are able  
9 to move and there were, there were challenges and yes  
10 there are places that we did not get into  
11 neighborhoods on Staten Island until a little bit  
12 after 8 o'clock. We were mainly on your main roads  
13 through that period and then we caught up through the  
14 evening.

15 JOSEPH BORELLI: Good, thank you.

16 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Good for time by  
17 Council Member Borelli. Thank you so much. Yes, you  
18 are. So, the second round is going to be two  
19 minutes. I would ask our colleagues to please ask as  
20 many questions as possible in those two minutes.  
21 There will not be a third round specifically because  
22 we do have someone that is going to speak after this  
23 panel. Uhm we are going to start with the Chairs and  
24 then go down the list. We will start with Council  
25 Member Rodriguez. I forgot your name my colleague.

1  
2 Yeah, it's my Dominican brother, it's the love. I  
3 know.

4 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Uhm first of all  
5 Chief Monahan all of my respect for the work that you  
6 do and the men and women that work with you. In no  
7 doubt I would not be surprised in the street helping  
8 anyone who needed help that night as men and women  
9 who were there. So, saying that, you know our  
10 concern and is always, we had to learn from many  
11 crises to do better in the future. It is about a  
12 game. For me, as I said before, whatever happened,  
13 happened, cross the GW we know but I should say that  
14 there were 370 traffic agents. Something that I  
15 would like to know is that one how many in total City  
16 workers as traffic other men and women NYPD,  
17 Sanitation, DOT, how many individuals were activated  
18 to work overtime? Were all of the always working  
19 until 11:00 p.m. and why? And why, who made a  
20 decision not to offer for a, the 370 who were loved  
21 or like or would volunteer to continue working  
22 overtime? So still in the street helping traffic and  
23 how many individuals from other agencies were  
24 activated? What was the total of individuals

1 activated in the City of New York that day from 4:00  
2 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. in the morning?  
3

4 TERRANCE MONAHAN: Uh to the traffic  
5 agents, that was everyone that was working that day.  
6 So, we held the entire traffic agents at 370 were  
7 working, every one of the stayed. We held out day  
8 tour on the highway. The highway personnel they  
9 stayed over. That was a total I believe of 16. Our  
10 day tour, by the time our day tour got off, our day  
11 tour patrol units are off by 3:30. At that point we  
12 did not see a necessary reason to hold them because  
13 all of our 3 to 11 personnel had shown up. We held  
14 everyone that was working on the 3 to 11 that night  
15 as needed until sufficient personnel came in to  
16 relieve them so I believe it was around 150 citywide  
17 that we held, maybe a little bit more. The report  
18 may have been a little bit low but the order went out  
19 from me, citywide, no one goes home until adequate  
20 resources are in each and every command in the City  
21 before you release your personnel on the 3 to 11.

22 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: So, by the 300,  
23 what impact was the 370 traffic agents having in our  
24 streets? Working up to 11 p.m. And what difference  
25 will we make if similar numbers or half of those

1 numbers and I'm not saying that, I'm not questioning  
2 I'm not questioning that there was not men and women  
3 from the NYPD or from this particular agents'  
4 traffic. Since they left by 11:00 p.m. what  
5 different would it make if they will be helping to  
6 move traffic from 11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. in the  
7 morning.  
8

9 TERRANCE MONAHAN: Where their posts  
10 were. Where they are assigned was mainly in midtown  
11 Manhattan. By 11:00 they were seeing the inner  
12 streets in midtown Manhattan were running and flowing  
13 a lot better. But at that point a decision was made  
14 by the Chief uhm the Chief Kollectki (SP?) who as  
15 working. He stayed overtime, he is the Traffic  
16 Coordinator. He made that decision at 11:00 to  
17 release them.

18 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: And I feel that  
19 the issue we have, we have the City of two tales. It  
20 showed that the fact is there and no one is telling  
21 me. I was in (INAUDIBLE) there was only one person  
22 helping to move traffic at 1:45 and then you are  
23 saying that most of them, they were stationed in the  
24 midtown area?  
25

1  
2 TERRANCE MONAHAN: That was their normal  
3 post. That's where they started their day. And  
4 that's where we held them at those posts and each and  
5 every one of those intersections had issues also.

6 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: So, one should  
7 be responsible then for not being able to move some  
8 of those traffic agents to be and they didn't have to  
9 drive because I just said the train was running. Who  
10 was looking at the gridlock that we had in different  
11 places and move them? Why did we leave them only in  
12 midtown?

13 TERRANCE MONAHAN: What we did also move  
14 was our uniformed forces. The Citywide Traffic Task  
15 Force, they were all moved up into the vicinity of  
16 the George Washington Bridge, right around 4 o'clock  
17 in the afternoon.

18 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: George  
19 Washington, midtown.

20 TERRANCE MONAHAN: George Washington  
21 Bridge that whole area the Washington Heights over  
22 there, that's where the congestion is starting.

23 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I just feel that  
24 you know hopefully we learn from this.

1  
2 TERRANCE MONAHAN: Oh absolutely. This  
3 was.

4 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: That was too  
5 much and and again I the interagency coordination and  
6 as you agree, running your agency. We have been  
7 working together. But I hope that what happened on  
8 the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16th should not happen again. I am  
9 going to check in with my sister about one child who  
10 has autism, Francis Rojas. Do you know what time he  
11 got home? At 1:20 in the morning and at least we  
12 were here. He was able to talk to his mom and when  
13 he got home neither Rojas asked how are you doing?  
14 He couldn't talk and he was brought home crying.  
15 That's the story of thousands and thousands of people  
16 not only again as a student but senior citizens were  
17 there so hopefully, we learn from this.

18 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: I will be the  
19 interim Chair as we wait for the return of Council  
20 Member Reynoso but I just had a couple of uhm follow  
21 up questions with regards to the DOE. We had  
22 mentioned earlier that some uhm of the bus attendants  
23 did make contact with families and many families of  
24 course were not contacted but my question is who is  
25 actually responsible? Is there anyone responsible?

1 Who is responsible for reporting late busses to  
2 parents or guardians for general education and for  
3 Special Education busses?  
4

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, there is a  
6 provision in the current contracts that bus companies  
7 are responsible for contacting families when there  
8 are delays, weather related delays or delays  
9 generally uhm and then we all, the OPT hotline also  
10 our customer center also contacts families when there  
11 are significant delays. We made it and as  
12 Commissioner Garcia said in her testimony, they made  
13 about 665 contacts that evening to families and we  
14 had staff stay overnight to make sure that our, that  
15 our customer hotline was available and ready for  
16 families.

17 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: So, there were  
18 contractual obligations is that correct?

19 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Correct.

20 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: And when contact is  
21 not made what is the consequence?

22 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So right now, in our  
23 after action we are looking at all of the contacts  
24 that were made with families and and looking at how  
25 dispatchers and the, I'm sorry the vendors and the

1 bus companies were contacting families. Uhm and  
2 assessing if there were any mistakes made.  
3

4 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Has the DOE issued  
5 any punitive actions since the storm?

6 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm we have not.

7 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Not one?

8 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm no punitive  
9 actions uh towards companies for that event.

10 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: I find that to be  
11 very concerning. Because if we are acknowledging  
12 that there were mistakes made and things that should  
13 not have happened again and they are contractually  
14 obligated to reach families and there has not been  
15 one consequence to any of these companies I think  
16 that is a significant problem. And that's on the  
17 City that's not on the. We have to issue those  
18 punitive actions, otherwise they will keep repeating  
19 them. Uhm can you talk to me about capacity of the  
20 OPT Customer Service Line that night, were they able  
21 to handle the volume of calls? And also, the issue  
22 of language access?

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, like I mentioned  
24 we had 15 staff members stay until 5 in the morning  
25 so we had, it was completely overnight stays.

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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CHAIR MARK TREYGER: How many staff?

3

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm 15 uhm and they

4

for the most part was handling a lot of the contacts

5

with families and in addition them there was

6

obviously uhm my colleague Kevin Moran and myself,

7

other people who were working overnight to make sure

8

that we were both in contacts with schools and

9

principals. The families as well, uhm including and

10

I Council Member Kallos was in direct contact with

11

families as were members of City Hall. Everybody was

12

all hands-on deck trying to communicate with folks.

13

I do think what we are looking forward in lessons

14

learned is figuring out how do we uhm better staff up

15

our OPT Call Center if there is an emergency like the

16

one that happened on November 15. I will have to get

17

back to you in terms of language access to see how

18

many calls we received from uhm from languages other

19

than English. But I will get back to you right away.

20

CHAIR MARK TREYGER: But we have people

21

on standby who are, who are able to speak different

22

languages if we receive a call from parents that

23

speaks a language other than English?

24

25

1  
2           URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm I know we have  
3 staff members who speak other languages. I want to  
4 make sure on that evening, what we had available.

5           CHAIR MARK TREYGER: I mean both from the  
6 OPT Service Line but also with regards to even the  
7 dispatches, bus Commissioners who are required to  
8 make contact with what notices. Are there any  
9 language access requirements in those, in those  
10 contracts?

11           URSULINA RAMIREZ: UH I'm going to have  
12 to get back to you on the language requirement uhm  
13 for the company but I will get back to you.

14           CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Uhm, this is  
15 concerning and I'm also something that we raised at  
16 the hearing that we had last month and we are going  
17 to continue this conversation with regards to who  
18 from OPT is supposed to have the information about  
19 what type of accommodations are required, mandated  
20 for students and how we are complying with these  
21 things? Who is responsible to enforce compliance on  
22 the busses. We are going to keep at this issue.  
23 This is a very, very serious issue, it's, a, it's an  
24 issue of a life and death for our children. It's an  
25 issue that just gets moral. It is the right thing

1 that we have to, we have to follow up on. Uhm do you  
2 know of any other mechanisms the DOE used to inform  
3 parents about those delays that day?  
4

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Uhm it was direct uhm  
6 direct phone calls was most of the communication that  
7 was happening that evening. Obviously, we were  
8 working through Social Media and Twitter but direct  
9 phone calls were our, was our best way of, of getting  
10 in contact with families.

11 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: But were you aware  
12 of complaints who could to reach because the line was  
13 busy or there, there was a long wait time. Are you  
14 aware of any of those type of complaints?

15 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I've not and if you've  
16 heard any of those things please. I would be very  
17 helpful to have that relayed. We, you know when we  
18 did contact families, a lot of them were very  
19 understanding and empathetic with the bus drivers and  
20 just wanted to make sure that there, their child got  
21 home safely.

22 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Okay well, there is  
23 some follow up that we will do with uhm DOE and  
24 actually I have a final question to Commissioner  
25 Silver from Parks. Uhm I know that there were uh

1 significant number as we heard before from other,  
2 from my colleagues, a significant number of trees  
3 that uhm went down during the storm. Uhm I am also  
4 concerned about the trees that maybe did not go down  
5 but are in danger of going down. And are the Parks  
6 Department handling inspections of such trees because  
7 we saw many trees down which, which contributed to  
8 some of the issues we faced with congestion in  
9 traffic and other, other delays and conveniences.  
10 But sometimes as we have learned, even post super  
11 storm Sandy a tree gets damaged but doesn't fall that  
12 day but might fall next week or two weeks from now.  
13 So how, how is Parks ensuring the safety of our  
14 residents? Making sure that trees are not in danger  
15 of falling down?

17 MITCHELL SILVER: Well as was started,  
18 what was unprecedented is the amount of leaves on  
19 trees this early in the season and so that clearly  
20 contributed to the number of limbs in trees that went  
21 down. We probably have one of the best maintenance  
22 programs in the country. We assess all of our trees  
23 based on risk and so those who have the highest risk  
24 as we go out either through service call or when  
25 staff goes out to go its own inspection or through

1 its pruning cycle, uhm we were able to evaluate and  
2 we have a risk based system, so those that seem the  
3 highest risk uhm will be addressed within seven days  
4 and those that have less of a risk are addressed  
5 within 28 days. So, our staff pretty well has a way  
6 of managing over 600,000 street trees, make sure that  
7 we understand at risk and so of course while they are  
8 out there uhm doing the work we have had 3300 service  
9 calls which really translated to thousands of work  
10 orders, we were able to inspect to determine that  
11 there was no risk to our residents about in terms of  
12 additional trees falling or limbs. So, it is  
13 something that we do on a regular basis.

15 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: So, you activated a  
16 system to inspect these trees. Because we have had  
17 some recent days where it is very windy, gale force  
18 winds. It is a concern that we have. And so there  
19 is an activation of a system in place to inspect any  
20 potentially damaged trees that might fall or limbs.  
21 Well, when we depend on calls from the public through  
22 3-1-1 it actually happens to be the highest number of  
23 calls that we get from the public within Parks and so  
24 based on those calls, we go out and our forestry team  
25 inspects the trees. We also have a 7-year pruning

1 cycle and as they are going out pruning trees, they  
2 were also able to inspect trees. And through this  
3 incident as they were going out to assess the trees,  
4 they were also determining those that were damaged to  
5 make sure that they were properly pruned so that  
6 there would be no danger or risk to the public.

8 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: So, this is  
9 complaint driven Commissioner?

10 MITCHELL SILVER: It is not just  
11 primarily complaint driven, as I stated we have a 7-  
12 year pruning cycle and we thank both the Mayor and  
13 the Council for escalating that. It used to be 10  
14 year, now it is 7 year as the foresters are going out  
15 to inspect streets. They are able to look through  
16 the pruning cycle to the condition of the trees and  
17 those particular sectors of the City.

18 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: And you have  
19 confidence in the system?

20 MITCHELL SILVER: Yes, I do.

21 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Okay thank you I  
22 will turn it back to Chair Reynoso. Uh well actually  
23 we have round two questions and I just want to res... I  
24 think my colleague Reynoso would like me to remind my  
25 colleagues that there is now a two minute for, for

1  
2 questions which we do have to enforce so be mindful  
3 of the witnesses that want to testify after this,  
4 after this panel, so. We have also been joined by  
5 Council Member Kallos as well. And we will begin  
6 Round two with council member Deutsch.

7 CHAIM DEUTSCH: Thank you now I will ask  
8 my questions. I won't give testimony. Uhm so  
9 firstly I have, first question is you had that day,  
10 1900 collisions including the 20-car pileup on the  
11 George Washington Bridge. Knowing what you know now,  
12 what would you do different today if we have to go  
13 back to that day? Uhm with all of these 1900  
14 collisions? That is my first question. And my  
15 second question is you had 1200 trees down and how  
16 many, number one how many of those trees are still  
17 down? Laying in the streets? And what would you do  
18 today different knowing what you know today?

19 TERRENCE MONAHAN: I will start with the  
20 20-car collision on the George Washington Bridge and  
21 something that you have to understand, that's not New  
22 York City Property, that is the Port Authority. They  
23 did not request any help from us on that, they  
24 handled that incident in and of themselves. Of the  
25 1900 calls it turned out that there was 932 of them

1 that were actual collision, 1900 calls for  
2 collisions, there were 932 actual collisions up from  
3 692. Mostly minor incidents, minor crashes and what  
4 we were able to respond to. We were able to quickly  
5 take the reports and get those cars if they were able  
6 to move, get to moving.  
7

8 POLLY TROTTEBERG: I would just add on  
9 that, on the question of the number of collisions and  
10 what we would do differently and Commissioner Garcia  
11 referenced it in her testimony. When we went back  
12 and looked at both our data and you know our traffic  
13 monitoring data and the monitoring data from Transcom  
14 which monitors traffic data in the whole region, we  
15 saw that starting around 2 o'clock, traffic was  
16 starting to slow and as many members appoint it was  
17 not just in the Bronx and northern Manhattan. It was  
18 really happening in all five boroughs. It was  
19 happening in New Jersey, it was happening in  
20 Connecticut. It was happening in Long Island. We  
21 are now starting to our, our engineers are now  
22 starting to build an algorithm which will tell us,  
23 I'm hoping much earlier on hey we are really starting  
24 to see an unusual traffic condition develop in a  
25 large citywide or regional wide that will enable us

1 better to do. I think what Kathryn is saying what  
2 some of you are calling for which is start putting a  
3 lot of more urgent messages out much sooner than,  
4 than obviously we were able to on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

6 CHAIM DEUTSCH: Yes, so how, if finally.

7 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Final point  
8 Council Member.

9 CHAIM DEUTSCH: My I only have 15 seconds  
10 of my question. I have one important point. Uhm I  
11 just want to ask you uhm, so the Port Authority did  
12 not notify, the City didn't ask for backup, didn't  
13 ask for help, so how can we now work with the Port  
14 Authority that if they are incompetent that we step  
15 in and we say no. You are affecting our streets.  
16 You are affecting the congestion in our streets. You  
17 are causing a crisis situation, we need to stop in  
18 now.

19 POLLY TROTTEBERG: So, I'll just, and  
20 gentleman I spoke afterwards both to the Bridges and  
21 Tunnels Leadership and the Rick Cotton the Executive  
22 Director of the Port, and I don't want to say anyone  
23 was incompetent here, we were all struggling on that  
24 day. Again, they were struggling with the GW, they  
25 were struggling with the Bayonne. They had

1  
2 tremendous problems at the bus terminal with busses  
3 coming in from New Jersey and getting people back out  
4 so they had a lot of things that they were managing,  
5 but we agreed. I know Joe will talk about it from  
6 the OEM level but certainly from the DOT Port  
7 Authority level we are actually going to be meeting  
8 next week to sit down and make sure that when big  
9 incidents are happening that their Bridges and  
10 Tunnels were much more on top of it talking to each  
11 other. If they need the City's help or we need their  
12 help it's a good point and we need to make sure that  
13 is happening.

14 CHAIM DEUTSCH: Thank you.

15 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Okay anyone else.

16 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: Yeah regarding the Port  
17 Authority, I spoke with John Miller (SP?) from the  
18 Port Authority, after the event, we discussed that  
19 the day of the incident, of the accident we offered  
20 assistance. They uhm said they can handle it  
21 themselves. At one point after he was on the scene,  
22 spoke to the Port Authority Police and they agreed to  
23 uhm request Sanitation to go up there it was just  
24 impossible to get up there at that time but I am in  
25 conversation with the Port Authority, John Miller

1 (SP?), we are going to address this communication  
2  
3 problem.

4 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thanks, I think  
5 that is important and now Commissioner uhm uhm.  
6 Alright.

7 MITCHELL SILVER: Just by point of  
8 clarification, reference 1200 trees or actually  
9 approximately 120 trees that went down, roughly about  
10 1500 limbs and about 450 hanging limbs. Uhm in terms  
11 of our response, both fire and police respond to the  
12 overnight and I can report Park staff arrive for work  
13 at 6 a.m. and we were able to clear all streets that  
14 were blocked by trees by 5 p.m. the following day.  
15 In terms of the balance, uhm I believe about 98%, 99%  
16 of all the remaining trees and debris that was left  
17 was removed the day before Thanksgiving. And I do  
18 want to say that it was a multiagency cooperation, it  
19 was Parks, it was Fire, it was Sanitation, it was  
20 DOT, it was DEP. Uhm so it was a coordinated effort  
21 to make sure we removed all of that debris and right  
22 now it is about 98%, 99% all cleared.

23 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Okay thank you.

24 MITCHELL SILVER: But in terms of what we  
25 would do differently, it was mentioned by Comm..

1  
2 Commissioner Garcia. We are looking at conditions  
3 now with the potential climate change and these  
4 unusual storm events when leaves are still on the  
5 trees. We are now going to take that into  
6 consideration about messaging out because we did  
7 recommend that the public did not go into Parks uhm  
8 because we are concerned about the tree conditions  
9 and so now, we will take that into consideration  
10 since we may have having the storms events with  
11 leaves on trees. We want to make sure that we  
12 include that in our messaging so that is part of our  
13 conversation going forward. Thank you very much.

14 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you and  
15 next we will hear from Council Member Gibson.

16 VANESSA GIBSON: Thank you again, thank  
17 you Chair and I know our hearing will come to and  
18 end. Uhm I do look forward to the full internal view  
19 that will be coming out next week to really fully  
20 understand uhm what happened and I but I do want to  
21 join my speaker and really apologizing to New  
22 Yorkers. I on that day apologized to my District  
23 because I am sorry that New Yorkers have to endure  
24 this. We didn't set out that morning to know that we  
25 would be stuck in traffic. Chief Monahan you didn't

1 know that you would be in a suit pushing cars in the  
2 Bronx and that is what you were doing because we just  
3 are resilient New Yorkers and we always you know step  
4 up when needed. Uhm but moving forward for me and  
5 the Bronx understanding that the Bronx was at an  
6 extreme disadvantage with the George Washington  
7 closing. We are surrounded by highways in the Bronx  
8 so it is really important for us in the borough to  
9 ensure that communication does improve within City  
10 Agencies but it is even more important that we are  
11 talking to the Port Authority, to New Jersey Transit,  
12 New Jersey DOT, New York State DOT, Port Authority,  
13 MTA, New York City Transit, Metro North. We have got  
14 to talk to these agencies around the clock, not the  
15 day of, not the day before but there has to be better  
16 coordination. The Bronx should not have endured what  
17 we did and we did for an unfortunate reason and now  
18 this is a lesson learned. I pray to God that we get  
19 through this winter season. This was a test and we  
20 failed. Now we move forward from the lessons we have  
21 learned and we have got to do better, for the sake of  
22 New Yorkers, for the sake of Children, seniors and  
23 everyone else that lives in this City we all been  
24 better. So, I want to understand the Interagency  
25

1 coordination. What are we going to do moving forward  
2 to talk to our partners at the State level, at the  
3 City level and make sure that we are communicating  
4 and workforce staff, reinforcement of equipment and  
5 resources in everything to the best of our ability is  
6 really put in place? That is what I want to  
7 understand on behalf of the Bronx.  
8

9           JOSEPH ESPOSITO: At Emergency Management  
10 we conduct these calls and a lot of times in face  
11 meetings. On Tuesday when we got the forecast, we  
12 put a call out to all of our City Agencies including  
13 all of our partners including Port Authority, MTA.  
14 We put them on alert that there was a snow event  
15 coming. We did the same thing on Wednesday and on  
16 Thursday also we were in contact with them through  
17 the Watch Command through the whole event. The  
18 problem was the misdiagnosis or the miss. The event  
19 was only broadcasted as a flurry. Uhm you know just  
20 a dusting so that's what everyone was reacting to or  
21 working toward until the day of the snow but as far  
22 as the communication, we are in communication, we  
23 have, we sit down with the Port Authority, MTA, all  
24 of our partners, Con Edison, every City agency,  
25 everyone in the Tristate area, we talk to them all.

1 This event caught us off guard because of the bad  
2 forecast.  
3

4 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Uh next we will  
5 hear from Council Member Rose.

6 DEBORAH ROSE: Uh thank you uhm  
7 Commissioner Garcia how did you uhm how did your  
8 decision not to call in two 12-hour shifts impact the  
9 problems uhm that were encountered and will you  
10 change uhm that decision making in the future and for  
11 Commissioner Trottenberg when did DOT realize that  
12 there was a problem at the Ferry Terminal and that  
13 there was no bus service available. Uhm why were  
14 there no announcements made uhm and was there any  
15 communication with the MTA busses? And did you  
16 actually deploy your snow removal equipment to plow  
17 the terminal?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: Uhm.

19 DEBORAH ROSE: Two minutes, right?

20 KATHRYN GARCIA: Thank you Council Member  
21 so based on the forecast we had not staffed for two  
22 12-hour shifts as you know. Uhm I think that going  
23 forward as I testified, we will take an even more  
24 conservative approach and if we are given a forecast  
25 of 0 to three and particular if there is a high

1 moisture content in that storm that we will assume  
2 additional accumulations and are probably more likely  
3 to split more often. That being said, uhm there are  
4 portions of having a 12-hour shift split that I think  
5 would have been helpful in this storm that there were  
6 some portions on it based on my assessment that I  
7 think actually could have made it worse. Uhm so I  
8 think that every storm is different and we need to be  
9 prepared for more unpredictable storms but I think  
10 that you are likely to see us move into 12 hour  
11 shifts on a more regular basis with forecasts that  
12 are very low uhm initially.

14 DEBORAH ROSE: So, you don't think that  
15 there is the overlay of staff would have been a  
16 positive as opposed to.

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, I, I so one of the  
18 challenges is uh it may have been of assistance in  
19 certain areas of the City but in the places where we  
20 struggle the most which is in upper Manhattan and the  
21 Bronx and I am certainly not saying that Staten  
22 Island did not have challenges, that is not at all  
23 what I am saying. Uhm and that was true in Queens  
24 and in Brooklyn as well. As uhm Commissioner  
25 Trottenberg had said, we saw, we saw speeds across

1 the City uhm decline precipitously all at once. So,  
2 I think you are going to see some things like more  
3 pretreatment of the roads, you are going to see us  
4 move and assume that uhm that it's going to be, that  
5 we are going to need to be in two shifts. The  
6 challenge with upper Manhattan and the Bronx is  
7 really the gridlock. That adding more pieces of  
8 equipment could have actually just added more  
9 traffic. Uhm and gotten us more into a box there  
10 that might not have been true in other areas but in  
11 the area that we struggled the most in, I would say  
12 that that that it based on my assessment that I don't  
13 think that being in a two shift would have  
14 necessarily assisted there.

16 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you. Go  
17 ahead, please.

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: The question. I mean  
19 DOT DOT does plow around its fares and I have to  
20 admit that I was certainly getting a lot of reports  
21 about bus troubles all over the City but I, I don't  
22 think we heard that much about bus at Ferry. Maybe  
23 that's something if you have more detail, I mean if  
24 all of the hot spot areas, that wasn't, the one that  
25 was getting them.

1  
2 POLLY TROTTEBERG: There was no bus  
3 service at the Ferry and there were no announcements  
4 made. There was nothing posted on the overhead  
5 boards in, in the Ferry Terminals alerting people  
6 that there was absolutely no bus service at the Ferry  
7 Terminal.

8 DEBORAH ROSE: And so, I.

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: And so, lines were down  
10 the ramps, uhm in the terminal and people had no idea  
11 or any instructions about what was you know happening  
12 and that there were no busses coming. There was  
13 absolutely no service.

14 POLLY TROTTEBERG: So, I think, I think  
15 are you hearing here today and Council Member Gibson  
16 just mentioned it, we are obviously doing an After  
17 Action and we are talking to our sister Agencies and  
18 I obviously want to talk to the MTA about what  
19 happened there with the busses. You know they are  
20 certainly having struggles with busses all over the  
21 City. Uhm let me particular see what the Staten  
22 Island challenges were. We were plowing around the  
23 Ferry but obviously as I have heard from you and your  
24 colleagues there were much larger congestions  
25 happening all over the island.

1  
2           DEBORAH ROSE: Commissioner, yes, I know  
3 that the busses, the busses were not your fault but  
4 what I am trying to get to is that there was no  
5 communication from DOT that commuters as they were  
6 arriving and this started as early at 4 p.m. that  
7 there were no busses. And, and so people didn't even  
8 know that they might have had to make other  
9 arrangements so there needs to be some communication  
10 with the uhm MTA since they are supposed to meet.

11           POLLY TROTTEBERG: Yeah understood.

12           DEBORAH ROSE: And uh according to the  
13 Ferry schedule so.

14           POLLY TROTTEBERG: Okay.

15           CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Council  
16 Member Rose. I just really want to keep these things  
17 at two minutes, I believe I've been extremely  
18 courteous, I'm going to stop being courteous and I am  
19 cutting people off. We have other people that need  
20 to speak that have been waiting here all day. Uhm  
21 another panel and I want to give them the respect and  
22 courtesy that they got here on time. Council member  
23 Cabrera, Gjonaj, Salamanca, uhm are next.

24           FERNANDO CABRERA: Thank you so much. I  
25 if you could just give me the quick answer version to

1  
2 my questions. Were there any medical cases that you  
3 know of uhm regarding ambulances that were stuck,  
4 were there any deaths? Uhm were there babies that  
5 were born in departments because we couldn't get  
6 ambulances to?

7 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: No.

8 FERNANDO CABRERA: Okay so I, I thought I  
9 read something online regarding somebody giving birth  
10 at home.

11 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: That was a couple of  
12 days ago, four six guys delivered a baby but that  
13 wasn't during the storm.

14 FERNANDO CABRERA: It wasn't during the  
15 storm. Okay. The next questions regarding, the  
16 other day we had a big rain storm just a couple of  
17 days ago, uhm Monday I think it was. And uhm many  
18 elected officials we were going from west to east and  
19 the traffic was horrendous in the Bronx. Uhm and so  
20 my question is do you, have you done an analysis  
21 Commissioner in DOT uhm regarding all of this, the  
22 fewer lanes that we have now in the Bronx. You know  
23 I think 161<sup>st</sup> needs to have two lanes. I could go on  
24 and on. Uh have we done an analysis of how events  
25 like just happened is going to have an impact

1 regarding that, to respect the time? And the second  
2 question and then I'm done are there cameras at the  
3 George Washington Bridge, who is watching those? And  
4 how quickly do we move whenever as soon as we see an  
5 incident take place uhm at the bridge? Whoever wants  
6 to go first?  
7

8 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Please, please  
9 answer consciously.

10 KATHRYN GARCIA: So I think as you all  
11 know when we install bike lanes we do a lot of before  
12 and after traffic analysis and we try and make sure  
13 that we are doing as much as we can to minimize  
14 traffic and in the case of an emergency most of our  
15 bike lanes, emergency vehicles, NYPD can pull into  
16 the so they can be used when we are in an emergency  
17 state. If they are, you know we are always ready to  
18 come back if there are particular hot spots, relook  
19 at our traffic timing and see if there are  
20 adjustments that we can make. Do you want to talk  
21 about the?

22 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: I can.

23 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, DOT joined traffic  
24 and DSNY are looking at the cameras, uhm for the  
25 George Washington, we don't respond to the George

1 Washington it is usually the Port Authorities  
2 responsibility but we are absolutely watching all of  
3 the cameras in both areas.  
4

5 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: Mr. Chair if we could  
6 find out later and the context of storms. The fact  
7 that the lanes become smaller. I think you get that  
8 two lanes into one and so forth. Thank you.

9 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you we can  
10 do that absolutely. Uhm Council Member Gjonaj.

11 MARK GJONAJ: If you can help answer  
12 these questions Commissioner. Was all of the  
13 equipment, the plows, the salters, in the respective  
14 boroughs that they were supposed to be in?

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, at the..

16 MARK GJONAJ: At the time of the storm?

17 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, at the time of the  
18 storms in term of the spreaders, yes, you had exactly  
19 the number of spreaders that we published in the  
20 Bronx, that we had given you the day before. There  
21 were some boroughs that had plus or minus one or two  
22 just based on they weren't moved to other boroughs,  
23 they just weren't up. In terms of plows, we were not  
24 in a full plow plan sake. Okay so during in the  
25 Bronx by 4:30 it was 27, by midnight it was 72 so we

1  
2 are adding the plows to the equipment through that  
3 evening.

4 MARK GJONAJ: Thank you I just want to  
5 make that statement again, it is very difficult for  
6 me to accept that the intelligent, knowledgeable  
7 leaders of various departments and agencies no one  
8 came up with the idea that a Declaration of Emergency  
9 must be made, that is just outstanding. But on  
10 November 16<sup>th</sup> and you had post reported that the  
11 Administration is considering re-evaluating your dual  
12 role of leading the Sanitation Department and the  
13 City's Lead Paint Initiative. That was two weeks  
14 ago, are you still leading both?

15 KATHRYN GARCIA: Yes.

16 MARK GJONAJ: What is the current status  
17 of the proposed reevaluation?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: So, we are still on  
19 track to re, reproduce the 90-day report at the end  
20 of January.

21 MARK GJONAJ: What are the staff that you  
22 oversee when you are wearing your Sanitation hat  
23 versus our Lead hat?

24 KATHRYN GARCIA: The Department of  
25 Sanitation has just shy of 10,000 employees at this

1 point in time. Which is a variety of both Sanitation  
2 workers and Auto mechanic support services and  
3 building trades as well as a variety of other staff.  
4 Uhm on the Lead Team which obviously is a  
5 coordinating team in terms of working with the  
6 expertise that is housed with an HPD and the  
7 Department of Health and so I have a staff of, one,  
8 two, three, four, five, about nine people who are  
9 working on it.  
10

11 MARK GJONAJ: Okay thank you, that is the  
12 salary that you are receiving for each one of those  
13 positions that you...

14 KATHRYN GARCIA: I receive only one  
15 salary.

16 MARK GJONAJ: So, there was no increase  
17 in salary?

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: There was no increase in  
19 salary

20 MARK GJONAJ: Okay.

21 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Council Member  
22 Gjonaj I apologize.

23 MARK GJONAJ: Salamanca gave me his two  
24 minutes.  
25

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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1  
2 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Salamanca if that  
3 is true, I will defer. If not, we are going to have  
4 to move on, we can't be here all day, five minutes of  
5 questioning is more than appropriate. I want to  
6 allow for Council Member Salamanca to ask questions,  
7 I'm sorry Council Member Gjonaj.

8 RAFAEL SALAMANCA: I'm sorry Council  
9 Member Gjonaj. Thank you, Chair Reynoso. I have a  
10 question regarding the MTA busses. I know that MTA  
11 is not here, uhm West Farms and East Tremont I got  
12 videos on Twitter the busses were skidding. Uhm when  
13 do they put chains on these tires. Is it, is it  
14 acco... does DOT or the City advise them to do it or do  
15 they do it on their own?

16 KATHRYN GARCIA: I will, I mean I'm going  
17 to answer a little bit of the MTA but I'm not going  
18 to entirely speak for them. They are not here and so  
19 they gave us some their thoughts on the day but in  
20 the end, I think you probably need to hear it  
21 directly from them. Like us they coordinate through  
22 the OM but they make their own decisions about when  
23 to put chains on and they put chains on generally  
24 when you have a certain number of inches of snow, not  
25 so much just for ice. They have been moving over to

1 all weather tires so I think that will help with the,  
2 you know the traction of the fleet. But just so you  
3 know for them to put chains on it takes a number of  
4 hours to do so, so given where the forecast was, I  
5 don't think they, they would have thought to have put  
6 chains on that morning and they have to take them  
7 back to their maintenance facilities and it takes a  
8 bunch of hours to chain up a bus.

10 RAFAEL SALAMANCA: Thank you  
11 Commissioner. Uhm the Commissioner Silver you have  
12 been here for some time no one has asked you a  
13 question, right. Uhm I have, I have a question for  
14 you. Has Parks uhm addressed all 3-1-1 complaints  
15 for trees that are down, hanging limbs, falling limbs  
16 across the City?

17 MITCHELL SILVER: Yes, it is about 99%,  
18 but the answer is yes.

19 RAFAEL SALAMANCA: So, 3300 services.

20 MITCHELL SILVER: 3300 service calls,  
21 correct all streets were cleared of trees, uhm of  
22 blocking the streets by 5 o'clock the next day and  
23 the day before Thanksgiving we are about 98, 99%, all  
24 debris has been removed.

1  
2           RAFAEL SALAMANCA: Okay uh and who is  
3 responsible. Thank you, Commissioner, who is  
4 responsible for cleaning the highways, for example,  
5 the FDR, Brooklyn Boulevard or the I-95 to get you  
6 through the White Stone or the Droznic (SP?).

7           KATHRYN GARCIA: By cleaning you mean  
8 removing snow? Or?

9           RAFAEL SALAMANCA: By you know get,  
10 removing the snow.

11           KATHRYN GARCIA: No that would be the  
12 Department of Sanitation.

13           RAFAEL SALAMANCA: Department of  
14 Sanitation? So, you are responsible for our streets  
15 and also the highways. The roads leading through the  
16 to the bridges?

17           KATHRYN GARCIA: So yes, we get, as we  
18 coordinate with our partners at MTA, uhm and the Port  
19 Authority about how close we can get before we have  
20 to turn around. Uhm for, for example like at the  
21 Verrazano when they did all the changes on that ramp,  
22 uhm they actually have to block traffic so that we  
23 can make a U-turn because there aren't exits anymore  
24 but that's the same sort of thing that we do. We do  
25 the pretzel between the Cross Bronx and the Deegan

1 and the GW and that is actually one of our pre-  
2 salting positions.  
3

4 RAFAEL SALAMANCA: Alright and finally  
5 Commissioner, uhm do you know how many spreaders or  
6 uhm or plows were not operable that day?

7 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Your microphone  
8 is down.

9 KATHRYN GARCIA: Sorry our plan is to  
10 have 695, we had 679. So, 16.

11 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you Council  
12 Member Salamanca. Now Council Member Kallos, this is  
13 your first round of questioning, you will not get a  
14 second round. You will get three minutes and we are  
15 done. Please be concise as well.

16 BEN KALLOS: Thank you to the Chairs for  
17 this uhm hearing I don't think one like this has been  
18 done before. To those on the panel, pencils out I  
19 have a number of questions. I do want to start while  
20 you are getting ready for your questions by thanking  
21 the Mayor's office. I got a call at 9:45 p.m. that a  
22 parent of a child with Special Education still wasn't  
23 home and we worked very closely with the Mayor's  
24 office, the NYPD and OPT to get those children home.  
25 Uh so first question, uhm you testified that the Call

1  
2 Center Staff stayed until 5 a.m. is that when the  
3 last bus arrived? Number two, do we in fact have a  
4 GPS on every school bus with Special Education  
5 students as young as 3 years old who may be nonverbal  
6 due to autism or other uhm items they may be facing?  
7 Number three, the Mayor made a directive to the  
8 Chancellor on Friday following the storm, to  
9 Chancellor Carranza to implement GPS on all busses.  
10 Uh I believe that is about 1100 busses, smart phones  
11 are about \$20 uhm do we know exact when that is going  
12 to go into effect? Do you need me to give \$20,000 to  
13 get it live tomorrow because I will do that? Uhm  
14 with regards to number four, the parent in question,  
15 her name was Jennifer Reynoso. On a day without  
16 snow, her child faces a three-hour bus ride, I don't  
17 believe that she is willing to put her child back on  
18 the bus since that frightful night where her child  
19 was on for more than 10 hours. Uhm is there a  
20 commitment and a promise that that child is going to  
21 get back to a normal bus ride of no more than an hour  
22 and that we are not going to have Special Education  
23 busses with more than 22 kids on them. They should  
24 be on the small busses and I believe that is actually  
25 the status for NYPD, DSNY and anyone else who wants

1 to jump in here. The big question I got from media  
2 was just even if we got my magic GPS Bill passed and  
3 we had a GPS on every bus, what, what can do about  
4 it? Uhm is it a situation where EMS could be  
5 dispatched, especially when the children are in  
6 Special Education to provide services, is DSNY able  
7 to direct a plow to get each bus home and I would  
8 actually be okay with that, as a, as a new parent.  
9 Uhm OEM but what could we actually do, so now we know  
10 that there is a trapped bus, how do we rescue those  
11 kids? And I will say that night NYPD did actually  
12 rescue those kids just after midnight. Those are my  
13 questions.  
14

15 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Please answer  
16 those questions there are a lot of them are yes and  
17 no questions so answer them appropriately. Thank you  
18 and there will be no follow up to those questions.

19 KATHRYN GARCIA: I am going to go as fast  
20 as possible. Uhm so all of our Special Education uh  
21 busses have GPS but our Pre-K and our General Ed  
22 busses do not, we are trying to get rou... GPS in all  
23 of our busses. Uhm you would ask are, the busses  
24 were getting into depots into the wee hours of the  
25 morning. I mean some of the... I mean some of the into

1 the depots at like 5 or 6 in the morning uhm because  
2 of the traffic. Uhm around parent communication with  
3 the GPS I believe that was another question I want to  
4 make sure that I got it right, uhm.

6 BEN KALLOS: When will the GPS go live?

7 KATHRYN GARCIA: We are, we are looking  
8 at the best GPSs, I mean we are assessing what other  
9 Cities are using? What Sanitation is using? What  
10 DCAS is using, our goal and our hope, actually we  
11 will get bu... GPS into bussing's by September of next  
12 year.

13 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: I'll answer the last  
14 question, we have a meeting set up next week DOE, OEM  
15 and us to kind of work out what issue is happening,  
16 how we can improve in the future.

17 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you.

18 KATHRYN GARCIA: And just finally when we  
19 are contacted by OEM or PD, we would send a spreader,  
20 in this case, we would have been very challenging for  
21 them to get there.

22 BEN KALLOS: Okay.

23 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: And that closes  
24 out our, Chair Rodriguez has a question and then we  
25 are going to go to the next panel.

1  
2 CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you again  
3 concern, one did the interagency wasn't in place  
4 coordinating not before but during the gridlock that  
5 we, that we had that day afternoon, night and  
6 morning. Were you called to be in any particular  
7 place physical from where you were coordinating  
8 everyone? How many people do you have over time?  
9 Why they were let go after 11 p.m.? Why were you not  
10 able to activate other people from agencies that they  
11 could be helpful that day from 11 p.m. to 3 in the  
12 morning and then the question how actively was the  
13 First Deputy Mayor, whoever coordinating with this  
14 group of you guys that have shown in the past as  
15 showing leadership? And why did we fail? Not to be  
16 coordinated, not before but from 4 p.m. to 3 in the  
17 morning. Those are questions that I feel justify  
18 what everyone in this state including the Mayor has  
19 said. I understand the frustration of New Yorkers  
20 and I hope that we learn from this and then what  
21 happened that they would not happen anymore. We put  
22 in risk the safety of New Yorkers and we need to let  
23 you know how we allowed this for New York City to be  
24 gridlocked for hours, under a natural disaster.  
25 About how that condition can be created and put our

1 City in risk. How long and that's a question, my  
2 last part with this and refer to the MTA, last week  
3 on on the 4, we will have MTA in a hearing at the  
4 Committee of Transportation uhm this causing the fast  
5 forward plan and then any question also that we have,  
6 we should be able to ask them. But when it comes to  
7 ambulance and fire and the fire fighters, what was  
8 the average time that it took for them to go from a  
9 phone call that someone made to 9-1-1 to the  
10 destination and is there any information or data of  
11 any fatality related because of how long it took to  
12 respond from fire fighters and ambulance?  
13

14 JOSEPH ESPOSITO: I can talk about the  
15 coordination piece of this. Uh all things being  
16 perfect, we would have the situation I think with all  
17 of our partners there or a portion of the Emergency  
18 Operation Center where all of our partners would have  
19 been there. When the emergency does come light, when  
20 the snow is falling now and the streets are  
21 gridlocked, we made the decision to do that  
22 virtually. Instead of asking people to come to  
23 Emergency Management Headquarters and, and, and be  
24 physically present there, we thought that would have  
25 been counter productive to try and get all of those

1 folks to travel to Brooklyn under those conditions,  
2 so we did it virtually through emails and phone calls  
3 and we did have the coordination not to the perfect  
4 extent that I would have liked, I would have liked to  
5 have the people in the seats and in my office that  
6 wasn't practical at that time, so we did it  
7 virtually.  
8

9 TERRANCE MONAHAN: And again, for  
10 response time, you are going to have to get that from  
11 the fire department for their job. They would have  
12 their response times. I can give you the PD response  
13 time Citywide increased by five minutes. Uhm on  
14 average to a job. The Bronx had the largest increase  
15 uhm of approximately 13 minutes.

16 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Thank you, thank  
17 you for your testimony today to everyone on the  
18 panel. We are looking forward to better days ahead.  
19 I really appreciate you taking the time to be here.  
20 Uhm thank you to all of my colleagues for your great  
21 questions and now our next panel, is actually one  
22 person that we hope is still here. Randi Levine who  
23 is here from Advocate for Children of New York. Uhm  
24 is the only person that is scheduled to speak and if  
25 they are here you are going to get unlimited time to

1 speak on the issues that you think are of  
2 significance. Ms. Levine? Can you please clear the  
3 dais so that, not the dais I'm sorry the testimony  
4 tables so that Ms. Levine can sit? Good afternoon  
5 Ms. Levine whenever you are ready, we can you can  
6 start your testimony.  
7

8           RANDI LEVINE: Good afternoon, thank you  
9 for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is  
10 Randi Levine and I am the Policy Director of  
11 Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 45  
12 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a  
13 high-quality education for New York Students who face  
14 barriers to academic success, focusing on students  
15 from low income backgrounds. We heard from parents  
16 of students with disabilities who were trapped on  
17 school busses for hours on their way home from school  
18 during winter storm Avery. Parents were concerned  
19 about the safety and well being of their children.  
20 Many of these children had not eaten since lunch time  
21 and some did not arrive home until the middle of the  
22 night. Some parents did not know where their  
23 children were or when and where they should meet  
24 their children. One parent contacted and Advocates  
25 for Children Staff Member at 8 o'clock p.m. when her

1 son had not returned home. Her child, a 9-year-old  
2 student on the autism spectrum finally returned home  
3 at 11 o'clock p.m., 8 hours after he got on the bus.  
4 He did not have anything to eat or drink during this  
5 time. In fact, bus staff told the children that they  
6 were not allowed to drink any water. The bus never  
7 stopped to allow the children to use the bathroom,  
8 during these eight hours, nobody contacted the parent  
9 to let her know where the bus was or when she could  
10 expect her child to come home. However, unlike many  
11 other parents, this parent was able to track the  
12 busses progress during the trip and see where her  
13 child was because she had given her son a phone with  
14 GPS technology. We understand that unexpected events  
15 happen that impact a school bus ride, an accident, a  
16 traffic jam, a medical emergency or a November snow  
17 storm. This is a key reason why it is important for  
18 the City to provide all parents with access to real  
19 time GPS data for their children's school busses. We  
20 strongly support Intro 1099 which would require that  
21 all school busses be equipped with a GPS tracking  
22 system, a policy the Department of Education is  
23 already in the process of implementing and  
24 importantly would give parents and schools access to  
25

1  
2 GPS data in real time allowing parents to know when  
3 the bus is coming, how long the bus is taking to get  
4 to school and where their children are. We thank  
5 Council Member Kallos and Chair Treyger for their  
6 leadership on this Bill and look forward to working  
7 with City Council to move it forward. The stories  
8 that we heard about horrific bus rides during the  
9 storm also highlight the need for the DOE to ensure  
10 that bus drivers and matrons get the training needed  
11 to support students. Including those with a variety  
12 of disabilities on ordinary days and in emergency  
13 situations. These stories also illustrate the need  
14 for the DOEs Office of Pupil Transportation to  
15 provide better Customer Service and more effectively  
16 communicate information and updates to parents.  
17 Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I would be  
18 happy to answer any questions that you may have.

19 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: I want to defer  
20 to Chair Treyger.

21 CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Thank you very much  
22 Chair I want to once again thank Advocates for  
23 Children for really just championing the causes of  
24 helping children and I just want to thank you for  
25 that and your testimony. Uhm if you hear my exchange

1 with the DOE with regards to the issue of language  
2 access, can you speak to this, whether or not  
3 language access, a variety of languages that is  
4 spoken in our City is provided to families, and if  
5 that was an issue that you heard as well?  
6

7           RANDI LEVINE: I can't speak to what  
8 happened that night as far as language access. I do  
9 think that it is important that we as a City continue  
10 to ensure that every Department of Education Office  
11 that interacts with families has access to the  
12 language interpretation that they need.

13           CHAIR MARK TREYGER: Agreed. And uhm you  
14 heard as well that there is a commitment that they  
15 are going to have or improve or create protocols with  
16 regards to having food and water on busses. Because  
17 they just they had no policy, they had no protocol  
18 and we heard obviously the stories that the stories 8  
19 10 hours on the bus, no food, no water, no bathroom,  
20 so there are new protocols there apparently are going  
21 to take shape and we are going to follow up with the  
22 DOE but I just want to really thank you Advocates for  
23 Children for really just always being at the front  
24 lines of this issue. Thank you very much.

25           RANDI LEVINE: Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: Question from  
3 Council Member Gibson.

4 VANESSA GIBSON: Thank you so much I am a  
5 huge, huge fan of Advocates for Children you guys do  
6 tremendous work and I think you know the question  
7 that a lot of the reporters have been asking all of  
8 us is that even after today's hearing, after hours  
9 and hours of hearing testimony from Commissioner  
10 Garcia and the follow Commissioners, you know do we  
11 feel confident that the City of New York is prepared  
12 for this once a season and I think many of us are  
13 still equally as confused. Uhm a lot of our  
14 questions were simply not answered and I think  
15 although we all experienced individual like nightmare  
16 stories like many of our constituents the most  
17 heartbreaking are our children and you know that is  
18 unforgettable and it is unforgiveable and I spoke to  
19 a parent at 1 a.m. her 2-year-old child with a  
20 Special Needs, she is a Bronx resident, her child  
21 goes to school in the Bronx and she was the one who  
22 called her bus company, told them where her, you know  
23 where her child went to school and they refused to  
24 give any information on the location of the bus and  
25 that speaks volume to the communication but also what

1 protocols are in place. So, in addition to  
2 supporting the Legislation that would provide GPS in  
3 all of our busses, not just busses with Children with  
4 Special Needs but what would you recommend from  
5 Advocates for Children in terms of other protocols  
6 that the Department should look to have with all of  
7 these contacts that we have making sure that there is  
8 better communication? I think we all understand that  
9 a winter, a winter storm that we face, you know  
10 everyone was stuck in traffic but you can't deny  
11 children water and access to a bathroom and I think  
12 you know Ursulina talked a little bit about locations  
13 but that could potentially be emergency evacuation  
14 areas where children would be let off the bus and  
15 allowed to use the bathroom and things of that  
16 nature, so from your perspective, what would you  
17 suggest the City Council should be looking at moving  
18 forward?  
19

20 RANDI LEVINE: I think that the issues  
21 that you raise are the issues to focus on. I think  
22 that number one we know that the Office of Pupil  
23 Transportation needs to revamp its Customer Service  
24 System that is not only during emergencies but that  
25 is day to day so Chancellor has talked about the

1 importance of empowering parents and we hear stories  
2 throughout the year from families who have tried  
3 repeatedly to contact the Office of Pupil  
4 Transportation to get problems resolved and have  
5 never heard back and have not gotten those problems  
6 resolved. We do know that the Department of  
7 Education has taken some positive steps in terms of  
8 stating their commitment and hiring new staff to  
9 really focus on that issue. And I think you are  
10 right as well that we should be thinking about  
11 protocols with respect to emergencies and with  
12 respect to students with Disabilities on busses  
13 during those emergencies and training for staff in  
14 terms of what to do in emergencies but also in terms  
15 of training for working with students with  
16 disabilities in a variety of situations days when  
17 there aren't winter storms. And finally I would add  
18 that the issues that emerged from this conversation I  
19 think lead to other policy change as well or I will  
20 focus on these issues because of the storm but for  
21 example, we have preschoolers who are traveling hours  
22 to get to a preschool Special Education program  
23 because the City right now has a shortage of  
24 preschool special education programs and at a time  
25

1 when we are rapidly expanding PreK and 3K for all, we  
2 need to make sure that preschoolers with disabilities  
3 whose individualized education programs entitle them  
4 to a seat in a preschool special education class get  
5 the class they need and don't have to travel for  
6 hours to get to that class or aren't sitting at home  
7 because there is no class available at all. Finally,  
8 I think about students in Foster Care. Uhm Federal  
9 Law requires the City to provide transportation so  
10 that students in Foster Care can stay in their  
11 original schools when placed in a Foster Home that is  
12 far away from their school or when they switch from  
13 one Foster Home to another but right now the City  
14 guarantees only a Metro Card and that's not  
15 sufficient for a kindergarten student placed on  
16 Foster Care in a different community school District  
17 or a different borough to get to school. And you  
18 know in that case you are really relying on a foster  
19 parent or maybe a foster care case planner who has  
20 lots of other responsibilities to transport that  
21 child. We hear enough about the difficulties of  
22 doing that on a regular basis much less during a  
23 winter storm and so I think that these are important  
24  
25

1  
2 issues that we hope the City Council will continue to  
3 look at over in the coming months.

4 VANESSA GIBSON: Thank you so much and we  
5 look forward to working with you and since I. I thin  
6 I am the only Council Member left besides the Chairs,  
7 so I just want to take an opportunity to really thank  
8 you guys, thank you to Chair Rodriguez, thank you  
9 Chair Reynoso and Chair Treyger. This was a very  
10 good hearing. Uhm I'm still not satisfied but that is  
11 just me. Uhm I look forward to our continued work and  
12 really getting us through this winter season. We  
13 have got to make sure that these agencies are held  
14 accountable and they are working with our state  
15 partners as well, particularly on behalf of northern  
16 Manhattan and the Bronx we were crippled, crippled  
17 and we cannot have this happen again. So, I thank  
18 you for holding today's hearing thank you.

19 CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: It's, it's  
20 unfortunate that you are still not in our committee  
21 unlike last time you could have followed up but thank  
22 you Ms. Levine for your advocacy and the work that  
23 you do.

24 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you.  
25

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

170

CHAIR ANTONIO REYNOSO: I also want to  
thank the Council Members that are here, the staff,  
the Committee Staff for the great work that they did  
and the Sargeant at Arms as well for helping us out.

Thank you all. This meeting is now adjourned.

(gavel pounding).

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 December 4, 2018