



Oversight Hearing - The City's Preparation for and Response to Winter Storm Avery

New York City Council Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, Transportation and Education

**Thursday, November 29, 2018 at 1:00 PM
City Hall, Council Chambers**

Good afternoon Chairmen Reynoso, Rodriguez and Treyger, and members of the Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, Transportation and Education. I am Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner for the New York City Department of Sanitation. I am joined by Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Emergency Management Commissioner Joe Esposito, NYPD Chief of Department Terence Monahan and Department of Education Chief Operating Officer Ursulina Ramirez. Thank you for the opportunity today to discuss the City's preparations for and response to Winter Storm Avery on November 15th.

Let me say at the outset that the Department of Sanitation and I, along with my colleagues, empathize with the thousands of New Yorkers, including many school children, who faced excessively long commutes and dangerous roadway conditions on the evening of November 15. This event severely affected the entire tristate region, and it truly was a perfect storm of events that posed serious challenges for New York City, as well as our neighboring states and municipalities.

I would like to walk you through the timeline of this snow event, our preparations and response, the impediments we faced and lessons we have learned for future storms.

WEATHER FORECAST:

The Department monitors weather forecasts through its three contracted weather services around the clock and receives forecasts from the National Weather Service via NYC Emergency Management. When forecasts call for a potential snow event, the Department issues a "Snow Alert" to inform our staff, other city agencies and the public. DSNY received the first forecast of a possible snow event on the morning of Monday, November 12. On Wednesday, November 14, meteorologists expressed increasing confidence in the likelihood of a snow event. DSNY issued a "Snow Alert" to media and city agencies at 1:40 PM that day and held a joint press conference that afternoon with NYC Emergency Management. The press conference was attended by nine media outlets, including six major television news stations.

The forecasts leading up to the November 15 event called a wintry mix, with likely accumulations of 0 to 3 inches predominately on grassy surfaces. The morning of the storm, the National Weather

Service forecast called for one inch of snow for that afternoon. We know now that that forecast was off the mark.

It was not until 12:37 PM – less than half an hour before the snow started falling – that the National Weather Service issued a winter weather advisory calling for snow accumulations of 2 to 5 inches. By the time the snow ended, accumulations in Central Park measured 6.4 inches, and parts of the Bronx had experienced brief periods of snowfall of more than 2 inches per hour. The storm was the heaviest November snowfall since 1938 and the earliest November snowfall over 6 inches on record.

STORM PREPARATIONS AND OPERATIONS:

The Department deploys salt spreaders to spread rock salt on the more than 19,000 roadway lane miles across the five boroughs. Salt helps to reduce the accumulation of snow and prevent the formation of icy condition. Salt spreading operations continue for the duration of snowfall. Once the snow accumulation is greater than two inches, the Department deploys its snow plows. Plowing operations continue until all of the City's traffic lanes are passable.

Throughout the duration of a storm, Department field managers constantly monitor roadway conditions, equipment use, and variations in weather patterns. Our field officers report this information on an hourly basis back to their respective borough commands and on to our central Operations Office.

At headquarters, DSNY deploys a variety of technological tools to maintain situation awareness. These include GPS tracking of spreaders and plows, analytical tools to measure mileage completed, live feeds from DOT traffic cameras, NOAA weather grids, snow complaint data, and Dataminr "First Alert," a real-time social media alert system.

Based on the forecast on Wednesday of 0 to 3 inches on grassy surfaces, the Department suspended street cleaning regulations for Thursday, loaded 679 spreaders, attached plows to 150 collection trucks, and activated the PlowNYC tracking system. Based on the forecast and the anticipation that salt spreaders would be the primary snow equipment required for the storm, the Department planned for a three shift operation which included cleaning and collection of refuse and recycling.

At the start of the 6:00 AM shift, the Department sent 290 spreaders out to pre-salt high elevations and overpasses, which freeze earlier than streets. By noon, 1,024 miles of roadway had been pre-salted citywide, including 291 miles in the Bronx.

While the NWS did not change its forecast until 12:37 PM, DSNY's in-house meteorologist had reached out to our operations staff shortly before 10:00 AM to indicate that the storm was growing and that the City could now anticipate between 3 and 5 inches of snow. At this point, the personnel on the 6:00 AM shift were informed that they would work a 12 hour shift until 6:00 PM that night, and districts were directed to add additional plows to the collection trucks.

At 11:00 AM, 679 spreaders had been deployed to their stand-by locations. At 1:23 PM as field staff reported snow starting to fall in Staten Island, all districts were ordered to assign spreaders where necessary. At 1:34 PM, all districts were ordered to begin full salting as the storm came in quickly across the boroughs. Around the same time, DOT began treating the East River Bridges. By 3:00 PM, salt spreaders had treated more than 56 percent of roadway miles citywide. With snow falling heavily, the Department issued orders to all zones to deploy plows at 3:25 PM,

although some zones had already put plows in the streets based on local conditions. By midnight, we had a total of almost 1,400 salt spreaders and plows deployed in the field.

CHALLENGES FACED:

Just as the City Council and the public have demanded to understand what occurred two weeks ago, the Administration has been assessing this snow event to determine what factors distinguished this storm from others. It is vital to understand the unique challenges posed by this storm that impeded our spreading and plowing operations.

This storm would have been difficult to fight on its own due to the unexpectedly heavy snow and sleet and the timing at the height of rush hour, but a series of cascading events that affected the region made effective snow removal in the city nearly impossible.

These included a twenty-car pileup on the George Washington Bridge, one of the busiest vehicular bridges in the world, around 3:00 PM that led to the closure of the bridge to outbound traffic for several hours and caused gridlock on the Cross Bronx Expressway and other intersecting highways. In addition, the Port Authority closed the Bayonne Bridge for several periods between noon and 5:30 PM, which backed up traffic on the Staten Island Expressway and Route 440. The FDR and Harlem River Drive, upper level of the Queensboro Bridge, Van Wyck, Major Deegan and Gowanus Expressway, among others, also experienced intermittent lane closures.

The intense traffic conditions that occurred at the height of the storm, which gridlocked roadways and trapped cars and buses, also gridlocked DSNY's plows and spreaders. Upper Manhattan and the Bronx were at a complete standstill. As the major arterials became clogged, drivers, whether on their own or directed by dynamic mapping apps, took to local streets, which quickly became congested as well. According to data from Waze, the number of traffic irregularities reported in the New York metro area was 140 percent greater than the same day the previous year. In the Bronx, the number was 241 percent greater.

Additionally the storm caused damage to trees throughout the city. By midnight on Thursday, the Parks Department had received more than 1,200 reports of downed or damaged trees. Many of these left streets impassable for our spreaders and plows both during and after the event, and some even caused our plows to get stuck behind the downed trees.

However, the City's agencies continued to fight the storm through the night.

By 10:00 PM, 82 percent of streets in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island had been salted. As traffic began to ease in the Bronx, spreaders from Queens were redeployed to the Bronx to ensure roadways were cleared before rush hour. And at on the interconnection between the Major Deegan and Cross Bronx Expressway, DSNY salt spreaders received NYPD escorts to travel the wrong way on certain on- and off-ramps to spread salt.

By 8:00 AM, 98 percent of the city was salted.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT:

In anticipation of the impending snowfall, the Department of Transportation (DOT) began sending out pre-storm messaging in the early afternoon on the 'variable message system' boards it

operates on highways around the city. DOT updated the message to advise of a snow condition, to use caution, reduce speed, and avoid unnecessary travel, and again regarding slippery conditions.

As I mentioned before, a 20-car crash around 3:00 PM had blocked all lanes in both directions on the upper level of the George Washington Bridge—which would not be fully reopened for two hours. From that point, reports began coming in of disabled vehicles, including buses and tractor-trailers, affecting travel lanes on multiple highways.

What is apparent in our after action analysis is that starting around 2:00 PM travel speeds citywide at the MTA, Port Authority and 355 locations DOT monitors all began to drop precipitously, and continued to do so until about 6:00 PM, after which they only began to recover very gradually, and did not fully return back to normal until after midnight.

While this was occurring DOT's traffic management and emergency response staff were primarily focused on addressing incidents identified through visual inspection via their traffic camera network and calls placed into the Communications Center—an icy off-ramp, or a steep section of roadway where trucks and others were getting stuck—and working with its partners to direct authorized tow, NYPD, and DSNY resources to those locations.

At the same time, data from TRANSCOM—a coalition for coordination and cooperation among 16 tristate transportation and public safety agencies—gives a regional picture. Between 2:00 PM and 3:00 PM major delays began appearing, first in New Jersey and the southern parts of the city, then spreading into Upper Manhattan, the Bronx and all of Westchester. These delays created severe system-wide gridlock.

This meant that even once traffic on the George Washington Bridge started flowing again, it had nowhere to go by that point, whether coming into the city or headed into New Jersey, and it remained that way for several more hours. It should be noted that that it was mainly roads and bridges that got snarled across New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. Fortunately, the MTA did a good job of keeping the subways running well during this event.

Over the course of the storm, the NYPD adjusted their traffic enforcement to accommodate worsening conditions. All traffic enforcement agents on the 12:00 PM shift had their tours extended to 11:00 PM. The Citywide Traffic Task Force deployed officers and supervisors to the East River bridges and the approaches to the George Washington Bridge to help mitigate traffic. Extra officers were deployed to several major cross town streets in Manhattan. Furthermore, the NYPD extended the tours of every highway command officer in the first platoon and 4 officers in each command for the third platoon, which increased the manpower to respond to snow storm related events.

On the highways, in addition to the authorized tow program, NYPD added two tow trucks to each of the four highway commands to supplement the authorized tow program. An additional 60 tow trucks were deployed to help vehicles in need of assistance in other areas. All told, over 200 vehicles were towed to improve traffic flow that day.

NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS:

School buses were significantly delayed due to the November 15 storm and road conditions. The Department of Education (DOE) worked closely with bus companies and across City agencies to keep students safe, while getting them to their destinations as efficiently as possible. Approximately 700 routes were delayed that evening, representing a little less than 10 percent of all routes.

During the storm, the Office of Pupil Transportation prioritized communication with families, making 665 individual phone calls to the families affected by delays that evening. The OPT hotline was operational through Thursday night into Friday morning. Fifteen staff members remained in the office until 5:00 AM to answer calls until the call center's morning shift arrived.

DOWNED TREES:

As I mentioned earlier, this storm had the second highest accumulations for a November snowstorm since 1882. When the storm hit, more than half of the city's trees still had some or all of their leaves. This led to significant tree limb failure, as many limbs could not bear the extra weight of wet, heavy snow caught on their leaves.

During the storm, staff from the Police and Fire departments worked through the night to respond to emergency requests for downed trees and limbs blocking roadways. Late on the night of the storm, the Parks Department, NYC Emergency Management and the Mayor's Office called for the activation of the Downed Tree Task Force, an interagency effort to address storm-related tree issues, beginning Friday morning.

Starting at 6:00 AM on the morning after the storm, Parks deployed 30 crews into the field, prioritizing blocked streets, trees on houses, and leaning trees. These 150 Parks employees assessed tree damage, resolved dangerous conditions and began the disposal of fallen trees and limbs. Parks staff were supplemented by teams from FDNY, NYPD and DEP, as well as Parks emergency contractors. Both Parks and DSNY worked jointly to remove tree brush and logs from the streets, and reported tree debris was cleared within a week of the storm. Following the storm, the Parks Department completed inspections of more than 3,300 service requests made through 311 for downed trees, hanging limbs and fallen limbs across the city. From those inspections, Parks created more than 2,000 unique work orders for fallen trees and or limbs, and all of those have since been completed and resolved. These efforts were coordinated through the Downed Tree Task Force at NYC Emergency Management.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The City is currently performing a review and assessment of its response to this snow event. Based on the results of this evaluation, the City will make operational changes and adjustments. However, we are prepared to share some preliminary lessons learned at this time.

As a result of climate change, New York City will experience more frequent and intense storms of all types. Weather conditions are becoming increasingly variable and unpredictable, and the storm on November 15 was one indication of this long-term trend. As a result, the City must adapt its preparations for future storms to account for this increasing unpredictability.

To ensure that we are prepared for future early-season storms, DSNY will advance our "Night Plow" operations to start at the beginning of November, rather than in mid-November. In addition, for each individual weather event, DSNY will plan for additional staffing coverage to increase pre-treatment of roadways. While this may mean that in some cases we will pre-treat roadways in advance of events that end up bringing little to no snow, it will give us an additional jump start for weather events that turn to snow earlier or more aggressively than expected.

In advance of storms like this one with high moisture content and an even small possibility of changeover to mostly or all snow, the Department will plan for significantly higher accumulations than forecast to prepare for the worst case scenario.

Immediately the day after the storm, Commissioner Trottenberg spoke to her counterparts at MTA, Port Authority, New York State DOT, New Jersey Transit, New Jersey DOT, and TRANSCOM. She can say that across the region we all struggled, and we can all do better and that includes regional communication. In addition, DOT will work with partner agencies and TRANSCOM to identify recurring problem areas where icing and crashes occur, especially at high-volume crossings, in order to preposition assets at these locations and have emergency access plans in place, to be ready to address conditions immediately.

And while DOT's Traffic Management Center generally focuses on incident response, DOT is exploring automated, algorithm-based monitoring of traffic conditions that might alert us to the kind of precipitous drop in speeds system-wide in order to alert other agencies and the public. In a similar event in the future the City will be prepared to put out more information to the public as it is happening so that people better know what to expect as they are on the road or about to get on the road.

It is clear that the sheer number of vehicles on the road was a major factor that hampered DSNY's ability clear snow and ice from roadways. DSNY will work with NYPD and DOT to develop plans for emergency escorts and counterflow travel of spreaders, plows and tow trucks to ensure they can get where they need to go if gridlock conditions restrict travel in the future.

After the storm, the Chancellor convened an after-action group to review the response to the storm and ensure the best services for and communication with families in the event of future snowstorms and emergencies. DOE is exploring improvements to customer service to better communicate with families on a more consistent basis. DOE has already created an OPT Twitter handle and brought the OPT webpage into the DOE website; and is continuing to review their call center, robocalls, and how best to use Twitter and the website to communicate information.

DOE's contracted school bus service have GPS devices on all special education buses, as well as two-way radio communication with all buses. DOE is funding a pilot program to provide parents access to bus ETA information via an app, and it is currently assessing this pilot for expansion.

Every storm brings different challenges that impact the speed with which we can clear the streets, including storm intensity, temperature, time of day and total accumulation. We ask the public to heed any notifications or requests from the City, including DSNY snow alerts and travel warnings from NYC Emergency Management and DOT, and leave their cars at home or at work. Most importantly, I ask New Yorkers to be patient and allow workers at DSNY and other City agencies, who are performing under tough and often brutal conditions, to safely do their jobs as quickly as possible.

In closing, I want to assure all New Yorkers that snow-fighting remains a core component of the Department's mission, and our workforce understands that their performance is critical to keeping this City functioning 24/7. We strive to learn from this event and continue to improve our operations during future storms.

My colleagues and I are now happy to answer your questions.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committees on Education, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, and Transportation

Re: The City's Preparation for and Response to Winter Storm Avery

November 29, 2018

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi Levine, and I am Policy Director at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 45 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds.

We heard from parents of students with disabilities who were trapped on school buses for hours on their way home from school during winter storm Avery. Parents were concerned about the safety and wellbeing of their children. Many of these children had not eaten since lunchtime, and some of them did not arrive home until the middle of the night. Some parents did not know where their children were or when and where they should meet their children.

One parent contacted an AFC staff member at 8:00pm when her son had not returned home. Her child, a nine-year-old student on the autism spectrum, finally returned home at 11:00pm—eight hours after he got on the bus. He did not have anything to eat or drink during this time. In fact, bus staff told the children they were not allowed to drink water. The bus never stopped to allow the children to use the bathroom. During these eight hours, nobody contacted the parent to let her know where the bus was or when she could expect her child to come home. However, unlike many other parents, this parent was able to track the bus's progress during the trip and see where her child was because she had given her son a phone with GPS technology.

We understand that unexpected events happen that impact a school bus ride – an accident, a traffic jam, a medical emergency, or a November snowstorm. This is a key reason why it is important for the City to provide all parents with access to real-time GPS data for their children's school buses. We strongly support Int. 1099-2018, which would require that all school buses be equipped with a GPS tracking system, a



policy the Department of Education (DOE) is already in the process of implementing, and, importantly, would give parents and schools access to GPS data in real time, allowing parents to know when the bus is coming, how long the bus is taking to get to school, and where their children are. We thank Council Member Kallos and Chair Treyger for their leadership on this bill and look forward to working with the City Council to move it forward.

The stories we heard about horrific bus rides during the storm also highlight the need for the DOE to ensure that bus drivers and matrons get the training needed to support students, including those with a variety of disabilities, on ordinary days and in emergency situations. These stories also illustrate the need for the DOE's Office of Pupil Transportation to provide better customer service and more effectively communicate information and updates to parents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

OPT Bus Advocacy Message

Hello,

I'm writing to share the many years of experience of my daughter, Claudia, 16, on OPT bussing to her special ed schooling, first at Aaron School and now at Cooke Academy.

This year Claudia is on route M553. Her student ID is #.

The bus service over about a decade has been abysmal. On 11/15, the bus dropped off Claudia about 30 minutes later, but other kids on the bus took 3-5 additional hours to get home. Not ok. The day after, the bus didn't even show up. No calls. No information. Just no bus.

To be sure, there are stretches where the bus runs smoothly, this year and in previous years. But there are frequent horrible lapses with late busses, no busses, lost busses, rides to/from school sometimes taking three hours or more. Sometimes bus drivers don't show up for work. Bus companies have phones that don't work. OPT bussing is really a shabby operation. The start of every school year takes weeks, sometimes months, to get the route working properly. All of this compared to my sons, who go to a private school and whose busses run perfectly from day one every year. OPT pays a lot of money per student, and the service OPT gets is really horrendous. How does OPT accept such service? Forgive the bluntness, but it seems like OPT doesn't care. Companies need to be held accountable and provide proper service, period. It's just not that complicated. How can it be that private school bussing is seamless? That proves that providing good school bus service is very possible. OPT should begin providing proper bus service. Students need it.

Thank you,

Richard Lipsey

November 15, 2018 Yellow School Buses Delays

Attention City Council:

OPT and NYC need to be responsible for our students, especially students with disabilities.
Thank you.

Best,
Susana Montes
Parent

ongoing busing issues and delays

Dear Council Member Treyger,

Hello, my name is Ivy Ip and I have a 7-year old daughter named Molly. I am writing to you about the busing issues and delays that Molly has been experiencing for some time. We reside in Queens and Molly's school is on the LES. Molly was recently approved for the accommodations of "Limited Travel Time - Standard" and "Route with Fewer Students", which have been added to her IEP. OPT has confirmed that Molly's accommodations are on file, but to date, OPT has not taken the steps to implement these accommodations. Molly is still on the same route that picks her up at 6:20 and drops her off around 4:35-4:45. Molly's school day begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. I have called OPT to ask when Molly's accommodations will be implemented but have not been provided with a start date. I have also left a message with the router assigned to Molly but have not received a response.

A separate issue regarding Molly's transportation accommodations was that it took nine months for the accommodations to be approved and added to Molly's IEP. This delay can largely be attributed to Molly's Committee for Special Education (CSE), who did not provide the Office of School Health with necessary reports for several months. Molly's CSE also neglected to respond to my numerous attempts at communicating with them about getting the busing accommodations approved.

On 11/15, Molly's bus ride took 3 hours due the snowstorm. She arrived home at 6 pm. I realize that a 3 hour ride is nothing compared to the horrifying rides of 10 or more hours that other students had to endure. But this is not the first time that Molly's bus ride home took several hours. When Molly was in preschool through CPSE, one of her rides home took 4 1/2 hours because the bus driver got lost dropping off another student. The DOE, with OPT, needs to develop a plan to address the issues and delays surrounding the process of applying for busing accommodations, implementing the accommodations, and adhering to mandated travel times.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Ivy Ip

special ed kid busing

Dear Council Member Treyger:

Thank you for your advocacy for families with disabled kids.

Our daughter lives in Manhattan and is six years old, and this is our fifth year of her going to special ed preschool or school in NYC and our giving up on trying to send her to school by bus.

The fact that the DOE combines kids from different schools on the same route creates significant, avoidable issues, including having challenged kids sitting on the bus for way too long instead of getting much needed sleep, and behavioral issues--for example, this year, we gave up her riding the bus because a boy from another school would get very upset, and the bus would return him home, delaying all the other children from getting to school on time.

In addition, despite the fact that our daughter requires shortened bus time for medical reasons (she is at risk for seizures), the bus routes offered in the last five years have always either required her to get up unnecessarily early, so that the bus would arrive to sit in front of the school before school opens, or alternatively arrive late for school.

Calling OPT is very time consuming and frustrating, and ultimately useless.

Every year for five years, we have tried the bus, and seen how it would require compromising our daughter's sleep and health or her ability to be in the classroom on time, so we give up, at immense financial and time cost to ourselves--but it is better than having her hospitalized for seizures.

If the DOE stopped combining special kids from different schools, and if they provided some sort of financial compensation to families who ultimately elect not to use the bus, it would go an extremely long way to helping. The DOE can provide Metrocard compensation to families who choose not to ride the bus, but if we were to receive this, we have been advised it would be almost impossible to get busing back on our daughter's IEP, and she really does need busing.

Thank you again for your advocacy,

Vera Zlatarski

School busing issues

To Mark Treger,

Thank you so so much for taking on school busing issues.

I actually have rearranged my entire life to take my son to and from school because the school busing is so bad. I work part-time and weekends now so I can pick him up every day. He has autism.

When he was a toddler, I worked very hard to potty train him and he no longer needed diapers at 3. Then he started going to a special-needs preschool very far away I was told to send diapers into school to wear home because it would probably take him ~3 hours to get home the first few weeks while they were "figuring out the routes." I was horrified and unwilling to subject my son to that -- not the least because it would jeopardize the months of work I spent potty training him, which requires a lot of effort for a kid like mine. I was shocked other parents and the city put up with it! Seemed like straight child neglect/abuse to deny access to a bathroom for that long.

Why can't they drive the routes a week before school starts to get them down? Or use Google Maps or whatever technology is out there? It's because they don't care about abusing the kids. We need to make them care. They should not have any grace periods at the start of the school year to be "late."

At one point when my son was 6 I tried the bus when he was commuting from Manhattan to Queens. The matron, who had no training in handling kids with autism, requested that he be strapped in and a teacher warned me that the matron had been verbally abusing my son. She also told me they ran into the issue of abusive matrons a lot, because they received no training and the matrons just couldn't handle it. It was terrifying to think my son would be with someone for hours each day who couldn't handle the situation and I kept driving him myself and then pulled him out of the school several months later and sued to send him to a closer school, at great cost to me and the DoE.

It's surprising schools haven't taken this issue on, but I have heard from schools that they don't want to get on the bad side of the DoE so they try not to rock the boat when it comes to busing. For private special-needs schools, both funded and not funded, they worry about retaliation -- losing funding or the DoE aggressively challenging parents' lawsuits if they make too many complains. **THIS LEAVES PARENTS TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES** and the systemic issues are less likely to get identified and addressed.

For the snowstorm issue in particular:

I heard that some kids were stuck on buses for hours in that snowstorm -- even until midnight -- and not offered bathroom breaks.

We work too hard to potty train our children, particularly those with special needs, to let them endure this inhumane treatment. They need to come up with a system that does not result in children suffering strapped in a bus for hours on end. Keep them at school until parents can get there.

Or if they hit trouble on the road, then figure out a way to provide bathroom breaks every 2 hours. If the weather gets really bad, or the time excessive, call parents and see who can meet them at a central location close to the subway (often subways are in much better shape than roads in a storm) to get their kids. (Two parents in my son's school had to retrieve their kids after a bus got stuck in the snow several years ago. It was awful but at least they were able to rush there and get their kids within an hour.)

And of course, if the bus companies didn't use excessively long routes and poorly paid drivers to begin with, they would be much less likely to create such catastrophes.

Kathleen O'Brien

Working mother of an 8 year old with autism. I take him 75 blocks on the subway every day. I'm exhausted.

School Bus Delays During Thursday, November 15, 2018 Snowstorm

Dear Mr. Treyger.

Thank you for your email. Unfortunately, I can't attend the hearing but, I would like to have my testimony submitted to the record and I would like what I have written on this and my previous email on record.

I really do hope, that those responsible for the city's preparation during snowstorms learned a valuable lesson from what happened on Thursday, November 15, 2018.

I ask city officials to put themselves in the place of the many parents that didn't know where their children were and to put themselves in the place of the bus drivers, matrons and especially all the vulnerable children that had to sit through many hours without a bathroom break, and no food. Would you work under those conditions? I bet the answer is NO, so don't come up with excuses or apologies and plan ahead the next time.

I would also like to point out that on many occasions, we parents don't get notified by the school bus personnel. I was lucky that this year my child's school bus matron is very good at communicating with me and kept me informed on that day, but that has not always been the case in past years. It should be mandatory that they keep parents informed at all times and especially during extreme weather conditions.

As for my daughter, I vowed from that moment she made it home so late, she would not go to school the next time I hear there is a snowstorm on its way. Everyone who should have been taking action failed the city of New York. Let's not have a repeat of that disastrous day ever again!

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to have my voice heard.

Sincerely,

Nilda Ferrer

On Fri, Nov 16, 2018 at 5:20 PM N Ferrer wrote:

I am one of many parents that was worried sick during yesterday's (Thursday November 15, 2018) snowstorm. While I was confident that my child's school bus matron and her driver would continue to provide a safe ride home and would keep my daughter safe, my concern was that my child has a time limit and she was in the bus for about 5 hours. My daughter gets anxious once it is dark out. I was also concern about her and everyone needing to relieve themselves and the fact that she had nothing to eat. I was lucky in that my child's bus matron kept in constant communication with me and even allowed me to speak to my daughter. They did an excellent job in that sense. I am upset with the city's response and whoever is responsible for implementing the school bus regulations. There should be a plan in place for extreme weather. By this I mean bathroom breaks and a small meal provided even if we would have to pay for it later. The next time there is even a slight chance of snow I will not send my daughter to school.

OPT busing

Honorable Councilman Treyger,

I understand you are leading the efforts to improve OPT busing for our special needs children. My son, Alexander, has autism and attends school about 60 blocks away from home. On that Thursday snow storm, my son was stuck on the bus for 3 hours with no bathroom breaks or food. Worse it was nearly impossible to reach the bus driver / bus matron because they were preoccupied with driving in slippery conditions or dealing with anxious children. I wanted to track the bus down to get my son. This is one extreme example in which a GPS would have been very helpful for the parents.

Federal rules mandate an airline cannot keep you in a plane on the tarmac more than three hours on a domestic flight. Why can't we have similar rules for our more precious little ones? If a bus has been on the road for 3 hours the bus driver should be able to pull off somewhere safe or drive back to the school. Our students should also be allowed to use the bathroom or eat on the bus. Another suggestion is to mandate "emergency snack" packs on all buses.

Thank you very much for pushing this agenda with the DOE and DOS. I greatly appreciate it.

Best regards,

Teresa Watson

Desperate parent school bus issues

My name is Yina Flores my son Jake Alcantara attends the Bank street Family Center. He is dismissed from the family center at 1:30 pm everyday. Because his route is overcrowded(as advised by the bus driver), he gets home by around 3:30 everyday. Last week on Thursday because of traffic, he arrived home at 3:50! This is completely unacceptable and something needs to be done about it. I have been complaining and recording time with OPT since September now and nothing has been done yet. My son cant spent over two hours on a bus everyday for the entire school year! I'm tired of calling and complaint to the bus company to no avail. I have talked to Josias Gonzalez and Sheila Lucious Lowe from OPT for the last two months and Josias has been recording arrival times everyday. Please help me with the situation. I'm out of resources and just don't know what else to do any more, mi poor son gets home exhausted everyday from spending so much time on the bus. He doesn't even want to take the bus anymore. Please help me with this situation.

Bus Company: Phillips bus company

NYCID# [245-381-892](tel:245-381-892)

Complaint # [90692264](tel:90692264).

Thank you in advance,

Yina Flores

ATU Local 1056 Questions Response to Winter Storm Avery

Testimony to the New York City Council Committees on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management,
Transportation & Education
by Mark Henry, President/ Business Agent, ATU Local 1056

On behalf of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1056, thank you for this opportunity to share the perspective of bus operators in the aftermath of Winter Storm Avery. I am ATU LOCAL 1056 President and Business Agent Mark Henry. ATU LOCAL 1056 represents drivers and mechanics who work for MTA New York City Transit's Queens bus division. Many of my members were on the front line during the storm. On their behalf and that of our riding public, I want to make clear what we all know: the lack of adequate response to this Pre-winter storm in the borough of Queens represented a gross disappointment in both planning and response.

This Thursday, November 15, 2018 snow event, while short of horrific and unsafe conditions, left many of the communities we serve with no access to public transportation in outlying or transit desert areas of Queens. Main arteries where buses operate were not treated (with salt) in the first place to endure this type storm. Locations well inland to experienced the same impact much earlier; that gave us a warning of what we would face. Still, no midday efforts got salt spreaders and other equipment deployed along bus routes and other roads. Queens remains a transit desert without ready access to rail or subway (without a bus ride first). This makes reliance on buses all the more important. Further snow accumulations and street based snow removal often leave bus stop sidewalks and bus shelters totally inaccessible; this leave the riders we serve without a safe place to wait for a bus or to disembark.

This question comes to mind: After this small storm with big impact, what happens when a big storm occurs? Will conditions delay, limit or cause a cessation in bus service? Riders of public transit often lack knowledge of their preferred and regular transit options. No one ought to experience any wait in vain. What happened November 15: Apparently no early decision to deploy equipment to spread salt and clear snow. Ditto on personnel to clear sidewalks and curbs along bus stops and bus shelters. Decisions on preparation, response, budget and deployment fall first on City Hall and then the MTA.

Queens is not Manhattan. Queens primarily depends on more on buses than subway and rail to move about. Many main roads, including bus routes, include declines and inclines that require appropriate attention to maintain bus operations. With too many storms, planners fail to take terrain into account. Bus routes in Queens traverse across several community districts with many serving as feeder lines to subway lines. This requires a snow (and salt-spreading) plan that clears bus routes that often involves otherwise secondary and tertiary streets. Some inclines require special attention in extreme snow conditions or buses will not be able to complete their runs.

Hundreds of ATU members stuck on their buses for hours, remained unable to serve the riding public the way we prefer. Riders waiting for buses much longer than reasonable – even in these difficult weather condition. We want and demand answers. We look to this hearings to help get at the truth. We also call on City Hall to publicly release its (community/sanitation) district by district snow response plans and the actual implementation. Thank you.

-30-



Bussing complaints pre-K

To whom it may concern. Hello My name is Melissa Hilario. I had filled out on of the surveys about problems with bussing for children with special needs. My son is Henzel Miranda and he will be 3 in January, he is legally blind. We live in the bronx Hunts Point. He does to school in Manhattan 80 Westend ave, adapt community center. He gets pick up at 6:05AMand arrives around 8:00a sometimes 10mines late. They leave school at 2:00p and he is supposed to get home at 3:50P but since he start school in late October never has. He will always get home after 4:00p even almost 5:30p. The day of the snow storm he never got home i had been calling the bus since 4:00p and they would tell me, he'll be there in a hour and i would call back and they kept saying the same thing (to call back) Then at 9:00p they tell me that they cant get him home. I had to call someone to pick up at 10:40p around Fordham Rd. I know that was an exception but it not only that day he is late every single day! I have called pupil transportation every single day to complain and nothing has been done. I have even try getting in contact with the supervisor to my complain Mr. Gonzales and i'm never able to speak to him. The school also tells me they call about the problem. I have also called the bus company with the complain and given suggestions. I have even gotten to the point that i have a tracker on my son backpack since the snow day. Because it is very concerning and important to know why and where my son is. Please feel free to call me or email me back. 518-331-3585

From: **Melissa hilario** <melissahilario95@gmail.com>

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NY, NY 10013

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Name: Kevin Moran, Senior Adviser to the Chancellor
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I represent: NYC Department of Education
Address: 52 Chambers St NY, NY

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I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

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I represent: _____

Address: _____

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I represent: Advocates for Children of New York

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Name: Liam Keenan

Address: 830 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: 830 Fifth Ave., NY, NY

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I represent: OEM

Address: _____

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Name: Mitdell Silver

Address: 830 5th Ave., NY, NY

I represent: NYC Parks

Address: 830 5th Ave., NY, NY

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