

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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March 17, 2026
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway-8th Fl.- Hearing Rm. 1

B E F O R E: Shaun Abreu
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

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

Janno Lieber
NYC Chair and CEO of MTA

Jay Patel
Chief Financial Officer at MTA

Shanifah Rieara
Chief Customer Officer at MTA

John McCarthy
Chief of Policy and External Relations MTA

Mike Flynn
Commissioner of Department of Transportation

Margaret Forgione
First Deputy Commissioner at DOT

Paul Ochoa
Executive Deputy Commissioner DOT

Eric Beaton
Deputy Commissioner of Transportation and
Planning and Management

Rick Rodriguez
Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and
Community Affairs

Evan Hines
Acting Commissioner at Taxi and Limousine
Commission

Sherryl Eluto
General Counsel at TLC

James DiGiovanni
TLC Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Community
Affairs

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

Eduardo de Valle

Acting Commissioner of Department of Design and
Construction

Eric Macfarlane

First Deputy Commissioner at DDC

Nathan Toth

Chief Financial Officer at DDC

Jean Ryan

President of Disabled in Action Metro New York

Michael Ring

Second Vice President of Disabled in Action

Monica Bartley

Disabled in Action

Rasheta Bunting

Vice President at National Federation of the
Blind New York State

Zay Zay Howard

504 Democratic Club

Edward Funches

Inclusion Mobile Detailing

Glen Bolofsky

Brian Fritsch

Associate Director at Permanent Citizens Advisory
Committee to MTA

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

Christopher Schuyler

Bhairavi Desai

Executive Director at New York Taxi Worker
Alliance

Ali Langley

Taxi Workers Alliance

Rosa Chang

President of Gotham Park

Yadira Sanchez

Worker Justice Project

Abaubakar Ki

Worker Justice Project

Elizabeth Adams

Transportation Alternatives

Amanda Berman

Center for Justice Innovation

Wain Chin

New York Taxi Worker Alliance

Richard Chow

New York Taxi Worker Alliance

Kuber Sancho-Persad

Taxi driver

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

Joshua Boyce
New York Public Interest Research Group

Stephen Brinson
New York Public Interest Research Group

Norm Miller
New York Public Interest Research Group

Kathleen Collins
Disabled in Action

Christopher Leon Johnson

Charlton D'Souza
President of Passengers United

Jack Nierenberg
Vice President of Passengers United

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Remind everyone to
3 silence all electronic devices, and at this point,
4 moving forward, no one approach the dais. Chair, you
5 may begin.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [gavel] Not yet?
7 Sorry, give us a second.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and
9 welcome to today's New York City Council Preliminary
10 Budget hearing from the Committee on Transportation
11 and Infrastructure. At this point, I'd like to remind
12 everyone to please silence their electronic devices,
13 and at no point is anyone to approach the dais.
14 Chair, we're ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [gavel] Good morning
16 and welcome to the Committee on Transportation
17 Infrastructure's hearing on the Fiscal 2027
18 Preliminary Budget and the fiscal 2026 Preliminary
19 Mayor's Management Report for the MTA, DOT, TLC, and
20 DDC. My name is Shaun Abreu, and I chair this
21 committee. I would like to acknowledge fellow council
members who are here with us today, Council Members
Schulman and Dinowitz. Today we'll hear testimony
from three transportation agencies: the MTA, DOT, and
TLC. Each plays an essential role in the lives of New

2 Yorkers. Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia famously stated New
3 York didn't build the subways, the subways built New
4 York. This sentiment reflects the profound impact our
5 transportation systems have on our city's culture and
6 vitality. Effective and efficient transportation is
7 vital for economic growth, social mobility, and
8 commerce. It also serves a crucial role in community
9 health and our overall well-being as a city. I look
10 forward to speaking with each of these agencies about
11 their role in moving the city and its residents
12 forward. We'll also hear testimony today from DDC,
13 the city's primary capital construction project
14 manager. The methods, means, and materials we use in
15 construction are so crucial, not only to our
16 transportation network, but to the sustainability and
17 the long-term health of our city across all sectors.
18 First up today is the MTA, whose calendar year 2026
19 operating budget is \$21.32 billion. We will discuss a
20 range of issues, including the authority's \$68.4
21 billion 2025-2029 Capital Plan. We would also like to
explore the seemingly ever-increasing cost shifts to
the city, including increasing bus subsidies,
paratransit costs, and the payroll mobility tax.
Additionally, we plan on exploring how the authority

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2 plans to financially navigate the political climate
3 in Washington to complete projects like the Second
4 Avenue subway. We'll then hear from the Department of
5 Transportation at noon on its fiscal 2027 prelim
6 budget of \$1.57 billion for DOT, \$41.6 million more
7 than its \$1.51 billion fiscal 2027 budget in the
8 November plan. The agency's preliminary capital
9 commitment plan totals \$14.3 billion across fiscal
10 years 2026 to 2030. The commitments represent a total
11 of 12.6 percent of the entire city's capital
12 commitment plan. The fiscal 2027 preliminary plan
13 also includes \$8.9 million in new needs for fiscal
14 '27 and \$32.7 million in other adjustments. Local Law
15 195 of 2019, also known as the Streets Plan or the
16 Transportation Master Plan, was passed in October
17 2019. Notably, DOT is once again failing to meet the
18 legal mandates the council established several years
19 ago in the Streets Plan. As chair of this committee,
20 I wanna do everything in the council's power to help
21 support DOT and help them meet these mandated
requirements. Two weeks ago, at our Streets Plan
hearing, I asked the— I asked DOT what specific
budgetary items DOT needed in terms of funding and
headcount to meet the legal mandates of the Streets

2 Plan. At the hearing, they declined to answer and
3 postponed their response until today's preliminary
4 budget hearing. I look forward to finally hearing
5 their answer so the members of this council can get
6 to work to ensure that all their needs are met in
7 this year's budget, and they can finally fulfill
8 their legal requirement. Unfortunately, there are a
9 few declining metrics indicated in the PMMR that we
10 will discuss, including potholes. In the first four
11 months of this fiscal year, DOT crews repaired 5.1
12 percent fewer potholes on local streets and the
13 arterial highway system when compared to the same
14 period in fiscal 2025. This recently had fatal
15 ramifications. A 46-year-old man was thrown to his
16 death after hitting a pothole while riding a
17 motorized scooter in Ozone Park, Queens last week.
18 Only after he was pronounced dead at Jamaica Hospital
19 did DOT crews come by and fill the pothole. I look
20 forward to discussing how this year's budget will
21 ensure that DOT can meet its legal requirements and
more effectively serve communities citywide. Then we
will hear from the Taxi and Limousine Commission at
2:00 p.m. on its fiscal 2026 preliminary budget,
which totals \$57.9 million. We would like to explore

2 their enforcement capacity as well as get an update
3 on their vehicle accessibility. Over the last decade,
4 this industry has experienced tremendous change,
5 particularly since the introduction of app-based
6 for-hire vehicles to the city. The council remains
7 committed to removing barriers that prevent drivers
8 from earning an honest living while they provide
9 essential services to New Yorkers, and we look
10 forward to discussing how this budget further
11 empowers drivers to succeed. Finally, we will hear
12 from DDC at 3:00 p.m. on their 2027 Preliminary
13 Budget, which totals \$163.4 million, which is \$1.1
14 million less than its fiscal 2026 adopted budget. In
15 the preliminary commitment plan, there is \$23.53
16 billion in capital projects DDC is managing for the
17 city agencies and entities, which is 20 percent of
18 the citywide capital commitment plan. Today I plan to
19 ask DDC about the major capital projects the agency
20 is leading, from borough-based jails to pedestrian
21 ramp upgrades, but I also hope to discuss how DDC is
accomplishing its projects. For example, how the
agency is innovating to advance projects more quickly
and efficiently, and how DDC is maximizing
coordination with utility companies on joint

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2 ventures. Before we begin with testimony, I'd like to
3 thank my committee staff and the committee for their
4 hard work in preparing this hearing: Julissa Quigley
5 [sp?], my Deputy Chief of Staff and Legislative and
6 Budget Director, Adrian DrePaul [sp?], sitting to my
7 right, Principal Financial Analyst of the Committee;
8 Dan Kroop [sp?], Assistant Director of the Council's
9 Finance Division, Chima Obichere [sp?], Deputy
10 Director of the Council's Finance Division, Mark
11 Chen, Senior Counsel to the Committee; Theodore
12 Miller, Counsel to the Committee; and Kevin Kotowski
13 and John Basile [sp?], Senior Policy Analysts. I
14 would like to also recognize we've been joined by
15 Council Members Wong. I will now ask the Committee
16 Counsel to go over some procedural items and swear in
17 the representatives from the MTA. Just give us one
18 second.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, thank you. Sorry
20 for the delay. First panel will be from the MTA. Do
21 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
nothing but the truth before this committee and to
respond honestly to Council Member questions?

UNIDENTIFIED: We do.

UNIDENTIFIED: We do.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

3 CHAIR LIEBER: Okay. Good morning and
4 thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've had an opportunity to
5 have some preliminary discussions, and it's obvious
6 that you have hit the ground running in this— in your
7 new role. And I've also had an opportunity to talk
8 briefly Speaker Menin, and who's somebody I know many
9 years. So we're thrilled to be working with this new
10 council leadership as we go forward. I also want to
11 thank Council Member Dinowitz, Council Member
12 Schulman, and, and Council Member Wong for inviting
13 us this morning. I'm Janno Lieber. I'm the MTA chair
14 and CEO. I'm joined by Chief Financial Officer Jay
15 Patel, Chief Customer Officer Shanifah Rieara, and
16 Chief of Policy and External Relations, John
17 McCarthy. We're all glad to be here to share with you
18 an update of the MTA and glad to be first on the—
19 what sounds like a very long day. So, thank you for
20 all that. Listen, the headline is the MTA is in solid
21 shape. 2025 was arguably our best year in history for
a number of reasons. The hugely successful
implementation of congestion pricing, the enactment
of the largest ever MTA capital plan— thank you,
Governor Hochul— surging ridership and customer

2 satisfaction, best-ever subway crime stats, and
3 record-setting construction of subway accessibility
4 projects. It's safe to say that we have come a long,
5 long way since COVID shut down New York six years
6 ago. When I took this job in 2022, MTA was facing a
7 \$2.5 billion annual deficit on a \$20 billion less
8 than a \$19 or \$18 billion total budget. That
9 shortfall was like 14 to 15 percent of our budget,
10 you know, stuff that you guys are dealing with right
11 now at the city level. But today, thanks to Governor
12 Hochul rallying Albany and some very aggressive cost
13 cutting on our part, which to date has yielded
14 savings of \$500 million annually in our operating
15 budget. Because of all that, we have balanced the
16 budget for the third year running. The most recent
17 audit of this agency shows that in real terms, and I
18 emphasize this always, we are actually spending less,
19 three percent less overall than back in 2019 before
20 COVID even as we have dramatically increased subway,
21 bus, and commuter rail service. More service on 14
subway lines, a \$35 million increase of bus service
in Queens, and 40 percent more service on the Long
Island Railroad, much of which is going to increase
service within the City of New York. Out-year

2 deficits at the MTA have shrunk to half of one
3 percent or less. And Wall Street has clearly noticed
4 since the rating agencies keep upgrading us. Still,
5 some costs are increasing, and these are issues that
6 you alluded to in your initial remarks, some of them.
7 Most significantly, the cost of the- to the MTA of
8 running Access-A-Ride, our paratransit system. I want
9 to be clear, the cost per trip has gone down because
10 of the way we are managing it, but the total
11 operating cost to the MTA has gone way, way up. And
12 that's because paratransit ridership has exploded in
13 the last few years as we have dramatically improved
14 on-time performance and also switched 70 percent of
15 our trips to for-hire vehicles. So it's no longer all
16 the big blue and white vans. It's mostly in livery
17 vehicles and black cars. But the reality is that the
18 city's contribution to paratransit has not kept pace
19 with that growth in ridership. There's no reason why
20 the MTA should be punished financially for fixing an
21 operation that the city dumped on us a while ago. I
also want to talk about a few other areas of concern
with respect to the city budget- I know that's where
your heads are at- that could impact on our shared
goal. First, faster buses. We are thrilled that the

2 mayor is starting to revive bus lane projects that
3 were abandoned, or delayed by the pa- last
4 administration. Now it's time to kick things into
5 high gear, which will require not only more miles of
6 bus lanes, more ACE cameras, but also, here's the
7 punchline, dedicated funding for traffic enforcement
8 to keep the lanes clear of private vehicles. There
9 are hotspots, there are bottlenecks all over the city
10 where we need the traffic agents to keep it possible
11 for buses to move. Number two, affordability. I
12 always say, you know, mass transit is one of the few
13 things that makes New York affordable. And we are
14 huge supporters of the Fair Fares program. And we're
15 disappointed to see that the mayor's budget actually
16 reduces its funding by \$25 million. For years, we at
17 the MTA have been joining the council, your
18 predecessor council, in urging expansion of
19 eligibility so that more people can get the benefit
20 of fare fares. It doesn't make sense that today a
21 person working full-time for minimum wage is actually
making too much to qualify for fare fares. That
doesn't make sense, and we'd like to see the
eligibility threshold raised. Our transit system, as
I say, is one of the few things that actually makes

New York affordable. So— but if there is money that is being talked about to increasing affordability, let us prioritize people who are struggling to make ends meet, whether they use the bus or the subway or paratransit. And we also need your help making sure that we are preparing for the next generation of Student Omni, moves it— moving from the physical passes to digital, at least for the high school kids who have— overwhelmingly do have access to phones. Student Omni has been an unbelievable success, offering young New Yorkers a lot more flexibility in getting around, not just during the school year, but 24/7, 365. It's going to take continued close collaboration with the public school system to assure a smooth rollout of the new virtual student OmniCard. And we need DOE to prioritize getting ready for this new phase, especially training their own staff. And I'm just being honest, we have real concerns. We had an understanding with DOE that they were going to be ready. We were all gonna be ready for next school year, and that is starting to be a big question mark. So I'm putting that on everybody's radar. On to number three, climate resiliency, specifically stormwater management and the city's role in this.

2 I've spoken to Speaker Menin about this. Every big
3 storm, and they're only getting more frequent,
4 torrential rainfall overwhelms the city's sewer
5 capacity, causing backups that result in severe
6 flooding and stoppages in our subway system. Our team
7 has ideas about where the city can start expanding
8 capacity. We don't need the 7th Avenue line to
9 constantly being knocked out whenever there's a storm
10 that not-- that delivers more than an inch and a half
11 of rainfall in an hour. We need some investment by
12 the city, perhaps in the capital budget. Also, City
13 DOT needs dedicated funding to repave the areas where
14 the curbs have been reduced almost to nothing, and
15 the result is that during storms, water spills over
16 onto sidewalks and then cascades down through the
17 grates onto subway platforms. We've all seen this on
18 social media, and it's time to make the investments
19 that address this very, very unfortunate condition.
20 And finally, safety. Obviously, the NYPD's budget has
21 a direct impact on our system and the safety of our
passengers. We know that the increased police
presence in the subway does not come cheap. The
governor has also invested significantly in that. And
it has yielded-- that presence has yielded huge

2 results. Overall subway crime is down 14 percent in
3 2025 compared to 2019 before the pandemic. And it's
4 also— the increased safety has led to a surge in
5 customer satisfaction. Satisfaction with safety on
6 trains is up six points now to 63 percent, which is
7 the highest level since we began taking surveys. We
8 are headed in the right direction, but we cannot lose
9 ground. Rider satisfaction with overall service
10 reliability has increased, and we expect it to get
11 higher as we deliver the new \$68 billion 2025-29 MTA
12 Capital Plan. 90 percent of that plan is focused on
13 state of good repair work— basic stuff like new
14 signals, power systems, rolling stock, new subway
15 cars, plus a ton of ADA elevators across the entire
16 system. We are repairing the infrastructure that past
17 leaders and past MTAs actually left to crumble for
18 100 years. And we're doing it better, faster, and
19 cheaper than ever before. MTA construction
20 development saved over \$1 billion in 2025 alone. The
21 Bond Buyer, which pays close attention, as you can
imagine, to what's going on at the MTA, actually just
ran a story last week calling the MTA a model for
government builders nationwide. But while we're
prioritizing state of repair, we're not forgetting

2 about expansion entirely. My prepared remarks
3 discussed- the written remarks that are submitted to
4 you discuss some of these projects in detail. The
5 Interborough Express, Penn Station Access- I'm going
6 to skip over it in the interest of time, apart from
7 one important update, and this is breaking news. As I
8 mentioned to the Chair on the way in, the MTA has
9 just filed a lawsuit against the federal government
10 to restore funding for the Second Avenue Subway, the
11 Phase two project that will take the Second Avenue
12 Subway from 96th Street up to 125th Street. Everybody
13 knows the Trump administration has been withholding
14 money for New York infrastructure projects. We intend
15 to get every cent of what has been promised and
16 frankly, based on the agreements, what's owed to New
17 Yorkers. And we're not afraid to fight for it in
18 court, just as we've successfully taken on the feds
19 over congestion pricing and also successfully fought
20 for FEMA reimbursements, which were held back for
21 many years. Second Avenue Subway is an incredibly
worthy project, long overdue transit justice for East
Harlem, promised since the 1940s. And Phase two is
well underway and it's on budget and it's on
schedule. I was up at 125th and Park last week

2 looking at some of the work. There's a huge- there's
3 a huge excavation going on that will be part of the
4 tunnel boring process. And we don't want that work to
5 stop because of this funding gamesmanship that's
6 going on in Washington. We want to keep showing New
7 Yorkers that this is in fact- this is in fact a new
8 MTA, which is a businesslike government operation
9 focused on riders and focused on results. And we want
10 to be your partners, not just on Fair Fares and
11 faster buses, but housing too. The Chair and I
12 briefly discussed this in the last week. The housing
13 project we recently negotiated for Atlantic Avenue in
14 Brooklyn is a good example of what's possible. We all
15 know that good transit is a precondition for good
16 development. So we look forward to working with you,
17 all of you, on these issues, and I'm happy to take
18 your questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Mr.

20 Chairman, for showing up today and of course for the
21 preliminary discussions. My first set of questions
are on cost shifts. In the 2023-2024 state budget,
there was an increased payroll mobility tax,
increased levied on New York City businesses. In
2024, the final receipts from payroll mobility tax

2 and MTA aid totaled \$3.6 billion, up \$803 million
3 from 2023. The MTA sees this tax growing from \$4
4 billion in 2026 to \$4.15 billion in 2028. Does the
5 MTA project this revenue source to continue to grow
in later years?

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I'm going to let Jay
7 comment on that if you, if you would check the stats.
8 But here's the bottom line: payroll mobility tax is a
9 huge success. The business community was very clear
10 with us coming out of COVID. They said we need good,
11 reliable, frequent transit in order to get people
12 back to work and to rebuild the New York City
13 economy. And that's why you saw that particular small
14 increment in the PMT business tax actually not
15 meeting with resistance from the business community
16 because they wanted and they have gotten great
17 service, more frequent service, and a much better
18 mass transit system. It's been part of New York's
19 revival. So we're very pleased with that. The
20 governor took on the political responsibility of
21 getting that done in Albany. She delivered. She's
delivered again for the capital budget. And we're
very grateful that we're, you know, it's been one key

2 to the financial success. Jay, what are the
3 projections?

4 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: Thank you,
5 Chair. Our growth in PMT is small. It's relative to
6 the actual growth in the business employment sector,
7 and so we see our payroll mobility growing about \$50
8 million annually through our financial plan, and
9 that's covered through our expense growth, for
10 expenses that we have in our budget projected.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You say \$50 million
12 per year in the next five years? Yes, through 2029.
13 Thank you. With congestion pricing in effect, how
14 will this increased tax burden impact businesses in
15 the congestion zone?

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I think I said it
17 before, is that one of the rare things— what's
18 special about the couple of initiatives you've just
19 mentioned is the business community has been
20 consistent in supporting investment in transit
21 through the payroll mobility tax. And also the
congestion pricing initiative is not a negative for
business. To the contrary, the New York City
Partnership documented how billions were being lost
by time wasted in traffic. And the business community

2 partnership, but also the real estate community, you
3 know, consistently supported congestion pricing. And
4 they've been with us celebrating, literally
5 celebrating the fact that congestion pricing has been
6 so successful in improving the economy of New York.
7 You know, traffic is down, but business is up,
8 employment is up, uh, and there's been no negative
9 business effects from congestion pricing. To the
10 contrary, it's been a success.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Have you seen
12 ridership increase in the congestion zone?

13 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: We have, but it's hard
14 to attribute it specifically to congestion pricing.
15 Chairman, there are only 140,000 people a day who
16 actually drive to jobs in the CBD. We have, you know,
17 somewhere between a billion, a million and a half,
18 and 2 million jobs in the CBD. So they are really a
19 small dot. I could take all those people on the mass
20 transit tomorrow, and it would not really alter our
21 ridership. We carry 4.5 million people a day.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Chairman.
23 What will the additional funds from the payroll
24 mobility tax be used for?

2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: They're already
3 dedicated to the MTA's five-year financial plan,
4 which is a lot— you know, I mentioned in my testimony
5 that we have balanced budgets, and in the out years—
6 that's the last couple years of the financial plan—
7 half of 1 percent of a deficit. And that's because,
8 in part, because the payroll mobility tax has been a
9 successful ingredient in putting the MTA on solid
10 financial footing.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What work has the MTA
12 done to identify opportunities for efficiencies in
13 their operating budget? Are there any in-house
14 consultants MTA has on payroll to help facilitate
15 programs or projects?

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, you know, thank
17 you. You know how passionate I am about this issue.
18 Part of our success in, I think, getting the support
19 in Albany from the governor, but also from the
20 legislature to put the MTA in solid financial shape,
21 was that we stepped up and said, we've got a \$2.5
billion deficit. We will take \$500 million of that
and solve it ourselves through efficiencies. Not by
cutting service, not by cutting personnel, but
actually just by becoming more efficient. We have

accomplished that. We've now set ourselves on a course for another \$250 million of savings. And you're right, we did it by creating an in-house consultant operation that really works with the operating agencies to say, how can you deliver the same or better service at a lower cost? And it's been successful. We've hit our goals year after year.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm going to now turn over to the topic of paratransit cost shifts. This is a very, I would say a sensitive area for the city. In 2020, the state began to require the city to fund 50 percent of the net paratransit operating expenses of the MTA. I believe in the 1990s, it was in the 33 percent or so. It went up to 50 percent as of five years ago, and in just the last five years, it's gone up to 80 percent. Last year, the governor's budget extended the city's funding contribution level to this level for another two years, costing the city an additional \$165 million annually. Starting in state fiscal '26. In MTA's latest budget, they— you— it assumes that this cost will be permanent despite the need for legislative renewal at the state level. My question is, Mr. Chairman, why does the MTA increasingly pass this cost burden on to the city?

2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Because it was a- this
3 was a city operation that the MTA took on and has
4 grown in cost only because we are doing, I think, a
5 standout job of delivering better service. Last- in
6 the last couple of weeks, we have the most- we had a
7 day where we had more paratransit riders than ever
8 before in the city of New York, 50,000 people.
9 Ridership has gone up 20 percent per year, and yet
10 the MTA is having to eat that additional cost because
11 we're providing much better service even though we've
12 reduced the per-trip cost. So it seems like this is
13 one of those things where the MTA is being punished
14 for actually doing a good job. And in the division of
15 labor between city and state, this has been
16 primarily, you know, something that the city wanted
17 done by the MTA and was a city obligation. So we
18 think it's fair that they share the cost of all this
19 improved service and increased ridership.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Does the MTA believe
21 that this should be, uh, a permanent cost shift?

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I do. We think that the-
19 what needs to happen is that the cap on the city's
20 contribution should be removed. So that as we grow
21 ridership that is shared consistent with our

2 cost-sharing formula. Right now, the extra ridership
3 is in effect all being shifted to MTA's side of the
4 cost ledger.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So is it fair to say
6 that the MTA wants more increased costs to the city?

7 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, but just bear in
8 mind that the— for example, in the capital plan,
9 which was the \$68 billion capital we plan— we did
10 last year, the city's share of the capital plan went
11 up not at all, even as the state solved, you know,
12 had solutions for growing the MTA capital plan by
13 30-plus percent. So in the division of cost and
14 division of labor between our— the two jurisdictions,
15 this is one where the city ought not, in our view, be
16 shifting costs to the MTA. I can't keep providing
17 more and more and better and better service if it's
18 all going to, you know, come out of the MTA's hide. I
19 just want to acknowledge that we're joined today by
20 some of the activists in the disability community who
21 have, you know, although they have historically been
pushing the MTA to do more and better, some— they've
also been partners, including Michael Ring, who is
the Co-chair of our Accessibility Advisory Committee.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I just would like to,
3 you know, acknowledge, of course, that, you know, the
4 city obviously, at least speaking on behalf of the
5 Council, we would object to, you know, having this
6 cost to be permanent. And given that this is
7 something that is due up for next year's budget,
8 we're going to— we believe that it should go back to
9 at least the 50 percent levels. In five short years,
10 the city has been forced to shoulder an almost 50
11 percent increase in its contributions for
12 paratransit. What does the MTA project to be the
13 right cost share for the city of paratransit costs in
14 future years?

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I think the right cost
16 share is the one that would have— if you eliminate
17 the cap on the city's contribution right now, it
18 will— the contribution needs to move with ridership.
19 Now, in fairness, we also need to make sure that our—
20 the folks who are, you know, relying on paratransit,
21 now that we are improving accessibility to the subway
system, that we're doing a ton of outreach to make
sure that folks are aware you have a subway station
in your neighborhood that is now accessible. The bus
system is 100 percent accessible. So we hope that we

2 will- even though paratransit has been such a
3 success, we will continue to introduce a lot of folks
4 who need accessibility to the benefits of using the
5 existing system.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Mr. Chairman, you
7 mentioned in your testimony that costs have obviously
8 been harder control for paratransit. What is the MTA
9 doing to control the growth in paratransit costs?

10 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I think I've answered
11 this, respectfully. I think I've answered this. What
12 we've- what we're not- what we've done is that we've
13 reduced the per-ride cost, but we can't be held
14 accountable and punished for actually making service
15 better and more attractive so that people are calling
16 upon it. The people who used to have to- you would
17 wait five minutes for the phone to be picked up are
18 now getting the phone picked up promptly. That more
19 people actually have access to online ways of online
20 techniques for reserving their ride, that we've made
21 on-demand service a little more available. So I don't
think that MTA should be punished. That if the costs
go up because we're providing service and making it
more accessible, that's a collective issue, and it
should be- the cost should be shared rather than

2 telling the MTA to make the cost go away. That's sign
3 of success.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, I'm going to
5 move on to— just want to also stay for the record
6 again, I hope that the MTA stays open to reducing the
7 cost shift to the city on paratransit as we move into
8 next year.

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: If you find some other,
10 you know, some other source— the MTA is not— does not
11 print money, and we don't levy taxes. So telling the
12 MTA to, you know, find the money, that's— that
13 doesn't work. But we're always willing to work with
14 the Council and with the state on solutions. But at
15 the end of the day, if people are going to use the
16 system and it's going to be good, it's going to have
17 to be funded.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Let's just stay open.
19 Free bus routes: In the 2024 state budget, funding
20 was included for a pilot program offering one free
21 bus route in every borough. From September 24, 2023
to August 31, 2024, five MTA bus routes were
fare-free to passengers on these routes. The routes
offered were BX18A, B60, M116, Q4, and S4696. Can you
update the committee on how this pilot program went?

2 What were the results, and do you consider this
3 program to be successful?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You know, the- I would
5 rather not get into a debate about this oft-discussed
6 issue, but the way we look at that pilot program that
7 was done a couple years ago was, yes, there was a
8 little more ridership on the routes, but bus speeds
9 did not go up. And our analysis of who was riding
10 indicated that we were not attracting new riders.
11 What we were doing is we're taking people from paid
12 routes and they were choosing to take the free bus
13 which is- you know, if the goal is to increase trans-
14 you know, mobility in effect and have people have
15 more opportunity to have access to jobs and
16 education, we didn't look at it as an unqualified And
17 we have- you know, and I think there are a lot of
18 questions about- and I've raised them and I'd rather
19 not get into the detail right now, but we've raised
20 the questions that we need to- this is an idea which
21 has, I understand, you know, great, appeal but hasn't
really been studied. We have a sacred system in New
York that we depend on, our mass transit system. It
makes New York possible and I am- I have concerns
that we ought to be studying any of these huge

2 transformational ideas much more thoroughly before we
3 consider expansion.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Would you say the
5 program was not a success? I've drawn the- I've
6 described the conclusions that we drew. I'm going to
7 pass on the opportunity to headline it.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright. I guess I'll
9 take that. I'd like to recognize we've been joined by
10 Council Member Louis. How did you- how do you choose
11 which bus routes to make free to passengers in that
12 pilot, and do you learn anything while the program
13 was running that can inform future decisions?

14 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, I mean- but what
15 we- I don't have it- my- John, do you have- I don't
16 have my- the criteria, but I think the legislature
17 gave us criteria when they passed that five route-

18 CHIEF MCCARTHY: [interposing] Yeah, five
19 routes, one in each borough. We were looking for
20 routes that were not along subway lines, and looking
21 for routes that we'll learn something from. And so,
the- I think the routes that were picked were
sufficient. They were done by agreement. And at the
conclusion of the study, you know, we put out a
report, and it's- you know, the facts are there for

2 anybody to read and learn. And as the Chair
3 mentioned, I think the key thing that everybody was
4 looking at was will this make buses run faster? And
it didn't.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Did you see an
6 increase in subway ridership at stations along these
7 routes for the buses?

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I don't think so.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Interesting. What
10 would be the estimated cost to provide free bus
service throughout the city?

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: That's— we haven't done
12 nearly enough analysis, and we haven't been asked by
13 the legislature, which is— one house of the
14 legislature put a proposal on for a new pilot, but
15 nobody's asked us to do the kind of study that would
16 be necessary to give you an accurate answer on that.
17 But the answer is— but the answer ultimately would
18 not include, you know, the MTA's projections for bus
19 revenue are one thing, which push \$1 billion in a
20 couple years, but it would also include what would be
the cost of to the subway system of people shifting
from subway to bus? What would be the cost— that's
the revenue impact. What would be the cost of

2 additional buses? What would be the cost of
3 additional bus operators if needed? All that stuff
4 would have to be studied to give you a meaningful
5 answer. But it would be, you know, as I've said,
6 roughly based on just our revenue projections and
7 some other small factors, it would be north of a
8 billion dollars.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I just want to-

10 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] Per year.
11 Per year.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Per Year. Would like
13 to walk back to Mr. McCarthy. Is it fair to say that
14 free buses could mean slower buses? And would that-
15 you think that would- would that be something that
16 would remain consistent?

17 CHIEF MCCARTHY: It- look, there's- I
18 don't know that that's- that it means slower, but the
19 New York Times did it. They sent out a bunch of
20 reporters and they did a, you know, a pretty thorough
21 look at a bus route, and they determined that the
speed gained from not having someone pay was- or the
time it took for someone to pay was not the issue for
the pace of buses. It was the congestion on the
roads. It was double-parked cars. It was the lack of

2 enforcement in many areas. So, that's, you know,
3 that's something that I know you and others are
4 focused on, and it makes a lot of sense. Based on
5 what they reported out.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Not to make headlines,
7 Mr. Chairman, would you say fast and free are
8 contradictory?

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: No comment.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I think the point is
12 we're ready to do— we're working with the city to do
13 fast. That is under— that discussion is well
14 underway, and I credit the new DOT team and the mayor
15 and the mayor's team for stepping up on that. So
16 let's get going and doing fast. We have a lot of
17 questions relevant to the second half of that
18 sentence.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I think I know your
20 answer on this one. Does the MTA support trialing
21 free buses again during the World Cup?

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I haven't— honestly, I
haven't been asked that by anybody in a position.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay.

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2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: And we're not at— we're
3 not going to study things that are not on, you know,
4 not on the agenda of the city and the state and other
5 power players.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Has the city or state
7 asked you to do anything on this?

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: No. No. Nobody's asked
9 me to give free buses to—

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: people who are paying
12 \$1,000 a ticket from other countries. No one's asked
13 me that so far.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Fair, fair. A city
15 comptroller report from September 2025 found a
16 majority of buses are performing at below average
17 standards. 56 percent of bus lines, 186 out of 332,
18 received a grade of D or lower, meaning that they run
19 at speeds significantly below the borough-wide
20 average, are more likely to experience bunching and
21 consistently fail to arrive at scheduled stops on
time. By comparison, only 27 lines, eight percent,
received a B or higher. Only seven lines received an
A grade per hour, consistent with January 2019 speeds

2 at 7.8 miles per hour. What is the MTA doing to
3 improve bus speeds throughout the city?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, so you've just
5 made- recited stats that are the most powerful
6 argument for all of this bus speed initiatives that
7 have been the law of the- some of them have been the
8 law of the City of New York for several years but
9 haven't been implemented.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Talking about the
11 Streets Plan?

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I'm talking about the
13 street-

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We have a hearing on
15 that later. I'm going to zero in on it.

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, so we're for all
17 of those initiatives. Well, we are strong supporters
18 of the busway goals, the bus lane goals, including
19 potentially busways. We're strong support. We have
20 been pushing, pushing for more and more ACE cameras,
21 and ACE cameras are a success. We have seen
improvements in speed on those routes. We have seen
consistent improvements in speed. We have seen that
people don't violate again and again and again. Give
New Yorkers credit, just like they are where there

2 are speed cameras, when they know that there are ACE
3 cameras there, they are not engaged in, you know,
4 repetitive recidivist violations. So the system is
5 working where we get- where we get the ACE cameras.
6 And that's at eight over- I think how many routes?
7 It's a huge- I'll get you the number, but it's- but a
8 huge portion of our routes, about 20 percent of our
9 routes now are now covered by ACE cameras. We want
10 more traffic enforcement agents to break the
11 bottlenecks, but we have been supporters of, you
12 know, traffic signal prioritization, which is another
13 DOT initiative. And the whole congestion pricing
14 initiative was obviously focused on trying to make
15 buses move more closely. And we have engaged in these
16 borough-by-borough bus network redesigns. I'm not
17 going to give you all the details, but you know we
18 have been leaders in trying to make buses faster
19 using all these techniques, and we're going to
20 continue to push forward, especially now that we have
21 a partner, hopefully, in the city DOT.

18 CHIEF MCCARTHY: And Chair, if I could
19 just add to that, we have been- you know,
20 Commissioner Flynn's team has been meeting with us,
21 and they're, you know, very enthusiastic and working

2 together on ways that we can make buses faster. And
3 this really getting into the nitty-gritty, including
4 the bus lanes, including enforcement, and really the
5 MTA looking at themselves and how we can run buses
6 out of depots faster, whether it's signalization and
7 other things. So this is a- it's a good time for
8 anyone interested in faster buses, because I think
9 the teams are really working well together.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Collaboration is
11 great, and we'd love to see, you know, more of that.
12 I have a follow-up to ACE Program. A lot of these
13 cameras- the cameras capture the back of the cars,
14 but at what point are they going to start capturing
15 the front of the cars? Because you- we find a lot of
16 folks- in my neck of the woods, they cover the
17 license plates in the back, or they'll put the hood,
18 of their car up so you don't capture it. Are we
19 working on technology to also capture the front of
20 the cars?

21 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, but I'll just say
that, you know, the pattern of folks covering license
plates, altering license plates. I mean, you know,
one thing that the last administration got right is
that messing with license plates is a crime issue in

2 New York. It's not just an MTA bus lane enforcement
3 issue. People messing with license plates is very
4 deeply connected to the crime issues in New York. And
5 I'm hoping and confident that the— under the new
6 administration, the police will continue to enforce
on that because that is a huge problem.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What has been the
8 impact of congestion pricing on bus speeds, if any?

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: There has been
10 improvement, although it's— you know, I have to check
11 that— there has been an improvement. The greatest
12 improvement is obviously this— the buses that are
13 moving the fastest are the express bus buses that are
14 coming into the city by— on the crossings. So you
15 have the Holland and the Lincoln Tunnel. The Holland
16 Tunnel, you're 50 percent reduction in the time to
17 get across. Lincoln Tunnel was like 30 percent. The
18 Williamsburg Bridge and other East River crossings
19 have also seen significant improvements in speed. So
20 express buses and the inter— intra-borough buses
21 coming to Manhattan, dramatic improvements. In
Manhattan itself, the improvements in speed have been
somewhat less, but they are also— they've also been

2 validated and documented, and we'll provide those
3 details. John, do you have anything on that?

4 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Bus speeds are up, but
5 not as much as the other vehicle speeds entering the
6 zone, where, as the Chair said, is where we're seeing
7 the most dramatic increase. There are other reasons
8 that will slow down a bus within the zone, again,
9 going back into the idea of how cars are parked and,
10 and how traffic is moving once you're inside the
11 zone. So, but we have seen increase in speed- bus
12 speeds within the zone.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm now going to turn
14 over to my colleagues, Council Member Lynn Schulman.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very
16 much, and thank you for being here. I want to say for
17 the record that I am an express bus rider. I ride
18 public transit to come to City Hall to do my work. So
19 one thing I want to say is that, do you work closely
20 with the NYPD around the enfor- 'cause I will tell
21 you that most times the- where I take the bus from,
because I'm in far- first of all, I'm in a
transit-rich area. I happen to be lucky. But there
are cars and trucks parked in the bus lane.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And when it come
3 into Manhattan, it can't- they can't- you- the bus
4 can't use the bus lane. So are you working with the
5 NYPD to make sure there's enforcement?

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Absolutely. But you
7 know what? There's nothing like support from elected
8 officials to help us. So, we're- you know, we do stay
9 in close touch with them, but the hotspot that you're
10 talking about are real and many of them are every
11 day. We just walk outside here, just walk down-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing] I
13 know. I know.

14 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Broadway and you see how
15 the bus lane gets blocked. So, obviously the NYPD is
16 fighting crime and doing a ton of things, but we
17 welcome your help in bringing focus, consistent focus
18 to this issue, and maybe some set-aside money in the,
19 in the city budget for those traffic enforcement
20 agents that are necessary. It's a separate group
21 within NYPD.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

19 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: And having them funded
20 for the dedicated purpose of keeping bus lanes open
21 is one option that we could use your help on.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Now, I- yeah,
3 and I appreciate that. The other thing I wanted to
4 talk to you about, and I appreciate you're pushing,
5 you're advancing in terms of accessibility and all of
6 that. But, in terms of the safety, I know about the
7 stats, but the reality is there are a lot of homeless
8 on the- I haven't taken the subway in a long time.
9 I'm an older adult. I have a bad- I have severe
10 arthritis in my knees, so I can't really do that. But
11 I hear from constituents that there are a lot of- and
12 crime is a little different than feeling comfortable
13 being on the train. And so, you know, there are
14 people with mental health issues, and I understand,
15 you know, there are things that have to be done
16 around that as well, but I wanted to see what your
17 sense of doing something there. And the scout teams,
18 by the way, that the governor has are great, and
19 it's- we could expand that. That's on the state
20 level.

21 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: They work really
well.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So thank you for that
shout out that. The SCOUT program, just make sure

2 everybody's aware, is we pair a clinician with a-
3 with several MTA police officers. Not that the police
4 officers are dealing with the homeless person, but so
5 that the clinician feels safe to really engage with
6 somebody who- and this is focused only on people with
severe mental illness-

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]

8 Right.

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: who may be candidates
10 for, you know, involuntary commitment if they've got
11 to come indoors for their own good or for the safety
12 of others. So we've had that program for a couple of
years now. The governor has paid to expand it. We're
up to 30-

13 CHIEF MCCARTHY: 20 teams, and we're going
14 to go to 30.

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: 20 teams on the way to
16 30 teams. And we're very- overall, I don't want to
17 waste, you know, your time, but we have seen a
18 significant increase in customer satisfaction with
19 safety in the subway system. I mentioned in my
20 testimony, the highest ever stats on the feeling of
21 safety on board trains and in the stations as well.
But we got to keep pushing. You're absolutely right.

2 It's the one thing that's a make or break for
3 people's willingness to ride the system.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, absolutely.
5 And I also wanted to ask, is there any consideration
6 being given to expanding express buses? Because, for
7 example, I know the express buses where I am just
8 operate during the week. Like if they operate on the
9 weekend, you'd have more people coming in. It's, you
10 know, in terms of economic development and all of
11 that and the other- so the second question to that
12 too is that half fares, if there's any consideration.
13 I'm going to put in a reso for half fares for the
14 express bus, because I know in my district I have a
15 lot of seniors who want, you know, to go to doctor's
16 appointments, and they take it and all of that. And
17 if there's a way to do that, that would be helpful.
18 Okay, so fair fares gets- what? The reduced fare gets
19 half fare on the express bus, right? Off-peak. So,
20 let's get into- let's get into discussion. We're- the
21 reduced fare program is hugely successful. People use
it.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right. And we,
we, you know, we want to keep that constituency, but
I will say this, all of our decisions, we looked at

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2 express buses as part of the Queens bus redesign. We
3 added one or two routes. But it's under- always under
4 study about whether the ridership and the
5 constituency justifies-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]
7 Sure.

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: putting on a whole new
9 route. We gotta balance the budget, but we love that
10 express bus service seems to be really popular. The
11 customer sat is very high.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: In the express buses.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So anyway, I'm
15 going to try to push for half fares on the express
16 buses.

17 CHIEF MCCARTHY: And just to add, we did
18 add service when congestion pricing came on. And then
19 in addition to that, just- I think in your neck of
20 the woods, the- what's important is this- the new
21 city ticket where it's available all the time.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

CHIEF MCCARTHY: Used to be only the
weekends- is a great option.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Understood.

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2 CHIEF MCCARTHY: And we have the- in
3 Queens bus redesign, the rush routes that take you to
4 the Long Island Railroad stations and Most recently,
5 we now- seniors can ride in the mornings. It used to
6 be that you had to pay a full fare.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Understood. I'm
8 just-

9 CHIEF MCCARTHY: [interposing] We're doing
10 those changes. I think that might work.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I'm just going
12 to push for that, so-

13 CHIEF MCCARTHY: [interposing] Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And I've had
15 conversation with the governor as well about that. I
16 just want to- before I end, I want to give a shout
17 out to Lucille, who works with me in my office, and
18 she's amazing. So, thank you very much, Chair, and
19 thank you Lieber.

20 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You're shaming me. I
21 should have recognized Lucille Sanghaj [sp?] who's
the head of our Government Community Relations
Operation and the key intermediary with so many folks
in this building and City Hall.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Since we're on the
3 topic of express buses, I'm just going to ask a
4 question on that. A report found that express buses
5 have higher average speeds but a much lower on-time
6 reliability rate than the system overall. Many
7 express buses travel across bridges, highways, and
8 tunnels, allowing them to reach speeds most local
9 buses cannot. However, they fail to reach stops at
10 their scheduled times compared to local or SBS buses.
11 This is problematic for riders given that express
12 buses are less frequent than other types of service.
13 All of the 10 bus lines with on-time performance
14 rates below 50 percent are express buses. Are there
15 steps that MTA has taken or could take that should
16 improve express bus speeds on particular routes or in
17 specific boroughs? If so, please share with the
18 committee.

19 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, so you ask is
20 what can MTA do? It comes back to express buses have
21 the longest routes, so they are most subject to the
impacts of all of the street conditions that we have
been talking about in this hearing. So, you know,
what really comes down to is, is traffic going to
stop it? Is the bus lane going to be blocked? You

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2 know, the— are the double parking going to get in the
3 way? Will people be parked in the bus stop that makes
4 it impossible for them to load people. All of those
5 conditions that we need partnership with the city and
6 more enforcement to address. Those are the reasons,
7 the principal reasons, that express buses are more
8 subject to delay on their much longer routes.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
10 answering that. I'm now going to turn it over to
11 Council Member Wong, followed by Marte.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair.
13 Thank you, Mr. Lieber, for coming. Thank you. Before
14 I begin, I just want to ask, do you take the bus or
15 subway regularly?

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. And how about,
18 Sheffia [sp?]?
19

20 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: Shanifah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Shanifa?

CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: Every day.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Every day? Okay. And
19 John?

20 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah, absolutely, every
21 day.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. That's good,
3 that's good, because- and Jen, thank you, thank you.
4 Okay. I really- I have really three questions. Two of
5 them are from my constituents, and they're quite
6 concerning. Well, I- we all grew up with OmniCards, I
7 mean MetroCards, and every time I use it, it tells me
8 my balance, you know, whatever. You put in \$30, you
9 know, balance \$25. Or every time I do a transfer, it
10 tells me it's transfer, three [sic]. But when I use
11 my OmniCard, it doesn't tell me that. So my
12 constituent who emailed me directly says, this is
13 actually worse than the MetroCard in many ways. Can
14 you- can you answer that? Is-

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Sure.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Is something you can
17 fix, or-

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So yeah. So, right now,
19 you can get all that kind of information at the Omni
20 machine and you can get it online and you- there are
21 a number of different ways. Nevertheless, I'm
sympathetic to what your constituent has said. And
that's why when we're- we are now trying to get over
the final phase of implementing Omni, but we are
already working on a variety of tools. This was all-

2 the Omni system in terms of software was done long
3 before I got involved with this. And there are
4 shortcomings and we're going to be adding customer
5 transparency issues along the lines of what you just
described.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, yeah.

7 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So it's in process, you
8 know, too late for some people. I'm not thrilled
9 about those shortcomings, but the Omni system, I just
10 wanna emphasize, has major pluses, which is if people
11 want a weekly, they don't have to just come- reach
12 into their pocket to see if they have \$30+. They
13 have- they can get a weekly automatically just by
14 using it. And it's saving people \$40 million in
15 wasted money that people were investing in monthlies
and weeklies a year. We're trying to save people
money and give them a better deal.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, what I- but I
17 have encountered is that constituents often felt they
18 were overcharged and they weren't told when they used
19 the OmniCard during transfers and only found out
20 after the fact at the, like, at the end of the month
21 or when they check online when they get home. Oh, I'm
being charged. Why am I being charged? And then it's,

2 like, too late to even raise that because the person
3 is already home.

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: And the— you want to
5 talk about the customer service we do on that?

6 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: Yeah, so
7 similar to what the chair mentioned, I mean, we have
8 put in a lot of provisions as well as customer-facing
9 messaging within the system. We have stood up
10 customer service centers across the entire subway
11 system where customers can go within their community.
12 In the past, customers had to travel all the way
13 downtown to Stone Street. So now we have 30 customer
14 service centers in the boroughs that can answer these
15 questions, as well as customers using our app. We
16 have lots of text and email interaction, as well as,
17 you know, good old 511. So we do have a huge customer
18 service operation that is dedicated to this matter
19 while we work on getting the technology for the
20 customer-facing components.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. Yes. And
again, they're so used to seeing the balance for
decades. Every time you use it, you see the balance,
and suddenly that feature is gone. So that is the

2 mindset of my constituents, and I hope you
3 understand.

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I totally get it, and
5 we're working on it. We're going to try to improve
6 that over time.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. My next
8 question again is congestion pricing. My
9 constituents, a lot of them are drivers because my
10 district is- many parts of it is not subway
11 accessible, so they have to drive. They're telling me
12 that congestion is now shifted north of Manhattan, to
13 North Manhattan, to the Bronx, and in South Brooklyn.
14 Yes, there are fewer congestion in Lower Manhattan,
15 but the cars are still there, still coming in.
16 They're still leaving. What do you have to say to
17 that?

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay. So, I love and
19 respect your constituents, but you're- but the data
20 that actually has been collected publicly shows that
21 projections about displacement of traffic, especially
to the Bronx, did not turn out to be true. And
there's a lot of data on that. You can go online and
the New York Times did a detailed analysis of it. We
had do- we have not seen, and we planned and we

2 analyzed that to make sure that we did— that we were
3 ready if that did happen, and it hasn't happened as
4 documented to date. So respectfully, I would just
5 say, you might want to take a look at that data and
6 share it with some of the folks who may feel
otherwise.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I will look. I'm
8 sorry, I have— Chair, may I have more time? I have
one more question.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: There'll be a second
10 round.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, sure. I'll ask
12 in a second round. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Marte,
14 followed by Louis.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Yeah. Hey, good
16 morning.

17 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Good morning.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: For years buses
19 have had Omni readers at the rear door, but paying
20 riders must board through the front. Of course, some
21 riders still board through the back, as we all know,
but they can't pay at the rear door because the Omni
reader doesn't allow it. Can you tell us how much

2 money we're potentially losing from folks just
3 boarding in the back and not being able to pay in the
4 back, so that they just stay on the bus? And is there
5 a timeline of when that back-- when that rear OmniCard
6 reader is going to go live so folks can have, you
know, both front and rear door boarding?

7 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, respectfully, I'd
8 say most people are getting on the rear door, not,
9 you know, not saying, oh gosh darn, I wish that the
10 Omni reader were working so I could pay. They get on
11 the back door because they know they aren't going pay
there. So-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: I mean, you know,
13 maybe.

14 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, let's just- let's
15 leave that one aside for the moment. But right now,
16 we do have- well aware that, you know, there's been a
17 lot of discussion over the years about rear door
18 boarding. It's not something that we're against. What
19 we have to do is we have to reestablish the pattern
20 of everybody's playing by the same rules when you get
21 on the bus. It's disrespectful to the other
passengers when people don't pay. And it creates an
environment where, like anything in New York, we

2 share the public spaces. And if people aren't playing
3 by the rules, it feels like you're a sucker if you
4 play by the rules. And, so we get a lot of beef from
5 our customers who say, why are so many people getting
6 on and not paying? We- this is partly a self-created
7 problem, honestly. We, you know, during COVID we
8 asked everybody to get on the back, don't pay. We
9 were trying to protect the drivers. We- toothpaste
10 got out of the tube and we have to reestablish the
11 principle of paying. Once we have a modern fare
12 enforcement system where people can get on and check
13 with a handheld validator, and that's- this year,
14 we're going to have that. I am- once we reestablish
15 the principle of everybody pays and expects to pay.
16 I am willing to talk about making the backdoor a
17 legal way to get on and pay, but we need to have that
18 system in place, and that's coming.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Okay, thank you.

20 You know, Council Member Schulman brought up your
21 scout team. Is there a way to add a transparency
mechanism where we can know where the scout teams
have been sent? You know, there are stations in my
district like the Bowery Street Station where we are
constantly asking for additional support, but there's

2 no follow-up, there's no transparency if if folks
3 went there, if the issues were addressed, and if they
4 go on a routine, you know, timeline to check up on-
5 to see if issues are a pattern or if they're one-time
6 issues.

7 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I'd like to get back to
8 you on that. I, honestly, we have- obviously, we
9 have, like, the HIPAA rules about we can't tell you
10 about an individual.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Yeah, sure.

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: But I'd like to get back
13 to you on that. John, do you have any thoughts on
14 this?

15 CHIEF MCCARTHY: No, we can get back to
16 you. They're assigned by borough, so-

17 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] yeah.

18 CHIEF MCCARTHY: and by time of day. So
19 the idea is that they're spread out so they're
20 reaching a lot of different areas.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Okay.

CHIEF MCCARTHY: But let's get back to
you. I think there's probably some possibility that
can satisfy your request.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Yeah, I think for
3 us is mostly, you know, constituents ask. Especially
4 there's specific subway stations that feel a little
bit, you know—

5 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] Yeah, no,
6 and listen, we all want the folks who are suffering
7 with severe mental illness in the public space to get
help.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Yeah.

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I mean, that's— this is
10 just basic humanity. And I'm very, you know,
11 appreciative of our riders who, you know, want to get
12 help to some of the people, some of the neighbors
13 they see who are struggling. So let's talk about, you
14 know, we can share with— if we can share that
information and how.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Yeah. My final
16 question is about the Fulton Street Mall, just a few
17 blocks away. There's been scaffolding up since 2019.
18 My office has been asking MTA to take them down. You
19 know, there's been a citywide campaign of shedding
20 the sheds, and you know, it's disappointing to see
that on, you know, our public lands and our public

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2 infrastructure, we can't meet the needs of making our
3 quality of life much better.

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You're talking about the
5 southern half of the block between Fulton and John?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Yeah, it's on 11
7 John Street.

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, so that's the old
9 Corbin building, which is a really, really old
10 building. I will look into that and get back to you.
11 It's a little— you know, I'm with you, let's get the
12 sheds down. So we'll look into that one and come back
13 to you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: I appreciate it.
15 Thank you for being here.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Mr. Chairman, it seems
17 like, you know, every corner of this— of Manhattan.
18 I'm now going to turn it over to Council Member
19 Louis, followed by Council Member Brooks-Powers.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair,
21 and good morning—

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] Good
morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Chair Lieber. I
want to echo Council Member Schulman's sentiments

2 about Lucille, and I want to add Shanifah in there.
3 They've been great and very helpful. I have two quick
4 questions, so I'm going to state the questions and
5 then you all could jump in. I'm very happy to hear
6 about the synergy between you and Commissioner Flynn
7 from DOT. So I wanted to ask about Newkirk Plaza in
8 my district. In locations where maintenance
9 responsibilities intersect with city agencies, how
10 does the MTA budget account for shared or disputed
11 responsibilities? And is there any funding set aside
12 for interagency coordination or rapid response when
13 conditions are not addressed? And the second question
14 is, given that then there is \$9 billion allocated
15 system-wide to repair elevated tracks and tunnels.
16 What portion of that funding is dedicated to elevated
17 line structures in Brooklyn, particularly the BQ
18 right-of-way in Midwood?

19 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, so I know Newkirk
20 Plaza. I know some of those problems, and I'm going
21 to— I don't want to mislead you. I don't know the
specifics. We don't have a general fund for, like,
interagency coordination. But where there— we have
real estate responsibility, we ought to have funding

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2 to address it, and we'll come back to you with a
3 clear answer. But, you know, I mean-

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: [interposing] Or
5 you could create it.

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I live on the Brighton
7 Line. I live a couple stops north of Newkirk, so I
8 know what you're talking about. It's got some
9 conditions. We- listen, I'll give you the break- We
10 will come back to you with the breakout, but the
11 capital program that the governor got enacted in
12 Albany last year is transformational because
13 everybody likes new, you know, new shiny new objects.
14 And historically there hasn't been enough investment
15 in the existing system, which is 100 years old and
16 falling apart. That, you know, the Bright Line, which
17 you and I are talking about, was built like over 100
18 years ago to take people from, you know, the middle
19 of Brooklyn down to Coney Island for vacations.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Right.

21 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: It really needs
investment. We got the money to make those
investments in the structure and those old systems.
I'll give you these specific numbers, you know, as a
follow-up, but that is a huge piece of our capital

2 program. The structures, the both above-grade
3 structures, the ones that are in the cut like the
4 Brighton Line-

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: [interposing]

6 Right.

7 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: and also the tunnels,
8 all of it need investment. The power systems are like
9 the land that time forgot. And they're blowing up all
10 the time. We keep hearing about it. There's money for
11 that. New- you know, there is money for 2,000 new
12 rail cars, including both 1,500 subway cars and 500
13 commuter rail cars. So we're getting to the stuff
14 that has been neglected, and I'm thrilled about it.
15 I'll give you the specific numbers in the follow-up.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I look forward to
17 that response. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
19 Member. Now we will have questions from Council
20 Member Brooks-Powers.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
Chair, and hello to the MTA team. Thank you for the
testimony today. I'm going to start with adding on to
the questions for the express buses. Does the MTA
plan to make the extend- the expanded pilot program

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2 permanent for the QM15, 16, and 17 express bus lines
3 on the Rockaway Peninsula?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Somebody help me here
5 because I don't- I don't know. I don't have an answer
6 off-

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS:
8 [interposing] That sounds like a yes, Chair. I'll
9 take it.

10 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: What's the answer?
11 Okay. Well, Lucille tells me that we are taking a
12 look at it and we're going to come back to you
13 timely.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.
15 Hopefully I'll be favorable. Can the MTA share data
16 on MWBE and local hiring rates for the Rockaway Line
17 resiliency and rehab rehabilitation project?

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I can share it. I don't
19 have it at my fingertips, but the big- that we are-
20 we continue to be by far the largest agency on MWBE
21 investment, over \$1 billion a year, and we're
thrilled about that. And that specific project, which
you were very present for, which has been so
successful in getting that connection to the
Rockaways rebuilt on time and on budget, I don't have

2 the numbers offhand, but we complied with our own
3 rules on that, and I'll give you the specifics.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And it
5 would be great if we can follow up on that, because
6 I'm still very much engaged on that project, and I
7 know that initially the local numbers were not
8 reflective of the local community, so I thank the MTA
9 team of, you know, restarting that so that we could
10 get the appropriate zip codes included. So I just
11 want to make sure that we continue to monitor that
12 progress. How does the MTA plan to allocate the \$1
13 billion in projected annual revenues from the casino
14 proposals? Is there— is any of this funding intended
15 to target transportation needs in transit desert
16 communities, such as via express bus expansions or
17 subway or rail, excuse me, extensions?

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So, the story is the
19 governor, as part of her solution to the MTA budget
20 challenges in 2023, allocated those casino license
21 fees to us. And they are an absolute cornerstone of
our budget and of our operating budget so that we can
keep operating more service and hopefully better
service. Go ahead, Jay, CFO Jay Patel.

2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: Thank you.

3 So as many of you know, we were- we received three
4 license fees earlier this year. We received one in
5 December and two in January. That \$1.5 billion was
6 programmed in our financial plan over three years.
7 That continues to be the plan. And the first casino
8 tax fees, right, will come to the MTA sometime later
9 this year from the first casino that will open live
10 later, I think, I believe in May or June. But the
11 other two projected casinos will not open and be up
12 and running until sometime in 2030 or '31. So the MTA
13 would not receive any of those tax fees until that
14 plan. But again, we have budgeted a small increment
15 of tax fees from the casinos in our financial plan
16 already to balance.

17 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: But at a time when
18 there's, you know, there's a lot of challenging news
19 that everybody sees, I mean, how good is it that
20 thanks to what the governor and the legislature did
21 in '23? Unlike the rest of the country, we're not
cutting- you know, in Chicago and, and Philadelphia,
they're talking about cutting service by 40 percent
and raising fares by 20 percent. We ain't doing that.
We have a secure financial situation- challenges, but

2 secure. And we're getting— and, and that's because of
3 what happened at Albany.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: So where's
5 the money going to?

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: It goes to service. It
7 goes to provide the A train and all, you know, the
8 service that you—

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS:
10 [interposing] Look at you trying to speak my love
11 language, the A train.

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: It's going to make sure
13 that we don't— like, unlike the rest of these big
14 cities that are struggling with bad news from
15 Washington on transit, that we don't have to cut and
16 we don't have to dramatically—

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [interposing]
18 I'm sorry, Chair. I just don't want you to filibuster
19 me, because I have about two more questions for you.
20 So the Rockaway Beach branch, in the MTA's 20-year
21 needs assessment for 25 to 44, MTA estimated the
reactivation of the Rockaway Beach Branch would serve
39,200 riders, a 17 percent decrease when compared to
the MTA's 2019 ridership estimate of 47,000 daily
riders. One, what did the MTA attribute that decrease

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2 to? And two, has there been any discussion of putting
3 the Rockaway Beach Line into future capital plans,
4 why or why not?

5 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, I think you,
6 you're aware of this, that we studied all the
7 projects in that comparative valuation that led up to
8 our capital plan. We studied all of the big new
9 expansion projects, including the Rockaway Beach
10 Line, and compared them for how much transit benefit
11 and time savings they would deliver, and equity
12 benefit, and many other things. And the one that came
13 up really big winner was the IBX, and there are
14 others which were okay, but they didn't at this point
15 justify mega investment. We'll continue to study them
16 as we go forward.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
18 Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Mr. Chairman, next we
20 have Council Member Hanif.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Hello and thank
you, Chair. So first I'd just like to start off with
what used to be in my district, 4th Avenue 9th Street
Station, FGR lines. It's now in Council Member
Alexa's, but we've been wanting to know about what's

2 happening with the lighting, the vacant stores. We've
3 been asking both MTA and DOT and have been met with,
4 well, it's DOT's responsibility, well, it's MTA's
5 responsibility. It'd be really wonderful to have
6 lighting, adequate lighting. And there have been
7 proposals to fill the vacant window shops with art at
8 least, but would like an update on that. And if you
9 could share the operational cost of running
10 paratransit. And then I'll go into some elevator and
11 accessibility questions.

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, I'm glad you
13 mentioned elevators because, you know, your district
14 has got three major elevator projects.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And we're really
16 proud of that.

17 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: And one that's actually
18 being built right now, and we've recently completed
19 the ADA station at 7th Avenue in Park Slope. I— we,
20 did a system-wide redo on the lighting, which we're
21 very pleased with, and it's one of the reasons we get
that much higher safety rate.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Chair, because I
don't have a lot of time, could you just specifically
talk about 4th Avenue, 9th Street?

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2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I'll get back to you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, that's fine.

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You don't want to hear
about what we're doing broadly on lighting?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Not, with the-

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] We'll get
back to you on the specifics.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: less than four
8 minutes that I have. Okay, so \$7.1 billion in new
9 accessibility work, 60 subway stations at least will
10 receive these upgrades. How are those stations
11 selected and what criteria were used to prioritize
them?

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, so the- It is done
13 by analyzing both where the- you know, trying to make
14 sure we have the- the goal is to have no people be no
15 more than one station away from an accessible
station. That's where we are right now. That's the
16 pri- that's been the principal criterion. We also
17 consult with the disability community. There has been
18 a process, and we put it out for public comment as
19 well, and then we make the decision. So it's been
20 very transparent about how we're making those
21

2 decisions. And, you see the results. You've— your
3 district has gotten three or four of them.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: No, we're really
5 grateful. And I know that the 7th Avenue FD station
6 elevator was a real labor of love from the community
7 for years. And, we're really, really lucky to have
8 that elevator, especially because it's in a hospital
9 corridor, high traffic, foot traffic area. So the MTA
10 states that these upgrades, the \$7.1 billion, will
11 bring the system to roughly 50 percent fully
12 accessible stations. What's the timeline for reaching
13 that milestone, and how are you all measuring
14 progress each year?

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: The end of this capital
16 program is when we're going to be at 272 out of the
17 490 stations, and so we'll be at 55 percent. We've
18 done 50 projects since 2020. We're proceeding four
19 times as fast as the past MTAs did.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That's great news.
21 And then how much of the accessibility investment is
specifically allocated to elevators versus other
improvements such as ramps, platform modifications,
or ADA pathway upgrades?

2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I mean, technically, the
3 elevators are not usually the biggest piece of any of
4 those projects because what consumes a huge cost of
5 these old stations, you got to move all the utilities
6 around, move the stairways in many cases, move the
7 communication system. There's a ton of work to create
8 the space for an elevator to come in and for the
9 mechanicals that support an elevator. But we also do
10 all the other stuff, whether it's the platform edge,
11 other ADA improvements as well. I'd have to get--
12 you'd have to talk about a specific project if you
13 want me to break it down by how much is elevators and
14 how much is something else.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Sure. And then what
16 steps is MTA taking to reduce elevator outages and
17 repair times?

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, I'm very proud of
19 the fact we have 97 percent elevator availability,
20 which is way, way, way higher than it used to be. To
21 the extent that we have-- any underperforming elevator
in terms of availability, how frequently they break
down, they tend to be these private elevators, the
privately operated elevators where the city made a
real estate deal, usually more than 10 years ago, and

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2 they got a very weak agreement with a developer to
3 put in and maintain an elevator, and those are not
4 maintained as well. They have higher breakdown rates,
5 but we are banging on those guys. They're not, you
6 know, probably 10 to 20 of those elevators, but they
7 drag the numbers down. The city— the MTA-operated
8 elevators are actually performing in terms of
9 availability at a very high level.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And would you be
11 able to share what percentage of elevators and
12 escalators—

13 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: It's in every month's
14 report.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Every month's
16 report, not a daily report.

17 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: The committee reports
18 that are available online along with billions of
19 other lines of data in the MTA Open Data system.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Excellent. And
21 what's the average time that it's taking MTA to
repair an elevator once it goes out of service? And
I'll come back for round two.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, I think we've
dramatically, dramatically reduced the turnaround

2 times for building elevators, but also for
3 maintaining them. I'll have to- I'll have to come
4 back to you about-

5 CHIEF MCCARTHY: [interposing] It varies,
6 it depends on the elevator and the situation you're
7 dealing with, but it is reduced. We'll get you those-
8 we'll get you those times.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Mr.
10 Chairman, I'd like to bring it back now to the Second
11 Avenue Subway. In October 2025, the federal
12 government announced a pause on funding for the
13 Second Avenue Subway project to review contracts
14 related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In
15 February 2026, the MTA sent a letter to the United
16 States Department of Transportation in regard to
17 \$58.7 million for the phase two project of the Second
18 Avenue Subway, which would extend the Q line into
19 East Harlem. The Biden administration previously
20 committed \$3.4 billion to the Second Avenue Subway
21 project as part of the Capital Investment Grant
Program, which is close to half of the entire \$7
billion project. Hot off the press, there is a
lawsuit. Can you speak to that? And will this- the-

2 with the lack of the funding that we have now affect
3 project timelines?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay. So, I said in my
5 initial testimony this morning, we sued the federal
6 government, because the Trump administration
7 continues to withhold the Second Avenue subway
8 funding, which they're contractually obligated to
9 deliver. They've— for now it's been something like
10 eight months. I think it started back in August of
11 last year, or October [inaudible] October of this
12 year. But there's never been any question that we
13 were— we were in no way violating any terms of the
14 agreement. The grant agreement between the federal
15 government and us obligates them to reimburse us for—
16 when we— when we put the paper in and make
17 requisitions, and they've refused to do it. And then
18 when we kept putting the paper in through the portal,
19 the online portal, they shut down the online portal.
20 So, we're just going in the— what they call the
21 Federal Court of Claims, because it's an action on a
contract to get them to release the money and let it
keep going. As to your question of whether the
project's gonna be delayed, so far it hasn't. But at
some point we're on the verge of awarding a, you

2 know, roughly billion-dollar contract for excavation
3 on Second Avenue, and we need to know that the
4 federal money is available, and that's why we've had
5 to take this action.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Have any con- are
7 there any contracts? Have any contracts been awarded,
8 and how many are left to be awarded?

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, we've awarded-
10 we've now awarded two major- I mean, they're small
11 contracts, but the major contracts are the utility
12 relocations. This is a- it's something we learned
13 from the very imperfect first phase of Second Avenue
14 subway is you got to move the utilities out of the
15 way so you- they're not going to get in the way of
16 your construction when you open up the street. So we
17 did that as the first contract. The second contract
18 is the tunnel boring contract, and now we are- we
19 need- we have another major excavation contract which
20 is close to being awarded, but we need to have
21 resolution from the feds.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And there's no
23 expected timeline on when the federal court of claims
24 will resolve- resolve the dispute?

2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, they acted
3 promptly on the Gateway dispute. So we're very
4 hopeful that they will step in and take action.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It is my hope that
6 they act just as promptly. In the governor's
7 Executive Budget— Executive State Budget this year,
8 she proposed extending the Q line west along 125th
9 Street to my district, which of course we're all very
10 excited for, with three new stops at Lenox Avenue,
11 St. Nicholas Avenue, and culminating at Broadway. The
12 governor said she will support the next phase of this
13 project with funding for design and preliminary
14 engineering to advance tunneling across 125th Street.
15 Will MTA have to amend their 2025-2029 capital plan
16 to account for this proposed extension of the Second
17 Avenue subway?

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: No. So what the
19 governor's now funded— were proposed to fund in her
20 budget is for us to do the engineering and the other
21 technical work that will allow us to figure out how
to keep the tunnel boring machine going when it
reaches what was supposed to be the terminus at Park
Avenue, but around— no, Lenox Avenue, but it's around
that Lexington Avenue complex, 125th and Lex complex.

2 We'd like to keep it going, as you said, to your
3 district all the way to Broadway and 125th Street.
4 We're doing the analysis that would say, how would
5 you do that? How much time would it save? How much
6 money would it save? But then there will have to be
7 once that work is done, a decision about whether
8 we'll invest the big money to do that additional
9 construction. I'm sure you'll be part of that
10 conversation when it happens.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. What is
12 the updated timeline for the project with the
13 additional extension?

14 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I don't- I can't tell
15 you that offhand. It's one of the things we're going
16 to study. How much time could we save if we kept the
17 tunnel boring machine going? And what would that mean
18 to the completion date of a hypothetical extension
19 all the way to Broadway? That's one of the issues
20 that we will answer through this year-long
21 engineering and analysis.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I just want to go
23 back to the World Cup, your favorite topic. The
24 summer- this summer, the New York City region will
25 play a host to a round of group matches and the final

2 match of the World Cup. U.S. Secretary— U.S.
3 Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy today announced
4 on March 3rd that the FTA is investing \$100.3 million
5 into public transit systems within host cities
6 preparing to welcome millions of fans during the 2026
7 FIFA World Cup. Is MTA receiving any of this money?

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So they had— they set up
9 formula, which is based on how many games you had and
10 some other variables. The New York region got \$10
11 million of that, and we're sharing it with New
12 Jersey. We're figuring it out. Listen, our— you know,
13 the— our goal is for everybody to be able to enjoy
14 the city. I'm as concerned about the fan events in
15 Queens and the Bronx and around the city as I am
16 about, you know, people getting to the games, which
17 will be on New Jersey Transit. So my focus is going
18 to be make sure that we have good service, you know,
19 as people are moving around the city at the time of
20 the World Cup. And we a— John has been involved in
21 it. We're— we have a very close collaboration with
City DOT talking about that planning right now.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Have you, have you
received the money yet from the feds?

23 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Not too my—

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2 CHIEF MCCARTHY: No, it hasn't been broken
3 up yet between the agencies. But-

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] And when
5 it arrives, if- I know there's no use for free bus
6 service for folks- for the World Cup, is your
7 position, right? What will the MTA-

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I haven't been asked to
9 comment on it.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Fair. What will the
11 MTA use the resources for once you do get it from the
12 feds, assuming you do get it?

13 CHIEF MCCARTHY: These dollars are mostly
14 associated with security related expenses that will
15 be associated with the World Cup. So this is, you
16 know, policing around Penn Station where there's
17 going to be, you know, a- you know, a very special
18 situation as far as getting people onto New Jersey
19 Transit through the station. So that- so that's the
20 primary focus of this.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So fair to say for
22 policing at the moment and security.

23 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Mostly for security
24 related.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. But does. I have
3 to say, I do appreciate the platform barriers being
4 installed. I think you guys call them bolsters, is
5 that right?

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: The platform barriers-

7 CHIEF MCCARTHY: [interposing] Platform
8 edge [sic] barriers.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Platform barriers are
10 fine. What are- how many have been installed? I mean,
11 how many other stations are you looking to cover? And
12 what are the impediments to installing them at every
13 station?

14 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So, Governor's given us
15 money to- we're going to get to 200 stations by the
16 end of this current year. I'm very proud of that. And
17 it has- we've done, you know, we do hundreds of
18 thousands of people in customer surveys, and that has
19 improved the sense of safety for many people,
20 especially older people and people with kids in the
21 station. So we're going to have 200 stations by the
end of this year, and we hope we'll find the money to
keep going after that. And we're doing it with
in-house labor.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I was going to ask-

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2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Our own workforce. It's
3 something we're also proud of. We're saving money by
4 doing it in-house.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That was one of my
6 questions, is whether or not you're manufacturing it
7 in-house. What is the cost for each of these
8 barriers?

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I just can't remember
10 off the top of my head. We did the analysis because
11 we wanted to know whether we were going to contract
12 it or either do in-house. And-

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] You
14 could follow up with us on that.

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Regarding just broadly
17 speaking, MTA and vacant lots for affordable housing,
18 broadly speaking, New York City is obviously in the
19 midst of an extremely difficult housing crisis. Are
20 there any vacant lots, yards, or large-scale property
21 the MTA has identified as defunct or no longer of use
to the MTA that could be used by the city to build
affordable housing?

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So we were asked by the
governor to come up with plans for every possible

2 site for housing. And I'll— why don't we just, rather
3 than just taking time, share that with you? Because
4 we identified all sites. As I said, though, we're— we
5 look for opportunities. We worked something out at
6 the end of the last administration on Atlantic Avenue
7 where we took an MTA operating site where we, you
8 know, we moved off of it. We split the— there was an
9 upzoning. We took half of the site, we gave half to
10 the city, and we got some clarification on our real
11 estate rights on some bus facilities, one of which is
12 in your district. So we're always working to free up
13 space. And in the suburbs, we are taking parking lots
14 all over the place. And with the governor's help
15 doing housing development on them. We agree with you.
16 Every time that— everywhere there's an opportunity
17 for housing development, we're going to jump on it.
18 We have a transit-oriented development group that
19 does that every day, all day.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Well, that is
21 certainly refreshing to hear. And our office would
really like to partner with your office on, you know,
potential development sites, not only in our
district, of course, but throughout our city. And we
also have the same, you know, same questions for DOT.

2 There's a DOT-owned lot along 158th Street and
3 Riverside in my district where at any given moment
4 you have like seven DOT cars in this massive, massive
5 space where housing could be built. And so we really
6 appreciate your determination to looking into these
7 projects. I'm now going to turn it over to Council
8 Member Wong for round two, followed by Council Member
9 Brooks-Powers.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair. My
11 first question has to do with the express buses in my
12 district. Ever since that- the redesign- last year,
13 the local elected officials sent a letter to MTA
14 regarding these bus route redesigns, specifically
15 lack of buses or the diminishing of the frequency of
16 buses during peak hours, specifically the QM25 and
17 QM34 on Elliott Avenue. I use Elliott Avenue and I
18 have seen personally that people often have to wait
19 30 minutes or more for the next bus, because the
20 first one is packed. It's either wait on the cold or
21 to get on the bus and stand. And they pay so much for
the express bus, they expect to have a seat there. So
my question for you is what's being done about that?
Because this was raised several times already with

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2 the DOT and with recent meetups on the MTA regarding
3 these bus redesigns.

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I think there's a
5 dialogue that's, you know, between our offices that's
6 moved along as- rather than me jumping in, let's get-
let's continue the discussion.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Because we have, in some
9 cases, seen that there is additional service
10 warranted. And we're ready to work with you to add
11 additional service. I'm not certain about whether
12 it's the 34 or whether it's another line, but let's
13 keep the discussion going because we're ready to talk
about how much service there is and are there people
being left on the curb.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, thank you.
15 Very quickly, second question: congestion pricing. My
16 district pays a high proportion of the tax, and we
17 don't see investments in our area of Queens. Can you
tell me one investment being made in my district?

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, I'll tell you
19 what's being done in your district. We've got three
20 accessible- ADA accessibility projects- the 63rd
21 Street Drive, Rigo Park Station. There's new ADA at

2 Forest Avenue that's being paid for out of the
3 capital program. We're- we've done the accessibility
4 project at Woodhaven Boulevard, which is going to be
5 finished this year if it hasn't- it's actually in the
6 second quarter, so it's coming up pretty soon. I hope
7 you'll join me for that celebration. We're doing huge
8 communications and customer service upgrades at
9 Forest Avenue and at Fresh Pond Road. We're making a
10 lot of investments in your district, and I'm happy to
11 get into it, you know, specifics with you. It's all-
12 it's all above board and it's all discernible. You
13 know, we have an MTA capital program dashboard. So I
14 urge everybody, go online, look at your district or
15 your area, and you can actually tap on specific
16 projects and find out the status and learn more about
17 them. But we'll work with you, obviously.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.
19 And my final message to MTA. My district has
20 expressed strongly they don't want an IBX stop.
21 Please make a note about that.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I'm duly noted.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: But no- I'm not
responding. I'm just duly noted.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Pierina
Sanchez for questions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
6 you so much, Majority Leader, Chair, and good
7 morning. I ran over from a different hearing. I'm
8 very excited to have the opportunity to speak with
9 you all today and hear your testimony. I have to say,
10 you know, every time I see the Interborough Express
11 mentioned, I get really sad, because it was supposed
12 to be the tri-borough. I was at RPA, the New York
13 director during the fourth plan process, and we
14 really tried to get the Bronx in the picture. So, you
15 know, I will not stop advocating for that.

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You mean to say- but we
17 got Metro North Penn Access, which is the Bronx piece
18 of this, right? Metro North Penn Access is on the
19 same right-of-way that that original idea called for,
20 and we're delivering connectivity to folks in the
21 East Bronx.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, but I'm in
the West, so- reach us in the South, and then I'll be
happy. But my question- so I actually want to

2 piggyback off of Council Member Wong regarding the
3 Bronx local bus network redesign. Chair, I just have-
4 my concern, my complaint, and your staff is probably
5 sick of hearing me and my team complain about this,
6 that, you know, I understand that the redesign, you
7 know, is delivering improvements and improving
8 balancing of buses, but there seems to have been no
9 consideration, or not as much consideration, of the
10 beautiful topography that we have in the West Bronx.
11 We have really high hills. We have really- you know,
12 our street network is not a grid, you know, because
13 we have these cliffs. Literally under Cliff Avenue is
14 cut off of Bronx- the BX18 bus service that we've
15 complained about a lot. And Assemblymember Days at
16 the state level has also been talking about this
17 issue. And then we have in my, you know, in the core
18 of my area, the BX40 and 41 bus stops are not next to
19 the train stations. Some of the stations- some of the
20 stops that were removed were right near the transit
21 stops. So I'm just raising that here. It feels like
my concerns and our concerns have fallen on deaf
ears. We just get stonewalled whenever we bring up
these concerns. And it's an accessibility issue. Our
seniors our folks who are on wheelchairs, they can't

2 get to these buses. And then there is part of the
3 community that just feels cut off by the way that the
4 redesign was done. So that's a comment. And then my
5 question really is on a separate track, you know, and
6 it's regarding, you know, understanding that the
7 health of the MTA budget is important, and I
8 understand that fare evasion has been an issue, but
9 it feels like in my neck of the woods, in the South
10 Bronx, in the West Bronx, it just feels like
11 military. There are so many safety agents. So I just
12 want to understand, you know, whatever you can share,
13 whether it's the past two, three, five fiscal years,
14 whatever you have, do you have estimates on how much
15 revenue the MTA had been losing to fare evasion by
16 year? And then when did the security program begin
17 and how much has the MTA been spending on it? Are you
18 seeing a return on investment? Or what return on
19 investment are you seeing?

20 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Listen, you know, the
21 value of what we're doing is trying— as I said
before, and I don't blame the riders, but there was—
there's confusion. There was confusion coming out of
COVID because we had a period of time when people
saying get on the back of the bus, don't get on the

2 front, don't pay. And people got accustomed to that.
3 And we're just trying to, like, reestablish that
4 everybody's in this together. We are very proud of
5 the affordability of the system, but it's not going
6 to be there if all of a sudden everybody says it's
7 optional. So there is, you know, you call it fare
8 evasion enforcement, militarization. I don't see
9 anything like that. I am in your district a fair
10 amount. I have been there with the Eagle teams who
11 actually get on buses and ask people to, you know,
12 show them their proof of payment. In some cases—
13 what? Unarmed. They're unarmed. They're not
14 militarized in any way. And, but the important thing
15 is that I think that we're going to soon have a
16 system which is more like what you have in Europe,
17 where unarmed, non-military people just get on and
18 say, show me your OmniCard or your credit card,
19 however you paid, so I can validate that you paid.
20 And let's reestablish the fare payment policies of
21 the past. I'm very proud of the fact that we did
complete the Bronx bus redesign first, but it has
imperfections. So let's keep talking about it, and
see if we can make it better. Matching it up to the,

2 the subway system obviously makes sense. If there are
3 shortcomings, keep— let's keep discussing.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you, Chair.
5 And, and I— yes, thank God they are unarmed. But I'll
6 just share that my father was approached by someone.
7 He had paid his fare. They, you know, whatever the
8 conversation was, he was so nervous about it. His—
9 and he has high— he has hypertension. He's a senior.
10 He lives in public housing in the South Bronx. And
11 these interactions, right, it's not— it's not— they
12 have a uniform, they look official, they look scary,
13 and that's the point. And we want people to pay, and
14 I support that, but there's a balance in the
15 communities like ours that are overpoliced, that have
16 generational trauma around law enforcement with this
17 heavy use. And it's not just the buses, you know, I
18 understand that. It's also the subway stations where
19 you have, like, three, four, five people at every
20 single point of entry, and you have the cops, and you
21 have— so it's just, you know, I love riding the MTA.
I do agree with your testimony. I do feel safe, and I
do appreciate the improvements that we've been
seeing. But I just want to bring that into the
conversation. The low-income people that I represent,

2 that I— where— that I come from, you know, that my
3 parents are, you know, there is an impact on the
4 stress levels and, and the mental health, their
5 mental health of having all of this surrounding, so.

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: And, you know, happens—
7 I have a woman on my right, Shanif Rieara, who
8 actually takes the train to your district every day,
9 Metro North and the subway.

10 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: Yeah, so
11 we also just want to, you know, make a note that
12 while the unarmed Eagle team agents are out there
13 every day doing fare enforcement, we have, you know,
14 taken a multi-step approach to remind and encourage
15 customers that a fare is required. Every single bus,
16 before you board, there is a message, a fare is
17 required.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: In English.

19 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: In
20 English, but also onboard buses, I mean, and even
21 throughout the subway network. I mean, we have, you
22 know, published tons of customer-facing campaigns,
23 you know, even pulling from the heartstrings. It
24 Takes a City, and understanding that everyone has to
25 do their part to be part of this fabric of our

2 neighborhoods and our community. And then also, you
3 know, the Chairman has said fare evasion should not
4 be a crime of poverty. So we do all— I mean, the MTA
5 have stepped up and have been doing tons of outreach
6 and engagement, encouraging and getting people
7 enrolled in Fair Fares. We do it in our subway
8 systems as well as our bus stops and high-traffic
9 areas. So these are many steps and many approaches
10 that we are trying to work with our riders to get
11 them to pay their fares.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

13 Chair, if I may, just I would love—

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] I'll
15 allow it because you haven't had a second round of
16 questioning. So can we just put an extra five minutes
17 for her, please? And then—

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Oh, I won't take
19 five, but thank you, thank you so much, Chair. I just
20 want to make sure to follow up on the numbers. I'd
21 love to just see what is being spent. And then the
last is an advocacy piece. I, you know, was a huge
advocate of the Penn Access Project, but I also just
want to, on the record here, state we would love to
have Metro North service in the West Bronx too on the

2 way down. Right? Like, I would love to be able to
3 jump on in, you know, Morris Heights and come down to
4 the city in the morning, but our stations are skipped
in the West Bronx.

5 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, but we do have a
6 Morris Heights station, right?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: We have a
station, but the train doesn't stop.

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, we've actually
9 increased service. I'd like to show you how we
10 dramatically increase service. And, you know, the
11 fastest growing piece of our mass transit system
12 region-wide is Metro North service going north from
the Bronx to Westchester and Connecticut. And people
13 are seeking jobs and education and opportunity that
14 way. And we love providing that service to New York
15 City people who used to get skipped a lot more. I
16 think we've done a lot to actually increase service
to Bronxites with— on the Metro North system, and we
17 cut the fare in half. So, something I'm proud of and
18 committed to. Let's keep— we should discuss what— how
19 you're looking at that service.
20
21

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Excellent. Thank
3 you. Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you,
4 Majority Leader.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Of course. Mr.
6 Chairman, so we're going to have an extension line
7 coming from the east side to the west side, which is
8 exciting. Another— to make West Harlem even more of a
9 center of the universe, I would love— a lot of folks
10 in the neighborhood in my district would love to see
11 a Metro North stop along 125th Street. Can you look
12 into that?

13 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah. So not only can
14 we look into it, we did look into it, because it was
15 part of the— what I mentioned before, this
16 comparative evaluation of all of the ideas out there
17 about major projects and extensions and expansions
18 and so on. So when we studied the idea of having the
19 Hudson Line of Metro North, which now comes down to
20 Spuyten Duyvel and then zips to the east to come over
21 the, the Harlem lift— the Harlem River Bridge, have
it come straight down like the West Side. We actually
studied that as an investment, and it came up as a
good investment, a medium to good investment, but
only if you did have 125th Street station down in

2 your district as well. So it's an expensive project,
3 but one that rated reasonably highly on the rating
4 system. You know, again, future capital programs
5 might in fact- they'll have to be, you know, worked
6 on but it might warrant investment in a future
capital program.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is there any way to
8 add it to the 2025, 2029 capital program?

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: No. John, go ahead.

10 CHIEF MCCARTHY: Yeah. One of the things
11 that we're doing is we're looking at the work that's
12 needed to be done west of Penn Station, the track
13 configuration, so that you can run a train up the
14 west side that goes into Penn Station from that line.

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Right now there's very
16 limited capacity to get in and out of Penn Station
17 from the so-called Empire Line that runs up the west
18 side. That's a technical issue that we're actually,
19 as we say, studying.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Would you have any
21 idea how expensive it would be to do- install a stop
on 125th Street?

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Real money, but not-
why don't we go back and look at what's in the

2 comparative evaluation because there were very
3 conceptual numbers thrown at it for the purposes of
4 that analysis. That would be the answer to my
5 question— your question.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It's a big
7 transportation priority. I know that a lot of folks
8 have, you know, have long wanted this. I understand
9 the limitations that your agency is facing at the
10 moment, the authority. But we can just keep
11 conversations on that. That would be great.

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah. You'll have to
13 bring Columbia to the table, because they would be
14 the biggest beneficiaries of all. Columbia University
15 was— struggled to get in touch with their, you know,
16 their conscience to pay— with your— with— as a result
17 of your work, we're close to being able to announce
18 that Columbia is going to pay for accessibility at
19 the 125th and Broadway station. And they would need
20 to be part of a solution for a Metro-North stop
21 there, big time.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Well, of course, we
23 hope that an agreement is reached eventually on that,
24 and I'm sure you have more to report on that when the
25 time is right. Regarding subway surfing— subway

2 surfing is the act of riding on top or outside of a
3 moving train. In recent years, this dangerous trend
4 has increased, potentially due to the rise in social
5 media posts involving subway surfing. In 2023, at
6 least five people were killed in subway surfing
7 incidents, as compared to five total fatalities
8 between 2018 and 2022. According to the police
9 department, as of the NYPD. As of October 15, 2024,
10 the NYPD had arrested 163 people for subway surfing
11 in 2024 year-to-date, a 22 percent increase from the
12 138 that were arrested in all of 2023. The NYPD
13 contends that the increase in arrests is due to the
14 increase in enforcement and not indicative of an
15 increased number of subway surfers. However, in 2025,
16 five people died as a result of subway surfing. What
17 infrastructure enhancements does DOT— sorry, does the
18 MTA plan on building in order to prevent youth from
19 subway surfing?

20 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, so let's just
21 start off by acknowledging that subway surfing is a
tragedy and it is not— this is not fun. This is not
hijinks. This is life or death. And we cannot have—
we're going to try to— we have been working to try to
discourage this. You have probably seen we have

2 announcements constantly in the system to educate
3 kids. We've initiated an animated advertising
4 campaign. We have leaned on all the social media
5 companies to suppress this, to use their algorithms,
6 which they're pretty good at using to get business or
7 to find new sources of revenue. But they seem to be—
8 not all of the, but some of them seem to be unable to
9 suppress subway surfing videos. That one area they
10 can't get the algorithm right. One company, Meta,
11 principally Instagram, has been not cooperative on
12 this. And I've called them out a couple of times. I
13 have reached out to people through the very effective
14 NYC Tech Group to say, we are going to have to do
15 something about you if you don't— if you don't get
16 with the program because you can't have kids looking
17 at these things and getting killed. So we've been
18 very aggressive about that. We did all kinds of
19 things. We teamed up with New York City Public
20 Schools students to do announcement campaigns, and so
21 on and so on. You're aware of all that. In addition,
I bless the NYPD, whatever you think of drones, to—
the way they are using drones to identify subway
surfers on some of these outdoor lines, which are
where it principally happens, has been effective. And

2 I really appreciate what they've done. They have
3 deployed officers, and it's true that there have been
4 more arrests, but the arrests are not— no one's being
5 incarcerated. Basically, these kids get taken off the
6 train and they get taken home. And we ask the
7 parents, could you please— we beg the parents, could
8 you please intervene? Whether it's a parent or a
9 teacher or a caregiver or coach, folks need to take
10 responsibility for preventing kids. So there's a lot
11 of stuff that we have done and we're going to
12 continue doing. One thing on top of all this is it
13 took a while, but we have developed a— and by the
14 way, subway surfing was down in '25 versus '24. So
15 I'm by no means declaring victory, but the number of
16 cases actually has gone down by about 10 percent.
17 Not— this is by no means cause for celebration, but
18 we are pushing in the right direction. We are also on
19 one of the lines that seems to be the worst in this
20 area, which is the number seven. We are actually
21 doing what we call bolsters. They're physical
interventions. It's really hard to come up with a way
to do this that doesn't prevent the car from being
maintained in normal course. But the folks at Transit
have tested out and piloted a bolster, and they're

2 now deploying it onto the number seven trains so that
3 that line in particular will hopefully have- kids
4 climbing up from between cars will be prevented to a
5 greater extent. What else, Shanifah, am I missing?

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So as part of the
7 bolster expansion, are most of the seven train- seven
8 train stations are going to be covered, the ones that
9 are above ground especially? It's not the stations,
10 it's really the physical train itself that prevents
11 kids from climbing up-

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] Got it.

13 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: between cars. And they
14 had to test out a lot of different techniques,
15 because again, you have to maintain access to the top
16 of the car for maintenance purposes. But they do have
17 a strategy that they are moving forward with
18 aggressively, and you'll start to see more and more
19 of those.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And my last question
21 on this topic is, has the MTA reviewed case studies
from other municipalities with metro systems to study
how subway surfing is successfully prevented? If so,
what ideas have been implemented?

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2 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: I mean, I
3 would have to say we are the case study. You know,
4 we- I talked to lots of counterparts and colleagues
5 across various transit agencies. I mean, and this is,
6 you know, a phenomenon that is wide sweeping. But
7 they are looking to us, and we, you know, as the
8 chairman said, who spoke about the measures that
9 we're taking, another thing that we're doing is
10 going- I mean, we have the partnership with DOE
11 students who have lent their voices to this campaign
12 and the audio announcements, but also when we are
13 invited in to assemblies or gatherings, we do go out
14 and, you know, participate in doing a lot of
15 anti-subway surfing campaigns, as well as bringing on
16 celebrities and prominent New Yorkers to lend their
17 voice to the cause as well.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Council
19 Member Hanif?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. I'd
21 like to ask about, uh, Access-A-Ride. Could you share
22 what the operational cost of running paratransit is?

23 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: Sure.
24 Powertransit costs projected for 2026 is about \$990
25 million total.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And is that—

3 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: It's
4 about a 20 percent increase from 2025.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And could you share
6 how MTA handles situations where drivers are late,
7 no-shows? What recourse do riders have?

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, I mean, we now
9 have 85 percent customer satisfaction on paratransit,
10 which is 1 million miles better than it used to be.
11 We have 95 percent on-time performance. So we have
12 dramatically improved that. I'm not sure you were
13 here. There's been a lot of dialogue early in the
14 hearing about it. So the performance has dramatically
15 improved. Ridership has surged, I think, 20 percent a
16 year the last two years. And it's not a secret that's
17 part of the reason it's costing a fortune. We have
18 driven down the per-ride cost by using more black
19 cars and for-hire vehicles, but— and giving better
20 service, but the overall numbers are surging so much
21 that the overall cost of the program is dramatically
increased.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And is that budget
coming from city and state and federal? How is that
funding allocated?

2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: The
3 funding for the program is between city and MTA. We
4 have a cost share on the program, a historical cost
5 share and a cost share that's currently at 50 percent
6 with a \$165 million cap.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And with federal
8 ADA mandates, is there any funding associated?

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: There's no operating
10 funding coming from the federal government of any
11 kind.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. And then
13 what capital investments are planned for the
14 Access-A-Ride fleet replacement or expansion? Over
15 the next five years?

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: Sure. So,
17 normal replacement for our vehicles that are part of
18 our fleet, right- the primary carrier vehicles are
19 MTA-owned vehicles. They get replaced on a normal
20 basis. I believe it is every seven years. That is
21 already programmed into the paratransit budget for
cost replacements.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Coming to the
NaviLens program that helps visually impaired users
to be more independent in unknown spaces via QR codes

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2 positioned within stations, especially where it's not
3 possible to use GPS or other computer vision methods.
4 Could you share how many NaviLens are deployed in the
5 New York City subway?

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I don't know that
7 offhand, but I'll tell you, we've— what we've done is
8 an incredibly innovative pilot with if you hit a QR
9 code, you can get access to an ASL translator. And
10 we've gotten incredibly positive feedback on this
11 from the portion of the disability community that
12 relies on that. And you know, we're going to expand
13 that, but we're using NaviLens and other techniques
14 to provide accessibility benefits to folks who aren't
15 only mobility.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Sure. No, and I
17 think that's fantastic.

18 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: Yeah, and
19 it is affixed in every subway station as well as bus.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Oh, great. Coming
21 to bus lanes, seven out of nine council districts
with the fewest bus lanes are all in Brooklyn, which
also includes District 39. In my district, only 0.20
percent of streets have a bus lane. How do you decide
where to add new bus lanes, and could you discuss how

2 MTA is addressing bus bunching, route planning, and
3 all-door boarding?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, there's a lot
5 there, and you want me to go fast. So I'll say is
6 that obviously we're engaged in a redesign of the
7 Brooklyn bus system that will account for all of the
8 factors that you mentioned. With respect to— we
9 choose the lanes with— together with DOT. So if you
10 want to know if the— if that seven out of nine number
11 is gonna change, 1-800-NYC-DOT. Because we—

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] I
13 love [inaudible].

14 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: are waiting for them to
15 put into effect the bus lanes that we all agreed
16 ought to be done a couple years ago. And— but we're
17 happy to continue to provide data on performance.
18 That will inform our— you know, the bus route
19 redesign process that you're going to be very much
20 part of as it unfolds.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: We're really
excited and eager about the Brooklyn bus redesign,
and we'll just make a pitch for restoring the B71 bus
in my district, or something similar to the B71 bus.
And then finally, I just want to wrap by asking

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2 about-- you mentioned that most of the elevators out
3 of service are not run by the MTA, but rather the
4 private contractors. What do the--

5 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] Private
6 developers.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Private developers.

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Real estate owners.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Real estate owners.
10 So what's the informant mechanism-- enforcement
11 mechanism for those?

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: That's the problem. The
13 city made deals with folks-- most of them more than 10
14 years ago-- to put in elevators, and the agreements
15 didn't have tight language about the frequency of--
16 you know, that the availability, how frequently they
17 would be breaking down or repaired or whatever. And
18 we're trying to get some of these operators to do--
19 move more quickly so that the elevators are more
20 available. John?

21 CHIEF MCCARTHY: And just to answer a
question from an earlier round, it used to be eight
months for a capital replacement. It's now six
months, so a 25 percent savings. And our Chief
Accessibility Officer, Carmela Arroyo, just texted me

2 to say that there's 5,000 codes out there
3 system-wide. So-

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
5 Member Schulman.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. I
7 have a few more questions. One is- it's sort of a
8 small issue. It is and it isn't. But anyway, the app
9 for the timing of the express buses- this is a
10 particular issue- it only says when the bus is like a
11 couple of minutes away as opposed to this is the time
12 that- so what it causes me to do, and I've heard from
13 a couple other constituents, not a lot, is that I-
14 there's something called Transit Time that I pay them
15 \$5 a month so I can see what time the bus is supposed
16 to come so I can figure out my day and my plans and
17 all of that. But it doesn't- it just- just be aware,
18 like, I keep- I'll keep refreshing it, and it's not
19 until a couple of minutes before it's going to get
20 there- that it shows up.

21 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay. So, let's take
this discussion offline.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, fine.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: We're actually on the
verge of issuing an update of our app.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Great.

3 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: And it's— I think it's
4 going to have a lot of benefits. The people,
5 including me, who've been beta testing it, think it's
6 great.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: But I want to make sure
9 that you come away happy, because you're such a good
10 express bus customer, clearly.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I am.

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I got to make you happy.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I appreciate
14 that. And I appreciate, by the way, your
15 thoughtfulness and your thorough answers today. I
16 just want to say that. The other thing too, in terms
17 of subway surfing, I want to piggyback on the Chair's
18 questions. Have you spoken to DOE? Because some of
19 the class— some of the classes, some of the students
20 in my district have come up with plans on how to deal
21 with subway surfing. And these are, you know, their,
their— these are their co— you know, this— their
fellow students sometimes, and all of that. And they
have some ideas. Should we— who should I share them
with or get you guys involved or?

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2 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: Yeah, you
3 can definitely share them with me.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

5 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: And we do
6 have, I think, like biweekly meetings with DOE and,
7 and students that come up with different concepts and
8 ideas and hearing directly-

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]
10 Some of them are very creative.

11 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: from the
12 students. Yeah. Yeah. So please, again, we are-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]
14 You know, and it's their peer group.

15 CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER RIEARA: We welcome
16 any idea. Yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yeah. So, okay.
18 No, that's great. And also is- what's the- what are
19 you guys doing in terms of AI, in terms of the
20 transit system? Is there a place for AI in-

21 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Listen, you know, AI is
sort of just a general term.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

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2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: If it's about crunching,
3 taking data to try to deliver better outcomes, there
4 is a place for it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You know, I wouldn't say
7 that MTA is a- has been a thought leader, but we have
8 tasked all of our operating agencies to come up with
9 initiatives to start people thinking about it. One
10 area where we are using it is try to optimize
11 schedules of all of our services.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So you have the
14 minimized downtime for crews and maximize the benefit
15 to the customer.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And my last
17 question is about some of the news about buses being
18 out of service or being put into service that don't
19 have- that aren't up to par. And, you know, I just
20 want to get a response from you on that.

21 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, no one- listen,
here's the bottom line. We're never going to put a
bus into service that is defective or broken.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

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2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: That's nonsense. We have
3 disagreements with our friends in the union about,
4 you know, how quickly certain kinds of maintenance
5 activities should be performed. And we're trying to
6 get buses on the road so that people in your
7 district, in Council Member Wong's district and
8 everybody else's district aren't standing there
9 because one bus didn't run.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Correct, right.

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: So sometimes our friends
12 in the union make public statements that suggest-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]
14 Okay, understood.

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: dangers that are not
16 present in my view.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And the one
18 thing I want to just a comment is I was actually on a
19 brand new bus a couple weeks ago.

20 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: I'd like you to
get more new buses.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Was it an express
bus, Lynn?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Express bus,
3 yeah. Because it's more comfortable even to get on
4 the bus, and some of the buses are like not in great
5 shape. But so hopefully-

6 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] Well, I
7 know where I'm sending my next new bus, to which
8 line.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you so
10 much, Mr. Lieber. We really appreciate it.

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You bet.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I would like to add on
13 to Council Member Schulman's concern on the surf- the
14 surfing, subway surfing that we've been seeing. The
15 council's taking action. We're passing legislation
16 next week that would distribute informational
17 materials within our schools and for our students to
18 understand what the risks are of social media, not
19 only when it comes to the spreading of hate, but also
20 when it comes to public safety and issues like subway
21 surfing. So we are taking action on that, and
something that we take very seriously. Council Member
Brooks-Powers is next.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
And all those wonderful express buses in Forest Hills

2 I'm looking forward to confirmation about three
3 express buses in Rockaway being made permanent. But I
4 wanted to say thank you for responding to the letter
5 from myself and Council Member Ariola regarding the
6 Rockaway Park Branch of the A train service. I wanted
7 to know if there was any updates on the-- on when the
8 work will be completed on that. I know there was an
9 initial response to our letter, but wanted to see if
10 there are any other additional updates.

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I'm looking at Lucille
12 because she's adding me. Go ahead.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: We're looking at shortly,
14 so, you know, within the next six to eight weeks.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Okay,
16 good. Thank you for that. And then just going to--
17 back to the express buses in terms of the
18 accessibility. What we have heard from folks in the
19 disability community has been that it's difficult to
20 reliably take express buses because the drivers don't
21 always know how to lift or move the seats, especially
in the evenings, nights, and weekends. And sometimes
I think there's a swap out of the bus operators as
well that may not have training. Can you tell the
committee what steps the MTA has taken or will take

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2 to ensure that the bus operators are fully versed on
3 the mechanisms of the bus for the disability riders?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, your question
5 echoes something that we hear from one of our friends
6 in the disability community, Jean Ryan, every- on a
7 regular basis. Listen, we have taken steps to
8 redouble the effort to make sure that every bus
9 driver who's on an express bus needs to know how to
10 operate that lift. And the idea of people getting
11 stuck is, you know, that's not acceptable. So, it's
12 about training and refreshing the training. So even
13 if they don't get, you know, aren't prompted to
14 operate the lift for three months, that they don't
15 forget how to do it and they can do it timely and
16 effectively. So we're going to continue that. And let
17 me just reassure you that Jean Ryan ain't gonna let
18 us forget about that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I know she
20 won't let me forget either.

21 CHIEF MCCARTHY: New videos-

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] Go ahead.

CHIEF MCCARTHY: We have new videos out
there training our operators, and they have palm
cards explaining. So we're, as the Chair said, making

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2 sure they know what to do. It's what we owe to our
3 customers.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you
5 for that. And finally, looking forward to the update
6 on the express buses for Rockaway as well. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: These are the express
8 buses we ran during the temporaries-

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS:
10 [interposing] Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: that you want to make-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS:
13 [interposing] Yes, and I've been getting a lot of
14 feedback from the community in terms of how helpful
15 it's been and when I've seen them, it's had a lot of
16 folks actually riding it and taking advantage. And I
17 told you, we just needed the opportunity to show that
18 we have the ridership for it.

19 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Take a look.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
21 Council Member Lee? Finance Chair.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi everyone, thank
you so much. Sorry I was a little late. Just wanted
to ask a couple budget questions, and then also, as
well as since we're talking about bus lanes,

2 congestion pricing, all those fun topics. So, going
3 to— I know this was touched upon a little bit before,
4 but the casino revenue. In the MTA 2025 adopted
5 budget, the authority expected to receive \$500
6 million per year in casino revenue starting this
7 calendar year. In your 2026 adopted budget, this
8 figure jumped to \$1 billion. So does the calculation
9 take into account additional casinos to be built
10 throughout the calendar year or just existing
11 casinos?

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: Sure. We—
13 when the casinos were announced, we took a very
14 conservative approach of how they would be deployed
15 or awarded, right? And so what we had planned was in
16 '26, '27, and '28, each of those casinos getting an
17 award and a license fee to the MTA. What we did see
18 is the commission awarded all three of those licenses
19 in the month of December of '25. So we got the
20 revenue of \$1.5 billion earlier than planned.
21 However, it was already expensed and budgeted for in
our financial plan. So what we did was recognize the
revenue, but it is already spoken for in our
financial plan.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And what will
3 the funds be used for more specifically?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Run service. Just to
5 run the services.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Just to run the
7 service?

8 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Run service. It is— it
9 was an essential gap filler that Governor Hochul
10 identified in 2023. As I said before you arrived, the
11 rest of the country, transit is being cut, service is
12 being cut, fares are being dramatically raised. We
13 don't have to do that because of what Governor Hochul
14 and the legislature did in 2023.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: The casino revenues
17 were part of that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And then in
19 terms of dedicated taxes, almost 45 percent of
20 operating revenues that are necessary to cover
21 operating budget expenses are derived from dedicated
taxes, and an economic slowdown or recession could
adversely impact MTA's ability to cover costs. So has
MTA planned for an economic slowdown, and what is the

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2 contingency plan to cover the operational budget, if
3 there is one?

4 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Well, we've— just bottom
5 line is that we work closely with the State Division
6 of the Budget, who takes, you know, is an
7 appropriately conservative or moderate approach to
8 their projections. And that's the basis on which we
9 project our revenue sources. Anything else?

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER PATEL: Yep,
11 agree. We take both the city and the state
12 projections and use that to model our own revenue. I
13 think both agencies and entities take a conservative
14 approach. We have planned for the same. And we— if we
15 see any uptick, we recognize the revenue as it is
16 appropriated.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, good to know.
18 Um, so as— so if— okay, so you guys are working
19 closely with them, which is good to know. One quick
20 question about— I know this— that the question was
21 asked earlier, but just wanted to follow up in terms
of the list of elevators that are being operated by
private developers, if you have a list of that.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, I'll give you
that list again. It's like somewhere between 10 and

2 20. Just talk about— so one of them that we lean on a
3 lot that I'm not happy about is the Barclays Center,
4 which is new and it's a high-profile Brooklyn
5 location, and it shouldn't be going out of service as
6 much as it does. But we are on those people like the
7 proverbial cheap suit because they're not— they have
8 not been doing well enough.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect. And then
10 just really quickly on the bus lanes, because I'm in
11 Eastern Queens, where I think my district is one of
12 the only two that has no subways or Long Island
13 Railroad.

14 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: You got that Long
15 Island Railroad and Bayside, right?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: No, that's not me. So
17 I have no Long Island Railroad and I have no subways.
18 So we are— it's right to the north and south of me,
19 but I'm like smack in the middle of that area. So we
20 rely very heavily on buses as well as cars. And I
21 think when the bus lanes on Hillside were input— I'm
sure you've heard feedback on this, but just
wondering, is it one year? Like, how long do you guys
monitor that? Because it has caused so much traffic,
and we understand the need, especially on a

2 thoroughfare like Hillside Avenue. But if we can
3 switch it from 24/7 to certain hours during the day,
4 because it has— we keep getting so many calls into
5 our office about the traffic that gets built up
6 because now there's only one lane for cars. So that
7 is something that I know that myself, Nantasha
8 Williams, as well as Jim Gennaro, we all have parts
9 of that on Hillside Avenue, and that's something that
10 all of our offices have been hearing.

11 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: We should talk about—
12 it's definitely New York City DOT issue as well. And
13 I just remind all of us that the bus— the bus— the
14 vehicles that go in the bus lane carry 20, 30, 40, 50
15 people, and you know, individual automobiles. So I
16 respect the fact that traffic is impacted, but if you
17 can make things faster for the 40 people who are on
18 the bus, that is making a difference.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Well, and just to
20 make a point on that note, faster hopefully doesn't
21 mean that we're— I know we went through the whole
redesign, but hopefully it doesn't mean sacrificing
on stops, because for our elderly and the students,
that's really important.

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2 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Alright, I mean- may I
3 just- privilege of answering the question. It is
4 really complicated to find the Goldilocks solution,
5 the perfect- I mean, we have in New York, our bus
6 system has so much more frequent stops than the rest
7 of the world. And it's one of the reasons our system
8 is- our bus system is a little slow. Everybody wants
9 us to have faster service. So we're trying to balance
10 having fewer stops, but having them in the right
11 places and not-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Right.

13 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: you know, hurting
14 communities. It is a constant issue of balance.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: It's like a jigsaw.

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: No, which I
18 appreciate. And I'll ask if possible, another
19 question for the next round. I guess, Chair?

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Chair, you can ask
21 them now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, just one last
congestion pricing, because that is an area that
impacts Eastern Queens tremendously, because not only
in the sense of getting the benefits of congestion

2 pricing because we have to pay the prices, but also I
3 have a very large percentage of the drivers who live
4 in my district as well, and I know that the \$9 was
5 sort of exempt from the drivers, a lot of the
6 drivers. But if- correct me if I'm wrong on that- or
7 at least the fee was a lot less. But I know before
8 COVID there was workings on the state level to try to
9 get some of those resources to go to the outer
10 boroughs. And I'm just wondering, I know that
11 obviously the main source is in the subway transit
12 system, but if some of those resources could also
13 come out to the outer boroughs. I just wanted to
14 follow up.

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: We can- why don't just
16 give an IOU to give you the specifics of what
17 projects in your district are going to benefit. But
18 broadly speaking it's going to ADA accessibility, the
19 basics of making sure that the system doesn't fall
20 apart. It's going to enable us to run more service on
21 subway and commuter rail and new trains and buses.
But we'll give you specifics on your district and how
it's benefiting from congestion pricing. And honestly
I would- no one ever wants to get into the details of
it because it's controversial. But with the speed is

2 being picked up on the Williamsburg and the Midtown
3 Tunnel so dramatically, there are a lot of folks
4 coming out of Queens- I'm not talking specifics- who
5 are seeing real time savings. Their time is worth
6 money. That's why drivers in polls are much more
7 supportive of congestion pricing than they used to
8 be.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I understand they're
11 probably not coming to talk to you, but yes, in the
12 polling-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] I mean,
14 as a driver myself, I sort of have a different
15 narrative, but that's- I mean, not just me, but the
16 folks in our district. But we can talk about that
17 offline.

18 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Alright.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are you done, Finance
21 Chair?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, now my last
two questions, and I'm giving two minutes each for

2 the last third round, Council Member Wong followed by
3 Hanif.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yes, hi. Thank you,
5 Chair. I'm counting the number of bus shelters in my
6 district that's been abandoned or the stops have been
7 removed but the shelters are still there. What is
8 being done? It's been seven, eight months.

9 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Yeah, I, you have to
10 talk to New York City DOT. They oversee the bus
11 shelter system through a franchisee. That's not the
12 MTA.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I see. Okay, thank
14 you. Back to the express buses. What are being- what
15 sort of operational improvements are being done to
16 re- remove reli- to improve reliability? Yes, the bus
17 network was a significant change. I do- I don't see
18 any improvements. I only see bus stops being removed
19 and, and there are fewer buses coming. What is being
20 done to improve the services?

21 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Here's what's being done
is that we, in my era, we took away- the rule of bus
redesigns was it has to be cost neutral. I took that
away and we are spending \$35 million a year more on
buses in Queens per year as a result of the bus

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2 network redesign. We've added rush routes to connect
3 people from neighborhoods that don't have rail access
4 to get them to the commuter rail station, to get to
5 the subway station. And we've seen overall an
6 improvement in speeds. So you— we can share that
7 information. There'll be a full report coming out
8 within a couple months.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Please. Thank
10 you. And I have 30 seconds. Okay. What's being done
11 to improve the traffic signal timing on bus routes?

12 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Traffic signal
13 prioritization is one of the ways we speed up buses,
14 and it's being done widely, but it's part of our
15 discussion with New York City DOT, who controls that.
16 We're going to keep pushing for more of that
17 bus-specific traffic signal prioritization.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, I have some
19 recommendations on Woodhaven Boulevard.

20 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Welcome, welcome. Get
21 them to us.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. I'll do
that.

CHAIRMAN LIEBER: And we'll [inaudible]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. Thank
3 you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Hanif?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. I want
6 to come back to lighting and give you an opportunity
7 to tell us what MTA's been up to around lighting
8 repair. So 4th Avenue-9th Street Station, I mean,
9 it's got no lighting, it's drabby, it's dirty, and
10 thousands of people are using that station to get
11 into Park Slope, Gowanus. I mean, it's a huge through
12 line in my district and of course also now Council
13 Member Alexa Aviles. So would love to know just what
14 the plans are or where we are on the roster of
15 getting—

16 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: [interposing] I'm going
17 to have to get back.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: some of that
19 lighting?

20 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: I just don't know the
21 project as well as I know some others. You've raised
it now twice. I will get— we will get back to you on
it.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: It's very, very
important. Since I was a staff person in former

2 Council Member Brad Lander's office, we've been
3 fighting for this. Then I was a member for four
4 years, now Alexa. Like, I don't want this to keep
5 passing along to another elected official. This is
6 important, and I really hope that DOT and MTA can
7 really figure out what each's responsibilities are in
8 terms of whether adding street furniture would be a
9 positive element versus lighting, which we obviously
10 need more of, and then of course addressing the
11 vacant storefronts. Thank you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Thank you
13 so much again, Mr. Chairman, for coming to testify on
14 your team. This panel is hereby excused.

15 CHAIRMAN LIEBER: Okay, thank you.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Just a quick PSA.
17 Please do not approach the dais. Everyone, do not
18 approach the dais. Furthermore, food and beverages
19 are not allowed. If you have any, you can eat them
20 outside or drink them outside. Thank you. Please, at
21 this time, everyone please find your seats. Please
keep it down. Thank you. Please find your seat. We'll
be starting— We will be starting momentarily. Please
find your seats. Also, please do not approach the
dais at any time. Please do not approach the dais. If

2 you have any questions, please raise your hand and
3 the Sergeant-at-Arms will kindly assist you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, since I
5 already provided my opening earlier this morning, I
6 will turn it over to Committee Counsel to administer
7 the oath.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next
9 panel will be from the Department of Transportation:
10 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
11 Transportation Mike Flynn, First Deputy Commissioner
12 Margaret Forgione, Executive Deputy Commissioner Paul
13 Ochoa, Deputy Commissioner of Transportation Planning
14 and Management Eric Beaton, and Assistant
15 Commissioner for Intergovernmental Affairs, Rick
16 Rodriguez. I will now administer the oath. Please
17 raise your right hands. Do you affirm to tell the
18 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
19 before this committee, and to respond honestly to
20 council member questions? Thank you. You may begin
21 when ready.

18 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Great. Good morning,
19 or good afternoon, Chair Abreu and members of the
20 Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I'm
21 Mike Flynn, Commissioner of the New York City

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2 Department of Transportation. With me today are First
3 Deputy Commissioner Margaret Forgione, Executive
4 Deputy Commissioner Paul Ochoa, Deputy Commissioner
5 of Transportation Planning and Management Eric
6 Beaton, and Assistant Commissioner for
7 Intergovernmental and Community Affairs Rick
8 Rodriguez. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
9 on behalf of Mayor Zohran Mamdani on DOT's fiscal
10 year 2027 Preliminary Budget and fiscal year 2026 to
11 2035 Capital Plan. As Mayor Mamdani announced, this
12 preliminary- closer, okay. As Mayor Mamdani
13 announced, this preliminary budget confronts the
14 fiscal crisis head-on while preserving the core
15 services New Yorkers rely on every day. Within that
16 context, the New York City Department of
17 Transportation remains focused on our
18 charter-mandated mission to provide for the safe,
19 equitable, and sustainable movement of people and
20 goods, and create public spaces that strengthen our
21 communities. DOT manages 26 percent of the city's
land area, including 6,300 miles of streets and
highways, over 12,000 miles of sidewalk, 44,000
intersections, and more than 800 bridges and tunnels.
And this budget enables us to sustain those essential

operations while advancing savings, improving operational efficiencies, and maintaining critical infrastructure. We appreciate the mayor's continued investment in DOT, enabling us to maintain our programs to help all New Yorkers and millions of visitors get around the city. But we're also going to think big and be bold. We're laying the groundwork and we'll marshal our resources to go beyond the status quo, because the status quo isn't good enough. We will implement transformative street redesigns that improve safety, build busways and other bus infrastructure that speed up service, scale up the production of protected bike lanes and pedestrian space, take a hard look at parking policy in our city, usher in a new era for Vision Zero that builds upon past success and utilizes new tools and tactics, and streamline bureaucracy to accelerate important work that must be done with urgency, and so much more. All of this work will take resources, and Mayor Mamdani already gave an initial down payment on the important work that's ahead. But resources go beyond just money. There's a national shortage of engineers, which makes hiring for these essential roles difficult. That's why we're leading outreach and

2 events to attract engineers to work at this agency.

3 There's also a shortage of contractors who do the

4 work that's needed for our projects, including

5 painting the markings on roadways and repairing

6 traffic lights. And we're working with contractors to

7 encourage them to expand their operations because we

8 have work that needs doing. With climate change and

9 affordability as two of the defining challenges of

10 our time, we understand our critical role in

11 transitioning our roadways, infrastructure, and

12 assets to a safer, greener, and more accessible

13 transportation network to benefit New Yorkers for

14 generations to come. This is going to be a

15 forward-looking, problem-solving DOT, not the DOT of

16 no, but turning a ship as big as DOT will take time

17 if we want to get it right. So we're acting with

18 haste on the things we can deliver now, like

19 restarting shelved bus and bike lane projects and

20 announcing 800 15-mile-per-hour slow zones at all

21 eligible New York City schools this year and at all

3,200 schools citywide by the end of Mayor Mamdani's

first term. And we're building a rock-solid

foundation to deliver on the grander ambitions that

we have for this agency moving forward. And it's only

2 March. Let's start with where things stand today with
3 the fiscal year 2027 budget. DOT's FY27 expense
4 budget is \$1.6 billion, and you can see the
5 breakdown, and in the chart in my testimony. That
6 includes \$126 million for bridge maintenance and
7 inspection, \$139 million for ferry operations and
8 maintenance, \$271 million for roadway maintenance,
9 \$367 million for other DOT operations and
10 administration, including sidewalk management and
11 inspection, \$451 million for traffic operations,
12 including signals, streetlights, automated
13 enforcement and parking, and \$204 million for
14 transportation planning and management, including
15 installation of street signs and roadway markings.
16 Our FY26 to FY35 Capital Plan is \$33 billion, and you
17 can see the breakdown on the screen— well, or in the
18 testimony. \$17 billion for bridge reconstruction and
19 rehabilitation, \$6 billion for street reconstruction,
20 \$3.2 billion for resurfacing, \$3.2 billion for
21 sidewalk and pedestrian ramp repair and
reconstruction, \$1.6 billion for streetlights,
signals and automated enforcement, \$665 million for
the Staten Island Ferry, and \$1.3 billion for the
facilities and equipment needed to support DOT's

operations. This budget provides funding to support critical and innovative DOT operations that make New York safer and more livable. It's clear that the Mamdani administration shares this vision with the investments in bus riders, cyclists, and pedestrians in this budget, given the funding for a secure bike parking pilot, summer streets, open streets, and a down payment on bus and bike lane projects that we're actively planning now. These investments strengthen our vision to create a transportation system that provides equitable mobility for all residents and visitors. On faster and more reliable bus service, we're thrilled with the Mayor's proven commitment to make it easier and faster to travel around the city with his announcement of the revitalization of four previously halted street redesign projects across the Bronx and Brooklyn. These projects will build upon our creative and collaborative work with the MTA to improve the bus rider experience citywide, ensuring that New Yorkers have fast and reliable bus service. The addition of \$5 million per year starting in FY '27 as a down payment for bus and bike lane projects is not just a line in the budget, it's a clear commitment to faster and safer mobility methods that

2 move New Yorkers efficiently and equitably. This
3 investment makes a bold statement about our
4 priorities by accelerating projects that will
5 decrease commute times, protect vulnerable road
6 users, and support our climate goals, all while
7 strengthening the reliability of the city's
8 transportation network. This is how we deliver safer,
9 greener, faster streets, and we're just getting
10 started. On strengthening bike infrastructure, with
11 more than 600,000 cycling trips taken in the city
12 each day, we know we need to think holistically to
13 meet rapidly growing cycling trends. So we're working
14 with our vendor on launching a secure bike parking
15 and charging program. As many New Yorkers lack
16 in-home bike storage space or cannot carry heavier
17 e-bikes or cargo bikes upstairs, providing safe and
18 secure bike parking options at transit stations and
19 major destinations will reduce barriers to bike
20 ownership and encourage transit ridership and
21 last-mile trips by bicycle. The addition of secure,
covered, long-term parking options in residential
neighborhoods will enable people without storage
options at home to start biking, which is essential
to our goal of promoting mode shift. In addition, the

use of electric mobility devices has dramatically increased, with nearly six percent of New York adults reporting that they ride an electric mobility device once a week or more. When used safely, these new modes of transportation offer affordable, sustainable, and convenient options for a range of New Yorkers, from families to delivery workers. Delivery cyclists have a particular need for secure bike parking, particularly with e-bike battery charging, given a high rate of bike theft and safety challenges of indoor battery charging. Secure bike parking is a new opportunity for DOT to meet the moment during this time of rapid change on our streets, resulting in an intervention that supports evolving mobility trends and makes our streets safer. While overseeing one of the most complex urban transportation networks in the world, we remain proud of our creative work to reimagine the use of public space. To continue making a vibrant and people-centered city, this budget includes an additional \$2 million baselined investment starting in FY27 in Summer Streets and Open Streets that transform asphalt into opportunity. This funding expands car-free corridors, energizes commercial

2 districts, supports small businesses, and gives
3 families safe, joyful spaces to gather and move. It's
4 about reclaiming our streets for people and
5 delivering more welcoming streets for kids learning
6 to bike, seniors taking a morning stroll, and
7 communities hosting arts, culture, environmental,
8 fitness, and educational programming right outside
9 their doors. Summer Streets and Open Streets are
10 powerful demonstrations of what our shared public
11 spaces can be at their best. This investment keeps
12 that momentum alive and solidifies our commitment to
13 a more open, active, and vibrant city for all New
14 Yorkers. Regarding rezoning commitments, as part of
15 this budget, DOT will implement the projects outlined
16 in the Downtown Jamaica and Long Island City
17 rezonings. Over \$190 million of new funding was added
18 to DOT's budget to carry out a variety of projects in
19 Long Island City and Downtown Jamaica, including
20 Archer Avenue sidewalk and bus layover improvements,
21 Merrick Boulevard median and busway improvements, and
44th Drive pedestrian improvements. Thanks to the
Council's partnership, we're able to not only build
housing, but build all the other elements needed in
these dense neighborhoods. Finally, DOT continues to

2 make significant progress in expanding contracting
3 opportunities for minority and women-owned business
4 enterprises, or MWBEs. In fiscal year 2026, we're on
5 track to achieve record-breaking results with \$375
6 million already committed towards MWBE participation,
7 representing 32 percent of our contracted spending as
8 a department. This milestone reflects more than a
9 numeric achievement. It demonstrates our intentional
10 effort to ensure that economic, opportunity reaches
11 the diverse businesses that strengthen our
12 communities. By expanding access to contracting
13 opportunities, DOT is helping to build a more
14 inclusive and resilient business ecosystem while
15 advancing our broader vision of fairness,
16 opportunity, and shared prosperity. In conclusion,
17 we're thankful for the opportunity to testify before
18 the Council today and for your continued partnership.
19 We're grateful to the Mamdani administration for
20 investing in DOT, strengthening the steadfast work of
21 the 6,000 people at DOT who keep this city moving. We
now welcome any questions.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much,
Commissioner, for your time and for bringing your
team to testify today. Local Law 195 of 2019, also

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2 known as the Streets Plan or the Transportation
3 Master Plan, mandates expansion of the city's biking,
4 bus, and pedestrian safety infrastructure. DOT's most
5 recent report, released last week, states that the
6 agency only built 20.8 miles of protected bus lanes
7 in 2025, once again short of the 30 miles required
8 annually. DOT was also required to install Transit
9 Signal Priority, TSP, at 1,000 intersections but
10 completed only 769. The report noted that DOT has
11 installed roughly 18.2 miles of protected bike lanes
12 in 2025, an improvement, but still woefully behind
13 the 50-mile benchmark required by the legislation. At
14 our last hearing on the Streets Plan, I requested you
15 to come here today to prepare with a breakdown in
16 funding needed to attain these requirements on a
17 yearly basis. Do you have the breakdown— that is, the
18 calculation— in funding that DOT needs in order to
19 accomplish the Streets Plan, and how much additional
20 funding is required?

21 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank you, Chair.

22 Well, I want to start by saying that, you know, we
23 recognize that the Streets Plan mandates are legally
24 binding, and we'll do everything in our power to
25 deliver as many projects as we can. And we really

2 value the collaboration that we have with the council
3 in achieving that mission. While we don't have
4 specific numbers that we can share today, as we're
5 still developing the plan for this year, I do really
6 wanna reinforce that commitment, and we're happy to
7 talk more about some of the investments we have
8 planned.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I just want to be
10 clear that delivering as many projects as possible
11 does not mean a satisfaction of the benchmarks
12 required by the Streets Plan. At the last— you know,
13 two weeks ago, I requested for the administration to
14 come prepared with a breakdown of what would be
15 needed to accomplish the Streets Plan. So is it fair
16 to say that you do not have that kind calculation
17 today?

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
19 Council Member, thank you for the question. We did
20 clarify at the last hearing that this hearing would
21 be about the Preliminary Budget that was already
22 released. We are in conversations with the
23 administration and OMB about that exact question, and
24 we expect to have an answer, close to an answer, by
25 exec budget. The Preliminary Budget hearing is, as

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2 you know, the beginning of the process. There are
3 three steps: preliminary, exec, and then ultimately
4 adoption where the administration can deliver on
5 exactly what you're asking for.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So you do not have the
7 plan- you do not have the calculation breakdown today
8 despite the fact I requested it at the last-

9 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
10 [interposing] Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: hearing?

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: We
13 are testifying from the Preliminary Budget hearing
14 which was released just a few weeks ago.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Will this
16 administration commit to building 50 miles of
17 protected bike lanes and 30 miles of protected bus
18 lanes this year?

19 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: We're committed to
20 doing our best to meeting the targets in the plan,
21 and we're, you know, we're excited about the down
payment we received from the Mayor, especially in the
midst of the fiscal crisis that we're facing. We're
leaving no stone unturned, identifying all the ways
we can put out as much output this year as possible

2 while we also lay the groundwork to build that
3 longer-term capacity.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So as— so what I'm
5 hearing is that there is no commitment on 50 miles of
6 protected bike lanes and 30 miles of protected bus
lanes this year. Is that correct?

7 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Correct. We can
8 commit we're going to do our best.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright. So, just want
10 to state for the record that there has been no
11 commitment by the administration to meet this year's
12 benchmarks as required by the 2019 laws. I'll move
13 forward. Does DOT have enough capital projects in the
14 pipeline for 2026 to meet all of the requirements for
15 the Streets Plan mandates? And if so, do you have a
list of current capital projects that will be done
this year?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
17 Yeah, Councilmember, obviously our capital program is
18 a key part of what we do for New Yorkers and what we—
19 the type of projects we deliver. Most of the capital
20 projects that we are delivering this year, and in
21 fact most of the capital projects, have already been
counted for the Streets Plan purposes. We typically

2 start capital projects SIPs, Street Improvement
3 Projects, which are expense-funded, and then we move
4 on to capital. It is rare to have a capital project
5 deliver on new Streets Plan goals, so that means that
6 we probably already counted that project in a
7 previous year. So we do a SIP, we wait to make sure
8 that it works, and then we move on to forward for a
9 capital project, which means we count this- for the
purpose of the Streets Plan, we count it at the SIP
phase.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you anticipate that
11 in 2027 you'll be able to meet- with the current
12 preliminary budget funding- that you'll be able to
13 meet 50 miles of bus lanes next year and 30 miles of
bike lanes next year?

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
15 Yeah, so the same thing goes with bus lanes. Most of
16 the bus lanes for the purposes of Streets Plan are
17 protected via camera enforcement, which is- some of
18 it is capital, you are correct, and we do have the
19 funding to make those capitally eligible cameras
20 available in as many bus lanes- bus lane miles as we
21 can.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So you are committing—
3 and I want to reverse that— 50 miles of bike lanes
4 and 30 miles of bus lanes. You're committing that
5 you're able to— you will be able to meet those
6 targets in '27?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
8 We're going to be able to meet the capital portion of
9 those fundings, but as I mentioned, most of that—

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] This
11 seems like a technicality. I'm just— are you going to
12 be able to meet the 30— the 50 and the 30 numbers
13 next year?

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: I
15 think the Commissioner already answered that
16 question. I was speaking to the capital portion of
17 the Streets Plan goals. Most of the— most of the
18 goals of the Streets Plan are, are achieved through
19 the expense budget, not the capital budget.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Look, I don't get to
21 pick and choose which laws to follow, and I'm unsure
why DOT feels that they have the authority to do
that. They are legally required mandates of the
department, not a suggestion. I know that at the last
hearing, DOT mentioned that you're focused on

2 outcome-based targets. And so I guess my question is,
3 is DOT asserting that if the city met the
4 requirements of the Streets Plan, it doesn't believe
5 there would be vastly improved bus speeds, safer
6 crossings, and a larger protected bike lane network
in the city?

7 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: No, that definitely—
8 that's not the position. I think what we really want
9 to underscore is that both are important. We're
10 interested in the quantity of, you know, changes we
11 can make out there on the street, and we're equally
12 interested in what the impact of those changes are to
13 make sure that, you know, the investments we're
14 making are having the greatest possible benefit to
15 New Yorkers as they can. You know, one thing I want
16 to mention is, especially thinking about this year,
17 in addition to the discussions we've had around, you
18 know, resources this year and building the capacity
19 for future years, there's also— it's not only about
20 the resources, it's also about the process of
21 implementing these projects. And we really believe
it's important to engage with communities as part of
these projects. And we're a little bit behind the
8-ball from the previous administration for the

2 outreach not having started on some of these
3 projects. So there's also kind of a time aspect to
4 this that has to do with the time it takes to have
those conversations with communities.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So do you believe that
6 the Streets Plan would accomplish the outcome-based
7 targets that your administration is seeking to
satisfy?

8 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I think as a- yeah,
9 I mean, I think as a general rule, if we're going out
10 and building bike lanes and bus lanes, it's- we've
11 seen that it has that benefit, but there's a lot- you
12 know, where you put the bike lane or where you put
13 the bus lane and the specifics of how you design it
can make a big difference in terms of the impact.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So if we believe that
15 satisfying the Streets Plan would lead to
16 outcome-based goals, why not build the Streets Plan?
17 Well, like I mentioned earlier, we are working as
18 hard as we can, and I got to say I'm very proud of
19 our team because they really are working tirelessly
to maximize how much we can get done.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: In 2018, the
21 Department of Transportation's Better Buses Plan

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2 established performance targets of increasing bus
3 speeds by 25 percent citywide from approx-
4 approximately eight to 10 miles per hour. That target
5 has since been abandoned, and the lack of progress is
6 evident. Will your administration commit to
7 increasing average local bus speeds to a minimum of
8 10 miles per hour?

9 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: We're currently in
10 the process of developing a strategy for increasing
11 bus speeds dramatically around the city, and those
12 are the kinds of specifics that we're excited to
13 share in the coming weeks.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are you able to commit
15 to reducing- to increase- to increasing bus speeds by
16 25 percent citywide?

17 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: As I mentioned,
18 we're in the process of developing those commitments
19 and the specifics of how we can meet those
20 commitments. We want to make sure that we set
21 ambitious goals that we can follow through on, and
we're going to have more to share.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So it sounds- I mean,
look, from what I'm gathering is there's no
commitment to satisfy the Streets Plan. There's no

2 commitment to an outcome-based solution the previous
3 administration had set. So what are you willing to
4 commit to today?

5 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Well, I want to be
6 very clear that we're very committed to the goals of
7 the Streets Plan and to doing our best to meet the
8 targets of the Streets Plan. We support the goals of
9 the Streets Plan. We think it's been a transformative
10 piece of legislation. It's given us a lot more tools
11 to expand the work we do and to approach it more
12 creatively. And we're fully committed to ramping that
13 up this year and in the coming years.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: In your future Streets
15 Plans updates, can DOT break down the total
16 operational and capital expenses for their Streets
17 Plans projects?

18 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yes, council member,
19 we can commit to that. I don't see a problem.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is the administration
21 ensuring that DOT has the funding needed to reach the
22 requirements of the Streets Plan?

23 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: We're in those
24 discussions right now, working closely with City Hall
25 and OMB.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So is that a yes?

3 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

4 Council Member, it is not a simple yes or no
5 question. It is the mayor in his first few weeks gave
6 us a down payment, which means it's a very strong
7 signal to make sure that we have all the resources we
8 need. A lot of the work that we do, you know, a
9 little bit is going to be in fiscal '26. Most of the
10 work we do is in fiscal '27, and those conversations
11 are ongoing. But I would look at the mayor's down
12 payment as a way— as a strong signal in his interest
13 and the administration's interest to have DOT— to
14 give DOT all the resources we need to deliver as much
15 as we can deliver, including of course the Streets
16 Plan goals.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I mean, by definition,
18 a downpayment means that there should be more funding
19 coming. So I'm going to take it as a no, that there's
20 not enough funding needed because it's a down payment
21 and that more funding is needed to satisfy the
streets plan. So the administration is not giving the
department enough funding in this preliminary plan
for DOT to follow the law, and so the council needs

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2 to fight for more funding for you guys from this
3 administration. Is that correct?

4 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: It is a preliminary
5 budget hearing. It's the first--

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] Do we
7 need to find more funding? Do we-- does the council
8 should help you do-- you know, I understand you guys
9 have limited resources. Do you need our help in
10 pushing the administration to get you the resources
11 you need to satisfy the full streets plan?

12 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I don't think Mayor
13 Mamdani administration will need push to give us the
14 resources. I think we're lockstep.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So if you don't need a
16 push, you expect the money to be in the budget and by
17 exec?

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: We
19 expect those conversations to continue, and I hope
20 that we can have a positive conversation come exec.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, I just-- it-- I
think I understand you can't say certain things is
what it sounds like. But my understanding, it's a
down payment. It's currently not enough in the budget
to satisfy the full Streets Plan. You expect the

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2 administration to fight for this, but you can't
3 quantify how much more resources are going to be
4 added to, to fully satisfy the streets plan.

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

6 That's correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And it sounds like
8 you also need the council to help you in advocating
9 for the mayor to get you what you need. And I
10 understand you can't answer that question.

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: And
12 I think it's— it— the help that we need from the
13 council, it's not just monetary, it's support for the
14 projects that we have in place. I think the mayor was
15 very clear about the political support needed for a
16 lot of these projects, so we would definitely
17 appreciate that, um, from every single council
18 member.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It would be extremely
20 helpful for this committee to have the calculation of
21 what would be needed in order for us to effectively
22 advocate on behalf of New Yorkers who are desperately
23 wanting to see this come to fruition.

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

25 Understood.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, moving to
3 the Open Streets. Last July, Mayor Mamdani told
4 Streets Blog that Open Streets are a critical program
5 that I would also expand. However, in the preliminary
6 plan, there's only \$2 million in city funding per
7 year baseline from fiscal 2027. The funds are
8 fungible between the Summer Streets program and Open
9 Streets. This funding does not deliver on the promise
10 to expand the Open Streets program. It actually
11 provides less funding than the \$2.1 million the Adam
12 administration provided for the program. Is this
13 administration no longer committed to expanding the
14 Open Streets program?

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: No,
16 that's not how I would frame it. First of all, we are
17 very proud of the Open Streets and Summer Streets.
18 They're one of the most popular programs we have out
19 there. We have lots of partners in every corner of
20 the city, so we're very excited. The amount of money
21 that the Adams administration gave us last time was
an adoption at the end of the budget process. This \$2
million is at the beginning of the budget process.
And I would also- it's worth mentioning that the Open
Streets and Summer Streets spending is usually cut

2 between two fiscal years. So we think we are in a
3 great footing for us to do as much as we did last
4 year, if not more, for Open Streets and Summer
Streets.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So is the
6 administration saying— are you saying that you will
7 continue to commit \$2.1 million of funding program
8 from the commissioner's office on top of this
9 baseline funding? So the administration will commit
to a total of \$4.1 million, is that correct?

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: No,
11 that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that the Adams
12 administration gave us a one-shot \$2 million at
13 adoption. This \$2 million, \$2.1 maybe. This \$2
14 million that we were given at prelim is enough to get
15 us going, and if we need more funding, we're going to
16 talk to OMB and City Hall to make sure that they give
17 us the proper amount of funding. I would say though,
18 it is Summer Streets and Open Streets, it's cut
19 through two fiscal years, so it's always hard to say
20 exactly how much money we're going to be spending. A
21 lot depends on the number of partners that we have, a
lot depends on the, like, the programming that the
partners are suggesting we do. So it's not a simple

2 solution. What I can commit to you is that this
3 administration is in fact very supportive of Open
4 Streets and Summer Streets. I would also throw the
5 World Cup in there. So the Summer Streets may look a
6 little different this year than in previous years,
7 but we are very excited and I think New Yorkers are
8 going to be excited about it. So like the Streets
9 Plan, do you expect that by exec there will be more
10 resources allocated to the Open Streets program?

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: I
12 think if we need them, those conversations will be
13 ongoing. I'm not sure that we do at this point, but
14 we do have a strong commitment from City Hall and the
15 mayor to provide the resources we need for a
16 successful Open Streets and Summer Streets program.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The current funding
18 doesn't expand it, so it seems to me that there would
19 be— there would— there would— there would be a need
20 for more resources. Is that correct?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So I think
part of the point here is it's not just about the
money. Like, expanding Open Streets— each individual
open street is typically not very expensive. What we
want to do is work with each partner to make sure

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2 they're getting what they need. And so we're still in
3 the process of getting all the partners in. Different
4 partners have different levels of capacity. And we
5 want to make sure that we're giving the right amount
6 of money, the right amount of logistical support, the
7 right amount of programming to each partner. So it's
8 not just about saying we have this much money and
9 we're going to spread it wherever. We want to make
10 sure we're running a good program. We're recruiting
11 good partners. We're making sure we're getting out
12 into communities all over the city, so it's not just
13 in wealthier parts of the city. And then we're going
14 to deliver the resources, and the administration will
15 deliver the resources needed to make those
16 successful. So, that's where there's the difference
17 in the budgeting comes in. We don't start from a
18 number and do that many Open Streets. We get as many
19 Open Streets as we can, as many partners as we can,
20 and then make sure that they have the resources to be
21 successful.

18 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah, let me give
19 you an example. I have a four-year-old and we love
20 Tricker Streets. Tricker Streets is on- I actually
21 live in Council Member Hanif's district. That's in

2 October of this calendar year. So the amount of
3 requests from Open Streets partners to do Tricker
4 Streets events is actually not going to hit this
5 fiscal year. So this is why Deputy Commissioner
6 Beaton is saying that we are planning for it, and we
7 want people to ask us what they want, but the exact
8 number is to be determined.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So is it fair to say
10 that the admin is committing less money to Open
11 Streets, but doing more with less?

12 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I do not think that
13 is a fair statement. I think we got what we need
14 currently. If we need more, we're going to be asking
15 for more.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, I'm now
17 going to move on to favorite topic, daylighting. In
18 February 2025, at a mayoral forum, Mayor Mamdani said
19 we deserve to have universal daylighting.
20 Furthermore, in December 2023, then Assemblymember
21 Mamdani signed on to a letter from Queens Community
Board One to former Commissioner Rodriguez calling
for universal daylighting across the city. Is
universal daylighting still the viewpoint of the
administration?

2 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah, and I want to
3 be hopefully clearer than I was at the prior hearing,
4 that DOT sees daylighting as a really- important
5 safety tool, and when it's designed right, a very
6 effective one. And that's why we've done- we did over
7 400 locations with it last year, and we're on track
8 to do even more this year and the years ahead. We're
9 eager to, you know, speak with any partners about how
10 we can expand the use of daylighting quickly and
11 effectively.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So is the
13 administration committed to universal daylighting?

14 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: We're- we are working
15 to make- daylighting is already a key part of our
16 toolkit, and we're working to expand its use. And we
17 want to do that in a data-driven way that uses our
18 resources most effectively.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It sounds to me like a
20 no, that the administration is not committed to
21 universal daylighting. And if that's the case, is it
safe to assume the mayor has changed his view since
the campaign about universal daylighting?

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I think we would like
to see daylighting across the city.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Well, what type of-
3 what type of daylighting?

4 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Well, we want to make
5 sure it's done right, and that honestly, it depends
6 on the particulars of every location. We're always
7 using data to try to target our improvements where we
8 can address safety the best. We live in a world of
9 finite resources, but absolutely we're supportive of
10 the concept of daylighting across the city. We just
11 want to make sure that we can design it appropriately
12 in each location so that it has the intended benefit.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Does DOT have any
14 dedicated funding this fiscal year or next fiscal
15 year for any hardened daylighting projects, since I
16 understand that DOT is, is big proponents of hardened
17 daylighting, at least?

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: Yes,
19 Councilmember, we do have dedicated funding for about
20 400 to 500 locations.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Four to 500?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
Four to 500 locations. Each location is a little
different. That was funding that was added during the
last administration, during the- you know, we heard

2 Council loud and clear, we like daylighting, we
3 support daylighting, and we actually have dedicated
4 crews to do this work. I would just, point of- there
5 is sort of two sides to the daylighting operations.
6 There's a planning operation which Commissioner-
7 Deputy Commissioner Beaton oversees, but then there's
8 also a roadway component to hardened daylighting. So
9 we have a dedicated crew in our roadway division that
10 moves the blocks and drops off the blocks as repaving
season starts. So we have both components currently
funded in the budget.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So that appears to be
12 from last administration. Does this current
13 administration have any new commitments for hardened
daylight?

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
15 Well, we did get it last year, but we got it, I
16 believe, towards adoption last year. So as you know-

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] I can't
18 find any, just put that up.

19 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: You
20 can't find-

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] In terms
of for this year's capital project.

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2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: It's
3 not on the capital budget, it's on the expense
4 budget.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sorry, from this
6 administration, haven't found any listings of new
7 cap- of new capital for hardened daylighting.

8 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
9 Right. The actual daylighting blocks are not
10 capitally eligible is my understanding, so we pay
11 with them with the expense budget.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is furniture not
13 capitally eligible?

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: It-
15 How long do you have? The each-

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] I have a
17 lot of time.

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
19 Each- so essentially, each asset needs to be \$50,000
20 or more to be capitally eligible unless there is a
21 corridor or a systems component. So for example, if
we do a single streetlight in a given street, that is
not capital eligible. But if we do multiple
streetlights as a system, they are capital eligible.
So the blocks themselves are not capital eligible.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you ex- do you not
3 expect the furniture at the hardened daylighting to
4 not have a useful life of five years or more?

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: It's
6 not just the useful life, it's the-

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] What
8 else?

9 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: It's
10 the price too. It is- it's PBB rules. I wish it was
11 just useful life. That would be great.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So, what makes- what
13 renders it capitally ineligible? If the useful life
14 is not an issue? I guess-

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
16 [interposing] Cost. Yeah, it's cost and useful
17 life.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: But I thought you just
19 said useful life is not- is- it could last five years
20 or more, so that's not a problem?

21 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: That
side is not a problem. It's the cost that is the
problem.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It's the cost side.

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2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: The
3 city bonds all the capital funds, and it's very
4 difficult— this PPP rules, it's difficult to bond
5 assets that are less than \$50,000.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Finance Chair, Chair
7 Lee has questions.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, sorry not to go
9 against the Chair Abreu over here, but if you guys
10 wanted to slow roll the bike lane expansion, I know
11 my district would be totally fine with that. But
12 obviously, I know you guys have your mandates that
13 you need to meet. But really— some really quick
14 questions on the budget side of things with the
15 vacancies. So I know that the administration has, you
16 know, designated chief savings officers, and so
17 wanted to know if you've identified. However, you
18 know, and if it's at the same levels that most
19 agencies are, which is the 1.5 percent for this year
20 and the 2.5 for next year. And I know that currently
21 you have 704 positions that are vacant. And 11.8
percent— and correct me if I'm wrong— and 11.8
percent vacancy rate. With streetlight repair times
increasing, PMMR shows a decrease in pothole repairs
on local roads and a continuing downward trend in

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2 road resurfacing miles. So just wanted to know, you
3 know, does the department require more staffing
4 actually? And if so, how many positions need to be
5 filled and are additional budgeted positions
6 required, especially to do all the things that you
need to do in your department?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

8 Thank you, Chair. So good to see you. The— we about—
9 we have about 800 vacancies currently.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, okay.

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: The
12 vacancy reduction is— for DOT is 135. The reason it's
13 not 50 percent of 800 is because a lot of our
14 positions are grant-funded, and the grant-funded
positions, meaning they are paid by the federal
government or state government—

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Right.

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: are
17 not included in the mayor's calculations for vacancy
18 reduction. And so our target is 135, and yes, we are
19 expecting to meet it. We do have the same target as
20 every other agency. We are doing our part. We have a
21 1.5 percent target this fiscal year and 2.5 percent
in future fiscal years. We do expect to meet that. We

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2 are looking at all types of sources, either PS
3 savings or grant swaps and revenue savings. So we do
4 expect to meet that. As for the resurfacing
5 questions, I'm going to turn it over to the First
6 Deputy Commissioner, but we are fully staffed in our
7 roadway division, so the vacancy reduction and any
8 cut or potential savings would not be impacting our
9 revenue— our resurfacing.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so the 135,
11 that's grant. The 800 vacancies, the 135, that— so
12 you're saying that all those positions have been
13 filled?

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: No.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: So,
17 the— if you were to just to take our entire vacancy
18 reduction and do a 50 percent vacancy cut—

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] Right.

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: it
21 would be around 400—

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right, because the
two— okay.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: But
given that a bit more than half of our vacancies are

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2 grant-funded, that means that the denominator is half
3 of that. And so our target was 136, if I remember
4 correctly, and the- it was taken from the numbers
5 that we had in the November plan.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: So
8 the numbers fluctuate a little bit is what I'm trying
9 to say.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And it's great
11 to- sorry, yes.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Sure.
13 Just a little bit about the resurfacing target. Our
14 current target is 1,150 lane miles per year. It- that
15 has been the target for a number of years now. We
16 always meet that target. We generally go over that
17 target. And I think you touched on potholes. Potholes
18 are basically an indication of the condition of the
19 streets and reflective of the weather that we've been
20 having. So it was a good thing in previous years-

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: [interposing] We
22 didn't have to use it as much.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
24 Exactly. This year we, of course, will see a lot more
25 potholes. We have freeze-thaw cycles happening as we

2 speak. In the next week, we see temperatures going
3 down into the 20s some nights. So when we have
4 weather like this where we have, you know, rain and
5 then it freezes, then it thaws, and then it rains,
6 that's what we see when we get more potholes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We
9 will be out addressing them.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And I guess
11 especially this season, knowing that there is more of
12 a need with resurfacing miles, streets master plan,
13 and all of the pothole repairs, do you think that
14 you'll be able to fully staff up, and how do you plan
15 to address any needs in the future?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
17 Yeah, well, the roadway division is the one division
18 where we don't have any hiring problems. We in fact
19 have about 36 applicants for every assistant city
20 highway repair, uh, position that we have open. So we
21 have full employment in the roadway division, so we
do not expect any problems.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Are you looking to
use technology training or deployment any differently
to find efficiencies in its operations? I know that

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2 these days it seems like the technology question is
3 coming up a bit, but just wondering.

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yeah,
5 so we are always looking to be on the cutting edge of
6 asphalt work around the country. We are actually at
7 the highest in the nation for using recycled asphalt,
8 meaning we mill up the old street and we put it back
9 into the mix. We're already at 40 percent, which is a
10 great number, and we're looking to increase that in
11 the coming months and years to perhaps as high as 50
12 percent. And we're also in the process of constantly
13 upgrading our asphalt plant equipment in order to be
14 able to be more innovative.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect. And
16 historically savings have been taken out at DOT in
17 contracts, telecommunication maintenance, safety
18 programs like Vision Zero. Is it expected that these
19 areas will be featured in the CSO's proposals? And
20 can you provide any examples of potential savings?

21 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
22 Yeah, we're still looking- our savings are due on
23 Friday. I am the chief savings officer. We're looking
24 at every program, but we're looking at areas where it
25 is not going to be impacting any services delivered

2 to New Yorkers. So you're right, usually we find
3 savings in future contracting, budget codes or
4 efficiencies in PS savings, for example, which means,
5 you know, we're just not hiring those folks. So, rest
6 assured that I— we're going to do everything we can
to make sure that we limit the impact to New Yorkers.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes, definitely don't
8 want to cut services, especially now. And on the
9 revenue side, anticipated revenue from franchises,
10 bus stop, and other is expected to decrease by \$12.3
11 million in fiscal '27, down to \$52 million from \$64.3
12 million in fiscal '26. So could you please briefly
explain the scope of this revenue and why it is
expected to decrease in the out years?

13 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: The
14 targets that we set with OMB are usually pretty
15 conservative targets. If you're talking about the
16 JCDecaux [sic] revenue, that may be due to a deal we
17 made with them where they essentially bring down the
18 revenue but install more bus shelters across the
19 city. That was done last fiscal year. We're in
20 communication with OMB to see if they're going to do
21 it again this fiscal year. But overall, we don't
expect our revenue to significantly decrease on any

2 given program. In fact, most of the revenue is coming
3 in a little higher.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Okay. And
5 parking meter revenue- parking meters are the
6 department's largest revenue source at \$257.7
7 million, and New York City has more than 12,000 miles
8 of curb encompassing over 3 million street parking
9 spaces, but just 80,000 of these are metered, or
10 fewer than 2.5 percent. So increasing metered street
11 parking on commercial corridors- I just want to
12 emphasize commercial corridors- could raise
13 significant additional revenue for the city. The
14 Center for an Urban Future has written that if the
15 city were to meter just a quarter of existing free
16 spaces, it could generate at least \$1.21 billion in
17 additional revenue. So do you support increased
18 metering on commercial corridors, and have you done
19 your own analysis on parking meter revenue?

20 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I'll start by saying
21 that, as I mentioned in my testimony, we are taking a
hard look at our parking policy across the board. We
know curb space is some of the most in-demand real
estate in the city. But that said, pricing is just
one of several tools that we can use. Things like

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2 loading zones for deliveries or pickup and drop-off
3 of passengers, micro distribution hubs for freight-
4 so we're really looking across the board all the
5 time. You know, that said, we know it's really
6 frustrating for folks to have to circle looking for a
7 spot, especially in commercial districts. It's
8 actually not good for business either, right?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

10 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: If customers have a
11 hard time- and in addition, it's not great from a
12 safety and pollution standpoint and all those other
13 things. So, you know, I think we're always assessing
14 our metering and where we have it. And, you know, as
15 land uses change, should our metering change?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And do you see
17 any anticipated issues or potential problems with
18 doing it in, you know, additional commercial
19 corridors? And what would that be? And I can say that
20 for districts like mine, they're pretty much wanting
21 to keep things like the residential parking because
we don't have a lot of transit in the district and
they do rely heavily on cars. It's very residential.
So in terms of the commercial corridors though, if
there's any anticipated issues you foresee?

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2 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Sorry to clarify,
3 issues in terms of just being able to expand it?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah.

5 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: No, I don't think
6 there's issues in those kinds of expansions in
commercial areas. Yeah.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And as always,
8 we'd just like to emphasize that you engage obviously
9 the community boards and the local folks in the area
as well, especially the businesses.

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: I
11 mean, I can just clarify, in the past when we've
12 raised our parking meter rates, we haven't seen a
13 huge pushback or issues, and we do notify the
14 community boards, I believe at least 30 days before
15 we do that. I would also- I think it's also worth
16 mentioning that we have different zones for the city.
17 It is not one size fits all. We charge depending on
the area and the demand. So we don't expect any
issues if we decide to go this route.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And I would
19 emphasize instead of just notifying them 30 days
20 before, if you could include them in the process for
21 the feedback, that'd be great too. Because then I

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2 feel like there's less pushback if you get their
3 buy-in early. So, thank you. That's it, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Going back
5 to questions. The preliminary plan baselines \$5
6 million starting in fiscal 2027 for new bus and bike
7 lanes. What cost will the new \$5 million per year in
8 proposed funding cover?

9 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: I
10 can start it and then Deputy Mayor- Deputy Mayor, I
11 just gave you promotion- Deputy Commissioner Beaton
12 can fill in. But we expect a lot of that to be- so
13 there's about 20 headcount that we're going to be
14 adding. Most of those would be planners and engineers
15 to do a lot of the work behind the scenes. And then
16 there's also TPS for increase in markings. A lot of
17 that work that we do for bus lanes and bike lanes
18 requires markings, and there may be some concrete
19 work as well.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is DOT hiring for
21 this- for these new positions now so that the roles
can be filled early in fiscal '27?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
Yeah, yeah, we actually- we were just discussing
that. Technically, they don't hit until fiscal '27,

2 but it does take a while to bring in folks. So we
3 were- we have those postings opening- open now.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, I'm now going
5 to turn it over to questions on lane miles cost. We
6 have the 12th snowiest winter on record here in New
7 York City, so needless to say, our roads will be in
8 need of a lot of maintenance and resurfacing work.
9 However, according to the PMMR, the average cost to
10 resurface a single lane mile costs DOT \$221,693, a
11 substantial 15 percent increase in just two years. In
12 response to rising costs, DOT has stated that the
13 cost of petroleum and the fluctuating cost of oil
14 play a role in the cost of resurfacing lane miles.
15 With global tensions causing a recent spike in oil,
16 how will this play a role in DOT's resurfacing
17 operations? And does DOT have a plan in place to keep
18 costs down? And what is specifically planned to do?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Thank
20 you, Chair. So the increase in costs that you cite
21 were due to a number of factors. Yes, you mentioned
petroleum prices, which have up to this present time
fluctuated. We also have prevailing wage and salary
increases in the mix, and then overall increase in
some of the inputs that go into asphalt, gravel,

2 stone, and things of that nature. We are committed to
3 doing 1,150 lane miles, and we do expect the price of
4 petroleum, therefore, affecting our costs to
5 fluctuate, probably increase, for reasons that we're
6 all aware of in the coming months, but we are
7 committed to figuring out those costs and committing
8 to our lane mile target.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is there a plan in
10 place to keep costs down?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: There
12 are certain things beyond our control. We're
13 constantly evaluating what's happening and we're
14 watching it very carefully. Anything that we can
15 possibly do, we would do.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: On the topic of lane
17 miles, DOT has continued to resurface less and less
18 roads every single year— 1,200 in fiscal 2023, 1,176
19 in fiscal 2024 and only 1,167 in fiscal 2025. In the
20 first four months of this fiscal year, DOT is already
21 a few miles behind what was done last year. This is
an essential service and function that DOT is
supposed to be doing. What is causing the negative
trend on lane surface— lane resurfacing?

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2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay,
3 I wouldn't call it a negative trend. As I mentioned,
4 our lane mile target is 1,150, we will always meet
5 our lane-mile target. It's not a perfectly precise
6 science as to which streets are closed up or
7 completed exactly at the end of the fiscal year. So
8 sometimes we're over— we always try to be over— and
9 sometimes it's by 20 miles, sometimes it's by 40
10 miles. Sometimes we also use that time to catch up on
11 other jobs. We'll do large, like, wear and tear jobs.
12 We'll catch up on speed humps, and we'll do other
13 work that the agency needs to do once that we have
14 met our lane-mile target.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: In 2015, Mayor de
16 Blasio announced an increase, \$242 million, to repave
17 1,200 lane miles across the five boroughs through
18 2016, and 1,300 lane miles to be repaved by June
19 2017. Wouldn't you consider this a negative trend?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: You
21 know, we talk a lot about that. We actually think
22 1,150 is the right amount to balance and keeping our
23 roads in a state of good repair.

24 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It is a— I would
25 consider that to be a negative number compared to the

2 2017 numbers, personally. Will this administration be
3 less ambitious than the previous administration in
4 completing lane miles?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I
6 wouldn't- no, it would not. It won't.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So would that mean
8 that you're committing to the 1,300 lane miles?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: No,
10 we're not committing to 1,300 lane miles, but we
11 intend to keep our streets in a state of good repair.

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: And,
13 Chair, there was- that, that was in the, the Blasio
14 administration when those baseline funding were
15 there. A lot of that were to catch up to the
16 Bloomberg years where the agency was not getting the
17 proper amount of funding. It's since leveled, and so
18 the target of 1,150 miles is where we need to be. We
19 essentially caught up where we needed to catch up.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So is the goal 1,150
21 moving forward?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Which is a negative
trend compared to 2017 numbers.

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2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

3 Because we caught up, correct.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And with the
5 increasing need of, like, you know, the-- with the
6 weather conditions and on everything that's coming
7 our way, I think we ought to be increasing those
8 goals. I'm just curious, I know that the
9 administration does not want to get to 1,300. I do.
10 If we could get to 1,300, what would the cost look
11 like for that?

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

13 Yeah, yeah, we can check and get back to you.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Does DOT
15 have sufficient funding to ensure that it is
16 operating at full capacity? And how many staff work
17 on resurfacing, and are more personnel needed?

18 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Chair, you're asking
19 about resurfacing specifically?

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay,
we have over 1,000 people working on resurfacing. The
division has something like 1,300 and about 1,100 are
involved in resurfacing.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are more personnel
3 needed?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: No.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How does DOT measure
6 the condition of a road, and what factors are
7 considered when determining whether corrective action
8 needs to be taken? And how often do these assessments
9 happen?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes,
11 so we have a very robust street assessment unit which
12 looks at every roadway in the City of New York about
13 at once a year, a little bit- takes a little bit
14 longer than a year to get through each roadway. We
15 have a system where we look at cracking, potholes,
16 push-ups, humps, every sort of asphalt condition that
17 you can think of and a lot that you probably have
18 never even thought of. And we evaluate the condition
19 of that road. We have categories we put the roads
20 into: good, fair, poor, and that informs which
21 roadways we'll schedule for resurfacing that year
within each community board.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Would more personnel
be needed to achieve 1,300 miles?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, I'm going to
3 turn over my colleagues for questions. Council Member
4 Schulman?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you very
6 much, and thank you, Commissioner. And I just want to
7 give a shout out to Margaret Forgione, who I knew
8 when she was a Manhattan rep for DOT. So, a couple of
9 questions. One is, I know you've probably answered
10 this. The \$271 million you have for roadway
11 maintenance, that's enough considering all the
12 potholes that we have and everything else, and that
13 will probably get more?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
15 That's correct.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay. I also
17 want to ask you, my understanding, just talking about
18 universal daylighting, that DOT did a study in the
19 previous administration on daylighting that showed
20 that some intersections would not necessarily benefit
21 from daylighting? That's what we were told.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: At this point, we're
focused on looking forward and really—

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]
Okay.

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2 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: We want to work-

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]

4 So is it- so is it the case that some intersections
might not be conducive to daylighting?

5 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: We think daylighting
6 can take different forms in situations.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: And we try to
incorporate it into all-

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing] I
10 appreciate that. So let me talk about the school, the
11 15 miles per hour. Do we know sort of what the
parameters are around each of the schools? Like, is
12 it a couple of blocks? Is it like- how does that- how
13 is that going to work?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. So we
15 start by focusing on the block that's immediately in
16 front of the school, you know, the place where the
most activity is happening with children. And then as
17 we look at each school, we look to see if it makes
18 sense to continue farther down the street, or whether
19 there's any other treatments, which- like
20 daylighting- that could be appropriate to do at the
21 same time.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, because
3 offline there's a couple of schools in my district
4 that— where there have been accidents, and the
5 people— there's a lot of complaints about people
6 speeding through around where the schools are. So
7 offline, I'll talk to you, and I know I'm having a
8 meeting with you guys soon anyways.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Absolutely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, and then
11 enforcement. So let me talk about that because there
12 are— you know, I think it's a good idea, number one.
13 But the other is that there are people who speed who
14 get tons of tickets and they feel it's the cost of
15 doing business. So how do we deal with those
16 individuals?

17 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
18 That's right. We— what we've seen is that there's a
19 kind of troubling trend of folks who, you know, we
20 found our automated enforcement programs are very,
21 very effective. But there is that segment, right,
that—

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Right.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: No
matter how many violations they get, or maybe they

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2 have a defaced plate, license plate, or things like
3 that, you know, that challenges the program, right-
4 challenges the goals of the program. So it's
5 definitely something that's on our radar.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And
7 Councilmember, one of the things that was in the
8 governor's budget, it was a proposal for a city-led
9 ISA program or Super Speeders program. We've been in
10 conversations with both houses as well as the
11 governor's office. We're in support of that
12 legislation. So-

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: [interposing]
14 Yeah, we've had- we've done a resolution, I believe,
15 on that. So-

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Again,
17 and we'll definitely be looking to your support as
18 we're hitting the stretch towards the finalization of
19 the budget.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And if you can
21 also let us know if there's legislation that would
help in that regard from our end, please let us know.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ:
Absolutely.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, that's all
3 the questions that I have for you. That was easy,
4 right? So thank you. Thank you, Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Louis?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair. I
7 have a couple of questions, so if I could be added
8 for the second round, but my first one is on outdoor
9 dining. Now that outdoor dining is moving toward a
10 year-round program, there are many concerns with
11 DOT's ability to successfully execute this program.
12 So I wanted to know, does the Preliminary Plan
13 address the needs and concerns for our businesses—
14 our business community regarding backlog and
15 complicated application process? And does DOT require
16 additional funds to hire more staff to process
17 applications?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Thank
19 you, Council Member. So DOT is very committed to the
20 success of outdoor dining. This has become a beloved
21 program within the city, and we're looking forward
to— should it become year-round— making sure that is
successful. Right now we have over 3,000 applications
and restaurants in the program. We do have enough
staff to continue should we get an influx of further

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2 applications, to process everybody that's already
3 working with us as well as any increased applicants.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay. And how much
5 PS funding is currently budgeted in fiscals 2026 and
6 2027 and beyond for inspection and enforcement for
staffing costs?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: It's
8 about \$1.3 million. I think, if I remember correctly.
9 We have about 10 plan reviewers and-

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: [interposing]
11 That's for '26 and '27.

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: We
13 have for '26. We're in conversations to make sure
14 that we have the proper funding in '27 and beyond.

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: And I
16 can talk a little bit about the enforcement. We have
17 10 people dedicated to enforcement of dining out. In
18 fiscal '25, there were about 3,400 violations issued
19 for this program.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay, and I think I
21 have one more question I could quickly ask. DOT's
capital commitment plan totals \$14.3 billion across
FYs '26 to FY '30. Is any portion of this funding
allocated towards structural analysis, plaza

2 reconstruction, or pedestrian improvements,
3 particularly at Newkirk Plaza? And if not, what is
4 preventing the project from being included?

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

6 Council Member, let me check on Newkirk to see if
7 it's in the five-year window, but a lot of that
8 funding is in fact street reconstruction, so it
9 usually has ped expansions, plaza- the plaza actually
10 has a lump sum that we use for capital funding. Let
11 me just check back on Newkirk. I just don't know if
12 it's in the pipeline or not, but I can give you a
13 timeline if it is.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And one more quick
15 question on Newkirk. Given that Newkirk Plaza
16 involves overlapping jurisdiction between DOT and the
17 MTA, does DOT have any dedicated budget or capital
18 coordination mechanism to advance projects that are
19 stalled due to interagency responsibility disputes?

20 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah, so it's
21 obviously a very complicated location with the MTA
structure.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I'm aware.

COMMISSIONER FLYNN: But what we are
committed to maintaining it and making sure that's

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2 taken care of. We do that through our maintenance
3 contract that takes care of plazas all over the city.
4 So we have been incorporating that into it, which is
5 separate from the capital question that we'll get
6 back to you on. But we are committed to taking care
of the space and making sure it stays clean.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I look forward for
8 feedback because they've been waiting for years for
9 this support and haven't received it. So I hope we
could get it done this year.

10 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I understand.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You don't have any
other questions? You have more time.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Not right now,
14 thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. Council Member
16 Wong?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair. I
18 have a picture here, if you can see it, but this is
19 not- this is not a crater on Mars or on the moon.
20 This is a crater in my district, Queens Boulevard and
21 Grand Avenue. It's been there since the last ice
storm. And I lost track of the 311 calls because I

2 made at least two myself. It's still not fixed.

3 Here's my question- potholes are one of the most

4 common complaints my office receives. Some

5 neighborhoods see quick responses while others deal

6 with the same roadway hazards for months. The crater

7 I show you, about 100 feet away, all- everything else

8 was fixed except this one. So here's my question: why

9 does it take so long for certain potholes to be

10 repaired in some parts of the city? And what is DOT

11 doing to improve repair times? Please talk.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Thank

13 you. Very important question. We do need to make

14 sure our roads are in safe and smooth condition.

15 Typically it takes us about two days to repair a

16 pothole. Obviously, now in a time like this, it might

17 take a little bit longer. It sounds to me- and I'd

18 like to connect with you on your condition- sounds to

19 me like that condition could be something larger, a

20 sinkhole or something of that nature. So sometimes we

21 find that underground there's something washing away

the roadway. And that sort of issue takes longer to

address because we can't just throw asphalt on top of

that condition, it will continue to sink. So instead,

we work with maybe utilities, maybe with DEP, in

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2 order to assess exactly what's happening there to get
3 a proper fix. So if you get me that location, I will
4 be sure to get back to you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, it's— again,
6 it's been there since the last ice storm, Grand
7 Avenue and Queens Boulevard, my district.

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: My second question
10 is about milling and paving, repaving. My
11 constituents frequently report roads being milled But
12 then it takes two months for the repaving to happen,
13 or some other extended periods of time, leaving rough
14 and dangerous driving conditions. What— why is the
15 lag time between milling and final repaving increased
16 in recent years? It wasn't like this 10 years ago,
17 five, 10 years ago. And do you have the average time
18 between milling and paving? Thank you.

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay,
20 thank you. So there's a very important reason why we
21 have a lag between milling and paving. That's an
22 opportunity for all of the utilities, other city
23 agencies, even homeowners with any kind of plumbing
24 issues to come out. And while the street is what we
25 call open, make those repairs, get in subsurface in

2 order to fix any issues, and then we can come back
3 and have a perfect street and we can pave it all at
4 one time. The alternative is having people make cuts
5 at different times and cut into a freshly paved
6 street, which is not something that we want. The vast
7 majority of our roadways are paved two weeks after
8 being milled. Sometimes you'll find a longer time
9 period if those repairs do need to take longer, or
10 sometimes we have more streets that we're attending
to and we have weather, and we don't get back as
quickly as we would like to.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, thank you.

12 And I have some more time. Last question-
13 streetlights. Many blocks in my district have only
14 one or two streetlights, so when one goes out, the
15 entire block can become dangerously dark. I have
16 cases where DOT looked at it and said, oh, it's a Con
17 Edison problem. Con Edison comes, look at it, oh,
18 it's a DOT problem. I get the runaround. My office
19 gets the runaround. That was before I got elected.
Alright? So, what is your solution to that? Because,
we have several of these in my district.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Okay,
21 so when it's a pretty simple matter of changing the

2 bulb in a streetlight, that gets done pretty quickly.

3 The more tricky situation is when we have a problem.

4 Sometimes we have no current, meaning there is no

5 electricity coming to that light, or there could be

6 something more problematic at the base of the

7 streetlight, which might mean we need to swap out the

8 streetlight and bring in a new one. We do not want

9 you to ever be getting the runaround, you or any

10 member of the public or anybody. So if you do see

11 that condition, what we do is we will call Con Ed. We

12 will stay on top of those discussions with them and

13 make sure if it is a problem with the current, with

14 the electrical current coming in, that we do have it

15 done in a timely fashion, and then we can get it back

16 on for you. Commissioner?

17 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah, I just want to

18 add kind of bigger picture. I definitely- I'll say in

19 almost every meeting I think I've had since being

20 appointed, I've heard about frustrations with street

21 lighting. So, I definitely hear that and I hear that

frustration. We know that it's really such a bread

and butter issue for a lot of communities, and it's

something that I'll be personally taking a close look

at.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, I'll kind-
3 I'll reach out for these runarounds that I've been
4 dealing with six, seven months.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Councilman-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: [interposing] Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You're wrapped up?
9 Council Member Hanif?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Hi, everyone. So
11 I'd like to first start by thanking you for finally
12 closing the concrete recycling facility in the
13 Columbia Waterfront District in my neighborhood. And
14 of course, going back to what you shared about paving
15 and milling and using our city's concrete and putting
16 it back into our streets and wherever else is a
17 valid- and like, that's what we should be doing. It's
18 an environmental justice issue. However, at the same
19 time, I know that the space to do that work is
20 limited for DOT. Now with concrete recycling facility
21 shut down for that specific work, what are you all
thinking in terms of the future of ensuring that this
really dusty and health risk project- projects are
not happening in residential communities?

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2 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah, thanks, Council
3 Member. We always want to be good neighbors. We do
4 have a lot facilities across the city. You're talking
5 about the concrete recycling operation. We were— I'll
6 just give a little history. We moved there on a
7 temporary basis due to the South Brooklyn Marine
8 Terminal wind turbine project. We did find a
9 permanent home in an industrial area. So we expect to
10 resume recycling— the concrete recycling operation
11 very soon. And just to clarify, the concrete
12 recycling is all of the work that we do in our
13 sidewalk work. The recycling of the asphalt is
14 something a little different.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it.

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: We
17 also recycle that, but the facility you were
18 referring to is the concrete recycling, and we're
19 very excited to be able to turn on that machine.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And so for the
21 future of this work, where— is there a dedicated site
that DOT has, or is—

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: Yes,
it's in Metropolitan Avenue in a pretty industrial
area in between Queens and Brooklyn.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, great, great
3 to hear that. I want to talk about delivery workers
4 and the- specifically the e-bike trade-in program.
5 How many delivery workers does DOT expect the \$1.4
6 million e-bike trade-in allocation to serve, and what
is the estimated cost per participant?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: I'll
8 talk about the cost, and then I can turn it over to
9 the Commissioner about the policy. The cost that you
10 see in the Preliminary Budget was something that we
were- that we already spent last fiscal year.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay.

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: And
13 so this is just a repayment from that amount. But we
14 were very excited about the program. I think it
15 helped over 400 delivery workers to provide- to get
16 brand new e-bikes. But it also provided a lot of
17 training for delivery workers, not just the ones that
18 got the e-bikes but more delivery workers. So I can
turn it over to the Commissioner if he wants to add
anything else.

19 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Sure. I'll just say,
20 you know, on the general topic of e-bikes safety and
21 delivery worker safety, I think as the mayor said,

2 we're taking kind of a worker-forward approach. It's
3 a tough job. We're working closely with our sister
4 agencies like DCWP to promote safe operation. We had
5 created our Sustainable Delivery Unit last year, and
6 they've really been deeply engaged in this issue.
7 We're looking at potential legislation. But I think
8 we're- you know, we're- and we're doing quite a bit
9 of education as well to the workers and to-

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing]

11 Absolutely, which is greatly appreciated. And I've
12 been able to partner with the DOT to do some work in
13 my district, and really grateful. Now, Coming to bike
14 storage and parking- in my district, the Kensington
15 community is where large swaths of delivery workers
16 live, and they serve the Fifth Avenue and Seventh
17 Avenue corridors, restaurant corridors, local
18 commercial corridor, and in all of those areas there
19 is insufficient placement for their bikes. Now, that
20 creates a risk for these workers to get fines, or to
21 just be situated in an unsafe space. So, I'd like to
know what the plan is to address- to make sure that
they have safe parking space, and that even if they-
I mean, I don't think anyone should be putting their
e-bikes in their homes. The city must have a plan for

2 this. I'd like to know what is the cost or what
3 funding are you all allocating towards this specific
4 important urgent need?

5 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank you, Council
6 Member. Yeah, we completely agree. You know, when you
7 hear about the challenges that cyclists face, having
8 a secure safe place to park is that towards the top
9 of the list, right? And that's why we're really
10 excited we finally got the funding in the January
11 budget to launch a secure bike parking program.
12 That's going to allow us to install and maintain 500
13 locations over the next five years. And that's
14 actually on top of the over 2,000 standard bike racks
15 we do every year. So I think you're going to see a
16 real c-change in how we're providing safe bike
17 parking. But, you know, we're- we'd love to work with
18 the council to identify other ways that we can
19 increase bike parking.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, council
21 member. Want to now turn over the topic of potholes.
Maintaining the quality of the city's roads,
thoroughfares, and highways during the winter season
are integral to motorists, cyclists, and public
transportation riders. Despite this, in the first

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2 four months of fiscal— of this fiscal year, DOT crews
3 repaired 5.1 percent fewer potholes on local streets,
4 and the arterial highway system when compared to the
5 same period in fiscal 2025. Additionally, the PMMR
6 also shows in fiscal 2024 DOT repaired a total of
7 154,898 potholes on local streets and arterials,
8 which reflected a 12.4 percent decrease from fiscal
9 '23. This reflects another downward trend that DOT is
10 falling behind on. More recently, this failure has
11 turned deadly. A 46-year-old man was thrown to his
12 death after hitting a pothole while riding— while
13 riding a motorized scooter in Ozone Park, Queens last
14 week. It was only after he was pronounced dead at
15 Jamaica Hospital DOT crews came by and filled the
16 pothole. I assume after the winter we had— I assume
17 after the winter we had the roads are in desperate
18 needs of maintenance. What is the reason for the
19 decline in repairing potholes?

20 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I'll start and feel
21 free First Deputy Commissioner. So I think as First
22 Deputy Commissioner Forgione said, filling potholes
23 is— there's a lot of— it's dynamic, right? It depends
24 on the specific weather conditions of that winter. We
25 can't fill potholes when there's snow on the ground

2 or the ground is frozen. But even bigger picture,
3 potholes are kind of a symptom, and what we really
4 wanna do is try to address the underlying problem.
5 But when there are potholes, we respond to them very
6 quickly, typically under two days. And you know, when
7 we see kind of a proliferation of potholes after a
8 winter weather, then we do a blitz like we did on
9 Saturday.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We'll get into the
11 blitz shortly. I have a set of questions on that. Is
12 your staffing equal to-- with-- within the pothole, the
13 division, is your staff equal to your ratio of work?
14 Joe Puglio, President of Local 983 of District
15 Council 37, recently said in regards to fixing
16 potholes, "We just don't have the manpower to do the
17 job in a timely manner." Do you agree with Mr.
18 Puglio? If not, why not?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: No,
20 we do not agree. We have not reduced any staffing
21 within this Division for many years. We have adequate
22 staffing to address these conditions. We have both
23 dedicated crews, and then I know we'll talk about it
24 in a moment. We also have crews that will take off

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2 resurfacing and do things on the weekends for a
3 pothole blitz when necessary.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So it seems that the
5 administration disagrees with DC 37 then on this, is
6 that correct?

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We do
8 not have a lack of staff in this area.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So there's a
10 disagreement with DC 37. Okay. DOT has enough— so is
11 it fair to say that DOT has enough manpower to finish
12 the job efficiently and in a timely manner? So why
13 isn't the department doing that?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I
15 disagree with you, Chair, with all respect. We are
16 doing that. Last weekend we had almost 90 crews out.
17 We had all of our equipment that we have in order to
18 perform pothole repair. We took out about 7,000
19 potholes. We dramatically reduced the number that are
20 out there. As I mentioned earlier, potholes are going
21 to continue to form in the coming weeks. It's just
the nature of the weather and that time of year, and
we're well poised to take care of those as well.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You may disagree with
me, but the PMMR shows that in fiscal 2024, DOT

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2 repaired a total of 154,898 potholes on local streets
3 and arterials, which reflected a 12.4 percent
4 decrease from fiscal 2023. Who prepares the PMMR?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
6 Chair, at times when there are fewer potholes, we do
7 fix fewer potholes. So those numbers are more
8 reflective of what's happening in the street. It's
9 not reflective of the work assignments.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Again, you may
11 disagree with me, but also there's a 5.1 percent
12 fewer potholes on local streets.

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
14 That's correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Compared to the same
16 period in fiscal '25.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
18 That— because there were fewer potholes out there.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, it's not what
20 people are saying. The city can— cannot afford to
21 wait until warmer weather in April or May to
routinely fill potholes. What can DOT do in the
future to make sure that they are filling potholes in
a timely manner during snowy winters? And are you

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2 considering any solutions to this? What solutions
3 have you been considering to fix this?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yeah,
5 just as a reminder, we had an unusually bad winter.
6 What we are now seeing out there is not indicative of
7 many winters that we've had to date. So yes, it is a
8 very difficult pothole season. We are out there and
9 we will continue to be out there. We will be
10 addressing all of these conditions in a timely
11 manner.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It's— I think— I mean,
13 from what I'm— what I'm hearing on the ground, a lot
14 of folks feel that there's a lot of potholes, and a
15 lot of it is, yes, attributed to weather conditions,
16 which we should be expecting to happen— to happen on
17 a more recurring basis. So I think our budget needs
18 to reflect also climate change. On Friday, March
19 13th, the Mayor announced that the city would be
20 launching a pothole repair blitz that would send out
21 more than 80 DOT teams that would be spread across
the five boroughs to fill thousands of potholes in
one single day. More than 11,300 pothole reports have
been made by New Yorkers this year to date, which
make a 33 percent jump in reports from the same time

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2 in 2025, according to 311 data. Does DOT require
3 additional funding to perform this basic function of
4 the agency?

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: No,
6 Councilmember, we have— we use the same staff. If we
7 do require overtime, that is something that we spend
8 and we make sure that OMB knows about it, but we do
9 not require more funding. And I would just like to
10 state for the record that of all the divisions in the
11 agency, RRM has a negative vacancy rate, which just
12 means that they have— they're actually borrowing
13 headcount from other divisions. That's how fully
14 staffed they are.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How many crews were
16 assigned to each borough for pothole repair? Please
17 provide a breakdown.

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I
19 don't know if I have that with me. We can see if we
20 can get it while we're sitting here.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you believe that
you have the manpower necessary to fill the number of
potholes in our city at the moment?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We
3 do, yes. By when should we expect the vast majority
4 of the potholes to be completed?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
6 Okay, what I can tell you is that we are in the
7 middle of pothole season. It's actually April. We
8 expect to see a bit of a resurgence as the freeze and
9 thaw cycles have completed. We will stay on these
10 potholes until they're all taken care of.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How did DOT determine
12 which potholes to repair? Were 311 complaints used as
13 a means of identifying them?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes,
15 that's a great question. So yes, 311 was used as a
16 means, but for obvious reasons, our policy is that as
17 a crew is heading out to address pothole conditions,
18 any other potholes they see on the way to that
19 complaint and leaving that complaint, going to the
20 next site, they also repair on their way for- to be
21 most efficient. So we catch a lot of potholes besides
the 311s, as well.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for that,
Commissioner. The PMMR data shows that DOT is fixing

2 less and less and that 311 shows more potholes than
3 ever. How do you reconcile that?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I'd
5 have to look at that data, but if we're seeing more
6 311s right now, that is understandable.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm not going to turn
8 over to Sammy's law. I'd have to say I'm very
9 delighted to hear yesterday's announcement by the
10 administration on Sammy's Law. Mayor Mamdani will
11 reduce bus speeds— speed limits on streets in front
12 of 800 public school buildings by the end of the
13 year, bringing the citywide total to 1,300 15 mph
14 school streets. How did DOT choose these 800
15 locations for the initial round of reduced speed
16 limits, and what was the selection criteria?

17 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank you for the
18 question, Chair. So just to break it down, there's
19 500— around 500 existing school slow zones that
20 already have a 15-mile-per-hour speed limit. Then on
21 top of that— so those are— those are already taken
care of, right? Then there's 700 that have a
20-mile-per-hour speed limit. And it's, you know,
it's— we can rapidly update those since the signage
is already out there. And then this year, we're going

2 to do 100 new ones, basically, in addition to that,
3 which we're currently planning out.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Can you speak to the
5 rationale on why the administration decided to roll
6 out these speed limit reductions over the course of
three years and not sooner?

7 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Sure. And you
8 obviously- we take safety for children, safety in
9 front of schools very seriously. So it's not an
10 indication of being uninterested in it. We fit into
11 our program with making sure we're doing the right
12 treatment in the right places. If there's a more
13 dangerous location, we want to make sure that we're
14 building a more robust solution for them and not just
15 putting up a speed limit sign as quickly as we can
16 and moving on. So it really follows from being-
17 taking a hard look at the data and then making sure
18 that the Sammy's Law, the school speed limit, is not
the only thing we're doing, but that we're taking
more dangerous locations and implementing more robust
treatments.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for that.
20 And I recognize that yesterday's announcement was
21 very, very meaningful. I do have questions though.

2 Theoretically, why couldn't you do it sooner? Is it
3 because of— is it a resource question?

4 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I think as Deputy
5 Commissioner Beaton said, you know, we have a large
6 work program going on every year, and so it's
7 basically about how we can most effectively roll
8 these kinds of things out along with all of the other
9 things that we're doing every year.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: As I ask you these
11 questions, my mind turns to keeping all community
12 members safe as they go to gathering locations in my
13 own district, like Manhattanville Community Center,
14 Hamilton Grange Library, City College, and Riverside
15 Park. At the last hearing, there was a gentleman who
16 testified that, you know, we— he lost his daughter to
17 traffic violence on 110th and Manhattan Avenue. You
18 know, we've sent in requests, for instance, on
19 Manhattan Avenue to be included as part of Sammy's
20 Law a few years ago. So outside of the school zones,
21 which obviously our school zones are a priority and
they should be, how do— how is the administration
taking into account these requests that come in from
community boards or council member offices and just,
you know, regular members of the public?

2 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah, I appreciate
3 that question, Chair. So yesterday's announcement is
4 a big step towards dramatically expanding the rollout
5 of Sammy's Law, but it's by no means the end of the
6 story. Uh, we're keenly interested— I'm personally
7 very interested in other data-driven and
8 community-driven strategies to expand lower speed
9 limits across the city, and that's something that
10 we're currently looking at.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. I'm now
12 going to turn over to streetlight repairs, and then
13 I'm going to ask my colleagues for a second round of
14 questions. In fiscal 2025, it took DOT an average of
15 5.3 calendar days to repair streetlights, which is a
16 20.5 percent increase from 4.4 days in fiscal 2024
17 and 76.7 percent slower than the three days in fiscal
18 2021. It took Con Ed 22 calendar days on average to
19 repair streetlights, which is 17.6 percent slower
20 than the 18.7 days in fiscal 2024 and 45.7 percent
21 slower than the 15.1 days in fiscal 2021. The MMR
indicates that the DOT delays were due to
weather-related outages and coordination issues with
utilities during underground infrastructure work. No
explanation of the Con Ed performance decline was

2 included. Given the vital role that illumination from
3 streetlight plays in the safety of both drivers and
4 pedestrians, the extended time it took for repairs in
5 fiscal '25 is, is concerning. We see this obviously
6 as a basic and essential function of the department.
What is DOT doing to address this concerning trend?

7 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: And I'll just start,
8 you know, by saying, I think, like I mentioned
9 earlier, that this is definitely something on my
10 radar and we know how important it is for
11 communities. I don't know, First Deputy Commissioner,
if you'd like to add something.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
13 Right. So, I'm glad you raised it. It is something
14 that we want to improve upon and something that we're
15 digging into much more carefully. If we are seeing an
16 increase, which we have— we've seen an increase in
17 outages in recent months and the last few years— we
18 need to make sure that we're well-poised to address
19 those outages. So we will be working on this further.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is it— would you say
21 it's like contractual issues? Can you, can you
expound more about what's contributing to the delay?
Just the general— speak to the general factors.

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:

3 Right. So we have a number of contractors that work
4 on streetlight repairs. They have a certain
5 requirement of number of days to respond to these
6 repairs. By and large, we do get any bulb that's
7 burned back out, you know,, within 10 days. We have a
8 good rate on that. As we discussed a moment ago, when
9 we do have a deeper problem where we have electrical
10 connection issue, a problem in the panel of the
11 streetlight base, those things are taking longer.
12 They always would take longer, and there is a certain
13 amount of coordination required back and forth. So
14 those are all areas we're going to be looking into a
15 little further. Do we need more resources on it? Do
16 we need a tighter system with contractors.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I would like to say--
18 acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member
19 Justin Sanchez. What is DOT doing to coordinate with
20 Con Ed on street light repair?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes,
we have monthly meetings with Con Ed, and we have a
very close working relationship with them. We share
issues as we see them, and we have found them to be
very responsive.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Does DOT have enough
3 funding to adequately address streetlight repair?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We
5 do.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So then the issue of
7 why it's— why the timing is increasing for
8 streetlight repair is not attributed to financial
9 resources? Is that what you're saying.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: So
11 as I mentioned, we're going to be digging into every
12 aspect of, of where we can do better and where we can
13 be more responsive for New Yorkers. And if there is
14 something that we need more funding for, we will ask
15 for that additional funding.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So it's fair to say
17 that it's unclear whether or not resources— or the
18 lack thereof, rather— is contributing to the
19 increased time on streetlight repairs

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:?
21 Yeah, Chair, we're also looking at the streetlights
themselves, the date that some new bulbs, the new LED
bulbs, were put in and what the life cycle is of
those bulbs. We're looking at whether or not there's
some more system-wide issues that we have to address,

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2 and we'll be making sure that if we need resources
3 for that, we're going to be asking for that.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We would like to get
5 answers on the funding questions. Obviously, this is,
6 you know, a budget hearing, so having the breakdown
7 on what is necessary, you know, and to the extent
8 that resources is not an issue, I mean, and we can
9 find savings there, that's great. But if resources
10 are an issue and is contributing to the decline in
11 repair time speeds, we ought to know that as soon as
12 possible. I'll turn it over to Council Member Farrah
13 Louis for questions.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair.
15 Earlier in your testimony, you mentioned there was 36
16 positions available for roadway repair. So just have
17 a couple of questions around that. DOT's roadway
18 repair maintenance and inspection program shows over
19 \$151 million in OTPS spending in FY27. How much of
20 this funding is used to remediate failed street
21 restorations performed by contractors, and does the
agency track those costs separately?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
council member, let me just clarify the 36 number. I

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 211

2 just said that Chair Lee was asking about the
3 vacancies, and-

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: [interposing] Oh,
5 okay-

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: And
7 for every vacant posting, we have about 36
8 applicants, so we do not have a vacancy rate. So just
9 wanted to clarify that we do not have any vacancies.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay.

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
12 Yeah, and I can turn it over to First Deputy
13 Commissioner to answer the other question.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay.

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes,
16 we don't allocate any resources to repairing failed
17 street cuts by contractors or utilities. Instead, we
18 have a unit called Highway Inspection Quality
19 Assurance and they inspect and issue violations to
20 any of those entities who have not correctly
21 backfilled and topped off and repaired a street, and
22 then they need to come back and do it themselves.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Got it.

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: And
25 Council Member, this goes to Council Member Wong's

2 question. This is precisely why we leave the streets
3 open for as long as we can, because we want that work
4 to be done while the street is milled and not
5 afterwards. So it's really— that is the reason why we
6 want utilities to come in after milling and not after
paving, because we hate those curb cuts.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: What budgetary
8 mechanisms does DOT use to enforce compliance and
9 recover costs from contractors responsible for
10 defective road work? Is that back to the response you
gave me on issuing violations?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes,
12 that's right.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay. Alright. So
14 during the recent winter weather we have seen an
15 extreme uptick in traffic and street lighting
16 outages. Does DOT have its own budget and manpower to
address these outages on a more timely manner than
simply waiting for Con Ed?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
18 Okay, we have. During the recent weather when we had
19 a lot of water sitting for long periods of time, we
20 had salt as well seeping into the roadway. We did see
21 a few more traffic signal outages. We have

2 contractors who have a time requirement, a very
3 strict time requirement to get out and repair any
4 signal issues, which they generally comply with very
5 well. All of those were addressed, and we do have
6 funding for those contracts.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay, they were
8 severely delayed, but we could talk about that
9 another time. In corridors experiencing heavy
10 development activities such as Farragut Road, New
11 York Avenue, Brooklyn Avenue, and Foster Avenue, how
12 is DOT prioritizing inspection resources and funding
13 to prevent repeated patch failures? And is there a
14 dedicated allocation to increase enforcement in
15 high-impact areas?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:

17 Okay, if you have areas that are hot spots and
18 everybody's working there, everyone's ones digging
19 them up, we're happy to work through our Borough
20 Commissioner's Office to have a periodic meeting with
21 you, and to make sure we have consistent inspection
on those corridors. There's no reason we can't focus
on them. I just want to make sure we're clear on
exactly which corridors you're concerned about.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And just so you
3 know, we have sent that, but there's been a delay.
4 And just- I think I have a couple of seconds left.
5 You stated earlier that you have sufficient funds for
6 streetlight repairs. Is that only for FY26 or is that
including FY27?

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
8 Yeah, that funding continues.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay, thank you,
Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Nurse?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair.
12 I just have a few questions. One is a status update
13 on the Cool Pavement pilot that we passed last year.

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: Yes,
15 we have been taking preparations for the Local Law
16 that you passed. As you know better than I know, in
17 September we need to start that work. We've been
18 working with City College and with DEP to put
19 everything in place in order to select locations in
20 every borough and then have a method to measure the
21 temperatures both before implementation and then
after implementation. So we're on target to do that
in September.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: That's awesome.

3 Thank you for that update. And then I couldn't not
4 come and advocate for the Broadway corridor in my
5 district. It overlaps my district. Council Member
6 Gutierrez, Osse and Mealy, it is, I guess, concrete
7 and it needs to be pulled up and resurfaced. It is-
8 you all try to fill weird holes with blacktop and it
9 looks crazy. And we- I mean, it is- it's killing
10 everybody's shocks on our cars. So if you have an
11 update- I know we've spoken repeatedly on this, would
12 love to get a sense of what that project update might
13 cost and if the city's committed to addressing that
14 very long strip of horrible road conditions.

15 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank you, Council
16 Member. Definitely, that corridor is on our radar,
17 and hear you loud and clear that that's a top
18 priority. I'll say I live in the vicinity and know it
19 well. So, you know, we're happy to take a close look
20 at that as we develop the capital program and talk
21 with OMB and City Hall about that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah, would really,
19 really, really appreciate it being prioritized,
20 because it's been on your radar for a long time, and
21 hopefully this is the year we can get it done. I

2 mean, that's what we got to do here. So really
3 appreciate it, and thank you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Council Member Wong,
5 followed by Hanif.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair. A
7 question about the DOT- conditions of DOT
8 infrastructure, and particularly overpasses and trash
9 along medians and highways. I'll start with the
10 overpasses, because we get a lot of railroads cutting
11 through at my district- CSX, Conrail, you know. So we
12 have a lot of these overpasses, and those bridges
13 need to be maintained, like in severe weather. And
14 they have to be clean, including weeds and debris. My
15 question is, what is the maintenance schedule for DOT
16 regarding these medians, overpasses, and other DOT
17 properties? How often do you clean them?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:

19 Okay, so we have- we always have more work out there
20 in cleaning these locations than we can get to on a
21 constant basis. So we do have them on a rotation. We
also supplement the work that our in-house forces do
with a bunch of different workforces that we work
with. For example, right now we're working with the
DOE Fund and several others in order to get them out

2 at those locations. So those are the types of
3 additional workforce that we would like to put on
4 them. And if you let me know of any specific
5 locations that you think need a little bit more
6 attention, we'll do our best to get out there.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yep. In my
8 district, the most serious issues are graffitis and
9 overpasses. So I don't— how often do you address
10 that? Because get weekly calls regarding—

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
12 [interposing] We do have some bridge painters that
13 handle graffiti. If you get me those locations, we'll
14 get them done as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, thank you.
16 Citi Bikes— in the— when I brought this up in the
17 last hearing, I had a question. I don't think I got a
18 very clear answer. Is there flexibility within the
19 Citi Bike or Lyft contract to place stations based on
20 actual demand rather than a fixed grid? Because we— I
21 can tell you which stations are just not used at all,
and then the residents in the neighborhood want it
moved. And while you go to the other side of my
district, the racks are always empty and they want

2 more racks. So is there something we could do to
3 change- to fix that?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:

5 Right, so I understand exactly what you're saying.
6 Our philosophy and our feeling, working closely with
7 our bike share provider, is that it's very important
8 to have a presence of a station within a certain
9 distance. And if we start- and it's roughly like four
10 blocks, sort of grid blocks. If we start removing
11 stations, then all of a sudden the bigger system will
12 break down, and it won't be successful because people
13 just will know they have to go too far to pick up a
14 bike or drop off a bike, or it's very hard for them
15 to go into the neighborhoods they're trying to go
16 into. So we would not want to remove any stations.
17 However, what we would want to do in locations that
18 you said there's so much of a demand is two things.
19 One, talk to, Lyft about adding more docks
20 potentially and more bikes. But then two, also look
21 at rebalancing. If there are certain parts of the
day, times of the day where all the bikes are gone or
there are too many bikes trying to dock, that's the
kind of issue that we like to work with Lyft in order
to see what we can do about that.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: But can the
3 contract be revised, or though that- that is set in
4 stone that this is a grid-based?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE:
6 Yeah, Council Member, we do believe in the grid-based
7 contract.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: And that's being-
9 this is what it was signed, right?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: I
11 have to go back and understand exactly what we signed
12 in our agreement.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, thank you.
14 Thank you, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, thank you, Council
16 Member. Council Member Hanif?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. I want
18 to go back to bike parking. Really wonderful to hear
19 about the 500 goal. Where will they be and how will
20 that be determined? And then what's the timeline?

21 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: So for the Secure
Bike Parking program that's still in development. You
know, I think we want to look at locations where it
can have the greatest benefit. You mentioned a few of
those situations, Council Member, whether it's folks

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2 who live in walk-up apartments, you know, or maybe
3 further from transit or things like that where it can
4 be kind of a helpful first and last mile connection.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. So it— this
6 hasn't been rolled out yet? We're still in the
7 preliminary—

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BEATON:
9 [interposing] That's right, we're still finishing up
10 the—

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing]
12 design.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BEATON:
14 procurement with the contractor. But then we do
15 expect it to be a public engagement process too,
16 where they don't just start appearing on the street.
17 We'll work with electeds and community boards to say,
18 here's some types of locations where it could be. Do
19 you have preferences? Are there things we should be
20 looking at? You know, we'll try to have some smaller
21 ones in residential areas, some larger ones near
transit. It will not be a secret in the night
process, right? We'll be upfront about it.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Well, I'm happy
about that. I'll just say that for my district,

2 please feel free. I don't- you don't have to ask me
3 for permission. For accessibility, does the DOT have
4 a specific budget for making ramps or intersections
accessible?

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

6 Yeah, I can take it. The- obviously accessibility is
7 a core priority for us. A lot of the work we do is
8 ADA compliant, if not every single piece of work we
9 do is ADA compliant. A good chunk of the sidewalk
10 inspection management budget is about ped ramps and
11 accessibility, but also traffic operations. Traffic
12 operations has accessible pedestrian signals as well.
13 So every work and every division that touches the
street is- has an accessibility component. I'm happy
to break it down if you want by-

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] Is
15 there a separate cost or is it included in the cost
16 of the specific project?

17 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:

18 Yeah, so, like, a capital project, for example, would
19 be baked in. All the accessibility components would
20 be baked into the capital project. But for specific
21 accessibility issues, like in sidewalk inspection
management, we have a budget for the ped ramps, for

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2 the ped ramp program, for example. Same with traffic
3 operations, one of the biggest divisions that we
4 have, and we have a budget for accessible pedestrian
signals.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What's that?
6 What's the budget for that?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
8 Yeah, I can, um, let me try to find it, but if I
don't, I'm happy to follow up with you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Because those
10 aren't installed all across the city, right?

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
12 That's right. Yeah, they're on rolling basis.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then if you
14 could share what the current backlog of intersections
15 without ADA-compliant ped ramps and how long it'll
take to eliminate it at the current funding level.

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: It's
17 actually not just a funding question. It's also a
18 capacity question. We do in-house- the pedestrian
19 ramps that are- that we- what we call simple
20 pedestrian ramps, which means there's no underlying
21 capital work beneath them, we do in-house. The
complex pedestrian ramps that have some underlying

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2 infrastructure work that needs to happen is- they're
3 done by DDC. And so it's a partnership between DOT
4 and DDC to make sure that we get to every single
corner or intersection in the city.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So right now there
6 isn't a sort of list where you're like-

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA: We
8 have the entire universe. We're happy to provide-
9 it's literally a map and it follows the resurfacing
10 schedule. So whenever we go to a street that needs to
11 be resurfaced, we check every ped ramp along the way.
12 And then the simple ped ramps we do as the
resurfacing schedule gets done. The complex one we
let DDC do.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. And if you
14 could also share the funding-

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
16 [interposing] Sure.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: level for that
18 would be great too. And how does DOT coordinate ramp
19 installation with other street redesigns? Such as bus
lanes, bike lanes, and other road safety measures?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure, so
21 it- as Paul mentioned, we have a program where we

2 specifically do pedestrian ramps following
3 resurfacing, but also when we're out doing other
4 work, we make those accessibility upgrades at the
5 same time. So if we're building an extended corner
6 for pedestrian safety, it gets updated ramps, and not
7 just at the corner that we're doing, we do all the
8 ramps at that intersection. If we're moving a light
9 pole as part of a bike lane project, the entire
10 intersection gets the APSs. And that's both— that's
11 efficient work, right? We're at a location, we want
12 to do the work. And it also makes sure that when
13 we're bringing these intersections up to what we
14 consider our standard, that it is for everyone, that
15 it's not just for cyclists, it's for people who use
16 the intersection however they use it.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, council
15 member. I'm going to ask questions on behalf of
16 Council Member Krishnan, who was here earlier but had
17 to step out. Other cities have been implementing
18 low-traffic neighborhoods. What are DOT's plans to
19 doing so here?

19 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I think it's a really
20 interesting idea, and it's something that we're
21 certainly taking a look at in the context of, you

2 know, we're always thinking about how we can level up
3 what we're working on.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Great. And on behalf
5 of Selvena Brooks-Powers, I have— Council Member
6 Brooks-Powers, I have questions. She says, my office
7 has asked for a briefing regarding the New York City
8 truck route redesign for several months now in
9 partnership with our community stakeholders. Given
10 that our district has one of the highest rates of
11 illegal truck activity given our proximity to JFK
12 Airport, it is absolutely critical that our community
13 is engaged on the significant changes to the city's
14 truck route network. Can you commit to setting up
15 this briefing in the next two weeks?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yeah, we—
17 we've— we're very happy that we put out the report
18 last year. We've got a lot of feedback from the
19 council member and others, and yes, we're happy to
20 have a meeting.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Furthermore— this is
still along her line of questioning. Furthermore, our
community has been vocal about the need to include
overnight truck parking locations in Southeast Queens
as part of Local Law 96 of 2025. Can the agency

2 provide an update on what locations in Southeast
3 Queens have been identified for overnight parking per
4 this law?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So we've had
6 a number of walkthroughs with the council member, and
7 we're working on the specific locations. We think
8 that the three pilots that we've had in Flatlands, in
9 Maspeth, and in the South Bronx have all been working
10 well. They appear to be used more or less
11 appropriately. And so we are looking for more
12 locations in and around other IBZs in the city as per
13 the law. So we— it's underway and we'll have more to
14 report.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Great. Can DOT provide
16 an update regarding— this is still along her line of
17 questioning— can DOT provide an update regarding the
18 street lighting along Rockaway Beach Boulevard from
19 Beach 62nd to Beach 73rd Street? These street lights
20 remain out and cause a major public safety hazard to
21 local residents.

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FORGIONE: We
23 can get that to her, um, today or tomorrow. I don't
24 have it with me right now.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That would be greatly
3 appreciated. Thank you, Commissioner. Alright, back
4 to my round of questioning. It's on bus speeds and
5 on-time performance. A city comptroller report from
6 September 2025 found that a majority of buses are
7 performing at below average standards. 56 percent of
8 bus lines, 186 out of 332, received a grade of D or
9 lower, meaning that they run at speeds significantly
10 below the boroughwide average, are more likely to
11 experience bunching, and consistently fail to arrive
12 at scheduled stops on time. By comparison, only 27
13 lines, eight percent, received a grade B or higher.
14 Only seven lines received an A grade, which was
15 consistent with January 2019 speeds at 7.8 miles per
16 hour. What is DOT doing to improve bus speeds
17 throughout the city?

18 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Well, we're leaving
19 no stone unturned, and there's, you know, multiple
20 causes of bus delay. It could be, you know, at busy
21 stops, folks queuing to get on the bus. It can be due
to waiting at traffic signals. It could be due to
traffic congestion. And there's really a whole range
of things we can do to speed them up. And actually
we're working very closely with our partners at the

2 MTA right now to do a comprehensive look at how we
3 can significantly increase bus speeds.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I would also add, I
5 think the satisfying the Streets Plan would be very
6 helpful with that. Where will DOT prioritize new bus
7 lanes? Which routes, and how will DOT determine which
8 routes require new protected bus lanes?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure, and,
10 and a number of the lanes for this year have been
11 announced, including restarting projects like Madison
12 Avenue and Fordham Road that had been on— put on hold
13 last year, which obviously is not helpful to bus
14 speeds. But it's something we work in very close
15 partnership with the MTA. We look at places where
16 buses are slow and unreliable. We look at places
17 where traffic congestion is the main issue. As the
18 Commissioner said, sometimes it's people boarding the
19 bus, sometimes it's traffic signals. We want to
20 address the busiest parts of routes. So we— it's a
21 very close partnership between us and the MTA to make
sure we're delivering all those different aspects of
making the buses faster. And bus lanes and busways
are a big piece of that and something that the mayor
has been very committed to.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is camera enforcement
3 of track- traffic violations working in your view?

4 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, I'm not
6 going to turn over to questions on bus rapid transit.
7 Bus rapid transit is a high-capacity bus-based urban
8 transit system designed to combine the speed and
9 efficiency of rail transit with the flexibility and
10 lower cost of buses. I was recently in Argentina, and
11 I was impressed with the bus rapid transit system in
12 Buenos Aires. Their BRT system, known as Metrobus,
13 has been developed to enhance public transportation
14 efficiency across the city. The average speed of
15 their BRT was 15 miles per hour and covered almost 40
16 miles. I like to explore bringing BRT to New York,
17 specifically along the 125th Street corridor. Can you
18 walk us through what scope of that project would
19 entail and how much it would cost?

20 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: I'll just start by
21 saying thank you, Speaker. You know, I think we're-
sometimes we think, you know, there's an idea that
New York can't learn from other cities or that we're
unique, and I don't agree with that. I think there's
so much we can learn and get inspired by what other

2 cities are doing, and BRT is a great example of that.
3 And it's definitely something that we'd like to, you
4 know, figure out how we can apply that here. We're
5 very open to recommendations and ideas about
6 corridors that could be a good fit for that. And
7 yeah, I guess, maybe, Eric, if you want to talk a
8 little about the components.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. So, we—
10 It's simple to start, right? It's about dedicated
11 right-of-way. It's about quality stations. It's about
12 being able to board the bus through all doors, You
13 know, all things that make the bus work more like the
14 subway system does now. How you do that on an
15 individual street is, of course, the tricky part. And
16 as we've seen in Europe and we've seen in Latin
17 America and we've seen, you know, places like 14th
18 Street, there are places where we can do things like
19 busways where it's about removing other traffic from
20 the street. There's also projects like what we're
21 doing on Flatbush Avenue where we create a dedicated
space in the middle of the street protected from
traffic. So we want to look at any individual street
before saying it costs exactly this much.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Certainly.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: But it's a
3 good conversation. We're happy to—

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I would like to have
5 that conversation. And, when you do, if— when you do
6 get, you know, the cost estimates or you got— or if
7 DOT does explore, I would like to be part of that
8 conversation and understand how much it would cost
9 and whether if it's feasible. I would also like to
10 add that the Uniformed Services and Transportation
11 Committee of Manhattan Community Board 9 passed the
12 resolution in March of 2025 calling on the Department
13 of Transportation to consider a bus lane project on
14 145th Street in Upper Manhattan as well. This is
15 something I'm also interested in exploring. I think
16 we can go even bigger than that, and I would— to the
17 extent it's feasible, I would like to know whether or
18 not BRT would be feasible along that corridor as
19 well.

20 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank you, Chair. I
21 think we would love to sit down with you and your
stakeholders and look at that.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Some of the
stakeholders may not be happy with it, but I— it
doesn't matter to me. I'd like to have that. Is this

2 something DOT is considering implementing along the
3 newly redesigned 14th Street corridor? If not, why
4 not?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: So yes, and
6 we're very excited about 14th Street, right? It's a
7 street that we did upgrades in 2019, but we know it's
8 not fulfilling the full vision of that street. So it
9 has a lot of the pieces in place. It has the
10 dedicated right-of-way, it has the all-door boarding,
11 but we want to look at the streetscape as a whole.
12 Can the stations be better? Can the street be
13 friendlier to pedestrians? Can we create better
14 loading zones so that trucks aren't interfering with
15 the buses as much? We want this to be a street that's
16 a great street, not just for buses going fast, but
17 for the businesses, for the community, for all the
18 uses of that street. So it's certainly- it's included
19 in the things we'll look at, but I think we want to
20 go beyond that too.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Clearly, I think BRT
would be very transformative, and would really hope
that this administration takes it very seriously. I
understand it's something that the mayor also cares
about. Regarding the World Cup- and this is my last

2 line of questions. This summer of New York City— this
3 summer, the New York City region will play host to a
4 round of group matches and the final match of the
5 World Cup. It's been reported that the mayor is
6 asking Albany to sign off on five weeks of free bus
7 service across the five boroughs while the region
8 hosts matches for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. I do know
9 that Chairman Janno Lieber this morning said that he
10 has not received any advocacy either from the state
11 or the city regarding this. But does the
12 administration have an update on this proposal or how
13 much it would cost? Or I don't know if this is
14 something that you guys are advocating for.

15 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: No, not at this
16 time.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. U.S.
18 Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced on
19 March 3rd the Federal Transit Administration is
20 investing \$100.3 million into public transit systems
21 within host cities preparing to welcome millions of
fans during the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Is DOT receiving
any of this money?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
Those are conversations are ongoing. That \$100

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2 million was meant for direct transit agencies, but we
3 are going to be making a case for us to tap into
4 those— that grant as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And to be used for
6 what purpose?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
8 Staffing mostly.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: For the World Cup?

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OCHOA:
11 Correct. Yeah, so we're going to need a lot of
12 staffing, mostly overtime for folks, you know,
13 setting up cones, taking down cones, but also flowing
14 the flow of traffic in the same way that we do Summer
15 Streets, for example.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Has the administration
17 outlined to DOT what their role will be in the
18 upcoming World Cup? What does the scope of that
19 involvement entail? I know there's been entertainment
20 zones proposals, among other things. Would like to
21 know the breadth of that involvement?

22 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Yeah, we're working
23 closely with the City Hall's World Cup lead and other
24 agencies to contribute to an overall plan. We
25 definitely see the huge economic and social potential

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2 of the World Cup, and we know, you know, especially a
3 lot of New Yorkers can't afford those tickets to the
4 matches, and we want to make sure that all New
5 Yorkers can benefit in some way and feel like they're
6 a part of this World Cup. So we're really- we're
7 thinking through a lot of big ideas right now, and
8 we'll have more to share in the near future.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much,
10 Commissioner, and your entire team for testifying
11 today. This hearing is excused- this panel is
12 excused.

13 COMMISSIONER FLYNN: Thank you, Chair.
14 [break]

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, we are back.
16 I am now turning it over to Committee Counsel Mark
17 Chen to administer the oath.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next
19 panel will be from the Taxi and Limousine Commission.
20 Evan Hines, Acting Commissioner and Deputy
21 Commissioner for Operations, People, and Innovation.
Sherryl Eluto, General Counsel, and James DiGiovanni,
Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Community Affairs.
I will now administer the oath. Please raise your
right hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the

2 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
3 committee, and to respond honestly to council member
4 questions?

4 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
6 begin when ready.

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Good
8 afternoon, Majority Leader Abreu and members of the
9 Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. It is
10 a pleasure to deliver an update on the fiscal state
11 of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission.
12 My name is Evan Hines, and I am TLC's Acting
13 Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for Operations,
14 People, and Innovation. With me is Sherryl Eluto, the
15 agency's General Counsel, and James DiGiovanni, the
16 agency's Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Community
17 Affairs. TLC's regulated industries encompass nearly
18 300,000 licensees, including taxi, for-hire vehicle,
19 and commuter van drivers, as well as vehicle owners,
20 bases, and other related businesses. Although TLC is
21 a relatively small agency of about 500 team members,
We have a large role to play within our city's
transportation ecosystem. As we move into fiscal year
2027, I look forward to continuing our partnership

2 with the Council to ensure that all New Yorkers
3 receive the services that they need and deserve. The
4 data from calendar year 2025 continues to indicate
5 stability within the TLC's regulated industries.
6 Across all vehicle markets, there were over 320
7 million trips completed. Overall trips have increased
8 by six percent. Each sector of our regulated
9 industries is unique, and there is some variation
10 across each type. Taxi trips have increased by 16
11 percent from '24 to '25, but have still only
12 recovered 57 percent from 2019. The agency estimates
13 that between 60 to 65 percent of yellow taxi drivers
14 are currently full-time drivers, and the median gross
15 hourly pay for this group is around \$60 an hour
16 compared to \$50 an hour in 2019. Earnings after
17 expenses are unique to each driver, but expenses
18 sharply reduce take-home pay. A typical medallion
19 owner pays around \$25,000 per year toward vehicle
20 payments and medallion loan service, and that's
21 before fuel, maintenance, and insurance. The
high-volume for-hire vehicle sector, which includes
Lyft and Uber and is the largest segment of our
regulated industries, completed over 243 million
trips in 2025. That is up from 239 million in 2024, a

1.7 percent increase. We also saw earnings increases for drivers in the sector as well. The median pay for full-time drivers before taxes and expenses is approximately \$61 an hour in comparison to \$46 an hour in 2019. This reflects the impact of the driver pay rules authorized by Local Law 150 of 2018 and the amendments TLC adopted last year. Other sectors are also showing progress. Non-high-volume for-hire vehicles completed 28 million trips in 2025, a four percent increase from 2024. Although trips are largely recovered since the COVID pandemic, we know challenges exist in the industry as well, such as congestion, insurance costs, and more recently, increases in gas prices. The commuter van recovery extended through this year with 56 vans in service compared to 34 at the beginning of 2024. In part due to Empire State Development's commuter van stabilization program. Through this program, eligible applicants can receive up to \$40,000 to help offset the cost of annual commuter van auto insurance policies, as well as receive reimbursements for specific vehicle safety upgrades, including advanced driver assistance, dashcams, and GPS tracking. While we see stability across the TLC's regulated

industries, we continue to see and address unlicensed activity, which is— which not only siphons off trips from licensed drivers and bases who follow city rules, but also endangers and exploits passengers. Illegal rides may not be insured, dispatchers may overcharge passengers, vehicles are not inspected for safety by TLC, and drivers may not even have a valid DMV license. This is an issue that TLC has consistently been addressing, and the newly nominated chair and chief executive officer made a commitment to stop these scalpers in her testimony before the council. Moreover, we are working with our city and state partners to identify additional tools that could be used to halt the operations of these bad actors. I would like to thank the council for passing Local Law 35 of 2026, which through a DOT study will help gather data to assist the agency with unlicensed commuter van enforcement. TLC continues to support and ensure compliance with several key pieces of legislation which were passed last year. Local Law 78 of 2025 requires taxis and for-hire vehicles to display a decal to warn passengers to look for cyclists when opening the door. The agency voted to adopt rules to implement this requirement at our

2 September 17th Commission meeting, and we stocked up
3 on our decal supply. TLC will distribute decals
4 during vehicle inspections at the Woodside facility
5 if needed, and decals are available to licensees for
6 free at both our Woodside and Long Island City
7 facilities. Local Law 84 of 2025 requires the TLC to
8 conduct a new study on the challenges and
9 opportunities related to increasing the use of
10 electric for-hire vehicles and installing new
11 charging infrastructure by the end of this year. In
12 addition, it requires the agency to include data on
13 electric for-hire incentive program- I'm sorry-
14 include data on electric for-hire vehicles, the
15 infrastructure necessary to support them, incentive
16 programs, and overall progress towards the
17 electrification of the for-hire vehicle fleet in its
18 annual for-hire vehicle license review report, which
19 will be released in the next few weeks. I am pleased
20 to announce that 978 new level two and three chargers
21 have come online since the agency's Green Rides rules
were adopted. According to these rules, by this year,
25 percent of all high-volume for hire vehicle trips
must be dispatched to electric or wheelchair
accessible vehicles. Our newly nominated chair and

chief executive officer highlighted in her testimony before the council that the costs associated with this public good has largely been borne by drivers and small businesses and is something that TLC should further review. We fully expect to— the companies to meet these requirements and they are on track with a current industry average of 22.7 percent. Also in September, TLC completed rulemaking to implement Local Law 90 of 2025 to reduce TLC's insurance requirements for licensed vehicles. TLC now limits the amount of personal injury protection insurance coverage for licensed vehicles to an amount no greater than 200 percent of the amount required by state law. This change will help drivers and vehicle owners save money while still requiring the highest personal injury protection insurance coverage in the state. Accessibility remains a top priority for TLC, and we are excited to report that as of today, over 58 percent of the city's active taxi fleet is wheelchair accessible. Currently, there are more than 6,300 accessible taxis, bringing us closer to our next goal of 50 percent accessibility of the authorized fleet. Notably, TLC thoroughly reviewed its accessible taxi programs last year to keep the

Taxi Improvement Fund solvent in anticipation of the increase in wheelchair-accessible vehicle hackups. Leaving the TIF program as it was, with grants for hackups, quarterly operational payments \$1 per trip payments for all trips in a wheelchair-accessible vehicle, and funding the accessible dispatch program was not possible. Our amended rules increased the accessible vehicle hack-up grant for medallion owners from \$14,000 to \$20,000 and capped operational payments at a maximum of \$10,000 for a period of four years for eligible participants, for a total of \$30,000 in grants to owners. As part of these changes, TLC shifted from a single vendor accessible dispatch model that costs the TIF \$6 million annually to a multi-provider model serviced by individually licensed e-health apps at no cost to the fund. Redirecting these funds afforded us the opportunity to add an additional 200 waves to the medallion fleet, as well as offer a \$10 bonus incentive for drivers dispatched by the eHealth company's call centers. TLC maintained the 24/7 call center requirement and established more stringent service standards, such as requiring call agents to receive disability etiquette and sensitivity training.

Throughout this process, TLC engaged members of the disability community and continues to listen to feedback and perform service audits. We are committed to good service for the disability community, and we are committed to monitoring and pivoting as needed. TLC authorized the ATLAS pilot program, which helps owners qualify for low-cost financing for accessible vehicle purchases. The program will provide assistance to 100 small business medallion owners to purchase a wheelchair-accessible Toyota Sienna in partnership with Empire State Development, the Disability Opportunity Fund, Hillside Toyota, and the New York Taxi Workers Alliance. The fund can provide a low-interest loan due to the upfront TIF grant of \$30,000, thereby reducing the loan amount from \$80,000 to \$50,000. So far, 16 medallions have received funding, passed inspection, and are in revenue service. Next, I would like to preview TLC's preliminary budget for fiscal year 2027, which is projected to be approximately \$57.9 million, broken down into \$45.5 million in personnel services and \$12.4 million in other than personnel services. This is an overall decrease of \$4.2 million, or 6.6 percent, from the current modified budget. This

2 decrease is the result of less funding for MRP- for
3 the medallion relief program needs. Last fiscal year,
4 we had received an additional \$4.2 million that was
5 added to the budget for those costs. Currently, the
6 TLC's authorized headcount is 546 for fiscal year
7 2027. At our budget hearing last year, we reported
8 that we hired the first of several cadet classes to
9 fill 100 new vacancies given to us to backfill high
10 attrition positions. Since then, we have filled all
11 of these new lines. Although we continue to see high
12 attrition amongst our Uniform Services Bureau, we've
13 made great progress in reducing our vacancy rates
14 since the 2026 preliminary budget hearing. Last year,
15 our vacancy rate at this time was 30 percent, whereas
16 I'm happy to report, our current rate is 13 percent.

17 As is customary, I want to ensure that the new
18 committee members are aware of one of TLC's major
19 capital projects. Our safety and emissions inspection
20 facility in Woodside, Queens is currently entering
21 the second phase of a \$180 million reconstruction.
This project is being managed by the Department of
Design and Construction and is expected to be
substantially complete by the end of 2028. The
project is needed to mitigate structural degradation,

2 as well as to meet an increasing demand for
3 inspection services. Once completed, the new facility
4 will increase inspection capacity and reduce street
5 congestion associated with entering and exiting
6 vehicles. The original scope of the project was
7 expected to— the original was expanded to include 70
8 new electric vehicle charges including 30 level three
9 fast chargers to support TLC's Green Rides
10 initiatives. For TLC employees, there will also be a
11 new administrative building, a parking garage, and
12 vehicle testing equipment. The current inspection
13 facility remains operational while construction is
14 underway. Across all of TLC's projects, the agency is
15 committed to ensuring that vendors— our vendors
16 reflect the diversity of New York City. The Minority
17 and Women-Owned Business Enterprises program expands
18 opportunities for local entrepreneurs to access
19 government contracts and grow their businesses. TLC's
20 current fiscal year 2026 MWBE utilization rate is
21 40.9 percent, or \$1.4 million in MWBE contracts,
nearly 11 percentage points greater than the citywide
goal of 30 percent. We are incredibly proud of this
achievement. For six consecutive years, TLC has
exceeded the citywide MWBE participation goals and

2 remains committed to closing the fiscal year on June
3 30th above New York City's 30 percent requirement.

4 This number reflects utilization for eligible
5 contracts, which do not include intergovernmental
6 contracts or requirement contracts. MWBE vendors were
7 procured for services required to revise our
8 educational course curriculum, provide translation
9 services, cloud security, and quality assurance
10 services. Through all these contracts, we are
11 contributing to advancing equity in our city. As we
12 prepare for the upcoming fiscal year, I want to thank
13 the dedicated staff at TLC for their efforts to
14 ensure that agency initiatives are successful. I look
15 forward to the opportunity to work with the Mayor,
16 Council, and incoming agency leadership to ensure
17 that the Taxi and Limousine Commission continues to
18 support a fair and equitable industry for licensees,
19 passengers, and all New Yorkers. I am now happy to
20 answer any questions you may have about the TLC's
21 budget or regulated industries.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
19 Commissioner. According to numerous studies, compared
20 to the general population, professional drivers have
21 higher rates of depression, diabetes, hypertension,

stress, and anxiety. In May 2024, an outreach campaign by Health + Hospitals launched to help provide and connect drivers to health and well-being resources. Can you please tell us about the status of this program?

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So, we actually are partnering with H+H actually for that program. It provides both physical and behavioral health services, using- for drivers and their families using insurance if they have insurance. If they don't have insurance, it helps them to get insurance, and fees are on a sliding scale We have installed- there's a kiosk at our licensing facility that's available for drivers, as well as we've referred drivers from the owner-driver resource center if they came in and needed assistance. The response, the number of people that have been availing themselves of these services is not- is not high. And we- one of our Assistant Commissioners for programs did actually have a check-in with H&H last week. I believe there was some turnover in the people responsible for the program at H&H, but she has spoken with them last week to strategize to come up

2 with more ways of communicating out that these
3 services are available to increase.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you have any idea
5 how many people have been served and what is the
6 funding level in fiscal '27 for this program?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: The funding
8 level, I wouldn't know because it's funded through-
9 H&H provides the services. The number of people, I
10 would actually have to get back to you, but it's not
11 a large number, I can tell you that.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It's under 100. I
13 mean, do you have any idea?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Definitely.
15 Definitely.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. If you can get
17 us that information when you have it, that'll be
18 greatly appreciated. How many drivers have- I already
19 asked that question, my apologies. Alright, turning
20 now over to just rider safety. The PMMR shows that
21 there has been an increase in complaints lodged
against TLC drivers with 9,965 in fiscal 2026, 9,220
in the first four months of fiscal 2025, as compared
to 8,356 in the first four months of fiscal 2024, a
16 percent increase. Over the last three years, the

2 number of complaints has been steadily increasing.

3 Why have these metrics been going in a negative
4 direction?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So, we
6 actually have a lot more vehicles that are— that have
7 come out of storage over the last few years. I
8 believe just this year, 2,000 vehicles came out of
9 storage. So there's more vehicles on the street.
10 Trips— there's more trips, quite a bit. Quite a large
11 number. So in the last couple of years, the number of
12 trips, that vehicles are— experienced went from 3,400
13 on average per vehicle to 4,500, I think, now
14 annually. So, I believe it's because of the
15 additional activity of vehicles on the street. It— I
16 think if you're looking at the MMR, it's also
17 important to note that our response time for
18 addressing those consumer complaints has gone down
19 significantly due to operational changes with how we
20 handle those complaints. Because we found that the
21 longer it takes to get to a complaint, the less
likely that the person filing the complaint is
interested in going through with it to take some sort
of action. So we are going through them faster.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you find that TLC
3 has enough funding and staff to meet the needs for
4 enforcement, driver support, and case management?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: For— repeat
6 that again. Enforcement?

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Driver support, and
8 case management.

9 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Yeah, yes, we
10 do.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What is TLC doing to
12 address this decline in customer satisfaction?

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: What metric
14 are you referring to?

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Give me one second.

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Sure.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The complaints lodged.

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: The the—
19 they're not lodged against TLC. They're lodged
20 against drivers, right?

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes. So is DOT doing
anything to— is TLC doing anything to address this
decline lodged against drivers?

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Well, and we
have a robust education program. We actually, um,

2 have just updated our education curriculum. We've
3 changed some rules that require drivers to retake a
4 course if they're found, like, you know, violating or
5 if any— a certain number of complaints are found to
6 be valid.

7 GENERAL COUNSEL ELUTO: Yes, we amended
8 our rules last year so that more drivers are racking
9 up— I'm sorry, that racking up more points for
10 stationary traffic violations, so they're required to
11 take education in addition to just paying a penalty.
12 We also have education at renewal time for the
13 licensee.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, I'm now going
15 to turn to questions on accessibility. In the past,
16 TLC emphasized that improving accessible and
17 equitable service was a top priority for the
18 Commission. According to the most recent PMMR, there
19 are only 5,911 wheelchair accessible vehicles.
20 Additionally, in the first four months of fiscal
21 2026, there were 7,488 accessible FHV's, a marginal
decrease from the 7,642 during the same period of
fiscal 2025. How is TLC ensuring that the Yellow Cab
and FHV industry increases the number of
wheelchair-accessible vehicles in the fleet?

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: With regards
3 to our Yellow Taxis, our medallions, there is a 100
4 percent— right now, 100 percent of any vehicle that
5 is coming into service, whether it's a new vehicle
6 because a former vehicle has to be retired, or if
7 it's someone coming out of storage, they could only
8 put— they could only put a wheelchair accessible
9 vehicle on the street. The number with, with that is
10 already up to over 6,300, from the numbers that
11 you're looking at, because that rule went into effect
12 in— was it summer '24? October, October of '24 is
13 when we put that roll into effect. And, we also
14 increased the hack-up fee grants to help with all
15 those— the costs associated with that.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What about with FHV
17 industry?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI: So the
19 decline— there's probably a bit of fluctuation in the
20 FHV numbers over time. We've seen the general trend
21 has been very positive, and in part that's because if
you want to license a new for-hire vehicle, the only
way that you've been able to do that since 2018
consistently is with a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.
So right now, for example, if you want to enter the

2 industry, you want to get a vehicle license, the only
3 way to do that is with a WAVE. So that will ensure
4 that the numbers continue to go up over time.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What kinds of
6 assistance does TLC provide to drivers who are
7 converting accessible vehicles?

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So upon
9 hack-up, once they convert the vehicle to wheelchair
10 accessible and get, you know, the- all the other like
11 the TSP equipment into the vehicle, once they put it
12 into service, they are eligible for a \$20,000 grant,
13 which many have been taking us up on that. I think in
14 this last year, there's been \$40 million of grants
15 paid out for hack-ups. And then they are eligible for
16 up to \$10,000 over the first four years in quarterly
17 payments if they, if they hit a milestone of 750
18 accessible trips in- within that accessible vehicle
19 for the quarter.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Overall, we have seen
21 a faster adoption of accessible vehicles in for-hire
22 vehicles than Yellow Cabs. What do you believe is the
23 cause of this disparity, and what problems do Yellow
24 Cab owners encounter when converting to
25 wheelchair-accessible vehicles?

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: I'm not sure
3 about the- as far as adoption with FHV. I mean, the,
4 the requirement, once we had the cap in place, right,
5 wheelchair accessible vehicles were the only vehicles
6 that are able to enter the market on the FHV side.
7 The- on the medallion side, a lot of vehicles were-
8 medallions were in storage, which are now coming out
9 of storage. So over the last couple years, that's
10 what would be impacting it.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How many taxis and
12 for-hire vehicles were dispatched under TLC's
13 accessible dispatch program, broken down by license
14 type?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So the- the
16 Accessible Dispatch Program dispatches to yellow
17 taxis only, not to FHV's. I don't have the numbers
18 with me, but I could get that back to you. I could
19 get back to you with that. Let me just see if I have
20 it.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You can come back to
it. Yeah.

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: [interposing]
Yeah, I could get back to you with exact numbers, but

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2 it was- the monthly average this past year, was just
3 under 4,000.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay.

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: And we're
6 seeing a correlation that those are going down, but
7 trips requested through WAVE- for WAVE through the
8 eHows [sic] are going up.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What is the current
10 citywide average wait time for accessible dispatches,
11 for Yellow Cabs when compared to for higher vehicles?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Let me see if
13 I have that number. The accessible dispatch median
14 wait time for the first four months of fiscal vehicle
15 26 was 12 minutes and six seconds.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Take your time.

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Right, so 12
18 minutes and six seconds, and compared to FHV in
19 general?

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sorry, so the question
21 is, what is the current citywide average wait time
for accessible dispatches for yellow cabs when
compared to for-hire vehicles?

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Yeah, I'll
have to get back to you. I only have in front of me

2 the accessible dispatch for the first four months of
3 the year. The numbers—

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] But when
5 can you get us that information?

6 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: I can get that
7 to you tomorrow.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, thank you.
9 And just letting the committee staff to make sure we
10 get that information as soon as possible. Turning
11 over to electrification. According to TLC's
12 Electrification in Motion report released in
13 September 2024, most EV trips happen in Manhattan,
14 where the most trips overall occur. However, Queens
15 sees a higher proportion of EV trips. 24 percent of
16 the city's EV trips are in Queens, while only 20
17 percent of trips in all other vehicles occur in
18 Queens. The Bronx, on the other hand, sees 12.4
19 percent of trips, of gas-powered for higher vehicle
20 trips, but only 10.5 percent of trips trips in
21 electric for-hire vehicles. What is the reason for
this discrepancy?

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So as far as
23 we can tell, the discrepancy is likely because there
24 has been a lot of investment in charging

infrastructure in Queens and there may also be some things happening outside of the city, like if there's a lot of charging accessibility in Nassau, maybe that explains some drivers going across the border, or who live across the border, maybe they are TLC licensed drivers who live in Nassau charge at home and do a bit more trips in Queens. On the flip side, the Bronx has definitely lagged behind in charging infrastructure. So that's probably why we're seeing the trip counts lower there.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Which brings me to my next question. Does DOT have any-- sorry, I keep saying DOT. Does TLC have any plans to expand electric charging capacity in boroughs other than Queens?

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So, we do not operate any infrastructure ourselves. So, we would not be the ones, you know, shovels in the ground actually installing the charging infrastructure. We'd work a lot and very closely with city DOT, other city agencies, and the private sector. We like to say-- you know, other agencies say this as well, that the city did not install every gas pump in New York City. So the city's also not going to install every EV

2 charger. So the private sector plays a large part as
3 well. But we're definitely working with other
4 agencies.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How many electric
6 for-hire vehicles are currently licensed by TLC?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So as of
8 January 2026, there were 13,115 EV FHV's.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And what has been the
10 reception to the Green Rides initiative, and how has
11 the program been implemented by TLC?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So it's been
13 generally positive. There were definitely, admittedly
14 some learning curves at the beginning. I think people
15 who first get an EV, from what we've learned from
16 drivers, there is a bit of a learning curve. You
17 know, you have to figure out what your charging plan
18 is going to be. You have to know things like don't
19 charge past 90 percent, because that last 10 percent
20 can take a very long time. So, there were definitely
21 some lines when we issued a large number of EV
licenses at the beginning of the Green Rides
initiative, where people were still kind of feeling
things out, but it's been fairly smooth since then.
There's been a lot more investment in charging

2 infrastructure and more installations of chargers
3 citywide in the last couple of years. We think that's
4 in part because of the Green Rides initiative, that
5 we've created a large demand for it, so the industry
6 has adjusted and it seems to be going fairly well.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Taxi licenses, which
8 are TLC's largest source of revenue generation have
9 declined from \$49.3 million in fiscal 2024 to an
10 anticipated \$38.7 million in fiscal 2027,
11 representing a decrease of 21.5 percent. Why has
12 there been such a decrease in revenue due to taxi
13 licenses? Are fewer drivers applying to obtain
14 licenses?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: I believe that
16 fluctuation is due cycles, renewal cycles, and so a
17 driver's license is valid for two years, and so
18 depending on when people got their license. Like this
19 year, we are seeing our target for- I'm sorry, I
20 actually- I was talking about vehicle licenses.
21 Driver licenses are for three years. What- in 2024,
there was a large uptick in the number of driver
licenses associated with the FHV, the EV licenses
that we gave out to vehicles.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So is it fair to
3 expect increased revenue next year then?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: I'm sorry,
5 could you repeat?

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is it fair to expect
7 that there will be increased revenue next year?
8 Because of the three-year cycle.

9 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: It's- no, not
10 next year. The following year would be the increase.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay, thank you. Has
12 TLC seen a decline in overall drivers?

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: No, no, we
14 have not.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Have you seen an
16 increase?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Yes. Alright,
18 and my last set of questions are on headcount
19 vacancies. As of January 2026, TLC has an actual
20 headcount of 441 and is operating with a 24 percent
21 vacancy rate. Furthermore, TLC operated with a 23
percent vacancy rate in fiscal '24 and 15 percent in
fiscal '23. TLC has been operating with a high
vacancy rate for quite some time now. What budgeted
positions have remained open?

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So we
3 actually— this past year, we made a lot of progress
4 with hiring, and as of the end of February, our
5 vacancy rate is down to 13 percent. Where most of
6 those— most of the hiring happened was in our
7 Uniformed Services Bureau, which, a few years ago 100
8 additional headcount was added to our budget. And so
9 we were having challenges hiring for those positions.
10 So we have hired several classes over the last couple
11 of years attributing to the decrease. We still have
12 the highest vacancies, I'd say, are in our Uniform
13 Services Bureau as well as our prosecution— our
14 Prosecution Unit attorneys.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So as of February of
16 2026, there's now a 13 percent vacancy?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Kudos to you on that.
19 And how do we— how do we keep that up? How do we keep
20 that trend going?

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: It's— well, a
good start is OMB relaxed their rules as far as in
the last administration, there was a two-for-one rule
where for every two people that left the agency, we
could only hire one. They have since removed that

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2 just I believe a few weeks ago. So there isn't that
3 restriction on hiring. So that would help us to fill-
4 to take care of attrition.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are the vacancies
6 still in the prosecution division?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Vacancies-
8 the most vacancies are in Prosecution and Uniform
9 Services Bureau, so enforcement and safeties and
10 inspection.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So there were 16,629
12 complaints made against the TLC drivers in fiscal
13 2022, 24,131 in fiscal '23, and 28,025 in fiscal
14 2024. Additionally, the number of drivers eligible
15 for prosecution has been increasing with 9,290 in
16 fiscal '22, 13,087 in fiscal '23, and 15,471 in
17 fiscal '24. In the first four months of fiscal '25,
18 there were 6,914 complaints eligible for prosecution,
19 an increase of 61.6 percent compared to the same
20 period in fiscal '24. This brings to light a serious
21 concern that passengers in TLC-operated vehicles may
be feeling less safe. Why have these metrics been
going in a negative direction?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI:
Obviously, we don't love to see complaints go up by

2 that kind of rate, but one important thing to note is
3 that it seems like passengers and members of the
4 public do feel like TLC takes these complaints
5 seriously and actually prosecutes them. There are
6 websites and apps set up to make it easy to submit
7 311 complaints because the public knows that TLC will
8 look at these complaints, take them seriously, reach
9 out, prosecute these cases. So I think some of the
10 increase in complaints, there's actually a bit of a
11 silver lining there, that people feel like they, you
12 know- the word is out that if you submit complaints
13 to TLC, the complaint will be taken seriously, and
14 the increase may be partially at least related to
15 that.

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: And the
17 indicator of the stats that you're quoting with
18 regards to eligible to prosecute, that actually is
19 due to a large factor. It's due to, as I said
20 earlier, our prosecution team has revamped their
21 process, their process for addressing these
complaints, and they're addressing them and getting
in touch with the complainant much quicker than they
had been in the past. I mean, I think it's less than
half the time they're taking, and the sooner they get

2 to the complainant, the— without the person who filed
3 the complaint being willing to, you know, attend a
4 hearing, they have to throw out the case. So, the
5 eligible for prosecution, I believe is increasing
6 because of that.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: So there have been
8 improvements on vacancies in other places, but it
9 remains— it's clear that there's still a big need for
10 addressing the vacancies here. What is the
11 administration's plan on this?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So we actually
13 have— you know, we just onboarded a cadet class in
14 January which is— which filled a lot of our vacancies
15 in the enforcement and safety and admissions of
16 Uniform Services Bureau, which is, again, what's
17 attributing to our vacancy rate now only being at 13
18 percent. We want to get that down to under 10
19 percent.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much,
21 Commissioner. I'm now going to turn it over to
Council Member Phil Wong.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair. I
see in your statement here that 58 percent of the
city's active taxi fleet is wheelchair accessible.

Does that include yellow taxis only, or includes the greens and the yellows and all the, like, Lyft and Ubers?

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: That's only yellow.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: It's only- yeah, okay. Is there- do you have some figures like the green taxis or the Ubers? And then- and I'm going to explain why I'm asking, because in my districts, seniors often- they are either on the cane and a walker or wheelchair-bound, and they get very frustrated when they call for car service and it's not wheelchair accessible. They have to call self-help, or they have to call the neighbors down the block to take them to their medical appointments. So my question to you is one, what percentage of your green taxi is wheelchair accessible, and what about the Ubers and Lyfts?

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: So Uber and Lyft, which falls under our for-hire vehicles, FHV's, there's over 7,700 wheelchair accessible vehicles, FHV vehicles, in addition to of the 6,300 medallions that are in service.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: is it required that
3 a certain percentage of these Uber and Lyft vehicles
4 are handicap- wheelchair accessible, or it's up to
the driver?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI: So
6 there's no direct requirement for drivers or vehicle
7 owners to get a wheelchair accessible vehicle on the
8 for-hire vehicle side. As I mentioned earlier, if you
9 want to license a new vehicle, you're required to
10 make that wheelchair accessible. So current drivers
11 don't have to convert, but a newly entering driver,
12 the only option would be for a wheelchair accessible
13 vehicle. I want to add, too, that we do have on- a
14 little different from the taxi side, on the Uber and
15 Lyft side, we have dispatch requirements on the
16 companies. So they have to respond to wheelchair
17 accessible vehicle requests in a certain amount of
18 time. So 90 percent of trips that are requested as a
19 wheelchair accessible vehicle for Uber and Lyft, they
have to respond in 10 minutes or less. So it's more
on that side of a service requirement rather than a
vehicle requirement.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, so you're
21 saying is that if I'm a new driver, my only option to

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2 get a license is to get like a- the Sienna where it's
3 wheelchair accessible, is that right?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI: That's
5 right. Yeah. If you wanted to be like an Uber or Lyft
6 driver or drive for a smaller livery base, that would
be your only option.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. I just don't
8 see you have any data on the green taxis, and there's
a lot of them out there. Do you agree?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI: Well,
10 there actually aren't that many, but there are a lot
11 in your district, coincidentally. So there's a high
12 prevalence of green cabs, you know, that service your
area. I'm not sure if we have those numbers.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, I'm just
14 interested how- what's the percentage of green taxis
15 that are wheelchair accessible before I go on my next
question? Thank you.

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: I need a
17 minute to find the number of green taxis that are- in
18 total. Do you have- but-

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: You can get back to
20 me.
21

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2 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: There are only
3 19 that are wheelchair accessible of the fleet of-

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: [interposing] I see.
5 Yeah, perhaps something you can work on to get them
6 to convert their cars to wheelchair accessible or get
7 more drivers.

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Well, there's-
9 the trend is that there's less and less green taxis
10 each year. They're not renewing, whether they're, you
11 know, moving over to be an FHV. Like, you know, is
12 part of it.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI: There are
14 652 green cabs total citywide.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I see. Okay, thank
16 you. My next question is about the drivers. Let's
17 say, Commissioner, you're the driver and where would
18 you- in any part of the New York City, where can you
19 go if you need to go to the bathroom?

20 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Not a lot of
21 places. We do work closely with DOT for taxi relief
stands to try to coordinate to where they're putting
taxi relief stands so that they're close to places
that would have a restroom room that would be
available. There's over 100 taxi relief stands across

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2 the city, and we do coordinate with DOT to try to
3 have them put them—

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: [interposing] Okay.
5 Are there 100 bathrooms near these taxi relief
6 stands?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: That—

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DIGIOVANNI:
9 [interposing] So most of the relief stands are
10 located in areas where there are private businesses
11 that the— or houses of worship or other places that
12 drivers congregate. So for example, in Manhattan,
13 there might be a taxi relief stand near a lot of
14 restaurants that drivers go to.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, I get it, I
16 get it. They were going to the restaurants or
17 businesses and asked, may I use the bathroom? This is
18 closely tied to the public bathroom problem of New
19 York City that go back, I mean, when I was a kid. My—
20 they are— there are plans to build more bathrooms. Is
21 that right?

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Yes, the
23 Mayor's committed \$4 million for public restrooms.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, and my
25 suggestion to you is that it's something you could

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2 look into. Reach out to Uber and Lyft because they're
3 drivers, right? And then you work with them and have
4 them maintain some of these bathrooms.

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: I'll take that
6 back.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You can keep asking
8 questions.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah. Oh, huh?

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You can keep asking.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Oh, sure. Yeah, so
12 this is something, something that actually came from
13 drivers in my district. They actually make that
14 recommendation. You know, you want to— if the budget
15 is—

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: [interposing]
17 It's a very interesting recommendation.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: If budget is a
19 problem, reach out. Hey, it's your drivers, you know,
20 why don't you contribute in maintaining the
21 bathrooms? You know, right?

ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: We do
understand. We do agree that that's a problem for
drivers, that there needs to be more access to
restrooms. And between the mayor's commitment to put

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2 more public restrooms on the street, our work with
3 DOT, that to work with the industry, that's a new one
4 that I don't know of us considering.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I think they will
6 love the idea.

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: It's
8 interesting.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I think they will
10 love the- better yet, reach out to the other drivers,
11 you know, FedEx, UPS, you know. They need to go too.
12 Yeah, that- yeah, that's right. Thank you. Thank you,
13 Chair. Oh, actually, I have one more.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Please go ahead.

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: Sure.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: In my district, most
17 of the complaints about app-based drivers have to do
18 with aggressive driving. And the answer they often
19 get is, oh, reach out to Uber or Lyft, you know, if
20 you have a problem with the driver, or they deny your
21 service once they see you, or, you know, I don't want
to- you know, I don't want to do this, you know.
Does TLC keep track of these bad apples, you know,
and what is being done as a matter of discipline?

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: We encourage
3 anyone, any passenger in any type of TLC-regulated
4 vehicle, if they have any issue whatsoever, whether
5 it's about fare, whether it's about driver courtesy,
6 whether it's about the drive— the quality of the
7 driving, that they file a consumer complaint with
8 311. And we do take those very seriously, and people
9 are filing complaints which is what we want them to
do so that we can address the— where there's bad
apples.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: And what is the
11 disciplinary action for these, like, repeated
violations? Like—

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: [interposing]
13 It varies.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Like most in my
15 districts are speeding, running red lights, run stop
signs. Yeah.

16 GENERAL COUNSEL ELUTO: Sure. What's the
17 value besides the fines or the points on the license.
18 If they reach six points on their license— so you're
19 combining the DMV points and the TLC points, you
20 could be suspended. At 10 points, you could be
21 revoked.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I see. Alright, and
3 do you get more complaints from the- from the yellow
4 taxis, or you get more complaints on these app-based
5 drivers? Do you have their figures?

6 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: I don't know,
7 but I could certainly get a breakdown and share that
8 with you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay, please. Thank
10 you. Thank you. Thank you, Chair. No more questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You sure?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright. I just want
14 to thank you, Council Member Wong. You've been here
15 since the very early morning and appreciate your
16 commitment to your constituents. I will now excuse
17 this panel. I want to thank you so much for
18 testifying. And if you can get back to us on the
19 things you said you would get us, that would be
20 great. Take care.

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER HINES: And that one
by tomorrow.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sounds good.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Everyone have a seat.
We're about to begin. Chair, you may begin.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Hello, hello, good
3 afternoon. I'm now going to turn it over to our
4 Committee Counsel Theodore Miller to administer the
5 oath.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next
7 panel will be from the Department of Design and
8 Construction: Eduardo del Valle, Acting Commissioner,
9 Eric Macfarlane, First Deputy Commissioner, and
10 Nathan Toth, Chief Financial Officer. I will now
11 administer the oath. Please raise your right hands.
12 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
13 nothing but the truth before this committee, and to
14 respond honestly to council member questions?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I do.

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER TOTH: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may now
18 begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You may read your
20 opening.

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Good
afternoon, Chair Abreu and members of the committee.
I'm Eduardo del Valle, the Acting Commissioner for
the New York City Department of Design and
Construction, and I'm very pleased to appear before

2 you today. I was— First, Deputy Commissioner
3 Macfarlane will shortly join us. In fact, here he is,
4 as well as Chief Financial Officer Nathan Toth and
5 other members of the DDC leadership team. Fiscal year
6 2026 has been a period of growth and improvements at
7 DDC, as well as opportunity to demonstrate that many
8 of the construction reforms that we have been
9 advocating for the city and in Albany are working and
10 delivering the benefits we anticipated. DDC continues
11 to grow its portfolio and take on the city's largest
12 design and construction challenges. In that spirit,
13 I'll share how this year marked a significant step in
14 realizing the benefits of alternate project delivery
15 as compared to the traditional system of low-bid
16 contracting. We've also made progress on other major
17 programs including borough-based jails, coastal
18 resiliency, and green infrastructure. We are
19 improving the way we pay our vendors and the way the
20 city plans its capital improvements. We detail our
21 work in a new edition of the Strategic Blueprint,
which was published back in August. I will talk about
those developments in a moment, but first I will
share our budget overview for this year. DDC builds
on behalf of more than 25 city agencies plus numerous

2 museums, cultural organizations, and other nonprofits
3 that receive funding from the city. The January
4 capital commitment plan for 2020– FY26 contains \$5.8
5 billion in new planned investments. The figure
6 includes over \$2 billion for infrastructure projects,
7 as close to \$1.6 billion for public buildings and
8 support portfolio, and \$2.2 billion for the
9 Borough-based Jails Program. Capital spending for DDC
10 varies year over year as it is dictated by the
11 agencies that sponsor our projects and the funding we
12 received from them. We advise sponsors as to scope
13 and cost, but ultimately we rely on our agencies to
14 dictate policies and priorities. DDC's FY 2027
15 operating budget is \$163 million. This includes \$132
16 million of personnel services and \$31 million of
17 other-than-personnel services. Our budgeted headcount
18 is 1,207. Our total operating budget includes \$143
19 million in IFA funding and \$20 million in city tax
20 levy funding. In public buildings, we have 21
21 projects in the initiation phase, 62 projects in
active design, 38 in procurement, and 118 in
construction, with a total value of these projects at
approximately \$15.6 billion. In infrastructure, we
have 22 projects in initiation phase, 126 in active

2 design, 46 in procurement, and 91 in construction,
3 with a total value of about \$13.11 billion. I'm very
4 pleased to report that we have reached a significant
5 milestone in our design-build portfolio. For years,
6 we have advocated for design-build so that we could
7 build more quickly. And thanks to our partners in
8 both the city and the state, we're celebrating a new
9 era of construction efficiency. Last month, we opened
10 the Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center, among the
11 city's first fully public design-build projects. It
12 was completed in just three years, which is half the
13 time for similar public building projects using
14 lowest bidder contracting method on a typical
15 timeline. This \$141 million project was delivered on
16 time and also on budget with an anticipated cost
17 savings, as a matter of fact, of about 10 percent.
18 With lowest bidder contracting, this project would
19 not have been completed any sooner than 2028. The
20 recreation center was designed by the world-renowned
21 architectural firm Studio Gang, and a review of the
building last month in New York Magazine COLE [sic],
its architectural "that invites to come, stay, and
enjoy." The building is also one of only three
citywide to achieve LEED Platinum for environmental

2 sustainability under version four of the LEED
3 program. These results demonstrate the benefit that
4 design-build and other alternative delivery methods
5 can provide. It's faster, it's more efficient,
6 mitigates delays, and it still provides for superior
7 designs through a comprehensive public review
8 process. All six of our original design-build pilot
9 projects will be completed by the end of this year.
10 Other design-build projects nearing completion
11 include Marlboro Greenhouse in Brooklyn, which will
12 be completed this summer, and the Brownsville
13 Multi-Service Center, which would also be completed
14 this summer. We're hard at work building our CM-Build
15 pilot program as well. We were cleared to use
16 CM-Build by the state for library and cultural
17 projects. We already have five projects in our pilot
18 program, including the renovation of 70 Mulberry
19 Street in Chinatown. Last year at this hearing, DDC
20 informed this committee about our advanced capital
21 planning effort. We have completed our advanced
Capital Planning Program data portal, and we're
starting on the building assessment tool to augment
the data the city already gathers about its own
properties. A comprehensive planning program is in

the works. We currently have pilot programs with the Queens and Brooklyn Public Library systems, and we will continue to grow the overall program. We've also made progress in how we process payments for our construction vendors, with a goal of reducing the administrative burden and making DDC a more desirable partner to work with. We've standardized our forms, we've removed numerous redundant and onerous paperwork requirements. We also work with a payment task force to assess on an ongoing basis what works and what doesn't work. We're also developing similar reforms for payments to consultants. The borough-based jails program continues to be our largest overall program as well as our largest alternative delivery program. Since we last appeared before this committee, site preparation for Manhattan, the last of our early works sites, has been completed, and we intend to start early works construction on that site this spring. The Brooklyn facility remains furthest along. With top-out scheduled to be achieved next month. We continue to seek design input from local communities with design workshops in Queens, the Bronx, and Manhattan, which are scheduled for the rest of this month and into

April. All four sites have benefited greatly from the use of design-build contracting and would have taken several additional years to design and construct if we had used the lowest bidder contracting method. As we reported in the new PMMR, DDC remains a leading agency in contract awards and payments to minority and women-owned business enterprises. In fiscal year 2025, DDC's MWBE participation was 33.6 percent of all contracts subject to Local Law 1 of 2013. There were over \$1 billion in awards to city-certified NWBEs, nearly half the \$2.2 billion awarded to MWBEs citywide. As reported in the latest One NYC MWBE Bulletin, Fiscal Year '15 through Fiscal Year '25, DDC remains the leading city agency in awards to MWBEs with over \$6.8 billion awarded to MWBEs since the start of the One NYC MWBE program back in fiscal year 2015. We're very proud of these accomplishments. We're growing our MWBE participation in the alternative delivery program as well. We continue to set ambitious and desegregated MWBE goals in both design and construction portion of our design-build contracts, and we are seeing the result of these efforts. Also, it's worth noting that DDC capital projects have begun using the new community hiring

2 goals, which aim for 30 percent of construction trade
3 labor hours to be completed by NYCHA residents or
4 individuals who live in low-income communities
5 defined by zip code. At the Shirley Chisholm
6 Recreation Center, we had 36 percent overall MWBE
7 utilization, and 37 percent of the total work hours
8 were performed by people hired through HireNYC. Our
9 coastal resiliency efforts expanded in September when
10 we began a new \$218 million project in Red Hook,
11 Brooklyn. That project includes public space
12 improvements and is expected to be completed by the
13 summer of '28. We continue to make progress on the
14 East Side Coastal Resiliency, ESCAR, and Brooklyn
15 Bridge-Montgomery Coastal Resiliency, BMCR, in Lower
16 Manhattan, and expect to have BMCR completed before
17 the end of the year, with ESCAR several months after
18 that. In all, we intend to build 5,750 linear feet of
19 coastal flood protection in the current fiscal year.
20 We're also expanding our green infrastructure program
21 to help meet the challenges presented by intense
storms and rainfall and climate change. And in the
first four months of the current fiscal year, we
installed almost 30,000 square feet of porous
pavement, with another 70,000 planned for this, for

1 this fiscal year. In closing, as DDC's
2 responsibilities and portfolio expand, it remains
3 critical that we find new ways to be faster and more
4 efficient. We also recognize that delivering capital
5 projects in New York City remain complex and
6 challenging, and we continue to work with our partner
7 agencies to shorten project timelines whenever
8 possible. We continue to deliver additional public
9 buildings like libraries, cultural institutions for
10 DCLA, firehouses and EMS stations for FDNY, plus new
11 plazas, streets, and enhanced pedestrian safety
12 measures, and new water mains for our sponsors DOT
13 and DEP. We have proven that cities— that the city's
14 construction process can be improved, and we have the
15 opportunity to take our progress even further and
16 expand it to other types of projects. We will
17 continue to advocate for New Yorkers and to build on
18 these efforts in the future. Thank you again for the
19 opportunity to testify today.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much,
18 Deputy Commissioner. I'm going to ask questions on
19 the pedestrian ramp upgrades. In the fiscal 2026-2030
20 preliminary capital plan, there is \$107.7 million
21 across the plan added for simple upgrades to

2 pedestrian ramps throughout the city. What is the
3 scope of the project?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So the
5 pedestrian- the scope of that project includes a-
6 about- I think it was- let's see. I want to get you
7 the number exactly, but- so, the, the scope includes-
8 at this point, we have nine active projects in the
9 initial phase with approximate value of \$158 million,
10 37 active projects in the design phase with a value
11 of \$528 million, and 28 active projects with a value
12 of \$478 million for a total of 81 active projects.
13 And obviously these are to bring the corners in
14 compliance with federal ADA requirements. We're also
15 improving drainage at these corners as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'll now turn over to
17 Committee Counsel to administer the oath of the- Mr.
18 Macfarlane.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, sorry, just
20 because you came in late. Do you affirm to tell the
21 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
before this committee, and to respond honestly to
council member questions?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MACFARLANE: I
do.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks.

3 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, getting back
4 to pedestrian ramp upgrades, why was funding
5 increased so significantly since the adopted capital
6 plan?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I believe
8 that initially assumptions were made on the
9 conditions as they were known at the time. As
10 engineering and design progressed and actual field
11 conditions were identified, the scope was adjusted
12 accordingly.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And what is the status
14 of this project, and what is the updated timeline for
15 completion?

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So would
17 you like to take that, Eric?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MACFARLANE:
19 Eric Mcfarlane, First Deputy Commissioner of DDC.
20 This project is the-- involved the upgrading of over
21 6,000-- 600,000 corners in the city. Each corner has
about eight, average eight ped ramps. So you can
imagine how much-- what we're talking about. And some
of these, as Commissioner de Valle mentioned, some of
them are complex, meaning that we have to relocate

2 catch basins in order to provide the drainage, proper
3 drainage. We have to look at catch basins. Once you
4 involve— when you start digging the street, you're
5 involved with the utilities and all kind of
6 complexities. That's— all traffic signal has to be
7 removed. So that's a complex part. There are simple
8 ped ramps where you just go and just replace them,
9 right? So initially when we started that program, I
10 was— it was a 29-year duration you're talking about,
11 because it's a long-term project, almost \$5 billion,
12 more than 15 years— well, 29 years. We are shortening
13 it a little bit more. So what we are trying to do
14 right now is we realize that that's a long time. So
15 we sort of increased the amount of contract that we
16 put it out to a reasonable degree, because let's say
17 we put two contracts per borough, talk about 10
18 contract over \$21 million each. So it's a— so the
19 constraints are not only the capacity capacity of the
20 industry to respond to this, but also the amount of
21 budget involved— the budgetary involved. So we're
making every effort to sort of increase— try to
shorten the duration as much as we can, but it's a
long-term project.

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: And of
3 course, we execute these projects as the sponsors
4 provide us with the required funding and the scope.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for that.
6 Now I want to turn our— turn to the topic of
7 reconstructed road miles. According to the PMMR, DDC
8 completed 7.8 miles of roadway lane mile construction
9 in the first four months of fiscal 2026, compared to
10 10.6 miles that were completed in the first four
11 months of fiscal 2024. In fiscal 2024, DDC completed
12 only 20.3 lane miles, much less when compared to
13 fiscal 2023 when they constructed a total of 33.6
14 roadway lane miles, and significantly less than the
15 60.6 lane miles that were completed in fiscal 2021.
16 Why has roadway lane mile reconstruction been
17 declining over the past few years, and why have they
18 declined in recent months?

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So, as
20 alluded to earlier, we build the projects that are
21 originated by the sponsor agencies. We do not
determine the scope, the timing, or the budget. So,
in this case, we work with DOT, and they provide us
with the magnitude of the work that they desire to do
on any given year.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Does DDC need
3 additional headcount to operate at higher capacity,
4 and what other resources are needed?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: No.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You don't need
7 anything else? Come on now.

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: We're
9 fine. We as— and we're moving forward in terms of
10 backfilling the many vacancies that we have.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'll fight for more.
12 I'll try to fight for more.

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Appreciate
14 that.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm now going to turn
16 over to borough-based jails. DDC manages the project
17 to build the borough-based jails. It is currently the
18 largest project in DDC's portfolio, totaling \$11.84
19 billion across the preliminary capital commitment
20 plan. DDC is awarding separate design-build contracts
21 for each of the four new facilities, as well as early
works packages for each of the facilities, for a
total of nine contracts. What is the current status
of the borough-based jails project?

2 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So
3 currently, as you may know, all of the early
4 projects, the five, have been completed, and we have
5 at this point closed out all of those projects. With
6 regards to the new facilities, we have awarded all of
7 the- all of those contracts as well. And we are
8 looking to complete the Brooklyn facility, which is
9 the one that's furthest along, by the first quarter
10 of '29. The Queens facilities is scheduled to be
11 completed by the third quarter of '31. The Bronx
12 facility will complete by the first quarter of '31,
13 and the Manhattan facility will complete by the first
14 quarter of '32. At this point, as I pointed out
15 earlier, we are- we'll be ready to top off Brooklyn,
16 meaning we will reach the very last level of that
17 high-rise jail in April.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright. Well, that
19 was pretty detailed. Thank you for that. Why have
20 there been consistent delays?

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So the
procurement process for the new facilities was
launched just prior to the start of the pandemic. And
in addition to delays associated with this crisis,
the initial pool of qualified and financially viable

design-builders interested in participating in the procurement of these mega-projects was actually very limited, with one eventually dropping out in the middle of the procurement process, leaving us with an even shallower pool, of potential proposers. It was decided in early '21 to reset the procurement process. We engaged the industry to identify the reasons for the lack of interest in the previous procurement process. Coming out of this industry outreach efforts, we calibrated our procurement strategy. The most significant change was switching from lump sum to guaranteed maximum price, or GMP. NTP. And this pivot was better suited for the mega projects. And so it generated a much higher level of interest among the larger design-builders. From that point on- it's important to understand that- from that point on, we have stayed on schedule for the procurement and the in-market phase and awarded all contracts as per schedule. And upon issuance of the NTP, for each one of these design-builders, we have stayed on schedule delivering design and construction work in accordance with the contract delivery requirements for each one of these projects.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What is the plan to
3 ensure that the jails can handle the full capacity of
4 the current system?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So, we are
6 designing these jails to house 1,040 persons in
7 custody per facility and for a total of 4,160. That
8 was a number that I was arrived at by- or in
9 consultation with MOCJ and DOC and City Hall a few
10 years back. And I cannot speak as to the capacity
11 seizures [sic] associated with operations for DOC, or
12 how it was anticipated back by MOCJ. But, we are
13 building for 4,160 as dictated by scope.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: The timing of this
15 work behind this window is not a good- it's not a
16 good one. Given that the last jail will be built by
17 2032, is it fair to say that Rikers won't close until
18 2032, then?

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I think
20 that that's a fair statement.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What is the plan- if
there is overflow, how is DDC and the city planning
to address that?

ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I know
that DOC and MOCJ have been involved in a different

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 291
2 effort and initiative regarding that. I cannot speak
3 to that as an operational issue.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What is the current
5 cost estimate for the completion of each of the
6 facilities? You gave me that number, I believe,
7 right?

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Yes, we
9 do have- the total- the total package including the
10 early works that have already been accomplished is
11 approximately \$16 billion.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. DDC manages
13 a large portfolio of capital projects being completed
14 for non-city entities such as 501 nonprofit
15 organizations. How many non-city projects does the
16 DDC currently manage?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Many. I
18 don't have an exact number. I can definitely get back
19 to you with those details.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That would be great. I
21 have heard from a number of organizations that have
22 been awarded funding for non-city capital projects
23 that once funding was allocated, they were not
24 provided- they were not provided with any roadmap for
25 how the process worked. What is DDC's protocol for

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2 contacting groups once a non-City Capital project is
3 in the budget?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: That's a
5 fair statement, actually. We— and this is something
6 that we have identified as an issue, and we are— we
7 have been over the past several months in the process
8 of developing standard operating procedures that will
9 be posted online. Then we will bring in those
10 organizations to train them on how to basically
11 submit the paperwork that they need to submit, and
12 providing checklists and, and training is something
13 that is now being worked on.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And can you provide us
15 with a summary of your internal timeline for these
16 projects?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I can get
18 back to you on that.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sounds good. In the FY
20 26-30 preliminary capital plan, \$5.1 million was
21 moved from fiscal '29 to fiscal 2026 for raised
crosswalks design-build. Why was funding shifted?

ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So funding
was advanced by OMB based on the current progress of
the project.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Can you repeat that?

3 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So the
4 funding was advanced by OMB based on the progress of
5 the project.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And what is the
7 current scope of this project? How many locations are
8 DDC looking at for this project, and what does the
9 work entail?

10 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Right, so
11 this is a design-build project, and it entails 127
12 locations across all five boroughs. And the
13 procurement has been packaged in seven packages. And,
14 of course, it includes raised sidewalks, crosswalks,
15 as well as ped ramps, and utility work, catch basin
16 improvements, and so forth. So, at this point, we're
17 looking to start the work this summer and complete by
18 the summer of '28.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are these DDC workers
20 distracting us here?

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Call
DCAS.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Oh boy. Where—
alright, I can't— I got to stop joking around. What

2 is the updated timeline for completion for these
3 raised crosswalks?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So, uh,
5 we're looking to complete by the summer of '28.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I have to say, y'all
7 are answering my questions and I really appreciate
8 it, really appreciate that. It's not always that I
9 get my answers to questions, so I have to say thank
10 you for that. In the first four months of fiscal
11 2026, 54 percent of eligible projects completed a
12 post-construction customer satisfaction survey, up
13 from 21 percent in the same period of fiscal 2025. Of
14 the 18 surveys returned, only 29 percent of
15 respondents rated the completed project as adequate
16 or better, a 71 percentage point decrease in
17 favorable responses from the same period of fiscal
18 2025. Most of these responses were about a particular
19 project which required the construction team to be on
20 site longer than anticipated, in part due to utility
21 delays. What is DDC doing to better coordinate with
utilities and improve delay times?

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So, as
23 you may know, joint bidding is one of our most
24 important initiatives, and it's critical that we get

2 an extension of it, multi-year extension, not a
3 year-to-year extension as we have been getting over
4 the past couple of years, to ensure that the
5 coordination with the private utilities is adequate,
6 that they do the pre-engineering as they should, and
7 that we identify to the greatest extent that we can
8 all of the underground conditions as we do
9 infrastructure work. So, I think that a key component
10 in improving that metric is to ensure that we get the
11 multi-year joint bidding legislation approved by
12 Albany.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I was going to say we
14 need a city legislation. I mean, we would be happy to
15 look into it, but it seems like it's a state issue,
16 right?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: My last set of
19 questions before I pass it on to Council Member Wong.
20 DDC's contract budget is only \$3 million and you
21 spend \$131 million on personnel. What efficiencies
has DDC's Chief Savings Officer identified in their
budget? Are there any in headcount?

ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So I have-
the Chief Savings Officer is right here with us.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are you the Chief
3 Savings Officer?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Yes.

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER TOTH: I am. I'm a
6 bunch of things.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. You wear a lot
8 of hats, I see.

9 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER TOTH: Yeah, it's
10 CFO and CSO for the hearing, but a bunch of stuff.
11 Yes. So basically, we have identified it. And, as you
12 know already, most of our fund— and as my
13 commissioner has testified, most of our funding is
14 from Interfund Agreement, which comes from capital
15 budget. So when the CSOs were tasked with finding 1.5
16 percent in FY '26 and 2.5 percent from '27 going out,
17 they asked us, or me and DDC, to find savings in the
18 city tax levy. So it's a very small percentage of our
19 budget as it compared to the— you see the \$130
20 million in PS. We have— let me just give you the
21 exact right number. But if you're looking at a— our
PS number for tax levy is \$10 million out of that
\$132 million. So out of that, we are asked to take
half of our vacancies, and that's in addition to the
1.5 and the 2.5 percent we were tasked with savings.

2 And we came up— frankly, we came up with a proposal
3 that we submitted to OMB. OMB has been very good
4 working with us on it, and we're trying to come to an
5 agreement where we meet the full funding, uh,
6 requirement, and we kind of save some of those
7 vacancies, because the— you know, the vacancies are
8 very important to our front-end planning units and
9 advanced capital planning, and they can actually save
10 the city hundreds and tens of hundreds of millions of
11 dollars in capital. So we wouldn't want to, you know,
12 make a cut to those guys and lose a bunch of savings
13 in capital. So that's what I know we've provided, and
14 OMB has been very agreeable to it so far. It's not
15 been accepted, but it's been something that they
16 didn't react harshly to. So it's good.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Has DDC considered
18 contracting out more work?

19 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: So we— not
20 more work than what we contract out now. We do quite
21 a bit of in-house work, design work and
infrastructure, less in public buildings. But we do
the bulk of our design work— is farmed out to firms
around the city.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And my last question
3 is, how often does DDC revise their headcount in
4 terms of efficiency, and when was the last time?

5 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I'm going
6 to turn to you on that, Nathan.

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER TOTH: Alright.
8 Well, we are— I will just tell you that we are
9 constantly revising it. We're constantly looking at
10 it. And as far as efficiencies go, we are actually
11 allowed to recruit— I'm going to just say this. We're
12 allowed to recruit over our headcount because we're
13 IFA funded, so we have to constantly recruit. I will,
14 tell you that in my time here at DDC, we have seen a
15 lot of separations. I've seen a lot of— it's very
16 hard for us to get to the headcount level we want to
17 get to. We're putting— get— and all kudos to our HR
18 department. They're doing a great job of just getting
19 everybody in. We've got, you know, some salary
20 barriers for civil service and things like that. Just
21 like, you know, just the things we have to work
around that puts us a little bit of a competitive
disadvantage to the private sector. But we're doing a
good job. We're trying to really keep ourselves at a
good level. And also, you know, pre-pandemic we had a

2 much higher headcount, and then it went down because,
3 listen, pandemic, everybody had to take, you know,
4 just the belt tightening and everything else. And
5 frankly, where our capital budget itself- I'm sorry,
6 we don't have a capital budget. The budget of our
7 sponsors and the prod- the budget of the sponsor
8 agencies we manage is much higher than it was
9 pre-pandemic, and we're doing it with less people.
10 And I will tell you, as you should- efficiency is
11 defined as doing more with less. But I mean, we're at
12 some point, it becomes you can't do it. So I mean,
13 are we- we're right there and we're very good and
14 we're doing it. But, you know, we got to stay at
15 least this level, I would say.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Well, thank you. I
17 want to let the record reflect that I acknowledge
18 that there have been- there are seven green ties in
19 the room. I see a lot of green sweaters and shirts,
20 and I appreciate the solidarity on St. Patty's Day.
21 Council Member Wong?

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay, thank you,
19 Chair. I actually have three questions, bear with me.
20 Number 1 is regarding in my district. There's a
21 reconstruction on 80th Street between Caldwell Avenue

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2 and 58th Avenue where sewer lines were replaced. The
3 street was closed for like two years, including
4 sidewalks and the road. The whole road was closed,
5 alternatively, like, they were— they closed this side
6 and they closed the other side. Residents lost access
7 to their driveways and then their sidewalks. Here's
8 the issue, the project lasted for a very long time,
9 and residents are now being billed for sidewalk work
10 that they did not ask for. In other words, the vendor
11 replaced the sidewalk as part of the digging. They
12 broke the sidewalk and the residents got billed, and
13 they found out only when they received the latest tax
14 bill. That's how ridiculous it is, alright? And
15 first, they weren't told that they will get billed,
16 and they didn't even ask, hey, we're going to do your
17 sidewalk, you know. So my question focuses on
18 transparency, fairness, and preventing similar
19 situations from happening again. Was it DDC that
20 determined that homeowners should be billed for these
21 sidewalk repairs? I mean, who made that
determination? That's my first question. Please,
please answer. Yeah.

ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: It was not
DDC, and I believe that there's a another meeting

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2 that's been scheduled with Finance in regards to this
3 as well. We will be happy to participate as well with
4 you and Finance on that meeting,

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: [interposing] Yeah,
6 because-

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE:
8 [interposing] But it was not DDC.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: bills were coming to
10 my office and total is over \$80,000 in repairs, and
11 it's a big surprise to many seniors who rely on fixed
12 income. How are they going to- where they gonna come
13 up that money?

14 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE:
15 Understood. Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. And then And
17 hopefully, DDC could work with the Department of
18 Finance to ensure that there are no penalties and
19 then no interest applied when this issue is under
20 review, because this is very, very frustrating. The
21 residents just is so angry right now, you know?

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Sure.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: And I get blamed.
24 Yeah. It's my fault. Yeah, that's right, though. That
25 was- it's your fault. It's you. It's you. Okay. My

2 next issue is Grand Slope staircase, it's a park.

3 There's a stair at Grand Slope Park. There's a

4 staircase, it's 15 steps. Okay, bear with me. Let me

5 explain to you and then I'll come to a question. This

6 15-step staircase was cracked for many years and DDC

7 worked on it, I believe, last year and they replaced

8 the 15 steps. But from the day the funding was

9 secured, it was secured by Council Member Daniel

10 Dromm, it was exactly three years and 8 months ago

11 from the day that money was allocated to the day the

12 stairs were completed- three years and 8 months. The

13 total cost was \$400,000. If you do the math, it's

14 \$26,666 per staircase. Now, the reason I know,

15 because I was the one who went to Council Member

16 Dromm and told him please fix the stairs. Alright, so

17 he allocated our funding. I waited and I waited, and

18 I've been following because that was the end of my

19 block. That's where I live. Alright, and I just want

20 to tell you how insane the cost could be, because

21 there's a general contractor that live in my block

who said that he could do it over the weekend for

\$500 and a six-pack of beer. The truth. That's the

truth. Okay. So I just- I just find it very, very

outrageous. Yes, there's design, and yes, there's

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2 bidding, but I just don't see why it could cost so
3 much. Can you- can you talk about that?

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I- is
5 that what- what's that, a DDC job or-

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: [interposing] Yes,
7 it is. Yes, it is.

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: a Parks-

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: [interposing] I
10 have- well, I'll look up my pictures. There's a
11 contract number too.

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Okay,
13 well, yeah, I don't have an answer. I mean, \$26,000
14 per step. I can see how that could inflame anybody.
15 Yeah, I don't have an answer. I really don't.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah, because again,
17 perhaps for these- I treat this as a small job
18 because we're not building the whole park. It was
19 just fixing the staircase, and then it could take so
20 long and with involving so much money of so much tax
21 dollars, and then I felt it's unjustified. It could
have done better and it could have been done sooner.
Right. Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Yep.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Next. Now my next
3 question is 70 Mulberry Street. In your statement,
4 you said there is— you have five projects in our
5 pilot program, CM-Build pilot program. I don't know
6 what it is. If you can talk about it, that would be
7 great. That includes the renovation of 70 Mulberry
8 Street. Now that building— sorry, yeah. That building
9 is significant because on January 23rd, 2020, there
10 was like a three-alarm fire that pretty much burned
11 down the building. And that was— that housed many
12 nonprofits and a senior center and a museum, right?
13 And the reason I'm mentioning, because what that used
14 to be PS23, and I used to go to that school. I
15 learned my English there. That's why I'm here asking
16 the question. Do you have an update for the community
17 and what has been happening since the fire? And, of
18 course, what is this CM-Build program that you're
19 talking about?

20 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Right. So
21 the CM-Build program is one of the alternative
delivery program methods that we're using in addition
to design-build to expedite delivery of these
projects. So, understanding that this job is deal for
CM-Build, meaning that we will bring on a consultant,

2 an architect, and as he develops the design, we'll
3 bring on a CM, a construction manager, to then work
4 with the architect not only to try to expedite but
5 also to perform the work as efficiently as possible
6 in terms of cost and time. And so that's why we use
7 the CM-Build on this job, because we know how
8 important it is to the community. It's very close, as
9 you know, to the BBJ facility in Manhattan, in
10 Chinatown. And so we realize that the type of synergy
11 that needs to be developed in terms of project
12 development for 70 Mulberry needs to be in sync with
13 what we're doing at the BBJ facility too. We don't
14 want these jobs to be trampling over each other. So
15 at this point, we are in the procurement phase, and
16 that means we are about to hire an architect to get
17 started.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Are you keeping the
19 first two floors? I mean or you're- or most of it
20 will be demolished?

21 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: I think we
are preserving the facade, which the community had
expressed was historically significant and
culturally, but the structure was really, really in

2 bad shape. It was damaged beyond repair, and it's
3 just better to redo it than to repair it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I see. Okay, thank
5 you. Thank you for the update.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Council
7 Member Wong. I also want to tip my hat off to the
8 Acting Commissioner. The patron color of St. Patrick
9 is blue, not green. So, thank you so much for coming
10 today. We really appreciate you, really appreciate
11 your time. This panel is excused.

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER DEL VALLE: Thank you.

13 [break]

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are we rolling?
15 Alright, I now open the hearing for public testimony.
16 I understand that there are folks who are signed up
17 to speak at four o'clock online. We'll make sure to
18 keep the hearing open, but we want to take advantage
19 of the fact that we have people people here now, but
20 want to reiterate, we will keep the hearing open for
21 folks who are signed up online, or folks wish to come
in person at 4:00 will be here, but we'll get
started. I remind members of the public that this is
a government proceeding and that decorum shall be
observed at all times. As such, members of the public

2 shall remain silent at all times. The witness table
3 is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video
4 recording or photography is allowed from the witness
5 table. Further, members of the public may not present
6 audio or video recordings as testimony but may submit
7 transcripts of such recordings to the
8 Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.
9 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill
10 out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms and
11 wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will have
12 two minutes to speak on today's hearing topics, that
13 is, the calendar year 2026 Adopted Budget and the
14 2026-2029 Financial Plan of the Metropolitan
15 Transportation Authority, the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary
16 Plan, the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Capital Commitment
17 Plan and the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Mayor's
18 Management Report for the following city agencies:
19 Department of Transportation, the Taxi Limousine
20 Commission, and the Department of Design and
21 Construction. If you have written— if you have a
written statement or additional written testimony you
wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy
of that testimony to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may
also email written testimony to

2 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this
3 hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be
4 accepted. I will now call on the first panel. Just
5 give me one second. Oh, I have it right here.
6 Beginning first with Jean Ryan. Thank you for being
7 here, as of nine o'clock this morning, and appreciate
8 your patience. Michael Ring, Monica Bartley, and
9 Rasheta Bunting. Michael, my apologies. Do we need
10 additional seating or tables? Alright, we'll make
11 sure to put her on this— on the next panel. We'll
12 just get started. Yeah, we can hear you.

13 JEAN RYAN: Hi, I'm Jean Ryan, President
14 of Disabled in Action of Metropolitan New York, and I
15 am testifying about issues facing the MTA, DOT, and
16 TLC that affect people with disabilities. Of course,
17 there are many other issues that affect us. DIA wants
18 the TLC to reinstate the accessible dispatch program
19 with trained dispatchers so that the people with
20 disabilities, including people with speech
21 differences, can call on the phone and get a person
who understands our needs and can dispatch a taxi
that comes to where we are anywhere in the city. The
people who are there at this TLC program now are not
able to get a vehicle to us, and we get stranded at

home or elsewhere. This is very urgent because every day that this program remains like it is now is a day that people with disabilities are stranded. Taxis refuse to pick us— pick up wheelchair users who try to hail them. We are asking the MTA to look into low-floor coach-type express buses that have a ramp instead of a lift so that wheelchair users can reliably get onto and off the express bus and take it like anyone else does instead of being left at the curb or having to be removed from the bus by the New York Fire Department, as often happens now. They say all their buses are accessible, but in reality, the current buses are not accessible when it is a complicated system that drivers are unable to use reliably, especially on nights and weekends when there are many fill-in drivers. Nothing has changed much in 25 years. Wheelchair users and other people with mobility problems need access. We are feeling the count— we are telling the Council and DOT that we want outdoor dining to be 100 percent accessible to wheelchairs. It has been the requirement since at least 2020, but there seems to be zero enforcement of accessibility for outdoor dining. What good is a rule if—

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] You can
3 finish.

4 JEAN RYAN: Thank you— if not followed? We
5 also want any outdoor restrooms to be fully ADA
6 compliant so that we can use them too. And lastly, we
7 want the DOT to pick up the pace making curb cuts at
8 corners because there are so many bad or missing
9 ones, including at and right around Union Square in
10 Manhattan. Now it's dangerous to be there in a
11 wheelchair and try to cross the street. We need
12 high-contrast domed ramps at every crossing, not
13 fancy stones or cement that might be a slightly
14 different color so that everyone can safely cross the
15 street. And one thing I want to add, DD— I don't know
16 if it's DDC or DCAS that's in charge of access to 80
17 Center Street, but we need a safe and accessible
18 entry and exit there. We want a permanent ramp on
19 Center Street like the one at 100 Center Street,
20 because it's totally dangerous to get in and out of
21 that building. And we shouldn't have to literally
risk our lives to go in for the services that that
building has, including court, DA—

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] Thank
you very much.

2 JEAN RYAN: [inaudible] center and
3 marriage center. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I appreciate that.

5 MICHAEL RING: Hi, my name is Michael
6 Ring. If anyone needs a verbal description of my
7 appearance, I'm a 62-year-old white guy that needs a
8 shave, wearing a hoodie. My hands don't work very
9 well and I'm wearing ankle braces. I'm also Second
10 Vice President of Disabled in Action. I wasn't going
11 to talk about Access-A-Ride, but Janno called me out
12 this morning and he gave me a sticker. There's a
13 program I'm in that does cost more money, because it
14 works so well. It's the Access-A-Ride On-Demand
15 program. In short, I could use Uber or Lyft in real
16 time to get to where I'm going. It costs about the
17 same per ride as being picked up by a white and blue
18 van, but it works. I could get here. I can get home
19 in real time. We've lost one of our speakers because
20 their ride showed up and they had to leave. But I can
21 leave when I'm ready to leave. But what I did want to
come here and talk about today was snow removal.
There's a concept in the disability community called
the curb curb cut effect. Building curb cuts for
people with disability was a requirement. It turns

2 out a lot of people like them— parents with
3 strollers, delivery people, people who just don't
4 want to walk up a step. Removing all the snow for
5 people with disabilities is crucial. I can't walk on
6 an icy surface. Someone using a wheelchair can't get
7 anywhere if there isn't a four-foot-wide clearance. I
8 would really hope maybe in the future if there's a
9 snow emergency, we can have a Snow Removal Czar. I
10 noticed that, you know, the Department of
11 Transportation have fleets of snow removal trucks,
12 sanitation, and the MTA, and the police department.
13 Someone should coordinate all these vehicles, all
14 these workers, and the snow could be removed a lot
15 better. And if disabled people can get around, and
16 then everyone will get around, and the city will get
17 back to normal even quicker. Thanks a lot.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, thank you. Next?

19 MONICA BARTLEY: Good afternoon. I'm
20 Monica— my name is Monica Bartley, and I'm a member
21 of Disabled in Action. I want to speak today about
the challenges that construction and sidewalk work
create for wheelchair users trying to access buses.
At many bus stops, scaffolding, construction
barriers, or temporary fencing take up space along

the curb. When this happens, there's often not enough room for the bus operator to deploy the ramp.

Sometimes the driver will try to pull forward to find a place where the ramp can be lowered safely. I appreciate those drivers who make that effort.

However, other times the driver simply indicates that there's no space to deploy the ramp and continues on.

When this happens, I'm left waiting for the next bus, which may take a long time. For people who rely on

wheelchair access, missing even one bus can mean a

very long delay. It can also make it difficult to get

to work, medical appointments, or other important

destinations on time. Construction is a normal part

of city life, but accessibility should not disappear

when there is sidewalk work. Bus stops must remain

usable for everyone, including people with

disabilities. I urge the Council to work with the

city and the MTA to ensure that construction sites do

not block accessible boarding areas at bus stops.

Contractors should be required to maintain adequate,

clear space so that bus ramps can be deployed safely.

When that is not possible, there should be clear

temporary accessible boarding areas nearby.

Accessibility is not optional. It is essential for

2 people with disabilities to participate fully in city
3 life. Thank you for your time and your attention on
4 this matter.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I appreciate your time
6 and attention to this matter. Thank you. This panel
7 is excused. Next up we have Rasheta Bunting, Zay Zay
8 Howard, Edward Funches, Glenn Bolofsky. I'll let you
9 know when to begin. Let's just wait for everyone to
10 settle. Okay. Alright. You may begin.

11 RASHETA BUNTING: Yes, thank you for
12 having me. My name is Rasheta Bunting, and I'm the
13 Vice President of the National Federation of the
14 Blind of New York State, and also on the board of
15 Disabled in Action, and also a member of the DOT
16 Disability Advisory Committee. So today I want to
17 talk about something that's dear to not just the
18 blind community, but anybody who uses— anybody with a
19 disability who uses their ears to navigate NYC. The
20 Accessible Pedestrian Signals, I'm just gonna say APS
21 in the interest of time. For years we fought for APSs
to be everywhere, and slowly but surely— it could be
a lot faster— they are popping up, especially in the
outer boroughs where there was a deficit of this.
They're here, but now we need them to be louder.

2 Blind people use our ears to navigate. As my vision
3 deteriorates more and more, I use my ears to navigate
4 the city. But like my colleague Monica just
5 expressed, the city is loud. There's a lot of
6 construction. If we're not able to hear the APSs
7 safely, even though they're on the corners, we're not
8 able to cross the street safely. Case in point, I
9 live in Canarsie. I fought hard for an APS to be at
10 the Rockaway Parkway train station, Rockaway and
11 Flatlands, Rockaway and Glenwood. Yes, the APS is
12 there, but I should not have to rely on the kindness
13 of strangers to cross me across the street. I implore
14 that the Council work in conjunction closely with the
15 DOT to make sure that not just the APSs are here in
16 the outer borough on all corners, but to make sure
17 that they are loud enough for those who do use their
18 ears to navigate the city, whatever your disability
19 is, to work properly. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, I thank you. Next?

21 ZAY ZAY HOWARD: Zay Zay Howard. Yes, I
am Zay Zay Howard.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We hear you loud and
clear.

2 ZAY ZAY HOWARD: Okay. This is Zay Zay
3 Howard. As I said previously, I am a member of 504
4 Democratic Club. I'm one of the advocates for people
5 with disabilities. I am also an Access-a-Ride user.
6 My worst experience is double parking. Sometimes you
7 are- you rushing, going to work or going for an
8 appointment. Unfortunately, you know, there is a
9 heavy truck that hindering the traffic movement of
10 Access-a-Ride. That have been one of our complaint,
11 that hindering our movement of getting to our various
12 destination on time. So we have to work on that very
13 seriously for people with disability because
14 sometimes you have a certain time to go to work or to
15 go for your doctor appointment, but when you have
16 been stopped by commercial vehicles, you-
17 unfortunately, you are late for your appointment or
18 you are late to work. It's creating a problem in the
19 disability community. And one thing I do believe,
20 what affect us people with disability affect everyone
21 because even you as able-body person, when you are on
your way to work, unfortunately, when you have been
or hindered by commercial vehicles, you will also be
late, I mean, for work. That's why I say what affect
us affect everyone.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much
3 for your testimony. Next?

4 EDWARD FUNCHES: Hello. I want to thank
5 y'all. My name is Edward Funches, and I am the
6 Founder and President of Inclusion Mobile Detailing.
7 I come here as an advocate and as a business owner.
8 As I heard all of the statements from the Department
9 of Transportation, TLC, I currently hold a contract
10 with the Department of Transportation. However, with
11 this contract that I have with them, when they- when
12 you ask them about the budget that they have, I am
13 currently rotating individuals on payroll, which is
14 unheard of. We're doing a lot of work in the city,
15 and as an advocate, you know, I drive- you know, we
16 have vans, we have five vans moving around the city.
17 I get tickets on these vans. We do not get- we have
18 to pay these tickets in full, not like these other
19 stipulation fines that people getting, you know,
20 breaks on this right here. So I'm here as an advocate
21 and as a businessman. I want to thank y'all.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Good. Anything else?

19 EDWARD FUNCHES: That's it, that's it. I'm
20 here, man.
21

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I appreciate you for
3 coming today, sir.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Can I have his extra
5 minute?

6 EDWARD FUNCHES: Yes, you could.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, you cannot. But if
8 he wants to keep speaking, I'm here for it.

9 EDWARD FUNCHES: [inaudible] I'm just
10 saying, I mean, like, I really would like to have
11 the- really sit down with somebody, man, because at
12 the end of the day, I built this company from the
13 ground up. And I hire all formerly incarcerated
14 individuals, people with disabilities, people
15 experiencing homelessness, and veterans. You know,
16 like I said, we currently have a contract with the
17 Department of Transportation, which would- extremely
18 good to us. You know, but unfortunately, we just
19 don't have enough job opportunities to change things.
20 What we do at Inclusion- you know, if you can employ
21 somebody, you empower them. And that's how you enrich
the community. And that's what we've been doing, but
we need some help.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much
for your time.

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2 EDWARD FUNCHES: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I really appreciate
4 it. Next?

5 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Okay. First of all,
6 compliment everybody for their staying power.
7 Amazing. Especially those of you who have young kids,
8 you know, it's really hard. So I'm Glen Bolofsky. I'm
9 a CPA. I'm a born and bred New Yorker, and I love New
10 York City, and I dislike what's going on in New York
11 City with the streets here. For 22 years, the
12 Department of Finance has been stepping on the toes
13 of the Committee of the Trans- Committee on
14 Transportation and on the DOT by creating a program
15 called the Stipulated Fine Program. That program
16 discounts and ignores the double parking rules that
17 applies to commercial vehicles, which is 20 minutes.
18 That's the law. But when Amazon or companies like
19 Amazon double park for more than 20 minutes, they are
20 breaking the law, but the Department of Finance turns
21 a blind eye to it and discounts those tickets,
causing individuals who are blind, like Zay Zay,
incredible safety hazards. And the double parking
that's illegal needs to stop. Why are the buses going
at 10 minutes and not at eight or six? Why aren't

2 they going as fast here as in Buenos Aires,
3 Argentina? Because of the stipulated fine program.
4 When vehicles are double parked all day, we'll never
5 have faster moving buses. It won't happen during the
6 next four years that this committee has. It's a big
7 challenge for this committee to get buses to move
8 faster. There's also \$1 billion lost to the city
9 treasury during the last 22 years because of
10 discounts given to billion-dollar companies. And the
11 Council denied the city the ability to have that
12 program in 2007, but the city went ahead with it
13 anyway despite the will of the people. In 637, 2007,
14 which was supported by TA- thank you- and others, and
15 by the 504 Democratic Club, by the PBA, by so many
16 different organizations, had 39 members on the bill
17 in 2018. It got stymied for political reasons that I
18 could only talk about behind closed doors. But the
19 reality is that, that 15- the stipulated fine program
20 is taking \$15- \$115 ticket is being reduced to \$100
21 in that case, and a double parking ticket is reduced
from \$115 to \$65. So where's the money coming from?
The city doesn't have that money. They're not
collecting it. They're supposed to give at least \$15-

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Please wrap up your
3 thoughts. Thank you.

4 GLEN BOLOFSKY: I will. \$15- thank you,
5 thank you, Mr. Chair- \$15 per ticket to the Court
6 Justice Fund or Justice Court Fund.- and the
7 attorneys will know about that, that's VTL 1809A. And
8 that means women who are victims of domestic violence
9 and their children are living in cars and homeless
10 shelters that we can't afford because the Department
11 of Finance is a morally bankrupt organization that
12 has no- doesn't even care about the treasury of New
13 York City. And this is something I believe the
14 council and the administration can work on together
15 because they all appear in alignment.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much.
17 This panel is excused. Appreciate your testimony
18 today.

19 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Next up we have Brian
21 Fritsch, Christopher Schuyler, Ali Langley, and
Bhairavi- Bhairavi my apologies. Or Bhairavi. I need
to get it right. I need to get it right. You guys can
go first if you like. You may begin.

2 BRIAN FRITSCH: Good afternoon, Chair
3 Abreu. I am Brian Fritsch, Associate Director of the
4 Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA,
5 PCAC. For nearly 50 years, PCAC has served as the
6 official voice of riders on the MTA system. Just over
7 a month ago, we organized a letter from a broad range
8 of over 40 groups who believe City Hall can make
9 transit affordability a reality in this year's budget
10 by transforming the Fair Fares program. Our
11 five-point plan includes expanding eligibility,
12 eligibility to at least 300 percent of the federal
13 poverty level to finally include workers making at or
14 close to minimum wage, fully free fares to the
15 lowest-income New Yorkers at the current level of 150
16 percent, adding the commuter railroads and express
17 buses as options, and also instituting automatic
18 enrollment as only a dismal third of eligible New
19 Yorkers are currently enrolled. In addition to Fair
20 Fares, we have been ardent supporters of faster and
21 more reliable bus service across the city. We believe
a bus rapid transit network, starting with one or two
world-class routes as a proof of concept, could serve
as a North Star for what it would mean to deliver
world-class service, which our world-class city and

2 its riders deserve. This means a host of things,
3 including protected bus lanes aligned to the center
4 of streets, transit signal priority, left turn bans
5 and queue jumps, and building accessible BRT stations
6 with level boarding and off-board fare payment. We
7 look forward to working with you in the Mamdani
8 administration to make BRT in NYC a reality. Finally,
9 three key final issues. We strongly oppose any
10 efforts, be it from the Council or state legislature,
11 to dismantle the MTA's automated camera enforcement
12 program, or ACE. ACE is essential as it increases bus
13 speeds by five percent and reduces collisions by 20
14 percent. We also hope the city will work with the MTA
15 to ensure the agency has enough bus depot capacity to
16 provide frequent and reliable service. As we work to
17 create the excellent bus service the city deserves,
18 depot space is a critical component that doesn't get
19 the attention it deserves. Thank you for the
20 opportunity to testify today.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next up?

Good afternoon to Chair Abreu, Council
Member Wong, committee staff. So I want to start with
talking about Access-a-Ride. So, I think it's- I
think it's important to frame Access-a-Ride properly,

which is that it's a legal right. It's not a privilege. It's not some kind of premier service that the MTA is running. The MTA is legally required to provide comparable service. As we heard this morning, that the MTA wants the city to commit more funding than what it already commits to Access-A-Ride. I think it needs to— if it wants to do that, it has to, has to really work on its cost-saving efforts. And so that includes expanding the on-demand pilot program, which currently is a little less than 4,000 of nearly 200,000 AccessRide users can use. It's about 50 percent of the cost of traditional paratransit. Another idea is to close the assessment centers, which are used for eligibility determinations. There's a cost involved with that. Also want to talk about discounts. The MTA does not offer the same discounts to Access-a-Ride users as are available to bus and subway riders. So that— so they often kind of refer to the Fair Fares program when discounts come up. I mean, that's a city program and there's a cap on it. It stops at age 64. And so for— and so for Access-A-Ride users who are older than 64, they don't get discounts, you know. And so this is a— this is also just a huge problem. Maybe I can quickly kind of

2 wrap up with talking about expanding the on-demand
3 program. I also wish that the council will push TLC
4 to work with their partner, the MTA, on expanding the
5 on-demand program. As far as the bus pilot that was
6 referred to earlier, it- if that goes citywide, it
7 also means for for free Access-a-Ride citywide as
8 during the pilot, all Access-a-Ride trips within a
9 half mile of the pilot were free. So that's- that's
10 something to consider. And lastly, I would say that
11 the MTA should consider settling its cases, its cases
12 that also involve the city as a cost savings. And so
13 rather than spending huge sums of money in litigating
14 accessibility cases, end those cases and get the
15 accessibility improvements done.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next?

17 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Good afternoon. I'm
18 Bhairavi Desai, Executive Director of the New York
19 Taxi Workers Alliance. I was really stunned to hear
20 the TLC say that their budget is less by \$4 million
21 this fiscal year compared to the prior one because
the medallion relief program is no longer in the
budget sheet. This program was prematurely closed
down. This was a historic achievement by our union
and a group of allies, including a 15-day hunger

2 strike in order to address a level of debt crisis,
3 which had led to suicides among drivers. We've so far
4 achieved \$476 million in forgiveness. It's been
5 life-changing, but we still have close to 200 loans
6 that remain. They need to be restructured. And the
7 last administration closed down that program
8 prematurely rather than lift a finger to help us. We
9 were the ones that brought the lenders-- almost all of
10 them, we were responsible for bringing them to the
11 table. We also were responsible for creating an
12 alternative that was acceptable to lenders who did
13 not want to restructure the loans themselves
14 directly. We have less than 200 loans in order to
15 cross the finish line. We must complete this program,
16 and the city must live up to its promise to the
17 Yellow Cab medallion owner-drivers of the city that
18 invested all of their life into it. The city, during,
19 you know, one decade, made like \$850 million in-- from
20 the sales of these medallions that the same city was
21 responsible for tanking. And it has led to, like,
serious human consequences for so many families.
Meanwhile, for the loans that are in the program, the
drivers are saving about \$11,000 on the premium
compared to the drivers whose loans are not

2 restructured under the program just yet. If I could
3 take an extra 30 seconds just to say- thank you- that
4 it's also wrong- wrong misconception that the yellow
5 cab industry has lagged behind in terms of
6 accessibility. The- percentage-wise, there's far more
7 wheelchair-accessible vehicles that are yellow cabs,
8 rather, you know, rather than on the FHV side. Of
9 course, primarily because on the yellow cab side,
10 there is a mandate of 50 percent. On the FHV side,
11 there was a settlement that was made that's left- you
12 know, that's required a much lesser percentage for
13 that sector, even though they by far have a much
14 larger number of vehicles. And in fact, the
15 accessibility mandate for yellow cabs, one that we
16 have supported not just today, but since that
17 settlement was first reached with the yellow cab
18 industry over 10 years ago- we were the only voice at
19 that time that supported it. It cannot be an unfunded
20 mandate. The TLC did not tell the truth to this
21 council about the fact that the Taxi Cab Improvement
Fund is insolvent. It needs to be supported, and the
council must find ways not only to help us rebuild
the Taxi Cab Improvement Fund, but also other ways of

2 financial support for medallion owners to continue to
3 meet this mandate. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And I'll make sure
5 that we will coordinate on that for the exec budget
6 hearing as well, to shed light on what you're
7 discussing.

8 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Next?

10 ALI LANGLEY: Thank you. My name is Ali
11 Langley. I'm a staff attorney at the Taxi Workers
12 Alliance. I'll pick up where Bhairavi left off, which
13 is talking about the Taxicab Improvement Fund, which
14 is the fund that provides benefits to Yellow Cab
15 owners to provide this wheelchair-accessible vehicle
16 mandate and to meet that mandate that the city
17 entered into. The TIF is funded by a surcharge on
18 Yellow Cab trips. This funding model made sense when
19 TIF was created in 2014, when the settlement was
20 entered into— when the city entered into the
21 settlement for that wheelchair-accessible vehicle
22 mandate. Since then, however, as we all know and as
23 Bhairavi described, there's been back-to-back crises
24 in the yellow cab sector from the unregulated entry
25 of Uber and Lyft to the medallion debt crisis to

2 COVID-19. Yellow cab trips today are just— are less
3 than 24 percent of what they were in March 2014. That
4 is a staggering difference. And that means not only
5 financial harm to individual drivers, but also that
6 revenue for TIF is down, which leads to that
7 insolvency crisis. Meanwhile, the cost that the fund
8 is supporting are up because of that 50 percent WAV
9 mandate and a recent court order enforcing the
10 settlement. Instead of exploring other avenues for
11 funding, the TLC turned around and slashed benefits
12 to drivers. They said today they increased the
13 upfront funding for the hack-up payments to \$20,000,
14 but they didn't tell you that they did that by really
15 just destroying the benefits available to drivers and
16 decreasing the overall amount available. They did
17 this in two ways. One, they got rid of some benefits
18 entirely, including the \$1 payment to drivers
19 performing trips in wheelchair-accessible vehicles,
20 and two, by heightening eligibility requirements. And
21 what that means is that the drivers who are
fulfilling this promise of accessibility that the
city has made to disabled New Yorkers, drivers who
are operating wheelchair-accessible vehicles, are not
getting these benefits because of technicalities. And

2 this disproportionately harms the most vulnerable
3 drivers. It harms drivers who are not technologically
4 literate, who struggle, you know, with email and
5 submitting applications online- and if I may just
6 wrap up? And it also harms drivers who are not able
7 to work as much as they once did, because of illness
8 or because of age. They're no longer getting
9 operational payments, and some drivers are not
10 getting hack-up payments at all, which leaves them
11 struggling with the increased cost of operating a WAV
12 which is nearly double that of a conventional
13 vehicle. The TLC has to repeal these rules, and the
14 city must provide additional funding to TIF so that
15 all drivers who are operating WAVs, who are realizing
16 the wheelchair accessible vehicle mandate and making
17 sure New York City has an accessible transit system,
18 get the benefits that they deserve, not only to
19 restore benefits to their prior level, but also to
20 make sure that the benefits actually reflect the true
21 cost of purchasing and operating these vehicles.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. This panel
is excused. Next up, we have Rosa Chang, Yadira
Sanchez, Abaubakar Ki, Elizabeth Adams. Can we add in

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2 a chair for an additional panelist? And I'm going to
3 call up Amanda Berman. Alright, you may begin. Do you
4 want to start?

5 ROSA CHANG: Sure. Good afternoon,
6 Majority Leader Abreu and members of the City
7 Council, thank you for the opportunity to testify
8 today. My name is Rosa Chang, and I'm the Co-founder
9 and President of Gotham Park, a 501C3 organization
10 formed to advocate for, help guide the design and
11 operate and maintain the newly opened and revitalized
12 public space underneath the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage
13 in Manhattan, just across the street, actually. Over
14 4.5 years, we distilled the hopes and dreams of our
15 diverse community of over 47,000 residents within a
16 half-mile radius, 20 percent of whom live below the
17 federal poverty level, 20 percent of whom are 65
18 years of age or older, 64 percent of whom are BIPOC.
19 And we responded to the deep needs that we have in
20 our historically disadvantaged community. The
21 Manhattan neighborhoods surrounding the Brooklyn
Bridge are some of the most densely populated in the
entire city, with an egregiously low square footage
of public space per resident. The famous Brooklyn
Bridge that is celebrated the world over, that

2 stretches from City Hall to the East River, lands
3 like a wall that separates our community, triple
4 burdened by the bridge, the FDR Drive, and the Civic
5 Center security zone. We are grassroots effort fueled
6 by the approval of the communities that we serve. In
7 2021, we saw the opportunity in the in-between spaces
8 between transportation infrastructure in its shadow.
9 And with the support of City Hall, we opened our
10 first acre in 2023. Last year, we were selected to be
11 DOT's official plaza partner, and we were able to
12 renovate and open an additional three acres to the
13 public. In the last 10 months, this new space has
14 already become a community hub for recreational
15 activity, serving thousands of people a week. We hope
16 to continue our plans to open the entirety of the
17 space totaling nine acres within the next few years.
18 Oops, and I'm running out of time, so I am just going
19 to end by saying that we deeply, deeply need public
20 spaces in these underserved communities. So if we
21 could get your support to support these spaces, we
would very much appreciate it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much.

Next?

2 YADIRA SANCHEZ: Thank you. Good
3 afternoon, Chairman Abreu and members of the
4 committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
5 My name is Yadira Sanchez. I am the Director of
6 Organizing at the Worker Justice Project, home to Los
7 Deliveristas Unidos. We are representing over 80,000
8 app-based delivery workers in New York City. Delivery
9 workers are the backbone of cities' on-demand
10 economy, completing nearly 3 million deliveries each
11 week, even during storms and emergencies. Yet they
12 lack basic labor protections and the mobility
13 infrastructure they deserve to do this work with
14 dignity and safety. Through Los Deliveristas Unidos
15 and with the leadership of the Council, we recently
16 won historic labor rights, including expanded pay-

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] My
18 apologies. I'm going to ask you to stop, because
19 apparently folks online can't hear. I'll have you
20 restart your testimony. Just give me a second. The
21 issue has been resolved. You may- you can start from
the beginning or you can start where you left off,
your choice.

YADIRA SANCHEZ: I'll do it from the
beginning. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Alright, let's start
3 off from the beginning. Thank you.

4 YADIRA SANCHEZ: Thanks. Good afternoon,
5 Chairman Abreu and members of the committee. Thank
6 you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Yadira
7 Sanchez. I am the Director of the Organizing at the
8 Workers' Justice Project, home to Los Deliveristas
9 Unidos. We're representing over 80,000 app-based
10 delivery workers in New York City. Delivery workers
11 are the backbone of the city's on-demand economy,
12 completing nearly 3 million deliveries each week,
13 even during storms and emergencies. Yet they lack
14 basic labor protections and the mobility
15 infrastructure they deserve to do this work with
16 dignity and safety. Through Los Deliveristas Unidos
17 and with the leadership of the Council, we recently
18 won historic labor rights, including expanded pay
19 standards for app grocery workers and just-cause
20 protection. I also want to thank you, Chairman Abreu,
21 for making it possible to restore tipping options and
ensure pay transparency for delivery workers. My
community and the delivery community are really
grateful for your support. Thank you. These victories
show that it's possible when we organize and when the

2 New York City Council shows bold leadership to
3 deliver what our community, especially delivery
4 workers, need to live and work with dignity. But
5 there is still much work to do. Deliveristas continue
6 to face predatory algorithmic management from
7 multibillion-dollar companies and prioritize profit
8 over safety, exploiting our communities. We must
9 invest not only in city infrastructure, but also in
10 education and resources for delivery workers. Last
11 year, we helped more than 300 workers trade in their
12 e-bikes with UL-certified models through the DOT
13 e-bike trade program. And we hope to see this program
14 expanded. This April, we are launching the first
15 Deliverista hub near City Hall, a space with e-bike
16 charging, rest areas, and worker resources. This is a
17 dignifying infrastructure, but infrastructure cannot
18 do it alone. That is why I'm here requesting \$300,000
19 in funding for our Deliverista Outreach and Safety
20 Training Program, which will be offered through our
21 soon-to-launch Deliverista app. This program,
together with other day labor workforce initiatives
and other critical funding initiatives, that will
hope to bring, restore and ensure dignity for
workers. Thank you so much for the opportunity. I'm

2 going to finish because I know my time is up. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next?

5 ABAUBAKAR KI: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Abaubakar Ki. I am an app-based delivery worker, and
7 I have worked for Grubhub and Uber Eats since 2019,
8 primarily in Lower Manhattan. I'm also member and
9 leader of Los Deliveristas Unidos and Worker Justice
10 Project. I joined this movement because, like many
11 delivery workers, I have experienced unjust
12 deactivation, traffic accidents, and constant
13 pressure from the app, which prioritizes profit over
14 worker safety. Because of this, we have had to
15 organize and fight back, not just for ourselves, but
16 for thousands of delivery workers across New York
17 City. When I started delivering in 2019, I used a
18 regular bicycle, but by 2021, that became impossible.
19 Delivery distance grew longer, time limits became
20 tighter, and the app began punishing workers who
21 could not deliver fast enough by reducing our access
to work or deactivating us entirely. To survive, I
had to switch to an e-bike. Today, more than 80,000
delivery workers rely on e-bikes to do their job
across New York City. Together, we complete about 2.7

2 million deliveries every week, making sure New York
3 receives food and groceries in every neighborhood.

4 Yet our city and city police have not caught up to
5 this reality. That is why I'm here today asking the

6 City Council to invest in infrastructure that will
7 make our streets safer for the workers who keep this

8 city moving. We urge the City Council to continue
9 expanding protected bike lanes, build accessible

10 e-bike charging stations and circular parking, invest
11 in e-bike training programs to help workers

12 transition to safer UL-certified batteries, and
13 create delivery zones so all users can share the

14 streets safely. We also soon launch our first
15 delivery center near City Hall, a space where workers

16 can safely charge batteries, rest, and access

17 support. I am here on behalf of the Workers Justice
18 Project to respectfully ask the City Council to

19 invest \$3,000 to help us launch a street safety

20 outreach and training program for delivery staff so
21 we can continue working together to make our streets

safer for everyone. This industry generates enormous
profit, but the risk, cost, and danger are pushed

entirely onto workers like me. App companies must

also be held accountable for unrealistic delivery

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2 times and unsafe conditions they create. E-bikes are
3 the future of transportation in New York City. To
4 make that future safe and sustainable, we must invest
5 in workers to rely on them every day. We look forward
6 to continuing to work with the City Council to build
7 safer streets and stronger support system for the
8 delivery workers. Thank you for listening to the
9 voice of the workers who keep this city running.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Elizabeth
11 Adams?

12 ELIZABETH ADAMS: Good afternoon. Thank
13 you to the Chair and the committee for today's
14 hearing. I'm Elizabeth Adams with Transportation
15 Alternatives. The Mamdani administration has
16 committed to building streets that are the envy of
17 the world. And realizing that dream is going to
18 require significant resources to DOT. We are calling
19 on this year's budget to fully fund and staff the
20 Department of Transportation. DOT can— with ample
21 resources, DOT can implement the Streets Plan, can
end the Safe Streets hiring freeze, and work towards
building the streets, intersections, and bridges that
New Yorkers deserve. We recognize the city's fiscal
needs, and our streets play a critical role in

2 addressing long-term issues. Traffic fatalities and
3 injuries cost New Yorkers an estimated \$3 billion
4 annually in direct economic costs. Investing in
5 Vision Zero is not only the right thing to do, it is
6 fiscally responsible. Next, I'd like to highlight
7 potential revenue raisers. Building the streets that
8 New Yorkers deserve is not free, but there's
9 tremendous opportunities for raising money from those
10 same streets. Today, 97 percent of our parking spaces
11 are free. By just modestly expanding the current
12 metered parking program, the city stands to raise
13 hundreds of millions of dollars. One estimate found
14 New York is losing over \$100 million a year from free
15 parking on the Upper West Side alone. New York has
16 significantly less metered parking than San
17 Francisco, LA, or Boston. It is time we reassess and
18 update our current program for our streets' needs.
19 Expanding metered parking is a no-brainer. Paid
20 parking leads to less traffic congestion, cleaner
21 air, and even faster parking. By metering parking and
using that revenue to fund DOT, our city can build
the streets of tomorrow, all on a balanced budget.
I'd also like to quickly reiterate a point that Open
Streets organizers have been making for years in

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2 response to the Commissioner's comments earlier this
3 morning. In order for this program to survive and
4 thrive, it needs to be fully funded. The Open Streets
5 program relies heavily on unpaid volunteer labor by
6 community organizers, and that is not a sustainable
7 long-term model. Thank you so much for your time and
8 the opportunity to testify today. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I have a question for
10 you, Elizabeth. Are you concerned with the
11 administration's testimony today with the lack of
12 commitment on the Streets Plan and not committing to
13 universal daylighting?

14 ELIZABETH ADAMS: The Streets Plan is a
15 legal requirement. It is the law. There is a reason
16 that there are metrics requirements in there. We
17 believe that those need to be met. They can be met.
18 We support the resources for them to be able to meet
19 the legal mandates and the requirement. We support
20 the outcomes, you know, requests that the
21 Commissioner made as well. But this is not an
either-or. This is a both-and. And we have to start
from a place of making sure that we hit the minimum
and then go from there. So that is critical to us.
And then also on universal daylighting, the mayor has

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2 said it is a commitment of his. We know that
3 daylighting saves lives. It is time to get this done.
4 It is time to make it happen across our city. So yes,
5 we want to see that happen urgently.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Amanda
7 Berman?

8 AMANDA BERMAN: Good afternoon. Thank you
9 for the opportunity. My name is Amanda Berman. I'm
10 here to speak on behalf of the Center for Justice
11 Innovation about some of our efforts to make the city
12 streets safer, as well as our justice system more
13 effective and more equitable. And I want to take this
14 time to highlight three initiatives that we're hoping
15 City Council will support this year. First is our
16 Driver Accountability Program. This is a program that
17 is evidence-based, is diversion programming for
18 people who have been arrested on lower-level offenses
19 coming through our criminal courts. And thanks to the
20 support of Council, we serve around 1,000 people
21 every year in this program throughout New York City.
The program works by providing education and
encouraging behavior change through a facilitated
group discussion rather than relying on traditional
punitive court-based responses like fines or jail. So

2 I'm proud to say that our recent evaluation of our
3 program has shown that the program led to a 50
4 percent reduction in recidivism for these kinds of
5 offenses in the borough of Brooklyn, and also very
6 promising significant reductions in Staten Island as
7 well. The second program that I wanted to highlight
8 is Circles for Safe Streets, which we actually
9 operate in partnership with our friends at
10 Transportation Alternatives through their initiative
11 of Families for Safe Streets, and that program uses a
12 restorative justice model to bring drivers together
13 with victims or survivors of those they have lost
14 through traffic violence where there's been a crash
15 leading to a fatality or in some cases a serious
16 injury. And so by bringing the parties together, the
17 victims have an opportunity to talk about the impact
18 and drivers have an opportunity to take
19 accountability. And then I see I'm almost out of
20 time, so I'm going to try to wrap up, but the last
21 initiative I wanted to mention is our Bronx, DWI
initiative where we assess and refer— if I could just
have a moment, I'll be brief. We assess and refer
drivers who might be in need of substance use
treatment or alcohol treatment in order to get those

2 services. We do all of this for free, which is
3 unusual in the field because most providers doing
4 that are charging people. So by removing those
5 barriers, we are facilitating access to those
6 much-needed services, and of course, in doing so,
7 hopefully making our roads safer. So together, these
8 programs are part of a holistic approach to street
9 safety where we're focusing on reducing the harms
10 that are caused on our roads and reducing the harms
11 that our traditional justice system has caused in
12 response. So thank you for the time. We hope we can
13 count on Council's support.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much for
15 your testimony. This panel is excused. Alright, we're
16 now moving to folks who are testifying on Zoom,
17 beginning first with Wain Chin.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Wain Chen?

20 WAIN CHIN: Hello, can you hear me?

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can. Hi, my
name is Wain Chen. I'm a member of New York Taxi
Workers Alliance. I drive a wheelchair-accessible
taxi. As you all know, 50 percent of the fleet are
required to be WAV, and we all— so we need adequate

2 support from the city and state to offset our cost of
3 the operating the WAV taxi. You know, we are not only
4 facing the rising cost of living, we also face the
5 rising cost of operating the WAV taxi. The WAV taxi
6 five years ago cost \$50,000 and now costs \$80,000.
7 Also, we had to pay our rising- not only the
8 operating cost, we had to pay higher gas, insurance,
9 maintenance costs. So we demand the city and state
10 provide adequate support for disabled community and
11 also for the WAV taxi driver. So by eliminating the
12 state tax or the new taxi, new WAV taxi, so to lower
13 the cost of the WAV taxi. So also to ask the city to
14 instate the \$1 per trip requirements to the WAV taxi
15 driver, and also expand the other tax program to help
16 with the purchase of the WAV taxi. And also finish
17 restructuring the loan, medallion loan, to end all
18 the medallion debt crisis, so all the owner get a
19 debt relief. So we had like 200 medallion owners
20 remaining to be- the loan to be restructured. So we
21 can save about \$800 a month. Right now I paying \$200
on my medallion loan and my insurance like \$1,300 a
month and my car loan is \$800. So it's- my cost like
\$4,000, more than \$4,000 a month to operate the taxi-
the WAV taxi.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: 15 more seconds.

3 WAIN CHIN: That's not including gas and
4 maintenance. So we need that city and state support
5 for the WAV driver and the disabled community. Thank
6 you so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, thank you so much.
8 And now we're moving on to Richard Chow.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 RICHARD CHOW: Okay, can you hear me?

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, we can hear you.

12 RICHARD CHOW: Okay, thank you. And good
13 afternoon, Chair, and everyone. My name is Richard
14 Chow, member of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance.
15 I'm an owner-driver. We need to bring back the tips
16 from [inaudible] eliminated \$1 tip driver
17 reimbursement and reduce the maintenance, rent car
18 owner \$1,000 till the life of the- to life of the
19 750, up to the full year. TIF funds almost
20 bankruptcy, that because of this eligible grant and
21 because the trips are down. City make the settlement
agreement and must find the way to fund the program.
We need more trans- support, low interest rate, lower
down payment, payment, the ATLAS program, and the
city could continue to find- fund the Medallion

2 Relief Program. So last- remaining loans are
3 restructured under the Citibank guarantee, plus all
4 transfer of the guarantee, transfer all the
5 guarantee. It's made nonsense, and why the city
6 doesn't allow the owner to- who's under this grantee
7 to sell the medallion and the transfer to the
8 grantee? It will save the city money overall. Right
9 now, all owner drivers who want to leave their
10 medallion to the family member not allowed to
11 transfer to the grantee. That's mean- this mean
12 those medallions end up with the defaulting, losing
13 the city money from the grantee, and loan reserve
14 fund. Our family lost the medallion. And then- and
15 now we have another issue that the City Council
16 hearing testimony for MTA NYC-

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] Give you
18 15 more seconds.

19 RICHARD CHOW: Yeah, thank you very- I
20 close up. Demand the City Council support on this,
21 rising the payment to the Access-a-Ride medical trip.
These are low-paid trips to the industry remaining
outside there, and between low price MTA and the high
take from the broker base, drivers are left behind
with penny. We demand higher pay. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much.
3 We'll now move to Kuber Sancho Persad.

4 KUBER SANCHO-PERSAD: Oh, hello. How you
5 doing?

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Hey, I can, I can hear
7 you perfectly. I can— you may start.

8 KUBER SANCHO-PERSAD: My name is Kuber
9 Sancho-Persad. I'm a Yellow Cab driver for— since
10 2014. My dad was a Yellow Cab driver since 1984 and
11 he passed away. I'm here to talk on behalf of the— to
12 keeping the Medallion Relief Program open until the
13 final set of my member, my fellow taxi drivers to get
14 over the— get over the finish line with their
15 crushing medallion debts. There's only a few hundred
16 left. I would need— we need the help of the city and
17 the City Council to try and get them over the finish
18 line and make sure that they're debt-free and they're
19 forgiven by this debt that was caused by the city
20 irregularation of Uber and Lyft and the taxi industry.
21 We also like to talk about the WAV program and talk
about trying to reinstate the dollar per trip for WAV
drivers because majority of the vehicles, even now we
have the Sienna Hybrid, they are bigger vehicles and
they require a little more gas and maintenance. So,

2 and plus it's an incentive for drivers to pay to use
3 to put towards the gas. Also for owner- for owner
4 drivers who own the vehicle, TLC had said that they
5 increased the vehicle amount to \$20,000 up front, but
6 they didn't tell you that they cut the amount that
7 they used to give us on a quarterly basis to keep the
8 maintenance of the vehicle. And these vehicles are
9 not OEM fitted with wheelchair equipment. These are
10 retrofitted, which causes them to become more
11 complete- more damaged compared to when it's OEM
12 come- it comes from the factory original. So we need
13 more- we need money to just make sure that, that from
14 the TIF fund to make sure that we keep those vehicles
15 on the road and make sure-

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: [interposing] Please
17 wrap up.

18 KUBER SANCHO-PERSAD: that we're safe.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, I'm going to
20 give you an extra 15 seconds to wrap up.

21 KUBER SANCHO-PERSAD: Okay. I would
22 appreciate you guys' concern. I would think- I would
23 really like you to listen to my fellow taxi drivers
24 and my union. Thank you very much.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, I thank you.

3 Joshua Boyce?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

5 JOSHUA BOYCE: Hi, good afternoon. My name
6 is Joshua Boyce. I'm a Queens College student, and
7 I'm also a board member for, NYPIRG, New York Public
8 Interest Research Group. I thank you for the
9 opportunity to testify today. Today, I'm going to be
10 talking about bus service and bus infrastructure,
11 which is the first thing I'll harp on. Second one
12 I'll talk about is transit affordability for
13 students. And three, I would like to talk about the
14 Rockaway Beach Branch Line. But first, I'll go back
15 to the bus service. So I take the Q25, and there are
16 times when the Q25 is not as reliable as it used to
17 be. Obviously, the MTA had done the Queens Bus
18 Network redesign from before, and what had happened
19 was now the service for the Q25 has been— the service
20 has been slow for many of us students here at Queens
21 College. So we would like MTA to reevaluate certain
bus lines such as the P25 to make sure that our
service is reliable to us Queens College students.
The next one I'll talk about is the bus
infrastructure. Basically, MTA has said that they

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2 want to put more bus lanes and more camera
3 enforcement on many corridors and many bottleneck
4 areas that need it the most. So hopefully MTA does
5 put more emphasis on making sure that enforcement is
6 there. The next one is transit affordability, which-
7 to talk about transit affordability, I do wish- and I
8 apologize for me just walking with the trucks and the
9 cars in this neighborhood- I do wish that the MTA had
10 put more emphasis on transit affordability to us CUNY
11 students that need it the most because we are the
12 investment for the future. And so having that
13 opportunity to have student OmniCards for us Queens
14 College students and many CUNY students would be nice
15 and would be great for all of us that need it the
16 most. And I know it's already for ASAP and SEEK
17 students, but we need to expand on it for more- for
18 all CUNY students. Lastly, I would want to talk about
19 the Rockaway Beach branch line, which the MTA has
20 said that they wanted to-

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Please wrap up. 15
seconds.

JOSHUA BOYCE: Yes- I had wanted to
evaluate on which for the next capital plan, which
hopefully they should put this on the next capital

2 plan because this will be a good investment for
3 people that live and work in the area of Forest
4 Hills, Woodhaven, Ozone Park, and will also connect
communities together.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very much.

6 JOSHUA BOYCE: Yes, you're welcome. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I appreciate your
9 testimony. We heard you on the capital plan on the
10 Rockaway Project. We're going to pivot to in-person
11 really quickly. I just realized, we had someone who
12 was here this whole time who just signed the
appearance card. Come on up, Stephen Babson [sic].

13 STEPHEN BRINSON: I'm Stephen Brinson. I'm
14 also with the New York Public Interest Research
15 Group. I work at City Tech in downtown Brooklyn.
16 Apologies for the miscommunication. But anyway, I am
17 also here to speak on students' transportation needs
18 and wants. Our campus is in downtown Brooklyn.
19 Virtually all of our students come in from outside
20 downtown Brooklyn via the MTA, many from outer
21 borough neighborhoods with limited transit service.
In fact, one of my most active students is one of
your constituents, Council Member Wong, Matthew

2 Ahrens. And they face enormous challenges in just
3 physically getting to campus on lines that are
4 unreliable, both bus and subway lines, making
5 difficult transfers, coming in from outer borough
6 neighborhoods. Most of them work virtually, virtually
7 all of them, in fact. And it's for that reason that
8 I'm call- that I'm calling for more investments in
9 the interests of students. Better bus lanes to
10 improve reliability on crucial corridors like
11 Flatbush Avenue, Fordham Road. New investments in
12 maintenance, in de-interlining, like the proposed
13 Rogers Junction in the capital plan, and new
14 investments in student OmniCards and eligibility for
15 better transit. Because when you invest in students
16 being able to get to class on time, participate fully
17 in their education, dedicate as much thought to that
18 as they possibly can, and attend as many classes as
19 they can so they don't have to take longer to finish
20 their education than they otherwise have to. That's
21 an investment in the future. Not investing in those
is going to cost us more in the long run. Investing
that now is going to make New York money that we need
for future development. Thank you, council members,
so much. And yes, have a wonderful evening.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much for
3 your time and your testimony. Now going back to Zoom,
4 we have Norm Miller followed by Kathleen Collins.
5 Norm Miller, you may begin.

6 NORM MILLER: Hello, good day. My name is
7 Norman Miller. I'm also part of the New York Public
8 Interest Research Group right here at the New York
9 City College of Technology located in downtown
10 Brooklyn. I would like to say today that students
11 like myself here, we deserve faster, reliable, and
12 equitable bus service, especially right here in the
13 downtown Brooklyn area. Especially right- sorry about
14 that- especially right here in the downtown Brooklyn
15 area where we're served by the B41, which is a major
16 crucial route where most of us students travel to and
17 from downtown Brooklyn. We're also calling upon the
18 New York DOT to invest in more bus lane
19 infrastructure and more ABLE enforcement bus lanes,
20 especially for Flatbush Avenue, but we would like to
21 see Flatbush Avenue have bus lanes all the way down
to Kings Plaza, not just north of the Grand Army
Plaza Circle, especially with the Brooklyn Bus
Network bus re- Brooklyn Bus Network redesign coming
around the corner, at least up until 2027. And

2 lastly, I would like to- also like to say that we
3 deserve to have an economy and a culture- an economy
4 that works for all of us, not just for certain
5 people, but for all of us too, as well. That's all I
6 have to say. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much for
8 your testimony. Kathleen Collins followed by Stephen
9 Brinson. Well, actually, Stephen was in person, so
10 we'll take him off. So, Kathleen Collins followed by
11 Edward Zheng. Kathleen, you may begin.

12 KATHLEEN COLLINS: Thank you. My name is
13 Kathleen Collins, and I am part of a board member of
14 Disabled in Action. I'm a native New Yorker,
15 congenital quadruple amputee who uses a wheelchair
16 and artificial arms at times. I'm going to talk today
17 just about one thing, and that's the eHealth program.
18 This is a significant benefit because it allows me to
19 do things on the spur of the moment and was a
20 lifesaver when my husband's father became sick after
21 5:00 p.m. and I had to go to the emergency room with
him. I could not have done that if I had just
Access-a-Ride. Access-a-Ride does not- cannot take
into account emergencies, but I was able to do it
with the e-Health program, and that really means a

2 lot to me and to my husband and my family. I ask that
3 the e-Health pilot program continue to be funded and
4 that we improve it in the following ways. Please make
5 the e-Health pilot program available to all
6 Access-A-Ride users who want to use it. Please
7 eliminate the restrictions on the number of rides a
8 person is allotted to take on the e-Health pilot
9 program. I'm allotted 25 trips. If I had used- I'm
10 planning to testify at least two or three hearings,
11 that would be six trips just right off the bat that
12 would be knocked out, out of my 25. That would be one
13 quarter of my trips. Please, eliminate the
14 restrictions on the number of rides a person is
15 allotted to take on the e-Health pilot program, and
16 also please increase the amount of the cost that the
17 MTA will cover for each trip on the e-Health pilot
18 program so that more of the city can be reached
19 without passengers having to pay significant
20 out-of-pocket costs. I understand that the city and
21 the MTA face budget constraints just like everyone
else. However, the cost of placing more people on the
e-Health pilot program is not only minuscule, but
actually better use of our money, as was shown-
stated by Christopher Shire about that. It's only

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2 about 50 percent of the cost of the regular
3 Access-a-Ride program. And we should realize that the
4 cost of placing more people on e-Health is not only
5 minuscule and—

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm giving you 15 more
7 seconds. 15 more seconds to wrap up.

8 KATHLEEN COLLINS: [inaudible] I just—
9 sure. I just ask that you consider these things and
10 expand the program because it really helps so many
11 people. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, I appreciate that,
13 and we will take your testimony into account for
14 sure. Christopher Leon Johnson?

15 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello, my name
16 is Christopher Leon Johnson, and thank you, Sean, for
17 doing this hearing. I want to make this clear that I
18 believe that the City Council need to allocate at
19 least \$1 million into the Worker Justice Project for
20 emergency services when it comes to the relay layoffs
21 that's going to occur in the next— probably a week
now, two weeks now, on April 1st, 2026. These guys
are going to be out of a job. It's thousands of them.
If it's like 1,000, you take 10,000, times that by
\$500, that's like \$1 million. That's like a million

2 bucks. Give \$1 million for OSHA trainings and job
3 trainings when it comes to the relay workers getting
4 laid off, including the members that are the people
5 that are, like, going to be- used to work for relay
6 that are opposed to the Worker Justice Project. I'll
7 send a written testimony about that and make them-
8 give them an online option so they don't have to be
9 in the office, the same office as, Lydia [sic] and
10 the crew. But I make this clear that I support the
11 Deliverista Hub. They deserve a Deliverista Hub. And
12 I hope that very soon that the City Council comes to
13 the conclusion that they fix the budget to make sure
14 that at the end of the year that the Deliverista Hub
15 will get built for the Deliveristas. But for now, I
16 believe that more- is more needed for the people that
17 going to be laid off from relay to start getting
18 trainings for different jobs for the meantime,
19 because it looks like Motoclick and the other apps
20 aren't going to be hiring them. So these guys are
21 going to have to find something new to do. But I hope
that you, Mr. Sean Abreu, and many of these
nonprofits come to the table, including, Mrs. Galapa
[sp?] and many other organizations, and come together
and find a way to allocate- make them prioritized

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2 more when it comes to the job trainings. If I was in
3 the [inaudible] I'll find a way to allocate \$1
4 million so these guys- these guys would relay to
5 start getting the job trainings. So, look, I'm going
6 to submit testimony about that more, be more in depth
about that.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: 15 seconds to wrap up,
8 Mr. Johnson.

9 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, that's
10 all- that's all I say. A million dollars Worker
11 Justice Project for the relay worker laid off for job
trainings. Thank you so much and enjoy your day.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much.
13 Charl- Charlton D'Souza followed by Jack Nierenberg.

14 CHARLTON D'SOUZA: Good afternoon,
15 everyone. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. My name is
16 Charlton D'Souza. I'm the President of Passengers
17 United. So what's very important with DOT funding is
18 DOT needs to restore all the good bus shelters and
19 bus pads that were removed during the Queens Bus
20 Redesign. You have bus shelters sitting idle which
21 have become garbage dumps, and that is ridiculous.
That is the biggest waste of money. And also my
colleague Jack Nierenberg conducted a study, an ADA

2 accessibility study of every bus stop, which is still
3 ongoing. And we found serious deficiencies, and we
4 found that there was a lack of correlation between
5 what the DOT did in removing bus stops and ADA
6 access. So that is something that we would like to
7 meet with you and the Transportation Committee on.
8 And also, we feel that the Department of
9 Transportation should have an ADA accessibility
10 committee, especially when it comes to Open Streets,
11 bus stop removals, bus redesigns, and also bus lanes.
12 This has been very controversial in a lot of
13 neighborhoods, and a lot of these groups that are
14 coming on here, you know, they're getting, like
15 lobbyist groups. It's not fair to all of us that are
16 doing all the hard work in the community. And we're
17 actually focused on scientific engineering, whereas
18 groups are just coming in and saying, put this here,
19 put that there. And like the DOT Commissioner said
20 today, that, you know, he didn't support universal
21 daylighting. And in a way, he was speaking from an
engineering background. So that's a good thing. And
we need more of that. And, you know, because
sometimes communities, you know, they might have a
different opinion on something. And I can tell you,

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2 like, bus stop islands, for instance, if you look at
3 the ones on Queens Boulevard, it is so high up that
4 seniors with walkers and limited mobility, many
5 seniors were falling down.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: 15 more seconds to
7 wrap up.

8 CHARLTON D'SOUZA: It was not properly
9 shoveled and salted. So please, Mr. Chairman, meet
10 with us and also look into that, and also the DOT.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next up,
13 Jack Nierenberg.

14 JACK NIERENBERG: Alright, can you hear
15 me?

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I can.

17 JACK NIERENBERG: Alright, fantastic.
18 Thank you. Good evening everyone, my name is Jack
19 Nirenberg. I'm the Vice President of Passengers
20 United. I'm also a master of city planning student at
21 the University of Pennsylvania, and earlier today, we
heard the MTA CEO claim that the bus stop balancing,
the bus stop removals during the Queens Bus Network
redesign and Brooklyn Bus Network redesign, they were
balancing the needs of people with disabilities with

those traveling longer distances. Yet there's no evidence that that's actually true. And all the information that we were trying to acquire to justify the removal, we've been having extreme difficulties actually obtaining to the point where we're kind of forced to sue to get any kind of information like this. So what we sought out to do— I'm leading the, the study that my colleague alluded to earlier where we are conducting observational data studies at each of the eliminated and intact bus stops. We're starting starting in Queens. We have three routes done so far where we're looking at each of the observational factors that enable people or prevent people from getting to the bus stop, getting on and off the bus, waiting at the bus with ease, at the bus stop with ease. And what we found is that there's no correlation between the bus stops that were removed in the Queens Bus Network Redesign and their overall accessibility, including presence of a bus shelter, whether the bus stop is close to essential origins and destinations, including grocery stores, healthcare facilities, assisted living facilities, the conditions of the sidewalks as well. And all of these factors have to have immense impact on people's

2 ability to get on and off the buses, get to and from
3 the bus stops, especially since they have to walk
4 farther.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: 15 seconds to wrap up.

5 JACK NIERENBERG: And we are going to be
6 continuing this study for the Brooklyn Bus Network
7 Redesign, but we're going to need the support of the
8 city council to- and the DOT to really have the
9 greatest impact possible. We have identified nine
10 areas thus far, nine census tracts, for prioritized
11 stop restoration, but accessibility needs to be a
12 greater part of the DOT's budget and the MTA's budget
13 as well. Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No, thank you, and I
13 appreciate your commitment. I appreciate your
14 commitment to this issue. If we have inadvertently
15 missed anyone that has registered to testify today
16 and has yet to have been called, please use the Zoom
17 hand function if you are testifying remotely, and you
18 will be called in the order that your hand has been
19 raised. Have we- is there anyone with their Zoom hand
20 function? Seeing no one raise their hand on Zoom. If
21 you are testifying in person and haven't testified
and would like to testify, can you please come to the

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2 dais? Seeing none, this hearing is hereby adjourned.

3 Thank you all.

4 [gavel]

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3 C E R T I F I C A T E
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5
6 World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing
7 transcript is a true and accurate record of the
8 proceedings. We further certify that there is no
9 relation to any of the parties to this action by blood
10 or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome
11 of this matter.



17 Date August 14, 2026
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