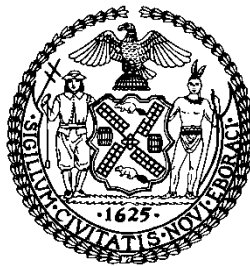


Transportation Committee Staff:
Kelly E. Taylor, Counsel
Gafar Zaaloff, Policy Analyst
Jonathan Masserano, Policy Analyst
Russell Murphy, Policy Analyst
Chima Obichere, Finance Analyst



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BRIEFING PAPER OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION
Matthew Gewolb, Legislative Director

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair

October 7, 2015

Oversight – Vision Zero: Evaluating the City’s Progress

INTRODUCTION

On October 7, 2015, the Committee on Transportation, chaired by Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, will hold a hearing on the oversight topic “Vision Zero: Evaluating the City’s Progress.” The Committee expects to hear testimony from the New York City Department of Transportation (“DOT”) and other interested stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

Early in 2014, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that his Administration would commit to a “Vision Zero” initiative aimed at eliminating deadly crashes, especially those involving pedestrians, from the City’s streets. Vision Zero seeks to achieve its goals in a number of ways, including street redesigns and roadway enhancements, more effective enforcement strategies, regulatory and legislative changes, robust public education and awareness, and safety improvements to the City’s vehicle fleet.

In 2014, 138 pedestrians were killed in traffic crashes in New York City, the lowest number since recordkeeping began in 1910 and down from 180 in 2013.¹ 20 bicyclists were killed, up from 12 in 2013.² And 60 motorists and passengers lost their lives, up from 59.³ Although injury statistics can better reveal trends because they provide a larger sample size that is less prone to randomness, according to the City, reliable injury figures take more than a year to process due to coordination with State agencies. However, preliminary data show that nearly 15,000 pedestrians and cyclists were injured in crashes in 2014, compared to over 16,000 in 2013.⁴

¹ City of New York, *Vision Zero: Year One Report* 14 (Apr. 2015), available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/visionzero/assets/downloads/pdf/vision-zero-1-year-report.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* at 15.

⁴ Brad Aaron, *NYPD: 1,399 Pedestrians and Cyclists Injured, 10 Killed in December*, Streetsblog, Jan. 26, 2015, <http://www.streetsblog.org/2015/01/26/nypd-1399-pedestrians-and-cyclists-injured-10-killed-in-traffic-in-december/>; Brad Aaron, *16,059 Pedestrians and Cyclists Injured, 178 Killed in Traffic in 2013*, Streetsblog, Jan. 31,

The Administration's Vision Zero One Year Report examined the progress the City made toward achieving its street safety goals during the first year of the initiative. Regarding street design efforts, the report touted the installation of a myriad of street improvements aimed at safety including more than 400 speed humps, 45 leading pedestrian interval signals, and five miles of protected bike paths.⁵ The City also continued to roll out Arterial Slow Zones, which target wide, high-traffic roadways with a 25 mph speed limit, increased enforcement, and signal timing changes, and Neighborhood Slow Zones, which focus on a specific neighborhood area by instituting a 20 mph speed limit and other safety measures, including speed humps. And the Great Streets program seeks to transform the city's large, iconic streets (such as Queens Boulevard and the Grand Concourse) with large-scale, long-term capital projects that will allow a complete rethinking of each street's design in order to improve safety, mobility, and accessibility.

On the enforcement side, the Police Department ("NYPD") reports an increased focus on violations which have been shown to contribute to pedestrian fatalities, resulting in a 42 percent increase in speeding summonses and a 126 percent increase in failure to yield to pedestrian summonses in 2014 compared to 2013.⁶ Last year, the NYPD's specialized Collision Investigation Squad responded to 430 crash scenes, leading to 96 findings of criminality.⁷ And, after receiving authorization from the State to increase to 140 the number of locations where it may deploy speed cameras near schools, the City made cameras operational at all 140 locations by the beginning of the current school year.⁸ DOT asserts that the program has been successful

2014, <http://www.streetsblog.org/2014/01/31/nypd-16059-pedestrians-and-cyclists-injured-178-killed-in-traffic-in-2013/>.

⁵ City of New York, *supra* note 1, at 24.

⁶ *Id.* at 37

⁷ *Id.* at 39

⁸ Press Release, N.Y.C. Department of Transportation, *As School Year Begins, NYC DOT Announces Full Installation of Speed Camera Program is Complete*, Sept. 8, 2015, available at <http://a841->

by pointing to an average 60 percent drop in daily violations over the course of the program.⁹

The City's Vision Zero public education and awareness efforts seek to make all users of the city's streets more aware of the need to take responsibility for traveling across the city in a way that keeps themselves and others safe. These efforts have included public awareness campaigns in traditional and new media, as well as targeted outreach to groups such as seniors, children, and TLC-licensed drivers.¹⁰

The Council & Vision Zero

On February 24, 2014, the Committee on Transportation and the Committee on Public Safety held a joint oversight hearing examining the City's Vision Zero Action Plan, at which time the Committees heard testimony from the Administration regarding its plans and strategies related to Vision Zero. Safety advocates and victims' families, as well Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and representatives of the New York County District Attorney and the New York Taxi Workers Alliance also offered their views on the Plan and ideas for how to enhance traffic safety in New York City.

The Council held Vision Zero town hall meetings in each borough in order to gather feedback from the public regarding Vision Zero, in particular new ideas for street safety-related legislative and policy proposals. The first town hall meeting was held in Manhattan on March 26, 2014, followed by one in Brooklyn on April 1, 2014 and one in Queens on April 23, 2014, Staten Island on May 7, 2014 and in the Bronx on May 22, 2014. Individual Council Members also held their own Vision Zero-themed events.

tfpweb.nyc.gov/dotpress/2015/09/as-school-year-begins-nyc-dot-announces-full-installation-of-speed-camera-program-is-complete/#more-544.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ City of New York, *supra* note 1, at 8-9.

In May 2014, the Council passed a package of bills and resolutions aimed at furthering the City's Vision Zero street safety priorities. Among many provisions, the bills required the City to study factors found to be related to serious crashes, imposed penalties for certain dangerous behaviors, increased penalties related to failing to yield to pedestrians and cyclists who have the right of way, regulated DOT's actions concerning work zones and traffic signal replacement, required the installation of "slow zones," mandated more publicly available crash data (particularly with regard to crashes involving TLC-licensed vehicles), and strengthened penalties against TLC-licensed drivers involved in serious collisions and who exhibit dangerous driving behaviors.¹¹ In October 2014, after the State enacted legislation allowing the City to lower its official speed limit (which applies unless otherwise posted), the Council passed legislation lowering it from 30 to 25 miles per hour.¹² And, in May 2015, the Council passed legislation requiring side guards, which help prevent pedestrians and cyclists from falling into the exposed space between a vehicle's axles, on most trucks in the City fleet and on City-licensed trade waste hauling vehicles by 2024.¹³

The resolutions passed by the Council called upon the State to take a series of steps to improve street safety, including increasing penalties related failure to exercise due care, leaving the scene of a crash, reckless driving, and driving on the sidewalk, as well as giving the City more control of its speed and red light camera programs.

CONCLUSION

At today's hearing, the Committee hopes to hear from the Administration and other interested stakeholders about how well the City is progressing toward its Vision Zero street

¹¹ Local Laws 21-31 of 2014

¹² Local Law 54 of 2014

¹³ Local Law 56 of 2015

safety goals more than a year into its efforts and what more needs to be done moving forward in order to eliminate traffic fatalities from the City's roadways.