

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

JOINT COMMITTEES ON TRANSPORTATION AND EDUCATION

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April 23, 2009
Start: 10:20am
Recess: 11:29am

HELD AT: Hearing Room
250 Broadway, 14th Floor

B E F O R E:

JOHN C. LIU
Chairperson

JAMES VACCA
CO-CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Miguel Martinez
Larry B. Seabrook
Daniel R. Garodnick
Simcha Felder
Diana Reyna
Peter F. Vallone, Jr.
Albert Vann
David Yassky
Gale A. Brewer
Melinda R. Katz
Jessica S. Lappin
G. Oliver Koppell
Maria del Carmen Arroyo

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Michael C. Nelson

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

Kathleen Grimm
Assistant Chancellor
Department of Education

Eric Goldstein
Chief Executive for School Support Services
Department of Education

Brian Snodgrass
Executive Director of Wireless Network
New York City Department of Information, Technology
and Telecommunications

Steven Harte
Associate Commissioner
New York City Department of Information, Technology
and Telecommunications

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2 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Morning. Welcome
3 to today's hearing, joint hearing, between the
4 City Council's Committees on Education and on
5 Transportation. My name is John Liu. And, I have
6 the privilege of Chairing the Transportation
7 Committee and, very honored to Co-Chair today's
8 joint hearing with Chairman Pro Tem, Councilman
9 Jimmy Vacca from the Bronx, who is standing in for
10 Robert Jackson, the Chair of the Education
11 Committee.

12 We've convened today's meeting for
13 the purpose of examining what the City is doing
14 with regard to tracking the City's school buses.
15 The school buses that parents and families rely
16 upon to get their kids to and from school on a
17 daily basis, safely, efficiently, quickly and
18 conveniently. And, in the last few years, we have
19 seen instances where the City, the school have no
20 idea where the bus that's purporting their child
21 is. And, in fact, earlier this school year, in
22 September of 2008, we had an instance where a
23 mother was going out of her mind for five hours
24 after waiting for her child to be dropped off at 4
25 p.m. in the afternoon, after school, for her to be

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2 waiting and not seeing or not having any idea when
3 her child would materialize again; neither the
4 school nor the DOE not being able to give her any
5 clue as to where her child might be. If I was in
6 that parent's situation, I'd be out of my mind in
7 15 minutes, let alone five hours.

8 So, we're going to get to the
9 bottom of exactly what the Department of Education
10 is doing, or has done, with regard to putting
11 these vehicle tracking devices on the school
12 buses, on every school bus; something that was
13 promised to this Council and this joint Committee
14 more than four years ago.

15 So, I'm very pleased that we are
16 joined by Council Members Miguel Martinez of
17 Manhattan, Larry Seabrook of the Bronx, Dan
18 Garodnick of Manhattan and Simcha Felder of
19 Brooklyn. And, let me turn it over to my Co-Chair
20 today, Councilman Jimmy Vacca.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,
22 Chairman Liu. And, in the absence of Chairman
23 Jackson, I very much am pleased to be here today.
24 I very much want to add my voice to those who are
25 concerned about this issue. We've heard of many

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2 cases is one case too many. Parents, when they
3 put their children on school buses, trust that all
4 is well; trust that their children will be taken
5 to and from school each day safely and that they
6 will arrive at their destinations at a certain
7 point. Unfortunately, we've had several instances
8 in our City where parents have been so upset and
9 distraught because where the bus is often remains
10 a point of contention. Under no situation should
11 that be allowed to exist.

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13 Our children, many of them in
14 special education, many of them in kindergarten
15 and first grade, are in the care of bus drivers
16 for long periods of the day. And, in those cases,
17 where the buses are becomes not only an emotional
18 issue for parents, but an issue for the child, as
19 well. We want to make sure that those buses are
20 properly equipped with tracking devices; that
21 these buses have communication systems so that
22 there is-- if there is a difficulty, if there is a
23 problem, the school and the parents will be aware
24 if there is an undue delay and where the bus is
25 and what the problem is. And, that's not the case
now.

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2 So, Intro 121 will go a long way to
3 requiring stronger standards for our school buses,
4 to prevent what could be the worst nightmare ever
5 for a parent, which is not knowing where your
6 child is and not knowing when they will be coming
7 home, not knowing what may have happened. That's
8 a parent's worst nightmare. And, that's a
9 scenario that this legislation seeks to address.

10 I thank Chairman Liu and I'm sure
11 Chairman Jackson, if he were here, would echo my
12 thoughts on this matter. And, I look forward to
13 hearing from the Administration.

14 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you. And,
15 we're delighted to be joined by our Deputy
16 Chancellor Kathleen Grimm of the Department of
17 Education. And, Brian Snodgrass of the New York
18 City Department of Information, Technology and
19 Telecommunications.

20 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: I'm Eric
21 Goldstein, Chief Executive--

22 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Oh.

23 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: -- School Support
24 Services, DOE.

25 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. Well, even

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2 better. Thank you very much. Thanks for joining
3 us. And, if you--

4 KATHLEEN GRIMM: I have some
5 prepared remarks.

6 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. Please.
7 Thank you.

8 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Good morning Chair
9 Liu, Chair Vacca, and members of the Education and
10 Transportation Committees. As indicated, I am
11 Deputy Chancellor Kathleen Grimm. And, just for
12 the record, this is Eric Goldstein, who is our
13 Chief Executive for School Support Services. And,
14 one of the areas, among many, that Eric oversees
15 is our pupil transportation. We are both here
16 today to provide you with an update on our
17 Geographic Positioning System, GPS, pilot for our
18 school buses.

19 Since we last testified before you
20 on this issue at the end of 2005, we have
21 discovered several things about GPS throughout our
22 RFP process. This is an expensive and a very
23 significant engineering and computer
24 hardware/software undertaking. It is certainly
25 bigger than we originally expected, given the

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2 complexity of building a system that links buses,
3 satellites and a command center, as well as the
4 challenge of scaling the system to fit the size
5 and nature of our bus fleet. And, it will take
6 longer than we originally predicted.

7 That said, we fully support the
8 goals of the proposed legislation you are
9 considering today, that is, ensuring the safe and
10 timely transportation of students. But, we do
11 have reservations about the specified timeframe in
12 the litigation. And, I hope, through our
13 conversation here today, we'll be able to persuade
14 you to consider that.

15 Before I lay out what has been
16 accomplished to date and what our next steps are,
17 I think it's important to explain what fleet-based
18 GPS/Telematics is and, also, what it isn't. Many
19 of us are familiar with the navigation devices in
20 our cars or even on our Blackberries that assist
21 us with driving directions. Garmin, for example,
22 is installed in many vehicles now. This
23 technology enables a driver to enter a destination
24 and will calculate the route based on the car's
25 location. The system will literally talk the

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2 driver through the directions until they reach the
3 destination. This retail GPS is very different
4 from the GPS system we are building for our school
5 buses, and is not as simple as just putting a
6 Garmin or a Tom-Tom device on 7,000 plus buses.

7 What we're dealing with is an
8 industrial-scale GPS, where the focus is on a
9 systematic management of the fleet and its
10 operations, rather than on driver accessibility to
11 maps and directions. This includes emergency
12 assistance, managing routing and on-time
13 performance, as well as vendor compliance.

14 GPS/Telematics is a complex
15 performance monitoring system with Automatic
16 Vehicle Location, AVL, for DOE general and special
17 education buses. And, it consists of three
18 components. First is vehicle hardware, which
19 includes GPS computers and antennae, actually on
20 our buses. Secondly, communication. This enables
21 the network between the satellite and the antenna
22 and the GPS computer and the central computers all
23 to talk to each other. Thirdly, Software and
24 monitoring. This includes desktop applications to
25 actually see where the vehicles are on a map. It

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2 will also generate automatic alerts in response to
3 panic button activation and vehicle movement, if a
4 bus travels outside of a designated zone, for
5 example.

6 In addition to monitoring the
7 movements of our buses, the system will be able to
8 monitor on-board emergency and non-emergency
9 events as well, such as door, flasher light and
10 stop arm sensors and the driver panic button.

11 In December 2002, a few months
12 after we testified on this topic, the Department
13 followed through on its testimony to the
14 Transportation Committee by issuing an RFP for an
15 engineering consultant to define and design the
16 telematic system requirements for our bus fleet.
17 Specifically, this included requirements
18 gathering, industry research, the development of a
19 next stage RFP for the actual telematics system
20 vendor, assistance in evaluating the proposals,
21 assistance in negotiating a final contract and
22 implementation plan, and finally, assistance in
23 oversight of implementation. The deadline for
24 proposal submissions was January of 2006. And,
25 Macro Corporation of Pennsylvania was awarded the

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2 consulting contract in April. The term of the
3 contract was from June 1st, 2006, through May 31st
4 of this year.

5 Macro and DOE's work, during this
6 research and analysis period, included visits and
7 interviews with school districts with large-scale
8 GPS systems. We visited Dallas County Schools,
9 one of the largest school bus implementations in
10 the country with approximately 1,000 vehicles,
11 that is still less than 15% the size of our fleet,
12 and, also the Baltimore City Public schools. We
13 conducted a phone interview with London Public
14 Transit, which was the only implementation we
15 could identify anywhere with a similar fleet size.
16 We found, through this research, that this
17 proposed project is enormously complex and that it
18 would be the first of this magnitude in the United
19 States. In addition, we have been talking to the
20 New York City Transit Authority, which recently
21 discontinued its telematics project, about GPS
22 since 2005 and we have been following their
23 program, as they have been following ours. While
24 the programs are different in many fundamental
25 ways, in some ways we face many of the same issues

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and challenges.

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In December 2007, we issued another RFP, this time for the actual telematics system vendor. The RFP contained more than 150 pages of technical specifications. It called for equipping all of our buses as well as accounting for potential growth in the fleet by the end of the contract with GPS equipment and AVL functionality. It also calls for five year maintenance from the end of installations. The primary goals of our endeavor are to accurately measure on-time performance; to increase efficiency by providing information to manage the fleet by exception reporting, in other words stops that are routinely missed will be highlighted; to provide tools to identify, analyze and resolve problems; to support customer service by providing functionality that will allow agents to query the system regarding location and status of a particular bus; to provide tools to support the investigative process and, to verify that bus route overtime is being performed as scheduled and paid for.

In response to that RFP, we received eight proposals by the due date in April

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2 of 2008. In late August 2008, the Evaluation
3 Committee convened, and during last September, the
4 Committee members submitted their evaluation
5 forms.

6 In the meantime, we have been
7 working very closely with our sister agency,
8 DoITT, on this project. As the proposals were
9 coming due, we started more protracted discussions
10 with DoITT about using their full-service
11 approach; namely, both network and vendor as part
12 of the DOE's telematics solution. When we first
13 started pursuing the RFP, the DOITT system did not
14 appear to meet our needs. But, as the RFP
15 progressed, DOITT convinced us that it could work.
16 Both agencies decided a pilot was the best next
17 step to take in order to evaluate DoITT's system's
18 ability to meet our needs and how to customize it
19 should we decide to use it for rolling out on our
20 buses. I'll also just note here that, during this
21 time, the Office of Pupil Transportation delayed
22 the initial rollout phase of GPS implementation as
23 part of our Citywide budget reductions. The
24 projected 1.7 million rollout was deferred to
25 satisfy the Program to Eliminate the Gap

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2 associated with the City's November Financial
3 Plan.

4 We have been developing the pilot
5 with DoITT over the last few months, and in the
6 last several weeks, we have begun installing and
7 monitoring AVL equipment on eight buses. During
8 the next several weeks, we will take the necessary
9 steps to migrate any issues that arise on these
10 eight buses, and then proceed to install equipment
11 on the remaining 42 buses in the pilot in early
12 May. We expect equipment installation to be
13 completed by mid-May, at which point we invite you
14 to come and to see the progress that we have made.

15 The proposed legislation, Intro
16 121, reflects the Department's efforts and intent
17 to ensure that children traveling on our buses are
18 transported safely and in a timely fashion. All
19 of our buses have two-way radios, as called for in
20 the bill. We also support the call for installing
21 GPS, as our pilot, that I have just described, is
22 underway. But, because of our expansive fleet, we
23 do not believe that the timeframe cited in the
24 proposed legislation is realistic or prudent. We
25 want to take the time that is needed to make sure

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2 we get this massive project right, and to also
3 ensure that the system is as efficient as possible
4 to meet all of our needs, and, of course, more
5 importantly, the needs of our students and their
6 parents.

7 Thank you very much for this
8 opportunity. And, we'll be very happy to answer
9 any of your questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you and
11 thank you [off-mic]. Thank you Deputy Chancellor
12 Grimm. We've also been joined by Council Member
13 Diana Reyna of Brooklyn and Queens, Council Member
14 Peter Vallone from Queens and the prime sponsor of
15 Intro 121, Council Member Mike Nelson from
16 Brooklyn. Council Member Nelson, would you like
17 to offer some opening remarks?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: Yes, thank
19 you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of articles, just
20 yesterday, we probably all have read that there
21 was a 3-year-old left alone on a bus. And,
22 authorities from the company said they left the
23 boy locked in the school bus in front of Yeshiva
24 in Brighton Beach, supposed to be on the way back
25 to the boy's school. Members of the Yeshiva came

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2 out, found the bus locked and, of course, the
3 little boy was crying and very upset. And, it
4 goes on to describe the horrendous situation. In
5 one case, the mother thanked, said a thank you to
6 the unknown Samaritan who summoned the police,
7 rightfully so. They didn't thank the DOE or this
8 Council, for that matter.

9 Here is a case where there was a
10 disabled student left abandoned on a bus not too
11 long ago. There's another one about family taken
12 after the school bus takes a four and a half hour
13 trip. They couldn't find their kid. And, another
14 one here-- well, this is where we called for
15 something to be done.

16 I want to thank Chairs Liu and
17 Jackson for their constant support for our City
18 and for our children. I've been a member of the
19 Council for ten years and everybody knows that I
20 don't pontificate or grandstand for the sake of
21 looking like a tough politician. I've always
22 presented my, and the people's, case in a not-
23 confrontational manner. My colleagues will verify
24 that, I'm sure. But, today's issue puts my normal
25 silent and demeanor to the test.

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2 I was a teacher for about 18 months
3 in the '80s. My wife taught for about 20 years.
4 My daughter went through public schools, right
5 through Brooklyn College. I was a member of the
6 School Board for five years. Point being, I have
7 a well-rounded education in education. Ergo, the
8 most important thing, as a parent or guardian of a
9 school child, is that the child gets safely to
10 school and back. Learning, eating, being treated
11 appropriately are all actually secondary to that
12 basic expectation. I think we can all agree with
13 that.

14 Now, for the most frustrating
15 portion of my statement, I requested the DOE
16 ensure that every school vehicle that transports
17 our children are equipped with a tracking device,
18 GPS, and/or a communication system, cell phone,
19 two-way radio, over four years ago. And, we've
20 had numerous incidents since and we don't know
21 what the future will hold.

22 I was told, as was the Chair of the
23 Transportation Committee and I believe the
24 Education Chair Jackson, along with Council Member
25 Liu, Chair Liu, a version of don't ask, don't tell

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2 and we'll all get along. And, which frustrated
3 the Chairs of those Committees, too. Since that
4 time, we've all witnessed many cases where
5 children of all ages and disabilities were lost
6 for hours, causing incredible grief and fear and
7 unknown future psychological damage to the family
8 and the child. This 3-year-old, I have a feeling
9 just will very well may be traumatized for a long
10 time, if not forever.

11 Now, and thusly far, we've been
12 lucky. Just by chance, no child, to my knowledge,
13 has been hit by a car, kidnapped, molested,
14 etcetera. But, cases now in the newspapers should
15 really point to the importance of doing something
16 here and quickly, taking these many years,
17 especially. DOE has been gambling all these years
18 that our kids will be safe on our school bus
19 transports and with all of the drivers and matrons
20 involved. This Council has been the bookie,
21 taking these bets, thusly, we are defacto part and
22 parcel of this failure to protect our children,
23 with exceptions, of course, of many of the Council
24 Members, who are concerned and the Chairs.

25 So, today, I'm demanding that you

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2 pay your debt to us and to our kids and to the
3 families. I'm requesting this Council to
4 immediately codify this vital, safety measure in
5 order to ensure that this untenable situation goes
6 on no longer than this school term before we have
7 an even greater tragedy than we've witnessed in
8 the past. This is our mandate, as elected
9 officials and appointed public officials and, just
10 by being human beings.

11 Having said that, I'm going to calm
12 down again, and hope that we finally see an end to
13 this extremely frustration situation, which should
14 have been taken care of years ago. Thank you,
15 Mr. Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,
17 Council Member Nelson. I hope next time you will
18 tell us how you really feel. We have been joined
19 by Councilman Al Vann from Brooklyn.

20 And, I want to thank Council Member
21 Nelson for bringing this issue to the forefront
22 years ago, when we had already witnessed, in this
23 City, school buses that seem to be in the Bermuda
24 Triangle, right here within the five boroughs.
25 And, that's why Council Member Nelson had pushed

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2 hard for his legislation that would require some
3 kind of tracking or communications device on every
4 single one of our school buses.

5 In 2005, we held joint hearings on
6 this issue, again, because our constituents were
7 complaining because kids were stuck on buses and
8 the City somehow did not know where these buses
9 were. In October of 2005, which was the last time
10 we held a hearing on this topic, we were implored
11 by the Department of Education to put the
12 legislation aside because the Department had
13 already put together concrete plans on how to
14 install these devices on every single school bus
15 in New York City by the beginning of the following
16 school year, which meant September 2006. By
17 September in 2005, the Department of Education
18 clearly promised, in testimony before these joint
19 Committees, that those devices would be installed
20 by September 2006.

21 Lo and behold, September 2008 comes
22 along and on the second day of this school year, a
23 5-year-old goes missing for five hours.
24 Fortunately, it was nothing worse than the school
25 bus driver being lost and not being willing to

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2 call in to admit that he was lost. Meanwhile, the
3 mother, who was waiting on that street corner for
4 hours, kept calling the school, kept calling the
5 Department of Education, to no avail because no
6 one had any idea where that child or that school
7 bus was. This would have been avoided along with
8 many other incidents would have been avoided if,
9 in fact, the Department of Education had lived up
10 to its commitment to get this done by September
11 2006. And, unfortunately, it is now April of
12 2009.

13 This testimony by the Department of
14 Education is like déjà vu all over again. The
15 kinds of arguments about how it's complex, about
16 how it's going to take a long time, about how the
17 Department supports what the Council Members are
18 trying to do, but don't believe that the timeframe
19 is realistic or prudent. It's the same stuff we
20 heard back in 2005. It's the exact same
21 testimony. It's totally unacceptable that, in
22 2009, we don't know where the school buses are.

23 So, I have a question for you.

24 Well, the question is now that the Department of
25 Education is finally cooperating and working with

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2 the Department of Information, Technology and
3 Telecommunications, my simple question is when did
4 you start talking with DoITT? When did the
5 Department of Education actually start
6 conversations with DoITT?

7 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: We started
8 conversations about a year ago.

9 CHAIRPERSON LIU: What is about a
10 year ago? I think, actually, to be-- we just got
11 to be very honest with everything that's being
12 said here. Would that have been, like, after
13 September 2008 or before 2008? And, you know,
14 the--

15 KATHLEEN GRIMM: [Interposing]
16 Excuse me. I think, I don't know exactly the
17 date. We will try to reconstruct that for you.
18 But, it was certainly before September because
19 there was consideration when we were issuing the
20 original RFP as to whether we should work with
21 DoITT or not. And, at that time, we didn't think
22 it was a fit. We continued conversations and
23 then, intensified conversations when discussions
24 indicated that perhaps it was a good fit.

25 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well, there are

1 reports in late September to early October of 2008
2 that the Department of Education was considering a
3 pilot program, on its own, and that it was looking
4 for contractors and that an RFP either had
5 recently been issued or was about to be issued for
6 the purposes of finding a contractor that could
7 start a pilot program to install vehicle tracking
8 devices on school buses.
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10 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Yes. As I
11 discussed in my testimony, we issued an RFP in
12 December of 2007 with the idea that we would
13 secure the services of a vendor to do a pilot and
14 ultimately do the whole fleet. What we realized,
15 as we went through the process, was that there was
16 an opportunity to work with our sister agency,
17 which we didn't think was an option before that.

18 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well then, why,
19 in September or early October of 2008, was the
20 Department of Education still on record saying
21 that it was about to commence an RFP to put
22 together, to find a contractor that would be able
23 to start that pilot program? Or, are you saying
24 that those news reports were simply false or
25 erroneous?

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2 KATHLEEN GRIMM: I'm not quite sure
3 what you are citing to. But, it was around that
4 time that we were making the decisions to
5 intensify our cooperative effort with DoITT and to
6 forego the money we had set aside for the pilot
7 vendor as part of the PEG program.

8 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well, there is
9 clearly muddy timeframes going on here.

10 KATHLEEN GRIMM: There're muddied
11 timeframes?

12 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Yes, there are
13 fuzzy timeframes going on.

14 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Shall I go back
15 over it?

16 CHAIRPERSON LIU: You can certainly
17 go back over it, sure, if you'd like to do it one
18 more time for the record.

19 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Yes. On the 2nd of
20 October in 2005, Marty Ostraker [phonetic]
21 testified before the City Council on our plans to
22 do a GPS system. On December 5th of 2005, the
23 Department of Education issued an RFP for an
24 engineering consultant to help us design a system
25 and procure the services of a vendor. On the 6th

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2 of April, we awarded, 2006, we awarded a contract
3 to Macro Corporation in response to that RFP.

4 From April '06 through '06 and '07,
5 we went through our research and analysis period.
6 We did visits and interviews with other school
7 district and large-scale GPS systems. We worked
8 with the MTA, DOT and DoITT. We developed an RFP
9 for a vendor. And, we learned many things. We
10 learned that the proposed project is enormously
11 complex; that the system would be the first of
12 this magnitude for a school system. And, at that
13 time, in October, we were having discussions,
14 serious discussions, with DoITT around its network
15 system. But, we had decided, in 2007, that we
16 would seek a separate vendor for system
17 development.

18 In December '07, we issued the RFP
19 for the system vendor. In January, the Mayor
20 announced, in his State of the City, that we were
21 doing a GPS system. In April, proposals were
22 submitted in 2008. By 11/2008, which was last
23 November, we deferred our budgeting for our own
24 separate pilot. And, in light of the increased
25 functionality that we were seeing at DoITT, we

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2 decided that we would work with them and utilize
3 them for all the services, both the network and
4 the vendor. And, we began plans for a pilot
5 program with DoITT and its contracted vendor. We
6 have been, since November, doing program
7 development on the pilot and, as Eric mentioned,
8 just recently, we actually began the installation
9 on eight buses.

10 So, we have been very actively
11 involved. And, I think trying to make the best
12 decisions for this effort. After all, we have
13 seen other large systems get scrapped because they
14 are so complex. And, if they aren't done
15 thoughtfully, and unfortunately that just takes
16 time.

17 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well, let me note
18 that we've been joined by Council Member David
19 Yassky of Brooklyn, Council Member Gale Brewer of
20 Manhattan, Council Member Melinda Katz of Queens
21 and Council Member Jessica Lappin of Manhattan and
22 Council Member Oliver Koppell of the Bronx.

23 Everything takes time. The fact of
24 the matter is that the Department of Education
25 made the commitment, in 2005, to get it done by

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2 2006. In fact--

3 KATHLEEN GRIMM: [Interposing] Just
4 for the record, there was a commitment made--

5 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Hold on.

6 KATHLEEN GRIMM: --to have a pilot
7 done by 2006. And, what we, unfortunately,
8 learned as we went through the steps is that it
9 was much more complex than we had anticipated.10 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Tracking vehicles
11 in today's modern times is actually not that
12 complicated. By your own testimony, the
13 difficulties have to do with the bells and
14 whistles that are intended to be applied here.
15 And, there's nothing wrong with those bells and
16 whistles. I mean, those things all sound great.
17 But, the basic functionality of being able to know
18 where the vehicles are, that's not that
19 complicated. It is not rocket science in today's
20 world.21 And so, this really points to lack
22 of a sense of urgency on the part of the
23 Department of Education, not only to install these
24 devices, but to actually adhere to the
25 Department's own commitments to the public and to

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2 this Council, even as the Department asked this
3 Council to put aside legislation that we were
4 moving forth with.

5 This is why I truly agree with
6 Council Member Nelson that we need to move forward
7 with Intro 121 to codify this. And, I hope that
8 the Department will work with us. If you think
9 that the timeframe in the bill moving forward is
10 not sufficient, then give us a timeframe. But,
11 the Department of Education has to be accountable
12 for this, because there is no accountability right
13 now. Even if it was a pilot program that was
14 supposed to have been completed by September of
15 2006, it's still years late. And so, unless we
16 codify this, the Department appears to not have
17 any sense of urgency or to have no timeframes by
18 which to measure its performance against.

19 You wanted to...

20 KATHLEEN GRIMM: If I may.

21 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Please.

22 KATHLEEN GRIMM: The Department is
23 perfectly happy to support the legislation but,
24 would certainly appreciate the opportunity to try
25 to persuade you that we have to look at a

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2 realistic timeframe.

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4 And, I'm going to ask Eric
5 Goldstein to talk a little bit. This system is a
6 lot more complex than just putting these devices
7 that we all, or most of us, have on our own
8 personal cars. And, he can walk us through some
9 of that complexity. But, just for the record, and
10 the finding, the legislative findings in your
11 proposed legislation, don't reflect this, every
12 one of our buses is equipped with a two-way radio.
13 We do have communication capability with every
14 single bus. And, that doesn't mean that we avoid
15 the situations that Council Member Nelson spoke
16 of. And, when I hear about those situations, as
17 he, my usual demeanor is also tested. And, we
18 react swiftly and surely every time that happens
19 because just one is totally unacceptable.

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20 But, Eric, could you talk a little
21 bit about the complexity of this system?

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21 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Sure. And, just
22 to make a point, we currently have two-way radios
23 now. And, all the buses should be known. So, if
24 there's a situation where we can't find a bus,
25 that is because, as was mentioned, the driver's

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2 not responding and following procedure, in which
3 case, the driver will be sanctioned.

4 Just to talk a little bit about the
5 complexity. And, I think what's important to keep
6 in general context is, over these years, I think
7 we've all seen the technologies evolving. And,
8 when you try to put together an industrial-size
9 system with evolving technologies, that just gives
10 birth to complexity. And, we saw that by talking,
11 as Deputy Chancellor Grimm mentioned, to the City
12 of London, where they do it with their surface
13 transport, also Dallas County Schools, where they
14 do it with school buses and Baltimore. And, all
15 these districts and other districts we've spoken
16 to, as well, have had tremendous issues that they
17 are seeking to resolve. And, what we are trying
18 to do here in New York City is to learn from
19 those. And, I think, at this point in time, the
20 technology is at a point, on all levels, where, in
21 working with DoITT, we have the ability to, I
22 think, construct an important pilot.

23 To the point of the complexity of
24 the systems, on a retail system, one could have,
25 as was mentioned, the Garmin, and I can speak from

1
2 personal experience, those, even in today's world,
3 those retail devices have their challenges in
4 trying to find one's way. But, one thing we
5 didn't want this to do was to distract the driver.
6 The driver's job is to drive. This system is for
7 us, with a Command Center, to track the buses, to
8 make sure we have adherence to on-time performance
9 at schools and the like.

10 So, there are three main
11 components. One would be the actual GPS system
12 that is on the bus with the antenna. The second
13 is the wireless communication network to transmit
14 that data. And, the third would be the software.
15 And, there is a great deal of customization that
16 goes on with that software in terms of the
17 reporting, enable us to track the buses to keep
18 track of the buses and to provide the level of
19 service that we all try to provide.

20 CHAIRPERSON LIU: All right. Let's
21 move on. Mr. Goldstein, it's just not that
22 complicated. It really isn't that complicated.
23 And, it shouldn't even be compared to the retail
24 systems because these bus drivers, they know their
25 routes. They know where they're going. We're not

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2 suggesting, in any way, that GPS devices be put on
3 these school buses so that the drivers know where
4 they're going. They know their routes. They know
5 where they're going. Maybe a new driver needs to
6 learn his or her route. But, within a couple of
7 days, they know their routes.

8 The point is not to help the driver
9 know where they're going. The point is for the
10 schools and the Department of Education to know
11 where those buses are. And, that kind of vehicle
12 location system, that tracking device, it is not
13 that complicated. It really isn't. Let's just
14 get it done. How long will it take? If
15 Chancellor Grimm is saying, and look, I have a lot
16 of respect for Kathleen Grimm. She's saying that
17 the legislation is not realistic in its timeframe.
18 Tell us how long. How long will it take to get
19 done, because you don't have an unlimited amount
20 of time here? You do have to adhere to some kind
21 of performance standard.

22 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: The important
23 point, in terms of timing, is these devices have
24 to be fit in and wired on the bus. So, even now,
25 during our pilot, we could do about two buses in a

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2 day. Maybe, over time, we can get up, in talking
3 to the contractor, to four buses a day. We have
4 over 7,000 buses active. We'd have to do spares.
5 Just by taking that simple bit of the manual part
6 of putting these GPS computers on the buses and
7 the antennas, it takes months, if not years to get
8 through thousands and thousands and thousands of
9 buses. It's just the simple mechanics--

10 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] I
11 don't know if you realize how ridiculous that
12 sounds that the City of New York can equip two
13 buses per day or four buses per day. And,
14 therefore, to get thousands of buses, it might
15 take ten years to do. Just sounds ridiculous,
16 really. But, anyway--

17 KATHLEEN GRIMM: [Interposing]
18 Excuse me. I didn't--

19 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Yeah.

20 KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- hear it would
21 take ten years. I think part--

22 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Sure.

23 KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- of what we're
24 trying to--

25 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Sure, at a rate

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2 of two buses per day.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: I think what we're trying to do with this pilot is to learn. That's what it looks like now. Let's see what we can learn with this pilot.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: So, what do I expect-- what kind of results are we trying to measure through this pilot? And, when will we have the results?

KATHLEEN GRIMM: The pilot program runs through August.

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Right. So, it's currently ongoing.

KATHLEEN GRIMM: And, we estimate that we will have results analyzed by October.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: And then, the Department of Education will decide how to proceed from there?

KATHLEEN GRIMM: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. Can we have, 'cause Brian Snodgrass, from DoITT has put in an appearance card. Can we talk to Mr. Snodgrass?

KATHLEEN GRIMM: He's right here.

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2 Pull your chair up, Brian.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Oh, thank you very much for joining us, Mr. Snodgrass. Could you identify yourself for the record? And then, give us just a very brief, one minute, update on where the \$500 million system that the City has already implemented is?

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: Sure. My name is Brian Snodgrass, with the New York City Department of Information, Technology and Telecommunications. I'm the Executive Director for the New York City Wireless Network. And, I'm joined by my boss, Associate Commissioner Steve Harte today.

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In terms of the network itself, Commissioner Cosgrave recently reported, at his budget testimony, that we now exceed 90% of the City is now covered by this network. We continue to work actively with NYPD, FDNY, DOT, DEP, DOE and dozens of agencies on their use of the network today.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. So, the City has invested \$500 million in this project?

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: Yeah, it's a \$500 million five-year contract, yes.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. And, how
3 many vehicles would you say have been installed
4 with these vehicle location devices?

5 BRIAN SNODGRASS: We have
6 approximately 400 vehicles.

7 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Four hundred
8 vehicles right now. And, what is the goal, then?
9 The total number of vehicles to be installed as
10 part of the system?

11 BRIAN SNODGRASS: The contract
12 defines for a minimum of 5,000. The system is
13 growable and scalable, can meet DOE's long term
14 needs. The platform we've selected is very
15 customizable. And, the goal is to continue
16 pilots, like what we're doing with DOE and other
17 City agencies, so agencies can make decisions on
18 how they'll use the technology to meet their
19 unique needs.

20 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Conceivably,
21 would the system be able to handle 7,000 school
22 buses? Or, is that too many vehicles?

23 BRIAN SNODGRASS: With the
24 appropriate expansion, planning, capacity and
25 funding, yes.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. And, what
3 does this vehicle location system actually do?
4 Would it enable the City to know where all of
5 these vehicles are; school buses or agency
6 vehicles or otherwise?

7 BRIAN SNODGRASS: I think one of
8 the important things for the Council to consider
9 is that the location of vehicles looks nice on a
10 map. But, what's important is what's done with
11 the data behind it. Putting 7,000 buses on a map
12 and not knowing the information that correlates
13 the bus to the students to the schools to the
14 routes, really is an investment that wouldn't be
15 wise. And, DOE's decision to take the time to
16 figure out how the data, the raw GPS positions,
17 will be used to correlate back to their systems is
18 really-- needs to be carefully planned. We've
19 mentioned other implementations that have gone
20 poorly, whether they're in other cities or other
21 programs. That's always because people look to
22 putting the buses on the map. The key is knowing,
23 once the buses are on the map, it would be hard,
24 if I gave you a map with 7,000 buses, to see where
25 a bus is in trouble. The intelligence, knowing

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when a bus is off route or when a bus is--

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] Are you suggesting that the system would just know where the buses are without having any identification number for each of those buses, 7,000 or otherwise?

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: The buses are identified by vehicle and bus company.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Right.

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: However--

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] So, it would be very easy-- I mean, we're not suggesting that you have 7,000 dots moving on a map. In fact, every one of those dots would be easily identifiable?

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: That's correct.

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But--

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] So, I don't think it's that complicated. Are you aware, Mr. Snodgrass, that the City has already mandated, on the private industry in New York City, something this is far more stringent than the City itself is willing to admit to at this time with regard to the Department of Education?

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2 Are you aware of any system that the City has
3 already mandated on the private sector here in New
4 York City?

5 BRIAN SNODGRASS: I think that's
6 something outside my area of knowledge.

7 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well, it turns
8 out that the Taxi and Limousine Commission has
9 already mandated that on 13,000 vehicles, 13,000
10 vehicles, with a very accelerated timeframe. And,
11 I don't understand how, with \$500 million, with a
12 commitment from the Department of Education that
13 is now three years old, that we can't figure out
14 where the school buses are.

15 BRIAN SNODGRASS: I am aware, to
16 clarify, of the TLC program. I was involved with
17 some of the decisions in that program, as well, as
18 was my agency. I guess I just want to reclarify
19 my statement, I believe that, based upon
20 experience, that knowing where 7,000 buses are on
21 a map is one piece. But, that it would be
22 challenging for an operator in DOE to have the
23 kind of information we need to address it. I
24 think the ability to know where a bus is is
25 helpful. The intelligence behind the system, the

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2 ability to look and see that bus left the route, a
3 bus is will beyond its travel time, for example,
4 the references that have been made, if a bus is
5 supposed to take four hours per day and it
6 actually is out five, sending an alert so that DOE
7 can be proactive.

8 These are the kinds of technologies
9 DOE needs to be successful in this program. And,
10 that requires careful planning, because some
11 routes will take four hours; some will take three.
12 So, there is no one size fits all due to the
13 customization in a system like DOE.

14 CHAIRPERSON LIU: All of the
15 parameters and the information you are talking
16 about would be easily manageable with a single
17 spreadsheet. Let me, I have more questions. I'll
18 look forward to a second chance to ask. But, my
19 Co-Chair and then, our prime sponsor, they have a
20 number of questions. Co-Chair Jimmy Vacca.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes. I
22 would point out that the issuance of the pilot
23 programs is a long process involving very few
24 buses. Was there any thought, in the beginning,
25 to at least the cellular phones or the two-way

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2 radios? Was there any thought to doing something
3 in the interim pending the execution of the
4 contract and pending the review of the small-scale
5 pilot programs?

6 KATHLEEN GRIMM: We need to really
7 make this clear on the record. Every one of our
8 buses is equipped with two-way communication.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Cellular
10 phones, are they equipped with-- does the driver
11 have a cellular phone?

12 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Many of them do,
13 but what we require, pursuant to the local law,
14 which mandates either two-way communication radio
15 or cellular phone. We mandate the two-way radio.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Then, how
17 did these incidents happen if every bus had a two-
18 way radio? How did we have these incidents where
19 buses were lost? Did the equipment work? Is the
20 equipment current equipment? Or, did the driver
21 know how to use it? Or, was the driver failing in
22 his responsibility?

23 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Very often, when
24 we investigate a case, that's what we find. And,
25 we proceed to terminate.

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2 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What do you
3 find, Deputy Chancellor?

4 KATHLEEN GRIMM: If the bus driver
5 failed to use the equipment, if the bus driver was
6 lost and didn't communicate back to base to get
7 some help and just drove around, that's all
8 unacceptable, because we have the equipment there
9 just for that use. So, that is malfeasance on the
10 job, if the driver fails to use it.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Are there
12 maps on these school buses? Do the drivers have
13 maps of City streets and locations?

14 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Usually they have
15 what we call left-right sheets, which are, you
16 know, go to this street, take a left; go to that
17 street, take a right.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: The money
19 involved, you mentioned \$500 million, is that
20 capital budget money or expense budget money?

21 BRIAN SNODGRASS: It's a
22 combination of both.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Combination
24 of both. Is that money committed by the City?
25 Or, is that also possibly going to be scrapped due

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2 to PEG cuts?

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: The capital is committed. The expense is currently being reviewed in our Commissioner's annual budget.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So, we may not have that allocation in place totally, as you indicated. How much of the money is capital? How much is expense? And, how much is under review?

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: I should clarify my statement. Expense, like all of our agency's expenses, are being carefully reviewed. However, there is commitment for the expense portions of the program. That's not in question.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And, there is a commitment for the capital money?

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BRIAN SNODGRASS: The capital's completely committed. And, the network is near completed.

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CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Your timetable, you said that the timetable that this bill of Councilman Nelson's has set forth is not doable from your vantage point. What timetable do you suggest? What timetable is operable from your perspective?

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2 KATHLEEN GRIMM: That is what we're
3 going to determine as we move through the pilot.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,
5 Mr. Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you very
7 much. We have questions from Council Member
8 Nelson, the prime sponsor of the bill.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: And, just
10 sort of a sidebar about, must have been eight or
11 nine years ago, a bus broke down near my district,
12 Flatbush Avenue. Well, my question first would be
13 when were two-way radios installed?

14 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Ten years ago.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: It was
16 about then, right?

17 KATHLEEN GRIMM: At least ten years
18 ago.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: I made a
20 big issue out about that then, because the driver
21 was on the side of the road, with the
22 schoolchildren, with no way to communicate. And,
23 what they had to do was depend upon the kindness
24 of strangers. And, it was about ten years ago.
25 And, I made a big fuss about it. I guess you guys

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2 got the message back then. I don't know if you
3 were there. But, some kind stranger dialed 911
4 and the kids and the driver were saved, if you
5 will.

6 First of all, I have a lot of
7 respect for you and your positions, including Erin
8 Stevens, who's, I don't know if she's going to
9 testify or not. But, we're dealing with the human
10 factor here; drivers, matrons. If only 1% of them
11 are not up to the task, we have a big safety
12 issue. Not to be contentious, which if I was
13 before, I apologize, but, we have, you know, you
14 mentioned you were actively involved and I can't
15 argue that 'cause, you know, I'm not over at Tweed
16 [phonetic]. So, I don't see what you're doing.
17 But, as far as the timeframe goes, it's totally
18 unacceptable. This has got to be codified. Four
19 years, at least, I mean, I don't want to see the
20 DOE going the way of GM. And, right now, it
21 appears that it is.

22 Now, I've defended Mayoral control,
23 to my chagrin sometimes, 'cause I've had a lot of
24 opposition in my district with this. With
25 conditions only, I've defended Mayoral control, I

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2 would hasten to add. But, this is pushing me and,
3 I'm sure a lot of State electeds, also. This
4 issue may be pushing them the other way, 'cause
5 this is something that if Mayoral control can't
6 totally guarantee the safety of our
7 schoolchildren, after all these years, I'm really
8 very offended by it.

9 I believe that New York City can
10 install these devices. I'm not an engineer. And,
11 I don't have the expertise that you gentlemen, and
12 you, do, Deputy Chancellor Grimm. So, I can't say
13 what you know and why you are coming up with this
14 defense. You could be correct. And, I'm not
15 doubting that you're being truthful in your
16 statements. What I am questioning is that I don't
17 know if it's been a big enough priority through
18 the years to really huddle and get this done.

19 We built the Empire State Building
20 in 13 months. This City did. And, with the
21 amount of vehicles that you have and, as Chairman
22 Liu mentioned, 13,000 taxis are going to be done,
23 the time limit I do not know. But, supposedly
24 it's not going to be as long as I'm hearing from
25 DOE. I just feel upset, frustrated and somewhat

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2 disbelief. And, again, not doubting your
3 veracity, but I just don't think that you really
4 have been working on this as a priority with
5 enough time, 'cause I'm sure you have the
6 expertise to do this. I would not question that
7 whatsoever. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
8 Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,
10 Council Member Nelson. Question from Council
11 Member Arroyo.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chair. Good morning. Nice to see you, Deputy
14 Commissioner. The concern that the legislation is
15 seeking to address, the issue of children not
16 being where they're supposed to be safely. Two
17 questions on-- in the incidents that have been
18 cited, what was at fault?

19 KATHLEEN GRIMM: What was our
20 reaction?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: No. What
22 was the outcome of whatever investigation? Was it
23 malfeasance on the part of the driver? Or, what
24 were your findings?

25 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Well, which

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situations are you talking about?

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: There were two, in particular, cited in the documents that I've read. One bus--

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: One, last September--

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Uh, huh. One--

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- is that--

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: -- bus lost for five hours--

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- is that investigation.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: -- with children on it.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: No, no the September. Let me see if I can't get the answer before this hearing is over.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Yeah, because I, you know, I read in the briefing document that I have that the attorney for the bus company basically passed the buck to the Department of Education. So, what's at play there? Do we know if it's just, you know, they're

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2 his client or the bus company--

3 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Well--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: -- was not
5 at fault.

6 KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- what's at play
7 is we have a contract. It says-- because our plan
8 is to have a GPS system. When we did the
9 contracts the last time, we put it in the
10 contracts because we wanted the bus companies to
11 know that we were going to go forward with this.
12 So, when we had this unfortunate situation, I just
13 think it was not exactly relevant in terms of the
14 situation. The situation was a driver drove
15 around for five hours. That's totally
16 unacceptable. And, we'll get what the disposition
17 of that case was for you. But, what the driver
18 should have done, once he figured out he was lost,
19 is to call. He has a two-way radio.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: I get that.
21 Let me ask you about the pilot. Eight buses in a
22 fleet of 7,000, I hear, the total number of buses
23 in the study is going to be 42. And, at some
24 point, based on what happens with those 42, you're
25 going to say what?

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ERIC GOLDSTEIN: It's 50.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Fifty,

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okay, it's 50.

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ERIC GOLDSTEIN: It's 8 plus 42.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Right.

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Okay.

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ERIC GOLDSTEIN: So, we picked a

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variety of routes for a variety of reasons to test

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a lot of the functionality and to start to

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understand how we're going to use this information

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to make our operations more efficient and provide

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better service to parents.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: So, the

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pilot is to test equipment, not anything else?

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ERIC GOLDSTEIN: No. It's to test

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the systems, to test what we do with the

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information--

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO:

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[Interposing] Yeah, when you--

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ERIC GOLDSTEIN: -- and how we--

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: When you

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say systems--

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ERIC GOLDSTEIN: -- translate that

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into--

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: -- you mean
3 the equipment on the buses? The route planning
4 that you have as a Department? What systems are
5 you talking to?

6 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Exactly, all those
7 things.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Everything.

9 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: That's exactly it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay. So,
11 are 50 buses enough to give you a good sample for
12 you to assess whether you're on the right track or
13 not?

14 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: We think so.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: And, where
16 are those five buses? What boroughs? What
17 districts are they serving?

18 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: We picked two bus
19 companies, 'cause we wanted to concentrate this
20 into--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO:
22 [Interposing] Out of how many bus companies?

23 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: About 50. But,
24 various bus companies are various sizes. So, we
25 picked two sizeable bus companies, Varsity and

1
2 Pioneer. And, we put buses, a lot of these buses
3 travel in Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens. The bus yards,
4 themselves, are on the Queens Brooklyn border and
5 the Bronx, as well.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: But, the
7 routes that the 50 buses have, do you have that
8 much detail?

9 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Yes. We know the
10 routes. The routes travel all over the five
11 boroughs.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: So, how
13 long are you going to take to figure out whether
14 you're going to go to the next step?

15 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: October.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Of this
17 year?

18 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: That's correct.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: And, at
20 that point, you'll decide what?

21 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Part of that is to
22 go through school opening, obviously. The point
23 of this is to gather learnings, to understand how
24 we digest this information operationally and how
25 we use it to make ourselves more efficient and

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2 deliver better service.

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4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: With a goal
to have equipment installed in every single bus?

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6 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: The goal is to
deliver better service. So, that's what we keep a
7 very keen and focused eye on.

8

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: So, at the
end, it's not whether or not they will be
10 equipped, it whether or not-- well, whether or not
11 they will be equipped. I guess that would be the
12 question.

13

14 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Our goal is to put
this system on every one of our buses.

15

COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay.

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17 KATHLEEN GRIMM: What we don't want
to do is go too fast and go without knowing what
18 we're doing, because we've seen too many big
19 systems not work.

20

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Okay. So,
my final question, Mr. Chair, so, at that point,
22 you will decide how to move the installation of
23 these systems forward with a timeframe of what?
24 Do you know?

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: No. We will know

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2 that based on the--

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO:

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[Interposing] In October.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- analysis of the

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pilot, yes.

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COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Thank you,

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Mr. Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: I have some more

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questions, 'cause the more I hear, the-- I'll

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reserve it. Let's turn it over to Council Member

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Felder. He has questions.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you.

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Good morning. Is this working? You hear me?

15

Good. Good morning. First of all, I just I

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wanted to know what is your understanding in terms

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of the legislation's effect on nonpublic schools

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that have their own service, that's not contracted

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at all through the City's?

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: I'm assuming this

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legislation applies to our buses.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Right.

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That was my impression. I just wanted to know if

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that's... That's one. Two, on a entirely different

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subject, just to make sure that the Chairs get

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angry with me, I wanted to ask you what's your opinion about privatizing transportation entirely?

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: I'm only hesitating because I realize I just gave you my impression of what the legislation is. You really should check with corporation counsel.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, I understood that.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: Okay. All right.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: But, I wanted to know how you felt about it.

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FEMALE VOICE: She doesn't want to tell you.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: She told me already. Now, she's trying to take it back. It's too late.

11

KATHLEEN GRIMM: We--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: And, what's with the privatizing?

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: We run a very, very large contract operation with buses. And, the bus companies know the business. Our business is education. So, we have no plans to privatize or to deprivatize it and bring it in-house.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, that
3 wasn't my question.

4 KATHLEEN GRIMM: I'm sorry.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: My
6 question--

7 KATHLEEN GRIMM: I am so confused
8 about--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- is that--
10 -

11 KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- the first--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- instead
13 of, for example, let's say starting out with the
14 service you provide to the disabled. By the way,
15 this, Mr. Goldstein, this test run includes, I
16 assume, service that you're providing to the
17 disabled, as well. Is that true?

18 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: That's true.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah. So,
20 in terms of privatizing, which would mean that
21 you'd voucher the--

22 KATHLEEN GRIMM: Oh.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- the
24 amount that somebody wants to spend to get their
25 kids to school--

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: Um, hm.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- without having to go through a lot of what's being discussed here.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: I'm sorry. I did completely misunderstand. Yes, we are exploring a pilot in that area, also, where we would give cash payments to parents who would volunteer--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Right.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: -- to accept it in lieu of our providing transportation.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: Um, hm. That, for the pre-K children, special ed children.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, thank you.

18

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: So, I'm sorry about the confusion.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well, are you willing to give me your opinion about the other thing, again, just to make up for what you did before?

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COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: Don't feel bad. I don't understand him half the time either.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Oh, would that
3 be all, Council Member Felder?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I have a
5 lot. But, I'll defer to my colleagues first.

6 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Council Member
7 Nelson.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: [Off mic]
9 Just one statement - - scenario, but, I believe
10 that - - a hands on - - and make this a priority.
11 Again, working with your incredible intelligence,
12 your talents, your expertise, you can do it. I
13 don't know if we need Donald Trump coming to this.
14 I'm pretty sure he could have it done faster, as
15 well. But, again, I, at the risk of being
16 redundant, really feel this-- I really feel this
17 can be done and done sooner. And, working
18 together, the Council and DOE, let's do it faster
19 so we don't have more of these episodes. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,
22 Council Member Nelson. In fact, I think,
23 obviously, if Donald Trump was here, he'd say
24 'You're Fired.' He really would because DoITT, in
25 fact, has done it. They put together the system.

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2 And, I got to say, the more I hear these excuses,
3 the more outraged I get. The fact of the matter
4 is you're telling us that it's going to take them
5 'til October to figure out whether we know how to
6 track eight buses, or 58 buses, whatever that
7 number is? That just sounds ridiculous. Please.

8 This is the automatic vehicle
9 location device. You're saying that oh, not only
10 is it about knowing where the bus is, but what
11 you're going to do with that information, as in,
12 which kids are on that bus, as in what time the
13 kids are supposed to get there. The schools
14 already have that, sir. They already have that.
15 If you go to the principal of a school and ask
16 them what bus is my child on, they have that
17 information. They may have it on pieces of paper
18 and maybe you need to computerize that. But,
19 that's not high technology. That's just getting
20 organized.

21 And, in the case of what happened
22 in September, that was a matter-- you knew exactly
23 which bus that kid was on. It's just that you
24 couldn't reach the driver for whatever reason. It
25 turned out, as far as we know, that the bus driver

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2 was lost and probably did not want to admit that
3 he was lost.

4 But, you know what, that was not
5 what was going through the mind of that mother.
6 That parent was fearing the worst in this day and
7 age. And, she should not have to had to suffer
8 through that. Nobody should have had to suffer
9 through that. You knew where the bus was. It's
10 not about technology here. It's about, as Council
11 Member Nelson said, paying attention to this
12 critical need at this point and to upholding the
13 promises that the DOE already made years ago.
14 Really. These excuses are totally inexcusable.

15 MALE VOICE: [Off mic] Is that the

16 - -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: [Off mic]

18 No, it's the technology that's being tested.

19 CHAIRPERSON LIU: I think we, if
20 you're serious about this, Chancellor Grimm, let's
21 sit together. Let's figure out the timeframe.
22 But, you have to really, please, step back for a
23 little bit and hear what you're telling us here,
24 that it's going to take them until October to
25 figure out where eight buses are or where 58 buses

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2 are. That's just not-- that doesn't make any
3 sense.

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KATHLEEN GRIMM: What we'll know in
5 October is how to take what we've learned from the
6 pilot of 50 buses and scale that to 7,000 and how
7 long it will take.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I actually
9 think-- I'm going to be in trouble now. I think
10 it does take until October to figure it out. But,
11 once you have it figured out, I think you can go
12 very quickly. But, I'm just saying I'm going to
13 disagree with my very good friend, Mr. Liu, on
14 that. I do think you need 'til October to figure
15 it out. And then, you could be able to-- 'cause
16 the NYCWin system, having participated in the
17 beginning of that and sat through a lot of those
18 hearings and gone down and seen how they operate,
19 it took a great deal of time to get that up and
20 running. Two different companies making sure that
21 they were appropriate pilots for about a year,
22 right. And then, NYCWin moving forward.

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So, I'm just saying, after that, it
should move very quickly and should certainly
codify it, it'd be my opinion. But, it does take

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until then, in my opinion. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well, I will state once again, that the issue here does not actually seem to be the technology itself, at least not the technology of knowing where the bus is. The main hurdles that you seem to be suggesting really have more to do with actually organizing the information because, right now, the principal knows which bus each child is on. They have that information already. It's just not centrally organized. And, that, in fact, and, in fact, the hurdles that you bring up really have to do more with organizing that information.

It really has very little to do, and it's becoming clear that it has nothing to do, or little to do, with the actual vehicle location technology, 'cause the vehicle location technology is there already. It's pretty simple. It's not that complicated. It's what you do with that information. And, you know, just think about it, 'cause the principals, they already know where the buses are. In fact, the DOE knew where that little 5-year-old, back in September, which was on that bus that was missing for four and a half

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2 hours, was.

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So, it's not the GPS or the vehicle location technology. It is, at this point, it seems clear, a matter of the DOE getting that information organized. And, if you're saying that you need a highly sophisticated computerized system to organize that information, I don't think that's true. It's not that complicated a set of information.

Okay. Well, we don't need to beat the dead horse. Let's just, I guess we'll leave that at that. But, I implore you to please sit with us and figure out a timing that does make sense and really have more of a sense of urgency because, in this day and age, there's no excuse why we don't know where the school buses are in an organized fashion. Thank you.

KATHLEEN GRIMM: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: No, I just wanted to say--

CHAIRPERSON LIU: I'm sorry, Council Member Nelson.

COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: -- I appreciate your courage for showing up today and,

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your dignity and grace under fire I respect.

Thank you.

KATHLEEN GRIMM: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: We expect no less from Chancellor Kathleen Grimm.

KATHLEEN GRIMM: Well, the same is true about Chancellor Klein, too.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: [Off mic] I have more questions. I want to test - - under fire.

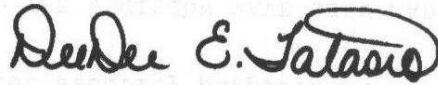
KATHLEEN GRIMM: Invite me back any time.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: All right. With that, this joint hearing of the City Council's Committees on Education and Transportation is adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, DeeDee E. Tataseo certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "DeeDee E. Tataseo". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Date

May 2, 2009