

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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DECEMBER 10, 2019
Start: 10:31 AM
Recess: 10:46 AM

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Fernando Cabrera
Andrew Cohen
Chaim M. Deutsch
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Rafael Espinal, Jr.
Peter A. Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Mark Levine
Carlos Menchaca
I. Daneek Miller
Antonio Reynoso
Donovan J. Richards
Deborah L. Rose

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

2 (sound check) (pause) (gavel) (background
3 comments/laughter)

4 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Good morning
5 everyone. Welcome to this hearing of the City
6 Council's Transportation Committee. I'm Ydanis
7 Rodriguez, the Chair of the committee. First, let me
8 recognize my colleagues who are here with us today
9 Council Members Holder, Deutsch, Cohen, Cabrera,
10 Koo, Menchaca, Reynoso and Espinal. This bill that
11 we will be voting today will address the many safety
12 and traffic concerns that rise when a vehicle is left
13 on the sidewalk near fire hydrant, bike lanes or bus
14 lanes. These designated areas are not for cars, and
15 this bill will ensure that the city is enforcing
16 that. Anyone from the media would say advising of
17 the law today, and the answer is no. The law today
18 in those areas empower the men and women of the NYPD
19 or the Traffic Enforcement to give a ticket. What we
20 are adding today is to empower--empowering the city to
21 remove those vehicles if they park in those areas.
22 One important matter to point is that across the city
23 many of our bus stops, fire hydrants areas are not
24 marked, and you live---it create a confusion where
25 the city in my case in many occasions is that

2 confusion to give tickets and to raise revenue. So,
3 the city must pain the bus stops as well as the fire
4 hydrants now because I myself and I know many taxi
5 drivers and many others when you are parking near a
6 fire hydrant and you know that you will not be
7 obeying the law, you mark yourself what no one know
8 what is the distance. Is that 12 feet or is that 15
9 feet, the distance for the-a-a driver to park the
10 vehicle from the far drive (sic). So, the same thing
11 with the bus stop. I have an area in my community in
12 Inwood at 201 and 10th Avenue that the drivers they
13 don't know what is the distance that they should not
14 get into the bus stop area. So, as someone that we
15 know that we need to raise the revenue because we
16 need money, but also we need to improve safety. We
17 are ready to support the bills of this kind. I will
18 be adding my name, too, but I also want to ask the
19 City of New York to paint, to mark the distance where
20 drivers should not park the vehicle close to the fire
21 drive as the same for the bus stop. As I said, you
22 know, today we will be voting on Proposed Intro 1412-
23 A sponsored by Council Member Holden. This bill will
24 provide the Police Department's tow trucks may remove
25 unattended vehicles that are obstructing the

2 sidewalk, crosswalk, fire hydrants, bicycle lane or
3 bus lane if the vehicle present—presents a threat to
4 safety or would inhibit the safe and expeditious
5 passage of the MTA buses. This bill will also
6 require the Police Department to issue a report on
7 January of 2021 that include for each month in 2020
8 the number of vehicles towed, disaggregated—
9 disaggregated by police presence. [Speaking Spanish]
10 I will now like to invite the sponsor of the bill
11 Council Member Holden to deliver his opening
12 statement, and then we move on on voting on this
13 bill.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair
15 Rodriguez. This is a very important bill, um, that
16 we're voting on today. Right now, the Police can tow
17 any vehicle. However, they'll tow vehicles that are
18 parked 10 minutes over on muni meter. They'll—
19 they'll tow vehicles at their discretion, but safety
20 is not really the main concern, and I think we should
21 make a priority for safety. I think everybody would
22 agree that we're seeing a lot of cars parked at
23 hydrants, crosswalks, bike lanes, bus lanes, and it
24 gets to the point where people can't walk. They have
25 to walk in the street especially around precincts. I

2 think we've all noticed that that this placard abuse.
3 This--this bill was originally part of the placard
4 abuse package and it is still except we had to work
5 out some details with towing, and this had--and the
6 fact that--and I--and I appreciate that Speaker Johnson
7 actually, you know, adding important, um, parts to
8 this bill. The reporting is very, very important
9 that we get reports every months, and make sure the
10 police are towing, um, you know, crosswalks that are
11 blocked, and I see it--I think everybody sees this in
12 the City of New York now. In fact, I walked into a
13 number of firehouses, and they were pleading with me
14 to do something about people that are parking at
15 hydrants. In fact, they go to fires in my district
16 and they can't find the fire hydrant. It delays
17 several minutes in fighting the fires because they
18 can't find the hydrant because somebody is parked in
19 front of it. So, my--I'm actually introducing
20 additional legislation today at the Stated that will
21 require DOT to mark the hydrant with a stencil in the
22 middle of the street like I--like I saw the symbol of
23 a fire hydrant possibly red that would tell the
24 firefighters where the fire hydrant is located.
25 That's how bad it's gotten, but you also see people

2 parking in crosswalks, which is very, very dangerous
3 because people have to walk in the street to get
4 around, but in my district and I think many other
5 districts with driveways in the front of people's
6 homes, they are now parking like tandem parking and
7 blocking the sidewalk so you have to go around
8 especially in the snow storms you have to go into the
9 street to get around. The sidewalk is blocked and-
10 and in the past the police would not handle this and
11 this-this bill would actually make it an option.
12 It's still at police discretion, but this will make
13 it, um, more safe I think in the City of New York,
14 but we have to actually check monthly and that's
15 where we all come in. We have to make sure that
16 there-the police are enforcing safety regulations,
17 and-and making our sidewalks and streets much safer.
18 So many tragedies we've had around New York City.
19 We've had a number of bicyclists that have been
20 killed because somebody was blocking the bike lane
21 and they got out into the main traffic area and get
22 struck, and, um, that is such a serious issue. So, we
23 have to start making it civilized out there in New
24 York City that we enforce our regulations, but with a
25 priority for safety. So, I just want to-I want to

2 thank the Committee. I hope, um, we have support on
3 this bill. It's—it's been a thing I've been working
4 on for over a year because I first discovered when I
5 moved into my new office in Middle Village back in
6 March of 2018, we have a fire hydrant right outside
7 that was blocked the whole week, and I—of course I
8 had it ticketed everyday, but I—I said to the police:
9 When are you going to tow this? And they said: We
10 don't do that. I said, What do you mean you don't—you
11 don't tow from a hydrant? That's very dangerous if
12 there's a fire, and this guy was actually blocking
13 dead center of the hydrant for—and he left his car
14 there a week. I finally got it towed, but then
15 that's was the motivation for this bill, and that
16 started it, and then I just started to discover
17 people blocking and especially in sections of my
18 district, and in Antonio Reynoso's district they're
19 blocking crosswalks. They're parked on the
20 sidewalks, and some blocks—three or four blocks in a
21 row I would see blocking they hydrants, and I said
22 enough is enough. So, um, I did, you know, push this
23 bill and I hope everyone will support it, but I think
24 it's a very, very important component to the placard
25 abuse package. Thank you very much, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, and-
3 and this bill will help a lot in the direction that
4 we're going also to create the New York City
5 Pedestrian and Cyclist Departments for which we will
6 have a hearing on the 16th, next week. I now call
7 for the vote on Proposed Intro 1412-A. I recommend a
8 yes vote, and-and I ask the Committee Clerk to please
9 call the roll.

10 CLERK: William Martin Committee Clerk,
11 roll call vote Committee on Transportation,
12 Introduction 1412-A. Chair Rodriguez?

13 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

14 CLERK: Cabrera.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye and
16 congratulations to Council Member Holden, and this
17 literally is going to save lives. Thank you.

18 CLERK: Cohen.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Permission to
20 explain my vote.

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: [off mic] Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I also want to say
23 congratulations to my colleague, and I-I just-I think
24 that this bill does really codify safety as a guiding
25 principle in NYPD exercising their authority to tow,

2 and I think that makes a lot of sense. So, I'm very
3 pleased to vote aye. Thank you.

4 CLERK: Deutsch.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Permission to
6 explain my vote.

7 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: [off mic] Yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yeah, so, for
9 six years it's—it was like pulling teeth, um, when
10 you need to have the Traffic Department enforce
11 dangerous conditions, uh, whether you're parked at a
12 hydrant or at a bus stop, and also when it comes to
13 trailer, um, parked on the streets over night, um,
14 you know, NYPD only has two heavy duty tow trucks
15 that tow these trailers for the entire city, and each
16 time I need to get a tow truck, um, I have to make
17 like an appointment like going to the dentist or a
18 doctor. I get that trailer like two or three weeks
19 later, and, um, it's very unfortunate that we have
20 to pass a bill to make sure that these dangerous
21 conditions are enforced by the New York City Police
22 Department. So, with that, I'd like to thank my
23 colleague Council Member Bob Holden for putting this
24 important bill for a vote and, um, I'm—I'm proud of
25 this bill, and we need to make sure and enforce and

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 11

2 especially in my district we had, um, two-two major
3 fires where in one case, um, seven-seven young people
4 died in that—in that fire, and another it was three
5 from the same family who died in the second fire.
6 So, it's important that people do not block hydrants,
7 that they are not parked there overnight and the Fire
8 Department should know exactly where the fire
9 hydrants are. So, with that being said, I vote aye.

10 CLERK: Espinal.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ESPINAL: I vote aye.

12 Congratulations to Bob.

13 CLERK: Koo.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I vote aye and
15 Council Member Congratulations to you on this
16 project.

17 CLERK: Levine.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVEINE: Aye.

19 CLERK: Menchaca.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA:

21 Congratulations. I vote aye.

22 CLERK: Reynoso.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [off mic]

24 Permission to explain my vote.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: You can explain
3 your vote.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: I want to
5 congratulate Council Member Holden, but I just really
6 want to get to the root of why this problem exists.
7 It's not that more people are parking in front of
8 hydrants because they want to or more people are
9 parking in crosswalks because they want to. We have
10 too many cars in the city of New York. It's the same
11 infrastructure that will continue increasing car
12 ownership. We are not going to have new streets,
13 we're not going to create new streets, unfortunately,
14 so that means that we have to do something about the
15 amount of cars that we have. So, I congratulate
16 Council Member Robert Holden for the great piece of
17 legislation that we did here, and hopefully we just
18 start addressing the issue of the over proliferation
19 of cars in the city of New York, which is the root
20 problem of—of most of these issues. So, I vote aye.

21 CLERK: By a vote of 9 in the
22 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
23 the item has been adopted by the committee.

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you and
25 before we finish I would like to—I know that I speak

2 in the name of members of this committee our prayer
3 to the family who their three-years old boy yesterday
4 killing in the Barrio, Council Member, if you don't
5 mind, as you know, yesterday a three-years old boy
6 lost his life in the intersection of 116 and First
7 Avenue. So, as the Committee of Transportation we
8 would like to send a prayer to the family. At the
9 same time, I continue asking the city of New York ,
10 the State Department, the New York City Department of
11 Transportation to redesign intersections, separating
12 the time for drivers to turn and so and for
13 pedestrians to cross by in those intersections.
14 Unfortunately, we lost another person yesterday and
15 that's how we are coming today in this year and that
16 shouldn't happen. With that, this hearing is
17 adjourned.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 14, 2019