

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

----- X

October 31, 2013
Start: 10:07 a.m.
Recess: 12:19 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
14th Fl.

B E F O R E:
JAMES VACCA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

GALE A. BREWER
DANIEL R. GARODNICK
DAVID G. GREENFIELD
VINCENT M. IGNIZIO
PETER A. KOO
G. OLIVER KOPPELL
JESSICA S. LAPPIN
DARLENE MEALY
YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ
DEBORAH L. ROSE
ERIC A. ULRICH
JAMES VACCA
JAMES G. VAN BRAMER

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay, I thank you all for coming. I apologize for the little delay. I'd like to welcome you all. This is October 31st and this is not a trick, trick or treat hearing. This is a real hearing of the City, New York City Council of Transportation Committee. My name is James Vacca and I'm chair of the Committee on Transportation and we're here today to hear testimony on four bills. First we will hear two bills that pertain to improving safety on our city's roadways. Councilman David Greenfield has introduced a bill 535 which would reduce the speed limit on residential streets to 20 miles per hour and proposed intro 904 A by Council Member Levin mandates that the department of transportation in conjunction with the police department should update an interagency roadway safety plan every five years. Secondly we're going to hear testimony on two bills related to the Taxi and Limousine Commission. Proposed intro 635 A sponsored by council member Elizabeth Crowley would require the TLC to notify community boards and to better publicize when a commuter van route is established.

1
2 Last but not least we will discuss a bill that
3 council member Brewer and I have introduced
4 together. Intro 1123 which would require all Hail
5 vehicles, the new out of borough green taxis to be
6 accessible to the visually impaired. I would like
7 to thank my colleagues for introducing these bills
8 and I look forward to our testimony today. I'd
9 first like to talk about the bill that council
10 member brewer and I are sponsoring.

11 Last year I was a prime sponsor of
12 local law 57 of 2012 requiring that taxi cabs be
13 accessible to people with visual impairments. This
14 law defined accessible to people with visual
15 impairments as a taxi cab that is equipped with
16 instructions for contacting the TLC in brail and
17 large print text that has audio instruction for
18 paying the fair, audible announcements of the
19 initial charge with the fair periodically, you
20 know, showing the fair periodically in a, in an
21 audible way during the taxi trip. The fair at the
22 conclusion of the trip must be audible and any rate
23 code changes and toll charges would be audible as
24 well. Those with vision impairments are extremely
25 vulnerable to be treated unfairly and exploited

1 when it comes to cab fares. It's not always easy to
2 figure out how much you owe for taxi rides even
3 with perfect vision. That's why this law was so
4 important. I wanted to ensure that those with
5 vision impairments have as much information as
6 possible so they can pay a fare charge that is
7 fair. This bill we're hearing today will simply
8 expand this technology to all the new Hail
9 vehicles, the new out of borough green taxis. I
10 commend those who have already equipped their Hail
11 vehicles with this technology. These types of
12 vehicles are proliferating throughout our city and
13 council member Brewer and I would like to ensure
14 that all of them are equipped to fairly transport
15 those with vision impairments. Next we will hear
16 from the TLC about council member Crowley's bill.
17 commuter vans today are an alternative service for
18 a lot of people especially in out of boroughs and
19 this legislation would require the TLC to inform
20 community boards upon the approval of a community,
21 a commuter van application. Current law only
22 requires that the city council receive such
23 notification. This bill would also require the TLC
24

2 to improve and update their online map of approved
3 commuter services.

4 This committee has been committed to
5 improving safety in our streets and today we're
6 hearing two bills designed to do just that; council
7 member Greenfield's bill seeks to make our
8 residential neighborhood safer by reducing the
9 speed limit to 20 miles an hour on streets no wider
10 than 60 feet. While DOT has unveiled and
11 implemented some effective programs to reduce speed
12 and prevent collision fatalities such as the slow
13 zone program and the safe streets for seniors, we
14 can always do more. I truly believe that slower
15 traffic means fewer serious injuries and fatalities
16 in the case of collision. Council member Levin's
17 bill also requires DOT to commit to safer streets
18 by codifying the periodic update of an interagency
19 roadway safety map. And it ensures that DOT do, do
20 this every five years. I look forward to hearing
21 from DOT and TLC as well as from members of the
22 public today. I thank you very much for coming. I
23 want to acknowledge my colleague who's joined me,
24 council member Peter Koo. I'm sure other colleagues
25 will be arriving. Without further to do let me call

2 on the New York City Department of Transportation
3 Deputy Commissioner Kate Slevin to lead off in
4 testimony. Thank you.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Good
6 morning Chairman Vacca and members of the
7 Transportation Committee. My name is Kate Slevin
8 and I'm the Assistant Commissioner of
9 Intergovernmental Affairs for the New York City
10 Department of Transportation. Joining me today is
11 Ryan Russo DOT's Assistant Commissioner for Traffic
12 Management. Thank you for the opportunity to
13 testify in introductions 904 A and 535 and for you
14 interest in enhancing safety and mobility in New
15 York City. Starting in 2008 DOT's strategic plans
16 to Sustainable Streets set into motion a clear and
17 detailed transportation policy agenda for the city
18 that puts safety first. In particular we pledged to
19 halve traffic fatalities by 2030 and committed to
20 dozens of initiatives to accomplish this goal.
21 These included a Safe Routes to Schools Program and
22 Safe Streets for Seniors Program. More traffic
23 calming and Complete Streets Projects, additional
24 automated enforcement cameras, and new educational
25 campaigns to encourage safe behavior. Our 2010 New

1
2 York City Pedestrian Safety Study and Action Plan
3 strengthened this commitment by analyzing 7,000
4 pedestrian crashes and outlining an even greater
5 menu of safety programs and projects. In total we
6 have brought safety changes to 137 corners and 113
7 intersections. Thanks to this commitment traffic
8 fatalities are now at the lowest level in recorded
9 history. The last six years are the safest periods
10 since the city began collecting data in 1910 and
11 DOT works daily to expand and improve upon this
12 progress. One of our programs to come out of the
13 pedestrian safety study and action plan is our
14 Neighborhood Slow Zones Program which reduces speed
15 limits from 30 to 20 miles per hour and adds
16 traffic calming measures within a select area in
17 order to change driver behavior. Following
18 installation in 2011, the first slow zone in the
19 Clermont section of the Bronx saw a 10 percent
20 reduction in the worse speeding in the
21 neighborhood. There are now 13 additional slow
22 zones active within the five boroughs and 15 more
23 zones will be constructed between now and 2016.
24 Reducing the speed limit can help enhance safety
25 and reinforces the message that residential streets

1 aren't high speed shortcuts. Not only is the
2 lowering of speed limits to 20 miles per hour in
3 connection with the use of traffic calming measures
4 a common sense approach to saving lives, it is also
5 required by the state's Vehicle and Traffic Law.
6 Specifically the VTL allows New York City to set
7 speed limits between 15 and 24 miles per hour on a
8 particular street if the lower speed limit is for
9 implementing physical traffic calming measures or
10 if the street is within a quarter mile of a school.
11 Unfortunately not every residential street is
12 appropriate for speed bumps, roadway narrowing, or
13 other traffic calming treatments. As such DOT would
14 be unable to comply with intro 535 is currently
15 drafted. As an alternative the council may want to
16 consider lobbying the state to allow a citywide
17 speed limit of 25 miles per hour. Currently state
18 law allows citywide speed limits as low as 30 miles
19 per hour. Those cities can set 25 mile per hour
20 limits on designated streets. If the VTL were
21 changed the council could codify a lower citywide
22 speed limit. DOT works with other agencies to make
23 streets safer. We've partnered with the New York
24 City Department of Education and more than 300
25

2 schools a year to teach children how to stay safe
3 as pedestrians. And we've partnered with the New
4 York City Department of Health conduct, to conduct
5 a New York City specific motorcycle safety study.
6 Thank you Chairman Vacca for your letter of support
7 to the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
8 for the grant of that study. For our largest
9 partnering agent, agency is the NYPD who we met
10 with on; we meet with on multiple levels throughout
11 the agency each month. For example since April 2010
12 the DOTNYPD interagency safety committee has met
13 monthly to review fatality data and identify the
14 particular types of crashes and particular
15 locations that are most problematic and to develop
16 strategies for reducing fatalities. In addition
17 NYPD progress on speeding, failure to yield and
18 bike enforcement is discussed. Committee meetings
19 also serve as a forum for DOT enforcement requests
20 for various projects including Sixth and a Half
21 Avenue, Webster Avenue Select Bus Service, and
22 Flatbush Avenue Traffic Calming. Similarly NYPD
23 brings DOT requests for engineering enhancements at
24 certain locations. The interagency Roadway Safety
25 Plan required by Local Law 12 of 2011 and published

1 that October discusses much of this work and more.
2
3 By requiring this port to be, report to be produced
4 every five years as intro 904 A seeks to do we'll
5 be able to continue to update the city council on
6 these important initiatives. DOT looks forward to
7 continuing our traffic safety initiatives, working
8 with our partners in other city agencies and with
9 the council. I would be happy to answer any
10 questions. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Let me
12 lead off with a couple of questions. You, you did
13 say that we could go to a 25 mile an hour speed
14 limit, the state law allows for 25... Cities can set
15 25 mile per hour limits but then the next sentence
16 says that we'd have to go to the state for that.
17 Do, do we have to go to the state for 25 mile an
18 hour limits?

19 ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: For a
20 citywide 25 mile per hour limit, yes. [interpose]

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: For citywide?
22 [interpose]

23 ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: For 25
24 mile per hour limits on certain streets, no.

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Alright because my
3 interpretation of your testimony is that if we want
4 to do 20 miles an hour as part of legislation it
5 would have to be part of a street reconfiguration
6 process?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN:
8 Correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Can we do 25 miles
10 per hour without having a street reconfiguration
11 process?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: You can
13 do 25 miles per hour on certain streets, yes. You
14 can't do a citywide speed limit of 25 miles per
15 hour without a change in the state law.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. When you
17 mentioned the slow zones that DOT has implemented
18 and I, I, I'm, I love them but they're other, there
19 are a lot of people, a lot of groups wanted slow
20 zones and they're getting them in future years or
21 they would deny their applications. Can I ask that
22 you look at those community requests to see if 25
23 mile an hour limits within those boundaries would
24 assist those neighborhoods until the slow zones are
25

2 in place or if they were denied would this be a
3 good substitute for those communities?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: We'd,
5 we'd be happy to take a look at it but ideally
6 we'd, we'd like to address the problem more
7 holistically and institute traffic calming measures
8 in addition to a reduction in the speed limit.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But some of the
10 traffic calming measures are three and four years
11 away, even for those who've been approved. I have a
12 slow zone in my district that was approved and it's
13 going to be a slow zone in 2016. So what happens in
14 the intervening years? And then I think you have
15 almost fifty or so applications that were denied. I
16 know in my district alone, I think I have seven
17 that were denied. [interpose]

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: That's
19 correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So therefore what do
21 for those communities who have identified a problem
22 but we have no solution at hand?

23 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Chairman Vacca,
24 my name's Ryan Russo, I'm Assistant Commissioner of
25 Traffic Management. It's important to realize that

1 the neighborhood slow zone is not the only tool
2 that we use for neighborhood traffic calming or
3 local traffic calming. We have had Speed Bump
4 Program in effect for over 15 years and that is an
5 ongoing and very robust program. And what's
6 important to keep in mind here is that the primary
7 traffic calming intervention that goes with the
8 neighborhood slow zones is the speed bump itself,
9 the construction of the speed bump along with
10 gateway treatments and other markings and the
11 reduction of the speed limit. And the speed bump is
12 what really changes behavior. So any street that we
13 get a request, we have, we get requests 311
14 letters, community boards, any block we have a team
15 that goes and investigates and does speed surveys
16 and we can approve and construct speed bumps on
17 individual streets. What the Neighborhood Slow Zone
18 Program does is does this sort of on an area wide
19 basis that's not based on individual speed or local
20 condition criteria. So there's definitely those
21 communities can get individual speed bumps on
22 individual streets which might address that
23 specific problem.
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I, I first want to
3 agree with you of course. I'm an advocate for speed
4 bumps. My community wants more and more and more of
5 them. They do work but the reality is that DOT has
6 a waiting list for speed bumps. They are, there is
7 a backlog of requests for speed bumps. Not every
8 block can get speed bumps. I know you have a policy
9 where you don't put them on bus routes. You don't
10 put them near driveways. There is a criteria for
11 speed bumps so I'm looking for an overall strategy
12 of what do we do and is there, are there other ways
13 to supplement what the speed bump does? You know my
14 problem also is that from the day a speed bump is
15 approved to the day it's installed is often a year,
16 and a year and a half. That is what's happening in
17 our districts. We get the speed bump approved, we
18 get a letter from DOT, and then it takes a year and
19 a year and a half and that's a dangerous year to a
20 year and a half. You've identified a serious
21 problem and nothing is done for a long period of
22 time. So you're back logged and that's why I was
23 thinking of the 25 mile an hour limit as a
24 supplement to the speed bumps. Granted we'd need
25 enforcement and I take, I've taken the police

1 department to task, that they have not been
2 enforcing speed limits as much as they should be.
3 They, they, and this committee has supported speed
4 cameras and we, we've, we have insisted during our
5 oversight hearings that the police department do
6 more but right now you're on the witness stand so I
7 have to tell you that we want more from your
8 agency. We want more done.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Yeah, I
11 mean, we, we agree. We'd like to do more in, in, in
12 implementing speed humps. It's really a resources
13 issue that we're doing as much as we can given the
14 resources that we had. If we had additional
15 resources for this program then we would certainly
16 be able to expand it. One thing that you'd mention
17 was speed cameras. Those are very effective at
18 reducing speeds and making our streets safer and we
19 thank the council for their support of the
20 legislation that passed in Albany last year. But
21 one thing you might want to consider is asking
22 Albany to eliminate all the restrictions on red
23 light and speed cameras that are currently in
24 place. We're allowed to have 150 red light cameras
25 and we're only allowed to have 20 speed cameras

1 near, near schools. So if we were able to decide,
2 you know along with you where a broader approach
3 and we're able to place them in more locations we
4 could bring, improve safety to many more streets
5 and intersections.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Can you tell me what
8 part of the Interagency Roadway Safety Plan that we
9 spoke about, that you spoke about. What parts of
10 that Interagency Roadway Safety Plan have been
11 implemented and do you still plan to implement all
12 aspects of the prior plan.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: All of
14 them have been implemented and we do plan to
15 implement all of the ones in the plan, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And what agencies do
17 you work with? Do you work with, police obviously.
18 [interpose]

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Yeah;
20 police, DOE, Department of Health.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Are there monthly
22 meetings you hold to follow up? Are, is, is there a
23 task force? Is there a, a, multiagency meeting
24 taking place on a regular basis?
25

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: We have
3 a unprecedented coordination with the New York City
4 Police Department from the commissioner level down
5 to the project managers. We meet very frequently
6 with them and go over, make sure we're being
7 coordinated, and implementing this plan along with
8 other safety measures.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: One thing that I had
10 requested from the mayor's office and the mayor did
11 not see fit to implement was an interagency, a
12 formal interagency task force on speeding because
13 speeding is killing people in this city. You seem
14 to have something that's not formal. You seem to
15 have something that's operating by virtue of your
16 being in touch with other agencies. I would suggest
17 that the meetings you hold be on a regular basis,
18 monthly if not more. You know I was a district
19 manager of a community board before I came here and
20 we used to have district service cabinet meetings.
21 And those cabinet meeting brought people together
22 around a table for an exchange of ideas but they
23 were very very helpful in getting ideas out there
24 that a telephone call and an email would never
25 bring to light. I'm looking to formalize the

1 interagency process. I think we have to do that and
2 since the mayor has unfortunately declined then
3 your agency does have some type of interagency
4 contact. So I would think before the end of this
5 administration hopefully we can formalize the
6 stakeholders, their role, and what we hope to do.
7 And I would hope you take that back.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: We
10 certainly will. Just to expand a little bit on our
11 level of coordination. We've met 30 times over the
12 past two and a half years or so with NYPD just in
13 terms, in this. And that doesn't include other
14 coordination we do with them. We also attend their
15 traffic stat meetings. Our borough commissioners
16 attend their traffic stat meetings. And then
17 there's other coordination going on. So there
18 really is an unprecedented level of coordination
19 there. And we're also partnering on them with
20 various grants, still working with them on that
21 level as well.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: One thing I will say
23 and this really is not your agency but at our last
24 hearing that I held jointly with Chair Vallone on
25 public safety, the police department indicated that

1 they had four speed guns per precinct. And we
2 received an email two days ago which I would like
3 to state into the record at this hearing that the
4 police department misspoke and that every precinct
5 does not have four speed guns every precinct has at
6 least one. There's a big difference between one and
7 four. And number two I still questioned whether we
8 have enough people trained to use these speed guns
9 and I still question why we don't have the four. So
10 I think we all have to step up to the plate because
11 the speed of traffic is a major issue in this city,
12 throughout the city. How people are driving is
13 often frightening to many people. I was at a red
14 light the other day and I'm stopped at a red light
15 and the guy in the right lane just went through. I
16 thought the light changed. The light didn't change.
17 He just went through the red light. He stopped for
18 a second, he looked around like this, and he went.
19 So some people have contempt even for a red light.
20 You would think that the red light is symbolic of
21 absolutely stopping. To some people it's not. Okay,
22 any questions my colleagues? Council member, oh
23 council member Brad Lander.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Mr.
3 Chairman and... [interpose]

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, let, let me
5 mention we're joined by council member Rose as
6 well. I'm sorry Brad. Oh and council member Eric
7 Ulrich.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, thank
9 you Mr. Chairman and thanks to DOT for being here
10 and I just want to flag we're going to hear in a
11 few minutes from a family in my district and
12 friends Gary Eckstein-Cohen to Mark Cohen-Eckstein
13 who lost their son and brother Sammy about a month
14 ago on Prospect Park West. And so my, my whole
15 community is grieving and these issues are feeling
16 very emotional and personal but as you know they're
17 ones I've been working on a long time as well. So I
18 just want to kind of ask one or two questions and
19 then make one point about it. And I really
20 appreciate the chair's advocacy on this for a long
21 time and I think the push for something standing in
22 regular on speeding is, is essential. I want to
23 make sure I understand the speed limit, what's
24 within our, the city's power and not within the
25 city's power and I'm sorry I wasn't here but I read

1 the testimony carefully. We could under current
2 state law take speed limits down to 20 miles per
3 hour on all streets where it's about implementing
4 physical traffic calming measures or within the
5 quarter mile of a school. Is that right?

6
7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Yes. We
8 can down to 15 miles per hour so we can set them
9 between 15 and 24 miles per hour on streets where
10 we're implementing traffic calming or on streets
11 within a fourth of a mile of a school.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And a speed bump
13 counts as traffic calming as would a curb extension
14 or other... [interpose]

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: My sense is
17 there are many residential streets for which one of
18 those two conditions already applies that have
19 speed limits of well higher than 20 that have speed
20 limits of at least 30 miles an hour so... Right? Do
21 we know that?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: What's...
23 [interpose]

24 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: You mean that
25 have the school criteria or... [interpose]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: My sense is that
3 there are many streets that are either within a
4 half mile of a school or residential streets within
5 a half mile of a school or where traffic calming
6 measures have been applied that have speed limits
7 higher than 20.

8 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah, what,
9 what's the speed bumps? So when we implement the
10 speed bump we, we put what's called an advisory
11 speed plaque that tells you what the road's
12 designed for. So there is 15 mile an hour, 20 mile
13 an hour sign on all of those blocks so changing the
14 actual speed limit on the street would just mean
15 additional signs but what we consider a speed bump
16 is actually it's a self-enforcing device that
17 people actually and what we found is people slow
18 down so the need to actually change the limit and
19 then put up signs to tell people they've left a
20 zone with the limit would really be sign clutter
21 and a distraction of resources.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Let me ask...
23 [interpose]

24 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Answer my
3 question.

4 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So I appreciate...

6 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...you guys have
8 done and we've worked so... [interpose]

9 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...well together
11 on many many street calming efforts and I've, you
12 know, and including some other tragic intersections
13 were moving forward. Finally the pedestrian island
14 is being installed at Church and Ocean Parkway and
15 I really want to thank the city DOT for the work
16 you did with state DOT and [crosstalk] [interpose]

17 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: You should get
18 the credit for that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...make it happen
20 so...

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Uh-huh.
22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...that's all. But
24 I still think... I guess what I'm asking is it is my
25 sense... [interpose]

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...it, it's,
they're certainly within... [interpose]

ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...a half mile of
a school there are a lot of streets in residential
neighborhoods within a half mile of a school whose
speed limit is 30 miles an hour. Is that correct? I
mean, if we have to find a lot. [interpose]

ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: No.

COUCIL MEMBER LANDER: I don't know if
you have an analysis. My point I guess is that if
we can't go, if the bill, if council member
Greenfield's bill as drafted would require a change
in state law to enable us to go down to 20 miles an
hour even on residential streets where that weren't
true. A narrower one piece of advocacy might be to
go change state law as you suggest. Another would
be to narrow the bill to the range of streets we
have the power to do something about. And I just,
do we have an analysis of the street, the
residential streets that are within a half mile of
a school and or where traffic calming treatments
have been applied to understand the universe of

1
2 streets where we could reduce the speed limit by
3 local law. And in fact can we ask for that
4 analysis?

5 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: I, I think what's
6 the, the what we should talk about is our Reduced
7 Speed Zone Program at schools and that we didn't
8 really cover. Is that, we have 270 priority schools
9 and we're actually proactively reducing the speed
10 limit around schools and this is a resource issue
11 and any reduction in speed limits is we go do field
12 work and we go and we are reducing, either put... The
13 most effective tool is a speed bump so we first we
14 investigate the block for a speed bump and we...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Can, can I, I...
16 [interpose]

17 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Sure.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: so I don't... I'm
19 sorry to push here because you guys, I mean I
20 really, you in so many ways what you've done here
21 makes, I feel very good about. [interpose]

22 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Mm-hmm.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And I don't
24 want... But I guess what I, I would like to
25 understand the universe of streets that comply with

1
2 the law where you could by law reduce the speed
3 limit to 20 miles an hour and that is a different...
4 [interpose]

5 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Mm-hmm.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'm not saying I
7 know today... [interpose]

8 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Right.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...that every one
10 of those should be taken down to 20. I hear you
11 that physical treatments in many situations are a
12 better safety mechanism than... [interpose]

13 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Mm-hmm.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...just to reduce
15 speed limit without other action but I still want
16 to understand the universe of streets that on which
17 we could reduce the speed limit to 20 by local law
18 and it's, without changing state law and it sounds
19 like there is such a universe and I would like to
20 see it mapped. So we could... [interpose]

21 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Yeah.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...understand what
24 we're...

1 ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: We'll
2
3 take a look at it... [interpose]

4 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah, yeah.

5 ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: ...and
6 see what we have for sure.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And, and let me
8 clarify. I agree with council member Lander. We
9 want you to get back to us regarding that. Where
10 can we do 20 miles an hour? Now you mentioned it
11 was basically when we have street reconfiguration
12 projects. Am I correct?

13 ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: We can
14 do 15 to 24 miles per hour within a quarter mile of
15 a school... [interpose]

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes.

17 ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Or...
18 [interpose]

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Where street
20 reconfiguration... [interpose]

21 ASSISSTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: where
22 we have traffic, traffic calming. Not street
23 reconfiguration, traffic calming.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So why can't we
25 designate schools for the reduction in speed even

1 if they're on a wait list for speed bumps...

2 [interpose]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: This was mine.

4 [interpose]

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...because the speed
6 bumps are wait, we're waiting for, we're waiting a
7 long time for speed bumps. Not every location
8 around a school is going to get a speed bump so
9 therefore, although council member has a billing
10 which we had a hearing on so I want that to happen.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But as we sit here,
13 until we pass council member Rose's bill, it's not
14 going to happen so my question is why don't we look
15 at schools and I think the manpower we would need
16 from you would be to post the adequate signs
17 denoting what the speed limit reduction now is. We
18 will work with you on communally education
19 notification outreach. I mean the council members
20 that I speak to are very committed to this issue of
21 speeding. It just seems to me that there are
22 certain things we may have to wait for. When you
23 say go to Albany I can just hear violins in my head
24 because it takes forever and it goes on and on and
25

1 on. When you say speed bumps are coming my answer
2 is when. Slow zones are three and four years away
3 if your agency approved the application. But the
4 speed limit signs can be done more simply and we
5 then on a local level, if you put one around Ps 14
6 in my district I will go to my police captain and
7 say I need your help. I need the sign enforced. But
8 before I do that I'll go to the PTA and the
9 principle and say let everybody know gang, look at
10 the sign.
11

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Right.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So, I mean, we're
14 here to cooperate with you but we want something
15 done immediately beyond what you're doing. And I
16 agree with my colleague what you're doing is, is
17 good but we want, we want to expedite this effort
18 citywide.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Right.
20 We, we completely agree and, and we will get you
21 that, that list of schools. What Ryan was referring
22 to is we do have our Reduced School Speed Zone
23 Program which is being implemented at schools
24 across the city. I think we have almost 200 schools
25 now. We, we have done exactly what you're talking

1 about. We've put up blinking lights and we've
2 reduced the speed limit to 20 miles per hour.

3 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And don't...
4 [interpose]

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: So, we,
6 we will look at... [interpose]

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...and... [interpose]

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: ...what
9 other schools are... [interpose]

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...and... [interpose]

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: we
12 could do that... [interpose]

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...don't take what I'm
14 saying... [interpose]

15 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...or I think what the
17 chairman is saying... [interpose]

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...as those are not
20 good strategies or this is a better strategy. We're
21 looking to do more so we want more... [interpose]

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Great.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...safe routes to
24 schools. We want more of the school safety zones.
25

2 We want more speed bumps. We want more intersection
3 traffic calming. I think we also want to see the
4 universe of places where we could reduce the speed
5 limit to 20 by local law or by partnership with the
6 agency without a change in state law and we'll
7 speak with council member... [interpose]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Greenfield about
10 whether tightening up the bill to be, to not
11 require a change in state law is something that he
12 might like to do. And for starters it would be good
13 to see a map of what streets we would be talking
14 about and so that would be great.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: We'd be
16 happy to get that for you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you. And
18 then just one word on enforcement. I just want to
19 underline what you said on enforcement. We've had,
20 we had one good hearing with, where the NYPD was
21 here talking with us about collision investigation
22 and although we got much better answers on
23 collision investigation and not good answers on
24 speeding and red light and failure to yield
25 enforcement and so I never feel good yelling at the

1
2 DOT about the NYPD's failure to enforce the law but
3 since the NYPD is not here you guys are standing
4 for the Bloomberg Administration on this. And the
5 people in my community well before this tragedy
6 every single month we look at the statistics. I
7 love my inspectors. They work so hard and yet every
8 month there's many many tickets for tinted windows.
9 Now there's all kinds of tickets, which there
10 should be for I guess for bicycling on the sidewalk
11 and almost no tickets for speeding, for running red
12 lights, and for failure to yield. And we need to
13 enforce the law. You're right. If we reduce the
14 speed limit to 20 miles an hour and no one enforces
15 it then it's not going to make any difference. So
16 we need changes in enforcement and if that's, if
17 one way we can do that is through a standing
18 interagency council so that you guys, and us, and
19 others, and the DOT, and the NYPD are there looking
20 at the data. This is a CompStat-like issue. I mean
21 anyone who took street safety seriously and
22 believed in data would be appalled by the, the
23 right the citywide, this is not in any one precinct
24 to write tickets for the things that kill and
25 injure New Yorkers.

2 [background laughter]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And we have to
4 keep fighting to change that until it changes. So I
5 understand that none of that is in the jurisdiction
6 of the DOT except perhaps supporting the
7 interagency council so that there is a space that's
8 looking at that data together every month or every
9 quarter and pushing for real, and meaningful, and
10 concrete improvements so thank you Mr. Chairman.

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you council
12 member. Council member Peter Koo.

13 [off mic]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PETER KOO: Hello,
15 commissioners thank you for coming in to do the
16 testimony. My question is have got any statistics
17 on like fatalities, I say that traffic fatalities
18 in residential neighborhoods. Do you have any
19 statistics on how many people get kill or seriously
20 hurt while walking the neighborhood or going to
21 school in the neighborhood?

22 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: I would point you
23 to our Pedestrian Safety Study and Action Plan
24 which we published in 2010 which looked at
25 fatalities and serious injuries and this sort of

1 goes to the rest of discussion is that we're
2 extremely interested in the goal. We share the same
3 goal and what we want to do are things that are
4 effective in reducing serious injuries and
5 fatalities and we found that 60 percent of serious
6 injuries and fatalities occur on our arterial
7 streets so it's not so much about a residential VS.
8 non-residential, we looked at it by street type.
9 And the larger streets are where the majority of
10 the serious injuries and fatalities are occurring
11 which is why we focus so much effort around our
12 roadway redesigns, traffic calming projects that we
13 work very closely with you and your communities and
14 we look to continue support on that, on those
15 redesigns. Because really as we look at the data in
16 how to reduce speeding and reduce, it's really
17 reducing the crashes and tragedies that result.
18 It's those redesigns that are; give us the best
19 sort of bang for our buck. So that study details
20 the location of where the serious injuries are and
21 again it was about 60 percent arterial roadways.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Well the reason why
24 I asked you that because for the last couple years
25 I, I know personally my friend's spouses were

1 killed while just walking in the neighborhood, you
2 know, in the afternoon, you know. And we all know
3 that I think AAA have done a study long time ago to
4 when it's easier to get killed in your own
5 neighborhood while walking than on the different
6 places because you're alert, you're stunned because
7 this your own home, your own house area you walk
8 and you're not, you don't pay that much attention
9 to traffics. And so this why we had to put a speed
10 limit on residential areas because a lot of the
11 case they are driving too fast in the neighborhood.
12 Or sometimes they go to a new neighborhood and just
13 ram through the streets. And whilst people are
14 walking in afternoon to get, to do their routine
15 walk and their attention span is done. They don't
16 pay that because this is their neighborhood so they
17 think they know all the elder streets that they
18 just walk and a lot of times people get hurt or get
19 kill. So that's why I echo chairman's sentiment
20 that we have to pass this law to lower the speed
21 limit in all residential areas especially those
22 with large families with kids and elderly people.
23 Well, there's my, my proposal. Yeah.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, thank you
3 councilman Koo and took, to elaborate on councilman
4 Koo is speaking about; I would like to know how we
5 further get cooperation from some pedestrians also.
6 Too many people are crossing in the middle of the
7 street and not at crosswalks. And I think we need,
8 again, an education program to urge people to walk
9 the half block or go to the crosswalk where you
10 have a traffic light, where you have a walk, don't
11 walk box they count down. I want to know what
12 percentage of accidents are caused because people
13 are not in safety areas when they cross. You know,
14 are most people hurt because they cross the street
15 at places other than the crosswalk?

16 ASSISTANT RYAN RUSSO: Yeah. Again in
17 our Pedestrian Safety Study and Action Plan where
18 we looked at 7,000 serious injuries and fatalities
19 we looked at the, the sort of the why the
20 contributing factors, those sorts of things and it
21 was something in the neighborhood of, in the mid 20
22 percent are speeding related or failure to yield by
23 motorists. So those are really kind of the top
24 causes that came out of that study.

25

2 CHAIRMEMBER VACCA: So is this a serious
3 problem we have in the city about people not
4 crossing at crosswalks. So is that something that
5 you don't view as a serious issue? I just had an
6 elderly gentleman in my district on Tremont Avenue
7 run down 8:00 in the morning but he didn't go to
8 the crosswalk from what I understand. Not that he's
9 wrong because the person who hit him's breaks
10 failed but you tell that family that these things
11 happen and that's not acceptable either. So I, I
12 mean my, my question is what are we doing about
13 that, about getting pedestrians a little more to
14 cooperate?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Well
16 obviously everyone who's using the streets has a
17 responsibility to be safe and act appropriately and
18 be aware of others. We do have an educational
19 campaign called LOOK which is geared towards
20 pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers to urge them to
21 look around them and be aware and not look down at
22 their smartphone while they're walking. So
23 hopefully that has helped and helped get the
24 message across. I think Ryan's point is just while
25 everyone needs to be responsible and aware and safe

1 on the streets there are certain activities like
2 speeding and dangerous driving that are large
3 contributors to traffic fatalities and injuries.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: No, no doubt. No
5 doubt. Okay. Okay I thank you.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SLEVIN: Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank, the
9 Department of Transportation will now call up the
10 Taxi and Limousine Commission. Commissioner David
11 Yassky is here.

12 [background talking]

13 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Good morning.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Commissioner.
15 Welcome.

16 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Thank you much.
17 You have my prepared testimony. Good morning Mr.
18 Chair, members of the committee, you have my
19 prepared testimony. I won't take your time by
20 reading it. In short these, both bills are
21 perfectly fine. We support them. The, we already,
22 as you know, have a rulemaking in process on the
23 issue of accessibility for people with visual
24 impairments. That certainly should be done. And on
25

1
2 the kind of transparency point about the commuter
3 van zones, again, transparency always good. No
4 harm. So I will say I just was looking at the
5 testimony while I was waiting there from the
6 Borough Taxi Trades Council and this is not in my
7 prepared statement but they recommend at the,
8 toward the end a push back of the, not quite
9 effective date, but I guess the date by which Taxis
10 would have to, the borough taxis would have to be
11 in compliance. That struck me as a good suggestion.
12 Honestly we had not, it's not on our recommendation
13 in our testimony nor had we kind of vetted that
14 idea extensively but reading it in their testimony
15 this was I guess one of the now two trade
16 associations that represents the borough taxi
17 sector, the emerging and growing borough taxi
18 sector. There is, there's quite a backup in getting
19 the borough taxis on the street and equipping them
20 with all the necessary equipment as you may know.
21 Most, there are, every borough taxi is required to
22 have you know otherwise this bill would make no
23 sense. It's required to have credit card processing
24 equipment. The, there's currently a wait of about
25 six weeks, I thought it'd been running in the four

2 to five week area, it may now be six weeks because
3 we've issued almost all of the 6,000 licenses that
4 can be issued this year so there are 6,000 people
5 out there that want to put their, now have a
6 license that want to get their car on the street.
7 There are two companies that provide this
8 equipment. Of the ones that are on the street so
9 far about 80 percent have chosen one of those two
10 vendors and that vendor is backed up you know. Had
11 been forced five weeks, maybe it is now six weeks.
12 My point being to get them to make the technology
13 change necessary here and then make sure that have
14 all the cars come in is would further delay people
15 getting on the street and might even not be
16 feasible within the time frame that you got here.
17 So my, for my two cents the suggestion in this
18 testimony strikes me as a good one. I'm happy to
19 answer your questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you
21 commissioner. And we've been joined by council
22 member Elizabeth Crowley... [interpose]

23 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...and I'll take
25 questions. Councilwoman Crowley this is your, this

1
2 is the councilwoman's legislation so I'm going to
3 yield to her.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you Chair
5 Vacca. Good morning Commissioner.

6 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Good morning. It's
7 good to see you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: You too. I have
9 questions about the commuter vans operating outside
10 their approved zones and we spoke about this
11 earlier... [interpose]

12 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Who?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: ...but in my...
14 [interpose]

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: That was the issue.

16 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: No, now I'm
17 reminded.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: My constituents
19 frequently call my office about commuter vans. It's
20 been a headache for a few years. They're frustrated
21 that they've don't know what the zones are. They
22 have difficulty accessing the approved zones on the
23 website. So part of the bill would be to improve a
24 way of using the map currently on your website.
25 Maybe a key or breaking it down for community

1 boards, council districts, and just listing those
2 that are approved in the area so that they could
3 know for sure if the names that they're seeing on
4 these commuter vans are actually authorized. So the
5 problem is that enforcement. I appreciate the TLC
6 coming out and doing enforcements and each time
7 that you've come to the district you've been able
8 to take off the road dangerous commuter vans that
9 shouldn't be operating. They may not have the
10 license to do it. The vehicle may not be in good
11 shape to pick up passengers. However there's really
12 no enforcement when they go outside these zones we
13 feel. And so we want to make sure, how could we
14 make this more of a way whether it's the TLC or the
15 MY, NYPD, how do we work together to make sure that
16 commuter vans stay in authorized zones.

18 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: [coughs] Excuse
19 me. So several, let me respond to all the issues
20 you raised. Without question I think we can make
21 better use of our website to convey information.
22 We've, you know I think taken some strides there.
23 There's a lot me we can do. The, kind of guidance
24 in this legislation is useful in that regard. I
25 will say for us, for, FYI as far as the website's

1
2 concerned we just now put into effect a few months
3 ago we finally finalized with DoITT and thank you
4 again DoITT for this three year project that
5 enabling licensees to renew their licenses online
6 so all the you know car service owners, you know
7 car owners that are out there they would have to
8 schlep into Long Island City now can just do it on
9 the website. Yes it's 2013 so we thought that was
10 appropriate. A few, a week or two ago finally when
11 was that would you say?

12 UNKNOWN MALE: [off mic] Last Tuesday.

13 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Last Tuesday you
14 can as of last Tuesday you can pay your summonses
15 online. So you'd obviously know on this panel would
16 have gotten a parking ticket for example in the
17 last ten years but if you, I have, and you can just
18 go online and pay it and it's much easier. Now you
19 can do that with our summonses. This is I know
20 digression but on the topic of website
21 improvements. We can do better with information.
22 For example as the borough taxi, as the wheelchair
23 accessible borough taxis start to roll out we will
24 have on the website a tool that will allow some of,
25 a wheelchair user to see what base in his or her

1 area has wheelchair accessible taxi, borough taxi
2 so they can call them. But the commuter van we
3 should do and thank you for the direction. On
4 enforcement. You're right to note that we've paid,
5 we've focused on enforcement and yet there remains
6 quite a bit to be done. One thing I would ask for
7 the help of the panel members on is we are printing
8 up a post card that you can distribute to people,
9 to constituents, to riders that's, it's a, we think
10 a, a clear simple little postcard that just says;
11 'Use the legal ones. Don't use the illegal ones.'
12 If you think about it alright. They're very few,
13 you don't see too many people painting themselves
14 yellow and pretending to be yellow taxis. Partly
15 it's because you know that we'd have our
16 enforcement on the street but it's probably because
17 customers are conditioned to look for certain
18 indicia. We would like to do the same with commuter
19 vans and condition the custors to look, the
20 customers to look for the indicia of a legitimate
21 commuter van. That you know I think will have a
22 greater impact on the illegals even than our
23 enforcement can do. So I would ask for your help
24 with that. In terms of the routes. You are right to
25

1 say what our enforcement has focused on is getting
2 the illegals off the street much, we have focused
3 on that rather than the people who are licensed but
4 maybe picking up at the spot that they're not
5 supposed to pick up at. And the reason for that is
6 given our enforcement resources the illegals post
7 so vastly greater a threat. I mean they are the
8 drivers they may or may not be licensed so we can't
9 assume that they have the proper licensing from us.
10 They almost surely not drug tested the ones that
11 the legitimate ones are. Most important they don't
12 have insurance, they, there, there's no reason to
13 think that they have the proper insurance and you
14 know that is the public safety concern that worries
15 me the most. So it is true that the directive to
16 our folks in the field is focus on the illegals. I
17 would like to, and not just like to, be happy to
18 sit with you and with your local precinct commander
19 because we end up doing most of our enforcement on
20 vans in conjunction with precincts given the, it,
21 it can be kind of dangerous. You know when you stop
22 one of these vans that has 15 people in it and
23 they're on their way to work and we say hey this
24 one's operating illegally the 15 people who are on
25

1
2 their way to work get really restive. And our
3 inspectors have had many incidents in which they
4 are doing that and it's an illegal van and we don't
5 want the people to be operating but the people in
6 the van are not happy with the enforcement. Then
7 sometimes we've had bystanders kind of gather
8 around and say what the hell, what the heck are you
9 doing taking, stopping these people from getting to
10 work. So for that reason we work as often as we can
11 in conjunction with the local precinct. I would
12 like to sit with you and your precinct commander
13 and talk about what our advance strategy is.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I appreciate
15 that and I do like, you know I also appreciate your
16 strategy in terms of enforcement of the dangerous
17 vehicles were not authorized. That should berate
18 priority number one but I also think it's important
19 to make sure that, that they're following the law
20 and staying on their route. I know that it could be
21 difficult to take them off if they're full with
22 passengers but we've used cameras to help enforce
23 traffic laws with... [interpose]

24 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: That's not crazy.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: This could be a
3 situation where... Because it is dangerous when
4 they're coming off the route and often in, by bus
5 stops but these roads in my district that they
6 travel mostly on are narrow and not only are cars
7 moving quickly, you have other vehicles that
8 they're competing with to gain passengers.

9 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: I, I also, you
10 know just cause your, council member you've been so
11 engaged on this. It's, there are some hard
12 questions. The, a lot of the van, of the commute
13 van, rules for commuter vans that are written into
14 the state law so I want to make a plug for the city
15 council here, are kind of crazy. The van is
16 supposed, the driver is supposed to carry a written
17 manifest with a name, you know the name of every
18 passenger written on it. I mean, obviously they
19 don't do that. And I don't think anybody here would
20 say that that makes any sense to work, to really
21 require them to do. And, and, so yet, so you know
22 and yeah it's written there on the books and you
23 know two points make one is we do have to make some
24 enforcement decisions about what is worth our time,
25 not worth our time, given the limited time and

1
2 people, do I want them writing tickets against the
3 illegal guy who doesn't have insurance or because
4 you didn't have, write, you wrote Debbie and Debbie
5 Rose in the passenger manifest. Right? That would
6 not be, that might be actually genuinely a gotcha
7 ticket. The, so that's point one. Point two is this
8 is why it really is important for the council to be
9 engaged on these things. When these rules and laws
10 are written by the city council rather than by the
11 state legislature. You know, it's just easier to...
12 You know what's going on. It's much easier to
13 address things that don't work and don't make sense
14 and fix them. Now, you know we have between, you've
15 got the commuter van law, now you have the street
16 have liberty law written by the state. It's just
17 much harder to make adjustments when you see things
18 that don't work out and I, you know, I'd love to
19 see the council kind of take responsibility for
20 these issues.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I, I agree with
22 you know the use of the current laws and how you
23 could over enforce commuter vans but I'll just
24 stick to the point I made early that I believe is
25 important... [interpose]

1 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: ...when they're
3 off their zones, out of their authorized approved
4 areas. They need to be ticketed. The law needs to
5 be enforced on that because I do believe it's a
6 public safety danger. Then the, just lastly is the
7 community board awareness of new approved commuter
8 van service. I, I know the process now is including
9 the public but it seems like the community board
10 feels that they're out of the loop and that they
11 know best about whether you know added
12 transportation is needed in certain areas. And they
13 would like to have you know whether it be the
14 company, the TLC come before the community board
15 before they approve it. And also show the plan, the
16 study; I believe it's the department of planning
17 that works with TLC to do a study as to whether it
18 is needed additional commuter van service.

19 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: You know I,
20 correct me if I'm wrong, it's, The Department of
21 Transportation makes the determination as to
22 whether there is an area that is in need of
23 service. They do rely on; there is some city
24 planning work that goes into that. I don't know if
25

1 that's formal or not. Sounds like you can say if it
2 is or not. Oh why not please. Are you Department of
3 City planning?
4

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: No, I'm
6 from, I'm DOT.

7 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Do you want to
8 join, I mean since... Do you mind if they join up
9 here? Or would you just sit.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: [off
11 mic] I could just answer the questions

12 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: Go ahead

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: We...
14 [interpose]

15 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: [off mic] Identify
16 yourself and go to the microphone.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: [off
18 mic] I'm Tom McGuire Assistant Commissioner of DOT

19 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: [off mic] Go to the
20 microphone.

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: So
22 DOT's role is reviewing the applications that come
23 over from TLC and make a determination as to what's
24 called the public convenience and need for the
25 service. So we basically look at whether there's

1
2 adequate transit service in the neighborhood and
3 whether there's existing adequate and perhaps too
4 much commuter van service already.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: And is the
6 Department of Planning involved in it in any way?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: They
8 have not been involved since the 1997 commuter van
9 study and you know that reflected conditions in
10 1997 but we really make determinations based on
11 information we have today, not that study.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So after that
13 plan is done by the DOT it would be helpful for
14 communities that I represent. If they could have
15 access to that plan when reviewing or before the
16 authorization is given so they could feel that you
17 know whether it really is needed as it relates to
18 the people who live in or closely involved with the
19 life of the community.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: Yes we
21 actually hold a public hearing in each borough in
22 which services proposed before we make the
23 determination and to that hearing we invite all the
24 both elected officials that represent the proposed
25 territory and the community boards. So we're

1
2 notifying the boards and holding a public hearing
3 already.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right well the
5 complaints that we've had from the board members is
6 that we don't know about this. So for some reason
7 they're not hearing about these meetings and we'd
8 ask if you could bring it to the individual board.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCGUIRE: Okay and
10 if, yeah, and if there's a particular board that is
11 having trouble we would be happy to hear their
12 specific complaint and make sure we're
13 communicating with them the right way.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Okay, thank
15 you. No further questions. Thank you chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay thank you
17 council member Crowley. I see no further questions.
18 I want to thank the Taxi and Limousine Commission
19 for their testimony. I'd like to call up witnesses
20 now.

21 COMMISSIONER YASSKY: I just want to
22 note that I, I read this about council member
23 Garodnick's point about the time zones. You know
24 the fact that day light savings time really is not
25 being tracked properly by the government. I, we, we

1
2 are going to look into whether that, how that,
3 should effect the win for example the rush hour
4 surcharge goes into effect in taxi cabs, it may be
5 that that's been an hour off for many years and
6 needs to be adjusted so thank you council member
7 for bringing that to everyone's attention.

8 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. We have
9 our first panel Tamar Eckstein, Prospect Park West.
10 I think it's Garry or is it Garry?

11 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: [off mic] Gary.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Gary Eckstein and
13 Amy Cohen, Prospect Park West. I usually impose a
14 limit but on this panel I will not. But on future
15 panels we'll see how it goes. I'll put it that way.
16 I'm flexible. But on this panel I, I know the
17 significance of the issue here and I want, I want
18 you to be heard. Would you identify yourself please
19 and start off?

20 AMY COHEN: I'm Amy Cohen.

21 TAMAR ECKSTEIN: I'm Tamar Eckstein.

22 GARY ECKSTEIN: And I'm Gary Eckstein.

23 AMY COHEN: On October 8th at 5:11 p.m.
24 my 12 year old son Sammy Cohen-Eckstein was struck
25 by a van just across the street from our home. He

1 died a few hours later. As best we understand it,
2 he crossed into the intersection from Prospect Park
3 with the light in his favor to get a soccer ball.
4 While he had the light when he entered the
5 intersection it quickly changed and he slipped and
6 was hit by a van approaching the intersection at
7 full speed. Sammy was a bright, kind, and generous
8 soul. He was confident and well liked with strong
9 opinions and a drive to make the world a better
10 place. He had a zest for life and recently road 100
11 miles on his bike in a century ride. I am still
12 shocked that I will not to get to see Sammy Bar
13 Mitvahed next month, or hear where he will attend
14 high school whether it be at Bard where we feared
15 we'd lose our last remaining years at home to his
16 homework load, or Brooklyn Tech where he sought to
17 follow of Tamar's friends or perhaps Beacon where
18 his sister goes, let alone see him graduate, attend
19 college, bicycle across the country which they
20 planned to do after graduation, get married, grow
21 his first grey hairs, have children, and grow into
22 middle age himself one day. At the end of this
23 testimony Sammy's sister Tamar will be sharing her
24 tribute to him from his funeral so that you get,
25

1
2 can get to know him a little better. If she is
3 unable to read it the words are included in our
4 written testimony. Our family has suffered an
5 unspeakable loss. Every day is filled with pain so
6 deep we are not sure we can bare it but the world
7 too has suffered a great loss for Sammy could have
8 really made a difference. He would even have been
9 an excellent city council member had he had the
10 chance. The proposed legislation before this
11 committee to impose a 20 mile per hour speed limit
12 in all residential neighborhoods in this city
13 cannot bring out beloved Sammy back but it would
14 surly ensure that other families do not suffer as
15 we have and that more lives are not needlessly cut
16 short.

17 GARY ECKSTEIN: Although tremendous
18 strides have been made in recent years to reduce
19 traffic injuries and deaths New York has continued
20 to die in great numbers from motor vehicle crashes.
21 Approximately one every 33 hours. Speed is a factor
22 in many of these deaths. Just yesterday morning Amy
23 used a borrowed radar gun to clock the speed of
24 vehicles traveling in front of our home on Prospect
25 Park West where Sammy was killed. Although the bike

1 lane and reduction to two lanes has slowed traffic
2 somewhat. And you would think the large memorial to
3 Sammy in the interim, intersection would make
4 drivers aware of the need to drive slowly. In the
5 span of approximately 15 minutes 25 vehicles many
6 of them large commercial vehicles exceeded the 30
7 mile per hour limit. A few were clocked at 38, 39,
8 and 42 miles per hour. In addition, in that short
9 time, she witnessed a pedestrian almost him when
10 like Sammy he was in the intersection as the light
11 changed. An additional three vehicles ran the red
12 light when it had already turned to green for
13 pedestrians. Numerous studies have borne out what
14 common sense dictates. Slower motor vehicle speed
15 reduce injuries and death from crashes. New York
16 City's DOT found that 70 percent of pedestrians hit
17 by vehicles travelling 40 miles per hour or faster
18 are likely to be killed while those hit at 30 miles
19 an hour have an 80 percent chance they will live.
20 Chicago reports that pedestrians hit at 40 miles an
21 hour has a 15 percent chance of survival. At 30
22 miles per hour a 25 percent. While at 20 miles per
23 hour the pedestrian has a 95 percent chance of
24 survival. These numbers differ somewhat but the
25

1 import is clear. Speed kills and slower speeds will
2 save lives. 20 mile per hour slow zones... Oh and
3 that doesn't even account many accidents wouldn't
4 even happen. There wouldn't even be a collision at
5 a slower speed because people could react and
6 prevent it from happening. 20 miles per hour slow
7 zones in residential neighborhoods is not a new
8 idea. It has been used successfully throughout
9 England. Chicago and Washington D.C. are moving in
10 this direction. The loss of a few seconds at the
11 beginning and end of a trip is a small price to pay
12 to save the lives of individuals such as Sammy. And
13 since most people are happy to have a 20 mile per
14 hour limit in their own neighborhood they
15 understand the need for it in others. To be
16 effective the reduced speed limit would of course
17 require enforcement. That would involve a
18 commitment from the mayor and the police department
19 to prioritize enforcement of traffic safety.
20 Shockingly there were no citations for speeding in
21 September in the precinct where we live. This
22 legislation to reduce the speed limit, a single
23 sentence, will save countless lives. It's a no
24 brainer. Please do what is necessary to bring this
25

1
2 legislation to the full council and pass it soon. I
3 know there's complications with the federal law,
4 with the state law but there's certainly things
5 that can be done to make this happen. Every 33
6 hours someone is dying. The next one could be
7 someone you love. Tamar you mind reading? Tamar's
8 going to read a letter she wrote to Sammy that she
9 read at his funeral.

10 TAMAR EXKSTEIN: You touched everyone
11 you ever met and all these people because of the
12 impact you had on all of their lives. I love you so
13 much. You're my best friend. You've helped me
14 become the person I am. You were always there to
15 fill up the silence whether it was the silly
16 trumpet noises or intellectual comments about the
17 world. You have so much to give; so much you wanted
18 to change to make the world a better place. All of
19 these things, all the things that were hard for me
20 were easy for you. You made them just a little bit
21 easier for me just being there and helping me
22 through life. We had such a good relationship. We
23 would bicker like most siblings but it never lasted
24 very long. You always made me laugh with our weird
25 inside jokes. Sometimes we would just sit on the

1 floor of your room talking about anything and
2 everything. At summer camp. At camp this summer for
3 the first time in our lives we are separated for
4 four weeks. It was really hard. I kept expecting
5 you to be there and you weren't. You made me so
6 happy when you wrote me a letter even though it was
7 short and you didn't really say very much. Now I'm
8 going to go. Now I'm going to have to live my whole
9 life like that. I'm going to miss you every day for
10 the rest of my life. I love you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: No, you can stay. I
13 think that... Stay Stay...

14 [Applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I think they're some
16 questions. I'm very upset by this. I'm sorry. You
17 know I'm a father so to hear your daughter talk is
18 like very moving and both of you were very moving.
19 You know I'm here four years and there's no greater
20 commitment that I have than speeding and there's no
21 greater feeling that I have when I hear something
22 like this. So I know it's not really reassuring
23 because you suffered this loss that's incredible,
24 unbearable, so I just want you to know that we're
25 committed, we're committed to do more and I'm going

2 to remember this day as long as I live. I can't say
3 anything more than that. I want to say that
4 councilman Lander was nice enough to call me to let
5 me know that you were coming and you were in my
6 thoughts and in my prayers so I know you are in
7 councilman Lander's district. I did want you to
8 know assure that the letter you gave concerning
9 speeding on Prospect Park West and the speed limit
10 violations. I will personally give that to
11 commissioner Kelly. He will get a letter from me
12 with your letter and I will insist on enforcement.
13 We can do at least that because while speeding
14 happens throughout our city at every location I'm
15 going to insist that something be done. So I thank
16 you. Brad Lander.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Mr.
18 Chairman and I really appreciate it and I know that
19 the family really appreciates you're making this
20 opportunity possible. And I just, I think on behalf
21 of all New Yorkers I want to thank you for the just
22 the extraordinary courage to be here today. As you
23 guys know I'm you know Sammy and my son Mark were
24 in Hebrew school together and we're part of a very
25 close community and it's been in the whole... Excuse

1 me. It really has felt like the whole community has
2 been grieving with you. But I think the number of
3 people that could take that and in less than a
4 month be here testifying to do something that will
5 save other peoples' lives in the future is very
6 few. It's an extraordinary act of courage and
7 generosity and the desire to make his memory not
8 just as we say for a blessing but for something
9 that really saves lives in the future. And so it's
10 an incredible tribute to him and to your courage
11 and as the chair said that you know that's so far
12 from being enough that it's hard to fathom but it
13 means a lot and I just want to say an enormous
14 thank you and obviously we are, this is an issue
15 that the chair and all of us have been motivated on
16 but not motivated enough on. And it means a lot to
17 have you here and none of who are here today will
18 forget it our colleagues and we'll be very
19 motivated to push very aggressively forward so
20 thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I thank
23 you for your strength.

24 [Applause]

25 [Background comments]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Why don't we
3 go on and I would like to limit every speaker from
4 here on in to three minutes. I'll be a little
5 flexible but let's try to adhere to the, that rule.
6 Paul White, Transportation Alternatives, David
7 Pollack, Committee for Taxi Safety, Dorie Rush,
8 Lighthouse International. And Lester Marks,
9 Lighthouse International. Why don't we have Mr.
10 White go first okay.

11 PAUL WHITE: Thank you chairman Vacca
12 and thank you for that extraordinarily courageous
13 testimony. Transportation Alternatives is very
14 proud to call Sammy and his family long standing
15 members and they're the reason we fight for safer
16 streets for all New Yorkers. I just want to make
17 five quick points. You have my written testimony.
18 Firstly, strong agreement with council member
19 Lander and others of the committee who are
20 exploring the possibility of immediately signing
21 scores, perhaps hundreds of streets, 20 miles per
22 hour that are either approximate to schools or
23 already have some traffic calming and in so doing
24 meet the standards established by the state law. So
25 apparently the DOT is going to get back to you but

1
2 there may be hundreds of streets that we can sign
3 20 mile per hour very quickly. Second, experience
4 from other cities particularly in London and cities
5 in the UK such as Portsmouth show that even without
6 proper enforcement and traffic calming there is a
7 lot of better fit to merely signing streets 20
8 miles per hour. You do get significant lifesaving
9 speed reductions from signage alone. So I would
10 like to voice my disagreement with some of the
11 earlier testimony from DOT that signage
12 particularly when it's done with public education
13 with the community can actually make a big
14 difference and while we wait to get the traffic
15 calming and the enforcement we should go for the
16 signage. Third there was a study published two
17 years ago in the Journal of Psychological Science.
18 It was a study done by the University of London
19 which showed that kids, 15 and under, are
20 physically, psychologically incapable of accurately
21 judging vehicular speed and distance. This is
22 really significant because it showed that at speeds
23 over 20 miles per hour kids literally just do not
24 have the ability to accurately judge vehicle
25 speeds. It's because they're still developing,

1
2 their brains are still developing. This study was
3 under reported but it's very significant to us here
4 in New York because we know that death by traffic
5 is still the leading cause of preventable death for
6 children in New York City under 15. Fourth Tokyo,
7 London, even cities in South Carolina and Wyoming
8 have lower default urban speed limits than New York
9 City has so we all know that New York has, we have
10 the most dense pedestrian rich city in America and
11 yet there are hundreds of cities around the country
12 that have a lower default speed limit and lower
13 residential speed limits. So it's really just again
14 incredible that we haven't done this already. We
15 should all work together to change the VTL next
16 year so that we do have the authority to manage our
17 own streets according to our pedestrian rich dense
18 dense nature. So let's all work together to do
19 that. And finally, also with regard to our friends
20 in Albany. You know we've been trying to
21 reauthorize and expand the city's red light camera
22 program for years now. Going from a handful of
23 cameras to forty to fifty cameras. You know there
24 are thousands of intersections in New York City and
25 we still have you know 50 cameras. We all worked

1
2 very hard to pass the speed camera legislation
3 earlier this year. We got 20 cameras. There are
4 2,000 schools in New York City and then we have 20
5 cameras. So instead of going back to Albany every
6 single year and begging and pleading for the
7 authority to enforce our own streets properly. So
8 let's all work together next year to pass a home
9 rule so that from this day forward New York City
10 will have the authority to know what's right for
11 our kids and for our streets so that we can deploy
12 as many automated enforcement cameras as we need to
13 keep our kids safe. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you and you
15 can count on me for support on all those matters. I
16 do not understand for the life of me why we have to
17 go to Albany to have a speed camera. I don't know
18 what anyone in Albany knows about New York City
19 unless they come from New York City. I don't know
20 why. And the speed cameras we got this year were a
21 spit in the ocean and it took us years to get that.
22 And all your suggestions Paul are I want to be
23 supportive of that you spoke about. So I thank you
24 for all your hard work on these issues too. You,

1
2 you've kept the focus on speeding and I appreciate
3 that. Mr. Pollack?

4 DAVID POLLACK: Good morning Mr.
5 Chairman, commissioners. First of all I don't know
6 what to say to the family. I can't imagine losing a
7 child and I'm glad that they had the courage to
8 come here today and talk about their son. I'm
9 condensing my testimony on two of the intros; intro
10 1123 and intro 535. As far as intro 1123, for
11 requiring Hail vehicles to have payment technology
12 installed for the visually impaired. Is that for
13 all green cabs and all yellow cabs? Is that for
14 both? Green? Okay. You know well May 1st is already
15 passed and November 1st is the deadline, just one
16 day away so accordingly the dates need to be
17 changed to allow time for the technology to be
18 created and installed in a cost effective manner.
19 This bill has no consideration for cost. No one has
20 identified as responsible for the development for
21 this technology. No revenue stream has been
22 outlined to pay for the installation to pay for the
23 technology and no one has stepped forward to pay
24 for the cost of the testing of this technology. The
25 bill cannot become yet another unfunded mandate by

1 government on the hardworking men and women of the
2 taxi industry. Taxi owners, drivers, and passengers
3 have been asked to pay more and more on
4 conflicting, redundant, and impractical innovations
5 proposed by public policy makers and the TLC and
6 the state without any regard to the costs coming
7 out of the pockets of those who can least afford
8 it. The TLC through its own policy motivated
9 decision making has artificially limited the amount
10 of revenue one can earn through their small
11 business operations without taking realistic
12 account of the actual operating costs and
13 government mandate costs to an industry. As a
14 result the TLC's own statistics show that market
15 values of medallions have decreased by
16 approximately 25 percent. With the city medallion
17 auction around the corner the city needs to
18 consider that its constant imposition of new costs
19 upon the industry and the erosion of the exclusive
20 street hail rights of yellow taxis will in all
21 likelihood result in the city receiving
22 significantly less the anticipated revenue from the
23 sale of these medallions. The city will have to
24 reevaluate the assumptions under which it passed
25

1
2 its last budget. Services will be reduced;
3 employment opportunities both in government and the
4 taxi industry are likely to be negatively affected.
5 There needs to be a realistic timetable for a cost
6 effective solution with an actual revenue stream
7 designated to pay for the cost associated with
8 implementing this new system. The current proposed
9 legislation falls short of that bar. As far as
10 intro 535 relating to the speed limits; although we
11 applaud the intent of the bill, the Committee for
12 the Taxi Safety feels that the bill needs further
13 review and discussion. TLC statistics have shown
14 that the number of accidents in the taxi industry
15 is the lowest they have been for years and we wish
16 to build on our improved safety record but this
17 bill will not allow us to build on gains in traffic
18 safety. It will instead create confusion for
19 drivers on the road. The bill does not define with
20 sufficient clarity what is a residential
21 neighborhood. I mean one could argue that all of
22 Manhattan is a residential neighborhood. From block
23 to block you could have drivers changing speed,
24 creating accidents with other drivers who are
25 interpreting the rules differently. There are

1 already thousands of signs in Manhattan that
2 drivers adhere to. Any more signs from block to
3 block may distract drivers as they continue to take
4 their eyes off the road. In addition we're
5 concerned that the proposed bill will become
6 another excuse for NYPD traffic enforcement
7 officials and TLC enforcement agents to use fines
8 to justify financial goals that both agency have in
9 their quota systems to balance the city's budget
10 deficits. Tickets with points result in suspensions
11 and revocations of taxi drivers' hack licenses and
12 thereby their ability to earn a living. We're happy
13 to work with and offer you a, and offer to find
14 solutions with you and take into account the policy
15 objectives of these bills. Thank you again. We look
16 forward to working with you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you and I
19 should mention we've been joined by council member
20 Garodnick and we've been joined by council member
21 Van Bramer. And council member Greenfield. Okay.
22 Lester Marks?

23 LESTER MARKS: Good morning. My name is
24 Lester Marks and I'm Director of Government Affairs
25 at Lighthouse International. I'm joined here today

1
2 by my colleague Dorie Rush who's Director of
3 Accessible Technology and also Ellen Rubin who I
4 know you'll hear from in a few minutes. Today we're
5 here to express our full support for intro 1123
6 which would require all Hail vehicles to be
7 accessible to people with visual impairments. As
8 you mentioned earlier in the committee councilman
9 this, this bill is pretty much an expansion of one
10 that was passed; local law 57 in 2012. It is
11 essential to somebody who is, who has a visual
12 impairment to travel in a taxi in New York City.
13 It's critically important that somebody with a
14 visual impairment has the ability to conduct that
15 transaction independently and the existent system
16 with the, which is in every yellow taxi cab right
17 now is, is essential to that. So the expansion to,
18 of that system throughout the five boroughs is a,
19 is a very important piece of legislation and one
20 that we fully support. Two things that were
21 mentioned I think and you'll hear from Dorie Rush
22 on what it, what it provides a rider or a taxi
23 rider. But two things that I think were meant to...
24 One, any delay, we don't, we don't see any reason
25 for a delay of implementation of this system. And

1 from what I understand the yellow taxi driver's
2 were, did not incur any cost to the drivers. This
3 was something that was developed by both
4 manufacturers of the TPEP system and from my
5 understanding there was absolutely no cost incurred
6 by the driver. So cost is not an issue here nor is
7 implementation because from my understanding the
8 system is currently in the cars and there's no
9 reason to delay implementation so we, we thank you
10 councilman and the committee for your continued
11 commitment to accessibility for people with visual
12 impairment and support this whole heartedly.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you Mr. Marks.
15 Now was there... Oh yes, you want to have, there's a
16 question. Council member Greenfield.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you
18 Mr. Chairman. Mr. Pollack can I ask you some
19 questions? Is that okay? Thank you. Do you mind? So
20 you, you represent the Committee for Taxi Safety.
21 What exactly does that mean; Taxi Safety?

22 DAVID POLLACK: It's the name of our
23 association. [interpose]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I know I'm...
25 [crosstalk]

1 DAVID POLLACK: It's made up of...

2 [crosstalk] [interpose]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: ...it's a good
4 name.

5 DAVID POLLACK: ...made up of... [crosstalk]
6 [interpose]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: What does
8 that actually mean... [crosstalk] [interpose]

9 DAVID POLLACK: ...a number of...
10 [crosstalk] [interpose]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: when you say
12 you worked many as...

13 DAVID POLLACK: ...leased, leasing the
14 medallion agents that are licensed by the New York
15 City Taxi and Limousine Commission and we represent
16 the owners, the agents, and the drivers who lease
17 medallions and purchase their own vehicles. So
18 often a segment of the industry that is overlooked
19 by regulators.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I completely
21 understand it. I'm just curious. The name Taxi
22 Safety does that relate to the mission of what it
23 is that you folks are doing in terms of trying

24
25

1 engage and save taxis or is it just sort of like a,
2 an industry name?
3

4 DAVID POLLACK: Anything that's
5 detrimental to our drivers or our owners we
6 advocate for... [interpose]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay so
8 you're not... [interpose]

9 DAVID POLLACK: ...including safety
10 issues.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: ...focused
12 necessarily... So you're not really focused on
13 safety. You're really focused on the perspective of
14 the owner and driver. Is that fair?

15 DAVID POLLACK: That's fair.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay, I mean
17 because I just couldn't understand it because you
18 know from my perspective if there was a committee
19 dedicated to safety right, you know lowering the
20 speed limits would keep your drivers safer quite
21 frankly because it would lessen the possibility of
22 accidents as you probably know their reaction time
23 especially when you're on a residential street. A
24 child sort of jumps out, you're driving at 20 miles
25 per hour you have a better shot of actually hitting

1 the breaks and not hitting that child as opposed to
2 if you were driving 40 miles an hour.

3
4 DAVID POLLACK: And quite apropos today
5 being Halloween.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah, so, so
7 you would agree with me. It would be safer for the
8 taxi drivers and the pedestrians and children if we
9 did lower the speed limit?

10 DAVID POLLACK: I think that any, you
11 know it's obvious. The slower you go the safer it's
12 going to be but this is New York City, this is
13 Manhattan and I don't know if you drive or you take
14 taxis or you know busses... [interpose]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I do all the
16 above.

17 DAVID POLLACK: ...and... Okay.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Trains,
19 drive... [crosstalk] [interpose]

20 DAVID POLLACK: And sometimes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: ...taxis,
22 busses.

23 DAVID POLLACK: And sometimes if you
24 look at your speedometer when you're going down 2nd
25

1 Avenue in the 80s which is a residential area. I
2 mean it's... [interpose]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: 2nd Avenue
4 would not apply. It's a 60, it's at 60 feet. So if
5 you're going down a major avenue actually this
6 would not apply to this particular piece of
7 legislation. So if you're going on 2nd Avenue or
8 you're going down Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn we
9 would not be lowering the speed limit. We're
10 talking about the side streets where kids live and
11 play and you know you really have to run from stop
12 sign or a red light to a red light, that's what
13 we're referring to.

14 DAVID POLLACK: Is that going to be
15 every street.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: In
17 residential neighborhoods, yes.

18 DAVID POLLACK: Okay I'm just a little
19 confused with the legislation. I just so, you're...
20 [interpose]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: That's why
22 I'm here.
23
24
25

2 DAVID POLLACK: So we're defining, we're
3 defining residential neighborhood as every side
4 street and no major avenues?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Well it's,
6 there's a width of the legislation right. So if
7 it's six, if it's 60 feet or below which are
8 exactly side streets as opposed to the major
9 avenues that is correct. So the major avenues would
10 continue to have a 30 mile an hour speed limit but
11 let's say you're turning onto 85th Street, that's
12 when you would have to slow down because those are
13 the residential side streets. That's right.

14 DAVID POLLACK: You know, you know I was
15 driving down Broadway and down by Grand Street, I
16 mean there's one lane for traffic so is that
17 considered residential if there's one lane?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I don't...
19 [interpose]

20 DAVID POLLACK: I, I mean...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: ...represent
22 Grand Street so I can't tell you that particular
23 district honestly.

24 DAVID POLLACK: Okay.
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: But if you,
3 if you want to refer to, I'm Southern Brooklyn so
4 if you want to refer to anything in my neck of the
5 woods I'd be happy to sort of explain it. I mean my
6 point is, I, I appreciate the testimony. I just
7 think it's easy poo poo ideas but you know if
8 you're really focused on taxi safety, unless that's
9 not what you're focused on I think you, you should
10 actually support this bill because it will keep
11 your drivers safer. Quite frankly it'll probably
12 lower the cost of their insurance because they'll
13 hit less people and they'll kill less of them which
14 is you know good for the taxi business if you're
15 looking at it from a business perspective as well.
16 And I think it'll keep them safer because you know
17 nobody wants to get into an accident.

18 DAVID POLLACK: That was pretty, I think
19 it's pretty hard on side, on streets today in
20 Manhattan to drive even 20 miles an hour so I
21 appreciate your points.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Alright
23 good, I'm so, we've turned around the Committee for
24 Taxi Safety. Questions for my friends at
25 Transportation Alternatives. London, Paris, Tokyo,

1
2 how's it working out for them? I've never been to
3 Tokyo but I've been to London and Paris and it
4 seems like the taxi industry is still thriving and
5 everyone's getting around just fine.

6 LESTER MARKS: Yeah, they actually
7 charge more in London. But you know London is
8 London but it is quite similar to New York in terms
9 of its urban density, its economy, its population,
10 and its traffic management. And what they found is
11 that, actually there was a study published in the
12 British Medical Journal two years ago showing that
13 literally hundreds of lives have been saved just in
14 the few short years since they went to 20 mile per
15 hour residential street home zones. So I'm not
16 aware of any city that has gone to 20 and hasn't
17 yielded major safety benefits while at the same
18 time having negligible if any impact on traffic
19 flow. I see a lot of cabs going 45 miles an hour to
20 the next red light and stopping where as you know
21 what we've seen in London and other cities going to
22 20 miles per hour is a smoothing effect. So it's a
23 traffic smoothing where your journey time doesn't
24 actually significantly change but it's a much
25

1
2 smoother median speed as opposed to 40 zero 40
3 zero.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: And imagine
5 the fuel efficiency is probably better for the taxi
6 cabs and drivers as well as opposed to just sort of
7 flying down the street stopping.

8 LESTER MARKS: Well your, your, your
9 point earlier was well taken. We've actually worked
10 with the taxi driver groups on, a, a number of
11 street safety initiatives. There was a tragic case
12 last year where commissioner Yassky was out at the
13 memorial for a taxi driver who was getting out of
14 his car and was struck by a speeding driver. So I,
15 I, your point is very well taken.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Absolutely.
17 I just think it's a, it's a little embarrassing you
18 know. I don't mind being behind London and Paris
19 but Tokyo seriously? I mean that's just like we
20 could do a lot better. Thank you folks. Appreciate
21 your testimony and support.

22 LESTER MARKS: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Ms. Rush would you
24 want to testify?

1
2 DORRIE RUSH: Thank you. My name is
3 Dorie Rush. I am the Director of Accessible
4 Technology for Lighthouse International and I have
5 to begin by saying although I take accessibility
6 for people with vision laws very seriously and I'm
7 happy to talk about that. I can't really imagine
8 anything more important than protecting children in
9 the streets of New York from getting killed by
10 cars. Having said that I'll switch gears to
11 accessibility. Thank you. I'd like to thank the
12 council for implementing accessibility in the taxis
13 of New York City. I can tell you I am legally blind
14 and for the past ten years it has been impossible
15 for me to see the fare in a taxi. So obviously it
16 creates an awkward situation. There's no end to the
17 joy I feel today taking a taxi and being able to
18 process the whole transaction on my own. I know
19 what the fare is. I know where I am. I can do the
20 whole thing. I can hear it and I can even see it
21 with the technology that's put, put on the screen.
22 The numbers are big enough even for me to see it.
23 So it's phenomenal and I, I doubt that many taxi
24 drivers have anyone happier than I to pay my fare.
25 I'm usually very enthusiastic about it and they too

1
2 have been extremely enthusiastic about the process
3 and very cooperative and very interested. So I've
4 had nothing but a good experience. Vision loss we
5 know takes a lot from people. You know it takes
6 bits and pieces of your daily function. Sometimes
7 all at once and sometimes a little bit at a time.
8 Technology we also know today can give us some of
9 that back. And it's incredible what a difference it
10 can make. This may seem like a small thing but it
11 really isn't small. It really is, it's really big.
12 I know for myself and I know for the thousands of
13 people that I encounter every year. So it's made a
14 huge difference for me. I think that the importance
15 we've stressed before and will stress again is
16 consistence; that it has to be in every cab. It
17 can't be in some cabs. It can't be as useful or as
18 effective if it's hit or miss. And I think that the
19 taxi, the process today, the technology that's in
20 the cabs when it's working is amazing. It's
21 beautiful. It's a, it's a really incredible
22 experience but it's not working in all the cabs so
23 I hope and ask that we'll continue to work on the
24 implementation and so we'll know that it's
25 everywhere. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you very much
3 and we're committed to this bill so we're having
4 our hearing today and I'm going to try to move it
5 as quickly as I can alright.

6 DORIE RUSH: Excellent.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And thank you for
8 all the work of Lighthouse International.

9 DORRIE RUSH: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: You've been a, the
11 major advocacy group in this field and I thank you.

12 DORRIE RUSH: Thanks.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We're one more
14 panel, or are we, are we two more, or two more
15 panels. Okay. Oh Christine, come on up Christine.
16 Edith Printess, Patrick Killackey, and David
17 Dartly. Okay.

18 [background comments]

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay...

20 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I do this often.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Why don't we start
22 with Edith Prentiss?

23 EDITH PRENTISS: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Please
25 identify yourself for the record.

1
2 EDITH PRENTISS: Sure. My name is Edith
3 Prentiss. I am the Vice President of Disabled-In-
4 Action for legislative affairs. The chair of Taxis
5 for All campaign. And it's a little frustrating to
6 see that we're talking once more about London.
7 London which became a fully accessible feat in 1989
8 you know guys it's really frustrating. You know
9 we're talking about the, the greens. And in
10 Washington I say, see lot of them. I've never seen
11 an accessible one, never. Joe Rapaport posted a
12 photo of one from 106th and Broadway. Little
13 concerned about what it was doing there but you
14 know okay. When we start talking about enforcement
15 those of us who live in the northern and outer
16 boroughs know that enforcement is a joke. When we
17 start talking about everything from transportation
18 to the police enforcement of traffic issues. My
19 major concern though is the commuter van issue. In
20 May of '12 United Spinal, someone can MOU with TLC.
21 Has anything happened? It was to ensure accessible
22 transportation options to commuter vans. It is, it
23 is attached to the testimony that Jim submitted.
24 The entire concept of commuter vans is appalling.
25 You are creating a system and you are in, you are

1 supporting this system. The council and the TLC are
2 supporting a system that is inaccessible and
3 unequal. Do you not think people with disabilities
4 have the equal need for transportation in those
5 parts of the city?
6

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Well let me
8 interrupt. I, I, the answer is yes I do. The second
9 answer is I'm not, I'm not part, the council is not
10 an administrative agency. We are a legislative
11 body. Now is the Taxi and Limousine Commissioner
12 still here? Is anyone here from the Taxi and
13 Limousine Commission? Okay. Are you prepared to
14 answer the question about the, that Ms. Prentiss is
15 raising regarding the court settlement concerning
16 accessibility to vans.

17 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: No, I'm not.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Alright.

19 EDITH PRENTISS: Of course not.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Well then, alright.
21 I would appreciate someone getting back, getting
22 back to my council Lyle Frank and someone getting
23 back to Edith Prentiss. I do have a copy of the
24 court settlement and Edith Prentiss is raising a
25 question about what the TLC has done to comply with

1 accessibility for vans as per the court order. So I
2 would like to know and I would like Edith Prentiss
3 to be advised.
4

5 EDITH PRENTISS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And you can feel
7 free Edith to contact Lyle if the answer is not
8 satisfactory or totally clarified.

9 EDITH PRENTISS: Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

11 EDITH PRENTISS: But you know I think
12 that I question why the council knowing these
13 vehicles are inaccessible continues to write
14 legislation about without including accessibility.
15 That's my question with the council. What, since
16 you know they're bad, why don't you require in your
17 legislation?

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I think there is,
19 there, I thought that there was legislation that
20 Oliver Koppell had proposed and then it was
21 modified... [interpose]

22 EDITH PRENTISS: 433 A has nothing to do
23 with this.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Right but I would
25 look at that legislation if it comes back again. He

1 had mentioned that he would like to bring it back
2 and if it does I think including commuter vans,
3 that would be a location, an opportunity to look at
4 that legislation.
5

6 EDITH PRENTISS: Well the fact of the
7 matter is we were in court I believe two weeks ago
8 and we're waiting from, for a decision from Judge
9 Daniels as to the status of the TOT as a van. But
10 as far as the TLC is concerned they have no trouble
11 with vans. No, the ADA, it's only a lure. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you Ms.
14 Prentiss. Christine identify yourself.

15 [background comments]

16 CHRISTINE BERTHET: It is? Oh okay.
17 Thank you. So my name is Christine Berthet. I'm the
18 founder of Checkpads a coalition for pedestrian
19 safety on the west side of Manhattan and I was very
20 moved by the testimony today because that's what
21 our coalition has been created for. On 9th Avenue
22 we have had within ten blocks, seven death. And so
23 we deal with those tragedy all the time and you
24 know this gets me to one question you pose chair
25 Vacca which is you know are the pedestrian not

1 crossing in the pedestrian crossings. And I have to
2 admit that near my home I never cross in the
3 pedestrian crossing because I consider this is the
4 most dangerous place. There is a study which was
5 published two years ago by the, one of the
6 hospitals of New York City which disclosed that 44
7 percent of injuries of pedestrian are in the
8 pedestrian crossing with the walk signal and
9 therefore the pedestrian, the crossing is not the
10 safest place. And the reason I'm not crossing in
11 the pedestrian signal is right there, a woman which
12 was seven year pregnant was killed few years ago.
13 And I could see the cars turning at full speed and
14 not yielding to pedestrian in that pedestrian
15 crossing. So I go inside and I go to a place where
16 I can watch what is going on and take the risk in
17 my own hands because it's scary to be at the
18 intersection. So the point is that the real
19 solution is to install SpeedFace signals at many of
20 those intersection and just like you're talking
21 about the speed, installing those signs, without
22 even making the study and spending a lot of time,
23 and I totally support that, there is a second thing
24 that you can do is say just go and install
25

1 SpeedFace signals every time there was a fatality
2 or injury of a pedestrian in a pedestrian crossing.
3 And we don't have to have a study we just have to
4 go do it. That would make it faster. That would
5 reduce the cost and that would address the 44
6 percent of injuries which are really where the
7 pedestrian is crossing and they think they are
8 protected and they are not okay. Second I applaud
9 your concept of creating a formal safety task
10 force. The, the DOT has referred a lot to 2010
11 reports and how they are implementing that but the
12 fact is that for whatever reason, and I'm sure
13 because they have a lot of things to do, some of
14 the recommendations are not being implanted. And we
15 had a recently discussion with the DOT about one of
16 them. We were the second more dangerous
17 intersection in that report and nothing has been
18 done as of one months ago. It was done one months
19 ago. But you know five years later it was not done.
20 So my recommendation is that the city council does
21 an audit and an accountability of those reports
22 every year and say okay there were so many things
23 you ask were they done. That's the key question.
24

2 Were they done? Thank you so much for taking up and
3 for all your help on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Sir.

5 CHRISTINE BERTHET: Thanks.

6 PATRICK KILLACKEY: Hi, my name is
7 Patrick Killackey. I'm a, I live in Brooklyn
8 Heights and another member, resident of our
9 neighborhood is here, Kerith Aronow, the community,
10 in the audience. I want to thank you for us here
11 today and I'm here to speak in support of, of intro
12 535. The Brooklyn Heights Association strongly
13 endorses intro 535 to reduce the speed limit on
14 residential streets to 20 miles per hour. The
15 recurring tragedy of a New Yorker killed in a crash
16 at a rate of one person killed every 33 hours is a
17 painful and constant reminder of the importance of
18 efforts to make our streets safer. The physics and
19 facts are clear. Someone hit by a car at 30 miles
20 per hour is 10 times more likely to die than
21 someone hit by a car a 20 miles per hour. Someone
22 hit at 40 miles per hour is 35 times more likely to
23 die. Speeding is the number one cause of deadly
24 crashes in New York City and in London the
25 extensive rollout in 20 mile per hour zones has led

1
2 to a 46 percent reduction in serious traffic
3 injuries and fatalities in those zones. Since you
4 are elected representatives I wanted you to know
5 that in our community we've documented very strong
6 support for safer streets. As it, as part of our
7 recent application to become a slow zone, a
8 successful application we did a survey with, in
9 which over 560 local respondents, there were 560
10 local respondents with 90 percent in support of the
11 slow zone. We believe the support we found in
12 Brooklyn Heights is common to all neighborhoods
13 with New Yorkers everywhere valuing the opportunity
14 to walk their local streets more safely. Now while
15 our selection as a slow zone promises to bring
16 safer streets to our community, and this is a
17 critical point I want to make today, the good news
18 is muted for us by a DOT planned implementation
19 date of 2016, three years away. We do not want to
20 wait three years for safer streets. We don't think
21 that anyone should wait that long or for very long
22 for the implementation of this common sense
23 improvement of any neighborhood. And we ask that
24 you commit to the funding, they've cited resource
25 constraints and we, that, that's a matter, or

2 question of priorities. So we ask you to commit to
3 funding and moving forward on this change for
4 safety for our community and neighborhoods city
5 wide. Thank you very much.

6 DAVID DARTLY: [off mic] Hi my name is
7 David Dartly and I live in Stuyvesant Town with my
8 wife and two kids. Thank you chair Vacca for having
9 this hearing. Thank you council member Greenfield
10 for introducing 535. Is this thing on?

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: There's a little
12 button right behind the mic. Oh, there you go thank
13 you.

14 DAVID DARTLY: Thanks. So thanks for
15 introducing 535 which in my opinion is 100 years
16 overdue. And it looks my council member Garodnick
17 has stepped away but somebody do me a favor and ask
18 him to sign on as well. So it was really kind of
19 hard for me to listen to the important testimony
20 from the Eckstein family because my family went
21 through almost the exact same thing. We were a
22 family of four and when I was a teenage we became a
23 family of three. And it's like why. Why do we allow
24 this to happen? Even if, even if, even if not every
25 traffic fatality is speed related why do we, if we

1 can do something about speeding why do we allow so
2 many of these, this to happen so many times? Also
3 chair Vacca thank you. I remember you appearing at
4 the 2010 Stop Speeding Summit. So thanks for your
5 continued interest in this important issue and I
6 urge you to go even stronger going forward. Alright
7 so I, I'm just somebody who has, you know as
8 someone who has lost a sister and a friend both
9 together in a double fatal car on pedestrian crash
10 I just spent some months on my own researching
11 when, why, and how New York City adopted 30 miles
12 an hour. And I even got some help from the New York
13 Times at one point. What I have found is nothing
14 but car capability and prevailing driver behavior
15 is what informed the, the arrival at 30 miles an
16 hour. I never found any evidence of public safety
17 even being considered. And predictably over the
18 20th century the speed limit just went, almost
19 exclusively just went up and up and up. Now I don't
20 quite have the technical knowledge to give a
21 scientific or data driven case and I acknowledge
22 that speed enforcement in the time between passage
23 of this bill and the day when one day our streets
24 are self-enforcing is a problem. But I don't care.
25

1 I, I'm here to make an ethical and valued space to
2 argument that officially sanctioning a speed at
3 which the impact on the human body is at least as
4 severe as falling off a three story building is
5 insane. And you know, and before we get even too
6 excited about 20 miles an hour. That's the same as
7 falling off of a one story building. So, it, it,
8 it's not, people do, people can and do die in 20
9 mile an hour crashes. Also when did 30 miles an
10 hour get adopted, 1964. Do we really want to inform
11 our current speed policy based on an era of exodus
12 from cities and massive highway expansion? It was a
13 different era. Seniors and cyclists. Okay. Senior,
14 as a cyclist I'm very happy to say that seniors
15 have every right not to be so much as scared as a
16 cyclist but what is it that they're scared of?
17 Something that's about altogether 300 pounds going
18 10 miles an hour and they shouldn't be scared by
19 that. So if any of you council members have ever
20 acted on one of those complaints then you have to
21 support this bill. Distracted driving. It's
22 ubiquitous and it's not going anywhere, it's not
23 going away anytime soon. Why? Because driving is...
24 Well never mind why. So, so while we're waiting and
25

1 waiting and waiting to find some way to find some
2 way of reigning in the enormous distracting driving
3 monster let's reduce speeds now... What do we
4 actually gain from the speed limit being so high?
5 There, we don't really gain any time or efficiency.
6 We don't gain any sort of 85th percentile safety
7 factor. According to Sam Schwartz if I'm
8 paraphrasing him correctly 85th percentile was
9 never really used in New York City streets. And
10 also that's really for highways not city streets.
11 And if, just wondering do we gain any time or
12 efficiency I actually conducted an experiment at
13 the suggestion of Rod King, a UK activist. The
14 other day my friend and I got in the car at 110th
15 and Amsterdam, went up Amsterdam, went across 125th
16 to Park, went down Park Avenue, and then went back.
17 So it was a square of four miles. Pretty typical,
18 pretty good cross section of a car trip in New York
19 city and a distance in traffic conditions. I did
20 one sticking at 20 miles an hour or less and I did
21 another going as fast as I, as I could pretty much
22 and it, in, in that real life test the time was
23 almost, it was almost, it was less than a minute
24 apart. So we gained nothing in my opinion.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I have to ask you to
3 conclude.

4 DAVID DARTLEY: Yes, I will conclude.
5 Yeah, just to, yeah, just in response to something
6 that the testimony from the TLC, or not the TLC
7 sorry but the Taxi Safety Commission, the law as
8 written is not vague. It's about 60 feet or, it's
9 about roads that are 60 feet or less and zoned so
10 there's nothing really vague about it so please
11 support this bill. Thanks.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay I'd like to
13 mention we, we'd been joined by council member
14 Rodriguez and council member Mealey, and council
15 member Greenfield has a question.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: A fellow,
17 spoke last I'm sorry I didn't see your testimony, I
18 guess you didn't print it out is that... [interpose]

19 DAVID DARTLEY: Sorry... [interpose]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Nothing
21 wrong with that I'm just, I don't know your name,
22 what's your name?

23 DAVID DARTLEY: David Dartley.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: David. So
25 actually you know I want to thank you for

1
2 testifying and for pointing out those points and a
3 part of the frustration that we, we have a similar
4 frustration as elected officials. I have a, I have
5 a street in my community where we've been worried
6 about traffic issues for years and I've spoken to
7 the DOT about it, it is, it's 53rd Street and
8 there's two schools and a, a baseball field for
9 youth on the block and unfortunately a couple years
10 ago a child there was struck and was killed and it
11 took probably say well over a year just to get a
12 speed bump on the block. Another year to get one 20
13 mile an hour sign turning, only a turning sign. I
14 still requested several other signs that we have
15 yet to receive and a school zone which we have yet
16 to receive. And so I think you're absolutely right.
17 The only thing I'm going to add to your point in
18 terms of our frustration, now this is something
19 that I think is very critical as well. The reality
20 is that when people see a speed limit, the natural
21 tendency of most folks is that they're willing to
22 go, depending on the individual five or 10 miles
23 above that speed limit and that's just human
24 nature. Alright I'm not a sociologist but I think
25 we can all agree as drivers and pedestrians that's

1 just the way it is. When it's 65 miles an hour
2 people drive 75 miles an hour. When it's 75 miles
3 an hour they drive 85 miles an hour and when it's
4 55 it's 65. Ask anyone it's just sort of natural.
5 The problem with the 30 mile per hour is basically
6 it encourages you to drive naturally up to 40 miles
7 an hour. And that's the point where when you get
8 hit by a car you're likely to die and that's really
9 the biggest frustration and by lowering it to 20
10 people are still going to go faster but they're not
11 going to drive to the point where we're basically
12 encouraging people through the 30 mile an hour
13 speed limit to drive at a point... And in fact I
14 don't even know that police officers will pull you
15 over for less than 10 miles an hour. I've never
16 seen it. I've never seen a police officer give a
17 ticket because I think they view that as part of
18 the natural extension as well in terms of the flow
19 of traffic. And to me that's just an added point
20 worth mentioning which is that unfortunately just
21 about everybody breaks the speed limit in New York
22 City. And by lowering the speed limit you're going
23 to get it at a much safer natural place regardless.
24 But thank you David for your testimony.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I think everyone
3 very much. All of you've made a great contribution
4 today. Eric McClure, Park Slope Neighbors, Kerith
5 Aronow, Remsen Street or Brooklyn Heights
6 Association, Ellen Ruben, Joanna Oltman Smith, and
7 Ben Shepherd. That will be our final panel.

8 [background comments]

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We've been joined by
10 council member Levin. Okay. If it's okay I'd like
11 to call upon Ms. Ruben first. Okay.

12 ELLEN RUBEN: Okay. Shall I stand?

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, it's fine Ms.
14 Ruben. Yes, just state your name for the record and
15 then we're ready for you okay.

16 ELLEN RUBEN: My name is Ellen Ruben and
17 I'm going to bring us back to the conversation
18 about accessible credit card machines or payment
19 systems in, in New York City Taxis and I have to
20 say that I'm thrilled to learn that we're now
21 extending that access to the green taxis or the
22 borough wide taxis. And that's really an important
23 thing as Dorie Rush said, this is maybe a small
24 thing to many of you because it's not a problem but
25 when I get into a cab and I'm going someplace I

1
2 have no clue where I am. I have no clue how fast
3 we're going and the setup that has been most
4 popular and works best so far has been something
5 that gives us that information, gives us a detail
6 of the medallion number which we also have in brail
7 thank goodness. It is an important factor that some
8 of these machines are not working and we need to be
9 monitoring somehow which ones are working and which
10 ones aren't. The Creative Mobile Technologies has
11 done an excellent job but even with them when
12 they're working they're fabulous. When they're not
13 working they're useless. But I have to say as Dorie
14 also said taxi drivers are very thrilled to have
15 this system in the cabs when they realize wow, I
16 didn't know, that's so cool that you can do that
17 yourself. And I have to say also that they have
18 improved in terms in giving assistance when the
19 machines are not working. And we need to have some
20 way of talking about it or talking to somebody
21 whether it's the TLC or the MOPD to look at what
22 are we doing to make sure that these systems are in
23 place so that the accessibility is worthwhile and
24 enables those of us who use them or who need them
25 to use them properly. The, one of the systems and

1
2 I, I have to say to the praise of Creative Mobile
3 Technologies they have come and met with a group of
4 people who are blind. I organized that meeting with
5 the, the, the American Council of the Blind in New
6 York City and we wanted to set up a similar kind of
7 thing with the VeriFone and they have refused to
8 come. Our meetings are on Saturdays and they refuse
9 to come to our meetings and it's been a problem. I
10 have never in a taxi where the VeriFone system is
11 accessible so my comments would really that we need
12 also, not only to say yes we need these systems in
13 place but we need to be sure that the systems are
14 working and we need to have a place to complain if
15 they're not working. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay thank you Ms.
17 Ruben. You know I've met you several times.

18 ELLEN RUBEN: Yes indeed.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: So I admire your
20 work and I truly admire you are knowledge of the
21 issues and I know it's sometimes difficult. You
22 know my father was blind so.

23 ELLEN RUBEN: I know that.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I know that what you
25 do is sometimes hard. I'm going to tell you that I

1
2 want to know who in VeriFone is not being
3 responsive to you and I will have my council reach
4 out. They are required to participate and if there
5 is someone that is not attending a meeting and not
6 being responsive I'd like you to call Lyle Frank or
7 Lester Marks or whoever from your organization.

8 ELLEN RUBEN: Okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Because we will run
10 interference with that... [interpose]

11 ELLEN RUBEN: Great.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...to make sure that
13 this issue is pressed.

14 ELLEN RUBEN: Okay, that'll be terrific
15 because I've been dealing with somebody from the
16 TLC who's been intervening so I need to get the
17 name of the person and I will do that and I'll get
18 in touch with Frank.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Thank...
20 [interpose]

21 ELLEN RUBEN: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: ...so much Ms. Ruben.

23 ELLEN RUBEN: Good to see you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Good to see, good to
25 see you, yes.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you for... That was great. Okay. Mr. McClure would you want to go next. Please state your name for the record.

ERIC MCCLURE: Thank you chairman Vacca. My name is Eric McClure. I'm a cofounder of Park Slope Neighbors, a grass roots community advocacy organization active in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn. I'd like to thank you for your continued focus on speeding enforcement and, and reducing speeding in New York City as well as councilmember Greenfield for introducing the legislation before the committee today. I'm here to offer our organization's strong support for intro 535. In 2011 Park Slope Neighbors partnered with the Park Slope Civic Council to submit a joint application to the Department of Transportation requesting that the entirety of Park Slope be designated a Neighborhood Slow Zone. We didn't make the cut. Nor did we make the cut in 2012. And we were deeply disappointed to learn three weeks ago when mayor Bloomberg announced the roll out of 15 new slow zones over the coming three years that Park Slope would not get a slow zone in 2014, in

1
2 2015, or 2016. We're fortunate in a sense that Park
3 Slope hasn't been considered a prime candidate for
4 a slow zone. Statistically we've had lower crash
5 rates, lower rates of crashes with injuries than
6 many other communities. But as in so many other New
7 York City neighborhoods there's too much speeding
8 on our streets. As Amy Cohen and Tamar and Gary
9 Eckstein made heartbreakingly clear in their deeply
10 moving testimony earlier a neighborhood's seemingly
11 favorable crash statistics can change in one
12 terrible incident. While the investigation into
13 Sammy's death is incomplete, there is no evidence
14 at this time the driver who ran him over was
15 speeding. But I can't help but wonder what if the
16 speed limit had been 20 miles per hour rather than
17 30; would the driver have had just a little more
18 time to react? Would he have had a split second to
19 break or to swerve just enough to avert tragedy.
20 We'll never know that answer but we as a city can
21 take an enormous step to make such crashes
22 significantly less likely and when they can't be
23 avoided, much less deadly. We're all familiar with
24 the stats but they bare repeating. A person struck
25 at 20 miles per hour is seven, or eight, or nine

1 times less likely to die than someone struck at 30.
2
3 Nine times less likely to die. The implementation
4 of 20 mile per hour speed limits in Austria and the
5 UK has resulted in reductions in crashes with
6 injuries of approximately 20 percent. When 20 mile
7 per hour speed limits are coupled with traffic
8 calming infrastructure to create slow zones
9 reduction in injuries is even greater. We need to
10 take a comprehensive approach to creating safer
11 streets combining design, regulation, and
12 enforcement. We've made big strides in New York
13 City in designing traffic calm streets that are
14 less prone to speeding. We clearly have much work
15 to do on the enforcement front though the recent
16 launch of speed, of speed camera pilot program is a
17 major step forward on that front. We need more
18 automated enforcement here. By moving forward
19 legislation that would reduce a citywide speed
20 limit in residential neighborhoods at 20 miles per
21 hour this body could provide the critical third leg
22 of the stool. Residents of Park Slope or any other
23 city neighborhood shouldn't have to pursue a
24 lengthy and complicated application process that
25 pits us against other communities to improve the

1 safety of our streets. 20 miles per hour should be
2 the default setting. The deaths of pedestrians and
3 cyclists and drivers and their passengers are
4 preventable. They can be reduced and they can
5 ultimately be eliminated. If we're willing to do
6 the hard work and commit to a vision of zero deaths
7 but that can't be achieved without a lower speed
8 limit. I urge you to vote into 535 out of
9 committee, send it to the full council, and enact
10 it into law. In doing so you will literally save
11 lives. Thank you.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Ms. Will
14 you identify yourself please?

15 JOANNA SMITH: Hi, I'm Joanna Oltman
16 Smith. I'm a Neighborhood Safe Street Advocate. I
17 live in Park Slope and I'm here today to let the
18 council know how devastated my neighborhood is over
19 what happened to Sammy. There's been so much change
20 in behavior since this tragic incident. I have so
21 many friends who won't let their children walk to
22 school anymore. I have so many friends who won't
23 let their children go to their after school sports
24 alone. Everyone's wanting to hold their children's
25 hand crossing the street. Everyone's taking

1
2 responsibility for the lives of their children as
3 though there's a monster at the door. And I, I just
4 need the council to know that I did prepare many of
5 the same data points that other people giving
6 testimony have offered. I'll put it in different
7 terms for a change. If a child is hit by a car
8 going 20 miles an hour that child will graduate
9 high school. That child will get married. That
10 child will have children of their own. If a child
11 is hit by a car going 40 miles an hour that child's
12 life is over. I mean, these are, these are the
13 numbers and they're very well-known and I'm glad
14 that everyone's sharing them over and over again.
15 We have a big problem in my local precinct of zero
16 enforcement. September's numbers were quite
17 stunning. The number zero was there next to
18 speeding tickets issued. We've done a lot as local
19 advocates with the precinct, encouraging them for
20 years to really focus on street safety and that has
21 unfortunately fallen on deaf ears. So I was very
22 gratified to hear the chairman's intention to hand
23 deliver to commissioner Kelly the very important
24 letter that Sammy's family has written. Somebody
25 needs to be in charge of enforcement and there are

1
2 many local commanding officers who do not think
3 that it is them so I'm looking forward to having
4 Kelly do what he can while he's in and hopefully
5 having a change of leadership and having people at
6 the NYPD do what we need to do to keep our families
7 safe on the streets. I also would encourage the
8 council to pass in whatever form possible 535. I
9 think that even the basic suggestion of a lower
10 speed limit, whether or not the enforcement follows
11 can only make things better for our children on the
12 streets. And I just wanted to remind everyone that
13 our streets are our largest public space. It's New
14 York City's back yard and we need to make sure that
15 they're as safe as possible for everyone to use and
16 enjoy. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes?

18 KERITH ARONOW: My name is Kerith Aronow
19 and I'm here on behalf of the Brooklyn Heights
20 Association but also as a mother of children who
21 are basically exactly Sammy's age and as a member
22 of the general neighborhood. We, you know we heard
23 about his death and have thought about nothing
24 since and it has affected the way we think about
25 it. I mean my children are just old enough to be

1 moving around the neighborhood by themselves and we
2 are very thankful that it's such a safe
3 neighborhood that really our biggest problem is the
4 cars and it is. It's a huge, scary, hulking
5 problem. We totally appreciate that Brooklyn
6 Heights as unlike Park Slope been selected to be a
7 slow zone, unfortunately in 2016 and we completely
8 appreciate our council member Steve Levin's support
9 during that process of trying to become a slow
10 zone. And I just, I would like to reiterate as a
11 parent and also as a daughter in law of an elderly
12 man living in the neighborhood that the cars that
13 are in our neighborhood are either desperately
14 looking for a parking spot or desperately trying to
15 escape the traffic on the BQE and they gun it when
16 they can. And that situation is really really
17 frightening. I, I think that's all I had to say.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you. Just
20 one or two points. You know... [interpose]

21 [background comments]

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh I'm sorry well
23 come up. Ben Shepherd are you here..

24 BEN SHEPHERD: Yes sir.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh come up then.

3 Well you're almost up there anyway. You know we
4 will be getting a new administration soon that all
5 these 2016 plans be moved up. I think it's
6 outrageous that you identify a problem, you admit
7 something has to be done, and you tell people wait
8 for safety until 2016. That's unacceptable so I
9 want you to know that that's on my, my agenda once
10 we get settled into the administration. Yes sir.

11 BEN SHEPHERD: Chair Vacca thank you so
12 much for letting us have this time to have this
13 conversation. We've all come here from many
14 hearings through the years and we've been here when
15 people have died. I, my, my children are friends
16 with your children. We've all seen our kids grow up
17 together and I don't want to come here the day that
18 Joanna, we have to have the Joanna talk because
19 something happened to her kids or something happens
20 to my daughters who are 10 and eight. For 10 years
21 I lived on Sackett Street in Brooklyn and cars and
22 motorcycles you'd hear motocross, people speeding
23 up to the light so they could stop and when I'd
24 ride my bike cars would yell at me for trying to
25 ride to work on Smith Street so I really implore

1
2 you to think about the enforcement issue. I
3 fortunately live in Iguana now where we also do
4 have, we are in a slow zone and it is fantastic.
5 I'm just saying as far as implementation I mean I'm
6 also a driver and you know what when I'm driving
7 and we're all in a rush and you're not looking at
8 the world cause you need to get a parking space
9 I see that 20 mile per hour slow zone sign and that
10 reminds me, they're kids. So it works and it
11 doesn't slow me down. It reminds me pay attention
12 to the big picture. So thank you for your
13 leadership. I know it's really hard to speak today
14 and I thank you for being here for the whole time.
15 I mean it's hard for all of us to... I appreciate
16 your humanness. I mean we all had a hard time
17 listening today but let's take the emotions we have
18 today and translate to get the bills out of
19 committee. If there's anything we need, you need us
20 to do as advocates to help you get this bill out of
21 committee, into the council, let us know. We'll
22 stack the committee hearings. We'll stack city
23 council. We'll back you. We will, I know that there
24 are forces that are going to be calling your office
25 saying kill this bill and we don't want that to

1
2 happen because remember Joanna's kids. Remember my
3 kids. You don't, I don't want to come to this
4 committee tearful and have to have everybody say
5 but Ben Shepherd I'm so sorry for what happened to
6 your two daughters. I want my daughters to grow up.
7 And you want them to. I know that. So thank you for
8 giving us this time. It means so much. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you all. Very
10 powerful today. Today was... Oh councilman Ignizio is
11 here. Did we announce him? Councilman Levin please.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you Mr.
13 Chair. I want to thank this panel and everyone
14 that, that came earlier in the hearing and I, I
15 think that we as a city council have the obligation
16 to head their words and to move with deliberate
17 speed but to move quickly and, and, and pass this
18 bill. And also work with a new administration,
19 current administration but a new administration as
20 well to truly do something about enforcement
21 because we don't, that is a, to my mind that is a,
22 a missing link here. We can do as much in terms of
23 infrastructure and neighborhood slow zones and
24 traffic calming measures and they have an important
25 impact and they work but if we don't have partners

2 within the police department that have, are getting
3 the, the direction from the top, from commissioner
4 level saying that this is now a priority. That if
5 they have quotas for other things how come they
6 don't have quotas for traffic for speed violations.
7 And in fact it seems like it's the exact opposite.
8 Where speed enforcement is discouraged. They don't
9 have the equipment that they are supposed to have.
10 There's this, I one time was told by our commanding
11 officer of a precinct that they share a single
12 speed gun with another precinct, with the
13 neighboring precinct. How is that in any way an
14 appropriate way to move forward for our city? So I
15 think that it's imperative upon us as a council to
16 do everything in our power and ability and
17 oversight and in our budgetary authority to make
18 sure that that happens. And I want to thank this
19 panel again. Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you councilman
21 Levin and I agree. Councilman Greenfield.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you
23 Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the panel. I just
24 want to reiterate one point and just point out
25 something else as well which is you know the DOT

1 acknowledges that lowering the speed limit is a
2 "Common sense approach to saving lives" despite
3 that they're not going to do anything about it. And
4 the reason they're not is because they, they really
5 don't care. And I'll tell you how I know this. When
6 the city of New York cares about something it
7 doesn't matter to them what the law is or what the
8 law say they find a way to push her though.

9 Alright, think soda ban, think smoking, think any
10 of the other issues that the mayor has decided was
11 a priority for him. Didn't matter that it was
12 problematic, possibly unconstitutional, they're
13 going to get sued right? They could care less
14 right. When they believe in something they push her
15 forward. Over here you know when you talk about the
16 when they speak of the requirement that there need
17 to be, there need to be, that there need to be
18 traffic calming measures. Paint could be a traffic
19 calming measure. Right? I mean they could simply
20 take the position that they could paint the streets
21 "20 MPH" alright not that difficult or expensive to
22 do and they could get it done. They're choosing not
23 to do it so I just don't want you to believe, and
24 because you're folks who are clearly genuine and
25

1
2 you came out here and you took the day off and
3 you're all very busy. We actually get paid to do
4 this. You don't right. So I'm grateful to everybody
5 who came out here. I just don't want you to believe
6 when the city tells you oh we can't do this that
7 they're actually answering you in good faith.
8 They're lying to you. They're not being honest
9 because they could do it. They're just making
10 excuses as to why not to do it. And so I do want to
11 encourage you to keep going forward and to keep
12 advocating because it's the grass roots that really
13 gets these done. And I just want to make a final
14 point which is just it's a little bit, it's a
15 little bit slightly deviating from what we've
16 discussed today that people don't realize either.
17 And that is you know unfortunately last week in my
18 district we had a 68 year old woman she was
19 visiting a relative in the hospital. When she came
20 back from the hospital she crossed the street and a
21 car struck her and hit her. After investigation
22 they determined that the car didn't do anything
23 wrong. I met a relative of this individual driver
24 of course I went to the funeral of the woman but I
25 also met a relative of the driver who told me that

1 the driver was devastated. Alright this is a guy
2 who follows the law who wasn't speeding who has
3 certainly had no interest in killing somebody right
4 and what we're doing is we're creating a situation
5 where inevitably law abiding citizens will kill
6 people as well. Alright imagine you're a driver
7 who's following the law of 30 miles an hour, a kid
8 darts in front of your car and you kill that kid
9 it's, it's devastating for the family and the
10 community but also for those law abiding citizens
11 and so I also tend to think and this was my point
12 before with the Committee for Taxi Safety. I think
13 people tend to look at it just from one scope which
14 is just the scope of those of us who are parents
15 and have children but those of us who drive what
16 could be a greater fear than god forbid driving
17 down the street at the posted limit and having a
18 kid dart in front of your car because that's what
19 kids do and killing a kid I think that's a
20 nightmare as well. So I want to thank the panel. I
21 want to thank everybody who came out here support
22 and I want to tell you keep on pushing and don't
23 buy the administration is lying that they can't do
24

1 this. They don't want to do this and if you keep
2 pushing you can get it done. Thank you very much.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you and you
5 have assurance too that we'll keep pushing. I just
6 sent a text to somebody about these bills so we are
7 on top of it. I want these bills very much. I want
8 this bill very much. I fought to get this hearing
9 scheduled today so my heart is there and my head is
10 there and we will do everything we can. Okay there
11 being no further questions comments or business
12 this hearing of the Transportation Committee is now
13 adjourned 12:20 p.m.

14 [gavel]

15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

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 November 15, 2013