

**NYC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TESTIMONY  
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEES ON TRANSPORTATION AND FINANCE  
May 12, 2020**

Good afternoon Chairman Rodriguez and Chairman Dromm, and members of the Transportation and Finance Committees. I am Polly Trottenberg, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation. With me today are Elisabeth Franklin, Associate Commissioner for Budget and Capital Program Management and Rebecca Zack, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. We thank you for inviting us to testify on behalf of Mayor Bill de Blasio on DOT's FY21 Executive Budget and FY20-24 Capital Plan.

**Introduction**

Today I am testifying on a far more challenging budget than the one I presented on March 9th, shortly before the COVID-19 crisis overtook our City. Like much of City government, DOT is now adjusting to a new operational and fiscal reality, requiring us to redesign, postpone or even cancel some programs, while doing everything we can to provide for the safe, efficient, equitable and environmentally sustainable movement of people and goods in New York City.

Many of the savings I will outline in this proposed FY21 \$1.1 billion Expense Budget and \$10.3 billion five-year Capital Plan simply reflect the reality of reduced service levels, operations, and projects for 2020. And while we are still grappling with the proposed funding reductions in this budget, we know there will likely be more to come in 2021 and beyond.

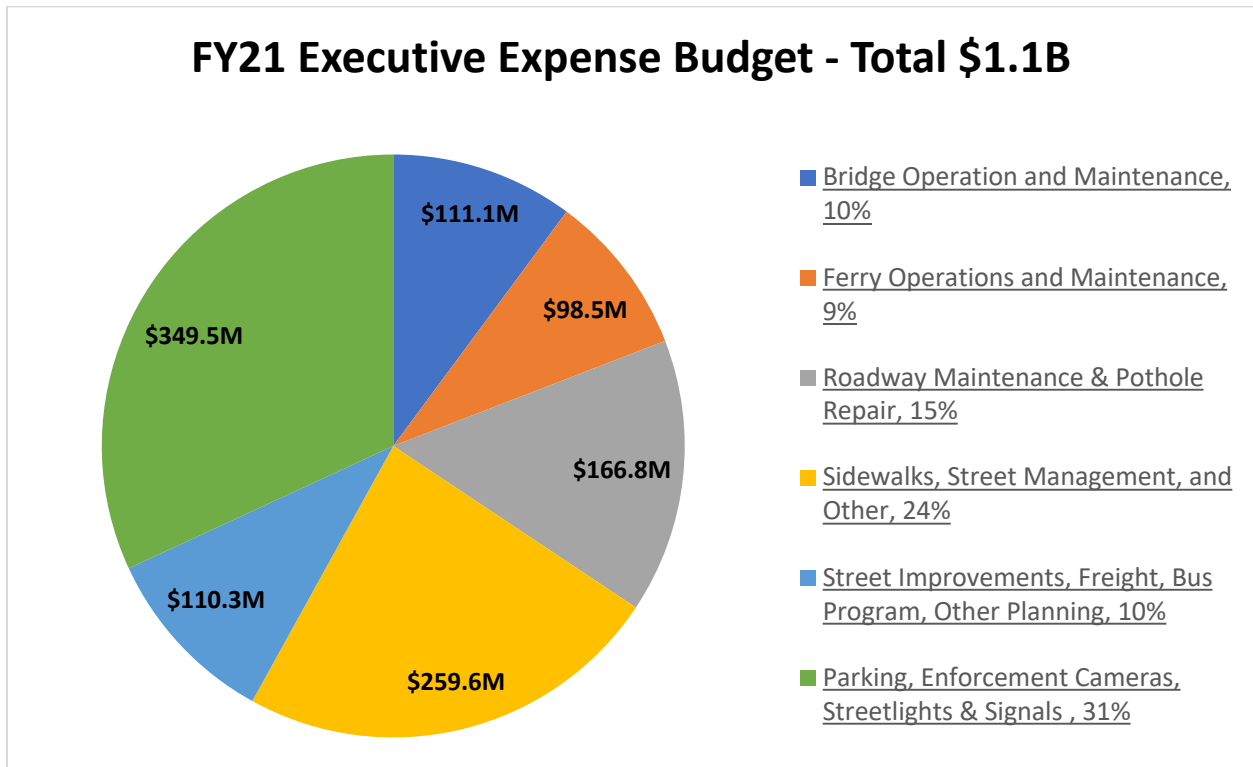
Additionally, with the COVID-19 crisis still upon us, we face an unpredictable and less productive operational environment. We must now perform our work with a relentless focus on the health and safety of our workforce, our contractors, and the public, with social distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE), temperature taking, and sanitizing regimens for our facilities, vehicles and tools. We also face an uncertain procurement environment as our contractors and supply chain firms face their own COVID-19 impacts.

But I am proud to say that during this pandemic, the team at DOT has been resilient, resourceful, and dedicated to keeping our agency operating as safely and productively as possible. And many DOT staff have stepped up to volunteer on other City needs during COVID-19, from food distribution to providing masks to the public. I thank them all for their service.

## Budget Overview

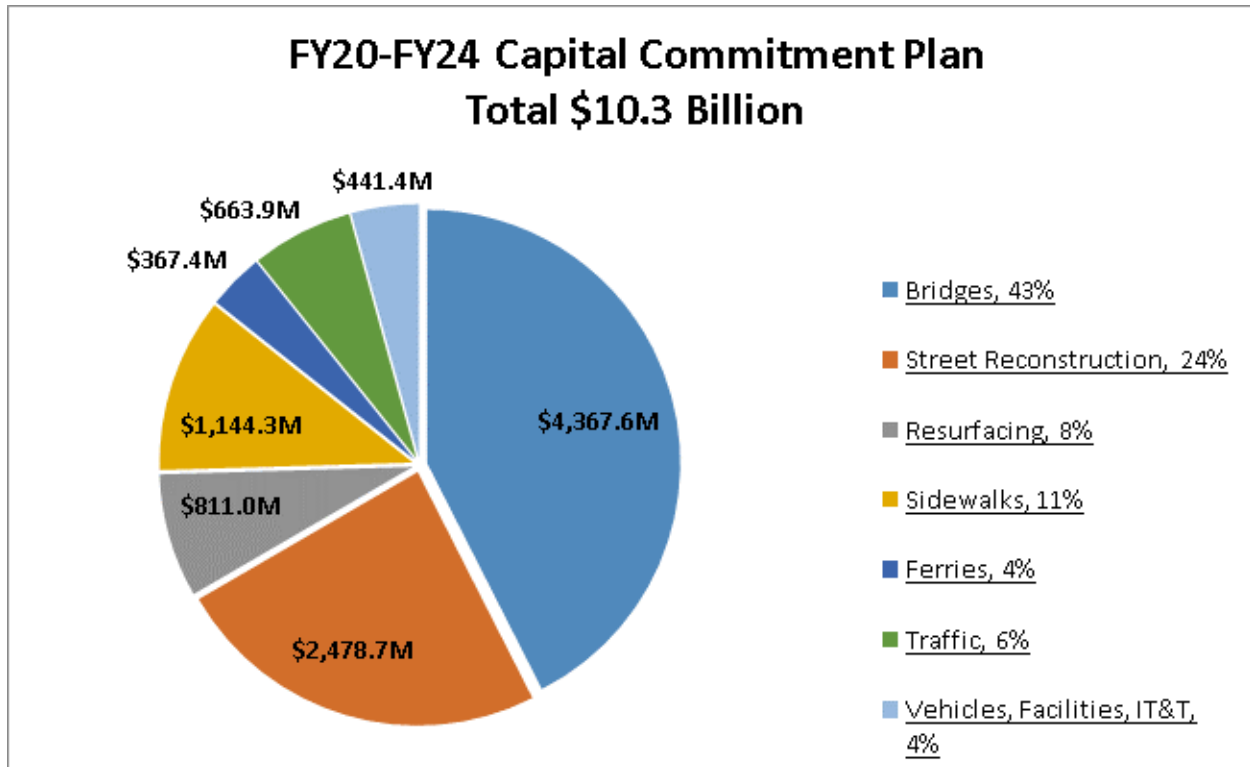
First, I want to present an overview of DOT's proposed \$1.1 billion FY21 Expense Budget, which includes:

- \$349 million for traffic operations, including signals, streetlights, and parking;
- \$167 million for roadway maintenance;
- \$111 million for bridge maintenance and inspection;
- \$110 million for transportation planning and management, including installation of street signs and roadway markings;
- \$99 million for ferry operations and maintenance; and
- \$260 million for other DOT operations and administration, including sidewalk management and inspection.



And DOT's proposed \$10.3 billion FY20-FY24 Capital Plan, which includes:

- \$4.4 billion for bridge reconstruction and rehabilitation;
- \$2.5 billion for street reconstruction;
- \$811 million for resurfacing;
- \$1.1 billion for sidewalk and pedestrian ramp repair and reconstruction;
- \$367 million for the Staten Island Ferry;
- \$644 million for streetlights and signals; and
- \$441 million for the facilities and equipment needed to support DOT's operations.



### **COVID-19 Response**

I would now like to turn to the immediate effects of the COVID-19 crisis on our operations. DOT, like many of our sister agencies, has felt the impact of the virus directly, with employees out sick and some lost forever. We mourn the loss of our colleagues, especially those on the front lines at DOT and throughout City government and the MTA, and are grateful to all the essential workers putting their lives at risk each and every day.

In the face of this crisis, I am proud to say that DOT has maintained all the agency's critical functions, including emergency infrastructure repairs, operating and expanding our speed camera program, and running the Staten Island Ferry 24/7. We are now starting to resume more field operations, including resurfacing, sidewalk and pedestrian ramp work, and pedestrian and bike projects. And we are working closely with our union partners to ensure that our field workforce is properly socially distanced, well-equipped, and fully supported.

This crisis has dramatically changed our City's streets. Traffic is down significantly, which has led to some good news: a decline in traffic fatalities since mid-March leading to the longest period without a pedestrian fatality—58 days—since we began tracking by mode in 1983. But, unfortunately, some drivers are taking advantage of much emptier streets to speed recklessly, and we can never let up our vigilance.

DOT's speed cameras have issued almost double the number of violations compared to before the crisis and NYPD has stepped up targeted speeding enforcement. And we are continuing our pace of installing 60 new speed cameras each month, and plan to meet our goal of standing up the largest speed camera program in the world.

We have continued to grow Citi Bike, with a focus on addressing COVID-19 impacts. The system now has 14,500 bikes and 900 stations, more than double the size of the system at launch in 2013. We recently began expanding into Upper Manhattan and the Bronx, where we are installing 100 new stations, including stations at Lincoln and Harlem Hospitals. We have also partnered with Lyft, Citi and Mastercard to offer free year-long memberships to essential workers on the front lines of COVID-19.

We are also answering the call from many of you, including Speaker Johnson and Councilmember Rivera, to open up the City's streets to pedestrians and cyclists. Late last month, the Mayor and Speaker announced we would open 100 miles of streets, including 40 by the end of the month. We are actively working with our sister agencies, Councilmembers, Community Boards, BIDs, advocates, and others to achieve this goal and thus far have opened nearly ten miles of City streets, and expect to announce many more miles very soon.

Lastly, even amidst this crisis, we are working with our contractors and partners at DDC to continue critical construction work on the majority of our capital projects, from transformational streetscape improvements in Downtown Far Rockaway, to a new community plaza space in Soundview, to a full neighborhood reconstruction in Ozone Park, and the next phase of our Grand Concourse project. And we are continuing our critical bridge work as well, including upcoming repairs and resurfacing on the BQE.

### **COVID-19 Recovery**

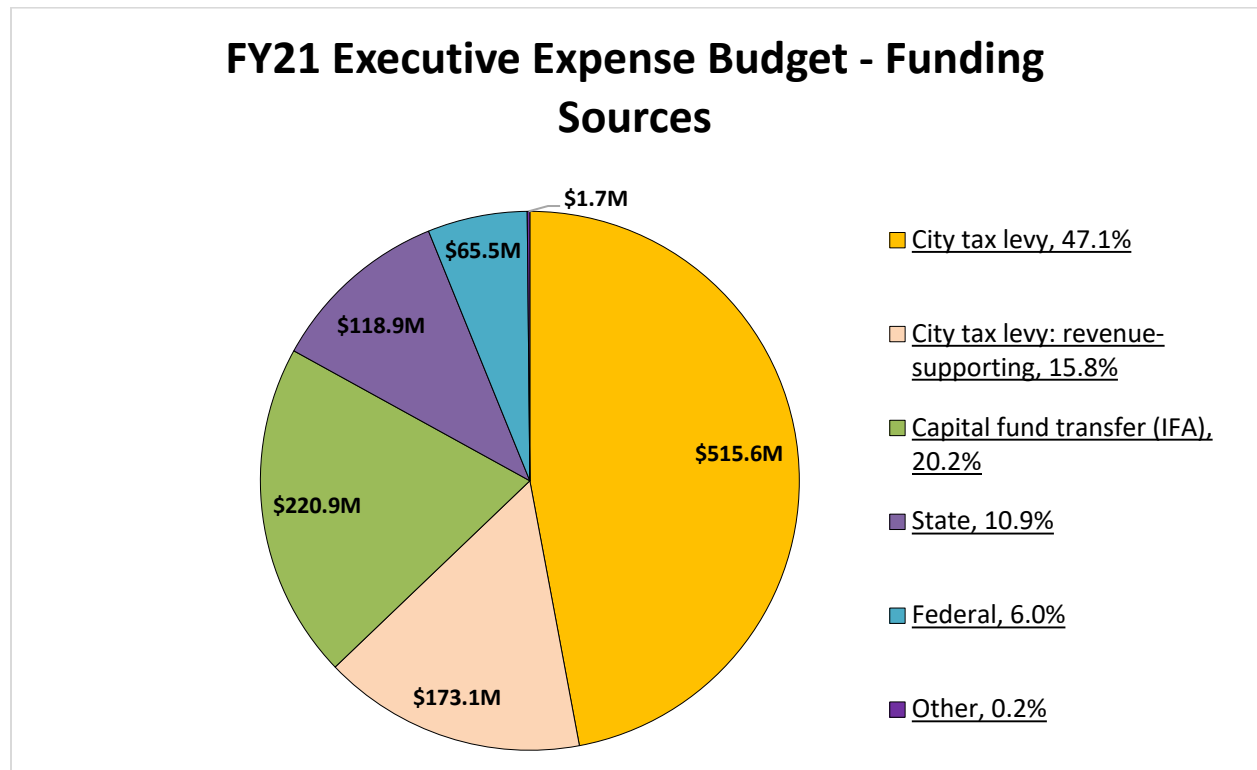
And now that our agency has grappled with the initial operational challenges of COVID-19, we are beginning to look ahead to innovative approaches to help our City and our economy reopen. We are grateful to the Mayor for creating a Surface Transportation Recovery Council, with representation from our sister agencies and a broad group of experts, including advocates, labor and industry leaders, and other stakeholders.

We hope to work with this Council on re-thinking our streets and on getting people back to work safely and efficiently, focusing on biking, walking, buses and ferries. The Council will also focus on how our street network can help bolster businesses and restaurants through public realm and access improvements, and support efficient commerce and deliveries.

We know how important it is to seize the moment – and draw upon our experience during COVID-19 – to focus on making our City even more equitable, healthy, safe, and sustainable. And we look forward to the City Council’s input and partnership in this shared goal.

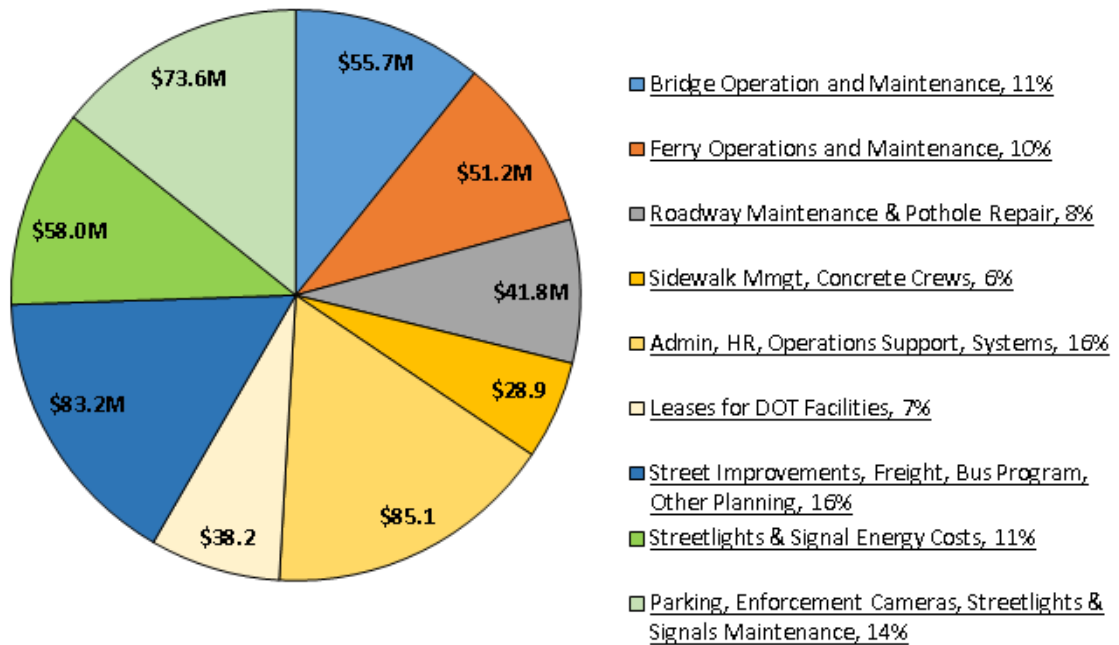
**Savings**

This brings me to our fiscal reality and DOT’s targeted savings of \$61.5 million in our FY21 Expense Budget. I think it is useful to contextualize the impact that dollar amount represents. While DOT’s operating budget is \$1.1 billion, over 50 percent of that comes from State and Federal grants, from the Capital Budget, which are known as “IFA” funds, or represents revenue-generating activities, like parking meter operations and automated traffic enforcement, and therefore making cuts to those programs would not generate Expense Budget savings.



And of the approximately \$515 million remaining, large portions are relatively fixed costs such as the electric bill for street lights and signals and leases on DOT facilities, or support the inspection and maintenance of the essential infrastructure on which *all* street users rely.

## FY21 Executive Expense Budget - City Funds: \$515M



A final factor when looking for savings is to do all we can to avoid layoffs, as the Mayor has pledged. That means looking for savings where we can from newer programs, like Green Wave or Better Buses, which have more unfilled positions that can be cut without laying off existing staff, which is not the case for core DOT operations like roadway repair or bridge maintenance. Nonetheless, should more savings be required in the coming months, we expect we will see further budget cuts in every part of the agency.

In the area of Vision Zero, we have identified \$10 million in total savings in FY20 and FY21 with reduced spending on roadway markings due to current contractor capacity, reduced media spending, and a delay in filling positions. While we do not take these savings lightly, with a total of \$1 billion spent on Vision Zero thus far and \$3 billion allocated in this budget, our commitment to eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries remains steadfast.

In our Better Buses initiative, we identified \$2.7 million in FY20 and \$5.7 million in FY21 in total savings from delays in hiring and reduced materials and supplies due to COVID-19. But the Administration remains committed to Better Buses and increasing bus speeds, particularly as traffic congestion returns to city streets. We still expect to invest over \$12 million from our Expense budget into the SBS program in FY21, which will enable significant work toward the goal of speeding up buses as outlined in the Better Buses Action Plan of April 2019.

Specifically, DOT still expects to install an average of 7.5 miles of new bus lanes per year and will meet our previous transit signal priority goal of 1,000 intersections by the end of 2020. And we still plan to move forward with bus priority projects planned for 2020, including on 149th

Street in the Bronx, which serves Lincoln Hospital. And we are open to adding additional projects as resources and community support permit.

With the Staten Island Ferry, we identified \$6 million in savings by reducing service and suspending lower level boarding in response to a 90 percent drop in ridership. And we have identified other opportunities for savings throughout the agency, including delaying parking meter upgrades and reducing vacancies.

For DOT's Capital Budget, we rolled out \$1 billion from FY20-25 into FY26-FY29. This is largely comprised of funding for the BQE project, while keeping funding available for critical near-term work on the structure. Also in the category of capital spending, DOT is funded for about 600 lane miles of roadway resurfacing, or around half of what we were able to achieve for five straight years under the de Blasio Administration.

During my time as Commissioner, DOT has been fortunate to have so many elected officials, advocates and other stakeholders supporting the agency taking on more projects and initiatives each year. And as DOT's mission has expanded, the agency has grown by over 30 percent in the last six years and added 1,000 new employees. But we now face significant budget cuts, a citywide hiring freeze, and restrictions on outside contracting. And finally, as I touched on earlier, we also face productivity challenges in light of the operational changes necessary to safely resume our work.

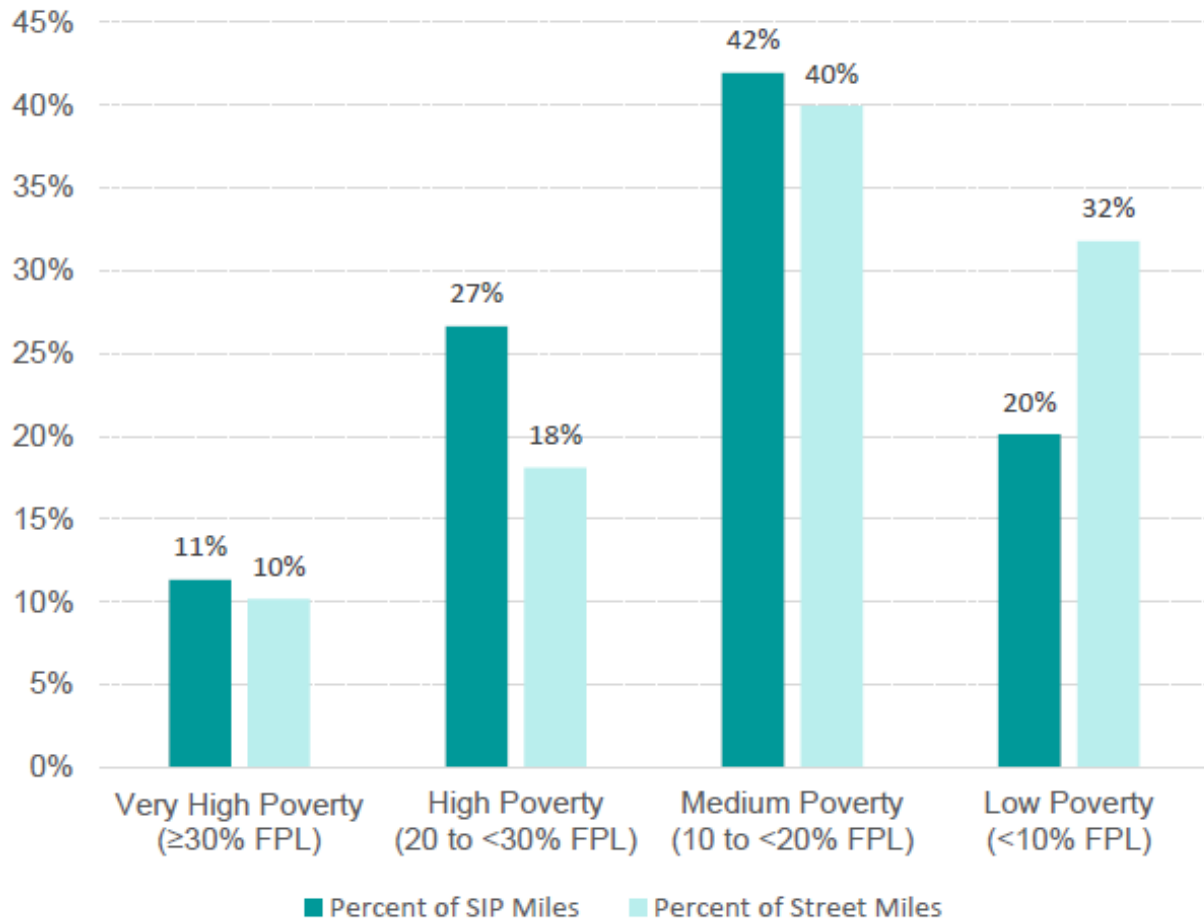
But I am confident that DOT's creative and resourceful workforce will find every way to make the most of our still robust resources. Even if we are unable to accomplish *all* that we would like, we will continue to maintain and improve our infrastructure, run the Staten Island Ferry and implement vital, innovative pedestrian, bike, bus and safety projects that will support the City's economic recovery and quality of life.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I want to thank the Council for its partnership, particularly in the face of these unprecedented times. I am proud of all we have accomplished together thus far. We have worked together in every part of the City, including our lowest income areas and not just those neighborhoods with the loudest voices or the most privilege, and I am re-attaching some equity analysis of our work that I shared in our Preliminary Budget testimony. We remain eager to continue working together to help our great City through this crisis, and to create an even better New York City for tomorrow. I will now be happy to answer any questions.

## Appendix

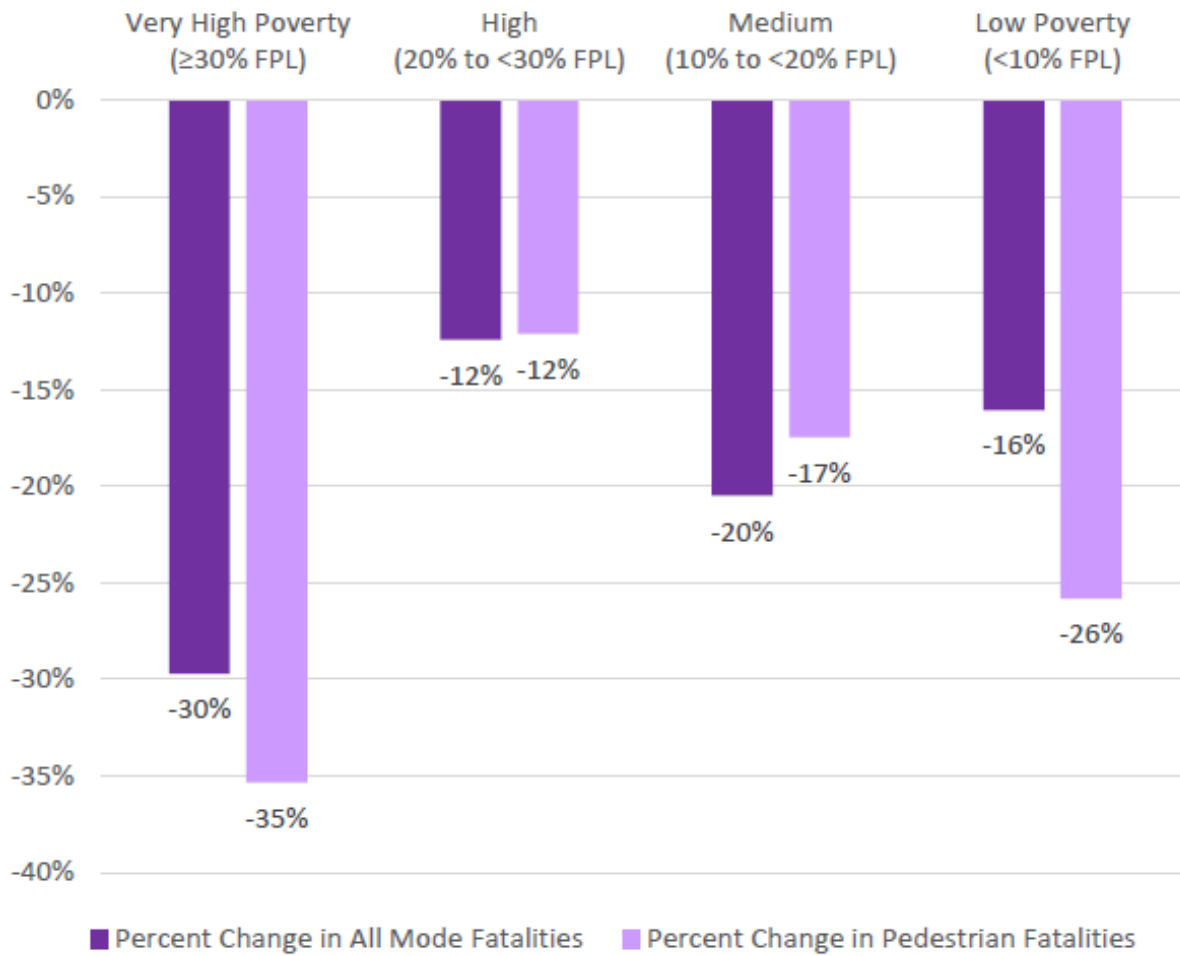
### *Street Improvement Project Miles by Neighborhood Poverty<sup>[1]</sup>*



<sup>[1]</sup> Street Improvement Project (SIP) mileage calculated using 2014 - 2019 SIPs. SIP intersection projects' mileage calculated using intersecting blocks. Street mileage calculated using NYC DCP LION 18D street network. Airports, Rikers Island, parks and cemetery NTAs were excluded from this analysis.



*Changes in Fatalities by Neighborhood Poverty<sup>[2]</sup>*



<sup>[2]</sup> NYCDOT/NYPD Fatality Database; 2009-2018. Change in fatalities from 2009-2013 ("Pre-Vision Zero") to 2014-2018 ("Post Vision Zero"). Airports, Rikers Island, parks and cemetery NTAs were excluded from this analysis.