

**NYC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TESTIMONY
ON ACCESSIBILITY OF STREETS BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

November 30, 2020

Good afternoon Chair Rodriguez and members of the Transportation Committee. I am Leon Heyward, Deputy Commissioner for Sidewalks and Inspection Management, or “SIM” at the New York City Department of Transportation and I am joined by Sean Quinn, Assistant Commissioner for Street Improvement Programs and Rebecca Zack, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Commissioner Trottenberg on street accessibility.

Under Mayor de Blasio’s leadership, DOT and this Administration are committed to creating a more accessible city for all New Yorkers. One of DOT’s core focuses is maintaining and enhancing our pedestrian infrastructure, free of defects and accessible to all. Last year, SIM performed over 22,500 inspections and reconstructed over 2.1 million square feet of defective sidewalk citywide.

Pedestrian Ramps

Now, turning to pedestrian ramps. Pedestrian ramps provide access on and off over 12,700 miles of sidewalks at approximately 185,000 street corners, mid-block crossings, and medians and are essential for all pedestrians, people with disabilities, and older adults. Currently, DOT upgrades pedestrian ramps primarily by following the agency’s resurfacing operation. In addition, pedestrian ramps are addressed when responding to 311 complaints, through street improvement projects and sidewalk repairs.

But recently, you may have seen more of our in-house crews and DDC-managed contractors around as we take on the task of assessing and upgrading every pedestrian ramp throughout the city. DOT has added a team of hundreds of permanent and seasonal employees, including planners, engineers, in-house construction crews, and inspectors, and in partnership with our sister agency, DDC, is awarding billions of dollars in contracts.

In October of last year, DOT completed a citywide survey using innovative technology to collect data on pedestrian ramp elements. We contracted a technology company, who surveyed a total of 217,678 ramps, using high definition, street level imagery and new software to extract each ramp’s measurements.

We also train other agencies, developers, and utility companies on ADA requirements for the pedestrian ramps included in their projects. Finally, we have a dedicated outreach team for community engagement and are collecting and tracking data through a comprehensive asset management system.

This long-term undertaking presents tremendous challenges at great scale. We must design and construct around numerous right-of-way infrastructure, including utility lines, catch basins, hydrants, street lights, trees, elevated and below ground transit structures, vaults under the sidewalk, distinctive materials in landmarked historic districts, and narrow sidewalks, among

others. And to make it even more challenging, the city streetscape is ever-changing, with private developers, utilities, and other agencies working on our streets and sidewalks every day.

This Administration believes in providing safe and accessible means of travel for all New Yorkers, and is proud to be dedicating very robust resources to that goal under the Mayor's leadership. Since July 2017, we have installed 1,185 missing ramps and upgraded 21,009 existing ramps. The public can see the most recent survey data, assessment, and construction progress at www.nycpedramps.info.

Now, Assistant Commissioner Quinn will discuss our work to create new pedestrian enhancements, our engagement with the disability community for project design, use of the curb, and finally, how evolving street use in the face of COVID-19 impacts accessibility.

Pedestrian Projects

Thank you Leon. Good afternoon, I am Sean Quinn, Assistant Commissioner for Street Improvement Programs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Pedestrian enhancements are a major focus for DOT and our Vision Zero efforts. Within the agency, the Pedestrian Unit works with other operational and planning units to implement new and expanded pedestrian facilities and to create new pedestrian connections. One recent example is at the complex intersection of Bronx Park East and Bronxdale Avenue, where we installed 12,500 square feet of sidewalk to create new pedestrian connections where there was once only a parking field. Another is at the historic intersection of York Street and Pearl Street in Brooklyn, where we installed new crossings with smooth accessible pavers in the cobblestone street as well as an expanded sidewalk to create an improved intersection layout and shorter, more direct crossings. In addition to these safety enhancements, our Plaza Program has turned underused roadbeds into vibrant and accessible pedestrian spaces, with 65 locations currently open to the public.

Engagement with the Disability Community in Project Design

Making these upgrades and all our projects accessible, safe, and successful cannot be done without input and guidance from accessibility experts. DOT works closely with the disability community and advocates to understand issues that people with disabilities face while navigating city streets. We host workshops, run online surveys, and speak directly to experts in the field to vet design ideas and test new treatments, materials, and technologies. To give an example, DOT's Mobility Management team co-organizes mobility clinics and evaluation events with community partners in which people with disabilities learn new travel skills while DOT tests and surveys participants about potential street treatments.

And in the face of the many challenges posed by COVID-19, DOT continues to partner with community organizations to engage the public through virtual and teleconference platforms. During the summer, we held an informational outreach session with high school students who are blind or have low vision. Held via Zoom, the virtual session enabled an engaging conversation with students who learned about the physical and design approaches DOT applies to enhance travel for people with vision disabilities. And to engage older adults with disabilities,

DOT held a teleconference via phone to learn about the mobility challenges older adults are experiencing due to the pandemic and share information about our accessibility work.

DOT also produces the Mobility Management Resource Guide, which includes information about street improvement projects, transit services, and other DOT initiatives to enhance mobility and accessibility.

And last week, DOT was pleased to welcome Edmund Asiedu, to backfill our Accessibility Coordinator position. This critical advisor to the Commissioner is the agency's representative for accessibility initiatives and leads ADA policy and compliance, internally and externally.

Use of the Curb for People with Disabilities

Another core part of the agency's mission is to balance many different uses for our streets while maintaining access for all. Particularly on our busy commercial corridors, we manage curb use to facilitate loading and unloading of goods and passengers, access to transit, and temporary parking for shoppers and visitors, among other uses, while maintaining emergency access. As an important part of this mission, our Parking Permit unit administers approximately 27,000 parking permits for people with disabilities. These permits provide motorists with a documented disability greater flexibility, by allowing parking in metered zones free of charge as well as use of no parking areas, authorized parking only areas, and truck loading areas.

Open Streets

Now I will speak about DOT's work, under Mayor de Blasio's leadership, to transform our streets in the face of COVID-19 and promote safe recreation, sustainable transportation, and support the city's beloved restaurant and retail industries.

First, as Commissioner Trottenberg recently testified in detail: this Administration has implemented over 83 miles of Open Streets citywide, nearly 50 percent of which are in zip codes with the highest rates of COVID-19 in the city—mostly communities of color—and nearly 60 percent of which are in census tracts that are low- to moderate-income.

When it comes to accessibility, DOT understands that a significant concern for some people with disabilities who rely on a vehicle is continued local access for parking and for loading and unloading passengers in taxis, for-hire-vehicles, access-a-ride, and private cars. This is one of several important reasons that our Open Streets program maintains local access. But, we are also keenly aware of the program's operational challenges, including the need to maintain appropriate setups, and are mindful of this issue as we plan for the program's future.

Open Restaurants

Building on the Open Streets program, DOT, in partnership with the Council and restaurant industry, established the Open Restaurants program. This has been one of our most far-reaching and successful COVID-related initiatives and, we think, the largest such program in the world. To date, over 10,700 restaurants have applied to participate in the program, supporting an estimated 90,000 jobs for a diverse group of employees. New Yorkers have embraced the program in neighborhoods throughout the city: in Mott Haven in the Bronx, Washington Heights

in Manhattan, Jackson Heights in Queens, Sunset Park in Brooklyn, Tompkinsville in Staten Island, and dozens more.

And now, through the Open Storefronts program—which the Mayor announced on October 28th—retail establishments can use the sidewalk space in front of their business as well, provided they maintain a clear path of travel for pedestrians.

In the face of the COVID-19, we deployed and expanded the Open Restaurants program quickly by allowing restaurant self-certification and then relying on an army of City employees to inspect each location and require modifications where we discovered issues. While we understand there were challenges with this approach, we worked diligently with business owners to ensure ADA compliance, requiring street setups to either be flush with the curb or provide temporary ramps, and ensuring compliance with path of travel, table height, and clearance requirements. MOPD has created helpful fact sheets on the accessibility requirements for both Open Restaurants and Open Storefronts, including detailed diagrams and instructions, which are available on their website.

And as the Mayor announced and the Council codified in Local Law 114 of 2020, sponsored by Council Member Reynoso, work is underway to design the legal and operational structure for a permanent Open Restaurants program, with a goal of having it in place before the end of next year. Now, as we turn to making the popular program, which was created under an emergency Mayoral Executive Order, a permanent part of our City, we look forward to discussing with the Council the longer-term operational, fiscal, and legal issues to be resolved. And it will be important to ensure that setups and guidelines under the permanent program meet ADA standards while maintaining appropriate clear paths for all pedestrians.

Finally, in developing a permanent program we must remember that DOT's core mission remains moving people and goods through the City safely, efficiently, and in an environmentally sustainable manner, accessible to all. Therefore, the future program must also prioritize bike lanes, bus lanes, pedestrian space, loading and unloading, as well as parking for people with disabilities, among other competing uses, while leaving room for future innovation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as use of the city's streets continues to evolve, DOT is committed to creating a more accessible city for all. In the midst of these challenging times, we thank the Council for your ongoing partnership and look forward to continuing this critical work. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we now welcome any questions.



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Testimony to NYC City Council Transportation Committee at Oversight Hearing on Street Accessibility November 30, 2020

I'm Jean Ryan, president of Disabled In Action of Metropolitan NY. As a disability civil rights group, we have many concerns about street accessibility, and we believe that sidewalk accessibility and street accessibility are inextricably linked. We believe in full accessibility and full participation in community life. People with disabilities should not be forced to stay home because we cannot safely access our community. Most people who are disabled do not travel with someone. We are independent, so the environment must be accessible.

These are our concerns, only some of which I was able to mention in my two-minute testimony:

- **Accessible audible street crossings are needed for every intersection in New York City.** The majority of people who are blind are not born blind. They become blind in later life when hearing isn't top notch either, so learning to cross streets safely and trying to discern where traffic is coming from is difficult and imperfect. Audible street crossings are the safest way. The City should commit to adding hundreds of audible street crossings per year, starting with requests and busy commercial areas, but if it is cheaper to do many in one area, that should also be a consideration.
- **Pedestrian ramps should be on all corners of every intersection and they should be well maintained. Disabled In Action sued the City on this issue.**
- **Presently, I don't think there is any attempt to repair broken or poorly maintained pedestrian ramps (also known as curb cuts), nor is there any feedback when a bad curbcut is reported.** Some of the concrete has totally crumbled and eroded to reveal a metal piece that chews up tires of wheelchair users and trips people walking. Sometimes there is a big pothole at the bottom so we get stuck. Years go by without anything being done to fix bad pedestrian ramps.
- **Missing pedestrian ramps** -- When we are on the sidewalk and come to a corner that does not have one, we either have to backtrack a block to one and either cross the street or turn at the corner and hope there will be a driveway or a ramp at the next corner, then meander back to the way we were originally going. This often happens on Broadway in SoHo. Our other option is to ride in the street with traffic but that is so dangerous! We make reports and nothing happens. There is a missing one on 4th Avenue and Shore Road Parkway in Brooklyn that forces me into the street.
- **Some of the old pedestrian ramps were made incorrectly in the first place and are too steep and have no gentle slopes on the side.** We actually slide backwards into the street or we are afraid we will tip over. Ones that come to mind with me are the ones on Bay Parkway on either side of the street between 86th Street and Shore Road Parkway. We call those suicide ramps because if you want to kill yourself, you can go on them. But how can we get

where we need to go without risking our safety on them? Another bad area is Fort Hamilton Parkway between 60th and 75th Street (Bay Ridge Parkway). I once fell over backwards into the street in front of a stopped garbage truck when I was trying to get up that pedestrian ramp. My wheelchair tipped over backwards with me in it. Because it is so dangerous in the 60's and 70's there, I do not go to a fruit and vegetable store that I would like to shop. Is it worth risking my safety and life? 92nd Street also has some dangerously steep ramps. Manhattan's upper East Side is full of bad, steep ramps. There are many all over the City.

- **Many pedestrian ramps have no detectable warning areas.** There was a time when this requirement was suspended, but it has been in full effect for years and pedestrian ramps should all have detectable warning areas. Blind people and people with low vision live everywhere. Besides, it is helpful to see a high-contrast warning area at night when the lighting is bad and wheelchair users do not want to accidentally miss the pedestrian ramp.
- **Pedestrian ramps with obstructions in them.** Why? On 57th Street and Madison Avenue, there are some bus stops on the northwest corner. In that ramp on 57th is a Fire Call Box. There is a lot of turning traffic there (buses, cars, and big trucks) and it is prudent to look over your right shoulder for safety's sake. But then you run the risk of running into the Fire Call Box which is too close on the pedestrian ramp. Other pedestrian ramps have a street pole in them. If it weren't so frustrating, it would be funny.
- **Sidewalks have holes and are lifted up by trees.** There are sidewalks, both in front of residences and in front of businesses and apartment buildings, that are never repaired when they need it. They have holes, are broken, or trees are lifting up the sidewalk panels so people with disabilities cannot pass or have a hard time doing it. People illegally shave off a bit of the concrete instead of replacing.
- **Discriminatory DOT parking rule - Cars parking and blocking pedestrian ramps.** In 2009, DOT changed the parking rules to allow cars to block ped ramps at T intersections on both sides of the street! This was done at the urging of Vincent Gentile, a city councilmember who wanted more parking for his constituents. It breaks the NYC Human Rights Law preventing discrimination of people with disabilities, but it is still in effect. So, if we are along a park street, we cannot get off if cars are blocking the ramps and we cannot go to the park side, either, from the other side of the street. Excuses were made that leaves covered up the pedestrian ramps so drivers did not know they are there, even though it is across the street from an intersection. This requires people with mobility disabilities to go blocks out of their way to try to find a passable pedestrian ramp! It is especially grievous at Shore Road Park in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn where there are many bus stops and the park is very long and goes from 69th Street to 100th Street.
- **Inaccessible bus stops and inaccessible sidewalks leading to and from bus stops** – The NYCT Express Bus, route 27 and route 37 go along Shore Road Park in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, and have bus stops on the park side coming back from Manhattan. This is the park where cars are parked in front of pedestrian ramps, where much of the sidewalk has terribly bumpy and mounded pavers which are impassable, and where a wheelchair user cannot get from the street to the sidewalk or from the sidewalk to the street because there are upright bricks making the pathway inaccessible. Additionally, one bus stop consists of a high island which cannot be gotten onto by a wheelchair and is very narrow so that a ramp cannot be put onto it.

DOT is in charge of this. How does this whole situation exist from year to year without anything being done to improve it and make the bus stops and the sidewalk accessible? There is another bus stop on 7th Avenue and 92nd Street in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn near Poly Prep school that is only reachable by walking over grass. It cannot be accessed by a wheelchair. There are other problems like this throughout the City.

- **Lack of crosswalks at corners** – New York City is a walking city for the most part and is made up of neighborhoods where people walk to get groceries, dry-cleaning, haircuts, see doctors, medications, etc.. The lack of crosswalks means that in many cases, especially on Shore Road where the bus stops are, people have to hope and dash across the street to avoid being hit by a car. DOT has many excuses about why they do not put a crosswalk at a corner or a stop sign or a light. It is all car-centered, not pedestrian centered and it is especially unsafe for people who are blind or who have mobility disabilities, but every pedestrian is at risk. It is time for NYC to be pedestrian centered!
- **Poor repair of crosswalks that do exist.** – Is there a longer time to repair crosswalks than there is to repair streets? Because many crosswalks are almost impassable from bad potholes or bus traffic ridges and they remain in this condition for years. It is difficult and dangerous to cross messed-up crosswalks; it is not safe to walk around them. A different system should be in place to mill and pave crosswalks.
- **Need for daylighting at every single corner in NYC** – This could be done by a rule change or better yet, legislation because rules can be changed back by an agency depending on whom is commissioner and mayor at the time. Vision Zero is not working. Other things have to be tried. The Open Restaurants program was launched very quickly. This could be launched quickly, too, with an advertising campaign followed by paint, signs, and enforcement. People would get the message quickly and lives would be saved as well as people would not be injured by swiftly turning vehicles. This is a problem all over the city when drivers act like there are not going to be any pedestrians. Then they sharply turn and we don't see them and they don't see us until it is too late. Turning vehicles are especially dangerous for children, short people, and wheelchair and walker users or anyone with a mobility disability, but when drivers are going fast and assuming no one is there, we get killed and injured. The City tabulates the number of people who are.
- **Where is the snow going to go?** With the Open Restaurants program, where will we put our snow? It will adversely impact wheelchair users and others with mobility disabilities. There already is a problem with intersections and bus stops not being shoveled out and mountains of snow near the curb at crosswalks. If there is a political will to solve this problem, it could be solved so snow does not keep people with disabilities in their homes. In Minneapolis, some snow is melted. They also have small vehicles that have plows on them and the snow at intersections can be easily removed. Keeping sidewalks clear for all pedestrians, including those with mobility disabilities is paramount, and the cleared space must be 4 feet to accommodate wheelchair users.
- **E-Scooters need heavy regulation for safety of pedestrians** – E scooters should not be on any sidewalks whether it is for riding or parking. It is too dangerous for pedestrians, especially for pedestrians with disabilities and small children. Technology should prevent scooters on sidewalks and should regulate speeds of rental e-scooters and privately owned scooters. It won't work to depend on rules that people will only follow sometimes. E-scooters need to make noise so everyone, especially people who are blind or who have low vision can see them

coming. E-scooters should ride in bicycle lanes. Parking for e-scooters should be in the street, not the sidewalk, and should not be parked near crosswalks because there will be too much interaction with pedestrians. In addition, accessible vehicles need to drop passengers off in the crosswalks if there is no other place.

- **Any new form of transportation that develops needs strong regulation for safety.** – Any kind of electric vehicle and all kinds of driverless vehicles need strong regulation for safety.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

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To: New York City Council Transportation Committee

From: Downstate New York ADAPT

Subject: Written Comments in Response to the New York City Council's Committee on Transportation's Oversight Hearing on Accessibility of Streets That Was Held at 1 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2020

Date: December 3, 2020

Downstate New York ADAPT is a grassroots, non-hierarchical community of people with all types of disabilities advocating for the civil rights of people with disabilities, including, but not limited to, the right to live and fully participate in the larger community. Downstate New York ADAPT submits these comments in response to the New York City Council's Committee on Transportation's Oversight Hearing on Accessibility of Streets that was held at 1 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2020.

In these comments, Downstate New York ADAPT addresses the following five issues concerning traveling around New York City. These comments just highlight some of the numerous issues people with disabilities face daily traveling around New York City. At times, these five issues intersect one another and all these issues make traveling around difficult and, at times, dangerous for people with disabilities. The five issues are 1-curb ramps, 2-the condition of the sidewalks and the roadways, 3-physical obstacles encountered on the sidewalks and in the roadways, 4-traffic signals, and 5-the lack of enforcement of traffic regulations relating to safety.

1- Curb Ramps:

The main issues with curb ramps are a) there are sidewalks missing one or more curb ramps; b) the curb ramps when they are installed many times are not correctly installed, c) there are many curb ramps that are in disrepair, including, but not limited to, having potholes in them, missing detectable warning materials or the asphalt sinks and the curb ramp develops a steep lip where it once was level with the road, and d-there needs to be a well-planned maintenance program for curb ramps.

Turning to the installation of curb ramps, there are times when the curb ramps are placed not where the crosswalk is located which is very dangerous because this forces people with disabilities into the traffic instead of the safer crosswalk. Another problem is that there are curb ramps installed in a position that it causes water to pool at the bottom of the curb ramps which then causes the ground there to be slippery, hides defects in the ground such as potholes and uneven ground, and gets the walkers, canes and

crutches wet which can cause them to slip. Moreover, when the wheels of a manual wheelchair get wet it makes it difficult for a person to get a good grip on the wheels to propel the wheelchair. Moreover, when water pools at the bottom of curb ramps this hastens the deterioration of the roadway and creates a trough in the roadway bed which in turn, creates a tripping hazard.

Further, some curb ramps when installed are made dangerously steep or they have high lips to them that make it dangerous to use them. In fact, on more than one occasion members have fallen out of wheelchairs because the front wheels of their wheelchair have hit the lip on a curb ramp that was too high and they were thrown from the wheelchair. Other members using canes and walkers also have tripped and fallen when the location where the curb ramp meets the roadway was not even.

2- The Condition of the Sidewalks and the Roadways:

A second issue is the condition of the sidewalks and roadways themselves. It can be very hazardous for a person with a disability to travel on many sidewalks and roadways because of the numerous cracks, holes, and uneven terrain. Further, some sidewalks have slabs of tiles instead of smooth concrete and make it difficult and at times, treacherous for people with disabilities to walk on such sidewalks. Another problem people with disabilities encounter are uneven sidewalks due to sidewalk slabs of slate or concrete being uneven or worse, totally upended and loosened by tree roots so much that they slip when you walk or wheel on them. So too, the sidewalk condition of the ground being at a downward or upward slant by trees can make traveling hazardous for people with disabilities. One recommendation provided by Downstate New York ADAPT members was to put a small fence around all tree wells located on the City sidewalks and not just some of them so that people with low vision or who are blind can detect that the terrain there is uneven. This can help other people who use wheelchairs to avoid the area too.

3- Obstacles Encountered On The Sidewalks and In The Roadways:

A third issue is obstacles on the sidewalks including doors leading down to store cellars being open and no warning around them. Scaffolding being installed and no way for a person with a visual disability to be able to detect them. Many members have had their clothes torn by parts of scaffolding protruding and worse being cut themselves by such scaffolding. Another recommendation made to Downstate New York ADAPT was for the City to have a scaffolding information website, that is, of course, accessible. Before any new scaffolding is installed this website should state when the

scaffolding will be installed, where it will be installed and how long it is planned to be there. When the scaffolding is going to be removed the website should contain this information and when it is finally removed the website should be updated with that information in real time. Such a real time website would be helpful to all New Yorkers, not just New Yorkers with disabilities. Some wheelchair users like to use sidewalks with scaffolding because those sidewalks are less likely to have snow on them because of the scaffolding. However, other times scaffolding is a detriment such as when a person using a wheelchair has to board or disembark from a vehicle. Thus, having this information all in one website that you could look up by street addresses would assist all New Yorkers.

Another is the placing of obstacles in front of and on all or some part of a roadway, sidewalk and curb ramp, such as police barricades, newspaper vending machines, trash receptacles, light poles etc. as well as people blocking the travel path on a roadway, sidewalk or curb ramp. Some people think the curb ramp is the perfect spot to talk on their cell phone or face to face with their friends or the perfect place to take photos. We need a simple public service announcement and ad campaign on curb ramp etiquette.

Further, it would be great if the same website that contained scaffolding data also had real time current information on when, where and how long the slabs that cover work in the roadway are located and how long they will be there and, when they are removed, this is stated too. It is difficult, and at times, treacherous for people with disabilities to walk and ride over these slabs covering work in the roadways.

In the winter months, another obstacle New Yorkers with disabilities and visitors with disabilities face is the intentional placing as well as pooling of snow at the bottom of and on curb ramps which make it absolutely impossible to cross the street. This is a systemic problem. There needs to be better dissemination of information to property owners of their obligation to clean snow not just in front of their property, but also curb ramps adjoining their property. Similarly, the Sanitation Department personnel need to be trained not to move snow in front of or on to curb ramps.

4- Traffic signals:

There needs to be accessible pedestrian signals installed at all intersections in the City. Presently, the administrative process in New York City for getting an intersection approved for accessible pedestrian signals is mind-boggling. We have been informed by our members that it takes many years for an approval to work its way through the City's byzantine bureaucratic maze.

Moreover, after the accessible pedestrian signal is installed, it typically can take several more visits by various technical vendors to get the device working properly (correct timing, appropriate volume, correct alignment with traffic, position of the accessible pedestrian signal relative to the crosswalk, etc.). Further, we have heard that the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) does not even return phone calls or e-mails when New Yorkers with disabilities attempt to determine the status of service requests on not only existing accessible pedestrian signals, but also curb ramps and other issues concerning the sidewalks and roadways. Finally, we have heard that the 311 operators do not know what an accessible pedestrian signal device is, so when a complaint is filed, the 311 operator rarely is able to correctly document the reported issue. Thus, a more responsive and better-informed complaint system needs to be implemented concerning addressing and communicating with New Yorkers on all accessibility issues relating to the sidewalks and roadways.

Further, we need more traffic signals and it must be made clear that a red light applies to all vehicles and pedestrians, not just to cars trucks and buses, but also to bicyclists, tricyclists, scooters, and skateboarders too. Many times, we have heard members complain that bicyclists, tricyclists, scooters, and skateboarders just zoom through intersections without slowing down and are more likely to run through red traffic signals expecting pedestrians in the crosswalk to slow down or stop dead in the road so they can go on their merry way while we have to worry about making it to the other side of the street before the traffic signals, which initially were in our favor, turn against us. This is particularly dangerous for people with disabilities that need the entire allotted time to cross the street safely. We have heard complaints about bicycles, scooters and skateboards often traveling in the wrong direction and people seeing more cyclists and scooters on sidewalks despite the fact that this is not permitted.

Everyone operating a vehicle should have to take training on how to safely operate their vehicle in New York City and should have to display a license when operating such a vehicle, whether it be a car, truck, bus, motorcycle, bicycle, unicycle, scooter or skateboard. Having to take a course on traffic rules and the reasons they exist before issuing licenses would lead to greater education of the public. Further, requiring these vehicle operators to display a license would make these operators of all types of vehicles more accountable, especially where there were traffic cameras that would issue tickets to those who choose to violate the traffic rules.

5- Traffic Regulation Enforcement:

We need better and greater enforcement of the traffic regulations as well as public service announcements that explain to New Yorkers that traffic regulations do not only apply to drivers of cars, taxis, buses and trucks, but to all New Yorkers.

Please add Downstate New York ADAPT to the New York City Department of Transportation's emailing list, especially any notification that will be sent out asking for public comments when the New York City Department of Transportation completes the current updating of its ADA Transition Plan.

Also, we agree with and incorporate here the many wonderful comments submitted to this Committee by Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York.

In order to promote a safer and more welcoming environment, we recommend that this Committee create an advisory board consisting of New Yorker with many different disabilities that could assist this Committee and other City Council Committees in their work so we, New Yorkers with disabilities, do not continually have to bring lawsuits against New York City. Finally, we ask that this Committee continue to reach out to New Yorkers with disabilities to make New York City a truly great and safe City for all New Yorkers and visitors to our wonderful City.

Thank you for giving Downstate New York ADAPT the opportunity to submit these comments.

Very truly yours,

Kathleen Collins,
Co-Coordinator,
Downstate New York ADAPT
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Subject: NYC Council-Committee on Transportation Hearing Accessibility of Streets –

To: City Council Committee of Transportation Oversight: Accessibility of Streets

From: Latrel Mosso, Member of NFB & DIA, Advocate for the Disabled

There are problems with the lack of accommodations on the streets of New York for citizens with disabilities.

SOME OF THE ISSUES ARE:

- Visually impaired pedestrians may not be aware that they are at or approaching a street corner.
- Bicycle lanes should be clearly marked, with attention to enhancing both pedestrian and rider safety.
- Street corners should be modified to provide easy on and off the sidewalk access, for pedestrians who might have visual and or mobility problems.
- Citizens with disabilities should be able to access information about ongoing construction or detours in local communities.

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Add textured non-skid ramps to street corners, to alert people with visual disabilities that they are approaching the corner, and aid people with mobility issues to ascend onto and descend from the sidewalk onto the street.
- Better signage delineating street corners would be helpful.
- Add signage to bicycle lanes reminding riders of the traffic laws with posted fines.
- At busy intersections throughout all boroughs, provide audio messaging as to when it is safe to cross as well as include a safe pedestrian crossing interval within the light cycle wherein traffic is stopped in both directions.
- Create an app for computer and smartphones that will allow access to information about ongoing construction and detours, accessible by local address or zip code. The question can be raised about whether a private company such as Google or MapQuest might be interested in helping to develop or fund the development of such an app.

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