

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway-8th Fl.-Hearing Rm. 1

B E F O R E: Joann Ariola
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Simcha Felder
Ty Hankerson
Virginia Maloney
Vickie Paladino
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Lynn C. Schulman
Phil Wong

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

Kevin Woods
FDNY Chief of Fire Operations

James Ahrens
FDNY Chief of City Planning

Kevin Molloy
FDNY Captain

Sean Quinn
DOT Associate Deputy Commissioner

Rick Rodriguez
DOT Assistant Commissioner

Jim Brosi

Andrew Ansbro

Michael Schrieber

Oren Barzilay
President of EMS Union

Alex Gregor

Juliane Forsyth

Hartley Bernstein

Joseph Maribella

Julia Passof

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

Thomas Herrera

David Besprozvany

Maxine DeSeta

Angelo Ferrara

Walter Adler

Andrew Farina

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good morning. I am
3 Joann Ariola and I am Chair to the Fire and Emergency
4 Management Committee for the New York City Council.
5 This is our first hearing under the leadership of
6 Speaker Menin, and I am absolutely honored to again
7 Chair this committee. I would like to acknowledge
8 members of the committee who are here today, Council
9 Members Wong, Council Member Maloney, Council Member
10 Paladino. Council Member Pierina Sanchez is joining
11 us via Zoom. Today, we will examine the city's
12 implementation of Local Law Six of 2025 which is a
13 bill I sponsored last session that requires the
14 city's Department of Transportation to consult with
15 the FDNY prior to approving open street applications,
16 certain bike lane projects, and further requires the
17 FDNY to confer with any affected firehouse prior to
18 approving open street applications, bike lanes, and
19 major transportation projects. When we passed Local
20 Law Six of 2025, we did so in the spirit that as
21 elected officials, as well as affected Community
22 Boards, we should be notified in a timely manner for
23 any transportation project, any major transportation
24 projects such as the introduction of bike lanes and
25 open street applications. These types of roadway

2 projects have created and unintended burden to
3 certain neighborhoods. We have heard numerous
4 complaints of fire trucks nearly colliding with
5 planters and bollards that have been suddenly placed
6 to close off a street. We've also seen more traffic
7 congestion due to closed off lanes resulting in
8 drastic increase, year by year, to emergency
9 responses. Additionally, my office has been
10 contacted regularly by constituents not being able to
11 access-- have access to crosswalks due to
12 transportation projects. Recently, we have heard
13 from the disabled community regarding inadequate
14 accessibility to sidewalks. The impetus behind Local
15 Law Six was to prevent these types of issues from
16 happening and by addressing how the city is
17 conducting business. Prior to today's hearing, we
18 provided the FDNY with a list of specific projects
19 that require notification under Local Law Six. We
20 anticipate the administration will supply the
21 committee with a full and thorough demonstration that
22 they are in compliance with the law. We will also
23 look to DOT who has sent representatives-- thank you
24 for coming-- to answer questions on their compliance
25 to Local Law Six of 2025. We want to know how they

2 are using the feedback from the members of the FDNY,
3 a life-saving agency that always puts the safety of
4 the city's residents first. I would like to thank
5 our Committee Counsel Josh Kingsley, our Senior
6 Political Analyst Will Hongach [sp?], and my amazing
7 Chief of Staff Phyllis Inzerillo [sp?] for their
8 important work on this committee. I would also like
9 to thank those from the public as well as
10 representatives from the administration who are here
11 to provide testimony. I will now for Committee
12 Counsel to administer the oath. On the dais we
13 have Kevin Woods, Chief of Fire Operations, James
14 Ahrens, Chief of City Planning Unit, Kevin Molloy,
15 Captain City Planning Unit FDNY, Sean Quinn, DOT,
16 Rick Rodriguez, DOT.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.
18 Can you just all raise your right hand and affirm to
19 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
20 truth, and to answer honestly to Council Member
21 questions? Okay, seeing that you acknowledge that,
22 you may go ahead. Thank you.

23 CHIEF WOODS: Good morning, Chair Ariola
24 and members of the Fire and Emergency Management
25 Committee. My name is Kevin Woods. I am the Chief

2 of Fire Operations at the New York City Fire
3 Department. I'm pleased to appear before you today
4 to discuss the implementation of Local Law Six of
5 2025 which places requirements on the Department of
6 Transportation and the Fire Department with regard to
7 proposed open street applications and major
8 transportation projects affecting city streets,
9 including open street applications and bicycle lanes.
10 I'm joined today by Chief James Ahrens who oversees
11 FDNY City Planning Unit as well as Captain Kevin
12 Molloy, and colleagues from the Department of
13 Transportation. In the case of a fire or emergency,
14 the time that it takes for the local fire company to
15 reach the scene is critical. It is not hyperbole to
16 say that time lost in transit can be a matter of life
17 and death. The Fire Department is always seeking the
18 most effective path to carry out our mission to save
19 lives and property. We are grateful to the Council
20 for your attention to this issue. We are also
21 grateful to the Department of Transportation for
22 their collaboration and coordination. A key part of
23 their mission is to make the streets safer for
24 everyone. It's the FDNY EMS personnel who respond to
25 crashes and accidents, so we support DOT's efforts to

1 reduce these injuries and deaths. The city's Vision
2 Zero initiative includes redesigning streets using
3 proven safety treatment which may involve bike lanes,
4 pedestrian crossing interventions, lane reductions,
5 or other major transportation projects that require
6 coordination with us and other New York City
7 agencies. In as dense a city as New York, our
8 challenge as government agencies is to find a way to
9 accomplish both missions at once. Local Law Six of
10 2025 passed by Chair Ariola in this committee
11 provides a road map for both agencies to improve our
12 working relationship for the benefit of all New
13 Yorkers. The Fire Department works with the
14 Department of Transportation on street redesigns,
15 including major transportation projects in several
16 different ways. Importantly, DOT engineers
17 incorporate standards that both agencies have
18 collaborated on over the course of a decade as part
19 of their designs. This includes modeling custom FDNY
20 vehicles to ensure necessary turning radii [sic] and
21 providing emergency access lanes through closed
22 streets. Additionally, we have several points of
23 contact. Senior leadership from both agencies met to
24 discuss challenges. FDNY Borough Commanders meet
25

1 with their DOT Borough Commissioners periodically so
2 they can discuss challenges they're experiencing in
3 the field, and the DOT can provide advance notice of
4 major transportation projects that are in the
5 planning stages. As prescribed by Local Law Six, the
6 Department of Transportation provides plans for the
7 Fire Department in order to coordinate FDNY feedback.
8 Those plans are submitted to the Fire Department City
9 Planning Unit. They then seek the input from local
10 division and firehouse or firehouses that respond
11 within the project area. In addition to seeking
12 input from the firehouse, the City Planning Unit is
13 staffed by experts who review each plan and where
14 appropriate conduct an in-depth analysis. They work
15 to understand how the changes to the street would
16 affect emergency response and what changes to the
17 plan would mitigate delays or encumbrances on
18 operations. Then feedback is provided to the
19 Department of Transportation. In some instances,
20 Department of Transportation and the Fire Department
21 staff also meet in the field to run fire apparatus
22 through the proposed geometry of the project, a
23 process that has resulted in modifications to the
24 design before the project is finalized. The
25

2 Department of Transportation reviews the feedback
3 from the Fire Department and at time makes changes to
4 the projects as a result. Changes can be made during
5 the design phase or after implementation. To give
6 the council some idea of the types of changes that
7 occur, some recent examples are as follows: involving
8 planter, granite block, Jersey barriers. Based on
9 FDNY input at West 103rd Street in Manhattan, Monahue
10 [sp?] Street and Scott Street in Brooklyn, Park
11 Avenue in the Bronx, Queens Boulevard, and Queens
12 31st Avenue in Queens, and recent design coordination
13 at Woodside in Queens, and two projects in Manhattan
14 35th to 36th and 17th to 18th. This process is not
15 without its challenges. To begin with, there are a
16 lot of major transportation projects, and the
17 permanent staffing of the Planning Unit consists of
18 an officer and two firefighters. The number of major
19 transportation projects can be quite large. As a
20 result, the unit has been working on a large backlog
21 of projects since the law went into effect. This
22 team is also responsible for conducting planning
23 analysis of numerous other projects that are
24 unrelated to the streets, including a typical
25 building design, large construction projects and

1 other private development throughout the city. So,
2 the work of reviewing bike lane proposals is only one
3 aspect of their portfolio. Though City Planning
4 disseminates all the bike lanes plans to the local
5 firehouses for review, it can be a challenge for the
6 affected firehouse to produce feedback. Members of
7 the City Planning Unit have specialized training in
8 the background and analysis of projects. For
9 instance, this unit includes a firefighter who's a
10 professional engineer, but that's not the case for
11 the typical fire officer or a firefighter in the
12 firehouse. The projects are not necessarily spread
13 evenly across all firehouses. Some firehouses are in
14 areas that contain many major transportation
15 projects, and those firehouses receive a large volume
16 of plans to review. Naturally, their primary duty is
17 responding to fires and emergencies and the training
18 and preparation that goes along with those
19 operations. When the list of projects grows and
20 creates a backlog of requests for feedback, the
21 process slows down. That said, I'm happy to report
22 to the Council that over the course of the year that
23 this law went into effect, we have learned from our
24 experiences and we are taking concrete steps to
25

2 improve and refine this process. We know that we
3 could do a better job of providing timely feedback
4 and coordinating with the Department of
5 Transportation to mitigate issues that affect
6 emergency operations and street safety. Both the
7 Fire Department and the Department of Transportation
8 have new Commissioners at the helm, and the
9 Commissioners and their senior teams have already met
10 to discuss these topics to ensure open lines of
11 communication. One of the changes under
12 consideration includes amending the letters that the
13 Planning Unit provides to DOT to provide more a
14 specific information that DOT needs in order to
15 better comply with Local Law Six. The Fire
16 Department is also looking at ways to support the
17 needs of the City Planning Unit. As it stands, an
18 enormous amount of work is being done by a small
19 group of people, and they are not able to do it as
20 efficiently as we would prefer. We're exploring ways
21 to assist with the workload that is created by the
22 numerous proposed major transportation projects and
23 open street applications. One recent change that we
24 have already made is that we are adding two light-
25 duty firefighters to the unit to assist with

2 reviewing projects and communicating with local
3 firehouses. We expect these additions to pay
4 dividends and improve the productivity of the unit.
5 The Fire Department is reviewing the lessons that we
6 learned during the first year of the Local Law Six.
7 We know that we could do a better job. We will
8 continue making improvements to this process so that
9 we create better outcomes for the Fire Department,
10 Department of Transportation, and all New Yorkers.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much
13 for your testimony. I'd like to recognize that we've
14 been joined by Council Members Felder and De La Rosa.
15 So, I'd just like to-- you mentioned a number of
16 areas that you recently had to remove implementations
17 that were hindering fire trucks from getting to fire
18 hydrants. So, when you say recently removed, these
19 were given to you how? How did you become aware of
20 these locations?

21 CHIEF WOODS: The open streets, I don't
22 believe we-- any of the plans with the open streets
23 were shared with us. I-- somehow it came to us
24 through maybe a complaint process. What we do is we
25 have the Borough Commanders coordinate with the DOT

2 Borough Commissioners. We'll go out to the site and
3 we put boots on the ground and we have a
4 conversation. Maybe they don't know that we need 15
5 feet access to a hydrant or blocks are blocking a--
6 affecting our turning radius of the apparatus that we
7 have to get into that open street. With the open
8 streets projects, yeah, we take that into
9 consideration. They do give us a 15-foot lane,
10 access lane, but sometimes there are blocks on the
11 front of those streets, and we have to maneuver our
12 apparatus around that. So, again, additional
13 coordination and communication is key.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. So, what I
15 want to say is that we as a committee received
16 complaints from those areas, and then we notified
17 FDNY, and that was how you actually became aware of
18 it. So, that's what's happening, and I want DOT to
19 be aware of that. The way FDNY is finding out about
20 things is not from the DOT. It is from our offices,
21 this committee, and the complaints that we get from
22 our constituents. Since Local Law 6 was enacted, how
23 many project notifications has the Department
24 received from DOT as it pertains to Local Law 6?

2 CHIEF WOODS: So, we received 95 plans.
3 So, the way that process works is when we receive
4 that plan. It goes to our City Planning Unit. They
5 are experts in their field. They do a phenomenal
6 job. They work under the Bureau of Fire Operations.
7 Then gets disseminated to the firehouses. We have a
8 chain of command. Everybody has to know in between,
9 the division, the battalion and the firehouses. We
10 also-- they also created a feedback form to make it
11 simpler for the firehouse which we're kind of
12 tweaking at this time. Then they send that back.
13 The firehouse sends that feedback back to the City
14 Planning Unit. They incorporate the comments into a
15 letter back to DOT, and those letters may state that
16 we have no objection, or we're open for further
17 discussion, and we'll identify the reasons why we
18 can't support it at that time.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Are you able at this
20 committee hearing to provide the committee with the
21 number of firehouses that have been conferred with
22 concerning the project notification process since the
23 enactment of Local Law 6?

24 CHIEF AHRENS: Councilwoman, yes, we sent
25 it to all our firehouses. So, every firehouse has

2 been consulted. They've been given a copy of the
3 project and the feedback form. So, they were all
4 sent out to every firehouse. When they come to us,
5 they are sent to chain of command. They go from the
6 divisions, so the divisions are aware, because they
7 do encompass large areas. Some of these projects
8 might encompass two or three more firehouses in the
9 area. So, the division disseminates them to the
10 units, and the units are to give us feedback.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And what is the
12 percentage of feedback that you get?

13 CHIEF AHRENS: I'd say we're about 40
14 percent right now.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: 40 percent. How
16 does the Department receive that feedback? Is it via
17 email? Are they-- you have meetings with your local
18 firehouses? How do you get that feedback for the
19 projected projects?

20 CHIEF AHRENS: So, when we-- when this
21 project-- when the Local Law went into effect, we
22 created a form. So, we send the form via the
23 division to the houses. They fill it out, and it
24 comes back via email to a database and we can see
25 who's completing them and who's not completing them.

2 And Captain Molloy next to me could explain. He
3 actually goes out to assist the firehouses with the
4 more complex projects, if you want to-- if he wants
5 to elaborate on that.

6 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: So, good morning. So,
7 what is more the direct question? You want to
8 understand the process of how--

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Yeah,
10 I--

11 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: [interposing] How the
12 firehouse receive the information--

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing]
14 Receive the information and then gets it back to you.
15 Is it via email or is it snail mail, or is some type
16 of Google document?

17 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: So, since the inception
18 of PIDs [sic] we're talking about now. So, since PIDs
19 has come into our desk in a new format and new way--

20 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] Kevin--

21 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: If you want to talk
22 about the technical end of it, how-- Chief Ahrens
23 just said there's a database. The units fill out the
24 form, and then it's uploaded to the database that we
25 receive all that information, and we go through and

2 we review the information that the firehouses
3 submitted, and what we'll do is we'll recognize if
4 there's a particular area that might be more complex
5 where we might have to use our expertise to evaluate
6 it further.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Do you know how many
8 firehouses-- you said all the firehouses are-- would
9 receive that information, that notification if there
10 are projects in their area. You're receiving 40
11 percent back, but I'm sure not all of the firehouses
12 are getting that. How many of the firehouses,
13 percentage give or take, have received that form?

14 CAPTAIN WOODS: So, if it's 95 projects,
15 some of the projects go to more than one firehouse
16 because it may span more than one administrative
17 district, and some firehouses have multiple projects.
18 So, I don't have that number off the top of my head,
19 but we will get that for you, Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Who's responsible
21 for that feedback at the firehouse?

22 CAPTAIN WOODS: The officers, the captain
23 and the company officers. The captain who runs the
24 firehouse, he consults with the company officers and

2 the firefighters as well, but it's ultimately up to
3 that captain.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And what is the
5 timeline for that feedback?

6 CAPTAIN WOODS: We don't have a timeline
7 right now for that feedback.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: But there is a
9 timeline for implementation, would that be correct?

10 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
11 Yeah, there's a season where we implement our
12 projects and one of the things that we're working on
13 through the improvements of the process is setting a
14 clearer timeline to make sure that we're getting that
15 feedback.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, if you don't get
17 the feedback and it doesn't meet your implementation
18 needs, do you implement without receiving any of the
19 feedback?

20 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
21 Last year, yes, we did implement a number of projects
22 without receiving a feedback. However, all of our
23 projects, as the Chief said in his testimony, have
24 been designed with over 10 years of input from the
25 Fire Department. We're making sure that all of the

2 projects can-- all the fire trucks can turn, that the
3 access is maintained. We are aware of the issues
4 that are needed around fire hydrants. So, any of the
5 projects that we're putting in place aren't just sort
6 of-- they reflect all of those conversations that
7 we've had for decades.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Chair,
9 one thing I want to add to that which is the power of
10 Local Law 6 is to make sure that there's coordination
11 happening in the front end, but one of the things
12 that we are doing consistently and throughout is
13 checking, seeing is this working. We're working in
14 dialogue with the Fire Department to make sure that
15 if the geometries don't work, we come back.

16 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
17 Right. And because-- through the process of last
18 year working through refining the system, we still
19 have met with firehouse on the ground in several
20 projects like out on Woodside and 31st Avenue, 31st
21 Street as well, making sure that those Borough
22 Command and Borough Commissioner conversations are
23 happening. So, there's been other avenues of
24 communication on these projects.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Is that something
3 that you oversee? Because that is not the feedback
4 I'm getting when I'm going to firehouses.

5 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: So,
6 can you explain that question a little more?

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: You're saying you go
8 on the ground to firehouses, speak with the captain
9 if he's the one in charge, but when we're on the
10 ground and going to firehouses and meeting with our
11 firefighters, that's not the feedback we're getting.

12 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: I'm
13 not saying that we've done it for every single
14 project. There's definitely projects that are more
15 complex where we've proactively met with the Fire
16 Department on the ground. We bring out spray paint.
17 We design the street and spray paint, bring out the
18 fire trucks, run the fire trucks through the new
19 geometry, make tweaks to the design, and we're always
20 happy to do that with anyone who requests, and I
21 think as we refine this process, that might become
22 more of a common place activity.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, what training or
24 instructions do you provide to the firehouses in

2 order to determine that they're qualified to evaluate
3 the risks of the proposed changes?

4 CHIEF WOODS: So, if there's a very
5 complicated project-- not every project is similar.
6 Some are more complex than others. I'm going to have
7 Captain Molloy explain that. He does go out to some
8 firehouses and explain the process to them so they
9 could fully understand it.

10 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: So, the question is what
11 type of training are we offering to the field units
12 so they'll understand what the project holds for
13 them--

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA:[interposing] Correct.

15 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: if it's implemented. So
16 that question will vary depending on a lot of
17 factors. There might be a very complicated plan to
18 look at. So, I myself may say well, the unit is not
19 going to understand the ramifications of this, so I
20 might reach out to the unit. I might know somebody.
21 I might know somebody who works there. I'll send
22 them a formal email with the plan attached, and I'll
23 write something up to say, FYI this is being proposed
24 for your area. Here's a couple things you should be
25 looking at, and can you in return tell me a few

2 things about your area that will help me understand
3 how to review this better? So, that's one of the--
4 that's one of the ways that we--

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] So,
6 it's not an in-depth training. It's more of a
7 conversation?

8 CHIEF WOODS: Yeah, it's more of a
9 conversation. It's-- a lot of it is anecdotally. If
10 you-- let's take a protected bike lane, for instance.
11 It reduces the real estate in that street, right?
12 So, when you have two lanes of traffic, and you go
13 down to one lane of traffic-- this is a lot of the
14 feedback we get from the firehouses for this specific
15 project. As per New York City Traffic Law, when you
16 have emergency vehicles responding, you have to pull
17 over to the right. Now, when you have curb, eight
18 feet of bike lane, three-foot buffer, nine-foot
19 travel lane, parked cars, they can't pull over to the
20 right, and we can't go around that traffic to go into
21 oncoming traffic, because they can't pull over to the
22 right either. So that's a big, big obstacle for us.
23 So, as well as laddering the building. So, with our
24 fire apparatus it's all about-- Fire Department, it's
25 all about life safety. When we have to ladder a

2 building, we have optimal positioning from the
3 building line to the inside of the apparatus. It
4 should be optimally 32 feet, 25 to 35 feet. We're
5 getting pushed away from that. So, our scrub area,
6 that's the area where the bucket could touch the
7 building, is drastically reduced. Less windows, less
8 height, and it's-- we have to pull in on an angle
9 sometimes. Sometimes we're 40 feet away from this
10 building. So, it's way beyond the specs of how we
11 operate our apparatus.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Which-- I'm so glad
13 that you went into that deeply into how it affects
14 your apparatus and your operation, and that is why
15 you should never, DOT, implement any change without
16 the confirmation from the FDNY. I'm also hearing
17 from FDNY that is not a simple answer. So, it does
18 take them time to fill out a form, make sure that
19 they're getting to the right person, make sure
20 they're getting the right information, go out to the
21 location, make sure that their trucks can make that
22 turn and navigate. So, if you don't hear back from
23 them in a matter of three, four, 10 weeks, you should
24 not be going out without getting some type of
25 feedback from the FDNY, whether it was before Local

2 Law 6 or now especially since. The answer that you
3 gave as yes shows that there's blatant disregard for
4 the safety of the people of this city of New York
5 when you're putting planters in front of fire
6 hydrants. I have one more question, and then I will
7 yield to my colleagues. Has the Department either
8 received any complaints from other elected officials,
9 Community Boards, or the public about accessibility
10 issues in areas where these types of projects have
11 been carried out?

12 CHIEF WOODS: Not to our City Planning
13 Unit directly.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And to DOT?

15 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: Can
16 you define what you mean by accessibility?

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Well, have you
18 gotten any complaints from elected officials,
19 Community Boards, the public or anyone who has said
20 this implementation is a hazard, has-- fire trucks
21 can't get down. There was a fire on my block. Fire
22 trucks were hindered. Do you get complaints to your
23 department?

24 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: The
25 main complaints that we've seen around some projects

2 post-implementation have been through social media.
3 There hasn't been a lot of direct communication to my
4 department. Maybe some contacts to the Borough
5 Commissioners, but there's not-- there hasn't been
6 like a widespread issue around communication on that
7 front.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah. What I'm
9 going to say is that there wasn't-- if there wasn't
10 widespread communication on that front, we would not
11 be having this hearing, because our offices have all
12 been contacted. Our Community Boards have contacted
13 both the DOT and the FDNY. Maybe it is through the
14 Borough Commissioner. Maybe it is through the
15 Commissioners or at some level above, but we do
16 believe that it is filtering down, and it should be
17 filtering down. I now yield to Council Member De La
18 Rosa.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you,
20 Chair. You asked a lot of the questions that I had
21 in mind. But I did want to ask about coordination
22 with the DOE. A lot of the open streets are within--
23 at least in my district-- schools that asked for the
24 open streets and then program them during the day
25 because of space constraint. What is the

2 communication among the agencies when it's a DOE open
3 street and then there is an emergency that happens?

4 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: So,
5 all of our open street applications and proposals--
6 thank you for the question-- go through review
7 through Fire Department operations. There's been
8 several occasions where the Fire Department has
9 declined to approve open street and we haven't moved
10 forward with those projects specifically on some of
11 our higher volume corridors like Steinway [sp?]
12 Street and State Street in Brooklyn. The school open
13 streets are all required to have manned barriers.
14 So, any time the street is closed in front of a
15 school or around a school, those barriers should be
16 attended by either school personnel or some partner
17 on the ground to make sure that the street can be
18 opened in need of access for the Fire Department.
19 That's standard across all of our open streets, and
20 the schools tend to have more personnel on the ground
21 as well.

22 CHIEF WOODS: Yeah, we look at-- when we
23 receive that, we may or may not object, and we--
24 first line of business is we coordinate with the
25 principal and whoever's in charge of the school, and

2 for the life safety there's a lot of kids out there
3 playing, and similar to what DOT just mentioned as
4 far as moving the barriers, that's critical for us,
5 because we have to respond to that school.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: My other
7 question is, in my district, for example, I have a
8 major hospital. And so there could be open streets
9 or plazas in the vicinity of where that hospital is.
10 How are those type of plans coordinated when we know
11 that there's going to be like ambulances, for
12 example, back and forth within that parameter of
13 those open streets?

14 CHIEF WOODS: From the Fire Department
15 side, we-- high-profile occupancies like hospitals
16 and schools, we will actually have familiarization
17 drills if there's an open street. We will have our
18 units physically go there and come up with a plan.
19 We won't use the open street to get from point A to
20 point B unless there's an emergency at that hospital
21 or that school. But otherwise, we'll divert around
22 those open streets. We put that in our planning, and
23 all of our local units are notified of that. Will it
24 increase response times for life safety? 100
25 percent. But for responding to that hospital and to

2 that school, we do have familiarization drills on-
3 site.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Is there any
5 data that DOT can share with us about when complaints
6 are generated and a project is tweaked or amended
7 based on complaints or things that happen after the
8 open streets has been approved? Does the Department
9 have data they can share back with the Council on the
10 percentage of times that these plans are amended or
11 changed, or the application is denied? Thank you,
12 Chair.

13 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
14 Yeah, that's something that we can get. I think we
15 are very open to making changes once a project is
16 implemented. I think we are very open to making
17 changes once a project is implemented. We-- I think a
18 lot of our frequent communication is with the Fire
19 Department on how we can make those changes, making
20 sure that the planters and blocks that we have on the
21 street, if they shift after we put them in, are being
22 shifted back into place. And yeah, happy to provide
23 any information if there's any specific locations,
24 but also generally as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I just have one
3 question before I go to the next person. So, to just
4 amplify Council Members De La Rosa's question, what--
5 you know, how many plans were either changed or
6 scrapped, because of the Fire Department's response,
7 and you don't have. We really would like to know.
8 But we have 13 projects that the Fire Department had
9 to go and ask to be fixed, because of complaints that
10 we've received via social media, via our office, via
11 Community Boards, and that's throughout the city in
12 all of our districts. And then the Fire Department
13 had to go out recently and adjust that. So, that's
14 just 13 that we were notified about. There are many,
15 many more. So, I think that what you're telling us
16 is not exactly what's happening, you know, in
17 practice. Exactly. I now yield to Council Member
18 Wong.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you, Chair.
20 On Monday, February 9th, there was a four-alarm fire
21 on Donkin [sp?] Avenue. It's a family home. It's
22 right at the border of my district. It's concerning
23 to be because hundreds of fire trucks had to--
24 dozens, not hundreds, has to respond to the scene,
25 and Queens Boulevard used to have-- to access local

2 streets on Queens Boulevard, there used to be two
3 driving lanes, but now we're only down to one,
4 because one driving lane has been converted to bike
5 lanes. And now before the concrete barricades were
6 put in, at least emergency vehicles can go down the
7 bike lanes and turn into local streets and respond to
8 four-alarm fires such as the one in Donkin Avenue.
9 But now with the concrete barriers in place, there's
10 only one driving lane, and there's no way emergency
11 vehicles can get to quickly respond to a scene. So,
12 what I-- I want-- my question to you is in that
13 situation of what happens, do you wait for the
14 traffic? You wait for the car to get unstuck from
15 the snow? Because that's what I saw. And then you
16 wait for the delivery truck to get out of the way,
17 because that's what was holing up traffic, alright?
18 Those concrete barriers are concerning, and I know
19 that they're coming if you have [inaudible] closed
20 streets. I walked down 31st Avenue, 26 blocks of
21 closed streets and they are there, the concrete
22 barricades are there, and they obstruct emergency
23 vehicles. I mean, what if there's a fire, how do
24 fire trucks go into these closed streets? So, that
25 is a concerning-- that's something I saw on Monday,

2 February 9th, and then please respond to that. What
3 is being done to relieve the emergency vehicles so
4 they can get to the scene quickly? Thank you.

5 CHIEF WOODS: I'll start from the Fire
6 Department. That was a very tragic fire. We got
7 there pretty quickly. We had about a four-minute
8 response time, but a four-alarm fire, we have 200
9 fire personnel and EMS personnel responding. And as
10 I discussed prior to that, when you-- again
11 anecdotally-- when you-- if you're ever sitting on a
12 highway and you're on a two-lane highway and it's
13 going from two lanes to one lane what happens with
14 sitting in traffic? It bottlenecks. And that's
15 what's happening there. By going from two lanes to
16 one lane, you do have bottlenecking. There's nowhere
17 for the cars to pull over to the right, and that's
18 what you witnessed.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Is there a fix? Is
20 there a fix? Because there will be more of these
21 emergencies, and the fire trucks will need to go down
22 Queens Boulevard and-- to get to these sites.

23 CHIEF WOODS : Yes, there is a fix. So,
24 we communicate and coordinate with DOT. So, there's
25 something called cut-outs. So, every so many feet,

2 they would have a cut-out for traffic to move to the
3 right, and we have to have further conversation about
4 cut-outs. You're right, nobody wants to lose their
5 real estate or their parking spots, but we need cut-
6 outs for apparatus, cars, delivery trucks to pull
7 into so our fire apparatus could respond.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Are these cut-outs
9 happening right now, or they're already done? Or
10 they're still in discussions?

11 CHIEF WOODS: I've worked with-- I used
12 to be Staten Island Borough Commander. We have part
13 of Brooklyn and Brighton Beach, Brooklyn. I met with
14 them on scene, and it was a recommendation that I
15 made years ago, and they complied with that
16 recommendation.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Can you talk about
18 Queens Boulevard? Do we have cut-outs on Queens
19 Boulevard so emergency vehicles can use the bike
20 lanes or access them in emergencies?

21 CHIEF WOODS: I'll give that question to
22 DOT.

23 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: I
24 know there's--

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Oh, I'm
3 sorry, go ahead.

4 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
5 Yeah. Yeah. And that's something we can work
6 closely on identifying additional ones. I know we
7 have changed parking regulations along the service
8 roads to make sure there's space for people to pull
9 over, do loading, make sure we're reducing double
10 parking. That's a standard. Yeah, sorry. That's a
11 standard tool that we try to implement in all of our
12 projects and definitely open to adding more
13 specifically on those service roads on Queens
14 Boulevard. Yeah, sure, happy to--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: [interposing] I'll
16 let you know on specific locations where there is a
17 need for these cut-outs.

18 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
19 Okay, thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I'd like to just
21 make mention that Council Member Restler has joined
22 us, and now yield to Council Member Paladino for
23 questions.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Morning and
25 thank you for being here. Open streets was

1 implemented back in 2020. It's been five years, six
2 years, going on six years since its implementation.
3 If it wasn't for Chair Joann Ariola who implemented
4 Local Law 6, DOT, you've gone wild on our streets of
5 New York with very little regard to-- not maybe you
6 directly, but DOT in general. The Department of
7 Transportation has gone absolutely crazy on every New
8 York City street with little or no regard for our
9 firefighters and the safety of the people of City of
10 New York. If it was not for Local Law 6, this
11 planning would have never happened. The very idea
12 that Queens Boulevard looks as it does-- areas of
13 Jackson Heights looks as it does is insane to me.
14 That we have put bike riders and bus lanes and bike
15 racks taking up parking spaces over the-- over
16 firefighters and putting out fires, which are
17 becoming more and more as we do the batteries and
18 everything else. We see house fires that never
19 happened before. So, while you are butchering our
20 streets and limiting our firefighters from doing our
21 jobs, and we're hoping that they get consulted in my
22 area in particular-- not much, but I will say this,
23 we do have Vision Zero that's been implemented.
24 Vision Zero whereas the safety of pedestrians in the
25

2 town of Whitestone and Bayside, they cut out all
3 these and made these curbs so much larger. I have a
4 hook and ladder on 149th Street and 14th Avenue. I was
5 there for lunch. The guy-- you know, I went over to
6 see their kitchen for other reasons, and I said hey
7 guys, what's going on with the corners here? Did
8 they talk to you? And the simple answer was no, they
9 did not. So, you had no idea whatsoever about these
10 four corners or two corners that they were going to
11 completely the change the traffic pattern. This is
12 ludicrous and should not be happening. So, we need
13 to see a much bigger input on DOT or I'll even
14 stretch it and dare say, enough is enough with bike
15 lanes and taking bus lanes, and greater consideration
16 to be given to the closed streets that we're doing.
17 This is absolutely ridiculous. Alright, now I'd like
18 to ask several questions here. To what extent are
19 emergency service agencies involved in the decision-
20 making process when determining the final placement
21 of bicycle lanes?

22 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: So,
23 as per the previous and major transportation law and
24 Local Law 6, the Fire Department has been consulted
25 over the years. The predecessors of Captain Molloy

2 and us set up a system of reviewing complicated
3 projects, especially protected bike lanes projects
4 where we're--

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing]
6 Everything is complicated now, because you wrecked
7 just about every street in the city. So, everything
8 is going to be real complicated. So, we have to
9 figure out how we're going to keep our firefighters
10 safe and their vehicles able to get to the buildings
11 that they need to go. How about we entertain the
12 idea that we start to dismantle some of these
13 ridiculous and hazardous implementations that's been
14 made by open streets. Has the new Commissioner of
15 the Department of Transportation entertained that
16 idea by going over some very dangerous areas such as
17 Queens Boulevard, such as different areas in Brooklyn
18 and the Bronx? How about we redo some of the damage
19 that's been done? Has anybody thought about doing
20 that?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ:
22 Council Member, just want to jump in here. I
23 appreciate the candor that you're giving this. One of
24 the things I just want to unpack from our side-- I
25 know this is the Fire and Emergency Management

2 Committee, but on our side we see ourselves as also
3 contributing to the lifesaving efforts for New
4 Yorkers.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: How?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: When
7 we go--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]
9 Yourselves as lifesavers? You're the Department of
10 Transportation. Give me a break.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank
12 you for the question. The reason why we go to
13 certain corridors is because of the data that we're
14 seeing on crashes, and one of the things that we do
15 to reduce those speeds in those areas is to provide
16 hardening, and sometimes it can be--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]
18 We've reduced--

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: like
20 parking protected bike lanes. Sometimes it can be a
21 narrowing of streets where like the corners will make
22 it a little bit, you know, wider turns to make sure
23 that people are going a little bit slower when
24 they're making those turns. It's all a part of a

2 balance that we have to make. You know, it's 364
3 days a year--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]

5 But I don't understand--

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ:

7 [interposing] when we're trying to make it safe for
8 people--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]

10 [inaudible] you're--

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ:

12 [interposing] But also we have to make sure that the
13 Fire Department has that emergency access, too.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: You're
15 presenting something here, and I guess you can tell
16 that I'm not a fan of--

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ:

18 [interposing] That's okay.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: what DOT has

20 done to our streets, because Manhattan and the five

21 boroughs, we've existed just fine before you started

22 to do all of this, and our firefighters were able to

23 do their jobs. What I'm asking you is, you know, how

24 are we going to fix this very broken-- can you

25 imagine a concrete slab that weighs probably close to

2 a ton-- honestly, we're looking at firefighters here,
3 but what about people who drive cars and they're
4 trying to make a turn, and guess what, we bottom out
5 or we slam into it because it's dark and we can't see
6 it. I mean, this is just ludicrous. Let me move on.
7 has EMS or FDNY ever formally objected to oppose lane
8 placement, and if so, how often were those objections
9 overridden?

10 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:

11 There's a-- thank you for the question. There's been
12 several occasions where we've worked with the Fire
13 Department in locations where there was concerns
14 about lane reductions. In those instances, we asked
15 for data around where they're seeing slow-downs. We
16 can then implement other measures to ensure that the
17 congestion or the concerns that they have about lane
18 reductions, like the cut-outs we were speaking about
19 before, are implemented as part of that project.
20 Where we do lane reductions and where we have
21 installed protected bike lanes, we see the safety
22 improve for cyclists, pedestrians, and motor
23 vehicles--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]

25 Cyclists and pedestrians again.

2 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: And
3 motor vehicle operators have--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]
5 You know, cyclists and pedestrians have existed in
6 this city since the day I was born, and before that--
7 I mean, I just don't understand. Okay.

8 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: So,
9 15 percent reduction in injuries to motor vehicle
10 drivers when we install a protected bike lane.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay.

12 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: And
13 last year was the second safest year on record in the
14 city in terms of traffic injuries and fatalities
15 which sort of adds up to all of the projects that
16 we've been implementing. All those incremental
17 changes add to this larger, life-saving effort.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So, I
19 just want to say, one of the things that I like to
20 give an example of is the benefits for some of these
21 projects. You know, we have-- protected bike lanes
22 will often include a pedestrian island for people to
23 gather before and while they're waiting for the light
24 to change. So, it does a couple of things. One, it
25 makes it easier for cyclists to come without

2 interactions or frictions with cars, but it also
3 provides a place of refuge-- we literally call them
4 refugee islands-- for people with accessibility
5 needs. I'm a parent. You know, when I was pushing my
6 daughter around, I used to hang out in the ped island
7 just to wait for the light to turn, and the magic of
8 these bikes lanes is actually-- the secret I like to
9 say, it's actually for the pedestrians. It shortens
10 the width that you have to cross.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I understand
12 that, and I'm sympathetic as a pedestrian, as a mom
13 who pushed a baby carriage. I get all that. but
14 we're not really tackling what we need to tackle
15 here, and that is we're not here to talk about
16 pedestrian safety or biker safety, we're here to
17 discuss the safety of our firefighters and making
18 sure that the rules of the road are created so that
19 our emergency management and our police as well as
20 our firefighters, EMS, can get to where they need to
21 get to without obstacles put in their path which is,
22 as you-- guys, you're intelligent. You know what's
23 going on. And you could sit here, and you probably--
24 you may be agreeing with me on 90 percent of what I'm
25 saying, because you too see the lunacy that is taking

2 place in this city. I've said it again. They've
3 coined me many times. This is not Amsterdam. This
4 is New York City. Nine million people live here.
5 Okay? Whether you're in a little one-family house or
6 you're in a 30-story, 60-story building. This is
7 Manhattan. This New York, and we're not handling it
8 as such. It's like we're some little country in
9 Europe. It's not the case. Okay. I want to say that
10 I thank you very much for your time, and I'm wrapping
11 it up.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Before I yield to
13 Council Member Restler, I just would like to say
14 you've already noted that you proceed without
15 feedback when you've not gotten feedback. Is there
16 any follow-up when you haven't gotten feedback? Do
17 you follow up with the Fire Department before you go
18 out and put these implementations in place?

19 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
20 Yeah, I do want to also respond to the Council
21 Member, too. We share the concern and we are sister
22 agencies. Our goal is never to create an issue for
23 the Fire Department or emergency services.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I can see that.
25 I know that. I understand that.

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 45

2 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: We
3 do want to improve the communication and we're
4 working every day to do that. we share--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing]
6 But it all comes down to DOT.

7 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: We
8 share the goal that you're stating today, and I
9 think--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [interposing] I-
11 -

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Okay,
13 so that's what we're here to really--

14 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
15 [interposing] Yep.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Bring home,
17 exactly.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: bring forward.

19 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
20 Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And so that we can
22 move forward. Okay, Council Member Restler. Thank
23 you for your patience.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Of course.
25 Great. Thank you so much, Chair Ariola. It's good

2 to be with you. Thank you for having me today, and
3 Council Member Paladino is a tough act to follow, but
4 I'll do my best. We come at this issue from a little
5 different perspective. And you know, I was one of
6 the few Council Members who voted against this
7 legislation, because I was concerned it created too
8 vague a process between the Department of
9 Transportation and FDNY that could potentially gum up
10 the works to implement life-saving projects and
11 protected bike lanes across my district and across
12 the city, and because there already is healthy
13 coordination between the two agencies, as I imagine
14 you would all testify to today. You know, we've seen
15 with multiple bike lane projects that this Local Law
16 has been used in litigation to try to slow down
17 implementation of life-saving projects, and I want to
18 make sure that these two agencies under new
19 leadership, under a mayor who is deeply committed to
20 expanding the network of protected bike lanes across
21 the City of New York in a more expansive and
22 expeditious way than ever before, that we're
23 seamlessly working in partnership. So, forgive me
24 for being late a little bit. But Chief, if you could
25 just lay out what's FDNY's process for consulting

2 with firehouses on bike lane projects, and how do you
3 convey that-- ensure that that feedback is conveyed
4 to DOT in a timely manner? Do you have set time
5 frames? Could you just--

6 CHIEF WOODS: We don't have set time
7 frames.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Should you?

9 CHIEF WOODS: We're working on that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So you're
11 planning to have set time frames?

12 CHIEF WOODS: We'll-- we don't want to
13 put a time frame on it, because--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] Why
15 not.

16 CHIEF WOODS: all the projects are
17 different. Some are more complicated than others,
18 but let me answer your initial question. So, we
19 receive the plans from DOT. They go to our experts
20 in City Planning. They're sitting next to me, and
21 they evaluate the plans. The plans are then
22 forwarded to our division. There are two divisions--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
24 Approximate time frame for how long it takes them to
25 evaluate the plans?

2 CHIEF WOODS: Well, they-- it goes
3 through a chain of command, division, battalion,
4 firehouse. Remember, when we respond to a fire, we
5 respond initially-- the report of a structural fire--
6 with three engines, two ladders, and a battalion
7 chief. So, you could have many people, many units
8 coming from outside that area. So, that's why the
9 division and the battalion have to see where these
10 say protected bike lanes are where there's going to
11 be future bottleneck.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Have you looked
13 at how long on average it takes the planning team to
14 review these projects?

15 CHIEF WOODS: Again, each case is
16 different. They review them--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
18 [inaudible]

19 CHIEF WOODS: Each case is different.
20 They review--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] I
22 understand, but is there a range for the different
23 cases? I understand every case is different.

24 CHIEF WOODS: No, every case is
25 different, so there's no range. So they--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]

3 Well, I get some cases are easy and simple and they
4 have-- there's a very broad street, wide street, you
5 can review in a day or two. Some cases may be more
6 complicated. It may take you a week or two. That's
7 the kind of range I'm looking for.

8 CHIEF WOODS: Yeah, it's a little more
9 complicated than that. So, they also-- they drew up
10 a feedback form for the companies. Even though this
11 is a priority of ours, our main priority is life
12 safety. So our fire companies right now are doing
13 five, six, and 7,000 runs a year which is about 18 a
14 day. Each run could be an hour. A fire, they'll be
15 there for three or four hours. So, we're trying to
16 get this-- we don't want to rush this. we want it
17 perfect. We want it right.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Absolutely.

19 CHIEF WOODS: Besides the snow right now,
20 every company, all 350+ fire companies in New York
21 City are shoveling out hydrants right now for the
22 next week. It's-- we inspect buildings every day.
23 We-- it's endless what we do, besides responding to
24 fire and emergencies, so we can't put a time--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
3 [inaudible]

4 CHIEF WOODS: So, we can't put a time
5 frame on that. We have to take it step by step and
6 evaluate that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: to be fair, I
8 think everything requires data. Everything requires
9 metrics. We have to hold ourselves accountable as
10 public servants to ensure that we're reviewing
11 information in a timely manner and trying to ensure
12 that we're working effectively across city agencies.
13 So, I would just humbly request that FDNY put time
14 frames on every step of this process. Could be a
15 range. Could be a generous range, but it's helpful
16 to hold ourselves accountable because if there are no
17 time frames to confer with the Planning Division and
18 then to confer with firehouses, then projects can
19 just linger forever. And we don't want the situation
20 where DOT's getting zero feedback on a project which
21 the Chair mentioned earlier is happening. And so the
22 FDNY is providing timely information so that we can
23 incorporate it to make projects better for all
24 stakeholders in the community.

2 CHIEF WOODS: Absolutely. I appreciate
3 that feedback. Yeah, so we--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] Is
5 that something you would consider?

6 CHIEF WOODS: We'll look into that. We
7 actually added two members to our unit just recently,
8 firefighters, light-duty firefighters. We have some
9 professional engineers in the works. We also have
10 some urban planners. We put some messaging out
11 there. So, and we also brought in a new
12 administrator, one of our PAAs--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That's great.
14 So, after the--

15 CHIEF WOODS: [interposing] to streamline
16 this process from getting the plans from DOT to the
17 City Planning through the chain of command to the
18 firehouse.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, af-- could
20 you just walk me through? So, planning team takes a
21 look at it first. They make recommendations. That
22 goes through the chain of command. That's a
23 centralized process. That's kind of FDNY
24 headquarters does that. And then it goes to the
25 firehouses locally for a review?

2 CHIEF WOODS: They don't make
3 recommendations. They give it to the firehouses, and
4 we want the firehouses, the boots on the ground, to
5 tell us how this could be problematic for fire
6 operations.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right.

8 CHIEF WOODS: How this could be
9 problematic for responding in that area. And so the
10 City Planning Unit evaluates it, then sends it
11 through the chain of command.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Got it. And
13 could you give us an example of when this has worked
14 well, where feedback has been provided to DOT and how
15 long that process has taken for FDNY to conduct its
16 review and provide that feedback to DOT. Thank you.

17 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: So, you'd like an example
18 of when the local firehouse or the review team of the
19 Fire Department notified the Department of
20 Transportation that there was a problem with one of
21 their projects, and then we communicated,
22 coordinated, and revised a plan so it would work for
23 what the Fire Department was saying they needed? Is
24 that basically what you're asking?
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And
3 approximately how long that took?

4 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: Okay, that never
5 happened.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It never
7 happened? You've never provided feedback to the
8 Department of Transportation that's been
9 incorporated?

10 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: We have provided
11 feedback to the Department of Transportation, but the
12 feedback was not received the way the Fire Department
13 asked for a plan to be revised.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I mean, I can
15 give examples in my district.

16 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: Where? Bedford Avenue?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Bedford Avenue,
18 we modified--

19 CAPTAIN MOLLOY: [interposing] We were
20 forced to do Bedford Avenue.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We modified the
22 timing of the traffic light on Bedford Avenue to
23 allow for FDNY to pull out. We allowed for FDNY to
24 turn in the opposite direction coming out of Bedford
25 Avenue to safely access sites in the neighborhood.

2 I'm surprised to hear that the Fire Department is so
3 vehemently against protected bike lanes when this is
4 a proven evidence-based approach that will save lives
5 across our city and has saved lives across our city.

6 CHIEF WOODS: The Fire Department is not
7 against bike lanes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Good.

9 CHIEF WOODS: We're against the protected
10 bike lanes, but we're working with DOT to improve
11 that process to have additional cut-outs. Again,
12 remember, we are responding down the street. New
13 York City traffic law, people have to move to the
14 right, and with a protected bike lane, they cannot
15 move to the right. To give you an example, prior to
16 you coming in I gave the same example. You have the
17 curb. You have an eight-foot bike lane, a three-foot
18 buffer, nine feet of parking-- typical city sidewalk
19 is 13 feet, and there's just no place for the cars to
20 go if the emergency vehicles are responding. So,
21 working with DOT, similar in the past, we've had cut-
22 outs, and it takes up some parking spaces, but these
23 are some of the solutions that we're trying to come
24 up with with DOT. And to re-- we're not against bike
25 lanes. That's not what we're saying.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to
3 conclude in saying, I'm pretty disappointed in the
4 Fire Department's responses to my questions today.
5 Let me not caveat that. I am incredibly disappointed
6 in the Fire Department's responses. I'll wait for
7 Jason [sic] to finish. I just want to say plainly in
8 response to your all's answers, that I'm incredibly
9 disappointed in the Fire Department's responses to my
10 questions today. The Mayor has made clear on his
11 agenda that we are going to save lives by
12 implementing evidence-based approaches to improve
13 street safety across our communities. Bike lanes in
14 the middle of the roadway are not it. That's what
15 leads to deaths. That's what leads to serious
16 injuries. We know what designs work, that protected
17 bike lanes will save lives, and the orientation that
18 I'm hearing from the Fire Department today that
19 you're unwilling to consider the evidence-based
20 approaches that make our community safer, and that
21 you don't-- you're unwilling to work cooperatively
22 and collaboratively with the Department of
23 Transportation to make projects better. I think that
24 we have a lot of work to do with leadership at City
25 Hall to bring agencies together under Deputy Mayor

2 Kerson's leadership to make sure that we're all on
3 the same page and that we're working collaboratively
4 to improve safety across each of our communities.
5 You have an essential role to play in safety in our
6 communities, and I admire the men and women of the
7 Fire Department enormously. What you all have been
8 doing through this storm and what you all do every
9 single day is nothing short of heroic, and I am
10 immensely grateful for the work you do across my
11 community and across the five boroughs to keep all of
12 us safe. But this is an important area for
13 collaboration. It's just one of many areas for
14 collaboration where I think the Fire Department can
15 quite frankly do better, but this is an important
16 one, and the Mayor's made his agenda clear, and I
17 hope we can all get on the same page to make that
18 happen. And I have to say, I'm more convinced than
19 ever that I made the right vote last year.

20 CHIEF WOODS: Yes. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [inaudible]
22 interject.

23 CHIEF WOODS: Yeah, sure.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I know you came
25 late, Council Member Restler, but had you been here

2 sooner, you would have heard the DOT say that they
3 often go without any type of recommendation from the
4 Fire Department. We've heard the Fire Department say
5 that they're putting in place new measures under the
6 new Commissioner so that they can have designated
7 people to look for these forms to fill them out, but
8 what they're telling you is, is their job is to
9 protect the people of New York City from dying in
10 fires and from fires spreading. They're not saying
11 they're against bike lanes. They're not saying
12 they're against--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]

14 Yes, they did testify to that.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: bus lanes. He
16 doesn't like the protected because it's difficult--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]

18 That is what we're talking about.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: for them to navigate
20 it. But we need to protect our pedestrians and our
21 bikers, and our buses.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That is what a
23 protected bike lane does.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: However, there is--
25 there are other measures that can be taken, but the

2 DOT is moving forward without their input, and that's
3 what we gained before you got here.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I've never--

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] So, I
6 don't--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
8 seen a--

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [inaudible] in favor
10 of the bill, but--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [inaudible]
12 project--

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: because of the bill,
14 safer will be safer, and--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] I
16 have never seen a project in my district where there
17 has not been consultation between DOT and FDNY. I
18 believe that already exists on a consistent basis--

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] If
20 there were not-- if there was consultation,
21 respectfully, we would not be having this hearing.
22 Because you and I agree on one thing. Lives have to
23 be saved.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: People need to be
3 able to utilize their streets, pedestrians,
4 bicyclist, cars, buses. We agree on that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 100 percent.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And we're here to
7 make sure that these two agencies now under different
8 leadership with their commissioners--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
10 Yeah, and a new Mayor.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: do-- and a new mayor
12 and a new speaker, do what we need them to do to make
13 sure everyone can live safely.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I look forward
15 to being a part of that conversation.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Great, perfect.
17 Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you very
19 much.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I will now yield to
21 Council Member Felder, and then there was a follow-up
22 from Council Member Wong.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you very
24 much. Councilman Restler's leaving. Does it have to
25 do with my questions?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [inaudible]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. I'm sorry
4 that Councilman Restler's leaving. I'm sure that
5 you'll have an opportunity to watch this on Netflix
6 tonight if he's interested. I just-- I did not want
7 to get into this discussion, but they-- but
8 Councilman Restler's comments forced me to respond,
9 because they're-- by being silent, it means that I'm
10 agreeing in some way to what he's saying. So, you
11 know, there's this old corny joke about somebody
12 interviewing accounts for a job and they ask him how
13 much is one plus one, and everybody says two, two,
14 two, and finally some guy says whatever you want it
15 to be. Right? Oh, yeah, that's the guy I want,
16 right? The statistics-- you know, my background,
17 although I was never good at it, believe it or not,
18 I'm a CPA by training. So, you can get any numbers
19 you want, and I don't rely on a statistics about--
20 you know, when Councilman Restler says more lives
21 have been saved in the city, I would say the
22 following: I do not trust the numbers in any way,
23 and it's been years back to my days in the Senate
24 that I've requested details that I've never able to
25 receive. Not from this-- you know, this is a new

1 administration, but it's consistent. It's been that
2 way consistent. The city, a number of years ago
3 decided on a mission, and the mission is to increase
4 the use of bicycles all over the city and if
5 possible, they would get rid of the cars entirely.
6 And it's not merely about bicycle lanes. You see a
7 trend in a variety of places. I will give you one
8 example. Ocean Parkway is a state highway, three
9 lanes in each direction with a 25-mile-an-hour--
10 that's the speed limit. We know that during the de
11 Blasio administration, initially the cameras were
12 only supposed to be by the schools, then it spread
13 further, and you know, the safety of the children,
14 and it spread further, and everyone knew-- everyone,
15 I should say, who, you know, who had some experience
16 in government, that it was never going to stop there,
17 that cameras were going to go everywhere. And they
18 initially started with the speed limits slowing down
19 in addition to the cameras in the school areas, which
20 made sense, but everyone knew as well that that was
21 only the beginning. Ocean Parkway at 11 o'clock at
22 night is litter-- looks like FAO Schwartz Toy Factory
23 with the little cars just hopping along at 25 miles
24 an hour. When the city, when they-- city says that
25

2 safety has increased, even if it were true, and it is
3 a lie-- but even if it was true, you know what, make
4 it five miles an hour. You'll increase safety even
5 more, and you know what, let the cars park entirely.
6 Safety. In addition, where are the statistics about
7 bicyclists who have injured people? I have a man on
8 my block, an 80-year-old man who has passed on, who
9 was active as could be. I mean, certainly more
10 active than me, irrespective to my weight, but he was
11 out early in the morning. He was always active. He
12 got hit by a bicyclist. He was in the hospital for
13 months. Where are the numbers? Can the city-- and
14 I'm not-- I just want to understand my frustration.
15 I'm not posing to you. It's to the subject matter in
16 its entirety to the discussion that we're having
17 which is outrageous. And Councilman Restler, that's
18 why I'm upset he left, because he was like the
19 topping on the cake. He's disappointed with the Fire
20 Department testimony and then walks out, and I like
21 him. I won't say I love him. I don't know. But I
22 like him, I certainly like him and respect him, but
23 that was what we call in Yiddish, meshuga, nuts.
24 Nuts for him to say that he was disappointed with the
25 Fire Department testimony, especially-- especially

2 since he didn't hear the beginning. So, you know, I
3 just would say, the city-- the city has Citi Bikes
4 all over the city on a mission-- this is all a
5 mission that started years ago, not today. And this
6 administration may be in favor of more bikes. I'm
7 not-- we're not discussing. This is not about this
8 administration or anyone sitting here, but this has
9 been a mission about increasing bicyclists. They
10 closed Prospect Park entirely to traffic a number of
11 years ago to give bicyclists more place to be able to
12 ride safely. There are a variety of things that have
13 been done. They are-- but there is no effort-- let
14 us say that that should be the way. Where is the
15 effort upon the city? I have a bill that cannot get
16 passed which would mean that anybody using a city
17 street, which includes bicyclists and the electric
18 bikes and all the other bikes that have increased,
19 would mandate anyone using the city street should
20 have to have a license, a license plate. So when
21 this guy knocks over this 80-year-old man and kills
22 him ultimately, no one knows where the guy-- the guy
23 that-- he wasn't wearing a mask. He-- you know,
24 that's not the issue. He hit the guy and then
25 disappeared. That's what-- that was the end of it.

2 I was driving on Bedford Avenue. A young woman from
3 Brooklyn College came from the opposite side of
4 traffic going in the other direction. Slammed right
5 into me, to me-- I don't mean personally-- to my car.
6 I was not on a bicycle. Please forgive me. She
7 slams into the car and then falls down, and I said--
8 I say, what are you doing, and she says-- starts
9 screaming that I didn't ask her how she is. Okay?
10 she's on the outside of traffic. There is no
11 enforcement whatsoever. If anyone on a car, it's
12 almost like, if you're in a car, you are evil. If you
13 are anything else outside of a car, it's okay. it is
14 a free for all, and the city has continuously-- just
15 one last thing. I'm sorry. Yeah. I have five more
16 pages. I just want-- this is a courtesy because I
17 respect you so much. Yeah. I want you to know the
18 truth. When they asked me originally, do I have any
19 questions-- you can ask them-- I said no. [inaudible]
20 because the probability is that colleagues ask the
21 question and then I, you know, that's what we do as
22 elected officials. We want to hear-- I'll talk about
23 myself. We like hearing myself, so I repeat the same
24 question over again some other way. I didn't want
25 to-- but Restler's-- Councilman Restler like really,

2 you know, got me going. So, I would just say that
3 the-- there are no statistics about injuries from
4 bicyclists, none whatsoever. Where are-- where are
5 you? And the city is safer than its ever been?
6 Okay, maybe, maybe not. And there's no numbers on
7 that, right? And as all as I said to you, if you
8 take the cars and slow them down to five miles n
9 hour, even-- you it'll be-- of course, it'll be even
10 safer or what-- what kind of crazy stuff. So, I
11 just--

12 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
13 [interposing] Council Member, we would love to--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So, I just want
15 to--

16 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
17 [interposing] We would love to give you a briefing on
18 the data that you requested specifically about--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: [interposing]
20 Yeah, you can give me a briefing, but let me tell
21 you, after Council Member Restler speaks. I would
22 love to do that--

23 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
24 [interposing] I'll let you go first, so that way we
25 won't have this problem.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I would just say-
3 - I would just--

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Council
5 Member Felder?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: One last comment,
7 Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes, one last
9 comment.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Where is the
11 statistics from the city about the use of Citi Bikes?
12 You-- they have installed Citi Bikes all over the
13 place, you know, all over the place. I do not-- you
14 know, I want to know where are the statistics that
15 show whether, for example, if there are 20 bikes on a
16 corner, how often are they used or not used? I know
17 how many corners have the bicyclists and maybe
18 sometimes some corners, no question, some corners are
19 never used. There's a vacuum. There's a-- there is
20 a vacuum that exists, and all I would say is the
21 firefighters-- do not in any way accept what
22 Councilman Restler said to you. He had a hard
23 morning and he came in here and you got the blame for
24 it, because it was outrageous.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Council
3 Member Felder. We do have to-- and I ask you to
4 please be brief with your follow-up, because--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: [interposing]
6 being brief.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No, not you. On the
8 follow-up question, Council Member Wong and Council
9 Member Paladino. Try to be brief.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yes, okay. Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And brief and
12 succinct as you can with your answers, because we
13 want to move onto the next portion of the hearing.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: [inaudible] being
16 succinct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: That's okay.
18 you did well.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: This is a general
20 question about closed streets and how would fire
21 trucks and emergency vehicles drive into a close
22 street when it's closed? For example, again, 34th
23 Avenue Jackson Heights. I use it, okay. It used to
24 be open. Now it's closed from 69th Street to Junction
25 Boulevard. So, how do you-- hwo would emergency

2 vehicles get into that street? What if there's a
3 fire in that block, in those blocks, and who's there
4 to move those concrete flower pots so fire trucks can
5 move in? Can you answer that, anybody?

6 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: The
7 closed portions of 34th Avenue aren't closed with
8 anything heavier than a French barricade, the metal
9 barricade which can be lifted out of the way. We
10 have people on the ground to ensure that those
11 barricades are moved for the Fire Department, and all
12 of our closed, fully closed streets, have fire access
13 lanes designed into the design so that they're never
14 blocked for Fire Department access.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: What about for--
16 who's there to lift them up for if there are
17 ambulances or Access-A-Ride cars, you know, what--

18 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
19 [interposing] They're staffed.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Part
21 of the way that we operate the program is making sure
22 that there's staffing to allow emergency egress.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: So there are people
24 standing there, like, doing the street closure to
25 move the barricades?

2 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:

3 They're not standing there fulltime, but there's
4 people on the ground, and we make sure that the
5 materials are light enough that they could be moved
6 by the Fire Department if needed.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: And this is true
8 for all street closures?

9 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: All
10 open streets, yeah.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Alright, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member
13 Paladino?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Thank you.

15 Very quick, very brief, very succinct. How's that?
16 in some cases bike lanes are being added not because
17 they are appropriate or necessary, but for a specific
18 corridor, but simply to satisfy annual benchmark
19 quotas under the Street Master Plan. Now, for this
20 reason, I am introducing-- reintroducing Intro 375.
21 Intro 375 is sponsored by me. It's a Local Law to
22 amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York
23 by removing bus lane and bicycle lane benchmarks from
24 the Streets Master Plan and repealing related
25 definitions. This legislation will eliminate

2 mandatory quotas and allow for more thoughtful,
3 safety-driven approach to street design. So, thank
4 you, gentlemen, for coming.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We're going to move
6 on to the next portion. So, if you just give us a
7 moment to set up. Thank you. No, no, you're
8 staying. You're staying. Yes, this is for you.
9 This is all part of this part of the hearing. I
10 didn't say public forum. I said the next portion.
11 Thank you. I would like to review a couple of the
12 areas that were on the list, and we can put some
13 graphics up so that you can see them. If everyone
14 would please take note of the cameras, and if you
15 don't-- if you cannot see it for any reason, we can
16 share the photograph with you. What we're looking at
17 for those that are online or may have trouble seeing
18 this graphic is area one. It's Montague Street from
19 Pierrepont Place to Clinton Street. The area hosts
20 approximately two and a half blocks of low-rise, non-
21 fireproof, mixed occupancy, commercial and
22 residential buildings. This is a high foot traffic
23 area filled with restaurants, schools, apartment
24 buildings, medical offices, retailers, and train
25 stations. As you can see in the photo, a fire truck

2 is pulling up. There is a fire hydrant that's
3 circled in red, and you will notice there is a corral
4 for a Citi Bike corral, a boulder, Sanitation bins,
5 and plastic bollards. The picture shows the fire
6 engine unable to pull next to the sidewalk, because
7 these obstacles are there. The obstacles are in the
8 space of the 15 feet on each side of the hydrant
9 which is supposed to remain clear for fire
10 operations. Everyone seeing the photos? This is all
11 of the same area. So, my question here is, is this
12 an area that you collaborated as the Fire Department
13 with the DOT and approved this configuration with
14 trash bins, large blocks and boulders, and plastic
15 bollards?

16 CHIEF WOODS: So, this is-- we have this
17 on our list. This is-- doesn't-- it was not shared
18 with the FDNY according to this-- I don't know if it
19 stems from the Local Law. Of course, I want to speak
20 all about life safety, and how life safety for the
21 FDNY is critical. We need access to that fire
22 hydrant. Everyone thinks 15 feet. We like to say 30
23 feet. It's 15 feet in each direction. We would like
24 more than that, right, but I know there's barriers--
25 no pun intended-- that get in the way. But we need

2 30 feet access to that hydrant. Similar to talking
3 about the protected bike lane where we want the
4 vehicles to move to the right, which they can't, so
5 we can get down the street. It's similar to a fire
6 hydrant. If we don't get that pumper that you see,
7 that fire engine into that hydrant, the other
8 responding apparatus cannot get past that which means
9 people trapped in that building, we can't access the
10 windows with our ladder and bucket apparatus. They
11 need-- their position is the front of the building.
12 So, it's a big coordinated effort with the FDNY, and
13 that's why we need access to that hydrant. We need
14 that 30 feet. We don't-- we can't have any barriers
15 whatsoever.

16 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:

17 And we respect that in our designs, specifically
18 making sure that nothing is within the 30 feet
19 coverage. Montague Street specifically it didn't
20 meet the definition of a major transportation
21 project, so it wasn't submitted through the portal.
22 However, we did an on-site with the local house and
23 have moved all of the barricades that they indicated
24 were issued post-implementation. So, we were out
25 there with them working to make sure that anything

2 that may not have been within 30-foot, if anything
3 shifted or moved, we've since moved it and have that
4 on the ground coordination.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We happen to have a
6 firefighter here that will testify later, but all of
7 these items are still in place. You may have been
8 told--

9 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
10 [interposing] They shouldn't be within the 30 foot--

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] that
12 they were moved, but they were not removed.

13 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: I'm
14 not removing them--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] They're
16 all still in place.

17 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
18 However, we're making sure that they're not within
19 that 30-foot envelope.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: If you look at the
21 photograph, there's not much room to move them where
22 they wouldn't be in the way of that fire hydrant.
23 There's no reason for bins, boulders, and the bikes
24 to be in that area. Look at how close it is. And
25 the firehouse was against it, and you went ahead with

1 it. Let's go the next, please. The next is Court
2 Street from Schermerhorn Street to Sackett Street,
3 approximately 12 blocks of low-rise, non-fireproofed,
4 mixed-occupancy commercial and residential buildings.
5 This is another high foot traffic area filled with
6 restaurants, schools, apartments, retailers, medical
7 offices, and train stations. You'll stop at that?
8 Okay, just hold on one second. We'll get to it. As
9 you can see, there are bollards. You can see the red
10 circle of the fire hydrants. You can see the
11 bollards. You can see a large boulder, and you can
12 see a fire truck not able to gain access close enough
13 to the sidewalk to reach that hydrant. According to
14 the members of the FDNY and DOT, it created a fire
15 safety hazard in this area by altering one-way street
16 from two lanes into one lane with an interior bike
17 lane and left curb, which pushes the left curb
18 parking lane into a floating parking lane. This
19 creates a serious hazard as hydrants on Court Street
20 are located on the left side. Access is impeded.
21 Before the alterations, the fire engine had direct
22 access to that hydrant, and now the fire engine must
23 attempt to access the hydrant across two lanes,
24 approximately 22 feet. Additional hazards in this
25

2 area cited by members of the FDNY are the
3 difficulties of turning onto the perpendicular
4 streets due to the floating parking lane. Fire
5 apparatuses must make wide turns in order to
6 successfully enter streets on a right or left turn.
7 The alterations impede the availability-- the
8 available width to create necessary turns. Other
9 hazards on Court Street include boulders, plastic
10 ballasts [sic], permanently affixed bike racks, and
11 planters. Hazards implemented by major alterations
12 by the DOT have also created significant traffic in
13 both areas which impede drastically on emergency
14 response. FDNY, can you share your expertise on
15 these concerns?

16 CHIEF WOODS: Yeah, similar to my last
17 response. We need 30 feet for that fire hydrant when
18 the cars are parked directly on the curb. You'll
19 have eight to nine feet of car. The width of a
20 typical car is about six to six and half feet. So we
21 could tuck in there pretty nicely if we had the 30
22 feet. Once you have that protected bike lane, we
23 need more than 30 feet, because you're coming from a
24 distance away from that curb now, and you have to
25 make a sharp turn into that hydrant which means we

2 could be blocking the street as well. So, all of
3 these additional obstructions affects life safety.
4 Court Street, those are all non-fireproof buildings.
5 Non-fireproof, very combustible-- they're combustible
6 buildings. The fire takes off. Large life-harboring
7 institutions, a lot of restaurants there, commercial
8 occupancies as well. So, yeah, these are life safety
9 measures.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And for the DOT, do
11 you understand the danger of the ladder being unable
12 to reach the windows of residential buildings?

13 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
14 We're happy to work with FDNY on the width and
15 distance needs. This is the first time we're hearing
16 about the additional feet needed beyond the 30 feet.
17 So, happy to have those conversations.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Wouldn't common
19 sense planning tell you that? Wouldn't common sense
20 planning with your engineers tell you that?
21 shouldn't common sense planning with your engineers
22 tell you that? On 01-23, an email was sent to DOT
23 noting the very same conditions that I just
24 mentioned. I'm familiar with the Court Street
25 design, because one of my constituents owns a store

1 that's affected by that redesign which is how I came
2 to know about it and look into it. We sent out a
3 request for information from DOT, and we were met
4 with the usual response that they conferred with the
5 affected firehouses. Obviously, we are here in this
6 hearing to hear directly from members of the FDNY,
7 because that was not done, and this letter confirmed
8 to us from that firehouse that a letter-- an email
9 was sent on 01-23 to the DOT and to-date they have
10 not received a response, nor has the condition
11 changed. And then in this case, one of their biggest
12 concerns is that the ladder is unable to reach the
13 residential building. Okay. As we can see. The
14 image that's being shown is an FDNY ladder truck
15 unable to reach the window of the residential
16 building on 31st Street in Astoria. Two firefighters
17 are in the bucket of the ladder truck, and there is
18 at least four feet of space between the bucket and th
19 window. FDNY, can you share how the ladder not
20 reaching a window of a residential building can
21 affect fire response and the safety of the
22 firefighter as well as the person who may be looking
23 to be rescued.
24

2 CHIEF WOODS: Absolutely. Very familiar
3 with this project. We met at the site, and I also
4 responded back. This is a protected bike lane where
5 similar to what I explained previously, vehicles
6 cannot get out of the way. So, working with DOT, we--
7 -- my recommendation was everywhere that's under the
8 L-- so between the columns where the hydrants are, I
9 recommended no parking between those columns with
10 delineators, stripes, striping of the road, and no
11 parking signs, no parking, no delivery trucks,
12 nothing. This way, our apparatus, our engine
13 apparatus would have access to the hydrant and our
14 ladder apparatus would have access past those parked
15 vehicles. And I requested that be done also on the
16 opposite side of the street as well, because the
17 hydrants pretty much the city main runs down the
18 center of the block. The hydrants are usually all on
19 the same side of the street. So, I requested that to
20 be on the opposite side as well, but we know,
21 everybody knows, hopefully everybody knows that that
22 project was stopped, but I think it's in the works of
23 getting going again.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And that's a
25 problem, too. Each time a project is stopped, or a

2 lawsuit is brought, the administration appeals, even
3 when the lawsuit is won which is what happened to a
4 community on 31st Avenue. We just need a moment for
5 the next portion. Don't go anywhere. I do have a
6 question, though, in the meantime for DOT. If you
7 see in this particular case an elevated train station
8 which hinders a fire truck as-is, and what would make
9 you think that it was a good idea to put all of those
10 impediments near businesses and homes that could go
11 on fire and obstruct a fire truck from a ladder being
12 stretched for their safety and access to a fire
13 hydrant? Like, what process do you use?

14 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: I
15 think one of the issues is on that specific location
16 is that I think with the L already in place, the
17 issue isn't the bike lane. The geometry didn't
18 really work beforehand anyhow.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, you just-- you
20 made it even--

21 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
22 [interposing] It wasn't the bike lane that made it
23 difficult for the Fire Department.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Made it more
25 difficult. The L is something that the Department

2 has had to-- this is the city. We have trains. We
3 have train trestles, but what you did was further
4 impede their ability to save lives.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Can I ask what
6 the point is of the boulders? Like, what-- what is
7 their purpose? I mean, why-- who thought of
8 boulders?

9 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: The
10 main reason we have to put the boulders in those
11 spaces is to keep vehicles out from parking in them.
12 A lot of those spaces are created especially at the
13 corners to improve visibility for pedestrians and
14 people who are crossing the street. What we found
15 over the years is that even if we have paint or the
16 plastic bollards, people still park in those spaces
17 creating a visibility hazard. So we had to employ
18 something a little more intense to keep the cars out
19 of there.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: But the boulder is
21 blocking many of the fire hydrants that the car would
22 block. So,-- I don't know what type of apparatus
23 would need to be used, but when those boulders are in
24 front of schools and such, I don't know who you think
25 from that school could move a boulder that, as

2 Council Member Paladino pointed out, weighs probably
3 a ton. Are we ready?

4 CHIEF WOODS: Just for the record, I
5 mentioned previously the FDNY was against protected
6 bike lanes. We're against the-- we're not against
7 bike lanes. We're against the complexities that it
8 brings on, and we're willing to work with DOT.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I think I did
10 clarify that when I spoke to Council Member Restler.
11 We're not against, we just don't want to impede
12 safety. The video we're about to see shows an FDNY
13 fire truck stopped in the street that is blocked by a
14 giant flower pot that has flowers in it. the pot is
15 filled with dirt and four firefighters have gotten
16 out of the truck to move the planter so that the fire
17 truck can go down the block. The video began with
18 the firefighters already trying to move the planter,
19 and we watched over one minute elapse until we see
20 them move it enough distance to allow the fire truck
21 to pass. We can assume that more than that time had
22 passed, since the video starts with the members of
23 the Fire Department already out of the truck
24 struggling with the planter. How much does having to
25 move planters or boulders that have been placed to

2 block of streets to vehicles by the DOT affect
3 response times? FDNY?

4 CHIEF WOODS: As you could see, we are
5 problem-solvers. We are very good, I'll admit that.
6 We're the best. But the intensity of fire doubles
7 every 30 to 60 seconds, and that increases our
8 response time and it affects life safety.

9 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: I
10 will note on this specific project, we've made
11 dramatic design changes based on feedback from the
12 community, the Council Member, and the Fire
13 Department. So, this video was taken very early on
14 in the life of this project, but we've made changes
15 to really ensure that all the access needs are as
16 available as possible. So, we did take a lot of
17 feedback from fire and seeing some of these videos,
18 too, and changing that design since it was first
19 implemented.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. We ready
21 for video two? Thank you for your patience while
22 they're getting it together. The next-- the next
23 video shows a fire truck responding to an emergency.
24 The fire truck comes up the block and is blocked from
25 continuing onto the next block due to barricades

2 being in its way. The truck now has to begin backing
3 up to try to go a different way to respond to the
4 emergency. When that doesn't work, the firefighters
5 resort to backing up down the block from which they
6 came from. Let's just complete the video. Can we
7 just note the time lapsing when they are going to a
8 fire and they cannot maneuver, because they cannot K-
9 turn out of this maze that has been created by the
10 DOT, not conferring with the Fire Department in the
11 proper fashion and not putting public safety first?
12 As we look at this video, FDNY, how does this affect
13 your response time to emergencies? I know it's
14 redundant, but it cannot be said enough times.

15 CHIEF WOODS: Again, it affects life
16 safety. There has to be more communication and
17 coordination between the FDNY and DOT prior to these
18 projects coming off the ground and having some more
19 FDNY input.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And has FDNY
21 complained to the DOT about this, and if you have, do
22 you have stats on how often?

23 CHIEF WOODS: We don't have--

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing]
25 General, not this particular--

2 CHIEF WOODS: [interposing] What we do is-
3 -

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [inaudible] this
5 particular and other instances.

6 CHIEF WOODS: Sometimes it's a little too
7 late, but when we come across a project like that, we
8 try to have our Borough Commanders meet with their
9 DOT Borough Commissioners. We put everybody in a
10 room. Everyone got to know each other. Maybe it's
11 time for another one of those meetings, and they meet
12 on the ground with the local units. So, that
13 coordination has to continue, and if we knew before
14 we had that run, we would make recommendations to
15 widen that pathway, to move those planters further
16 from that intersection, whatever it may be. And we
17 do dry runs with the apparatus to make sure that
18 works.

19 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
20 This is the same corridor where we made those
21 changes. That project specifically we've had a lot
22 of on-the-ground, I think even with Captain Molloy
23 where this is one of those places where we spray
24 painted on the ground, had the fire truck run through
25 the motions. I think one of the issues that came up

2 there was just that the planters did shift out of
3 position, and that's a thing that we're constantly
4 working on and then receiving the feedback and making
5 design changes to make sure they don't even get there
6 in the first place.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Alright, so what
8 we're here to do is make sure that you guys are
9 proactive and not reactive, and that's what Local Law
10 6 does, and that's why it is imperative that it is
11 followed. We ready for the next video. This was
12 just the other day. You can see the snow is on the
13 ground. This video shows a snow-covered street. The
14 person recording zooms in on a planter that is
15 covered in snow that is in the street in a space that
16 is supposed to remain clear within 15 feet of a snow-
17 covered fire hydrant. The recorder marks that DSNY
18 cannot plow this space because the planter is in the
19 way.

20 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: On
21 this, we did get concerns on this specific corridor
22 and went out very quickly after the initial
23 complaints came in and moved those planters to make
24 sure they were out of the way. This was a case where
25 the planters were pushed out of location because of

2 the DSNY plow. So we were able to put them back into
3 place.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, we have a
5 picture of it. They're still there.

6 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
7 Okay. We--

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] See,
9 what you're saying and what is factual, two different
10 things, and that's the problem. You cannot come here
11 and under oath misrepresent the truth, even if it's
12 truth your'e beign given. You should have checked
13 prior to--

14 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
15 [interposing] Well, I do want to--

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] It's
17 not--

18 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
19 just be clear. Prior to this, we did specifically
20 talk about this location, and I did get-- I did
21 receive photos showing that the planters had been
22 moved back in place. So, if there's something
23 different that's happened, I-- yeah, I'm happy to
24 take different dates and like talk about when the
25 photos came in--

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] What
3 I'm saying is, when they--

4 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
5 [interposing] but we are responsive to it. So, if
6 there's still an issue, I'm happy to go and address
7 it. I was under the impression it was taken care of.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, I think the most
9 common sense question to ask is, when we have issues
10 with these planters, why do you A, put planters by
11 hydrants in open street, and why do you put them back
12 after you know they've created a problem and they had
13 to be moved out of the way whether it's FDNY or DSNY,
14 and why do you put planters on your open streets that
15 are within the area that is supposed to remain clear
16 in the street which is 15 feet on either side of a
17 fire hydrant? You're just placing them prosthetics,
18 not for safety, and that's unacceptable.

19 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
20 Yeah, so the-- one of the main reasons that we place
21 planters on our projects is that it changes sort of
22 the feel of the corridor. It makes it clear that the
23 corridor is not-- is for pedestrians. It's for
24 people. It gives everybody a sense that this is a
25 place that we need to slow down, watch for

2 pedestrians. It's something a little bit different.
3 It does, in fact, add to the safety of the corridor.
4 It helps improve visibility, and we're always wanting
5 to insure that we can keep the hydrants clear, and
6 we're happy to keep working through the distance
7 requirements as well as-- that's a good question. If
8 something does keep shifting back over a snow
9 emergency or something like that, we should consider
10 maybe not putting it there in the first place. Happy
11 to even assess in that light as well.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: When your engineers
13 go out and decide, yes, this is a great place. I put
14 planters in my own district, not by fire hydrants, by
15 the way. But how do you expect the FDNY to gain
16 access to those hydrants when you've not heard back
17 from them, you've not followed up with them, and you
18 know that it is within the-- in less than 15 feet
19 from the hydrant?

20 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
21 Well, we would never purposely place something within
22 the 15 to 30-foot range. That's like our-- that's
23 our guidelines. That's something that we--
24
25

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] But we-
3 - wait. The videos and the pictures contradict what
4 you're saying. They are being deliberately put there.

5 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: Not
6 by our engineers, planners or the people who are
7 installing them--

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Well,
9 by the DOT. But who's giving the guidance? Who says
10 this would be the great place for it, right?

11 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
12 Yeah, our design standards do not allow any elements
13 to be placed within 30 feet of a hydrant. So, things
14 shift, things change because of other--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Those
16 cannot shift. Those planters cannot shift unless
17 they are plowed into by a car and broken into a
18 million pieces. They weigh tons. Those boulders
19 cannot shift. That's why they weigh what they do and
20 they're placed. So, do you understand that if they
21 cannot pull-- if the Fire Department cannot pull next
22 to a hydrant, that they have to block the street
23 where other emergency vehicles need to get through.
24 In the case of an emergency and precious moments are
25

2 lost. Is that taken into consideration at all? You
3 know that. You know what consciously. Correct?

4 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:

5 Yeah. Our guidance from the Fire Department has been
6 to keep 15 on either side of these elements clear for
7 their operations, and that's what we do.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: It's what you need
9 to do. It's not what you have done. And even in an
10 area where it is 15 feet, it is still not enough.
11 You really have to use the guidance from the FDNY.
12 And now that we understand with the new commissioner
13 that there will be more eyes on any type of
14 information you send over, but you have no right no
15 matter how long it takes for the Fire Department to
16 answer, you have no right not to follow up and to
17 just go out and put boulders, bollards, bike racks,
18 planters on the street near a fire hydrant, or in an
19 area that will hinder fire trucks from getting to an
20 emergency and our EMS. Our EMS ambulances. Next
21 video. The next video shows men plowing the bicycle
22 lane section of an open street, but not the open
23 lane. And this has been a complaint that my office
24 gets continuously. Only the bike lane section of an
25 open street is being plowed and removed with snow--

2 from snow. That particular open street in the video
3 remains unplowed as of today. So, why is that only
4 the bike lane is being plowed and not the vehicular
5 lane that would be utilized by our emergency vehicles
6 as well as our motorists? There still are motorists
7 in this city. So, for the FDNY--

8 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:

9 [interposing] I have a location.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes.

11 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:

12 What's the location?

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Say again? 34th
14 Avenue.

15 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: Is
16 this a block that's--

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Fulton
18 and Fulton.

19 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
20 that's permanently Closed?

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes.

22 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: So,
23 on those locations, the Fire Department emergency
24 lane is often used. We-- that's where we plow and
25 clear the road if it's-- so, vehicles aren't meant to

2 be in those spaces. The emergency lane, the access
3 lane encompasses the bike lane and the additional
4 space. We're not cleaning the bike lane
5 specifically. We're cleaning the fire access lane.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. We don't have
7 a picture of that. but I saw-- if we could just put
8 that back up. It's not wide enough for a fire truck
9 to go down.

10 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: We
11 have a standard that we met with Fire Department-- I
12 forget the number of feet off the top of my head.
13 But we always-- all the clear zones, all the guidance
14 we give to the people who clear the space for us is
15 met to the standard of the FNDY clear zone needs.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Would you agree with
17 that, Chief?

18 CHIEF WOODS: I'm not familiar with that
19 conversation, but we need 15 feet of clearance.
20 That's the clearance that we need. We don't use the
21 bike lanes, because we're concerned that we could
22 actually hit a bicyclist in that bike lane, but we do
23 need 15 feet of clearance, to get down any street.
24 The apparatus itself is nine feet three inches, nine
25 feet six inches. Then we have to put our outriggers

2 out which are an additional six feet on each side,
3 hence the angling of the apparatus. So, yeah, we
4 need some space. They're big pieces of apparatus.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Have you ever had
6 complaints from your firehouses that they have not
7 been able to get down the bike lane because it wasn't
8 wide enough?

9 CHIEF WOODS: They don't use--

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Or
11 they haven't been able to make the turn into the bike
12 lane because of other signs like planters and
13 boulders?

14 CHIEF WOODS: We don't use a bike lane,
15 and we don't stress our members to use a bike lane.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. So, how
17 would you get down that closed street in order to get
18 to a home that was on fire?

19 CHIEF WOODS: With that much snow, we
20 would just try to get down the street as best as
21 possible with the chains on the apparatus. We need
22 the street to be cleared.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What would-- what if
24 there were the impediments that we've been
25 discussing? Then how would you get down?

2 CHIEF WOODS: We wouldn't be able to get
3 down.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. On to
5 the next.

6 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
7 Again, though, we don't-- we do have a clear lane in
8 every single one of those closed streets that we keep
9 free of impediments, making sure that the fire trucks
10 can access them. We're not blocking off those
11 spaces. That's the area that's getting cleaned. It
12 happens to have green paint under it, but it is the
13 clean space for emergency access, and I can share all
14 of the emergency access plans with-- at our open
15 streets with the Fire Department if they want to be
16 able to share that with local houses if they haven't
17 already.

18 CHIEF WOODS: That'll be great. We'll
19 continue with that conversation.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: It'd be great if you
21 shared anything with the local firehouses. Let's go
22 to the picture. Okay. Okay. So, we're now showing
23 a photograph of a school with a street in front of
24 one of their exits. The street is blocked off by
25 metal barriers and a huge planter. Chief, are you

2 able to see that photo on-- might even be on your
3 screen if you can pull it up. Do you think it's ever
4 a good idea to block off streets near a school to
5 have an open street?

6 CHIEF WOODS: No, I do not think that's a
7 good idea. That looks like-- there would have to be
8 some conversation here before that planter was put
9 there. It's very-- I could see from here, it's very
10 difficult to make that turn.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yeah, that's PS149,
12 by the way. So, if you were asked by the DOT, you
13 would have rejected that plan?

14 CHIEF WOODS: We would have-- yeah, we
15 would have modified that plan. We would have done
16 something a little differently.

17 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
18 Just to be clear, we did meet on that project on-site
19 in the field with the Fire Department, and did
20 discuss planter placement. The planters are placed
21 in a way that the Fire Department can go around them,
22 and moving that medical barricade to access that
23 street. And happy to show those auto turns and bring
24 those designs and plans back up for discussion. But
25 this is one project, the 34th Avenue project where we

2 had a lot of on-the-ground conversations with the
3 local firehouse and FDNY.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So, they would have
5 to exit the apparatus, move the metal barriers, and
6 then get back in and go down the street.

7 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN:
8 Yeah, unless we have our partner on the ground there.
9 During school hours, school personnel is there to
10 move those barricades.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. So, how is
12 the school to know that there is a fire all the way
13 down the block and they need to come out? Like, what
14 you're saying, just you need to go back and listen to
15 this video, because what you're saying just doesn't
16 make sense. And that's why we needed to have this
17 hearing because it is imperative that the Fire
18 Department is involved and the local firehouse is
19 involved in every single movement that the DOT makes
20 that will change the configuration of a street. I
21 will now ask if any of my fellow colleagues have
22 questions. Council Member Wong?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I think you need to
24 review the positions of the boulders and the planters
25 and move them, if necessary, because this is a

2 citywide problem. I see them in my district and
3 certainly it's-- it makes no sense to rely on the
4 firefighters to move them and planters very
5 difficult, and boulders impossible. So, please do
6 the review. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes, of course.
8 Council Member Felder?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'm just curious--
10 - in other words, the Chair has I think repeated--
11 what is the process before these things are placed
12 wherever they are placed. Is there always an on-site
13 meeting between a rep from the fire, the closest
14 firehouse and from DOT?

15 ASSOCIATE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINN: No,
16 we do rely on our auto turn, our engineers and the
17 guidance from FNDY on where to make these placements.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So, I'm just--
19 I'm just-- you know, it's easy for me to give advice,
20 but I'm just suggesting that as a result of a lot
21 that's been, you know, said, I think it would be a
22 great idea if before anything is changed, that there
23 be on-site visits to locations so, you know, that it
24 actually-- because there's nothing, you know, on
25 paper. It's not just the same. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, I thank you so
3 much for coming today, for giving testimony, and
4 answering all questions and this panel is dismissed.

5 CHIEF WOODS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: If you could just
7 exit the room quickly and without much discussion.
8 That would be greatly appreciated. We need to get to
9 the public testimony. Thank you.

10 [gavel]

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Now, I'd like to
12 open the hearing for public testimony.

13 JIM BROSI: First, I'd like to thank the
14 Council for holding this hearing and for the pasture
15 [sic] of Local Law 6. Despite what was testified to
16 today, in the absence of a law like this, many bike
17 lanes throughout the city have been placed without
18 the Fire Department's approval and have dramatically
19 obstructed Fire Department response, whether
20 intentional or inadvertent, it doesn't matter. It
21 just puts lives at risk. The-- both unions, I would
22 say, are here for one reason and one reason only, to
23 clearly state that we are not against bike lanes. We
24 are against bike lanes that compromise the safety of
25 New Yorkers or firefighters. The reason that the

2 protected bike lanes are so problematic is they are
3 they ones that narrow the streets the most
4 significantly, and when they narrow the streets that
5 significantly, it makes laddering a building, it
6 makes gaining access to an upper floor, it makes
7 ventilation, it makes putting a hose line in place
8 more difficult, and that puts lives at risk. And
9 that isn't always measurable and tangible as much as
10 the statistics regarding lives saved. My fear about
11 statistics is they often times don't fully represent
12 the risks that are at stake in these trade-offs or
13 compromises in providing biker safety along with
14 public safety at the same time. So, some of the
15 flaws that were exposed in this meeting, I think need
16 to be corrected and corrected immediately. I think
17 the Department needs to dedicate more resources so
18 we're not relying on the individual officer for the
19 day they receive a piece of paper noting that they
20 should evaluate the overall risk of how a change in
21 street patterns might affect the responsible all
22 surrounding units. I think that teams should be
23 expanded out so that they have a more stringent
24 workflow that dictates the things they should be
25 concerned about, the narrowing of streets, the

1 response pattern, the proximity of buildings to the
2 sidewalk, the ability to ladder, the ability of an
3 engine to move out of the way so the proper ladder
4 can get in front of the building, the ability to
5 attack the fire from both sides of the street so we
6 don't have limited resources. When the Chief
7 testified that a five-alarm, four-alarm fire would
8 have a total of over 200 firefighters, there's also
9 going to have an access of several probably 50 to 100
10 rigs by the time conclude the chief's specialty units
11 and EMS. Wherever these rigs go and how will they
12 flow? And every time we make these changes, we never
13 measure impact. We have measured the impact on life
14 safety. Has anyone recorded the impact these street
15 narrowings had on the fire, whether it led to a
16 multiple alarm? Whether or not it led to a longer
17 response? When the Fire Department talks about a
18 response time, it's when the first unit arrives. If
19 that's a ladder, it means there's no water resource
20 on scene. If that's only an engine, it means there's
21 no rescue taking place, because the engine is in the
22 roll of putting out the fire, and all other units
23 being retracted [sic] after the fact--
24

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
3 expires.

4 JIM BROSI: to a multiple alarm. This
5 needs to be a better coordination, and this needs to
6 be decided upon well in advance and not fixed after
7 the fact when life has been compromised or safety has
8 been jeopardized, only because it's been brought to
9 the attention of DOT. It's a waste of resources, and
10 it's a public safety hazard. This needs to be more
11 coordinated from the start with both the Department
12 and DOT.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much,
14 and I couldn't agree more.

15 ANDREW ANSBRO: Good morning, Council
16 Members, and thank you for having me today. I would
17 like to, again, support what Jim Brosi has said here
18 today on the need for better coordination. I fully
19 support this law, and I feel that I've heard from all
20 of my members around the city that these planters or
21 bike lanes have been put up without enough input from
22 the Department or the local firehouse, but also I
23 think it's imperative that the DOT assists in
24 training the members of the department that are going
25 to handle this task, as Jim will agree that local

2 firehouses are tasked with so many different
3 expertises that they're not experts in, and this is
4 just another thing that they don't know. The flow of
5 traffic-- we can understand when you put a rig there,
6 but we need to know what the laws are, and we should
7 also be trained. There should be a specialized unit
8 which the Department did mention, but they need to be
9 trained by the DOT as what to look for so they can
10 coordinate better, and none of these changes should
11 be made until a few review by a trained Department
12 unit is done in coordination with the DOT. We can't
13 just have these bike lanes put up in areas where we--
14 it obstructs the flow of traffic. And again, the
15 studies need to be done after these things are put up
16 to show how it affect the flow of traffic, how it
17 affect the flow of traffic in the area. And one
18 thing that I've never heard anyone give any
19 consideration to is the loss of parking. Has anyone
20 calculated how many parking spots have been lost due
21 to all the additional DOT changes due to bike lanes
22 and planters and open spaces? When you have no
23 parking, cars just continually circle around looking
24 for it which only adds to the traffic. And the other
25 issue that I don't believe has been studied is the

2 impact on days like today when you have piles of snow
3 in these areas. As I drove through the city I saw
4 nothing but bike lanes filled with snow. You've just
5 totally taken that bike-- that lane of traffic away
6 and it's actually useless at his point in time, and
7 then the snow is backed up against the barricades
8 creating an even narrower pathway. But the last
9 problem that I wanted to mention is that when you
10 take away all this parking, and you remove the
11 ability for sanitation to get the snow off the
12 street, you then have people that have nowhere else
13 to park and they end up parking in the fire hydrant.
14 And we've seen that in the last few years. Above all
15 the other years that were there's nowhere to park--

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] time
17 expired.

18 ANDREW ANSBRO: they park in the fire
19 hydrant, because nobody thinks they're going to have
20 a fire, but we always show up when people are wrong,
21 and it makes it harder for us to get the hoses to the
22 fire hydrant and the hoses up to the building. So,
23 all these things need to be studied, and some
24 consideration has to be done about what are doing
25 about the lack of parking? Because those cars rare

2 still out there, and they're parking illegally
3 causing even more dangerous situation. Thank you for
4 your time, and I appreciate all the work you've done
5 here today.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much.

7 MIKE SCHRIEBER: Good morning. Mike
8 Schrieber. I'm the Health and Safety Officer for the
9 Uniformed Firefighters Association. Jim and Andy
10 made some great broader points. As an Astoria
11 resident, second due to the debacle on 31st Steet,
12 and an avid cyclist, I just want to talk about that
13 briefly. I bike to work, to the office. There is no
14 overflow or necessity to take away from the crescent
15 bike plane. There is no need for it. It's not as if
16 there's a tremendous amount of traffic on there.
17 Being second due to 31st Street, the area in
18 question, in can attest that pushing that rig into
19 the street is going to limit the ability for that
20 aerial to get to the third or fourth floor. You're
21 going to be screwed if you're above that level. We
22 will not be able to get aerials to you. Even a
23 firefighters to the roof at that point, if that is a
24 standalone building. This creates huge problems for

1 us and it's unnecessary. We don't need a bike lane
2 there in that spot. Yeah, thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We appreciate that
5 and I appreciate that we get it from the perspective
6 of an avid cyclist. And to both your points,
7 President Brosi and President Ansbro, we will be
8 looking into those studies that both of you
9 mentioned. We will bring that to the attention of
10 both the DOT and the FDNY. Council Member Paladino?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Yes. You
12 mentioned numbers. When the bike share program
13 started in 2013, the popularity grew from 92,598
14 annual members to 235,867 annual members as of 2025.
15 As Cycling in the City reports, Citi Bike makes it
16 more convenient for New Yorkers, blah, blah, blah,
17 but to make point to point, there are as of December
18 2025, 2,925 active Citi Bike stations and 33,095
19 bikes in fleet with an additional 3,400 additional
20 bike parking spaces. And there are currently 1,550
21 more bike lanes. That's over 555 miles of protected
22 bike lanes in the city, making this the largest
23 bicycle network in North America. So, there's your
24 numbers. We got to something about this. It's time
25 for the new Commissioner of DOT to revisit what they

2 considered to be safety bike lanes and how it impedes
3 on the job that you have to do in rescuing New
4 Yorkers and just being fireman. The idea that they
5 are even burdening you with DOT is insane. This
6 whole thing is ridiculous. We're talking about
7 planters. I mean, think about what we're talking
8 about here today. Weigh it out. It makes no sense.
9 But we have numbers. We have data. We have a new
10 Commissioner. Let's try to shake hands and try to
11 figure out a conversation that could be had so that
12 any existing bike lanes that happen to be in your
13 areas that you need to get to can be eliminated. How
14 about that? Let's see.

15 JIM BROSI: But there must be a mechanism
16 to measure the impact of these bike lanes when we
17 have large-scale fires, when we have delayed and
18 responses beyond the first unit. You would be
19 crippled with data on the amount of lives saved by
20 putting in these other protections. Somebody needs
21 to gather data on the impact. You didn't know you had
22 a candle [sic] issue fire, 'til we starting track it.
23 you didn't know you had any bike issue fire until we
24 started tracking.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Until we
3 started tracking it, right.

4 JIM BROSI: No one is tracking the impact
5 of these lanes and response times, expanding fires,
6 or life safety.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Duly noted.
8 25-- just FDNY responded to more than 25,000
9 structural fires during the fiscal year of 26.
10 That's ridiculous. It's a crazy number, and you guys
11 got to do-- I don't-- we're going to work on this,
12 because this is crazy. This is meat and potatoes.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And President Brosi,
14 to your previous point for real data, proactive data,
15 we will be in putting legislation for that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Council
18 Member Wong?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Back to the
20 boulders and the bollards and bins, trash bins that
21 are put near the fire hydrants. We talk a lot about
22 the boulders, but where are the bins? Why are the
23 bins there? Do anybody know?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: That's
25 Sanitation.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Why were they near-
3 - should we let--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [inaudible]
5 Sanitation.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That was a mandate
7 from the previous mayor, and we-- the bins, yeah.
8 So, we're addressing that as well on other levels.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Please. Yeah,
10 that's my question.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And also the BIDs
12 usually use them as well. Okay. Yes, of course.
13 Council Member Felder.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: We don't have to
15 worry about the bins, because they're going to change
16 again and make them put the garbage in their
17 basements, so they'll get rid of the bins probably.
18 But I just wanted to mention on record that the
19 bicyclists are not mandated to wear helmets. Again,
20 we talk about safety and all of that. They're
21 putting-- you know, making special lanes and
22 everything else. The Citi Bike program, you don't
23 have to wear helmets or anything else like that.
24 There is no record. You talk about statistics, about
25 safety. You know, with a vacuum in the numbers, you

2 know, I appreciated that, but another area-- I'm just
3 being succinct, you know, and that's the end of it.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much
5 and thank you so much for coming down waiting
6 throughout this. It was a long hearing and it's
7 continuing on, but I think a light was shed where
8 there was darkness before. Thank you so much. Next,
9 we're going to turn to Zoom where we have the
10 President of the EMS Union, Oren Barzilay.

11 OREN BARZILAY: Hi, good afternoon,
12 everybody. Thank you, Council Members, for having me
13 on. I apologize for not being there in-person. I'm
14 up in Albany doing some work here as well, but I'll
15 get straight to it, just to echo what my colleagues
16 have been saying. Every year, the mayor puts out the
17 MMR report, and year after year, it shows response
18 times going up for EMS and Fire. While bike lanes
19 might save bike rider's lives, it costs the lives of
20 those calling 911 for help, whether it be for EMS,
21 fire, or police. New York City's 911 system is the
22 busiest in the city-- in the country, if not the
23 world. We process roughly 15 to 20,000 calls between
24 fire, police and EMS. Council Member Restler
25 highlighted the safety of the bike riders, but what

2 about those 15 to 20,000 people who are needing help
3 immediately. The statistics are flawed, as Council
4 Member Felder said, and I'm here to support this
5 resolution or this bill. Thank you for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much
7 for all you do.

8 OREN BARZILAY: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: For our next panel,
10 I'd like to call up Juliane Forsyth, Alex Gregor.

11 ALEX GREGOR: Hello. My name's Alex
12 Gregor. I'm a Brooklyn resident. I live on Court
13 Street. I'm a former Highway Superintendent from
14 South Hampton. I was the 2021 President of the New
15 York State Highway Superintendent's Association. I
16 recently retired from Cornell. I was a safety
17 instructor for Cornell Local Roads Program, and I'm
18 here because I'm concerned about the response of
19 emergency vehicles on Court Street, recently
20 redesigned where they took away the parking, made the
21 floating parking. This was done-- I was walking down
22 the street. I am a cyclist. I am a pedestrian. This
23 is down by Baltic and Court. It was the ninth of
24 January. The ambulance, I heard it coming down from
25 Atlantic Avenue. It was boxed in. It couldn't go

2 anywhere. That's taking time. I was a volunteer
3 ambulance attendant in Hampton Bay with Allegiant
4 Ambulance. This is out my fourth-story window. I'm
5 in an old walk-up. This is a fire truck. I can look
6 up Court Street out my window and I can look in
7 front. I could hear the sirens fighting down the
8 street. There's no place for the cars to pull over
9 to let them go. They'd get stacked up so bad that
10 people ahead don't even hear the fire truck behind.
11 It's terrible. The design works on a sunny August
12 day when there's no traffic. Any other time, it's
13 chaos, and in the snow, it's crazy. During the last
14 snow storm, I went out with my measuring wheel, and
15 I've got lane measurements of seven to 6.8 feet. We
16 heard they need 15 to 20 feet. I'm not a fireman, but
17 I was a commercial driver, and I know they were
18 talking about out-riggers. When there's a 20 to 40-
19 inch snow bank pushed up, how are they going to set
20 their out-riggers up for their--

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
22 expired.

23 ALEX GREGOR: They're not going to be
24 able to do that. I have a few more, but I appreciate
25 your time. May I have 30 seconds? I'd like to talk

2 about the numbers that you hear. Court Street the
3 basis of the redesign, 155 accidents in 23 years, two
4 fatalities. One was at Atlantic Avenue, a major
5 road. The other one was at Hamilton. That's the
6 kamikaze Mad Max Road. That's what they're using to
7 base the protected bike lane. If you take the 155
8 number and divide it by the amount of years, that
9 comes to seven accidents a year. No accidents are
10 good, but they're using voodoo math. You hear in
11 Staten Island that they've improved the safety by 37
12 percent. So, let me offer this. If there were 10
13 accidents and they made it four, four better, that's
14 40 percent. They can bang their chest. Usually, you
15 take a five-year look. They're taking 23 years and
16 they're using nine months, and they're coming back
17 with this voodoo math. The Rocks, here's the one
18 that's been pushed out of the way, okay? Here it is.
19 Hit by the snow plow in this last thing. A road
20 should be predictable. A bicycle lane plow should
21 not have to expect hitting a boulder in the road.
22 Roads should be practical.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We completely agree.
24 Thank you so much--

25 ALEX GREGOR: [interposing] Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: for your testimony,
3 and again, for the package you put together for us.

4 ALEX GREGOR: Oh, you're welcome.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Ms. Forsyth, thank
6 you for your patience.

7 JULIANE FORSYTH: Hi, thank you, Council.
8 My name is Juliane Forsyth. I am a firefighter at
9 Engine 224 in Brooklyn Heights. I also hold a
10 master's in Emergency Management, so I'm very
11 passionate about improving the safety in my area.
12 Brooklyn Heights Cobble Hill area, over 250
13 firefighters respond to this area on an everyday
14 basis. The changes that were made recently by the
15 DOT significantly impede our operations as the engine
16 is required to have the best connection to the
17 hydrants. These connections are impeded by boulders,
18 public sanitation bins, heavy planters, dining
19 tables, bike racks, plastic ballast [sic]. Myself,
20 I-- wearing gear am 250 pounds. I'm expected
21 according to DOT to get off of my rig with full gear,
22 exert maximum energy, push the planter out of the
23 way, get back onto the rig, and then perform my
24 duties as a firefighter exerting maximum energy to
25 protect my community if a fire occurs. In 2021, a

2 fire occurred on Monague Street which is the area
3 that I had mentioned where firefighters became
4 trapped, firefighters were injured, and firefighters
5 were burned. On the same street I am talking about
6 that I need to see that these obstructions removed
7 from our hydrants. I do believe that this is our
8 chance to be proactive as opposed to reactive, as I
9 fear that our community is at risk of serious
10 injuries not only to firefighters, but also to the
11 members that I proudly serve with. I am requesting
12 these changes to be made urgently, and I would like
13 for these changes that did happen over the last few
14 months to be reconsidered, because they were not
15 consulted with my local firehouse or any of the
16 officers in my firehouse. So, I urgently ask City
17 Council to please make changes--

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
19 expired.

20 JULIANE FORSYTH: to improve the safety
21 of my firehouse and my community which I took the
22 oath to serve.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
24 compelling testimony, both of you, and thank you both
25 for your service.

2 JULIANE FORSYTH: Thank you.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Mr. Bernstein, can
5 you hear us?

6 HARTLEY BERNSTEIN: Yes, I can, Madam
7 Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, you can begin
9 your testimony. Thank you.

10 HARTLEY BERNSTEIN: Thank you again for
11 inviting me to join today and it's been illuminating
12 to listen to all the testimony. I'm not going to
13 repeat much of which has been said here already
14 today. As you know, I represent members of the
15 community on 31st Street and on Court Street in
16 connection with the litigation that we've been-- have
17 filed against the Department of Transportation, and
18 we were grateful that the court in Queens directed
19 the DOT to remove what it's done in terms of the
20 protected bike lanes. Although, I would note that
21 they were given 30 days to do that, and nothing has
22 been removed to-date. According to DOT, conditions
23 because of the weather have prevented them, but
24 hopefully they'll move shortly to do that, even
25 though I understand they're intending to reintroduce

2 reconfiguration. What we found and what we
3 discovered and brought to both courts' attention is
4 that DOT did not comply with Local Law 6 in either
5 case. To the extent that it consulted with the Fire
6 Department at all, it essentially ignored whatever
7 information and advice and direction it received, and
8 that's one of the prevailing problems here which is
9 that even though the law requires them to consult and
10 to certify which they did not do in either case, it
11 doesn't require them to agree or to-- or to integrate
12 the changes that the Fire Department, Emergency
13 Services, Mayor's Office of Disabilities suggest, and
14 so that--

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
16 expired.

17 HARTLEY BERNSTEIN: They continue to move
18 forward with an agenda that is solely motivated by
19 these protected bikes lanes with statistics that are
20 easily refuted, that don't demonstrate the lack of
21 safety that the DOT says is the consideration here.
22 The only real consideration, and I know the Council
23 Member brought it up before, is how do they create 50
24 miles of bike lanes, protected bike lanes a year?
25 And that is unfortunately the tail wagging this dog.

2 So, I would urge the Council to readdress that
3 mandate and to continue to enforce the necessity of
4 DOT protecting the communities through the fire
5 services, through emergency services, and making sure
6 that they have the ability to do what they need to do
7 which would be the priority here which is to protect
8 the members of the community.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Agreed. Thank you
10 so much.

11 HARTLEY BERNSTEIN: Thank you for your
12 time, and I have appreciated listening to everything
13 everyone had to contribute here.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much
15 for your testimony. Mr. Mirabella, can you hear us?

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 JOSEPH MIRABELLA: Yes, I can.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Please begin.

19 JOSEPH MIRABELLA: Good afternoon,
20 everyone. Thank you for being here. Thank you for
21 shedding light on this matter, but I want to talk
22 about why we're here, and it's because there's been a
23 systemic pattern by DOT to circumvent Local Law 6,
24 and they got caught on 31st Street. So, let's talk
25 about what happened. Going as far back as 2023 when

2 one of our businesses had a fire, a three-alarm fire
3 that required the FDNY to access the building from
4 multiple points. In sworn testimony, sworn affidavit
5 in the courts, the CEO of this business said, "Had
6 DOT's plan been implemented prior to the fire, I do
7 not think FDNY would have been successful in saving
8 our location." This is a concern that we've brought
9 up over and over and over to the DOT in our
10 conversations with them which were entirely
11 disingenuous. The DOT, a high-ranking member of the
12 DOT, and I won't mention any names, said verbatim, "I
13 don't need their approval," when it came to the Fire
14 Department. And low and behold, just a couple months
15 later the plan was finalized, and then we got a
16 smoking gun letter from the Fire Department which
17 further reinforced our concerns which states, "The
18 FDNY has encountered significant operational and
19 response difficulty at elevated subway structures due
20 to restricted maneuverability caused by columns and
21 overhead track systems limiting apparatus,
22 positioning and turning radius. They do not allow
23 FDNY to operate at full capacity, and without
24 adequate ladder apparatus placement, the subject
25 location presents a severe risk to life and safety of

2 citizens and first responders." And they end that
3 letter by saying, "With appreciation to the New York
4 City Department of Transportation's close
5 collaboration with the FDNY to provide optimal safety
6 measures throughout New York City, the Fire
7 Department deems the installation of the subjected
8 protected bike lane on 31st Street--

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
10 expired.

11 JOSEPH MIRABELLA: is too great of a life
12 safety hazard risk to install, cannot support the
13 implementation due to inherent safety concerns." So,
14 I am very appreciative that we were able to get
15 together today to discuss this, and I think that
16 there needs to be more oversight going forward, and
17 I'm very happy to see the Fire Department finally
18 pushing back on DOT. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Mr.
20 Maribella, for your testimony. Our next panel is
21 Walter Adler, Thomas Mena [sp?], Andrew Farina, Mera-
22 - oh, Herrera, I'm so sorry-- handwriting. No, no,
23 not yours, Josh's. Yeah. David Besprozvany, and
24 Julia Passat [sic]. Yes. Okay, if everyone is
25 settled in, we'll go with ladies first.

2 JULILA PASSOF: My name is-- Okay. My
3 name is Julia Passof. I live in Jackson Heights,
4 Queens. 34th Avenue is my block. We've had 26
5 blocks of open streets since five years ago when they
6 did it right after cov-- right during COVID when they
7 didn't have any kind of meetings with us at the
8 neighborhood. Okay, that's in the past. Right now,
9 I could see from my window 34th Avenue. I could see--
10 when I hear sirens, I run over to my window and I
11 watch, and I see the fire trucks having to-- guys
12 having to get out, go and move the barricades. Not
13 only that, but I also see the firetrucks backing up
14 and forth several times, because of the huge,
15 gigantic, concrete rectangle blocks, the huge flower
16 pots and bollards. So, I have seen it in-person.
17 Those videos are from my group in Jackson Heights.
18 We've been trying-- Cooper Davis [sic] tried to get
19 the DOT's attention which hasn't happened. So, we're
20 really in a bad spot because we were the first ones
21 to get these open streets and everything is wrong
22 with it. So, the fire trucks have to go back and
23 forth many times because of the daylighting median
24 and the corners filled with huge cement blocks, giant
25 flower pots, and bollards. All this takes, at least

2 I would guess, in my opinion-- what I count from my
3 window is 10 seconds of response time. Okay? And
4 also what they said-- the DOT said here about that
5 bike lane that's being plowed in the middle of the
6 night, that is not an emergency lane. That is way too
7 small to be an emergency lane. They have-- they have
8 blocks there, flower pots, chairs, tables. Fire
9 trucks could not back--

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
11 expired.

12 JULIA PASSOF: One more thing. The DOT
13 cannot manage these streets, okay. They have
14 partners. The partner are not doing their jobs.
15 They are not there. There's two different partners
16 available supposedly on 34th Avenue, and they are not
17 doing their jobs taking care of the avenue. It's
18 broken down. There's bollards all missing all over
19 the floor, and they're not doing-- they're supposed
20 to be by the barricades, moving the barricades. They
21 are not doing their job. So, the DOT either has to
22 get on better partners or do it themselves. And we
23 know that it's not going to happen.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much for
3 the information you've shared and the testimony
4 you've given today. Sir?

5 THOMAS HERRERA: Good morning everyone,
6 and thank you for allowing me to speak today. So,
7 let me be direct. Good morning. My name is Tom
8 Herrera and I am a District 4 resident my entire
9 life. I've been an EMT since 2002, and I have worked
10 Manhattan 911 since 2009. I'm here today as a
11 private citizens someone who lives this system every
12 single day. Let me be direct again. New York City
13 EMS is at a tipping point. Response times for life-
14 threatening emergencies are now pushing 11 or 12
15 minutes. They were just nine and a half just five
16 years. That gap cost lives and the reason is simple.
17 There's just no ambulances, not because they don't
18 exist, but because the people that staff them just
19 don't come to work. And why would they? An average
20 EMT with the Fire Department starts at around \$18 and
21 \$19 an hour, and after five years, five years of
22 dealing with trauma, rotating shifts, days away from
23 family dealing with the forgotten and the suffering.
24 The top out about half of what a firefighter makes,
25 half. That's not a gap. That's disrespect. And the

2 ones that we do lose, they're the best that we have,
3 teachers. Experienced medics and EMTs, we don't just
4 fill seats, but we want to train the next generation
5 the right way. New York citizens deserve better.
6 Pay parity is not charity. Pay EMS a living wage,
7 and I promise you we will come to work. Fund it in
8 2027. Set real unit and response standards. Invest
9 in EMS worker's mental health and the fixes known
10 [sic]. Thank you and I yield my time. Thank you
11 very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Thank
13 you for your service, and we do support everything
14 you've said in your testimony. Sir?

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you all for your
16 civic leadership. We also thank the FDNY and the UFA
17 for their bravery. We are here today, however, to
18 speak for some of the interests of the best, the
19 ambulance service, the EMS. We see these local laws
20 as discussed today as impacting both firefighters and
21 ambulances, anything that obstructs an engine will
22 obstruct an ambulance. That then said, we do point
23 to the fact that this law gave a clear way that the
24 FDNY and the Department of Transportation could
25 coordinate and it would be a little bit harder to do

2 that with the ambulance service, because we have 70
3 different agencies. In four sectors about 4,500 in
4 the FDNY, of course, about 2,000 just in Hotsala
5 [sic] in the volunteers, 36 other volunteers. We
6 have at least 15 privates, 6,000 more people, and
7 this data-- I know you all have the most up-to-date
8 data, and I don't really come here today to try to
9 pull heart strings with how hard we have it out here,
10 but we do have it quite hard, no matter what sector
11 we're in. 100 percent when Justin Brannan brought
12 the Department of EMS concept, I see how that flies
13 in the face of people's logic, but the idea behind it
14 was not to rip EMS out of the heart of the Fire
15 Department, but to allow some way to coordinate our
16 ambulance services. That then said, I would just for
17 a second know that today's hearings are about
18 obstructions. It's about agency coordination, and we
19 try to be relevant within the civics that are
20 involved here. We do not want a solution for EMS
21 that takes away from fire and PD. We just want a
22 seat at the table as a service to be taken as
23 seriously, and to be paid as respectfully so people
24 stay. We believe that a hearing must be called to
25 deal with the EMS issue. It has been in the past,

2 and we'd like it with all the actors, the hospital
3 actors, the privates, everybody else. We know that
4 FDNY EMS has been hurting. And certainly, we are here
5 to say we very much want FDNY EMS to achieve a level
6 of parity with the firefighters and have a fair
7 contract. But as a whole, a workforce of 15,500 that
8 is very diverse and very spread out across the city,
9 we just ask for your civic leadership in dealing with
10 the EMS issue so we could take our place alongside PD
11 and fire as a third important service unified in the
12 City. So, thank you for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you very much.
14 Sir?

15 DAVID BESPROZVANY: Good afternoon, Chair
16 Ariola and members of the committee. Thank you for
17 the opportunity to speak at this oversight hearing on
18 the implementation of Local Law 6. This law
19 recognizes something fundamental that the decisions
20 of the New York City Department of Transportation and
21 the operational realities of New York City Fire
22 Department are inseparable. Street design, open
23 streets, bike lane projects are not just
24 transportation issues, they are emergency response
25 issues. When coordination is weak, response times

2 suffer. When response times suffer, New Yorkers
3 suffer. When EMS suffers, New York City suffers. My
4 name is David Besprozvany. I'm an incoming medical
5 student and I've worked and volunteered at EMS
6 agencies across New York City for the past eight
7 years on 911 ambulances in Manhattan and Brooklyn, in
8 inter-facility hospital transport, and with one of
9 the more than 36 volunteer ambulance agencies
10 citywide. I want to be clear, when EMS system has
11 management issues, it begins to rely on volunteer
12 units as routine stop-gaps for 911 coverage or cannot
13 reach someone in an emergency in time, it's not a
14 sign of resilience, it's a warning sign. It means
15 the system is strained. Since I began working in 2018,
16 ambulance response times have steadily increased.
17 From publicly available, we are now projecting to
18 approaching nearly double pre-pandemic emergency
19 response times this year, approaching over 12.8
20 minutes for life-threatening emergencies and over 28
21 minutes for non-life-threatening emergencies. This
22 is not a statistic. This is difference between life
23 and death in cardiac arrest, stroke, trauma, or
24 respiratory failure, just to name a few. This is not-

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Expired.

3 DAVID BESPROZVANY: accidental. It
4 reflects structural interagency failure, declining
5 EMS staffing, burnout from excessive overtime,
6 inadequate mental health support, pay that does not
7 reflect the life or death stakes of the work, and
8 yes, even administrative decisions surrounding street
9 safety. Nearly half of EMTs and paramedics work over
10 40 hours a week, maintain holding multiple fulltime
11 jobs, and delays should not be build into the future
12 of emergency response in New York. If this council
13 is serious about public safety and street safety and
14 about meaningful interagency coordination, then EMS
15 must be part of that conversation. We need EMS-
16 specific mental health funding, pay parity with fire
17 and police, and long-term structural reform. The
18 current fire base management model is struggling to
19 meet the city's 911 call demand, the majority of
20 which is handled solely by EMS providers. A serious
21 discussion about a standalone EMS Department is
22 warranted. Transportation policy, fire operations,
23 and medical response are all interconnected.
24 Coordination must be real, not procedural, because
25

2 New Yorkers' lives and wellbeing depend on it. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much
5 and thank you for your service.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I believe we have
8 two more panelists via Zoom. Ms. DeSeta, are you
9 there? Maxine DeSeta?

10 MAXINE DESETA: Yes, I am. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: We can hear you.
12 Please begin.

13 MAXINE DESETA: My name is Maxine DeSeta.
14 I'm a lifelong resident of New York City. I represent
15 600 residents of our community which catchment is
16 from 102nd Street to 103rd Street from Broadway to
17 Riverside Drive. Our community has been jeopardized
18 by the redesign of our block, and it has been reduced
19 to 9.5 feet wide. We complained years ago to DOT and
20 we got really no response. We had a town hall, but
21 in fact, the town hall was inundated by people who
22 were for these designs, Transportation Alternatives.
23 I was arrested October 2023 when DOT came to start
24 redesigning our street between Amsterdam and
25 Broadway. Right now our street is still narrowed to

2 9.5 feet, against regulations for emergency lane of
3 15 feet. We have boulders. We have everything that
4 has been described here still in our streets. A
5 letter from DOT dated March 2023 said that this
6 design was submitted by the Open Streets Community
7 Coalition. This is not a real-- this is a
8 fabrication. We have been not able to present to CB7
9 the danger of this design, and I have worked with the
10 Fire Department that did finally come to our street,
11 but we still have the same issue, 9.5 feet, even
12 bicyclists don't want to-- this is now a shared
13 street.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 MAXINE DESETA: I just have one second--
16 two seconds more, please.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That's fine. You can
18 wrap up.

19 MAXINE DESETA: We really need
20 remediation and to have this street recon-- not
21 reconfigured, but returned to its original state.
22 We've had two fires on August 8th, 2024 and December
23 15th 2025 where a woman, 83 years old, was killed.
24 This is long past the day of what could have happened
25 if any of our agencies including DOT even responded

2 to our, you know, concerns. And also basically, even
3 bicyclists hate this street because they cannot share
4 such a narrow street with cars, not to mention our--
5 the parking that we desperately need has been
6 reduced. Thank you so much for this.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much
8 for your testimony, ma'am.

9 MAXINE DESETA: Really appreciate it.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Council Member Wong
12 has a quick question-- oh, I'm sorry. Council Member
13 Felder has a quick question for you.

14 MAXINE DESETA: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I just want to
16 know why you were arrested.

17 MAXINE DESETA: Well, this happen when
18 nobody will listen. CB7 turned our back on us,
19 wouldn't listen to our concerns. DOT never responded.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, but you're
21 not answering my question. You don't have to answer
22 it.

23 MAXINE DESETA: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, I
24 had--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: [interposing] I
3 just want to know why you were arrested. By the way,
4 I'm very proud of you. I just want to know--

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] But
6 we're all [inaudible].

7 MAXINE DESETA: Yes, I became-- I became
8 infamous on X which I had never been on before.

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Ms. DeSeta, if I
10 just may interject. Our office will be reaching out
11 to you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.

13 MAXINE DESETA: Okay. I just want to say
14 I was arrested because I was standing in the middle
15 of the street when DOT came, unknown to us, when they
16 started to redesign the street. I was in the middle.
17 They could have redesigned the street with me in the
18 middle.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well, you're a
20 flower pot. Why did they arrest you?

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much.
22 We're now going to over Angelo--

23 MAXINE DESETA: [interposing] I wouldn't
24 get out of the street. I wouldn't get out of the
25 street when the police said move, essentially.

2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you for your
3 testimony. Now, Angelo-- Angelo Ferrara, are you
4 there?

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 ANGELO FERRARA: Yes. How are you?

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Very well. Thank
8 you. Your testimony begins.

9 ANGELO FERRARA: Thank you for everyone
10 gathering given the occasion today. I just wanted to
11 be short and brief and, you know, jump right to the
12 point. So, there was a gathering with a lot of local
13 business-- local businesses, specifically, in 31st--
14 on 31st Street in the Dutch Kills area, and the
15 meeting took place on May 1st in 2025. There were
16 about 50 people in attendance, and one thing that
17 absolutely shocked me was Jason Benray [sp?] was on-
18 site, and when asked a question if he had FDNY
19 approval, it was clearly stated by him that FDNY
20 approval was not necessary for the progression of
21 this project or design which absolutely shocked me. I
22 ended up actually walking out of that meeting after
23 that statement, because I knew there was going to be
24 absolutely no progress or any listening that was
25 going to happen that was going to be progressive from

2 that meeting, given that that standard comment was
3 made. So, just wanted to make that note of that, and
4 that, and I was quite shocked.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much.
6 That's very insightful. We appreciate that. Thank
7 you for sharing.

8 ANGELO FERRARA: And just also wanted to
9 make note that that meeting was recorded. So, if--
10 and I know DOT I think did the recording of that
11 session. I think it would be important to reference
12 that video tape to see when that-- when that footage,
13 you know, was taken and that comment that that was
14 made, because that I think is pretty significant.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Yes, thank you very
16 much. Has anyone in the audience not been heard that
17 filled out a sheet? Anyone on Zoom, Josh? We have
18 now heard from everyone who has signed up to testify.
19 If we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to
20 testify in-person, please visit the Sergeant's table
21 and complete a witness slip now. If we inadvertently
22 missed anyone who would like to testify virtually,
23 please raise your hand. Use the raise hand function,
24 and a member of our staff will call on you in the
25 order of hands raised. Seeing no one else, I would

2 like to note again that written testimony which will
3 be reviewed in full by committee staff may be
4 submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the
5 close of this hearing by emailing it to
6 testimony@council.nyc.gov. I would once again like
7 to thank our council staff, our council attorney,
8 Josh Kingsley, William Hungesh [sp?], Phyllis
9 Encerillo [sp?], our Chief of Staff. This panel that
10 sits on the committee with me for their insightful
11 questions, the testimony that was given today from
12 those of you who took the time to Zoom in or come in-
13 person, you've been heard and it really was-- this is
14 our first hearing for 2026, and I believe it was
15 compelling. It was enlightening, and I believe that
16 changes will be made because of it. Thank you all so
17 much. We are now concluded.

18 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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 March 6, 2026