

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Jointly with the
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
And the
COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
And the
COMMITTEE ON AGING

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May 12, 2022

Start: 9:07 a.m.

Recess: 5:18 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 1)

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Charles Barron
Gale A. Brewer
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
David M. Carr
Amanda Farias
Crystal Hudson
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Rita Joseph
Lincoln Restler
Kalman Yeger
Shahana Hanif
Shekar Krishnan
Mercedes Narcisse
Carlina Rivera
Nantasha Williams
Joann Ariola
Althea Stevens

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

Ydanis Rodriguez
Commissioner
Department of Transportation

Eric Beaton
Deputy Commissioner for
Transportation Planning and
Management
Department of Transportation

Elisabeth Franklin
Associate Commissioner of Budget
and Capital Program Management
Department of Transportation

Yogesh Sanghvi
Associate Commissioner for Grants
and Fiscal Management
Department of Transportation

Charles Ukegbu
Assistant Commissioner for
Regional and Strategic Planning
Department of Transportation

Rebecca Zack
Assistant Commissioner for
Intergovernmental and Community
Affairs
Department of Transportation

Manuel Castro
Commissioner
Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs

Colette Samman
Deputy Commissioner
Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs

Tom Tortorici
Director of Legal Initiatives

Mayor's Office of Immigrant
Affairs

Anne Montesano
Executive Director of Interagency
Initiatives and Language Access
Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner
Department For The Aging

Michael Ognibene
Chief Operating Officer
Department For The Aging

Jose Mercado
Chief Financial Officer
Department For The Aging

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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SERGEANT SADOWSKI: Okay, I see the live stream is up. Just confirming.

SERGEANT BIONDO: That is affirmative. We are rolling.

SERGEANT SADOWSKI: Thank you. And sergeants, at this time will you please start your recordings?

PC recording has started.

SERGEANT BIONDO: Rcording to the cloud on the way.

SERGEANT SADOWSKI: Thank you and good morning, and welcome to today's remote New York City Council physical 2023 Executive Budget hearing of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and then later the Committees on Immigration and Aging.

At this time, would all council members and staff please shut on their video.

To minimize disruption please place electronic devices on vibrate or silent mode. All public testimony is set to be given on May 25 at 10 a. m. but if you would like to submit testimony, you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

Thank you for your cooperation. We are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. [GAVEL]

Good morning, and welcome to the first portion of today's executive budget hearing. This is our fifth day of executive budget hearings, and today, we welcome our former counsel colleague and now Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, Yidonis Rodriguez.

I'm also joined by the chair of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Majority Whip Majority Whip Selvena Brooks-Powers.

Quickly the department's fiscal 23 budget of \$1. 4 billion represents 1. 4% of the city's proposed fiscal 23 budget in the Executive Plan. DOT's fiscal 23 budget increased by \$100. 7 million, or 7. 6% from the preliminary plan of \$1. 3 billion. The increase is the result of a number of actions taken, most significant of which is a new need of \$53. 2 million added through the transportation streets plan, an adjustment of \$17 million in state funding for the Staten Island Ferry, \$3. 9 million in federal funding for the traffic management center, and \$1. 3 million in federal Coronavirus response and relief supplemental appropriations act funding.

Commissioner Rodriguez, I'd like to welcome you and your team to today's hearing. I plan on focusing my questions on the Transportation Master Plan, Citi Bike, street resurfacing, transit signal priority, and some other issues. I look forward to forthright answers from the department to learn about how DOT's fiscal 23 dollars will be spent, and more importantly, where. Issues like street resurfacing Citi Bike placement, the master plan and other critical issues must be equitable to neighborhoods across the five boroughs and every zip code. Underserved areas must be prioritized. This Council will fight for a fair and equitable overall budget, and that goes for the DOT budget as well. I want to take a moment to thank John Basile, Chima Obichere, John Yeddin, and the entire finance division for their work on today's hearing, and all the hearings up until now.

I'll now turn to majority whip and Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Councilmember Brooks-Powers for her opening remarks.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Good morning, and thank you, Chair Brannan, and welcome to the City Council Finance Committee and Transportation and

Infrastructure Committee's joint hearing on the fiscal 2023 Executive Budget. My name is Selvena Brooks-Powers and I have the privilege of chairing the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

Today we will be hearing from the Department of Transportation. I would like to thank the Chair of the Committee on Finance, Councilmember Justin Brannan, for his leadership and partnership throughout this budget process and during these hearings.

A reminder to those watching that members of the public are invited to testify on Wednesday, May 25, and you may visit [Council.NYC.Gov](https://council.nyc.gov) to learn more.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to recognize that tragically, 8 New Yorkers have died from traffic accidents in a span of just 4 days. Traffic fatalities are now at their highest level since Vision Zero was launched in 2014, at a total of 254 people. These deaths are preventable and the city has committed billions of dollars to Vision Zero in order to stop these deaths from occurring.

Today and moving forward, we hope that the Department of Transportation remains committed to the goals of Vision Zero, and addresses this tragedy by

promoting safer streets in all communities. The mayor's recent announcements look promising, and I hope to be a part of this important ongoing work. We are here today to continue the fiscal 2023 budget process. In March, this committee held its preliminary budget hearing, and we confronted the reality that transportation policy in this city has vastly under-invested in transportation deserts and ignored the needs of people with disabilities. Since then, I have continued my tour of all 51 council districts to hear directly from local communities, advocates, and elected officials on the transportation issues affecting New Yorkers so that we can work to reverse decades of underinvestment and neglect.

Today, we are here to continue the fiscal 2023 budget process with this subject in mind, and it is my hope that this budget process will lead to the adoption of a budget that is equitable and fair to all communities citywide. The Department of Transportation's executive expense budget for fiscal 2023 is approximately \$1.4 billion. In addition, \$12.1 billion is budgeted for the department's capital program. As a result of our preliminary

budget response, which called on the administration to add \$3.1 billion to the city street plan, the administration has included an additional \$904 million to enhance the... to enhance the plan. While I welcome the new funding, it's still falls short of the council's budget response proposal.

Additionally, one-time fiscal 2022 Council discretionary funding remains missing for Vision Zero education campaign.

We look forward to receiving an update on how this new funding will be used, and whether it is sufficient to meet the peoples'... excuse me the plan's legislative benchmarks. We also hope to hear how the Department of Transportation is addressing the needs of neighborhoods like mine that are suffering from high rates of traffic fatalities and crashes. It is my hope that the department will look to invest in these communities in order to transform city streets into safe and usable infrastructure.

Finally, we look forward to the commissioners updating the Committee on the department's efforts to maintain the city's roadway infrastructure, particularly in regard to its four-year capital plan.

I would like to thank the committee staff who have helped prepared this hearing, John Basile, the Principal Financial Analyst, Chima Obichere, the unit head and also a constituent of mine, Elliot Lin, Senior Committee Counsel, Jessica Steinberg-Alban, Senior Committee Counsel, Rick Arbello, Senior Policy Analyst, Kevin Katowski, Senior Policy Analyst, as well as the members of my own staff, my chief of staff, Sydney Renwick, and my policy director Alex Hunter. I will now pass it back to the Finance Council to continue our hearing. Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Chairs Brannan and and Brooks-Powers.

Good morning and welcome to the first agency hearing for May 12, the Department of Transportation. My name is Malcom Butehorn, and I am counsel to the Finance Committee.

I would first like to acknowledge council members present for the record. We are joined today by council members, Brannan, Brooks-Powers, Ariola, Velázquez, Farias, Yeger, Louis, Ossé, Kagan, Hudson, and Lee.

Unlike in past council members and members of the mayoral administration will have the ability to mute

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2 and unmute themselves. When not speaking. Please
3 remember to mute yourself. If you forget to do so
4 when we hear background noise, we will go ahead and
5 mute you. Council members who have questions should
6 use the raise hand function in zoom. I will call on
7 you and the order with which you raised your hand.
8 Councilmember questions will be limited to five
9 minutes.

10 The following members of the administration will
11 testify and or answer your questions. Commissioner
12 Ydanis Rodriguez, Eric Beaton, Deputy Commissioner
13 for Transportation Planning and Management, Elisabeth
14 Franklin, Associate Commissioner of Budget and
15 Capital Program Management, Yogesh Sanghvi, Associate
16 Commissioner for Grants and Fiscal Management,
17 Charles Ukegbu, Assistant Commissioner for Regional
18 and Strategic Planning, and Rebecca Zack, Assistant
19 Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community
20 Affairs.

21 I will first read the oath and after I will call
22 on each member from the administration individually
23 to respond. Do you affirm to tell the truth the
24 whole truth and nothing but the truth before these
25

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE 13
2 committees and to respond honestly to Councilmember
3 questions? Commissioner Rodriguez?
4 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I do.
5 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Associate Commissioner
6 Franklin?
7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Yes, I do.
8 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Deputy Commissioner Beaton?
9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes, I do.
10 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Associate Commissioner
11 Sanghivi?
12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SANGHIVI: Yes I do.
13 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Assistant Commissioner Ukegbu?
14 And I apologize if I'm mispronouncing
15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: Yes, I do.
16 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: And Assistant Commissioner
17 Zack?
18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Yes.
19 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Commissioner
20 Rodriguez, you may begin when ready.
21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Good morning. Buenas
22 Dias, Chair Brooks-Powers, Chair Brannan, and members
23 of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
24 and Committee on Finance. I am Ydanis, Rodriguez
25 Commissioner, the New York City Department of

Transportation. With me today are Eric Bateson, Deputy Commissioner for Transportation Planning and Management. Elisabeth Franklin, Associate Commissioner of Budget and Capital Program Management, Yogesh Sanghvi, Associate Commissioner for Grants and Fiscal Management, Charles Ukegbu, Assistant Commissioner for Regional and Strategy Planning, and Rebecca Zack, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental Community Affairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Eric Adams on DOTs FY 23, Executive Budget, and FY 2231 capital plan. I'm proud to be here for my first executive budget hearing on this side of the table, as DOT Commissioner after my four years serving on the Committee on Transportation, and 8 years as Chair and look forward to partnering with you all.

At the first 100 days address Mayor Eric Adams unveiled his vision for our shared future, and this budget that reflect those values.

As a mayor said, these values this budget puts people front and center, especially those who have often been left behind. Despite the massive shocks to our system in the past two years, our city entered

fiscal year 2023 on a strong financial footing, which was the result of effective planning and fiscal responsibility. This budget will allow the DOT to fight the rise in reckless driving, and hence safety with intersection upgrades, provide more public space in communities across the city, and speed up buses, expanding our bike lane network, and make the city more accessible for all New Yorkers, including people with disabilities, maintain our infrastructure, and continue to transport about 25 million passengers each year on the Staten Island Ferry. And even further to Mayor made a commitment to focus our investment in working class communities that have received less investment historically.

DOT's \$1.84 billion FY 23 expense budget that, as you can see include \$150 for bridges \$147 for ferries, roadway \$260, sidewalk and street management and other \$304, traffic operation \$450, and transportation planning and management \$194 million.

DOT proposed 26 capital commitment plan totals include bridges \$12 billion, street reconstruction \$4 billion, resurfacing \$2.9 billion, sidewalk \$3.2 billion.

First, as the mayor announced, this administration is making a historic investment of \$904 million to advance the goals laid out in the New York City street plan and rapidly build out critical street safety and public transportation infrastructure. These investments include nearly \$580 million in capital funding as well as expense forming that ramps up to more than \$65 million annually, or \$328 million over five years. These will find positions to conduct outreach and community engagement as well as manage, monitor, and coordinate agency efforts to meet the plan's benchmarks. This funding is both an important downpayment for the NYC street plan benchmarks and also fills critical shortfalls in other ongoing work.

This investment is critical for furthering Mayor Eric Adams and my commitment to create a more equitable city in our goal on making your city the safest city for pedestrians and cyclists in the United States of America. OSI testified before this committee previously that the NYC street plan laid out priority investment areas that will help focus our investment to where they can have the greatest impact.

DOT will continue to invest in communities across the entire city, but going forward a street design investments as a whole will be prioritized in higher need neighborhood based on the DIA tiers while still being guided by data such as crash histories and _____. The Citizen Foundation Network must meet the needs of all New Yorkers regardless of race, ability, or economic status in a safe, efficient, and sustainable manner, and these historic investments will help push us closer to that goal.

Far too many New Yorkers have lost their lives to traffic violence. The new NYC street plan funding builds on ongoing budgetary commitments to curb traffic deaths. The Total Vision Zero investments in DOT's current 10-year capital plan is nearly \$3 billion in addition to an average yearly investment of about \$250 million in expense budget.

This street plan investments in the mayor's executive budget goes with funding for our previous announcements that we are redesigning 1000 intersections to enhance safety. Thanks to funding in this budget, we will make intersection safety enhancements in areas near Southern Boulevard and Boston Road in the Bronx, Bay Water Park in Queens,

the New York Public Library Main Branch in Manhattan, and new Utrecht Avenue in Gowanus in Brooklyn. This budget includes \$195 million in capital funds to help us install raised crosswalks city wide in partnership with the Department of Design and Construction.

When it comes to bikes, turning to bikes, our bike lanes make roads safer for all road users, and we are focused on improving the cycling network coverage and connectivity across the entire city by building our bike lane network.

The street plan investment in this expense budget includes \$27.8 million in FY 23, increasing to \$33.5 million in FY 26, and the other years to expand the city protected bike lane network.

On the capital side, this budget includes nearly \$26 million that will go towards creating a raised and protected two-way bike lane on Willis Avenue in the Bronx, connecting the Willis Avenue Bridge and Roberto Clemente Plaza, which will also include accessibility, safety, and bus stop improvements.

We also include funding for destination greenways to improve access to parks in Brooklyn and Queens, \$30 million to Utopia Parkway in Queens that will allow us to initiate a new greenway connection from

Little Bay Park in Joe Michaels Mile to the wider bike network in this part of Queens. The funding will also allow us to bring significant pedestrian and bike improvements while protecting the waterfront on the parkways northern end.

In Brooklyn, work is on the way on one of the most critical segments of the Brooklyn waterfront greenway, currently planning for completion late next year. This project will create a safe, separate bike path connecting Sunset Park to Red Hook and Gowanus on Hamilton Avenue. Additionally, pedestrian safety, landscaping, and accessibility enhancements will help realize the vision of a connected waterfront greenway for the borough of Brooklyn.

The budget also includes funding for hardening existing bike lanes to enhance safety add in \$6.6 million in FY 23 and FY 24, and \$500,000 in FY 25 and the outer years. DOT crews have already begun work to meet the administration commitment to upgrade physical infrastructure on 20 miles of bike lanes by the end of 2023. Mayor Adams recently announced an additional five bike lanes that have been selected to upgrade, keeping the city on track to complete 30 mile of bike lane upgrades in 2022 and 10 more miles

in 2023. This includes 20 and Grand Street in Brooklyn, Northern Boulevard in Queens, 60th Street in Manhattan, and southern Boulevard in the Bronx.

When it comes to busses, our Better Busses Program will speed up busses and shorten commutes through dedicated bus lanes and bus ways. These budgets fund approximately \$15 million per year starting in FY 23, increasing to \$23 million in FY 26, and the outer years to build out more protected bus lanes. It also includes \$29 million in capital funds to install bus lane cameras.

It is not enough to just speed up buses. We need to continue to improve the bus riding experience for New Yorkers. Annual expense funding is provided in this budget for bus stop staff upgrades at \$1.5 million in FY 23, increasing to \$3.8 million in FY 26 and the outer years. Capitol funds are provided in this budget to fund safer and more accessible bus stops on 79th Street in Manhattan, as well as a number of projects in the Bronx tied to the MTA bus network redesign, such as bus improvements on White Plains Road.

In Brooklyn, we will start construction next year on improvements to the B-82 bus route, one of the

largest street projects in our 10-year capital. This project will provide many benefits to bus riders, including _____ accessible bus stops, as well as safety benefits for all _____ users throughout the route.

Through this project, DOT will also reconstruct the medians along Kings Highway to a state of good repair. I would like to thank Councilmember Louis for her financial support for this project.

For bus stop real time passenger information, this budget includes \$74 million in capital funds for installation, as well as \$840,000 in FY 23, increasing to \$1.2 million in FY 26 and the outer years for maintenance and operations. These investments will allow us to enhance the experience of bus riders throughout the whole city on New York.

And related to buses and other public transportation, as Mayor Eric Adams and Speaker Adams announced the Fair Fares Program will be expanded and made permanent. This budget baseline is \$75 million in funding for discounted MTA riders, and is the first time that the city has guaranteed annual funding for this program. This is especially personal to me,

since together with a previous speaker, we also championed the Fair Fair Program.

On accessibility, DOT is committed to making the city more accessible for all New Yorkers. Many of the bus projects I mentioned include accessibility enhancements and the agency continues to work with the MTA to make bus stops physically accessible for all users growing from a long-standing program to upgrade bus stops, on to elevator subways, to now addressing all kinds of physically inaccessible bus stops. These budget also includes \$1.5 billion in capital funding over the next four years to continue pedestrian ramp installation and upgrades citywide.

Our accessibility pedestrian signal APS program provides access to traffic signals for pedestrians with vision disabilities, and is the largest and fastest expanding in the whole nation. This budget includes \$232 million in capital phones for APS installation and expense funds to support these installations, \$11 million in FY 23, growing to a baseline of \$16.8 annually. DOT will install APS at 400 intersections this year, 500 next year, and eventually over 1000 intersections annually, with 10,000 intersections equipped with APS by the end of

2030. That's how we are taking care with a great community of close to 1 million New Yorkers that have physical challenges.

Together, these works will make it easier for the approximately again 1 million New Yorkers living with that reality.

On open space, all New Yorkers should also have access to safe, welcoming, and attractive public space close to where they live. In the lead up to car-free day last month, DOT launched their 22 Open-Street Program through which New Yorkers will be able to enjoy more public space on 150 streets, covering a total of 300 blocks. This budget includes funds that will allow us to advance permanent redesign of popular open streets, including \$88 million to transform 34th Avenue in Queens.

And to support a new vibrant public space in an area that would not have had it otherwise, this budget includes \$5.4 million in FY 23 in the outer years for the Public Space Equity Program. This comprehensive approach to public space support and management includes partners reimbursements and a contract for maintenance, landscaping, and technical assisting for public space partner organizations in

greatest need. These will allow us to continue providing direct support to over 20 open streets, over 30 plazas, and more in the future. We encourage council members, my colleagues, to connect us with community organizations that are interested in becoming public space partners.

When it comes to trade, to reduce congestion and contain competition for limited curb space, the DOT will be exploring and partnering micro-distribution centers, location of facilities for transferring goods from large commercial vehicles to a smaller, more sustainable, last mile delivery model. This budget includes \$959,000 in FY 23 and baselined \$154,000 in FY 25 to support the freight industry engagement report and pilot required by local law 166 of 2021. We are excited about the potential of these centers to enhance safety, efficiency in the public right of way, while accommodating the growing number of deliveries.

When we look to education awareness, media campaign, DYSMO, the DOT unveiled "Speeding Ruins Lives", a public awareness campaign directed at drivers that aims to counter speeding in New York City. The campaign, which used baseline Vision Zero

media following, is widespread across the five boroughs and includes billboard, bus shelters, LinkNYC kiosks, gas station pumps, radio, TV screens, and digital ads are featured in multiple languages.

To ensure New Yorkers continue to hear for us this budget's baseline has an additional \$960,000 in funding that will allow us to expand our education and media and promotional events going forward.

These will enable us to reach more New Yorkers and spread important news and educational information to the diverse communities across the city. A sample of this type of work includes amplifying the city's efforts to expand automatic enforcement programs, announcing new and enhanced bike lanes, and celebrating car-free events.

On federal funding, turning to federal funding, as the agency testified as well, DOT is working closely with city hall and our sister agencies to go after every dollar available from the bipartisan infrastructure law to advance projects that will benefit New Yorkers for decades to come. Our team has a history of successfully competing for federal grants. I'm very proud of the great work that they have done.

Some of our recent success includes winning a \$2 million race planning grant to reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway last year in partnership with New York State DOT and the Department of City Planning, a \$10 million grant in 2020 for bus stop improvements along BX-8 selectable services route, which connects Washington Heights in Manhattan to South Bronx, and a \$9 million grant in 2019 for a safe route to transit project, to make infrastructure, pedestrian safety and accessibility enhancement for transit riders along 86th Street in Brooklyn. I am happy to say that this budget funded the additional headcount for our grant unit to assist with the coordination, completion, and review of build grant application.

On state of repairs and other capital safety programs, this budget adds \$185 million to fund dozens of capital projects to address a state of good repair and to enhance safety. So an example includes street and sidewalk reconstruction upgrades in Far Rockaway and South Jamaica in Queens, South Shore in Staten Island, and in Clason Point and Harding Park in the Bronx, following a DEP project to upgrade the sewer system. Many critical projects are also ongoing. We recently started construction for the

next phase of our grade street program for Atlantic Avenue between Conduit and Rockaway Boulevard in East New York and Ozone Park in Queens. This project will continue important safety enhancements along the corridor as well as introduce project protected bike paths along a new planted median.

We are starting the construction on many critical capital projects. This year we will begin construction on a project to make access to Canarsie Pier in Brooklyn safe. Next year, we will partner with the Department of Environmental Protection to bring much-needed street repair and flooding relief to dozens of neighborhoods and streets in South Jamaica. Streets will be brought to DOT standards and we will be making safety accessibility enhancements. This project is part of the larger southern Queens initiative and will bring critical investment to a part of the city that has received less investment historically. This is how we're dealing also with equity.

We are also planning to start construction next year on one of several large school safety contracts city-wide. This project will create safer pedestrian crossing near aging schools in Brooklyn and Staten

Island, which will particularly benefit our school aged children.

Turning to our bridges. This budget funds the reconstruction of the bridge at Carey Grant street over Newton Creek. For upcoming consumption, we plan to start construction zone on the Williamsburg Bridge, continuing the goal of maintaining the iconic East River bridges in a state of good repair. This contract will extend the service life of the bridge for up to 60 years, and will include rehabilitating the floor beams and structures supporting the subway tracks, and more.

This fall, we plan to start construction on the Fifth Avenue Bridge over the Long Island Railroad and subway track, which is an important north-south connection between Sunset Park and Bay Ridge in Brooklyn. This project will modernize the 160-year-old bridge to the current design standards and address the factors that are contributing to its decline.

Of automated safety enforcement. Before I close, I must once again take this opportunity to emphasize Mayor Eric Adams and my call on the state to please allow the City of New York to expand and enhance our

Automated Enforcement Program. We are speaking for the \$8.6 million New Yorkers who are tired and fed up to losing so many great New Yorkers.

Our safety projects are critical for enhancing safety on our street, but we need every tool available to us to save lives and fight the rise in reckless drivers.

And we need your support, councilmembers, including a whole roll message: Without action by the legislature, the council and the governor who has expressed her support, these life-saving cameras will go dark on July 1. We can do it together. New York City deserves to have the expansion of speed cameras and automatic enforcement, we can save lives.

There's too much blood on our streets from people all ages, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Together, we must do everything in our control to keep New Yorkers safe.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to testify before you today, especially the two Chairs who are my friends, as they were my colleagues. We should all be proud that New York City has the largest transportation network in the nation, and we have great leadership in DOT that

they've been working for decades to improve our transportation system. I look forward to partnering with you as we work together to make this network in our city safer, more equitable, and accessible for all New Yorkers for generations to come.

Gracias por la oportunidad de testificar ante usted. Hoy estamos presentando el presupuesto del alcalde Eric Adams, de la administración, donde nosotros buscamos tener todos los recursos necesarios para collacion de Nueva York, así asceindo la ciudad más segura de los Estados Unidos de América.

We will now be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Commissioner. It's good to see everybody. I... I have to give a special thanks to folks that I talked to quite a bit who were very helpful in the Brooklyn office, certainly Commissioner Bray, Leroy Branch, Claudette Workman, and Rebecca, who I see is there with you today. Very, very responsive and helpful. And that doesn't go unnoticed. So I appreciate that very much.

We got a lot to do. So let's get into this.

Before we begin, the committee may not get to all the questions or... or we don't have hope for this. But

if you don't have the responses sufficient, we will send a follow up letter for any unanswered questions.

So Commissioner, fatalities among bicyclists have increased from 14 in 2014, to 25 so far this year 2022, so almost an 80% increase. Moreover, pedestrian fatalities increased from 107 to 123 between fiscal 20 and fiscal 23. Overall, it's unclear at the present pace if the city will achieve its goal of Vision Zero, which is what we all want, by 2024.

What largely does DOT attribute this increase to? And then what is DOT doing to address the issue of these increasing traffic fatalities?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you chairman. And you know, that there is no doubt that, you know, we have had bad years. Especially we had a one of the worst weeks. In the last two weeks we had the... those numbers or more than 10, you know, a pedestrian that unfortunately... in cycling though, we are losing. A doctor... a future doctor studying NYU, a mother originally from Nigeria that in her _____, her daughter was watching her how she will die. Chairman, reckless drivers is the cause of this epidemic. The DOT is doing the necessary

investments. The council is working with this administration to provide, you know, all the financial support that we need. The 10-year is doing a great job of redesigning and looking at any intersection that we need to reorganize the signal light. We are creating bike lanes, both lanes, open streets, everything that is required from the perspective of redesigning has been doing... is something that DOT has done. There's a trend nationwide, when it comes to, you know, those individuals who are killing pedestrians and drivers, most of them they are drunk when they driving, most of them they are speeding, most of them are not obeying the law, most of them are behaving in a way that is unacceptable. So, so far, you know, speed was a factor in at least 78 fatalities in 2021, up to 61% from the 2018 and 2020 average. This year, the number doesn't look good, and then main cause is related to violent drivers that we have seen. The speed camera makes them reduce the speed, because when we have a speed camera we have seen a reduction of 14% injuries, and we also are seeing a reduction of crashes in more than 60%. Those crashes are happening and intersection where the speed camera

must be turned off by state law. And they also operate from Monday to Friday. That's why we need your support to expand speed camera and automatic enforcement, so that we can have it the whole year, and the city should have the power to decide where do we install those cameras, and following the data on crashes that happen in location, that right now we are not allowed to install those cameras.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm with you there. I gotten my share tickets from speed cameras, and it's made me a better driver 100%. That's the bottom line. And that's why I support them. I supported their expansion, and we certainly support it now.

You'll remember you were our colleague back in 2019 when we passed the Transportation Master Plan. It is legislated to take effect in FY 22. As you know, the master plan calls for the installation of at least 250 protected bike lanes, 150 protected bus lanes, bus stop upgrades, the redesign of at least 2000 intersections, and other major transportation projects that we support.

Last month, the council called on the administration to add an additional \$3.1 billion to the streets plan in our preliminary budget response.

So far, the mayor has announced that an additional \$904 million in funding would be allocated.

Can you give us an update on the status of the Transportation Master Plan? And in focusing on equity, how will the DOT ensure that the master plan projects are funded and equitably distributed across the five boroughs?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I... first of all, thank you Chair. And I'm proud not to just be standing here, you know, collaborating knowledge to share information, but also to celebrate, you know, that, you know, probably I'm the first DOT Commissioner that has been a councilmember that understands the need that each _____, and to advocate not only for the constituency that you represent, but also the role that you play balancing this budget.

I feel that, you know, when we look to where we are today, I think that you know the \$905 million that the Mayor designated is a down payment to this program. Even when we look... and of course as a Commissioner, I always want more. So not only I know that the Mayor always, and OMB, will be able to work with us or to identify where or how, you know, we always continue getting funding that we need to build

more protected bus lane, to build more bike lanes, to build more open restaurants, open street. But you know, this is an opportunity. I hope also, you know, each councilmember has ideas, you know. I note that they also... they help us with the capital raising money, to identify any particular project that is important in those ways. When it comes to the role that you have, as Chairman of Finance, Speaker Adams, and the Chairman of Transportation are doing, you know, advocating, continuing this conversation about identifying needs that we have to always add more funding. You know, the \$905 million is... is additional funding that will allow the different divisions here at DOT to have the resources that we need to redesign dangerous intersections, to accomplish our goal of the numbers of bus lanes that Mayor Adams committed, and also had those goals, including the Street Master Plan, so I believe... I... we are in a good place. We always will be happy to get more money. We will work with OMB to identify needs and how to get support from City Hall. And of course, the support of the council is always very important.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Citi Bike: Can you update the committees on the status of the Citi Bike Share Program, and have there been any discussions with the administration and Citi Bike operators on the possibility of using city funds to further extend its reach citywide?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Uh, we are... I feel that because we... we were there together in 2020, when we saw the expansion of Citi Bike to Northern Manhattan, to South Bronx, and other locations, and we looked not only at Citi Bike, but also we look at micro-mobility, you know, expansion of other bike share programs and scooters that also are covering areas. We feel that working together with all those types of micro-mobility, including Citi Bike, we will see more expansion in... in our... this moment right now. It started as Citi Bike only covering a downtown Manhattan. We have seen expansion of Brooklyn, Queens, Northern Manhattan, South Bronx, and other places, and we will continue again a conversation with our partners _____ to identify where and how we continue expanding this great program. And more than expansion, Chairman, it is about making this program always affordable. It has

been shown that as the program provides a discount to the residents of NYCHA, we also want to work together to educate, you know, our especially working class community about the benefits of cycling, so that beside creating the infrastructure, we also want to be sure that those New Yorkers who can get a discount, the residents of NYCHA and others who live on the poverty line, also take advantage.

But our goal is to expand Citi Bike, is to continue to span other types of micro-mobility until we cover every single community in our city on New York.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I appreciate that. Yeah, I mean, I think it would be great to see, you know, some other bike share companies being allowed to set up here, certainly in areas like mine, where we've basically gotten to the doorstep of our district. But because Citi Bike has a monopoly in large parts of the city, and because they're so reliant on the dock-to-dock network, it makes it much harder. And... and what we've seen is that the, you know, is the company is concentrated its docks in neighborhoods that are already pretty well served by

public transportation, but ignored a lot of the transit deserts. So that's something that...

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I agree with you. I feel that, you know, we have a great opportunity to continue expanding. I love the partnership. You know... you remember that... because we were there together when Commissioner _____ was very helpful to renegotiate, you know, the Citi Bike Program that almost failed. And I think with the negotiation between DOT and... and the new stakeholders of that industry, and then the last one, Elite, we are seeing a level of expansion, but we are not there, but we should be. And we should be able to work together. Look, I... I think that first of all, I appreciate you know, Citi Bike was there on the car-free day. They provide, you know free membership, they've been great partners with DOT. But Mayor Adam was also saying that he was open to explore other partners in the City of New York. I feel that, you know, we will continue conversation, and we hope again that not only we will see Citi Bike where they are, expanding to the areas, but also we need to be sure that we don't build any second tier or users of the bike, that we only got one tier, and that the service be

accessible and affordable for all New Yorkers. As you know me for years. No one will be fighting more on equity, especially to be sure that Citi Bike is affordable to working class New Yorkers than me, because that's what I have done my whole life.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I appreciate that Commissioner.

Quickly on resurfacing streets and pothole repairs. So DOT previously had a goal to repave 1300 lane miles annually, which was reduced to 1100 lane miles per year in fiscal 2020 and 21. The reduced paving level was acceptable at the time because of a mild winter and reduction in traffic at the beginning of the pandemic, which... which caused less wear and tear on the city streets. In our budget response, the council urged the administration to increase baseline funding of street surfacing by \$45 million in the Executive Budget to allow DOT to repave up 1300 lane miles annually, which was the... the original goal back in 20, and 21. So given that the executive budget only provided funding to repave 1100 lane miles, is the resurfacing of 1100 lane miles adequate to meet the city's need or has DOT noticed additional damage to city roads after this winter?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I will start answering the question, and I will pass it to my colleagues here, Elisabeth or Eric, they also can complement all the information that you need.

One thing that I... you know, first of all, resurfacing and paving usually as everyone, we need to remind all Councilmembers in the audience and members of the public, mainly take place during the spring and the summer, because we have four different seasons. And this is one thing that... you know, that we also want to remind everyone especially... you know as we go directly to the equation, but when people look for areas that we have that we will be resurfacing or... or paving the street, I want for people again to understand that in spring and the summer is the time where most of the work is done. But let me pass it to Elisabeth so that she can follow your question, and probably Eric will want add to anything else.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure. The 1300 lane miles that we did for a few years was certainly extremely helpful to get our streets in good condition. But a big problem in our resurfacing program over time was that we didn't have steady

funding. Every year... the budget was very underfunded in the out years, and every year -- some council members might remember this -- we had to get more funding for the next year. What we have now is a fantastic situation -- I can't overstate it -- where we have baseline funding at 1100 resurfacing lane miles per year plus another 54 bike lane miles specifically. And so that's... that's really... we're in a good position right now to keep a steady funding level for resurfacing.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sorry, thank you. For pothole repairs in the first four months of FY 22 DOT repaired a little over 36,000 potholes. I think about 30,000 of them are in my district, 33% more in the same period than last year. The average time to close a pothole work order increased from two to four days.

These changes are related to a 15% increase in pothole work orders, which the DOT correlates to a doubling of 311 complaints for pothole repairs compared to fiscal 21, you know, coupled with staff shortages and fewer DOT crews during the pandemic.

So how much funding does DOT allocate towards pothole repairs? And how many potholes does the DOT

plan to fix this year and how many were done last year?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The DOT currently paid over \$25 million to street repair other than resurfacing per year which includes pothole repair. Our crew response follows demand, which is driven by various factors including freeze-thaw cycles, wear and tear on pavement, and long term capital investment in railway. In the last fiscal year, FY 21, we fixed around 175,000 potholes total. This fiscal year we have already fixed more than 160,000 potholes, including 11,000 _____ last month when 150 pothole crews worked all day Saturday. I want to thank all of them, because I also joined them on that particular... one of those Saturdays, where we arranged to join with other members on the roadway, and they were doing a great job.

We want also to remind all of you that we always will be taking care of the pothole. We have a goal to respond to any pothole in a 3-day timeframe. But the more resurfacing and paving we do, the less potholes we will have. And that's what we want to do. And that's what we want to focus on. However we know that potholes are something that we have to take care

of, and we've been doing that thing here. Thank you to the great workers that we have at DOT roadway division, they are doing a great job taking care of the potholes.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, they do. So they... you know, they're very... again, your Brooklyn office and Rebecca have been super, super responsive. I can't thank you enough there. I can't make any complaints there. So you said... I heard you on the radio the other day, but you just said it now. I want to get it on the record. For the amount of time... if someone calls in 311, what are we saying? How long until that pothole gets... gets filled?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We're doing three days. However, there is a moment and situation where there's no need to cover the pothole, if there is any code that related to (crosstalk) (inaudible)

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yup.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... the situation. And again, as... I also want to reinforce what I said before: You know, in many places... especially, you know, the country where I was born and raised, it is always worn in the Caribbean, Dominican Republic. But here we have to deal with four different seasons.

So the winter is a challenge of take care of the pothole, but our commitment is to fix the pothole in less than three days, with a later challenge related so underground _____ or other agencies.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it. We'll work on the weather. We'll do our best.

Open restaurants. In response to the pandemic, open restaurants program was launched to expand seating outdoors for restaurants in select corridors city wide. I wanted to get an update... which was first launched in 2020 as a temporary pilot program, Open Restaurants was given year round permanent extension by the de Blasio administration in September of 2020. How many businesses are currently enrolled in the Open Restaurant Program? And do you have numbers for the total enrollment in each borough?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We do. In total, and we launched in June 2020, to get New Yorkers space to safely dine out outside. And again, this is an initiative that The Council must take credit, because this initiative also came together as a result of the council and the previous administration. That's where the decision was made

for DOT to run the Open Restaurant. As the council codified in the Law 114 of 2020, DOT is working in partnership with our sister agencies to make this program permanent. So far we have 4000 open restaurants, and we have say 100,000 jobs. And as you know conversation continue with the council hoping that this program will be permanent, and we're hoping that DOT, with the _____ that the agency has, taking care of the roadway resurfacing and working with the utility program, doing open pedestrian _____, we hope that DOT is in a great position to run this program permanent, hopefully by 2023.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do we know...

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Sorry chairman. Let me also give you the breakdown per borough, as you asked that question. So the... on percentage, as I say over 2000 restaurants are part of the Open Restaurant Program, compared to 1200 sidewalk cafe in the consumer... in the Department of Consumer Affairs program prior to the open restaurants. So before Open Restuarants, we only had 1200 sidewalks. After COVID... during COVID and after, through this program, that number having has increased to 12,000, being the largest one in the nation. The breakdown

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2 is Manhattan: 6000 with 48%, Brooklyn 3000 and 24%,
3 Queens, 2400 and 20%, Bronx over 600 and 5%, and
4 Staten Island close to 200 and 2%. Many of those
5 areas, are areas... are working class community New
6 Yorkers never had the opportunity to enjoy a dinner
7 with a family member on a sidewalk or an open
8 restaurant before COVID struck.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And I know the answer...
10 and again, your team has been great on this,
11 especially Rebecca... but what is the procedure... or
12 what will be the procedure going forward to remove
13 the shelters that have become damaged or abandoned
14 and are no longer in use? Because we hear about
15 that... for as many restaurants are taking advantage
16 of it, there's some that that look like abandoned
17 shipwrecks out there. So what's... what's the plan
18 going forward in there? Is there a proactive plan?
19 Or is that still going to be sort of complaint
20 driven?

21 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: No, no. It is... it is
22 a proactive effort. DOT has given... has done more
23 than 60,000 inspections in those 4000 restaurant
24 operations that we have. This program... DOT has
25 since ramped up in up its enforcement, removing over

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2 60 non-compliant structures, and issuing 24 summons
3 so far. So for us, quality of life is important.
4 While we also know that we started something
5 temporary, you know, doing COVID. Now that we're
6 moving, hopefully, with a plan to be permanent, now
7 we have a direction...

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: (inaudible) Sorry, go
9 ahead.

10 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: No, I say now... we are
11 we working at DOT to be sure that, while we started
12 something temporary, as we move in, hopefully to make
13 this program permanent, now we have a director, now
14 we move in to hire a dozen men and women, that they
15 will be working in the Open Restaurant Division, so
16 that we can add the structure that we need to
17 continue stepping on enforcement. We agree with any
18 community board, we agree or any council member that
19 if there has been a structure that a restaurant
20 owner, they... they have left it empty, that they are
21 not helping us, but we feel that... that percentage
22 they are a low minority, that the vast majority of
23 the restaurants, they taking care of the structures.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright, let's talk about
25 the BQE. I hope to live to see the day that we tear

that thing down and build a tunnel, but I'm not sure we have the money for that currently. I'm looking for it though.

Two years ago, the council released the findings of a report titled The future of the BQE, and it was to look at alternatives to repair the BQE, specifically the triple cantilever. The de Blasio administration commissioned a panel to evaluate the reconstruction of the BQE. The DOT currently anticipates spending \$1.5 billion on this project between fiscal 22 and fiscal 2031.

Can you provide us with an update on the status of the BQE cantilever project and does DOT plan to move forward with its plan to fix the BQE cantilever, or is there an alternative plan that we're looking at?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: The BQE is a... Chair, the BQE is critical roadway for moving people and goods, and we need to ensure that it is safe, and that's what Bridge Division works on 24 hours, and they are doing a great job to ensure that it is safe.

The new administration has been taking a close look, and remains committed to addressing this issue in the long term. We look forward to engaging local

elected officials and community stakeholders soon... or more elected officials. We already are soon starting a conversation with Councilmember Lincoln, the Brooklyn Borough President, and also Antonio Reynoso, and hoping to continue engaging with more elected officials, and most important members of the community.

In addition to DOT... In addition, DOT has continued to monitor the BQE structure between Atlantic Avenue and _____ Street to identify any areas that need to be addressed in the near term. The two spans identified as being in need of repair in the near term, along with the structure unit will be addressed via an oncoming construction contract to be advertised shortly.

Where we are today right now is that conversation is going on between City Hall and the State. We hope to have a good plan to reconstruct the BQE, but we are looking to that to that area, from the north to the south... to the south to the whole area. And the conversation will continue. I know that you, in your role and the Chairman of Transportation, and also the Speaker Adams, and the stakeholders especially in this area, they will be engaged in conversation not

only with us at DOT, but also with City Hall as we are moving forward planning for the future of the BQE.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure. Just a question about the funding, and I know obviously this is very important to my colleague, Councilman Restler. So funding for the cantilever project was actually decreased by \$76, almost \$77 million in the preliminary plan when compared to the adopted plan. And in the executive plan 180 million in capital funding was shifted out of fiscal 23 and moved further out in the plan period, which ultimately reduced the plan capital spending for FY 23 from \$225 to only \$44 million. So I guess my concern is... has it been determined that, you know, with the cantilever reaching the end of its useful life expectancy, is shifting the plan work from 23 into the out years safe? Have we determined that that's safe?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, let me let me pass that part of the question on the money to Elisabeth, our Budget Director. I can... we can assure already all New Yorkers that that area is safe. But let me pass it to Elisabeth for her to explain it.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure. You know, we are doing the ongoing monitoring and the new motion... the legislation to... the legislation to allow for automated enforcement of overweight trucks is really going to help us with that. And so we're going to start issuing violations. We aim to issue violations by the end of this year. So between that, and then the ongoing monitoring of the structures, we're keeping a close eye on the BQE. And so the funding that we need for the structures in the near term, we have. That is we have left the funding in the inner years to do the contracts that we know we have to do now. And so the... the funding in the outer years can be moved back in as our monitoring continues, as we find work we need to do earlier.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I'm sure my colleagues will dig in on that and put a finer point on that later on.

Let's see where I want to go here.

Some of the transportation deserts. You know, for decades, the city has really under-invested in transportation deserts, including in my own district where we've got the R train, and that's about it. It took me about nine hours to take the R train to city

hall today. And this has led to an inefficient and inequitable transportation system, which I know the commissioner knows and certainly cared about, as a council member. Additionally, surging gas and auto prices as a result of inflation compounds these effects, and it's increasing the financial strain on working class New Yorkers who already suffering from the pandemic and have no choice but to own and drive cars as their only means of reliable transportation. You'll often notice that, you know, the folks that... that talk about driving cars are the ones that are in transportation deserts. I mean, that's... that's how they get around.

So what is the DOT specifically doing to reverse this decades-long under investment in transportation deserts? And where are these investments reflected in the 23? Budget?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I'm going to start to answer the question, and then I will also pass it to Eric so that he also can add more information.

Look, I... it's not only about transportation deserts. We have inherited a city that also has social investment deserts. So... so it I feel that, you know, those of us who are in leadership,

regardless of the role that we play, you know, from Council, Commission, and staff has a great job to do when it comes to address deserts that we have created in the city, lack of investment, in a city though they also has prioritized investment in a few areas, and they have left all the area behind. This is the gap that Mayor Adams will be closing in his administration. So when it comes to transportation deserts, I know that... the... the our busses is like one of those things that we are looking to... to use... to expand. In those areas that we need to provide riders more opportunity, not only to take the buses, but to go to places faster, to know that our buses are more efficient. But I think that, you know, we have investment priorities all the time to do more infrastructure on protected bike lanes in those communities, on bus lanes, to also be sure that we use our water to connect more New Yorkers, when it comes to transportation deserts, but let me pass it to Eric also, that he can add more information to that question.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And we fully agree that this is a place the city needs to be investing in historically underserved communities.

And that's why in the Streets Plan, as the Commissioner said during his testimony, we explicitly put out these priority investment areas. And when you when you look at that map, it is clearly parts of the city that have been under invested in over the years. And we're going to be very focused there.

We want to make sure that people all over the city have good options that, you know, if you drive we want to be providing electric vehicles that you can drive in an environmentally friendly way. We're going to be doing better bus service, working in partnership with the MTA as they do their borough redesign doing bus lane signal priority, improved bus stops to try to make buses a better option. We want our protected bike lane network to be a city wide protected bike lane network, and not just in the historic core of the city.

These are all things where we want to get those investments all over the city. We also know that that means working very closely with local communities who haven't always had that type of engagement. We certainly look forward to working with you and with all of your colleagues in these historically underserved communities to make sure

that as we want to do these investments, we're doing it in a way that is sensitive to the local needs of the community, and that we can do it in a way where we can all support it together.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Chair Brannan had to step away. So we're now going to turn to Chair Brooks-Powers for her line of questions for the DOT.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that. And it's great to see you Commissioner Rodriguez and your team. I appreciate the work that your team has been putting in and being responsive to my staff.

So in terms of some of my initial questions, I'm going to start around city cleanup corps underspending.

Due to the projected agency underspending, federal funding to the Department of Transportation for the city cleanup corps was reduced by \$1.8 million in fiscal 2022. Why does the Department of Transportation project underspending for the city cleanup corps this year? And what kind of maintenance and support has the city clean up corps provided? Has the cleanup corps assisted with graffiti removal and power washing?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Through the city cleanup corps program, we clean up litter, remove trash, and perform vegetation control, and out on the highway, the DOT uses the same resources of funding in several ways. We employ people to help out... help our in-house _____ maintenance crew. As a result, they remove over 8500 cubic yards. So we know how important it is, this funding. We have expanded our _____ service and train people in the basis of Horticulture and Landscaping.

This is a city-wide initiative involving multiple agency. Sorry. We are looking right now to see how we will be _____ this program. But let me also pass it to our budget director so that she can also add more information.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure, the underspending this year was because we encountered a few procurement delays. But as Commissioner Rodriguez explained, there was a tremendous amount of work we did get one.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that. And then the cleanup corps are entirely financed by federal funding. How will the city fund cleanup and

sanitation of the Open Streets Program after fiscal 2022 when federal funding ceases?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: So the federal funding... I mean, this is a citywide initiative involving multiple agencies, and so the extension of the whole program is still under discussion.

However, DOT is part of this plan funding... well as part of the investment, it did receive about \$5 million to do what... to maintain public spaces. So that will help us.

And Chairman, as you know, we are all about equity, as you are. We're in the same boat. And... and we will be sure that any funding... any program that we have is done... is planned to underserved communities. So as we will be planning how to use the funding, you have my word and my commitment, and the commitment of the team here that we will be giving priority to the underserved communities.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that. And as far as the Coronavirus Response and Relief, Supplemental Appropriations ACT, initially \$4.4 million in federal funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act grant had not yet been allocated from the original

award. The Department of Transportation has since identified items in their budgets that qualify for this funding. As such, the executive plan includes an adjustment of \$3.1 million in fiscal 2022 and \$1.3 million in fiscal 2023 As a part of a federal grant modification.

What projects has the Department of Transportation specifically identified that qualify for the CRRSA funding? What does the Department of Transportation hoped to accomplish with this additional federal funding? And how much funding has the Department of Transportation received from the CRRSA to date?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: This funding here is restricted to transit activities. And so DOT will use... will use it for area operations including staffing costs, cleaning, and security contracts, dry-docking and marine electronic maintenance and repair. The DOT received \$79 million of this funding and \$190 million American Rescue Plan funding. So we are using this funding to all those areas that where we can apply and they have been very successful for us.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And then shift into the ARPA Plan. Federal funding for the American Rescue Plan was reallocated across multiple agencies due to underspending. As a result, the Department of Transportation Executive Plan includes a reduction of \$6.2 million in fiscal 2022 only due to this reallocation of ARPA funding. How will this reduction in ARPA funding affect the Department of Transportation specifically? And why does the department of transportation project underspending for ARPA funding?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let me pass it to our Budget Director here so that he can go deep in to answer this question?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Sure. Like my answer last time: We did encounter some procurement delays in some of the programs you were planning to use the ARPA funding for, including Open Restaurants, and we are... oh no... hiring. Yeah. Mainly, it was additional hiring delays. And it's also that Open Restaurants is in a transition phase now, as you know, between the emergency program set up during COVID and the permanent program beginning in 23, that's pending legislation. So we've begun the

hiring process to prepare for the permanent program,
and additional hiring and purchase will be done as...
as it proceeds, the transition.

And then there was also for the Open Streets
Program, there were some procurement challenges and
hiring challenges, and so not all the funding has
been spent.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
I'm going to move over to the pedestrian ramp
program. So as an ongoing project DOT has been
installed on pedestrian ramps at street corners in
order to become compliant with the Americans with
Disabilities Act. The executive capital commitment
plan increased funding for sidewalk construction by
\$442.2 million when compared to the preliminary plan.
This is not new funding but rather funding
accelerated from outside the capital plan window to
support additionally legally required pedestrian ramp
work to make city sidewalks ADA compliant.

Can you please provide the committee's with...
with an update on DOT's ongoing project to make
sidewalks ADA compliant? How many street corners are
currently compliant with the act? How many pedestrian
ramps does DOT project it will complete as a part of

this funding acceleration? And what is DOT's... what is DOT doing to ensure that funding for ADA compliant sidewalks are distributed equitably across all neighborhoods? Can you please provide a breakdown of pedestrian ramp installations by borough?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. Let me start with the last, and then I will pass it to my team here to answer the other part of the question. One thing that is clear, as you know, is a commitment that I have for my three years as a council member, always working with the community that have physical challenges to make our streets accessible. We have 1 million New Yorkers that have physical challenges.

In this amount of time, you've got allowed to live long, at some point all of us we need to rely on some level of... of accessibility when it comes to our streets. So you know working together, the DOT, the administration, and especially with the council and the advocate community have been making a lot of progress.

I think the New York City is a role model. No one has done the same work that we have done here, using the technology, redesigning intersections, you know, to be sure that our New Yorkers who have

physical challenges get the respect by being able to have accessibility in our streets. The breakdown of corner constructed, installed grades in July 2017 is Bronx 5235, Brooklyn 11,016, Manhattan, 2932, Queens 11,217, Staten Island 4167, to a total of 33,667.

But let me also call on Eric, so that he also can add a list of _____, when it comes to what it is that we have done in the street to be sure that we're wheelchair accessible?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And just to go to the question, one of the things that... the reasons that we need this accelerated funding is because the things that trigger us to need upgrade the pedestrian ramps, primarily resurfacing, but also all of our street safety redesign projects are also being accelerated. And it's very important to us to make sure that those accessibility upgrades _____ work that we're doing on the street. So by accelerating this funding, we can keep up that... as we resurface more streets, as we do more of these intersection safety redesigns, the accessible ramp program can keep up at the same time. So we're absolutely committed to that. And we are continuing to put in the money, so that as we do this other

work... as we do our safety work, as we do our state of good repair work, the accessibility works keeps up with it and stays right in tandem.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that. I'm gonna move to talk about a project that's actually in my district, Bayswater Park pedestrian access.

So Bayswater Park is green space that is vital to residents in my district. This park is scheduled to receive capitally-funded pedestrian access work, which is managed by the Department of Transportation. However \$12.6 million in capital funding between fiscal 22 and fiscal 26 was not included in the executive capital plan. Has this project been canceled? Or was this funding moved beyond the plan period? Past fiscal 2026? If the project has been cancelled? I'd like to know why.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Chairman, let me... let me figure... let me find out here with the team, and... and I will... I will get back to you, you know, as soon as we finish the hearing, with any of the... but I don't know, if here, if Elisabeth something to share now. If not, then we can follow up with you after the hearing. But more than happy,

as I say, not only with you, but with every councilmember, that if they have something specific that is important for them, for the constituents that we are here to work together. This is the new day with this administration for Mayor Adams and here at DOT, we are going to be working closely with all Councilmembers.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that Commissioner.

Next, I want to pivot over to the electrical... electric vehicle charging stations. So last year's budget included funding for the installation of electric vehicle charging stations. How many charging stations will DOT install and what is the average cost of each charging station?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Our goal is to get 1000 by 2025 and 10,000 by 2030. DOT is doing a great work on advancing that. But let me also pass it to Charles, who is a person that oversees that particular portfolio.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: With regard to the Electric Vehicle Program, we have... the work we have done so far... Actually, let me just set the stage and say we have different levels of

infrastructure. There's the fast charging, and then there's... where you can charge your vehicle 80% in 30 minutes or so. But then what we're doing at this point... what we've focused on so far is the level two, which is really the on streets curbside charging, which we're putting on the streets as well as in our _____ garages. Thus far we have 86 level two chargers that have been installed... there are 86, but then there are two per side, one facing on the other with a long cord, if I may describe what it looks like. And then we have 8 fast-charging stations that have been installed under this program so far. We have a plan for a much broader level of... we have a plan to install more locations city-wide. There will be another 14 level two chargers to start construction this spring, curbside, and 1000 level two chargers by 2025. That's part of the vision citywide to a particular number of places. There's a broader vision that we can go into great detail on what exactly it is. But the DOT is very committed with regard to the level two charging... electric vehicle charging also.

In terms of the costs of each of the chargers. For fast chargers, one hub of installation is about

four chargers is around \$1.75 million. And these locations are capital eligible locations. For level two chargers and municipal garages, each charger costs approximately \$20,000 for installation. And then at the same time also we're building an evaluation plan for each of these chargers so that we can have a monitoring plan and we can report on what their status is.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Where will the charging stations be located?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well, we are in... Charles, you want to start?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: With regard to the charging stations, we did an analysis. We worked with the each of the community groups, and so we have an equity that is guiding our efforts with regard to most of the privately funded EV chargers in the city are located in Manhattan, and the others are in Brooklyn and Queens. We're seeking to expand access access in charging to areas where the private market is not investing so that we can fill the gap so that it's not only those who can afford it, or who have their homes, have access to garage, because we know

that 50% of New Yorkers park their cars on streets and they don't have access to a garage.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So you know, equity is the top priority on where we will continue installing those electrical chargers. And you know, having an electric car is not a luxury. This is a way of how we can say that... not to say... this is one of the ways of how we can contribute to save the planet.

And we need to combine both: One, hopefully electrical cars will be affordable to continue looking for incentive for people to get into electrical cars, but also to install those electrical chargers besides middle and upper class neighborhoods to also the underserved community. So... so equity is a guidance for effort. Most of the privately funded electrical chargers are in the city, located in Manhattan in the inner ring of Brooklyn and Queens. DOT is seeking to expand access to charging in areas where the private market is not investing, including low and moderate income communities.

One focus is on our _____. Across the city we are seeking to create charging hubs with both L2 and DC fast charging. Most of these facilities are in our outer borough areas. So we're looking to

identify municipal properties working with in any party that we can have, because electrical chargers cannot be only... and will not be only in upper middle class communities. We will see they put in all communities across the 5 boroughs, especially giving attention to the underserved communities, who people suffer the most when it comes to asthma, when it comes to obesity.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And thank you for that, Commissioner. That was a great segue into my next question. Because I guess you all know that I'm always going to go down that lane for equity.

And so I wanted to know what the department is doing to ensure that charging stations are installed across five boroughs equitably? And what DOT considers installing... or would DOT consider installing additional charging stations in neighborhoods with high asthma rates? I also want to take a moment to say, you know, my observations have been a lot of the pilot programs which I'm going to get to a question on that as well, have not necessarily been centered in transportation desert communities. And so with the electric vehicle charging stations, as we are encouraging New Yorkers

to begin to use electric vehicles, we want to make sure that it is convenient for them to be able to use those type of vehicles so that they have a more environmentally friendly means of transportation.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, well, you know, we are funded to do a study. We will look to... we will look at neighborhoods where a large proportion of drivers park on a street, and where there are limited off-street parking facilities, and we welcome any feedback...feedback from councilmembers... any input that you and the rest of the councilmembers may have, we are more... more than welcome to sit down with you. But definitely, we will see the expansion of electrical chargers from the lens of equity, and it will mean that we will pay attention to those communities, that they have not, and even I can say, that this is conversation that I even had as a commissioner here, you know, with my colleagues. You know, there are some electrical charges that I have in my district, but even in my own district, those electrical charges had to be spread to the working class area that I have in my district. So, as a commissioner, I am working here with the team to be sure again that we spread those electrical chargers

across the five boroughs, but specially paying attention... not paying attention... putting many of them in the underserved communities.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.

Next I'm going to pivot over to the camera fines. I know that chair Brannan mentioned it. You spoke about the home rule. I also am a supporter of it... the camera... the cameras as well. I'm someone who's been impacted by it also. But I do want to talk about the... the revenue that comes from it.

And so we know over \$200 million in revenue was collected from the city's bus lanes, speed, and red light camera programs, and are collected by the Department of Finance.

All revenue collected goes into the city's general funds, which is then later distributed across city agencies as needed. Does the Department of Transportation receive back any of the revenue generated from the city's bus lanes, speed, and red light camera program? If so, how much?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, no... I... As someone that has been there for 12 years, and it is likely my experience that I had as a teacher before becoming a councilmember. I tell people when you

work as a teacher, you will act as a teacher forever. So when you've been a councilmember, I cannot disconnect myself. Now being a commissioner for what I know the role that you have to play to be sure that agencies are accountable. To be sure that when we raise revenue, we use always... we reinvest those revenue in our community. So what I can say is that the city invests significantly more in Vision Zero than the revenue generated from the speed cameras. From FY 14 to 21, the city has spent more than... in the city, meaning the council and the administration. So he's not always saying that, you know, we are the one doing it. This is the budget at the end of the day will be the handshake as a result of both the council and the administration agreement.

So whatever source of revenue we have, regardless if we go to the general fund or not, the question will be: How do we use the money? So when we look at how we use the money, again, the city has paid more than \$1.7 billion in capital... in expenses in furtherance of Vision Zero, which is allocated to the areas that need it most based on Vision Zero Borough Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. Over the same period revenue from the speed cameras totaled \$555 million.

So when you look about the investment that we have made on redesigning our streets, following our Vision Zero goal of \$1.7 billion, and you compare years we raised \$550 million during the same period of time, from 14 to 21, definitely we are reinvesting the money. Because in order for us to earn money, the \$900 million that the mayor was able to allocate, you know, whatever additional funding we can get, that money has to come from somewhere. We don't have unlimited resources.

So I know as someone that lives in northern Manhattan since 1983, that question comes, when it comes to equity related? How are we spreading those cameras? How is the money coming back to the community? The answer is first, the camera are spread almost equally across all communities. The morning that we raise are re-invested on improving safety, in this case \$1.7 billion that have been invested as part of Vision Zero from 2014 to 2021. And when it comes again to... because I want to appeal again... We are in in in the in the stretch where it essential governing is almost done. That will be done very soon. We need a home rule. We need to be sure that we work in partnership with the

U.S. Chairman of Transportation and the colleagues from the state, that we need to expand the speed cameras, that that is _____. Those 70% of crashes are happening in area where the speed cameras are off from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. It is something that we can reduce. Anytime that that camera is off, there's beautiful New Yorkers, and smart New Yorkers, can be a child, can be a senior citizen, can be a daughter, you know, who lose their mother in any part of the city, because someone is a reckless driver. So, again, having a home rule where the city should have a speed camera, 24 hours, the whole years, speeding is speeding 25 mile per hour saves lives. Anyone go... and again... and people get a ticket when they go north of 26 or 27. They just get a ticket when they are at 35. So we are even given some space for those drivers. So someone who got a ticket because they driving 50 miles an hour. If you see the car, an investigation is still going on. But I... I was there close to NYU, holding the press conference where a 21 future doctor lost his life.

Investigation is going on. There's no conclusion yet. But when you see that car. That car has to be going more than double of the 25 miles an hour. So

we need again, the city hall for the state to allow to expand the camera to 24 hours, also the whole year, and the other part is about, Chair, that, you know, we started this program, putting those cameras around the schools. But we have many areas that they are out or the quarter mile from a school where we can install these cameras. So the speed cameras save lives, we need to get home rule, and the council is a great partner. We need to support every council member to be sure that by the end of this session, not only we pass a bill for home rule, you know, at the council but also the state, so that by July 1, not only will the camera will continue on, but to expand the program. So I appreciate your support.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that. And I just want to stay on this for a little bit... for a moment longer, just because I really want to zero in on how that money comes back.

So when you look at the communities that have the highest traffic fatalities, because you mentioned that the money gets distributed equally across the city. But there are some communities that have a higher traffic fatality. And so I'm interested in understanding if DOT has been investing more than how

you sprinkle out the general money, recognizing that there's a need to invest further in the infrastructure, such as speed bumps, and daylighting, and other means in the toolbox to be able to slow traffic down in the communities.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let me let me correct myself. Probably I didn't... you know, I wasn't clear.

I said, the cameras are equally distributed across all neighborhoods. And I say that because I know that sometimes, you know, as someone also who is part of the black and Latino community, and Asian community, we know who... an immigrant myself... we have that reality that sometimes those working class neighborhoods, they have felt that they've been targeted. But the first thing that I want to assure that, no, the speed cameras are everywhere. We are... and the reason why is because we have to change the culture on how we drive in the city of New York. Then down the street by _____, when someone gets a second ticket, most of the time, they don't get a third or fourth one. And at some point people get it. It's like, you know, any of us can get a ticket. The question is, if you get it, can you

change the way we drive? You know, and so we are... we are equally distributed. But when it comes to, you know, the money part... how we invest the money, let me also... beside what I said, I said dependent, that my point was, the speed camera has allowed us here in New York to raise \$555 million from 2014 to 2021. But we have invested \$1.7 billion, you know, three times more on Vision Zero initiatives. That's my point, that when we count it at the end of the day, it doesn't matter from where it comes, if the administration needs the money, we need to get revenue in order to do the project. So we have... we don't have any intention to raise \$1 from a speed camera. We hope that we can get a day where there's no one ticket, but in order for that to happen, we need to change the quarter. The revenue that comes is our revenue is reinvested on Vision Zero initiative.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And I appreciate that and I want to get to a point where there's one day where there's not a traffic fatality. And I think to get there, we have to make sure that we are also investing in the communities. So I would love to see a breakdown of the districts... the council districts

in the order in which there's traffic fatalities.

And how much money, in terms of Vision Zero, is going to those districts to address these traffic fatalities.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'm more than happy, Chair, to follow with you. And that's what we want to get. As you heard my testimony, you know, all the data that we share, as there are a lot of projects that we have done, or that... that we are on line to be done, that included redesigning dangerous intersection, creating protected bike lanes and bus lanes, but... and we also have a data that also we can share with any council member about all projects that we have going on in their districts.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No. Thank you for that, commissioner. I'm looking forward, as I've said plenty of time to working with you and the administration to being able to create safer streets for all New Yorkers.

Switching over to the bus lanes: Funding of the city's bus lanes is a key component to reducing private automobile use and alleviating traffic deaths. However, implementing a successful bus lane system takes coordination between DOT sister agencies

and most importantly local communities. Is the Department of Transportation working with the state and MTA to ensure city bus routes and lanes are benefiting local communities? Does the Department of Transportation solicit feedback and conduct outreach with local communities and businesses... and business improvement districts to ensure that bus lanes are not disrupting neighborhoods and businesses? And I'll just say that, as the Department of Transportation knows, I've been convening a city-wide transportation infrastructure... infrastructure tour, and visiting the districts, especially where there are merchant corridors like in Councilmember Williams's and Gennaro's districts, we have received feedback that our small businesses have been, in some cases negatively impacted, and they have ideas of how we can reach a middle of the road. So I'm just interested in seeing how the sister agencies are working, so we're not addressing one issue, but creating another issue for a sister agency.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, so DOT is supporting MTA efforts to redesign the bus network to better match the traveler needs on New Yorkers, but

let me also pass it on to Eric, so that he also can expand it the answer to this question?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. And... and you're exactly right: That these projects work correctly when they work with the city, and the MTA, and local communities all working well together. And when we do our bus lane projects, we work very hard to do that. So as the Commissioner said, as the MTA is doing their borough wide redesigns, we're working hand in hand with them. They run the buses. We know that nothing works without them. So with bus stop placement, making sure that they run the buses quickly, trying to provide more service, they are good partners in all the work we do.

We also work within the city family with all of our sister agencies, Small Business Services has been very involved in a lot of the bus work that we've done, but also sanitation... all of our other agencies come well together. And we know that bus corridors are often the very busy business corridors in neighborhoods. And we know that... that, you know, we don't just want people taking the bus through a neighborhood. The buses needs to be part of a vibrant local economy as well. So we... we work

very closely... we have a team that will go door to door and talk to businesses about their parking and loading needs. We try to make sure that we very carefully design the street, that where parking is needed, where truck loading is needed, we can accommodate that. But we also don't do these projects and then walk away. We put them in and then we stay in very close contact with businesses, with B.I.D.s. And if adjustments are needed, we always are willing to go back and talk about that, to do that. We've measured these projects over the years. One of the first ones we did on _____ Road, we looked at tax revenues, and we found that overall, we think these projects are not harming businesses. But we also know that it's a terribly tough retail environment out there, and anything that... that can push a business over the edge can be a problem. So we do want to stay in very close touch as we do these projects to make sure that we're providing the benefit for the two and a half million New York _____, but we are also doing it while being responsive to the very local concerns on a particular block or a particular business. So it's... it's a lot of work. We spend a lot of effort on it, we

think mostly we get it right, but where we don't we want to keep working and make sure that that we can improve what we have out there.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. And I'd encourage you to reach out to Councilmember Williams to meet with her and her B.I.D.s in her district because there were some specific concerns there.

Switching over to the scooter share pilot: Last spring, the Department of Transportation launched a scooter share pilot program that was scheduled to last at least one year. Can you please provide the committee with an update on the on the pilot? What vendor was selected? And how DOT decided what neighborhoods would be selected for the pilot program?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We did a competitor selection process, and Bird, Lime, and Veo were selected as operators. The pilot launch was 3000 Scooters in phase one, including Eastchester, Wakefield, Trenholm Parkway, and Coop City. So over 530,000 rides were taken in the first 8 months. DOT operators plan to expand to phase two including Throggs Neck, Parkchester, Sunview, and increase the total pilot fleet to as many as 6000 scooters in June

2022. DOT selected the East Bronx as a pilot service area based on population density, assisting traffic and bike infrastructure, and relationship to the Citi Bike service area. And this is something that will... micro-mobility is something that we're looking to continue expanding as a pilot project showing... showing how successful they are.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yeah, I think we need to make sure it is getting and reaching the communities that have a great need for it. I know, like in my district, we don't have that ability in some parts of the Bronx, but I just want it. I would love to see that expand out.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'm more than happy, Chair, to work with you and... and the partners in the micro-mobility. And let's also include it as one of the items, as I say that you know, we can have our bi-weekly conversation of things that is important for the members under your leadership that we can talk about it. So yeah, let's follow.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Awesome. I'm just going to ask one more question on my end, but then I'm going to ask a question on behalf of councilmember Narcisse.

So truck parking and idling. Parked, idling trucks adversely affect the health and well-being of neighborhoods like mine, and others across the city.

(1) What is DOT doing to address this issue? And (2) Would DOT be open to looking at unused parking lots as areas where trucks could idle?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. So Charles is the best person to answer that question, with him being our leader in that area here in DOT. I can say that for us, it remains as important as any councilmember that has to deal with a number of trucks parked in the residential area. I personally have one of those trucks parked on the same corner where I live, in the same block. And I had to you know, take their photo, push, do whatever, call the person, do anything. Now as a resident. I'm going to share the photo when we meet, so that you can see, you know, how I also deal in my community. But this is something that you know, we had to deal, but Charles can also expand on this.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: Last year, we... DOT released the Smart Truck Management Plan that covers most of the scenarios that we understand... the feedback that we received from various segments.

The concern you have with regard to truck parking and idling trucks is really one of those things that has been brought to our attention from various neighborhoods as well as what you just raised in this case.

One of the issues we're working... we do you have a task force with NYPD. Our freight unit does have a taskforce with NYPD where we meet every quarter to go over issues as they come up and we also go on site visits to the... these communities to address the issues. One challenge we have regard to truck parking is we do know that trucks -- commercially plated vehicles -- are not supposed to be parked on the streets. So we need a partnership with NYPD in order to adequately enforce. We do have adequate signage, but if there are any locations that... where there's a concern we're about to maybe there's some... will be willing to address that. Of course, if any observations such as those are brought to our attention, we'll investigate but we do need an active partnership with the police department in order to effectively enforce, and we're having that dialogue as we go.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And then in terms of the second part of question for unused parking lots to be used as areas. What about that?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well, let's say, we've been meeting with... also with the Trucking Association. This has to be a combined effort. And that you know, should include only the pre-initiative has been very successful. Also DOT has been running, which is to bring incentive for a delivery that uses those heavy trucks to do delivery a night, a but also when it comes to respecting the law or no parking, residential area, this is something that we express, you know, have expressed to the industry that we need their support to, where they need to be sure that they work with their drivers and, and for those who can stay in the Thruway, in the Jersey area, they should stay there and not come here, not come to the city when they don't have to. And also not only for exploring together potential areas is that we have on... in the city, but also... there's also members or... there's the other private sector, that they have big parking garages, that they also use those trucks. So we have again that conversation continues with the truck industry, and we work with NYPD on not

only enforcement but also to identify all the area where they should be able to park not to... and not to use residential areas.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, definitely I'm looking forward to working with you on that too. I actually met with someone recently that spoke about an innovative way that I believe Seattle has adjusted their infrastructure that can wait the trucks, and has an app with how they can find parking and everything. So we should explore and see what other cities are using also, so that we can find a resolution.

So the last question that I have for...

(crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: If you don't mind... if you don't mind, I'd add also to Charles to also explain a little bit why EDC is also... how we also are speaking to another sister institution in the city, and see how they can be helpful.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER UKEGBU: So, yes, I also wanted to add: Yes, we're working with the EDC, Economic Development Corporation, to... they do have private property also, not necessarily city properties, not a public right of way, but they do

have relationships with the real estate industry, that they can help us with that kind of dialogue.

Also, the precipitant of this whole issue with regard to overnight parking, we need to understand the broader... broader challenge. It's true that the federal government passed a law that requires electronic data logging, whereby truckers are not supposed to drive more than 12 hours at a particular time. We do lack public parking solution... locations here. There's only one, and it's actually in the district by JFK Airport. It's really one we helped to fund, working with Port Authority and working with...

And so part of our plan is to see how we can expand those types of opportunities across the city to other areas. But there is a challenge with regard to the value of real estate. But we're working with all the partners to ensure that we can do that.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, absolutely. And I think that it needs to also be a part of their business model to include an additional driver, my dad was a driver for many years for Greyhound buses and comfort buses, and when he drove long distances, they put an extra driver on there so that they could

be able to continue the course. So we do want them to get the rest that they need so that they can be safe and return home to their families. But... um, you know, they shouldn't shortcut it, and then put the burden on these communities where the trucks are parking.

Okay, so I'll ask the question on behalf of councilmember Mercedes Narcisse. She indicated the last two years have been incredibly deadly on our streets and we know that fatalities and injuries are higher in areas that have not received as much investment. DOT has a large budget and we know what kind of treatments will improve safety, but so often these investments are not made or take years to implement. What are the holdups and obstacles to quickly and efficiently invest in safety infrastructure?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Look, I again... Eric also can expand on this one. But while we can say that we are more than happy to share with any councilmember, as I have done, and with any of those that I have met, or physical, or walking the district, or having some Zoom meeting, or as I did with Councilmember Williams, I also I met here at 55

Water. So we are engaging directly with myself and the rest of the team with councilmembers to talk about what are the specific needs that they have.

We are following crashes. We are following data.

We are proactive. The investment that Mayor Adams did, and I as we will finish this budget

collaboration between Speaker Adams, you, and

Chairman Brannan, and the Mayor, I know that all of

us have the same commitment to provide DOT the

financial support that we need to continue investing

in dangerous intersections, dangerous areas in the

city. So I can say that I personally have been able

to spend these four months expanding my knowledge

that I have as a previous chair, knowing that DOT

with the support of the council, also will be getting

the funding to address dangerous areas that we have

in our community. Again, if any councilmember has

any particular need, if they have seen any area that

they... in numbers of injuries, a numbers of crashes,

and they believe that we have not responded, they can

call me directly, they can call my team, they can

call the intergovernmental division, or they can call

the Bureau Commissioner. We are here to save lives.

But let me pass it to Eric so that he can also start.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: The commissioner said it well. We are absolutely data driven and spend... spend our days going after the places that have the most crashes. What... what we've added to that, as part of the streets plan is those priority investment areas where we make sure that we're not only looking at high crash areas in in sort of the... the central parts of the city, but that we're addressing those safety needs absolutely all over the city. And, as the Commissioner said, you know, we are happy to go... to be with any councilperson to go through the... the borough's safety plans in their district, talk about where the crashes are in their district, and what we're doing to address them.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, and I'm going to kick it back to Counsel so that we get questions from my colleagues.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you chairs. For the record, we just want to also acknowledge, excuse me, that we've been joined by council members Sanchez, Stevens, Ayala, Carr, Barron, Narcisse, Rivera, Brewer, Restler, Williams, Ung, Krishnan, and Joseph. Hands have gone up and down, but I've maintained an order. So the order for questions is as follows:

Barron, Brewer, Rivera, Carr, Ossé, Ariola, Sanchez, Restler, Ayala, Stevens, Lee, Hudson, and Williams.

I want to remind council members that questions are limited to five minutes. When the sergeant calls time we ask that you please wrap up your comments, so we can move on to your fellow colleagues, as we do have two more agencies that the Committee on Finance has to hear from today. But we'll first turn to Councilmember Barron.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much. Good morning, all. You know, we always have the right rhetoric, particularly when a black or Latino gets in a high position, how much the commitment is, but if you say you're following the data, then the data shows that East New York has some of the highest fatalities and accidents, yet we don't receive the highest amount of resources. And this is long before you've come in. We've talked to prominent transportation on certain street issues. But the rhetoric... the resources have to reflect the rhetoric. It can't be just talking commitment. The resources has to show the commitment. So I thank Chair Brooks-Powers for bringing up the fatalities

and accidents, because we have some of the highest in the city. And we need to sit down and talk you need to come out to East New York and see the situation for yourself. I know Chair Powers is coming and we appreciate her.

Secondly, we have a lot of elevated trains and we need elevators for these elevated trains. Our seniors struggling to go up to the elevated trains, and for years. Oh, an elevator cost \$20 million. It costs \$10. When I was asking for it, it was \$12 million. Now it's \$20-some-odd million. We need elevators for our elevated trains, because our seniors are having difficulties. The resurfacing and the fixing of potholes: they need to have a kitty on the side to give to residents whose cars were almost destroyed by potholes, particularly the rims of their tires. And sometimes the resurfacing and the fixing of potholes is a shabby job, because they seem to just fill it up with something. And then about a month later, the pothole is back. So we need to look at that. We need more lights, traffic lights and stop signs, particularly in those intersections near our schools to bring down the dangerous intersections, the redesigning, we need that to

happen more in our communities. And we need a way to extend some kind of train service or something out to the Gateway Mall. The buses go out there, but I know when they wanted to go to JFK Airport, they extended and put another train out there to go. So in the Gateway area where we have a bunch of housing coming in, and new commercial businesses coming there, we need to look at train service to Gateway, and also the transportation... Well, the MTA deals with the buses, but to that train station out there, it stops at Astrid and New Lots, and it ends there. But to this whole new community coming out there, we need to look at transportation as it relates to that.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Councilmember is nice to see you.

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And thank you for your leadership and the great work that you do also, always standing and fighting for social justice, you know, that it is all my respect to you, and my great colleague, former councilmember Barron too. So I agree with you. And first of all, I'm more than happy to schedule a walk in your district. And more than happy to, you know, sit down with you identify,

you know, areas that we feel that we have to give priority that we cannot pay attention. So, so I, you know, that's... that's... you've got my commitment is on those two, following... following in those two directions. One walk through there and see, like, you know, whatever challenges we have in your district, as we're doing in the 51 Council district the same thing.

We have an ongoing transportation study, of the Gateway area. Their recommendation later will come this year. I feel that, you know, everything that you mentioned, you know, looking at traffic lights, let's follow... let's get our team from the office, from our team to identify areas near the school that you have seen. We're doing the best we can, that's in here doing a great job. But if there's any particular area that you can help us by bringing to our attention that we haven't seen, let's do that. On the elevator part, you know, that's on the MTA. So... so... I believe your experience, as it took me years and years to get an elevator when I was a councilmember at 129th...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: but... I am more than happy again to advocate together with you to bring into the MTA attention, but MTA are the ones who do the elevator. But overall, I think the summary that you have made is something that I agree with when it comes to identifying area that you have in your district, and lets schedule a walk that I will do together with you.

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: looking forward toward it. And one particular block between New Lots and Hagaman on Pennsylvania, we have cars that are up on the sidewalk, I had to ask the police department not to give them tickets, because we have a narrow two way street and the cars were getting this... you know damaged when they were parking on the side of it so that one I'll bring you to when you come out to the district.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you Councilmember.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Excuse me. Thank you Councilmember Barron. Councilmember Brewer?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay, she may be away from the computer. I will circle back. I don't see

Councilmember Rivera on any more. So next we'll turn to Councilmember Carr.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Councilmember Carrington Oral Wound Rinse? You're up.

COUNCILMEMBER CARR: I apologize.

Thank you Commissioner for being here today.

Thank you to our chairs. I just wanted to ask a few questions relating to road resurfacing piggybacking off of Chair Brannan. You know in in FY 21, we...

DOT was only able to surface around 900 plus lane miles citywide which was far less than the great strides that we made earlier in the decade. I can criticize the past administration for a lot, but they invested a significant amount in road resurfacing. I think 1300 lane miles was the peak in FY 16. And so you know, given that we're still staying at baseline levels, I'm wondering why we're -- and I know you touched on it earlier -- why we're not going to push through to the 1300.

Because in the previous decade, under the Bloomberg administration, DOT lost a lot of ground because it couldn't resurface roads faster than they were crumbling. And we had to catch up. That's why

we had those significant investments in the past several years. And after the COVID budget in FY 21, we were only able to do 900-plus, far lower than the 1150 you're looking to do now. We have an opportunity to kind of make up lost ground while we have revenues.

And so while I understand baselining funding is great. So it's wonderful that we don't have to haggle below that. But I'm wondering, you know, if we can get a commitment, so really try to reach for that 1300 lane miles per year. And in the event that we do, will we get over 200 lane miles resurfaced on Staten Island as happened previously when we had those numbers. And will you also commit, if we're only going to be at the 1150 that we will at least get the 155 to 160 lane miles for Staten Island if we if we maintain the baseline levels of funding.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: First of all, Councilmember, Staten Island is now the forgotten borough anymore under Mayor Adams' administration. And whatever is important for your constituents and for the whole borough, is something that we will be giving attention to, because we want to be sure that the residents of Staten Island know that your

priority in that borough is something that is a top one for Mayor Adams and here at DOT.

Let me pass it to Elisabeth to go into more detail on that question.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Um, 1300 is... is good, but it... to sustain that level of resurfacing, we would likely need more equipment, more facilities. And also a lot is tied to the resurfacing program like all the pedestrian ramps. The upgrades have to be done with that. And as we've discussed, I think over \$400 million had to be brought back into this five year window for pedestrian ramps. So there's a lot more that's going into resurfacing. So it's 1150 is a... is a high level that is more than what we had been doing previous to the 1300. And it's a really... it's a good sustainable level for us.

COUNCILMEMBER CARR: So are we are we on track for 155 lane miles this fiscal year? And if we do get the baseline funding, again, is that what Staten Island will at a minimum expect to receive?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: We are on track for the 1150 this year. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Not... not the 1150, but the 155 specifically for the borough.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Oh, for Staten Island? Let's check.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We can get back to it. Let me assure you that we are committed to, you know, do everything that we are committed to. But let's see where we are with the number, and we can also follow with you and your team.

COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Okay, I appreciate that.

I also want to ask about local law 52 of 2017. Commissioner, which you supported, during your tenure. Former Councilmember Mizel offered that law, and required DOT to do a study of private roads in the city and make up a report about, you know, potential roads for acquisition. You know, Staten Island has a number of private streets, we have a number of streets that, for all purposes are public roads that were CCO'd, and then there are private roads that are you know, in the middle of public road beds, that, you know, we reach out to the agency for resurfacing and we're told they can't be resurfaced, even though they're effectively a highway service road.

And so I'm wondering, you know, where are we in terms of the city looking at acquiring title to roads that have been in the public domain for some time, and that DOT has been responsible for in the past? And can we kind of pick up that conversation, you know, after this hearing and in the weeks to come?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Let's follow the conversation. We... This is something that we've been discussing internally here. I'm more than happy to follow up with you.

COUNCILMEMBER CARR: I appreciate it. Thanks so much. I yield the balance of my time.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thanks.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember Carr. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Ossé followed by councilmember Ariola. Councilmember Ossé?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you so much and good morning slash afternoon to everyone.

Commissioner, I know we haven't officially met in person however, you have a great opportunity to meet me. I'm throwing an event on Saturday, the 14th at 2 pm. We're doing a bike day right here in Bed-Stuy at

Restoration Plaza. I would love for you to be there. I hope I can put that on your radar.

But in terms of my questions: District 36, the district that I represent is naturally... is a naturally occurring retirement community, NORC, and I represent many seniors in our city. The biggest concern I get from my constituents is a lack of accessible transit options for seniors, and those with mobility needs. And while I know that many of those issues pertain to MTA, such as Access-A-Ride being inaccessible, many seniors feel unsafe on these streets, whether it's, you know, how cars drive, whether it's delivery drivers on E bikes going down the street. So I wanted to ask how much of the DOT budget will go towards expanding safety for our seniors on a city level?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Well, as you know, the \$905 million allocated from Mayor Eric Adams to DOT will be directed to invest on improving the safety of our roadways and our sidewalks, and the street, and for the agency to have all the resources that we need in order for pedestrians and cyclists to be safe.

I think that it is important that, you know, as the team here works, you know, redesigning dangerous

intersection, that also we address the issue related to reckless drivers. Because in an areas where we have, especially our senior citizens, they are the ones that when they are hit by the cars at intersections, they make 50% of the fatalities. So we need to be sure that we protect our senior citizens, and this is one of the priorities that we have.

Let me also call on Eric here to also add other information to that question.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Sure. As the Commissioner said, seniors are a special focus for us from a street safety perspective, because they're not necessarily more likely to get struck by a car, but when they are struck, they're much more likely to die from it. And so we really need to focus on making sure that people are not hit in the first place. It sounds obvious, but it is an incredibly important thing to do. And so we are focused on things like turn timing so people turn at slower speeds, and the speed camera program. Everything we can do to increase the ability to react, not as the car strikes the pedestrian, is really where we need to focus and to spend an extra effort in those senior heavy areas

to focus on that type of safety program. So we're happy to talk more with you and...

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Absolutely. Maybe... maybe on bike day on Saturday at 2 p.m., Restoration Plaza.

Another question that I have is, you know, lights are critical to ensuring public safety for our communities, and my constituents in North Crown Heights are often concerned about the lack of lighting in our parks, like Brower Park. I understand that the Department of Transportation is looking to install new bulbs and park lights that will bring in more illumination to the parks. And I wanted to ask what is the progress on this installation? And where have the bulbs been installed in the city? Is the Department of Transportation prioritizing neighborhoods that have previously been under-invested in, especially neighborhoods where parks need the most illumination?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, let's get Rebecca from the Intergovernmental...

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Yeah, Councilmember, I'll... I'll reach out to our lighting in the Brooklyn office and follow up with your office.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: That would be wonderful.

And then the final question that I have is...

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: I'm sorry... what was the park again? What was the park?

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Brower Park.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Yes. And the final question I have is, you know, the district that I represent is unfortunately home to the third largest number of traffic fatalities. This is due to the lack of enforcement of motorists. There are constantly vehicles at speed on our streets which pose a risk for pedestrians, especially our seniors, and motorists who double park and block protected bike lanes, making it unsafe for cyclists.

What part of the budget is DOT allocating to enforcing Vision Zero priorities and what is DOT doing to further ensure that our streets are safer for our communities?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Councilmember, as you can see in the back here, this is like you know our focus. This is about, we know, we... our focus on Vision Zero following the mayor's goal, which is to build a safe city. We want to build a safe city when

it comes to looking at traffic fatalities, not so far from a traffic violence is not so far from gun violence. So definitely you know, speeding is an epidemic. There is coordination... there is a trend that we have on numbers of pedestrians and cyclists... the cyclists losing their lives because of those drivers. So we are you know... not only are we investing...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... for the Location Awareness Campaign, but we are teaching drivers that they must slow down. _____ try to say over and over, 25 miles per hour is the speed limit in New York City. Drivers who drive at 25, they will be able to stop if they see a pedestrian, same thing, a cyclist. If by any chance they hit anyone, the probability that a person has a major injury is so low, the probability that person dies is so low. So what we are doing is (1) educating the drivers, but also letting them know there's consequences. And Mayor Adams also is calling on the N.Y.P.D., together with all them, and he put a message. There is going to be step up in law enforcement, because we want to be sure that, you know, working together with NYPD,

DOT, New York City, New York has to see... and they have seen already that we are stepping up enforcement, but please also help us you know, calling your senator, calling your Assemblymember, who are our friends, who already have expressed many of them that they will be working with us to ensure that we expand the speed camera and automatic enforcement, so that by July 1, we should be able not only to renew the program, we should be able to expand it so that we get this speed camera automatic enforcement 24 hours the whole year and lift the restriction that they only can be installed a quarter mile from school.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you, Commissioner. I hope to see you... I hope to see you on Saturday.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I'm gonna try. Okay?

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Okay.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.

Next we'll turn to Councilmember Ariola.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you, chairs. Thank you, Commissioner and your team for coming to... to testify.

I want to talk about the bike racks. So last year you received 10... you received funding for 10,000 new bike racks over two years. So in the portion of my district -- that's Rockaway Peninsula - - we've had some areas where bike racks were installed, especially along Shorefront Parkway, which... which runs along the beach.

Most recently, actually, in March, early March, we had a meeting with the Queen's team from the DOT to... to note, a number of issues along that strip that needed to be addressed, one of which were the bike... the bike racks. What's happening with the bike racks is anytime there is a snow of any magnitude that needs removal, the bike racks get plowed away. And then they get replaced in the very same spot. That is a tremendous waste of taxpayer dollars. We mentioned to the DOT team that had come down, gave them alternatives to where the bike racks could be placed, because they were they were broken, you know at the point when we met. And they came back and replaced the bike racks exactly where they were, only adding enormous boulders, which I will email to you commissioner in an area which is considered... it's almost to be like a buffer for the

for the bike racks. But this area is an evacuation route for the rockaway peninsula in the event of another superstorm. So I don't know what kind of thought was put into that and why the DOT did that. They did that without any notification not to my office, not to the community board, not at the civic associations.

We've also talked to them about the protected portion of the bike lane, where cars just... just naturally park there, and it is no parking. And we had asked for zebra stripes in those areas because a portion of it is where Parks Department has their facility, and once cars park there, they're unable to leave their facility with their vehicles and their machinery.

None of those questions not speed humps at entrances to large multifamily dwellings where it should be... should be installed, not the bike racks, not any type of remedy for the illegal parking and the fact that Parks Department cannot either access or... or leave their... their facility because of illegally parked cars, nothing was ever responded to. We have ramps that still need to be painted that go up and into where our concessionaire areas are. And

we're 16 days away from being from our... our beaches opening. 16 days. None of the things that were on our on... our list which the community board chairperson, Dolores Orr, detailed in an email so that... so that your team from Queens would know exactly what was discussed, and what needed to be addressed, and what they would need to answer, you know, yes, no, or maybe Joe was sent, we never received anything back.

And that's really... that is... that's unacceptable in and of itself.

But what was done was to poles got fixed. And as I said, the bike racks were put in the exact same spot, and then these enormous boulders were put side by side in what is considered an evacuation route.

So my question is, why aren't we getting a timely -- we're here at May 12th now, that was back in early March -- why aren't we getting timely responses from the borough office? That's number one.

Number two, why aren't we being notified and/or considered when making such decisions, like putting boulders in emergency evacuation routes?

And number three, why does DOT tend to be in many instances, reactive and not proactive when community

people... community people, community boards, elected officials are saying to them, this is what we need here. This is what we need to protect the community, people who are riding bikes, four way stop signs at this corner, zebra parking... zebra stripes so that no one can park, and this way there's not an accident with a beat a beach vehicle coming out of the Parks Department and a bike lane to cross, and then we have parked cars in that lane. I don't understand why everything goes back for a study, and never ever... and I'm asking you to really reach down because you were a councilmember, so you get this...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: ... why not use us as the real study... the real expert as to what's needed in the communities?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So Councilmember, definitely I will... I will be following with you. And as I have done it, you know, with the other colleagues, I am more than happy to schedule my team here to walk in your district. You know, being... being on the other side, so I understand, you know, the level of advocacy that, you know, that you are bringing on behalf of the residents of the district

that you represent. At the same time, I can say that, you know, we have a great team. You know, one of the things that I have seen being 4... 4 months here in this agency is that the team that I inherited here, you know, they have they be running the largest transportation system in the whole nation. And... and even though we definitely will pay attention to the needs of different, you know, realities, because each community are different. But you know, when it comes to expanding our micro-mobility, expanding our bike lanes, is important for us, because we also want to connect all New Yorkers, you know, all those additional access to transportation, but in those particular needs that you have mentioned, I am more than happy to get you our team to be following up with yours, and also to schedule a walk in your district.

COUNCILMEMBER ARIOLA: Commissioner, I welcome that, and I will have my office reach out to yours to set that up. Thank you for that.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember. Still not... Councilmember Brewer, are you there? Okay, next on my list is... Oh, there we go.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I'm here. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: I appreciate. I'm in a cab.

You know how I am. I have three quick questions.

And first of all... Ydanis is doing a great job. I

didn't know... but everybody likes you. I'm

impressed.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: You say it. I take it.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: It's an ongoing joke for those who don't know. And then secondly, Ed _____ is fabulous.

Three questions.

One is... I think you've given me before, but the status of the accessible pedestrian signals.

Number two, the data on... I think years ago, we had the data on incoming traffic to the Central Business District. Are you keeping track of that? If not, should you I don't know.

Then third, I know that you talk, to your credit, about figuring out on a pilot basis how to deal with the Amazon parking, the FreshDirect, the _____, the UPS, and so on. With... I know you're going to try to get some... rid of some of the 18 wheelers, do something different. I just want to get a little bit more on that because you can imagine, Westside, they

all order online. I never do but they all do. And it's a... it's a big problem.

And then finally the the intersection issue where you know, people park and then nobody can see and then somebody kills somebody. Is there something else we can do on that... on that front?

So those are my questions and thank you so much and congratulations.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Councilmember. You know that all My respect to your dedication also to be known only now, back as a council member in your previous role as the Borough President, that's something that I learned from you, is that you knew how to take care of the need that we have in all communities from the top to the bottom of Manhattan. So I'm more than happy to follow all the same, you know, commitments, as we paid attention here at DOT to all the needs of all five boroughs. So I'm going to be sharing the information, one on the intersection, say something and then on the on the APS and then the rest of my team also will add... answers to the other questions.

Look, I'm more than happy to do anything of the daylighting, anything that I can to identify

intersections where we have to remove cars. We are committed to use all the tools to improve safety. Most crashes happen at intersections, and normally, we are the team here that they are looking at redesigning the intersection. You know, in some cases separated the time for pedestrian to cross and driver to turn, but in other cases about the daylighting. So removing the car from the intersection that they block the visibility. So on the... on the on the accessible... accessible pedestrian signal, I've got to say that as of March 31, 2022, DOT installed APAs at 1004 intersections citywide. In calendar year 22, DOT planned to install APAs at 400 locations, almost double our high-water mark over the last two years when we average just over 200 intersections. And in calendar year 23, DOT plans to increase to 500 per year, and we plan to continue ramping up to eventually installing more than 1000 intersection per year with a target of having 10,000 intersections equate with APA... APA by the end of calendar year 2030.

Let me pass it now to Elisabeth, who will also answer the other questions.

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2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: The other... I
3 can't remember the other questions.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: So we have
5 neighborhood loading zones. (crosstalk) Hold on one
6 second. So it's great to see you Councilwoman. So I
7 think Eric could talk a little bit about neighborhood
8 loading zones. And that... Oh, Charles too sorry.

9 And then... Could you could you repeat one of
10 your questions, because I tried to write them all
11 down, but you were too quick for me.

12 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: One was a APA. The
13 other one was the intersection.

14 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Yeah...

15 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. Which were the
16 other...?

17 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: You're muted, Councilmember
18 Brewer.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Sorry, I'm trying to...
20 the data of incoming vehicles to the Central Business
21 District? I think we used to keep track but I don't
22 know that we still do.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Yes, we do. We work
24 closely with NYMTC, the Metropolitan Transportation,
25

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2 Council, and we do collect that data every year and
3 it gets published.

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Do you want to
5 talk about the loading zones?

6 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, the... your other
7 question has to do with loading zones, especially
8 with regard to you mentioned... specifically
9 mentioned Amazon. I would say that we do have a
10 partnership with... uh, major delivery companies.
11 Amazon does have a cargo bike program by which they
12 try to deliver, uh, the kinds of things that you did
13 mention that people order online. But our goal with
14 regard to encouraging the cargo bike pilot program
15 was really to take as many substitutes...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 ...from our trucks from delivery, you know, to
18 make sure that that delivery goes in the most
19 sustainable and environmentally friendly method, from
20 the last mile, in some cases the last foot of
21 delivery.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: What we did is we're
24 working with Amazon... and not just Amazon but any
25 other operator who wants to use our cargo bikes, we

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2 do have a pilot program whereby we can designate
3 specific areas on the... on the... on the curb... on
4 the sidewalk... I'm sorry, on the curb, on the main
5 driving lane so that these vehicles can park and so
6 that people can receive their deliveries in the most
7 efficient manner. Ultimately, also, we're
8 integrating some of the cargo bikes also include our
9 electric assist, pedal assist bicycles that has
10 over... your... you attended the launching in
11 December of 2019 when it was launched, and we're
12 pleased to report that it's been a very successful
13 pilot. We're trying to make it permanent expanded
14 across the city.

15 The other components actually a neighborhood
16 loading zone program whereby we are also designating
17 spaces whereby drivers of taxis, Ubers, even personal
18 vehicles can load and unload in a designated area so
19 that this reduces double parking. We found that this
20 reduces double parking by up to... more than 73% of
21 double parking in areas. And that's significant
22 for... for us.

23 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank... thank you very
24 much. Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.

Next, we'll turn to Councilmember Sanchez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Hello, hey Commissioner, and hi, everybody at DOT. So great to see you all. Very, very excited to be in this version of things.

So my question is around street safety and micro-mobility. So very, very excited to see the deep investment that the administration has made in the New York City Streets Master Plan. But I think as you all know, and many people know, I was personally hit by a moped over the summer. We know that they are driving on the sidewalks, we know that they are not... they're posing a safety risk to a lot of our seniors and elderly people and all of that. And so in the Streets Master Plan, you know, the Bronx has 3%... currently has 3% of the New York City's bike infrastructure, that we are severely behind. You know, it's not representative of, of our population, and more and more people are needing the safety and security that could come from the... from extension of bike lanes. So can you just tell me a little bit about DOT's approach to safe micro-mobility, right?, to... you know, I am not one to push for enforcement,

these, a lot of these folks are working, they're delivering and all of that. But they're also using the sidewalks largely because they don't feel safe on the streets, because our streets are so... so dangerous. So can you tell me a little bit about plans for improving bike lanes, improving micro-mobility options? What are the tools in DLTs toolbox to address this issue?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. First of all, congratulations, Councilmember as we saw each other yesterday, you're expecting the baby. I know that. That, as you know is the very important for you and your partner, so congratulation.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so much. We're excited. And I feel like... I think that... we all know that we have to continue expanding micro mobility. You know, we have our consciousness and our hearts that go together when it comes to ensure that the working class community gets all the modes of transportation, so that they can that can use the mopeds and the bicycles and busses, you know, to move around. Those of us who know what it is to be living in in a community, that they have a transportation desert. Pursuant to Local Law 67, that prohibits the

operation of a moped sharing system in New York City without prior written authorization of DOT, it required operators to adhere to the DOT rules regarding operation safety and data sharing.

So we at DOT also make those who are the operators of the mopeds accountable to our... to the law that already passed by the Council. Moped share systems are a network or sub-service and publicly available electric Class B or C, limited use motorcycle. An operator must pay a permit fee of \$1000 for the initial, six-month permit, and permit... they they have to be sure that, you know mopeds should not be on the sidewalk, and it is not legal for them to do. So if there's any particular cases that you know that you have seen, that you have experienced, or their constituency bring to your attention, be sure that you bring it us. Be sure to let us know which operators are the one that has any mopeds used by any riders on the sidewalk. And we take that very seriously. You heard from my colleagues here, and I, senior citizen are the one who are dying in larger numbers when they are hit... not only by car, they also can die by being hit by mopeds.

So we want to be sure that as we expand micro-mobility we also take care of the more vulnerable population, which are our senior citizens.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: We absolutely agree with you that the investment in the on-street infrastructure is a big piece of that, and there is a very big focus on bike infrastructure in the Bronx this year. In the Fordham area, we have University Avenue going on right now. There's the whole Fordham area bike network that we're implementing, and we know that... we don't want it to just be an enforcement solution. We want to put in the infrastructure that lets people feel safe in the right places on the street.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, no thank you, and I just want to clarify we don't have... we don't have any operators here in the... in the West Bronx yet. What we have is individuals who are using these different devices.

And I understand, and maybe DOT can clarify, I understand that if your... if your moped is underneath 100 pounds, then you don't need a license. But if it's above 100 pounds, then you do need a license, and so there's... there's kind of like, just

a very confusing and, you know, difficult-to-enforce regime going on. But I think that's one part is the enforcement question, and...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: ...laws are there, but the other part is really about, you know, how we're making the streets safer so that folks can feel comfortable and feel like they can be on Fordham Road and, you know, not... not going through the parks, which they're doing and not being on the sidewalks

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I'm more than happy to follow with you, councilmember, to share more details when it comes to what is the weight of those moped that are allowed in the city, in which are not. But, you know, definitely I understand why you bring to the table that question that you asked, because that is something that affects your district, and that also affects us on the other side of the street in Linwood, in many other areas, in underserved communities.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: And I think I don't think I'm lying when I say this. I think we have a one-pager that clarifies the mobility of the mopeds,

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2 so I can get that to your office. And
3 congratulations.
4 COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so
5 much. And congratulations, everyone.
6 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.
7 Next, we'll turn to Councilmember Restler.
8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
9 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Councilmember Restler, are you
10 there? Okay, I will circle back. Next, we will...
11 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I'm sorry.
12 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay.
13 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I'm sorry. I'll come
14 back later, when... when I can. I apologize.
15 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Next, Deputy Speaker
16 Ayala.
17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
18 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay, next, I'll try
19 Councilmember Stevens.
20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
21 COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Hello. Good afternoon,
22 everyone. I just have a quick... a few quick
23 questions. And it was something that the
24 Commissioner said earlier. Hello, Ydanis, how are
25 you? I know, you said that the turnaround time for

like potholes and things being addressed is like a three-day turnaround. That hasn't been my experience in my district. And so I would love to work with your office to get... have that turnaround happen, because we have a number of platforms that are growing, and a number of sinkholes that have just been developing throughout my district. So I definitely would love some time to talk with you and your team about how do we get those things addressed in a... in a much more adequate manner and faster manner, especially since in other places, I guess it's happening in three days. So let's set some time for us to talk about that.

And then I think you touched on this earlier as well, just talking a little bit about how are we prioritizing transit deserts? And what are we doing other than the bus lanes and bike lanes? Because my district is... it's a unique one, right?, because we have a number of very steep hills and bikes always is not necessarily an option. And even with the bus, we design in some of those areas, they remove bus stops. So this is a much greater distance between stops now.

So just thinking about how are we prioritizing these transit deserts and what does that really look

like? And are we... do we have any monetary investments that we're thinking about?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I will start and probably the team... not probably... the team here also will complete.

Look, I feel that you know, all of us being have been fighting on the issue related to transportation deserts. That didn't happen overnight. No, it happened as a result when major investments in the city only happened in a certain area. It is not investment only in transportation. Like when you have an area, and you know I got _____ that the... the state comptroller is doing a study on Inwood, I guess, with a councilmember about what is the average time of a resident in Inwood to go to work, and you find out that 80% of the residents in my district, they have to travel an hour and a half to go to work. So I feel that besides you know, addressing... connecting our community with buses, with trains, you heard, like right now the MTA is working with Governor Hochul's leadership to, you know, connect all the trains to... using trains to connect Queens and Brooklyn, and we feel that, you know... we definitely had to have our long vision about thinking

about connecting underserved communities, those who live in transportation deserts with new train lanes.

However, we also know how expensive and hard it is to build those trains. And I think that the immediate resources that we have are our buses. And that's why we also want to be sure that we all work together to be sure that we redesign our bus system. This is the opportunity that we have to use, what I call the above-the-ground train system, into something that can move New Yorkers faster, where we can turn our bus services more safer and efficient.

COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Yeah. And I was gonna say that's where my issue comes in. Right? Even with the bus redesign, the solution was to remove stops. So now we have longer walks in between the stops. And so you know, even with that assumption, it's like, I'm hearing this, like, Oh, we're improving time, but no one was really talking about how these long distances are really hard for the disabled and seniors who live in the community, who are really struggling for those things. And then a lot of times the push is, "Oh, they can take a bike." That is not always an option, especially with our seniors, people with young small children, and so

that's why this is my question, because I don't hear any real investment around what... what the alternatives are, especially when they're removing stops. So I had... you know, I don't have much time, but I think that we should definitely spend some more time just kind of exploring that, because I don't really hear what that... what that plan is.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, and we will follow with you. And again, as I said before, with any council member that we have to spend more time, you know, visiting the district. We... my team and myself are more than happy to do it.

But you know the... when it comes to the buses, you know, we build the infrastructure. The MTA runs the program.

COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So I feel that it is important also that, you know, we engage with the senators, assemblymember and can, you know, for them to bring their input to the MTA when it comes to buses. But again, as you say: Yes, we are expanding... we are concerned in the interest of connectivity, to connect more New Yorkers in underserved communities in different types of

transportation. We need to expand... we need to bring them the protective bus lanes...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Because on the _____, most people who die, they were coming from a community such as the one that you represent, and the one that I used to represent, and most of the time because of asthma and obesity, and diabetes, and we feel that, you know, connecting those communities... our communities with bike lanes, bus lanes is important, but I see that question. And yet there is an interest in this administration, led by Mayor Adams, when it comes to figuring out how we can connect those New Yorkers who live in transportation deserts with additional source of transportation, modes of transportation.

COUNCILMEMBER STEVENS: And just one last statement, because I've heard a lot of talk about Citi Bikes again. And I just want to say I think that we have a missed opportunity where we could be investing and having a shared bike program led by people from the community and young people that really have a career pathway. And I think that we need to really be exploring those options of

having... and making sure that we don't have monopolies in our... throughout our city that we're supporting. But I think it's a missed opportunity. That is something that we should be thinking about moving forward with our young people. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember.

Next, we'll call on Councilmember Lee.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi, everyone, thank you so much, Commissioner, and to all the DOT staff that are here, as well as the Chairs, Brannan and our majority with Selvina Brooks-Powers. I just wanted to ask more specifically about the resurfacing, not so much with the pothole filling, but when there are repairs that are being done, my understanding is that the resurfacing, you know, once it's milled... the streets are milled, there's about a four to six week time period, before you guys do the resurfacing of those streets. And my understanding, and please correct me if I'm wrong, is that it is to allow for you guys to coordinate with DEP if there needs to be any other work that's done underneath the surface and to allow for that time, but I know that with some of

the you know sewage being replaced and the resurfacing, and the streets being torn up, some of the major thoroughfares in my district were torn up, and to the point where like a residential driveways were being blocked, and they didn't even have access to their own driveways for months. This was actually a very long time, and you know, when they inquired to the city, like it was... they were just kind of talked back and forth between DEP and DOT. And I think there was just a lot of frustration there. So I guess if you could speak a little bit more to how that coordination is happening in terms of the efficiency, and... and how we can help address our, you know, our residents', you know, our constituents' questions around... because it really is impacting, you know, just the noise, the fact they can't access their house, or where they live, their residence.

And so if you could speak a little bit more to the time period in between, after the milling happens and when the resurfacing happens, and how the coordination with DEP can be more efficient.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yep, I cannot say what happened in the past. As you say, we can talk, I know that this is something that we agree on. We can

talk about the present and the future, and learn from things that were not done correctly in the past. So definitely, you know, in the interest of the residents, and the street where they live is very important for this administration.

But let me... let's hear now from Rebecca, who also expand with more concrete details.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: So I think the DEP project... that's a [top-o] project. That's not a milling project. So when we mill the streets, we do keep them milled for a handful of weeks so utilities can do work, and like... ConEd can get... get in and do that. And then we don't usually leave streets milled for months at a time. I think what you're... I think the other project that you're talking about is a capital project that DEP is doing, and we issue the permits for that. And I think the Queen's office has been... and I think the blocking driveways I've heard before. But we can... I can follow up with your office in terms of how we coordinate on capital projects. But I don't think that's a milling project, if I'm... if I'm... if I have that right.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well, and just to be clear, but that's just one example. But like, there are

2 other streets where you know, after the milling takes
3 place, it's about four to six weeks minimum, before
4 it gets resurfaced. And so just wanted to know, the
5 reasoning for the time lag. And if there actually is
6 coordination happening with the DEP. Sorry, I'm
7 having...

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: We do extensive
9 coordination with utilities. I hope you're okay.
10 But... so it's an... it's an opportunity. So before
11 we put fresh asphalt down, we have the street open.
12 So utilities can do work. And they know that there's
13 a period of weeks that the street is going to be open
14 that they can do the work. So hopefully we can avoid
15 -- that doesn't always happen -- the streets then
16 getting cut into after they have just been paved. So
17 that's the reasoning for the street milling. I know
18 it's not pleasant when it's like that, but at the end
19 of the day, you hopefully get a bunch of utility work
20 done, you get a freshly paved street that doesn't get
21 cut into for a period of time. That's the reasoning.

22 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: And definitely we will
23 look on... on, you know, let's be sure that we
24 communicate... continue communication and see, like
25 any specific thing that we can do to, you know,

addressing what we can do better, faster. It is important for us here at DOT too.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: So I really appreciate that. And I just wanted to reiterate, I think what council member Brewer said earlier about, you know, we have a lot of folks, you know, we're a transit desert. And we have quite a number of disabled in our community. And so the signals and the lights... if we can get that... or if you could let us know how we can implement those more so in our district, that'd be great.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember Lee. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Hudson.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Hi there. Thank you chairs and hello, Commissioner. A lot of my colleagues have already asked some of the really pertinent questions I had in mind and thank you to Councilmember Ossé for uplifting the needs of older adults as it relates to transportation.

I wanted to ask a question about residential parking permits. I'm wondering if DOT has considered the effectiveness of such a program like what many

other municipalities including Washington DC have, and... or what the city would need in order to implement and enforce a potential residential parking permitting program.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, so what I can say, you know, we at DOT are always open to look for any new innovation idea. There have been some concerns, you know, that DOT has done on other programs can operate but we will be more than happy to discuss with you further on these ideas.

COUNCILMEMBER HUDSON: Great. Thank you so much.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember Hudson. Next was Councilmember Williams, but she hopped off for another meeting, so she hopefully will hop back. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Louis.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Good afternoon. Thank you Chairs Brannan and Brooks-Powers for this hearing. Good to see you Commissioner Rodriguez.

Just... most of the questions I had were asked, but.. and I don't know if you've covered this already. I apologize if it was, but I wanted to have a quick conversation about the Interborough

Express. Though the Interborough Project is an MTA project, I wanted to know if DOT could comment on their role and how... how you all will be able to add funds in FY 23 budget regarding research or any type of... any part of the project.

The second question is in regards to Kings Highway. I want to thank DOT for their unwavering support for Kings Highway, and for applying for federal funds. I wanted to know if DOT could outline its Vision Zero investments regarding Kings Highway and how the agency will continue to support one of the biggest and most integral arteries that we believe in Brooklyn that goes between many council districts. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Let me get into the first one. And then Eric will also take on the second one.

Governor Hochum announced this transit expansion proposal in January 2022, which would connect the Jackson Heights with Sunset Park using existing freight rail right of way, and the MTA is currently exploring goals of Rapid Transit, light rail, or conventional... conventional rail similar to LIRR, each of which will have different costs, service

level, and performance. Currently, ridership estimates can go from 74,000 daily riders to... for BRT, 85,000 for conventional rail and 88,000 for light rail. The MTA anticipates choosing one of these to advance to environmental review process by the end of 2022. So they are the leading one, but we are more than happy to, again, to follow with you and make the connection with MTA.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: And then on Kings Highway, we couldn't agree more... like we're incredibly pleased to be investing in that corridor. There's about \$82 million in the capital budget for that. And, as you know, it's just it's such a big wide street, it is challenging for people to cross, there's tremendous speeding. And so a lot of what we want to do is make that street easier to cross. So you know, you see... we've done this already at a few medians. But really do the whole corridor, expand those into the crosswalks, so that pedestrians have a place... of refuge if they don't make it all the way across, slow down the turns, redesign all of those bus stops to be accessible to everyone using them, and use fencing to guide people to the crosswalks to get to those bus stops. It's really going to be a

full-on redesign of that... of that whole avenue.
And we think it'll be better for safety, better for
buses, to really try to take that street from being
almost a highway through the community to being
something that is really safe and accessible for
everyone who lives there.

COUNCILMEMBER LOUIS: Alright. We look forward
to working on that with you all. Thank you so much.
Cheers.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember
Louis. Councilmember Williams. I see you're on.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Councilmember Williams? Okay.
I will go to Councilmember Restler next.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Hi. Can you skip over
me and come back after, because I thought I was way
last in the queue. So...

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: We will.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Alright, we'll come back come
from. Councilmember Restler?

COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much. And,
and thank you to my distinguished Chairs, Brooks-

Powers and Brannan. I really appreciate both of your tremendous leadership. And I want to thank Justin also for shouting out many of the great staff at DOT, who are so responsive to us and helpful day to day. He shouted out lots of great folks from the Brooklyn office like Keith and Claudette, also, Rhonda and Emily in our part, as well as Daniel Zuckerman, who does so much to help our office day to day. I also just want to commend Commissioner Rodriguez. I really do believe that you care deeply about addressing safety and violence in our streets and that you're doing everything you can and pushing as hard as you can to try and improve the situation. So I want to thank you for your leadership there.

I want to commend some of the folks that City Hall notably the Chief of Staff, Frank Coron and Deputy Mayor Joshi and their teams for pushing to try and think about the future of the... the triple cantilever and think about a transformative and bold plan. We're certainly eager to get more information in my office, and my community is desperately seeking more info here, and we're hoping that that will come in the weeks ahead.

I do have to say that I have been really disappointed though by the Department of Transportation's lack of urgency in advancing the preservation strategies to keep the triple cantilever safe and functional for the 20 years that we're hoping to have before renovations need to... or transformation needs to occur.

And the dramatic reductions in funding by, you know, upwards of \$180 million that should have been spent this year, a reduction from \$225 million down to \$44.6 million that the Chair Brannan rightly shouted out earlier, is of grave concern. And, frankly, is indicative of the lack of urgency the DOT is placing on making the necessary repairs at this location. And I am very upset about it. And frankly, in my communications with DOT, I've been underwhelmed by the response that I've gotten from the agency. And so as it relates to the slowness of _____ installation, the slowness of the sensors being installed, the slowness of addressing water infiltration issues where we've had major flooding this very calendar year, I am disappointed and concerned about the safety of our community, and about our ability to preserve the lifespan of the

triple cantilever for these 20 years so that a bolder, more transformative solution can take place.

So my simple question is this. Well, the Department of Transportation, Commissioner Rodriguez, commit to meeting with me on a monthly basis to give critical updates on preservation strategies so that we can be sure that we are holding DOT accountable to... to extend the lifespan of the triple cantilever?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: First of all, congratulations to you and Anna, as you got married.

COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Yddanis, you're a good man. I love you. What can I say? Thank you very much. We're really happy.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Listen, there is no one who knows better City Hall than you. And you know how much time you have spent in your previous role, looking at the cantilever and the whole BQE, you know that... you know as you've been engaged in conversation with City Hall, and here we have previous a conversation that we have talked about our whole plan to... especially now that we have engaged in conversation with... with the state, and we believe that, you know, we have a big project to do,

we will do it together, we will continue doing the planning. There is no issue related to safety here at DOT, and Elisabeth can explain when it comes to you know, how we move money. No decision to move any money will put anything at risk. So we have a... our team of bridges. They have the resources that they need to be sure that safety is taken care of. But at the same time... and you will be part, as you have been in conversation, you know, with City Hall directly, and with us here too, as we move forward having planning conversation, we are looking to more engaged... stepping on engaging not only the local councilmember, but also the Borough President, and all the stakeholders. So let's keep _____, you know, be sure that when we follow the level of coordination. This is going to be a big project. But safety has never been an issue, when it comes to the resources of DOT has designated to that point.

COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that. And I know that you're planning a briefing for us... for myself and others soon about the future of the triple cantilever, but the preservation of the structure and is my concern. And if we don't do... act with extraordinary urgency and haste, to preserve the

structure for 20 years, it's... we're not going to be able to implement a bold, transformative solution that we all know is necessary, and that I know the mayor wants to achieve. And so that's why I'm asking...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: ...for monthly updates with DOT on the progress that you're making on the preservation strategies, particularly. This is the area where I'm very concerned we're not getting the responsiveness that we need. Is that a commitment that you're prepared to make? We will continue to meet. And as also we are trying to figure out, and we are coordinating with City Hall, how we're going to be bringing all the stakeholders not only the elected but all the voices of the community on discussing the future of that area, and this is something again, that, you know, we will have the time right, as you know, someone that happens at city hall, you saw for many years, and know how we work when it comes to the BQE, and the whole project is something that, you know, very soon you will hear on what is the next step on... on the community engagement, and that also will include the elected

official. On the council meeting, monthly, whatever, like I will have no issues again of coordinating our meeting between your office myself and the team here. But I... I prefer to say that we are working with City Hall. Let's see how we plan the level of coordination as we move forward. What I can tell you that Mayor Eric Adams is having a conversation directly with his team, and letting Albany know that coming together... planning together is very important for all to accomplish that particular big project. One of the most important projects that we have in our generation, when it comes to improving safety there. But one thing I want to be clear: Never has there been, or is there an issue of safety in that area. Our bridges division, our engineers, they have all the resources that they need in order to keep that area safe.

COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that. I know my time is expired, I would have greater confidence if there was if there was greater communication. And so I'm not asking for meeting with you every month Commissioner, but bridges... for the bridges team and your external, your _____ team, to sit with us every month and give us crisp updates

that I could share with my community would alleviate and assuage many, many concerns. Because I'm hearing every day from constituents who are freaked out. So I... I'll follow up with you. But I... I appreciate you answering the question.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember, Deputy Speaker Ayala, I see your screen is now on. You were on my list before, so I will turn to you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Thank you. And good afternoon, Commissioner. It's nice to see you. I haven't had the pleasure of seeing since you entered your new role. So congratulations to you. Obviously, I'm really concerned about, you know, the safety of our older adults and individuals with disabilities who are having difficulty navigating sidewalks that are in disrepair, and I wonder how much of this year's budget has been allocated towards sidewalk renovation and how much of that funding is specific to public housing sidewalks?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I can follow with a specific about the public housing sidewalk, but I can tell you, first of all, it is a... it's a great

honor, again, to be working with you, you know, in our role. I am here to support anything that will come to improving transportation in the whole city, but especially you and I know, because we were there together in previous, also speaker leadership at the council, and I know that you also are going to be doing a great job now working together with Speaker Adams, but we've been there, and we know that we are also committed, to be sure, that we protect all New Yorkers, but especially our elderly. Like you know, my mom was at 108 and Third Avenue, when they... when my apartment used to live at 1738 Lexington Avenue, where I did my swearing-in in 2019. So I will... I will continue working, again, in this case, we Commissioner AG, Lauren Cortez, who also always there caring for the senior citizen. But when it comes to, you know, the work that we're doing, the DOT had previously committed \$4 million annually for sidewalk repair on NYCHA properties. However, due to procurement delays related to COVID in 2021, DOT will increase this commitment to \$5 million for the calendar year 2022. So yes, we will be working together, the team here, you know, has the resources that are needed. Mayor Eric Adams allocated, you

know, close to a billion dollars for us to take care of a lot of the needs that we have in transportation, and taking care of the roadways and sidewalks is also part of her priority.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: How much... how much of the budget is that? And the reason that I'm asking is because I represent, you know, the largest public housing stock in the city. And not only... You know, so not only is the work not getting done yet, and I commend you're adding an additional million, but when one sidewalk is costing, you know, \$500,000 to \$800,000, for repairs, then we know that this is not going to really make a dent, right? The list of priorities that has already been established of the sidewalks that are in the most dire condition. So I appreciate that. But I would always argue that we need a lot more resources there. Because we, you know, I find that the city is really quick to fix, you know, sidewalks in front of private homeowners, you know, spaces. But, you know, the public housing developments would have the same condition ongoing for years. And what... what's happening is that we're seeing as a result that many of our seniors are like crossing the street, like literally walking in

the street because they can't navigate walkers, shopping carts, if they're a wheelchair users, they can't safely navigate the sidewalk. So now we're putting them at greater risk by forcing them onto the street with vehicular traffic. And that concerns me. And I would love to see some level of priority and a budget for that, because I think that it's something that isn't necessarily on, you know, anybody's radar, at least not... not any... in any space that I've heard it become a priority. So I really would welcome that.

And then I also wanted to know, how much of the budget is dedicated towards the highway and ramp cleaning? You know, the highways I know, specifically in the Bronx part, you know, going into the Bruckner, are in pretty bad condition. Normally, when I'm crossing over the Willis Avenue Bridge, I've had to personally call several times to have the bridge cleaned, because, you know, it's it hasn't been. And I get it, we were in the middle of a pandemic, but we have the resources to address these issues now. So I wonder how much of the budget is dedicated for that?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. I will pass it to our Budget Director here, Elisabeth, will that explain that... answer the question, but definitely taking care of the sidewalk is top priority because we know how important is our sidewalk for New Yorkers, especially for senior citizens.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Can I piggyback on that, too, Commissioner? Councilwoman, if you have priority locations, if you could send that to me or to the Manhattan office or the Bronx office, depending on where they're located. Then I would say even if they're not scheduled for concrete repairs, we could talk about maybe making some asphalt immediate improvements.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I will definitely do that.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Thank you so much.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: And for the for the cleaning of the bridges and highways, unfortunately, I don't have that number at hand. So we will have to get back to about that... that dollar figure.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Okay, and just before I end... it's not really a question, but more of a

suggestion: You know, recently we went through a situation in the South Bronx part of my district where Jackson Avenue was converted into a bike lane, leading to the connector that connects Bronx _____ to Randall's Island, which is great in theory. However, that street is very, very narrow. And it's also home to three schools.

In the Bronx, we have serious retention issues with educators, and most specifically, the highest rates of educators that are coming from out of state, from New Jersey, from upstate whatever, to teach in our schools. We don't have adequate parking space, and that was not something that was surveyed. So we had great difficulty, you know, trying to mitigate the impact of the bike lane.

So, you know, as we continue to have the conversation of how we introduce bike lanes, you know, into the city streets, we... we should also... there should be some study dedicated to that particular community to see what the impact is going to be. For me, it would have been pretty serious. And I... you know, I think that the idea that cars are a luxury for everyone, specifically for people that are living in, you know, in communities where

transportation is not as easily accessible, you know, is a disservice to that community.

So I would love to have more conversation, you know, with DOT around this, and I would welcome the commissioner as well to come out to the district to do a little tour so that I can show you some of the... the issues that are of importance to us.

But I think that on a greater scale. You know, as we're talking more and more about inclusion and inclusivity of bike lanes, that there has to be an overall assessment of what the impact of that bike lane is going to be on the immediate community.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I'm more than happy, Councilmember, to follow with you, and to do, you know, a walk-around and see what is important there.

I also want to, you know, to encourage you and to see how we can work together, because I feel and again, I say because we know that we have many conversation on things are related to the cycling community and I feel that also we need to educate our community about the benefits of cycling. I think that, you know, it is not only to build the infrastructure, as I said before, but it's about how

can we also you know, be able to work with a... with a local institution for them also to do their part? You know, teaching our... especially our youth about how riding a bicycle, you know, is good for the health tool. So... but when it comes to the parking... and, you know, it is something that they came around, and usually when we also expand our bike... a bike lane, I'm more than happy to have conversation with you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: I appreciate that. Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember Williams? I was told you're now ready.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: I am. Thank you so much chairs and Commissioner, for your patience. I think my colleague Councilmember Ariola, said it best, and Commissioner, as a former council member, you know that often we know our districts well. And for a very long time Department of Transportation often does this cookie-cutter model, where they have this bright and amazing idea, which is probably bright and amazing, but doesn't necessarily fit in every community and the ways in which maybe the agency

intended it to fit. And so that said, one of the first things I want to talk about is the bus lanes in my district in the downtown Jamaica area, it is absolutely horrific. We don't like them, and we want to see some changes happen. It's my understanding that the pilot is set to end a few months from now. But that is way too long for so many of the businesses that are losing business as a result of the bus lane that still isn't being enforced and isn't sort of offering the benefits that it was set to offer outside of certain metrics that talk about reduced time in buses actually getting through that corridor.

And so I wanted to know, what type of indicators outside of bus times are you using to really determine whether or not the bus lanes are working in certain communities?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. I can I can pass it to Eric again, to add... answer your question. I can think about my own experience when it comes to buses, that one refers... a sometimes you know, how a person feels when their bus lane is starting, but they will be losing, and at the end of the day, what happened is that they don't lose consumers.

Sometimes, you know, that bus lane ads, because more people walk in those areas. But each community is different. And again, you are the... you know your community, and we are more than happy again to... to hear from you, to work with you. And as you will hear from Eric, the positive thing he says is that we are always open to go back and see, you know, what has been a strain. But I just want to encourage all of us, irregardless on the side that we... that we... that we are elected or in a Commissioner level, that... understanding that, you know, when we bring that bus lane, we are connecting those group of the working class residents, who they don't have other modes of transportation. But I also know that we... that we also have to look for the small businesses back.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, it's not just the small businesses. Yes, the small businesses are the most harmed. But my district is a hybrid community. We have cars. And so when I think about the Department of Transportation, and maybe I'll just leave... I'll do a Councilmember Barron. And I'll just say a statement you don't really have to answer so I can get to another question that I like you to

answer, which is we are a hybrid community. And I think it's critical that the Department of Transportation takes into consideration that people do drive cars. We want to make sure that people that use public transportation have the proper resources to do that, that it's efficient, that they can get around well, but I think we need to really look at how we could make some small tweaks to ensure that it is not disproportionately affecting one group of people, one demographic of stakeholders over another and that is the case.

And so again, there's other things that the agency could be doing, resources that they could be allocating to the district outside of like dumping a bus lane that's still not enforced and still not properly... properly regulated.

So the other question I have is around school safety. I wanted to know if the Department of Transportation anticipates receiving an additional \$1 million in state funding in fiscal 2022 to support infrastructure improvement in school zone. So I have a whole bunch of schools that talk a lot about traffic safety. They have petitioned and lobbied for speed bumps, stop signs and to no avail, while

children are getting hit by cars. And so I wanted to know if there is going to be focused attention around school safety.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We are using all the tools that we have to use in order to improve safety in our city, especially the surrounding school. So we go from redesigning dangerous intersections to looking at any of the tools including to install the speed cameras, like the level of New Yorkers, especially they do that we are losing children around the school, there are too many, there is too much blood that we have, so we using all the tools, but let me pass it...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ...to Eric, so he can also add to it.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Absolutely. I know we've got some information on some specific schools. We were working on PS116, we put in some new all-way stops there. There is even more we can do PS176, _____, IS59, PS134. We're working at all of those places, because we agree, safety in and around schools are incredibly important. We work directly with the schools. We talk to the principals, we

talk... we work with students, we have a robust school safety program, and we will make sure we address those locations, and any others that you bring to our attention.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We're more than happy to... (crosstalk)

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: The pavers... the pavers in the downtown Jamaica area, DOT issues permits to different utility companies, and oftentimes, they do not properly replace the brick pavers. And so we'd love to know if any... how much it would cost to remove the pavers and just put regular cement on the sidewalks, so that... I don't know, I'm sure you don't have the question now, but that is something that I would like to explore, because it is a major issue in the downtown Jamaica area.

Also medians. I'm wanting to understand who oversees the maintenance and repair of medians, and if there are any resources that have been allocated in this budget to maintain the medians.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: I'll say this about the medians. It varies from agency to agency. Sometimes it's parks, sometimes it is us, so I think we'd have to know a specific location. And I'll let

Elizabeth talk about the funding part of that question. If you... If your office wants to send either the Queens office or my office specific median locations that you're discussing, then we can figure out the jurisdiction.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Thank you. I mean, we could... (crosstalk)

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FRANKLIN: Yes, we did get additional funding in this plan for maintenance of various public spaces, including maintenance. I'm looking for the exact dollar value, but that is going to be something we're increasing.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, just look for the exact dollar value.

Just my last final thing about bike lanes. So Southeast Queens really has no bike lanes, again, because we're a hybrid community. A lot of our community members are not huge fans of bike lanes, but I do think there are spaces that we could have more bike lanes. And so I'd like to work with the Department of Transportation, especially an area that has historic illegal dumping. That area could quickly be turned into a bike lane, and I know The

Mayor and City Hall has committed to keeping bike lanes clean. So I really want to have a conversation with the Department of Transportation about how we could expand some bike lanes into my district.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: More than happy councilmember to follow... follow with you on, you know, we want to expand bike lane, I think that this is not a luxury. This is something that is important for the whole of New Yorkers. And we want to be sure that, as we look at micro-mobility then also, we know that is community, most _____ a bike lane, and I'm more than happy to follow with you.

COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you so much. And thank you chairs, again, for your patience.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next we'll call on Councilmember Farias, followed by Councilmember Moya. So Councilmember Farias then Councilmember Moya.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Thanks. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you Commissioner and Team DOT for being here. I will be brief. I just have three quick questions.

In the council's budget response we had requested \$3.1 billion in DOT funding to transform our streets

to be safer, more accessible, and equitable. This included 500 miles of dedicated bus lanes and 40 miles of car-free busways. Can you share, if you haven't already -- and if you have, please tell me to refer back to the record, because I have been hopping in and out -- can you share what projects are included in the mayor's \$900 million budget? And Will any of the council's expanded goals be met? Are there any potential cuts?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. First of all, we are we working with a goal of Mayor Adams on... on building the numbers of bus lane that you mentioned. We are happy with the support that we've been getting also from the council, and we feel that the \$905 million... almost \$1 billion level that the Mayor designated to DOT as a down payment. We allow our division here to teach to other resources that they... that they need in order to advance, you know, the Street Master Plan, to have the bus line, the bike lane, so as we always say at the beginning, we always welcome more, but we feel that as we're going to be working with OMB, they always will be there, and working with us to make sure that we continue having the resources in a city that we have limited

resources in order for us what we need, in order to continue turning York City as a safer city when it comes to pedestrians and cyclists.

COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so much. The mayor's administration has also committed numerous times to exceed the legal requirements of the NYC Streets Plan by completing 150 miles of bus lanes in just four years rather than five, which is great, and we'd love to hear that. But we haven't yet seen a plan for completing the 20 miles required in 2022. Do we happen to have any bus projects planned for 2022 to meet that goal? And is DOT on track for completing those 20 miles by the end of the year?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: We do have it and a goal... we will get there. Let me provide the break down. I think that we... I can share it with you now.

So... so in some of the upcoming projects involve University Avenue in the Bronx, with new bus lane and new protected bike lane. For the role in the Bronx, an initial community advisory board meeting was held in March. For the role in the Bronx, the first SBS project from 2008 was 21st Street in Queens, and also BF6 in South Bronx, Crosstown Capital Project in

design in 2023. Yes, we are... we will be building the numbers of the 20 bus lanes, and we are working with... to accomplish that goal on the numbers of bus lanes that Mayor Adams committed himself.

COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Great. Thank you so much.

And the last thing that I'd like to ask about:

Recently, Chair and Councilmember, Selvena Brooks-Powers and I did a quick walkthrough of some of my major corridors... transit corridors and arteries throughout the district. One of the main concerns that I have, and that I brought up, and I'm sure we're dealing with city-wide as well, is the absence of bus shelters throughout our communities. You know, while we were touring through -- and I know Commissioner, you and I want to do want to do a walkthrough as well, so we'll be able to see this when we plan on our walkthrough -- we have a lot of elderly folks that are like leaning on hydrants or, you know, sitting on the sidewalks kind of waiting... waiting for the buses to make their way to that stop.

So I just want to know, going forward is there a plan to look at aging communities or highly utilized stops within communities to add any additional bus shelters?

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2 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, Councilmember.

3 That's our goal. And... we are in conversation we
4 JCDecaux regarding a potential opportunity to add
5 additional shelters and that has been on hold since
6 COVID, but just for your information, we had 3,320
7 bus shelters in the JCDecaux design currently in
8 service, 3,558 bus shelters in JCDecaux, designs are
9 installed in some workplaces out of service to
10 accommodate construction or the stop being moved by
11 the MTA, and others permanently removed due to the
12 MTA service code. We... we know our community when
13 it comes to the _____, and we know that we need to
14 have more bus shelters, not in your district, but in
15 other areas...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... not in your
18 district, but in other areas, I walked in Queens, and
19 I know that it is important for the Queens residents
20 also to get more bus shelters. This is a need that
21 we have across the five boroughs. And this is
22 something again that as we are having conversation
23 with JCDecaux regarding potential opportunities,
24 we're looking to add additional shelters... bus
25 shelters _____.

COUNCILMEMBER FARIAS: Great. Thank you so much, again for all of your testimony and answering the questions. Thank you to the chairs for allowing me the time. I won't take up any more. I appreciate you folks. Have a good day.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you Councilmember Farias. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Moya.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner. Good to see you. Cómo tú estás?

Listen, I want to just quickly talk about the open plazas. One: What is the budget for the direct services that the DOT has for public plazas? Two: What's the total cost of the contracts to external organizations for operation maintenance? And then also what is the average length of those contracts? And what are the mechanisms in place that you have to see if they are... they're actually fulfilling their obligations with the public plazas?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Give me one second Councilmember. As I announce... Give me one second, let me go back to... let me get the right information...

So... so council member, the OneNYC Plaza Equity Program addresses the need for NYC Plazas under the resources for neighborhoods where community-based partner organizations face challenges to maintain high-quality public space. 31 plazas have received support through the equity program, 17 high-need plazas received a full a suite of maintenance services. 14 medium-need plazas received financial subsidies of up to \$20,000 per year to support maintenance operation and programming, and all plazas in the program received technical assistance to... with fundraising operations, planning, and programming. So we feel that, you know, we are in a good place when it comes to providing those communities that doesn't have the resources, to have the technical and financial support to maintain those plazas.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: So let me ask... So wait, is it... you said it's \$20,000 a year that DOT puts in there to maintain these open plazas?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: This is... so it depends on the need of the of the partner. If it's a high-need partner, we take care of... (crosstalk)

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Define what's... what's a high-need partner.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BEATON: Basically if... if the partner is not able to take care of the plaza themselves, we still partner with them, but we end our contractor will do the maintenance for them.

If the partner is able to take care of the plaza themselves, but just needs some financial assistance, then we do that up to \$20,000. So they... for a high-need partner, we don't put a cap on it. We... we do the services that are needed for that plaza. If it's, you know, a partner that just needs some financial assistance, we do that up to \$20,000.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Okay, and... and what is the average length of the contracts that you have with these partners and the open plazas? And what are the mechanisms that you have in place that you look at to see if they're actually fulfilling their obligations?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: So through the... through the OneNYC Plaza Equity Program, DOT has supported a new public space, and based on the lessons learned over the past 5 years, a of our OneNYC Plaza Equity Program and recent street work to have the city cleanup corps. Right now, we are

restructuring our program to be more supportive of a wide variety of public spaces, and finances for the city. And we... the question related to you know, the funding, DOT was pleased to receive an average of \$5.4 million for public space management and maintenance on top of the system's baseline Open Street and other funding.

So I feel that, you know, our... our focus on providing the support, especially our... those plazas who are mainly in the underserved communities, who are in more need not only of technical support, but also funding for programming too.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: But I... what is the... the length that that you have with... with these operators? What's the average length of these contracts? And what are the checklists that you have that continues to renew the contracts with them? What are those? What are those mechanisms that you have in place to see whether they're doing their job or if they're not doing their job? Because I have a big problem. You came to see my district, Corona Plaza, where, you know, the city invested over \$5.6 million in redoing that plaza a number of years ago.

And it is a problematic place there. I need to know exactly like, what we're doing here.

You still haven't answered the question of how you go about getting these contracts done, what is the lengths of time. The one in Corona Plaza in particular was given the nine-year contract. I've never heard of that. That a nine-year contract is given out to a vendor that comes in here with no real community vetting whatsoever. It was just that I was told that they had enough money for insurance. So I really want to get to the core of this because this affects our communities. Communities like mine. They... you know, the people, the number one complaint has been about Corona Plaza. The quality of life that goes... that has gone consistently down. So I really want to get these answers so I can understand what is the process that the DOT has when (1) they select the vendor, and their conversations that they have with the community and the local elected officials here.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Councilmember, we will follow with you with detail that... as it pertains to, you know, the timeline and other needs that you have as you follow from the work we did together in

the plaza. So, let's follow with your office when it comes to providing the opportunity. One of the things that I can tell you is about that it doesn't matter for the numbers a year that a... any institution will run a plaza.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: I think that there would be a requirement, just like the city that, you know, who determines the amount of years that you give a contract to? Like I've never heard of a nine year contract being awarded just like that for a vendor.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. So... so the answer is that we will revise that particular length of time that was given to the institution that... regarding the plaza in your district, but what I can say is about... I know that any institution running any plaza, regardless of the years that they have to run it, DOT and I will check... we will regularly follow with you. We will always have the right to revise any one that is running a program, and if the program is efficient, we will go with a year that they get a contract to run it, but if anyone is not doing the job to run any plaza efficiently, especially responding to the needs of the community,

we are the only will revise it. But I will follow with you... (crosstalk)

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: I don't mean to... to Commissioner, but you know this... this isn't something I... This isn't something that is new to you. I already spoke to you about this. You were actually there. I still haven't heard what are the mechanisms that you have in place that actually determines whether or not they're doing their job.

Your response to me is, well, if they're not doing their job, then we'll review that. Well, if it's under your purview, and you've already heard from me, the local council member, and the community, I want to know what are the mechanisms in place that you have already. That does spot checks on the vendors that the city has actual contracts with?

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I will follow up with you...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: ... myself or the team here at DOT, but I understand the need that you have in the plaza and what happened, and I am more than happy to continue to work with you. But I know that

you have a specific question, and I will be following with you to provide the answer.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Okay, I appreciate that very much, Commissioner. And thank you Chair for allowing me the extra time. I appreciate it. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: And thank you for coming with me to the district too, Chair. I really appreciate that tour. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: It was a great time.

COUNCILMEMBER MOYA: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Thank you everyone. That concludes councilmember questions for the Department of Transportation. I will now turn it back to the chairs.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Majority Whip, Do you want to take it?

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I just want to say thank you to our colleagues and to the administration. We clearly went way past our time, but I think we were able to touch on a lot of important issues concerning transportation infrastructure across the city. And I believe with the administration taking back this feedback and with

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2 the body taking back this new information, we'll be
3 able to be in a much better place. So thank you so
4 much, everyone. And thank you, Chair Brannan.

5 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Majority Whip.
7 And, Commissioner, it's great to see you. I look
8 forward to working with you. We acknowledge that
9 this administration is only five months old. But...
10 but a lot of your team has been around, and they've
11 been very responsive, and we appreciate that. And...
12 and I think the breadth of questions that you saw
13 today just shows what... what a integral and
14 important agency the DOT is in... in the everyday
15 course of business that we do in our communities. So
16 we appreciate your time today and thank you so much.
17 We look forward to working with you going forward.

18 COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you Chairs. And
19 you know all those questions were similar to the one
20 that I asked, right?, back when I was _____. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right on Commissioner.
23 Thank you so much
24
25

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2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: All right everybody bear with
3 us we're going to switch over to Moya, and then we
4 will get the second leg of our journey on the road.

5 [TWO MINUTES SILENCE]

6 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: And good afternoon to
7 Director torture Ricci if you'd like to test your
8 audio, you can do so now.

9 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Good afternoon Sergeant
10 testing.

11 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear.
12 Thank you.

13 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Thank you.

14 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: And Executive Director
15 Montesano if you'd like to test your audio as well.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: Testing.

17 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear.
18 Thank you.

19 And good afternoon Commissioner Castro if you'd
20 like to test your audio you could do so now.

21 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yep. Can you hear me?

22 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Thank you

23 And good afternoon Chair Hanif. If you'd like to
24 test your audio you can do so now.

25

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. Thank you so much. Good afternoon.

SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: We are just waiting for Deputy Commissioner Colette Samman.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I'm here.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Ah, there we are perfect. Okay. Okay, chairs. Are you both ready?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're ready. I'm ready.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Chair Hanif, let me know when you're ready, and then we will hit the show on the road.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm ready. Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to the second portion of today's hearing of May 12. We will now hear from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. My name is Malcom Butehorn, and I am counsel to the Finance Committee. And we want to make sure that we recognize council members present for the record. Councilmembers Brannan, Hanif, Barron, De La Rosa, Farias, Joseph, Ossé, Restler, Sanchez, Ung, Yeger, Ayala, and that's it. Chair Brannan, we will turn to

you for your opener, then Chair Hanif, and then I will swear in the Administration.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Malcolm. We will now begin the second portion of our day and hear from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. For those joining us for this portion, I'm councilmember Justin Brown and I have the privilege of chairing the Committee on Finance and I'm joined by councilmember Shahana Hanif, is the Chair of the Committee on Immigration. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. The projected FY 23 budget of \$818,000 represents less than 1% of the city's proposed fiscal 23 budget in the Executive Plan. MOIA's budget resides within the budget of the mayor's office, but this does not provide a full picture of MOIA's entire funding as the office coordinates and collaborates with various city agencies including DYCD, HRA, DOH, all of which are managing MOIA programs found within their agencies.

I welcome Commissioner Castro and his team for being here today to answer these committee questions on their proposed FY 23 budget. I'll focus my attent... my questioning mainly on staffing, language access, day laborers and other topics. I want to

thank Florentine Coboray and Kerlian Francisco, as well as John Yeddin and the entire finance team for the preparation for this hearing.

I'm now going to turn it over to Co-Chair Hanif for her opening remarks.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. Good afternoon and welcome to the fiscal 2023 Executive Budget hearing for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, MOIA. I'm Councilmember Shahana Hanif. I'm the Chair of the Committee on Immigration. Today's hearing is joint with the Committee on Finance and I'd like to give a special shout out to my colleague Councilmember Justin Brannan for co-chairing this hearing with me. MOIA's proposed fiscal 2023 expense budget totals roughly \$818,000 in city funding to support seven full time positions, MOIA supports and empowers over 3 million immigrant New Yorkers who speak over 200 languages. The office collaborates with various city agencies to deliver essential immigrant services. However MOIA recognizes that, "It cannot be the only office that seeks to serve our immigrant communities. Furthermore, all city agencies must think about the needs of immigrants when engaging in their work." Funding for the

immigrant services in the fiscal 2023 executive budget is fully allocated to several agencies' budgets, including the Department of Youth and Community Development, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Education, New York City Health and Hospitals, the Department of Citywide Services, and the City University of New York.

At today's hearing, we will examine the components of the immigration program budget with a particular focus on, as mentioned, language access, legal services, adult literacy, IDNYC, and health care for all, because MOIA manages these programs along with the agencies, it is my hope that MOIA provides clarification on the funding included in the Executive Plan. Additionally, due to the nature of MOIA's mission, the committee is interested to know whether MOIA's headcount limits the office's ability to carry out its work efficiently. As we move closer to the budget negotiations, the committee is calling on the administration to restore funding for Immigrant Services and to enhance the Adult Literacy Initiative, all immigrant legal services and the Day Labor Workforce Initiative. The committee urges the administration to invest \$25 million in the Our City,

Our Vote to support community-based outreach to all New York City eligible voters regardless of their citizenship status. I look forward to working with MOIA and all other city agencies to deliver adequate services to immigrant New Yorkers.

I also want to thank Speaker Adams and Tanisha Edwards for ensuring that we were able to host this vital hearing. I want to thank our committee staff for their hard work Kerlian Francisco, the unit head Florentine Coboray, the financial analyst, and the committee Council and my legislative and Budget Director Alexander Yao and all others behind the scenes. Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you chairs and I just want to remind everyone that unlike in the past, Councilmembers and members of the Mayoral Administration will have the ability to mute and unmute themselves. We just ask that when you are not speaking, to minimize disruption, to remember to mute yourself, council members.

You've heard it before and I'm going to say it again if you have questions please use the raise hand function in zoom, you are limited to five minutes. I ask that you please listen for the cue from the

sergeant. And when they say time is called to please wrap up thoughts or comments so we can move on to your next colleague that is waiting in line.

The following members of the administration are here to testify and or answer questions.

Commissioner Manuel Castro, Deputy Commissioner Colette Samman, Anne Montesano, Executive Director of Interagency Initiatives and Language Access, and Tom Totorici, Director of Legal initiatives.

I will first read the oath and after I will call on each member from the administration individually to respond.

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before these committees and to respond honestly to Councilmember questions?
Commissioner Castro?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I do.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Deputy Commissioner Samman?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Yes.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Executive Director Montesano?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: I do.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Director Totorici? And if I pronounced that wrong, I apologize.

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: That's correct, and I do.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Commissioner catcher whenever you are ready.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you. Thank you. And thank you Chair Hanif and Chair Brennan and members of the Committees on Immigration and Finance for holding this budget hearing. My name is Manuel Castro, and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, or better known as MOIA, by its acronyms.

Since I may be speaking with many of you, especially members of the Finance Committee, for the first time, I would like to start with an introduction, and also by reviewing MOIA's goals as outlined in the charter.

So, you know, my testimony will be a little long, but I thought that this was important, just to set a baseline.

Prior to my appointment in January of this year, I was Executive Director of New Immigrant Community Empowerment, better known as NICE. I, myself am an immigrant. I crossed the border with my mother when I was five years old. I grew up undocumented here in New York City, in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and I was part of the early generation of Dreamers that began

to fight for an opportunity to an education and a pathway to citizenship, and this is a community that is still very much active in fighting for the same things.

So I am incredibly proud to now serve New York City in this role, and to be able to work with many of you in addressing the many needs of the immigrant communities that live here in New York City.

As it relates to the New York City Charter, it explicitly outlines the importance of our office and our work together for immigrant communities. It notes that immigrant New Yorkers make up a large... a significantly large percentage of the city's population. 3 million New Yorkers, or almost 40% of all people living in New York City are immigrants. However, when including the children of immigrants, this percentage goes up to nearly 60% of all people living in New York City. So because of this, the wellbeing of the city depends on our work together and the willingness of immigrant New Yorkers to engage with city government.

Given this reality, MOIA is not, and cannot be the only office or agency that seeks to serve our immigrant communities. All city agencies and offices

must think about the needs of immigrants when engaging in their work. The charter, however, recognizes MOIA's unique expertise as the mayor's office that focuses on immigrant-related issues, and it gives a special consideration in advising and assisting the mayor, the city council in other offices and agencies on developing and implementing policies related to immigrants in limited English proficient... proficient New Yorkers. MOIA is also asked to track state and federal policy and law, increase access to city programs, benefits, and service through outreach... and services through outreach, help advice in the legal service needs of immigrants, and consult with the community and other stakeholders and coordinate an interagency task force on Immigrant Affairs. In addition, MOIA works with revelant... relevant city agencies to address the needs of immigrant crime victims and witnesses including by working with agencies on the issuance of U Visa certifications, and T visa declarations.

Finally, MOIA is also required to report annually on its programming and on the demographics and needs of immigrant New Yorkers.

That said, I am proud to report that MOIA has been doing all of this and much more than what is outlined in the charter. Whether it is responding to the needs of immigrant New Yorkers during emergencies like the devastating fires in the Bronx, and most recently in Sunset Park, or assisting immigrants when they are victims of crimes, such as the recent subway shootings or a crimes against Asian communities and delivery workers.

Our leadership and staff are committed to go directly and be with communities on the ground. Today's... today's testimony builds on my remarks from our last preliminary budget hearing, and briefly outlines MOIA's continued work to respond to the challenges of immigrant New Yorkers. I'd like to emphasize, however, that I am not covering all of MOIA's current work in this testimony. The report we published in March of this year includes descriptions of the ways MOIA designs, proposes, implements and manages a portfolio program, programs that directly serve immigrants and are intentionally responsive to their needs. The following overview touches on just a few relevant pieces of our work, which focuses on two main areas: (1) Responding to the unique needs

of immigrant communities, and closing the access gap for immigrant New Yorkers.

So first responding to global crises and newly arrived immigrants: From the outset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the mayor and I called on the federal government to extend temporary protective status or TPS for Ukrainians already living here, and to streamline the process to help forcibly displaced Ukrainians come to the United States, particularly those with families in New York City. The Biden administration listened to our many calls for action by announcing that the United States will extend TPS to Ukrainians already... already living here, and welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainians and others fleeing Russia's aggression... aggression through the established resettlement pathways, as well as introduce a new process specific for Ukrainians. As home to the largest Ukrainian population in the nation, it was only right the New York prepared the resources needed to welcome arriving Ukrainians and meet their needs. So this past April, MOIA joined The Mayor, elected officials and Ukrainian community leaders to announce more than \$2 million in funding to help currently residing and newly arrived

Ukrainian New Yorkers take advantage of the available forms of relief and resettlement pathways including TPS, humanitarian parole, and more. The initiative will also include outreach, case management, interpretation, and translation services, and direct assistance for displaced Ukrainian families resettling in New York City. The funding is a prime example of how MOIA is proactive in responding to global crises, and in particular those that impact New Yorkers and their families, as well as the city's continued and relentless commitment to all communities... and to all immigrant communities.

Currently, the city is going through an RFP process to determine which community-based organizations will deliver these services. We plan to give a more detailed announcement in the coming weeks. In FY 23, we will also continue to fund and coordinate the Haitian Responsiveness Initiative, which is a coalition of community-based service providers who were... who are equipped to provide culturally and linguistically responsive services and information to Haitian community members and newly arrived Haitian immigrants, given the need... the tremendous need that continues in these communities.

Second: Legal services. I recently was able to see the... the impact of the city's investment in naturalization support at John Jay College, where MOIA sponsored and tabled at a CUNY Citizenship Now application assistance event. This event helped over 200 green card holders to ascertain their eligibility for US citizenship. Many of them also qualified for fee waivers that will allow them to naturalize without charge. Immigration legal services are a tool of empowerment for immigrant New Yorkers and their families, and MOIA demonstrates its commitment here, not just by word but by deed. New York City leads the nation by dedicating more funding to immigration legal services than any other municipality in the country. We do this in partnership with legal service providers, community based organizations and city agencies, through initiatives including Action NYC, Immigrant Opportunity Initiative, and Rapid Response Legal Collaborative. We are grateful for community based and city-wide legal service providers who carry out this difficult work in service of immigrant New Yorkers every day. To date, we invested 10s of millions of dollars into immigration legal services.

MOIA overseas more than \$10 million in funding for legal services programming, over \$8 million of which is baseline funding. Action NYC makes up the lion's share of the funding, with over \$8.7 million allocated to that program alone. The Council can find more details on Action NYC in our annual report, as I mentioned, published in March of this year.

Third: Language access. While ensuring language access is a large and significant undertaking, I am very personally committed to language access. About 22% of New Yorkers have limited English proficiency... proficiency, and about half of immigrant New Yorkers have LEP. In addition, over 200 languages are spoken in the city. We will continue to build on the city's infrastructure to support the delivery of high quality language services, advice, and provide technical assistance to our sister agencies and offices to provide the way city governments communicate with non-English speaker New Yorkers, and serve as a lab to pilot and further educate our partners on best language access practices. We look forward to sharing more details about this work through our forthcoming press announcements.

And in conclusion, in the past couple of months, I have had the privilege of meeting with diverse immigrant communities across New York City's five boroughs, to hear directly from them about their needs, and what the city should be doing to meet these needs. With every interaction, conversation, and event I've attended, it is clear that New York City is the city of immigrants, and we must do all we can to support our immigrant communities to thrive so that all New Yorkers are able to prosper together.

So with that said, thank you, again for calling this hearing. I look forward to working with city council on addressing the needs as the budget process continues. And now I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you so much, Commissioner, it's great to see you again. It's great to see you leading MOIA, having someone who knows what it's like to be an advocate and an activist in the streets leading this, this Mayor's office is... is certainly not lost on us or, or any of my colleagues. So it's very meaningful. So... but before we begin, I always say the committee, we may not get to all of the questions, or we don't

anticipate it, but you may not have responses for everything, so we'll send a follow up letter for any of the unanswered questions.

So let's dive right into staffing. So MOIA total budget is roughly \$818,000 to support seven full staff positions. The New York City immigration... immigrant population totals over 3 million and continues to grow. The executive plan does not include additional staffing for MOIA headcount. So how is your office carrying its mission efficiently?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: It's a great question. And as you know... as you know, as I began my role here that these are some of the first questions that I asked myself, and in piecing it together, I've now understood better, you know, how we partner with different agencies in order to be able to address the many needs that the immigrant community has. And so in the in the last hearing that I participated in, I mentioned that we had about anywhere between 50 and 70 staff lines. And, you know, those were the ones that we rely on to do this work. And, you know, I said it in my last time here, I always welcome welcome additional funding and staff line to be able to conduct this work.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, you said five-oh or seven-oh staff lines... 50 or 70?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. Currently, the headcount is at 72, but of course, there are many vacancies that we are working to fill.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So have you... have you requested an increase of staffing from OMB? And if so, are there certain types of positions that you need more than others?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So, we we've been working closely together with OMB, you know, like I said, in the first couple of months for me was just to go to OMB and really understand what, you know, what kind of staff lines we had and what needed to be addressed. And, you know, they have provided a number of staff lines for this next fiscal year. And, you know, certainly language access is a priority. And so that's what we're working through right now.

And our outreach team is something that we're also carefully rebuilding, which is, you know, a core... or an essential part of our work. Because we... we take pride in making sure that we have a good representation of outreach staff so that we're

able to communicate and, and work closely together with the many immigrant communities that we have.

So we're working through that, and we're certainly, you know, happy to provide more information. And, you know... you know, of our approach in trying to fill these lines.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So let's talk a little bit about language access. So in the preliminary budget response, the council called on the administration to include \$5 million to expand language access. We were delighted to see even more funding of \$8.7 million in FY 23 for interpretation and translation services. We also... in our... The council in our budget response called for an increase in access to language services across city agencies, which is very, very important, improving the quality of translation by creating a community interpreter bank, and providing employment and business opportunities for immigrant communities by developing worker-owned cooperatives. So how will this... the \$8.7 million... How do you see this funding being allocated, as far as these asks that the council had with the community interpreter bank, increasing the funding for language access to the city agencies, and

which agencies do you think need... are in greatest need of language access services?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, thanks so much for this, because it's been my focus in the last several months. It's something that I understood was a priority for advocates, having come from the from the advocacy and community group world. And so I tackled that first. You know, it's a tremendous need, but it's also a tremendous undertaking, because of the size of our... our city government. And, you know, I'm happy that we're moving things along. This is... this is a good amount to start working with. And just to clarify, how much of it is going to the Department of Education. You know, if you can... if you take a look at the breakdown, I believe \$7 million is going to the Department of Education, some of it is going to... some of it is going to DCAS and so on. But...(crosstalk)

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, but Commissioner, doesn't... doesn't... I mean, I worked at DOE. Don't... Aren't they one of the only agencies that currently has an in house translation office?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I believe... I believe so. Yes. You know, my understanding is because of the

size of... of the need there. And you know, of course, you know, working with parents of... immigrant parents, or even children... immigrant children is quite... quite a significant need. And it's important to the administration. So yes, they'll be expanding that work. And I'll... I'll certainly be involved for sure.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Because I think... I think something that... I can only speak for myself, but I think Chair Hanif feels similarly, in that what we would love to see is something like this in every agency, but... but also with a focus on instead of outsourcing to vendors, if we're going to hire vendors, it should be, you know, selections made within the community for the... a lot of the nonprofits that... that do this work already. Is that something you are in alignment with?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. And that type... that actually something that I'm excited to... to look into, and I think it's come up in all of our hearings, and, y k, something I've said that, you know, I'd want to continue to explore, I now understand the magnitude and, you know, the need to also build capacity for... for these smaller vendors

and the nonprofits that want to do this work. So I believe that is something that we're going to tackle initially. And, you know, I'm certainly taking a lot of... a lot of what we discussed in our hearings into account, and also in meeting with some of the groups that that have been working on this particular issue -- and in fact, I have a meeting next week with the Language Access Coalition to continue discussing these things. So yes, I'm very excited to be working, you know, along the same lines.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Great. Yeah, and we... The Council wants to be partners there in that work. So, please keep us... You know, think of us as a partner and leverage us where you can.

I want to jump into emergency food assistance. So food remains an issue amongst the immigrant population, and the city has to ensure that immigrants know that there's not any public charge risk for them to apply for emergency assistance. Did MOIA conduct any outreach to the immigrant community regarding emergency home delivery meals and SNAP benefits?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Um, well, on the outreach piece, yes, we're continuously, you know, informing

our different communities about these resources and benefits. We integrate them into all of our Know Your Rights, trainings and activities. On the food access question, as I learn, you know, how we address food insecurity, now, I see how the amount of funding and work that goes into it, and how dispersed it is throughout the city. In fact, I just had a meeting... a really great meeting with the Department of Parole. They also have a food program. And so my emphasis now is understanding where these resources exist, so that we can make sure that our communities know where to connect to, to these resources.

But I'll definitely have to refer to the Department of Sanitation that coordinates a lot of this work. I know that they've been, you know, thinking about this very, you know, strategically, and, you know, they'll be addressing it together with... with us.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And which... I mean, not only for emergency food assistance, but just sort of overall, what channels is MOIA utilizing to... what are your go to channels to notify immigrant population about any benefits or new information

coming from Washington or...? What have you found to be the most effective channels to communicate on?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, certainly working with community partners on the ground, which is why that's been my focus initially, meeting with... with our partners and actually visiting them because, well, I have first-hand experience that, you know, this is really the entry point for so many people, especially newly arrived immigrants, and... but just because I led one of these agencies doesn't mean that it looks the same everywhere. So I've... I've begun to visit. My goal is to visit some somewhere around 200 agencies this year. And I've developed a list, added many more to this list, you know, that... that I am familiar and I have worked with in the past. We have about 800 agencies that we work with. And yes, you know, prior to me arriving, and certainly now, I think the focus will be partnering with these community organizations, community groups, faith groups to make sure that they have the information to pass along to their communities.

Aside from that, we have our own outreach and organizing staff that provides Know Your Rights trainings, that provide, you know, just outreach to

communities, whether it's tabling, or speaking with community leaders about the services that that we have, or that immigrants can access that are provided by the state and federal government.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And as the city welcomes new immigrants from the Ukraine and from Haiti, how is the city... How are we ensuring that these communities have access to food assistance?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, on the on the Food Assistance... you know, like I said it, piecing together you know, the many resources that exist on food assistance, but we partner closely with many of the city... community-based organizations that have food pantries, or have begun food pantries as a result to have the pandemic, and you know, wherever they do exist, this is where we channel you know, or this is where we refer people to.

We also have a hotline that people can call for any of this information, which we can provide to them as needed. Of course, they can call 311. But we... you know, we also encourage people to call us directly to inform them of this... these resources.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I have some other questions about recovery as relates to the pandemic,

but... but I do want to give ample time for my Co-Chair at this hearing, Shahana Hanif, so I'm going to hand it over to her now. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much, Chair Brannan, and it's always good to see you, Commissioner Manny, and a pleasure to learn more about you in each of these hearings, it is a deep honor for our city to have you as the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

So I'd like to first follow up on language access... and a yes or no would be sufficient for this: Does the \$8 million, which is an incredible amount for language access included in the executive budget, include funding for the community interpreter bank and worker cooperatives for language access?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes and no. But more details to come. We certainly want to, you know, sit down with you and other councilmembers to discuss what we're thinking. But certainly, you know, we want to make sure that we're prioritizing, you know, the needs on the ground and what we're hearing from agencies... from community partners.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, just to clarify: There is a plan... there is a plan and you'd like to present it to the council and get feedback.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, we're working through the details. You know, as you know, we... you know, we also learned that we were able to secure these funds. And, you know, we want to make sure to have these discussions and continue to think strategically about how to use these funds. But yeah, I'm happy to report back on... on... on those discussions. And as details are firmed up.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. That would be great given I know that the bulk of this language access funding is going to the DOE. So the initiatives that advocates are pushing for, and which were included in the council's preliminary budget response are more comprehensive than just the DOE. So I just want to put that out there as well.

So one other priority that I didn't hear you speak about is Our City, Our Vote. So I'd like to start my questioning with that. In the council's response to the mayor's preliminary fiscal 2023

financial plan, that council recommended a \$25 million investment by The Administration to support community-based outreach to all New York City eligible voters and to effectively implement this legislation. However, the executive budget does not recognize any new funding for this proposal. Could you share: What is the administration's plan on implementing this legislation when the law goes into effect in December of this year?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah... no... and, you know, one of the reasons I did not include this in my testimony... in my remarks, even though it's incredibly important, largely because it's still under litigation. We're awaiting results on that. But I'm also mindful that we need to start preparing now, because this is something that we're very confident will... will be a reality. And so I know that my colleagues over at the Board of Elections, at Campaign Finance Board, and at the Civic Engagement Commission have been doing quite a lot of work, particularly, you know, studying, you know, like the different communities that this will be impacted how to navigate, you know, some of the challenges. But, yeah, I don't want to say something that, you know,

that perhaps, you know, I shouldn't be saying, while this is under litigation. And, you know, as someone who advocated for this for many years, as you know, I... I shared this in previous testimony, I began working on this issue in 2004. It is something that is very important to me, and I... you know, it's something that I'm definitely going to have a... an interest in being part of, in making sure that all communities impacted will be able to engage appropriately with this... this initiative.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That is a little disappointing to hear given December is merely six months away. And so what I hear from your response is that there isn't even a kind of preliminary plan to ensure the success of this historic legislation. And while you've mentioned that you are working with some of the agencies, I'd like to know which agencies and I don't want the litigation to be what pauses the work that needs to get done.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Mm-hmm. So, just to clarify: I... I should have said that I defer to... to our colleagues at the Civic Engagement commission who... who is charged... Well, actually, it's the Board Of Elections who is charged to implement this.

And I know they've been working with the Civic Engagement Commission to come up with a plan. You know, I don't want to disrupt their work by saying anything, perhaps that they're not ready to say, or... or that may impact litigation. But I know that they... they've been working very diligently on this. And, you know, my hope is that they will be able to announce something soon.

But yeah, I'm happy to share, you know, more about who's working on this, but like I said, Board Of Elections, Civic Engagement Commission, Campaign Finance Board, you know, we want this to be a success once we're able to implement it. And I certainly want to make sure that, you know, people are able to register, you know, to be able to vote in municipal elections and address any challenges that they might have.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. And I just want to reiterate that the law is indeed in effect, and we have got to be a city that treats it as such, and move forward regardless of the... the nature of the lawsuits being filed against this law. And so I urge MOIA, I urge the other agencies to take this very seriously, because you've mentioned you've been an

advocate, since before its passage, as have many of us on this call and those listening in. It's... it's vital on this city to be proactive about this rather than regressive. So I had other follow up questions on, get out the vote activities. We really need to set aside more than six months to ensure adequate equitable outreach, address all the language needs, ensure that we are particular about the community-based organizations selected to carry out the outreach efforts, and then to of course, improve or revise the Speak NYC videos to reflect this change.

Are you able to speak on whether MOIA plans to update the Speak NYC videos to reflect the Our City, Our Vote legislation?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, we are... we are engaged in you know, new script... script development for videos for the We Speak program, and, you know, I would be happy for this one to be... for there to be one dedicated to this, for sure. You know, a lot... a large... large part of our preparation has been around, you know, the mechanism, in thinking through language access, but certainly, you know, this would be one of the areas that I, you know, I'd love to work on together with you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I feel that this is a given, that we include this historic legislation and the... the nature of expanding our democracy for a program that is utilized by our immigrant and undocumented neighbors. And I ask this because I know that the program had been, or continues to promote, two unique videos in partnership with CUNY and Census 2020, which portrayed census questions as well as immigration status. And so I think this is just in line with the kind of work that has been lifted up through the We Speak Program.

So I won't go into further questioning about Our City, Our Vote. I am disappointed, just to put that out there again, that we haven't been doing our due diligence to this... this fight that was brought to passage by our immigrant community, and so this is a disservice. This is us again regressing, and it is unfair to our democracy.

I want to move into some more questions about legal services. The council is experiencing difficulties to receive clarification on immigration services that are located in the other agencies' budgets. Because your office collaborates and

coordinates with these agencies, I hope that you will provide some answers to my following questions.

So could you share what is the current budget and fiscal 2023 budget for immigrant legal services? I know you mentioned that \$8.7 million is allocated to Action NYC. I'd love a breakdown per budget cycle by service.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Just to clarify: Legal services in terms of immigration, legal services? Or...?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Correct.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Okay, so, let me... let me pull up some of the data. Hmm.

So the current funding for... it's a long list... but Action NYC, as I said, is \$8.7 million. New York Citizenship is \$465,000. IOI is \$22.7 million. And by the way this is for FY 22, not FY 23.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That... those numbers are still under discussion, but I hope this gives you a sense. Rapid Response Legal Collaborative is \$1 million. NYIFUP, you probably know this, \$16.6 million. Union Citizenship now receives \$3 million.

And am I missing anything? The ICARE Unaccompanied Minors funding is at \$4 million.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And you're unable to share how the budget is looking for 2023?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Uh, not... No, not really, because things are still under discussion. So I don't believe we have all these numbers for FY 23.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And have you had any conversations with OMB on the need to enhance funding for NYIFUP?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Uh, not for NYIFUP? No. You know, it's... as you know, we're... this is not a... we don't have oversight over NYIFUP. And you know, of course, you know, I have I have mentioned, and I'm sure advocates have mentioned in their testimony, how the limits of the funding and the amount of casework that exists for immigration legal services. And, you know, our continued advocacy for the federal government to step in and make sure that there's universal representation. But yeah, I don't have the information for NYIFUP necessarily.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. And then The Council calls for \$18 million to continue to respond quickly to shifts in ICE surveillance and arrests, and to

ensure that all detained New Yorkers have counsel.
How much of an expansion do you think would
adequately meet the needs for legal services for low
income New Yorkers?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, and that, you know,
that's along the lines of what I had said, you know,
it's... you know, I don't have the data in front of
me about the complete needs for legal representation
of... of immigrants that... in the immigrant
community that is justice involved, where they might
need legal immigration representation. It's
certainly something that -- not just New York, but
all advocates across the country have been pushing
for -- you know, universal present... representation
of... of immigration, legal services. It's much
needed, and we will certainly use our platform here
in New York and through our Cities For Action to
advocate for them.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So are you able to share if
the \$18 million is in line with what the
administration will align with?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No. I don't... I don't
think I can... I can say that right now. But you
know, again, these... these are ongoing

1 conversations. And you certainly want to hear
2 from... from our current partners providing this
3 work... legal... legal representation to immigrants.
4 But yeah, I couldn't weigh on it right now. But
5 we're... we're in conversation with OMB about these
6 issues.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then you shared with us
9 at the first hearing about the budget, that you were
10 looking closely at removing the criminal carve-out
11 from city funded immigration legal services...
12 service contracts. As you know, this is a critical
13 racial justice issue. Could you give us an update?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Uh, no updates currently.
15 You know, I continue to look at this and other
16 issues. You know. I... as I said it, you know, as a
17 new commissioner, I want to revisit many of these
18 policies, and especially those that make the work of
19 our partners more difficult... unnecessarily
20 difficult. And, you know, certainly, we want to make
21 sure that all communities are able to... to be
22 adequately served. And yeah, but I continue to look
23 into this and having meetings with colleagues
24 internally to see... to see if this is going to be...
25 to explore how we can make this happen.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Commissioner.

When will we have answers to any of my questions?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: On this specific...?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: On the numbers. On this.

You know, this hearing was close to not being... this was not on the... on the schedule, and I pushed for it to be on the schedule because we need... our immigrant communities deserve answers to programs that are meant to service them, particularly in one of the most vulnerable moments in this city's history. And to not have a single budgetary amount on the biggest need for immigrants is a big blunder. I'm disappointed. And I don't know how soon you can get us the... the answers to this, but we'll be following up proactively to make sure that the initiatives across the legal services not only remain up their baseline, but that... but that they're enhanced.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Mm-hmm. Yeah...

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I hope I can count on you to be an advocate here.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I certainly... I'm also looking for... to have concrete answers and concrete, you know, guidance, as it relates to fiscal

year 23. It always helps with planning. But as you know, these... these negotiations and conversations often, you know, go down... down to the wire. So, you know, I'm hoping to be working closely with you and, you know, with our community partners, to be able to have, you know, more concrete answers for you soon.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. So, in The Council's budget response, we called for a doubling of the baseline funding to \$27 million for Adult Literacy Programming. This is not what we got in the Executive Budget. Could you share how much is included in fiscal 2022 and fiscal 2023 Executive Budget for Adult Literacy Programming?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I'm trying to find this information for you, although not to disappoint you any further, but I think these numbers are often you know, especially with adult literacy, it's something that DYCD is overseeing. Perhaps... I don't know, Tom, can you help me with these numbers?

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Thank you Commissioner. I have FY 22 numbers, but we can't speak to FY 23 at this time.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: When will you be able to speak to FY 23?

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: As soon as the ongoing conversations reach resolution.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then I know that... and you've been very clear that... there are multiple agencies servicing the programming that are geared toward our immigrant neighbors. What is the relationship that you have with DYCD? How do you coordinate? Walk me through the partnership here.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, as you know... you know, currently I'm meeting with all commissioners or interim heads of agencies. I know DYCD doesn't have a commissioner currently, but will soon. Once that happens, you know, I will be meeting with a new commissioner and their leadership to make sure items like adult literacy that relate back to immigrant communities are, you know, areas we're working closely with. Certainly the, you know, the programs or funding that are directed to many of these city agencies: We can weigh in on and advise on but, you know, they're ultimately responsible for it. But yeah, that is... that is something that, as we've

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2 discussed in previous hearings, where we're trying to
3 navigate and working through.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. And then... so does
5 MOIA have a vision to ensure that the baseline
6 funding for adult literacy is directly allocated to
7 providers? Like how will MOIA be advocating on behalf
8 of the literacy... adult literacy programming to
9 DYCD?

10 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. I believe... I
11 believe that the... the adult literacy funding is
12 directed to nonprofit providers. But again, I don't
13 believe that will change. But I'll certainly, when I
14 have a chance to meet with the new commissioner, you
15 know, I'll... I'll share our perspective, and how we
16 work with nonprofit providers, and my experience,
17 having led an organization that received these adult
18 literacy funds to do the work on the ground. Yeah,
19 adult literacy is... is a huge component of... of, I
20 think, you know, what nonprofit immigrant service
21 providers do, and it's certainly something that I, I
22 want to be involved in.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm glad to hear that. And
24 I'm glad to know that you agree that adult literacy
25 programming is urgent. Do you agree that there is a

critical need to enhance funding for adult literacy programs, as our immigrant population continues to grow? As we bring in and resettle Ukrainians and other communities?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, like I said, in the past, you know, I welcome, you know, if it's directed to MOIA, I welcome funding, you know, and additional resources. Especially, you know, as we, like you said, serve newly-arrived immigrants and communities that are, you know, displaced due to crises. Those services are always in high demand. And again, you know, these funds go towards other agencies as well, but I certainly, as relates to We Speak, which is where, you know, we have oversight over the literacy, I certainly welcome additional resources.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sorry, a horn is going off... a car is going off. So, you don't want to give me a clear yes or no here?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: About...? About more resources?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: About more funding more resources to adult literacy programming?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, yeah, no, I said that, you know, I would welcome more resources. Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. Thank you.

I want to move into MOIA's advocacy work. Could you speak to how MOIA engages with the state and federal governments on immigration issues, including but not limited to closing immigration courts and decreasing the number of people in ICE custody?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, well, as you know, we're very limited in... in ways that we engage with the federal government. You know, we're... you know, we limit the... the, the amount of collaboration or no collaboration, right?. Let me rephrase that. We are certainly advocates of improved laws that... that are welcoming to immigrant communities. You know, we do this in large part through our Cities for Action Coalition of cities that are aligned with... with our policy priorities. And so, you see that, you know, reflected in the campaigns that we're engaged in currently. We engaged in a campaign to lift the Title 42 policy, which was successful, although, you know, there's been... there's been a delay in that. But yeah, we have been tremendously involved in that.

It's an area that I'm very passionate about, and we are certainly going to be focusing on that kind of advocacy during my time here, for sure. And, you know, I'm looking to grow our presence... our leadership nationally, in being able to push for these policies, especially for comprehensive immigration reform, which is an ongoing issue. And things change quite often. And we're certainly monitoring and those changes and submitting... submitting, you know, policy recommendations and weighing in on these changes.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And what are the... Is there a team that does this in MOIA? And could you give me a breakdown of how this work is carried out?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We currently have a team... a policy team. Of course, we we've had a number of transitions. But you know, we're... we're staffing up. As you might know, Cesar Vargas just joined our team. He's someone who is taking on a big leadership role in this area. He... for some of you who don't know, he's a well-known immigrant rights advocate, first, Dreamer, formerly... or first DACA recipient to be allowed to access the bar in the State of New York, and together with me, we're going to be leading

a lot of this work. We have a C4A team, the Cities For Action team that is also growing. And, you know, together with our policy team, we're going to be making sure we have a leadership team, navigating some of the complexities at the federal level and the state level, when it comes to interacting with immigrants.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. So will this team be focusing more closely on removing people from ICE custody, or providing support to families of those who have family members detained by ICE?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, we do a lot of this work through our legal service partners. I've met with a number of immigration legal service providers. You know, we have a specific initiative called the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, which does great work in addressing those most immediate needs from urgent cases. And that's actually something that... that I know the team is very proud about. Because of you know, there's... there's so many cases and, you know, we wanted to identify those immediate urgent cases. And this is how we've been addressing them. And, Tom, who just weighed in can share more. Tom,

do you want to give a bit of an overview of what our LC does?

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Um sure. Thank you, Commissioner.

The Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, is a... is comprised of a coalition of immigration legal service providers and provides critical support to immigrant New Yorkers who are at imminent risk of deportation. Oftentimes, these folks can't find suitable services from other providers because it's such a niche and intensive category of work. And so it's a unique initiative that has helped a number of New Yorkers to overcome the imminent risk of deportation and remain together with their families in New York.

And to the point of... so we are very proud of that, and also that it is continued and there is a baseline component to it, and we're grateful for the... the intense work that those partners do.

With respect to advocacy. We, as Commissioner mentioned, Cities For Action, C4A, is a key advocacy tool of New York City together in partnership with sister cities throughout the nation. Keeping track of federal policies and advocating for those that are

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2 pro-immigrant and supportive of immigrant New
3 Yorkers.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's good to know. Over
5 the last six months, what has the city's for action
6 campaign looked like? Could you share some specifics?

7 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: I don't have it right now,
8 but we can get back to you, Chair, with that
9 information.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

11 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: You're welcome.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, given that this is like
13 a core... it sounds like a core campaign of MOIA, and
14 a national campaign, it would be good to know, some
15 of the successes or some of the camp... like wins as
16 part of this work, and just how New York City is
17 contributing to this national campaign. So I'd be
18 happy to follow up about some specifics.

19 In your 2021 annual report, it was reported that
20 MOIA worked with city partners to support a bill that
21 expanded the availability of _____ for survivors of
22 trafficking. Could you elaborate more about that?

23 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Let me see. Tom, do you
24 have any more specific... specifics to that, or any
25 followup to that?

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2 DIRECTOR TOTORICI: I do. Yes, Commissioner. So
3 MOIA applauds the passage of the Start Act last year,
4 with expanded protections for survivors of human
5 trafficking, by allowing them to clear their records
6 of past conditions beyond those just related to
7 prostitution. In 2021, New York City submitted a
8 memorandum of support of the bills in the State
9 Assembly and Senate. And just for background, the
10 law gives survivors the fresh start they deserve. It
11 helps ensure eligibility for life saving forms of
12 immigration relief, such as T visas, by eliminating
13 criminal convictions that would otherwise ban them.
14 So we engaged in that advocacy and also advocated for
15 the passage of the Walking While Trans Ban, which was
16 passed in early 2021. We continue to monitor the
17 progress of that advocacy... or the results of that
18 advocacy, and the status of those pieces of
19 legislative... legislature, and will continue to
20 advocate accordingly together with our partners.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is your advocacy,
22 including informing immigrants about this piece of
23 legislation? Has there been any outreach done? And
24 could you explain what monitoring the legislation
25 means?

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Our policy team keeps... keeps track of how legislation moves, obviously, and then, you know, takes action where appropriate at different points. To the point on outreach, and public awareness, I don't have that information here, but I can check with the policy team regarding any public announcements that have been made, or information distribution through social media, or outreach efforts of MOIA.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: But given that MOIA (crosstalk) I'm just asking one more question, Commissioner. Given that MOIA played a role... a vital role in in advocating and the passage of this law, is it in line with the agency to be doing the public awareness work as well?

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Uh, yeah. Public awareness of policies and practices that impact immigrant New Yorkers is squarely within MOIA's purview and responsibility. I don't have specific information with respect to this particular topic. But Chair Hanif, we will get back to you more information about the efforts to date.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: And just to answer a little bit of that, at least, you know, in my time here, my

approach is to partner and work closely with... with the agencies that do have the responsibility to conduct some of that this outreach and public engagement work. And so I recently authored an op-ed with the Commissioner of the Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence, and I was doing sexual assault awareness month last month. And we made sure that this was translated into other languages and placed in different news outlets to reach, you know, different immigrant communities. And that's work that will I will continue to do, partnering with... with other commissioners to make sure that, you know, this is getting out to the communities we in particular work with.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, I'm relieved to hear that the... there is some public awareness work happening within your advocacy work, but I would like to follow up about the particular legislation about survivors of trafficking, and I want to make sure that there is substantial amount of work being done to... to get the information out in our city.

And then, you know, recently The Council passed three pieces of resolution, New York For All, Dignity Not Detention, and Coverage For All. Will MOIA

commit to championing these three resolutions? And if yes, how so? And how can the council be supportive?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: You know, definitely, you know, we're, we use our platform whenever, you know, we can to champion these... these different initiatives. And, in fact, very similar to what I just shared on Coverage For All, I wrote an op ed with the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. And, you know, we put out several statements in support of Coverage For All and... and, you know, how these... how medical coverage impacts our communities. And, you know, unfortunately, well, let's say that, you know, we were... we were very involved until... until the last, you know, final day, before the budget was approved at the state level. So, yeah, I'll continue to look into these many issues where we can advocate and be supportive in that way.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Thank you for that. We really need MOIA to step in and step up when the state doesn't carry through with protections for our immigrant New Yorkers.

I'd like to pass it back to Chair Brannan, or give an opportunity to some of our colleagues to ask

questions before I move forward with some more topics.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: I'm going to turn to Councilmember Barron.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much.

There's paraphrasingly, The Bible says where one's treasure is soul lies their heart. This mayor has no heart for immigration, because the treasure is not there. This is an embarrassingly low budget for such a powerful community and great need, and a powerful community of immigrants, whether they're documented or not, that provides a taxation base... they provide taxes. I want you to let everybody know how much tax the New York City receives from the immigrant community. And they contribute tremendously to the cultural and intellectual culture of New York City. So I have a couple of questions and you can answer them, and then I'm finished.

_____ tax base revenue comes from immigrants. How many immigrants are covered, or need to be covered, or are in need of coverage? And I think the Chair answered the questions I had about ICE, and the deportation and legal systems they need. _____

participation, I am honored to say I was one of the original sponsors of the bill, which would allow undocumented immigrants to vote in local elections. That should happen. _____ nothing in that _____ but they use that to divide our communities. Often you'll see these immigrants are allowed to vote. These immigrants are taken our jobs and stuff like that. There's a divide-and-conquer tactic that goes there. I want to know how are you providing education to our people to let them know we're all in the same boat. And even... everybody's an immigrant. This is the indigenous people's land, and everybody came from somewhere. African people were forced here against our will. And then there's racism in the immigration struggle. You know, oftentimes, I see they mention Haitians, but Haitians were treated very different than the Ukrainians. The Haitians were forced to sleep under bridges, and many of them were forced to go back home. So the Haitian community is disrespected. The African immigrants and the immigrants from the Caribbean... Caribbean are often neglected.

And then finally, if you could speak to _____ in the state when I was an Assemblymember, to get the

\$1.2 billion for the excluded workers, which were mainly immigrants, how has that money been... has it all been you used? Has it been channeled in the proper places? And is there more money in this next budget to deal with that?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll start with the Excluded Worker Fund. You know that this is a state fund that was provided last fiscal year. That... or... yeah, last fiscal year that those funds have been used. And as the... as I mentioned, as the executive director of NICE, I was able to, you know, work to support many immigrants that had been excluded from any COVID related benefits to access this fund. Unfortunately, no money will go towards this again next fiscal year. And, you know, we'll... we'll make sure to find other ways to support community members, I know that many didn't end up benefiting from this program, because the funds ran out. And it's certainly, you know, it's certainly something that we want to continue to, to monitor, because, as was mentioned before, COVID is something that has not ended. And it's something that continues to impact our communities, especially those who permanently lost work and now have to rely on

other means to make ends meet. And, you know, I'm happy to say that for next fiscal year, as I mentioned in my testimony, that the Haitian Relief Initiative was something included in FY 23. We're very happy that we'll be able to continue to support the community organizations addressing the many needs of the Haitian community. Which, you know, I've... In the last couple of months, I've been able to visit, speak with many of the groups working with the Haitian community, those who have family still in Haiti, and those folks who continue to arrive. You know, it's a big focus of ours to make sure that communities in crisis get the support they need. And so we're very happy about that.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I'll leave it there.

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: No, no. You can... you can finish, because I want to know, the amount of money that the immigrants contribute to New York's economy. And if you could speak a bit about that, because that's very, very important.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. No. It's... it's a huge amount. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but it's certainly significant. As I said, you

know, in my initial comments, you know, it's 40% of New York City's population. They, as you said, they support... they're a big contributor of our tax base. And, and, of course, you know, they are the backbone, in many ways of... of the economy, of many industries, and so yes, I don't have that data in front of me. But I (crosstalk)

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Well, I think you should always have that data, because it's critical when we making the case for immigrants, to have that kind of data to make the argument.

And finally, to my colleagues. The mayor may have not put any money in for our vote or for adult literacy, but I just want to remind us, he does not pass the budget. We do. So when there's an adequate funding, and most of the agencies that I've seen so far being on this Finance Committee, the funding isn't inadequate, because he's a concert closet conservative, where he's doing the austerity budget, and he's a cop looking at how he can use law and order and cops to resolve everything. So we have to check that and make sure immigration, 800-some-odd-thousand dollars is an embarrassment. It's a shame. And if you ever compare that to the amount of

taxpaying dollars, I know it's in the billions that the immigrant community contributes, to say we have an \$800,000 budget out of a \$99.7 billion budget, woefully inadequate, totally unacceptable, and unconscionable. Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you Chair Barron...
uh... thank you Councilmember Barron...

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Hey, don't put me in my buddy's chair, man. You'll get me in trouble now.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: I'll turn it back to Chairs Brannan and Hanif.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Chair Brannan might have stepped away. I'm happy...

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'm here. Sorry. Yeah, I'm here. I mean, I... I appreciate that Chair Hanif fought to get this this budget hearing included. Typically, we don't do an oversight hearing for MOIA, but we're disappointed with the lack of... of data that was brought to this. It's nothing personal. Manny, you've only been there barely five months. But when we're doing a budget hearing, we got to talk about the budget, and we got to hear about dollars and cents, and we're not hearing that. And this is an agency where the council really wants to partner

with MOIA to give you the tools that you need, especially at a time like this. But it's hard for us to advocate with OMB to get you what you need, if we don't know what you've already got. So we'll be sending follow up info, and I'm sure we could follow up that way, and we'll get stuff done. But it's disappointing that there just isn't... you know, I'm sort of thinking about that old commercial from 9 million years ago. "Where's the beef?" You know, we want to... we want to know the numbers so we can be helpful here. This is... it's rare that we're not grilling an agency because we think you're spending too little. We want... we want to know, you know, what we can do to... to advocate for you with OMB to get MOIA the tools that they need. And I think... I'm concerned that we've fallen short thus far today, because there's just too many unanswered questions, which I know we'll get in follow up. But tomorrow, we get the next budget hearing, and the day after that the next budget hearing right. So you know, and the train keeps rolling on. So.

But I'll hand it back over to Chair Hanif if she has additional questions. Otherwise, we, you know, we will move to the next agency.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I do have many more questions, but I'm afraid that I won't have answers. And, you know, I'm not one to yell. I deeply respect to Commissioner Castro. I don't throw tantrums, when things don't go my way. It's just not my style. But I'd like to make clear that what we're getting from MOIA today... what we've heard so far, is a lack of preparation. And I'm just not... I'm failing to understand why that is. And what this is showing to the council and to folks listening in is an administration abandoning immigrants. And we did that through COVID. And we saw very clearly who stepped up: Our community partners stepped up, neighbors stepped up for immigrants, and it is high time that this administration steps up for immigrants. So I'd like to move now into learning a little bit more about small business services support for our immigrant businesses. In March 2022, Mayor Adams signed an executive order establishing a Small Business Advisory Commission.

How is MOIA coordinating with city agencies in the Small Business Advisory Commission about language access and access to grants to immigrant business

owners who are limited in English? In the past SBS did not translate the grants and a lot of the immigrant businesses were not able to apply on time.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: On... on the SBS side, I've been working on a number of things with the commissioner, Kevin Kim, and on the language access piece, so let me ask Anne on the call if she has any more information about ways we support SPS on these areas.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: So yeah, generally we work with SBS as well as other agencies. We support them and provide them with technical assistance. During COVID, we helped with you know, providing faster translations of some of their materials. So we do support them on the language access front and work with them to ensure that they are able to communicate effectively with the folks that they serve.

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: Just to build upon that. MOIA's outreach partners with SPS outreach and to immigrant small business owners, and even this past week supported tabling at several locations to actively engage in that outreach with them.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many languages are included?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Anne, do you have that info?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MONTESANO: I don't have that information. We can get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That would be great. And Tom, you mentioned tabling. Could you share where the resource tabling have taken place and who's out there?

DIRECTOR TOTORICI: I don't have the calendar in front of me but I can get back to you after the hearing, Chair Hanif.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. And how can MOIA connect the newly-created Small Business Advisory Commission to community-based language professionals?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, I'll make sure to, to include that in our materials and coordinate with Commissioner Kim on this.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. I'm looking forward to more information about small businesses and small business services. Small Business Services Chair, my colleague Julie Menin and I are hosting a joint hearing on small businesses and relating to our

immigrant communities in June, I believe. So we're looking forward to having Commissioner Kim and you at the table for... for more resources about this.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah. I think by then we'll have more specifics. I know they... they have been working on a language access specific initiative. And so I think well, we'll have more to share then.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great, I hope so. So according to the street vendor project, there's approximately 20,000 people selling on the streets. And the majority of them, as you know, are immigrants of this number 71% do not have permits, because the city has made it absolutely challenging for food vendors to obtain a permit. And as a result, vendors have been victims of the administration's aggressive enforcement. Has MOIA received complaints regarding mobile food vending?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Complaints from the street vendors? Or other...?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: From the vendors.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO? Vendors? No, not directly. Not... not that I'm aware of. Many of these complaints go to our colleagues at the Department of

Consumer Affairs and worker protections. That's who we usually delegate anything that comes in to... on this issue.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Does MOIA do any work pertaining to street vendors?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Aside from our you know, general education work, particularly on... on immigration issues. You know, I know many of the folks that we reach out to are street vendors or informal workers. So you know, informal work opens up people to a lot of different challenges. So that that is something that we're particularly aware of. But again, you know, the DCWP is charged with running education campaigns on these issues. So we often defer to them on this.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then do you work closely with DCWP around supporting how their materials are shaped at all? Or is it very siloed?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Well, they have... I think that the commissioner was appointed before... or a little after... or a little before our last hearing. But yeah, I've had many conversations with Commissioner Mayuga on this. I know it is an issue that that she also cares quite a lot about, and I

expect that we'll be working very closely together in, you know, the administration.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. You know, it's unclear why the NYPD is doing street food vending enforcement. Do you have any thoughts on that?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Um, my sense... yeah, I, you know, I, frankly, it's... it's an issue that I'm very aware of having done a lot of this work at NICE prior to joining. It is... it is something that I want to be able to follow closely. I want to make sure that there are no immigration consequences on people that might be impacted by this. But yeah, I'll be working closely with DCWP and make sure that I weigh in, you know, wherever needed.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: With the recent incident of Maria, a street food vendor in the subway harassed by police: Have you had a conversation with DCWP to discuss what took place or any... any plans to provide support or speak up about how enforcement... how aggressive enforcement is taking place and hurting our immigrant workers?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah, I did reach out with... Like I said, I've had several conversations with our colleagues at DCWP and internally, you know,

I've weighed in, right?, from my experience and my understanding of street vending and informal work more generally. And also in learning, you know how the MTA NYPD has different guidelines for street vending inside the system, and how those differentiate from how it's, you know, enforcement outside. You know, these are ongoing conversations and for sure, advising and helping, you know, understand the issues, having done a lot of this work, you know, prior to joining.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. I'd now like to go into some questions about IDNYC. How accessible is the IDNYC is online appointment scheduler?

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Accessible as in language access? Or just...?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: In language, in its interface, and to be able to make an appointment.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: My understanding is that a lot of work has gone into this to create a very accessible. Our deputy commissioner who oversees this work is on the call as well. Collette, do you want to weigh in on this? I do know that...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Yeah. The minute you asked about IDNYC, I put a handful of chocolate in my mouth. Hold on a second.

Hi, yeah, so. The IDNYC website was specifically designed and all of our centers are also completely ADA accessible. And that spans for the website regarding any vision impairments, if the need is for hearing, and so the website's fully accessible. It's accessible in 25 languages. And we're always adding more languages. We do not use Google Translate, we use our own built-in system. All of our newsletters, any communications that go out, text messaging goes out in the cardholders preferred language. So if they have selected a different language at the time of enrollment, which is also listed on their card, any communication from us will go out to them in that language as well.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's great. And can participants walk into any site for enrollment and renewal?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: So yes, with an asterisk, right? So we are still in post-pandemic recovery. Like that's just a reality we... I have teams of people who work with CBOs, outreaching to

churches, any city agencies, anybody that is willing to let us reopen. Currently, we have the largest footprint that we've had, since 2019, 2020 when we had to shut down. So we're at 17 sites right now. And we're hopeful to have two more sites in Queens. And so we're also hopeful that by the end of summer, it will begin to resemble what it used to look like. With that being said, we were pegged with staffing, and we have attrition. So the ability to set up the same number of enrollment stations at each site is impossible at this point. So...

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you give me the breakdown? How... what was the before? What is it now?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I mean, we used to have 29 sites, including five popups going anywhere, right? And our command center. Currently we have 17. Most of them... (crosstalk)

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many are permanent and popup?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: They're all... No, no, this is permanent sites. 17 permanent sites.

(crosstalk) Pop ups we're not counting in the number

we're providing you, because we popup when we're invited and when we can, right?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Given the staffing, we try to have our command center out all of the time in good weather. So that goes out frequently. We consider that a popup, but because it's not a standing popup -- it's sometimes only out for a day, depending upon the event -- it's sort of classified on its own.

But whereas we used to have in most locations, three to four workstations where we could enroll people, our footprint in each site has shrunk because of COVID. And because people's need for space and their... and their conference rooms back and things of this nature. So now in most sites, it's at most three enrollers, and many sites have one. So our ability to do the numbers we used to do is lower but we're still cranking it out and we fit people in throughout, who come in for walk-ins, we still encourage people to make appointments because we don't want lines if people outside. That's not great for anybody. We... If people come to renew, we try to assist them while they're on the line, to actually

renew on an iPad that we have, or renew on their own phone. Because, you know, many people can if they haven't changed their name, or any of the identifying information, by simply... even if they change their address, they can simply upload a document. So that... that significantly helps with... with those numbers. And we're... (crosstalk)

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Given the shortage...

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Yup, go ahead.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Given the shortage of enrollers, what's the wait time for an appointment?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I... it just... it depends on what borough, right? In some boroughs we have more centers than others. And so... (crosstalk)

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Which are... which boroughs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: So Brooklyn has a lot, because... and we have large enrollment centers there. Large meaning two to three enrollers. Right, Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza, it's the center of that area. We have a location in Sunset Park, always busy. We're at the Department of Finance. We're in an HRA building in Coney Island. We're in an HRA building in downtown Brooklyn. That's a significant number, right?

We are... We need to build our Queens portfolio. We spend an enormous amount of time doing that. And wherever we can pop up in Queens, so if anybody here is from Queens and wants us we will come. So it's... I don't want to make it sound like it's such a shortage of enrollers. It's also a shortage of invitations. Because at this point, people are trying to reopen their businesses, reopen their offices, and we're extra and we bring in lots of traffic and people are nervous about having traffic. That's just a reality. I mean, we have scoured the city for locations.

So and, you know, we've recently, I think, collaborated with two more organizations that are willing to have us in the coming month in Queens, so that will be fantastic. We're still waiting for the Flushing Library to finish its renovations, so we can go back there. That was a huge site for us. The Jamaica Library: We're back there, and it's extremely successful. So I mean, that's, that's...

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's really... that's really great to know. And I know that the number of younger participants has increased. Could you share

what approaches has helped drive the number of younger participants.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I missed the word that you said. Can I show what?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you share what approaches have helped drive up the number of young participants?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: So really gearing benefits towards families, towards children, and trying to get benefit partners that are exciting for youth. And so we have done that in the last few years. We have a whole host of benefits for kids including like, Cartwright. Well, we have a huge partnership that we leveraged right before the pandemic with Sullivan County in Upstate New York. So one of our plans was to go to each of the outside regions where we could help both increase tourism in New York State, but also for our card holders who are traveling to get discounts there. So we had a whole plan to do the beaches out in Long Island, which would have been amazing for people but then the pandemic, but we weren't able to partner with Sullivan County and Sullivan County has Cartwright Water Park and Resort, has all sorts of things. So

we spent a significant amount of time, at the same time when we launched the middle school card for IDNYC, which also launched that fall before the pandemic.

So in conjunction, to really sort of get the youth interested in both civic engagements, but also interested in going and experiencing culture, staying off the streets, and doing things that they... they could also get discounts. Because if I'm an IDNYC cardholder as a mom, and I am, right?, that doesn't mean that when I go to a place with my kids, they get included, but now they can, right?, because they have their own ID on my SD card. So we did a lot there.

And also the IDNYC Middle School card, which we're hoping come this fall, DOE will welcome us back, and we know this was like a big year for them to reopen themselves fully. And so we haven't really pressed on that. And now we're towards the end of the school year, and that's never a good time to enter a school. But I'm sure you're aware that we launched the middle school card, which is a vertical card, which does not have the address and but does have an emergency contact, which parents were like super jazzed about because so many of the middle

school population travels the subways by themselves.

So I think those numbers will only skyrocket come the fall when we are able to get back into the schools and hopefully we can. I mean, that's really out of my jurisdiction.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, that's fantastic news. And I'd love to collaborate closely on making sure that these numbers continue to rise. I really appreciate that you're here with us, Deputy Commissioner Samman. I'll wrap up here. I know we've got other agencies on the deck. Thank you all so much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Counsel, do we have anybody else?

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: No, we do not. So we're going to wrap up with MOIA and we need everyone to bear with us a few moments while we switch over to DFTA... (crosstalk).

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: I'm going to make one last pitch. If you have an IDNYC card, renew it.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Laughs. Thank you Collette.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Also the Councilmember that joined us as well for the last portion were Carr, Dinowitz, Richardson Jordan, Marte, Mealy, Moya, Hudson, Louis, Brewer, Powers, and Schulman. So we're going to check everyone in for DFTA and then we'll get right started.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, Manny, thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Thank you everyone. Thank you Chair Brannan. Thank you Chair Hanif. Goodbye everybody.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Good bye.

SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Good afternoon COO Ognibene would you like to test your audio?

COO OGNIBENE: Testing testing? 123

SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Coming in loud and clear. Thank you.

COO OGNIBENE: Got it. Thanks.

SERGEANT SADOWSKY: And good afternoon, Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez. Would you like to test your audio?

[Silence]

SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Good afternoon Chair Hudson. Would you like to test your audio?

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2 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Hello. 123 This is
3 Cortés-Vázquez.

4 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Yes, we can hear you
5 Commissioner. Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

7 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: we're just waiting on CFO
8 Mercado, and then we can begin with the Chairs. So
9 let's just give them a moment.

10 CFO Mercado, can you just see if you can unmute
11 yourself, please? We just want to make sure we can
12 hear you.

13 CFO MERCADO: Yeah, unmuted.

14 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Perfect and we can hear you.
15 Thank you.

16 Yes, members of the admin and councilmembers,
17 you'll be able to mute and unmute yourselves. We are
18 extremely behind schedule. Thank you, DFTA, for
19 being patient with us, councilmembers, when it comes
20 time for questions, use the raise hand function zoom.
21 When time is called. Please use your time
22 effectively and efficiently. Chair Brannan, we'll
23 start with you. Then Chair Hudson, we'll start with
24 you. Then I will swear in the admin, and we're
25 gonna get this train back on track.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Captain. Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to the third and final portion of today's executive budget hearings. We'll be talking now to the Department for the Aging. I'm joined by Councilmember Crystal Hudson who is the chair of the Committee on Aging.

The Department for the Aging is projected fiscal 23 budget of \$479.2 million represents less than 1% of the city's proposed FY 23 budget in the FY 23 executive plan. DFTA's fiscal 23 budget increased by 4.3% or \$19.6 million from the preliminary plan of \$459.7 million. The increase is the result of a number of actions taken, most significant of which are a new need for home delivered meals and associated case management services totaling \$14.8 million, and the reflection of baseline New York Connects funding of \$3.7 million. There are no changes resulting from the peg in DFTA's executive plan. Despite the increased funding added for certain programs, there remain key programs highlighted by the City Council in its response to the mayor's prelim that remain unfunded.

With New York City being home to approximately 1.6 million older adults, I look forward to hearing from DFTA on why those priorities remain unfunded.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez, I'd like to welcome you and your team. I plan on focusing my questions on older adult centers and the end of the recovery meal program. At our hearing today and throughout budget negotiations, I want to make sure that the needs of this vulnerable population are met by a budget that is fair and equitable. COVID has exposed many inequities and issues facing older adults in this city, and with DFTA's budget representing less than 1% of the city's proposed FY 23 budget, every dollar must be used fairly efficiently and effectively. I want to thank Daniel Kroop, Chima Obichere, John Yeddin, and the entire finance team for their work on today's hearing. I'll now turn it to Councilmember Crystal Hudson Chair of the Committee on Aging.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much Chair Brannan. Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. And thank you again for your patience. My name is Crystal Hudson. I'm Chair of the Committee on Aging. We will now hold the committee's joint hearing on the

fiscal 2023 executive budget for the Department of the Aging, or DFTA. Thank you to chair Brannan, again for your leadership and partnership throughout this budget process. And during these hearings, I know it's grueling. So thank you.

A reminder to those watching that members of the public are invited to testify on Wednesday, May 25.

And you may visit council.nyc.gov to learn more.

Welcome back to Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez. Our work continues to make New York City the best place in the country to age, and to ensure that every older adult can age with dignity, no matter what zip code they live in. Older adults are the fastest growing cohort of the city's population, and we must keep pace with the strategic plan and targeted investments to accommodate that growth. DFTA's fiscal 2023 executive budget is \$479.2 million, as was mentioned, an increase of \$19.5 million or 4.2% from the preliminary budget. Major actions taken include new needs that baseline \$8.8 million for home delivered meals, and \$6 million for case management serving 3000 clients each. Although DFTA was not subject to new pegs in fiscal 2023 or in the out years, which is a welcome reflection of the discussion we had in the

preliminary hearing, the executive budget still proposes the termination of Get Food Recovery Meals Program on June 30 at the end of the current fiscal year.

A key question for today's hearing surrounds home delivered meals and combating food insecurity. I look forward to hearing updates on the current need. How DFTA will ensure that no older adult misses a meal, and the level of funding that must be added by adoption. The council's preliminary budget response also included calls for a range of investments and services and supports that will help older New Yorkers age in place and recover from the COVID 19 pandemic. In addition to \$30 million in funding for home delivered meals. These include \$8.7 million for geriatric mental health, \$7.5 million dollars for technology, and new funding for home care services. There were 421 eligible older adults awaiting homecare in March. However, the executive plan adds no funding to clear the homecare waitlist. Additionally, one time fiscal 2022 Council discretionary funding remains missing for programs that serve LGBTQ older adults, immigrants, Holocaust survivors, and support core operations and

programmatic enhancements and older adults centers and NORCs across the city.

As we turn the corner into warmer weather, I hope DFTA takes an aggressive approach towards attracting more older adults to its network of programming. I recently conducted a tour of two older adult centers in Harlem, and while I was impressed by the dedication of nonprofit staff, and the spirit of the older adults, it's clear that further investments are needed to strengthen the system, regain the levels of attendance that exist in pre-COVID, and refurbish centers. The capital plan at DFTA remains an untapped opportunity. DFTA's capital plan totals \$47.6 million across five years, which is the smallest of any standalone agency in the city. DFTA should review and invest in its capital plan to promote center refurbishments, renovations, and technology expansion for older adults.

It's a new day for older adults as we emerge from the pandemic. The council's vision in the budget response lays out a strategy for an equitable recovery for older adults. I look forward to ongoing partnership with the administration to match the council's commitment and meet the needs of every

older New Yorker. I hope DFTA takes a page from The Mayor's playbook and really gets stuff done this summer.

I'd like to thank the committee staff who've helped prepare this hearing, Daniel Kroop, senior financial analyst, Chima Obichere, unit head, Dahimi Sepura, Assistant Director, Chris Pepe, Committee Counsel, Chloe Rivera, Senior Policy Analyst, and my Chief of Staff, Casey Addison, and my Director of Policy and Budget Initiatives, Andrew Wright. I'll now pass it back to the finance council to continue our hearing and thank you very much.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you to both chairs.

The following members of the administration are here to testify and answer questions today. Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Michael Ognibene, Chief Operating Officer, and Jose Mercado, Chief Financial Officer.

I will first read the oath and after I will call on each member from the administration individually to respond.

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before these committees?

Excuse me and to respond honestly to Councilmember questions?

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I do.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: COO Ognibene?

COO OGNIBENE: I do. Yes.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: And CFO Mercado?

CFO MERCADO: I do.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Commissioner, you may begin when you're ready.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you so much.

Good afternoon Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and the Members of the Aging and Finance Committees.

I am joined this afternoon, as you just heard by Jose Mercado, our Chief Financial Officer, and by Michael Ognibene, our Chief Operating Officer. And I want to thank you for this opportunity to discuss DFTA's executive budget for fiscal 2023.

Chair Hudson, we have common cause and the goal to be the best and a model for aging in place in New York in the United States. The Department for the Aging administers a wide range of programs that enhance the independence and quality of life for the city's older population. The department's services

include adult... older adult centers, home delivered meals, case management services, home care services, transportation, caregiver services, mental health, employment counseling, and placement for older New Yorkers, and an array of aging services and programs. DFTA also serves as an advocate for the city's older adult population through legislative activity and public policy initiatives. The Department for the Aging's Fiscal Year Executive Budget, as you well stated, provides an operating expense of \$479.2 million, of which \$288.4 million are city funds. In addition, the department's 10-year capital plan includes \$61 million.

DFTA's Fiscal Year Executive Budget responds to the challenges faced by New York's older population during the pandemic, and lays the foundation for the future, including an extension for geriatric mental health and home-delivered meals. These investments reflect The Adams administration's commitment to the Community Care Plan, and supports the necessary to help older adults remain in their homes and age in place. DFTA's geriatric mental health commonly known as DGMH Initiative provides mental health services on site at 48 older adult centers in the agency's

network. Through this program, licensed mental health clinicians utilize engagement and workshops, on mental health topics to destigmatize mental health, screen participants for depression and anxiety, and to provide on-site counseling and give referrals. Overall participation in the program has led to a self-reported reduction in depression and anxiety. This program will expand to an additional 40 sites within three neighborhoods in fiscal 2023. Three neighborhoods are those communities that have been historically low income and are most affected by COVID. This will result in a total of 88 sites providing this service.

The fiscal budget for 2023 of \$6.4 million for older geriatric centers almost doubled what it was in fiscal year 22. The reach of the program exceeds just beyond those of the 88 sites. DFTA is always looking at how to innovate the provision of mental health services and have a greater reach for these services. As such DFTA is conducting a hub-and-spoke model, whereby outreach through engagement activities and assessment are conducted at other older adult clubs within the community.

As you know, the geriatric mental health services and the physical requirements are established by the State Department of Mental Health. If a mental health need is identified in a satellite site, the client is provided ongoing mental health services at the main older adult site that has been designated. This allows all older adults access to the geriatric mental health program, even if they are not a member of that particular local center, or the program is not located at a particular site.

Case management, which is the service that connects homebound older adults to resources and benefits so that they may continue to live independently and safely in their homes and to maintain the quality of life. That is the common cause that we all have. Case management is the gatekeeper for all DFTA funded in-home services such as home delivered meals, home care, friendly visiting, and the Bill Payer Program. All clients that are receiving in home services funded by DFTA will receive a comprehensive assessment from the case management agents. Case managers provide assessments to identify the strengths and needs of the older

person and work with the client to plan and coordinate services and resources on their behalf.

Again, the case management agency services are, again... most of them are dictated by the State Office for the Aging. Older Adults can call the agent connect hotline at 311 to be connected to a case management agency in addition to the regular outreach that's conducted. Additionally, many are referred to case management providers from an older adult center, meal providers, hospital, or other community based social services and healthcare agencies.

In 2023, \$44.1 million will support case management services for approximately 35,000 clients annually. Over 85% of the case management clients benefit from home delivered meal services five or seven days a week. DFTA contracts with community-based providers to provide these nutritious meals to homebound older adults aged 60 and older, and their dependents if they have a disability. Participants can choose if they would like frozen, fresh, chilled, or hot meals, as well as a form of variety of different cultural meals. This was very important and an issue that was raised by the older adult

themselves, and we ensured that that was built into the program. In 2023 \$60 million will support 5 million home delivered meals. This includes an increase of \$2.3 million in FY 22 and \$9.4 million in FY 23. So increasing the rate per meal to cover increased food costs, fuel, and labor costs. We want to thank the council and the network for the partnership and making this possible.

As the recovery meal service sunsets, we also project that up to 3000 additional older adults who currently receive recovery meals will be eligible for case management and home delivered meal services. As such, the budget includes an additional \$14.8 million, \$8.8 million for home-delivered meals, and \$6 million for case management to support this increase in that. I will talk to you about the increase in that. The pandemic has been challenging for everyone, and the strain on caregivers has been significant. DFTA's caregiver support program offers support groups counseling, training, outreach and caregiver services, and information to the many unpaid caregivers. Many older adults are caretakers for their aging parents, aunts, godparents, and other family members. Many are caregivers who also have

full time jobs. The program aims to educate, provide, or connect them to a wide range of supports that they may need. The caregiver program offers options for respite care, through home care participation in quality social adult daycare centers.

Without the respite care, many of these caretakers would not have the financial means or ability to leave the caregiver in someone else's care while they take a needed break from their caregiving responsibilities. Caregiver supports do not only allow the older adults remain safely in their homes, but they're also significantly less expensive, with higher positive outcomes than institutionalization. Caregiver support also provides a response to the unique needs of the diverse aging population. In addition, the program provides supplemental services, which offer limited financial assistance with the purchase of needed assistive devices such as walkers, bathroom steps, and other caregiver related expenses. These services help to ease the burden of families and of the other unpaid caregivers. In some cases the program helps connect caregivers to home health aides. In other cases, the caregiver attends

workshops to better understand how to care for someone with dementia.

Other support include connecting to additional groups to reduce social isolation for the caregiver. All situations are unique, and the caregiver program seeks to support these diversities. In 2023, funding for the caregiver program was \$8.1 million.

Caregiver supports positively impact the health and well-being of older adults, while aligning with the cultural background of the individual. As the aging population continues to diversify, agent investment and caregiver support are important and beneficial. July 1 2023, will mark the official start of our new and expanded portfolio for older adult centers and supports the five boroughs, which was among the top priorities of the community care plan. With new contracts and additional sites, our dedicated network of providers will even be better equipped to serve older adults as they continue to recover from the years-long pandemic. We are increasingly proud of the hard work of the staff and the AG network that has brought us to this point and let us really survive this pandemic. Survive is a loose word.

I would be remiss not to mention also our appreciation for the ongoing support of the City Council, which in FY 22 awarded DFTA with roughly \$41 million in discretionary funding, allowing us to make even greater investment in often underserved or unserved communities. Through this expansion our _____ and NORC portfolio, we effectively moved \$5.1 million of _____ investments into baseline contracts. You've heard me talk about this with you before, Chairwoman Hudson.

I urge you to continue your partnership to support the enhancement of these services, such as art programs and vehicles so that we can continue to diversify educational, art, and recreational programming for older adults. As I've always said, needs always outpace resources. As such, we are prioritizing several services that meet our priority the primary mission of keeping people safe and helpful at their homes and in their community, which include case management, home care, home delivered meals, caregiver services, transportation, and of course, workforce development, to help older adults attain financial stability, especially in the era of inflation, when so many older adults are subsisting

on limited incomes. These services built on investments made over the past years to provide older adults with opportunities to socialize and connect.
[coughing]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, do you want to... do you want to just jump into questions?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, what?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you want to just jump into some questions?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Let me just finish. I'm literally two lines away.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Including \$48 million in community care driven by the NORC investments. And then thank you for your consideration. And you can see that I'm struggling right? As well as the technological investments that help connect people with lesser mobility to virtual and other programs. Through the support and advocacy of important stakeholders. We have also advanced many efforts to help older adults in the midst of the pandemic. Last year, the challenge was: how do we do more with our existing resources? But I am very proud of our work and our work with the network.

There is always more that is needed to do more. As always, we are grateful to you, the chairs of the committee of your advocacy. I thank you. And now we can go to questions.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Commissioner. So let's just jump into it. So are all 308 of the centers currently open, and what... and what is the current utilization rate and daily attendance overall?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. You know, the good news is that yes, they're all open. Are they fully operational each one of them? No, it really is uneven. But I can say that we were real pleased. Last week, the number went up to 20... 20,000 for a day. And the average has been, you know, the average pre-pandemic used to be around 20... anywhere between 22,000 and 24,000.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's really good.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, yeah, a movement. But as you know, and as you can tell from my voice, that this pandemic and these situations are ever changing, and always affect the participation rates.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what is the breakdown for how DFTA has used the \$2 million added for marketing and outreach in fiscal 22 to attract older adults back to centers?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for that question. We knew as we... as we expanded to 36 new sites... if you remember, at a former hearing, I said it was 31 sites. My staff... the staff of DFTA corrected me and made sure that it was really 36 sites. So we were able to use the money much more judiciously than I thought. But because of that kind of an expansion we've built in outreach dollars in each contract. And... and as such, the goal was to conduct a variety of different approaches at the local community to... for outreach. That includes things like special events dates, social media, leafleting in the community, outreach through door to door, and a variety of other... other ways.

And what we did, Chair, was to assemble a group of providers to look at what some of the best practices are, or have been in the outreach methods, and we're using that work group to help inform how we can help the rest of the network come up with state of the art approaches.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: At how have we determined that inflation is impacting costs that are associated with the center operations? So how does the budget accommodate rising costs in terms of fuel and heating, cooling, personnel, food?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a... That's a great question. And we... first of all, I want to thank you, and the Chair and the entire council, for our joint efforts to get the home delivered meals a unit rate cost increase.

It is a conversation that we are having regularly with OMB that, you know, food and fuel which are the mainstays of older adult clubs in addition to... to the home delivered meals program. So we're looking at that right now. We... the inflationary rate has... it went from 7% when we was first started our discussion. It is now upwards of 8.7%. And so it's a great concern. The outcome will be, Chair, will be at the end of the year because programs have to cover costs, we will probably see a decrease in services. That said, given the slow uptake for full participation, it may balance out at the end, but it can't be sustained moving forward.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it. Um, so according to the executive plan to Get Food Recovery Meals Program, at a one year cost of \$53 million will be terminated in June. The executive plan adds \$8.8 million to accommodate 3000 more home delivered meal clients will be transferred to DFTA's baseline home delivered meals program.

How many older adults of above to 3000 may still want to receive a meal?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So I'm going to answer that two ways. I'm going to have Micheal Ognibene, after I make my statement, give you an update on the recovery meals and where we are today. We started out once at 199, by the time we took it over in November it was I believe 13,000 or 19,000, and that it went down to 13,000. Michael will give you the correct numbers, alright? But what I will say to you chair is that the 3000... we anticipate that about 3000 will be transferred over... will be home-delivered-meal eligible. But that doesn't accommodate what we call the natural increase for demand with the aging population and the aging in of the older population. So we will find ourselves at some point not... again, not being able to match that

increased demand. Michael, can you give the both Committee Chairs an update on where we are with recovery foods?

COO OGNIBENE: I'll just... Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

COO OGNIBENE: Okay, good. So I'm just going to back up a touch. In November, when we inherited the program, it was 13,000 older adults receiving recovery meals. These were both names of people that we knew as well as there were a number of plus-ones in the household. Since that time, in March, we began our outreach to try to, you know, alert folks that this was going to be ending in June.

So through the period of March and April, we've seen 6500... Oh, sorry, when we took... when we began the outreach in March, we were at 10,700. Right? So we've gone from November to March from 13,000 down to 10,700. We began our outreach in March, on March 7. Since that period, 6,500 of the 10,700 have found an alternative. Those alternatives include going back to groceries, shopping and meals preparation, older adults center, or they've gone through the case management assessment to determine their eligibility for home delivered meals. So got me so far?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, yeah.

COO OGNIBENE: Okay. All right. So for case management assessment, we've moved about 3,600 into the case management agencies for assessment. So far, they've conduct... completed 2,700 or so. I'm talking with yesterday's numbers, of which 1,700 have either been determined not eligible for the meals, and then they'll go to groceries or... or older adult center, or find another means, and 1,000 or so have moved into HDM. So we've got about 2,000 or so still to solve between now and June 30.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do we have an idea of how much it would cost to close that gap in your current estimate?

COO OGNIBENE: To close what gap?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So if there are folks who are slipping through the cracks there. I mean, are they... how... so tell me again, how many adults... more than... over the 3000, have we identified how many of those folks still might want to receive a meal?

COO OGNIBENE: Of the 3,600 that we assessed 1000 were assessed HDM so far, right? We've assessed about 2,700, we still have a few to go.

So let me tell you what we've been doing. On March 7th, we mailed a postcard to all of them, right? Then we followed up that postcard with a survey to everyone. And we asked them to complete the survey, give it to the delivery person the next time they come. Then we started making phone calls to all of these participants. People would complete the survey we would call a second time, we would call a third time. Then we mailed surveys translated in the nine most frequently preferred languages for people we hadn't heard from, complete the survey, give it to the delivery person. After three unsuccessful attempts with a call. We sent them another postcard, asked them to call us. Then we made a fourth attempt. After that one, another postcard was sent. So we at some point had six or seven or eight attempts to reach these folks.

So little by little, we've seen a lot of them say, "Yes, I'm ready to go back for groceries," "I want to return to the older adult center." As commissioner said, you've seen that that number has ticked up. And so we're still solving one by one by one. But every single one of these recipients is getting touched multiple times. We're trying to

solve for every single one of them. And we're on...
we're on track to do that between now and June 30.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's great.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think the other
thing that's important is that there are about --
Michael, correct me if I'm wrong -- there's about
anywhere between 300 and 350 for which we do not have
telephone numbers. And we will be doing door to door
canvassing of those in the next few weeks to make
sure that they get a communication about the programs
and possible off ramps.

COO OGNIBENE: Yes. It's about 400. But we will
be going door to door. There is a meeting we're
having next week to discuss a strategy for that. So
these are folks that we don't have phone numbers
from. Remember a lot of these were transferred to us
from Get Food and we have names and... and no phone
numbers in many cases.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's great. I appreciate
that. I'm going to hand it over to Chair Hudson for
her line of questioning. Thank you Commissioner.
Thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you Chair Brannan. So
3 going to home delivered meals, which is obviously
4 related, is there any money for new meal delivery
5 vans in the budget and how much does the capital plan
6 include to fund home delivery vans? And can the
7 capital funding be used to accommodate these
8 investments?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You and I talked
10 about the need for the vans, and we have some
11 limitations. I'm going to turn that over to Jose
12 Mercado, who can tell you what it costs per van, and
13 what the need is. Jose, do you want to handle that
14 please?

15 CFO MERCADO: Sure. Correct. Currently...
16 currently there are no funds set aside in the capital
17 budget for HDM vans. So part of that, for example,
18 it costs roughly about \$55,000 per van. Now, if the
19 Council were to actually give the funding to the
20 individual providers, then naturally the providers
21 could purchase these vans, but we cannot purchase
22 vans for the providers. That is something that we're
23 not allowed to do under the current capital plan.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. And just
25 going back to the recovery meals for a quick second.

Is it possible to get a table with updated numbers on exactly what you walked us through a moment ago?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Sure. We can give you that table. And just remember that it'll be a snapshot of that particular period, alright? So we can give you a snapshot as of let's say yesterday,...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, that's fine.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And walk you... and give it to you compartmentalized as to who is... who is in queue for case management and home delivered meals, and who is not, and where we are. And what the responses... we could also give you some of their reason or rationale that they've shared with us as to why or why not. Alright?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. That sounds good. Thank you for that. Okay, so home delivered meals. Combating food insecurity, as you know, is a council priority. And while the administration has included \$8.8 million in the executive plan for 3000 more home delivered meals, which I might note is 30% of what the council has requested, weekend and holiday meals remains funded by DFTA at a cost of \$3 million. And the council called for another \$9.7 million to help maintain meal quality despite rising costs. The

state comptroller's audit concluded in January that DFTA did not provide adequate oversight of its home delivered meals program, adding that, and I quote, "There are no consequences such as punitive actions for providers that fail to correct compliance violations." End quote. What controls are funded in the executive plan to ensure these issues are addressed in the future?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, well, with all due respect to my friend and dear colleague, Comptroller... Comptroller DiNapoli, that is... that is somewhat of an overstatement. But I will have... but that is... that said, there were some findings cited that are accurate. I will have Jose Mercado talk us through that process, and where we are, and what corrective measures we implemented before that... before that audit was completed and what we're doing moving forward. Jose?

CFO MERCADO: Sure. So as the Commissioner pointed out, there were specific issues with the audit itself. We basically... Again, we've actually are trying to look at our current STAR Systems, which basically is where we actually are... identify where each meal is being provided, and so we're trying to

leverage that technology to put in more, I would say, oversight of the way we actually monitor these providers. So we're in that process right now of actually reprogramming the STAR System to do that. That is kind of a major thing that we're doing right now. We also will have additional staff. We're going to actually be doing more audits of these providers, to ensure that they are actually doing what they need to be doing as well. So there's two major things that we're doing right now.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For example, Chair Hudson, one of the things that they cited us, was that we would not close a home delivered meals program immediately whenever we found a negative citation. And usually that was because the program officer was working with the program, trying to mitigate the situation. That is one of the biggest findings that they gave us, which should have been... they want... they recommended that we close immediately on these findings, some to deal... deal with health and cleanliness. Alright? I hope that clarifies it for you.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. That does. And, you know, if we have any follow up questions, we'll be

sure to reach out about that. We mentioned capital funds earlier. So I do want to just jump to capital funds quickly. And as I mentioned in my opening statement, DFTA has a capital budget that averages under \$10 million per year over five years. It's relatively small size makes it hard to tackle the repairs that many centers would benefit from, and if I can just also, you know, make a note that with 1.6 million older New Yorkers, you know, DFTA has one of the smallest agency budgets in the city. We have, by comparison 1.1 million students in the in the school system and a budget of \$31 billion. And we're talking here, you know, a budget less than half a billion dollars for older New Yorkers. So I just wanted to make that point on the record. Because, you know, this population is a growing population, we all know that, and we should really be doing a whole lot more to prepare New York City for, you know, the, the older New Yorkers who live here and call this home. So we're talking like any pennies here with... with, you know, capital budget, expense budget in terms of this agency. So I just want to just want to make that clear for the record.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. Chair, can

I make a comment also for the record?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sure thing.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you. And I heard Chair Brannan's statement in... in the previous hearing, where he talked about resources being dedicated to... a biblical reference about priorities. And so I just want to say that you're absolutely correct. But I also want to say for the record, two administrations ago, this agency took an incredible assault, meaning \$110 million reduction. And so for the last few years, I would say that we have worked very hard, both the former administration and this administration, to get us to the point of where we were before we were totally cut off from before. So I want that to be in the record. Since it's not a... it's not an indictment of the current state. It is, it is really a reflection of the historical cut that happened, you know, about... years ago, and all we've been trying to do is to catch up.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And I hear I hear that. But catching up to a level that was already too low is, by my... you know, from my perspective, it is too little too late. And with all due respect to every

mayor, we've had, everyone who's been elected mayor has been either an older adult or very close to an older adult. And so this agency historically has been underfunded. So this is not an indictment on any one administration. It's an indictment on all of us, you know, that we're just not valuing older adults the way we should be. But anyway, I don't want to get off track too much here.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And I want... and I don't want to countermand what you said. I... we're in total agreement, that given the explosive growth that we project, you know, in the next 10 to 15 years, it's something that we need to look at.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, when... when there's a baby boom, you know, we plan for additional school seats, and... and all sorts of things. And we're just not doing that for older New Yorkers. But anyway, I can go off on that for a very long time, and we don't have much time. So I want to get... get to the question I was going to ask about the capital funding. So does DFTA have a capital needs assessment for the 308 centers that are now in its portfolio?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Uh, Jose?

CFO MERCADO: We are actually doing assessments now. So, I mean, we've done assessments all along. Again, we have limited funding. The capital budget, you know, we do have a small capital budget, but we don't control that capital budget. We don't do repairs. We don't do any of that. We basically work with HPD, DDC to actually make renovations to any of our sites. So we don't really control it. It's all basically controlled by others. And the way that... the way the current charter reflects that. So we don't really control it.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So there is no needs assessment for the 308 centers.

CFO MERCADO: No. We are doing assessments. Again, we rely heavily on CDBG funds to actually do... to actually do a lot of our work, which is the Community Development Block Grant. That's the stuff that we control. So we do all that. We do actually look at kitchens. We look at, again, kitchens, roofs and all that. So little by little, we are doing assessments. We look at where we can. We focus... a lot of our work is on city owned sites that we own. So that's kind of where we do a lot of that. Where... if they're if they're non-city... non-city-

owned sites, we try to, again, work with The Council to actually get funding... capital funding, which then DDC and HPD manage... manages those projects.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Will DFTA sit down with The Council to examine where investments are needed?

CFO MERCADO: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes. Absolutely, because we do have, as part of our assessment, as you mentioned earlier, Chair Hudson, it's that we've been looking at the state of our kitchens in older adult clubs, and where we need to go to bring them to state-of-the-art, uh, kitchens.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright. Okay. And then what investments in the executive plan -- either expense or capital -- will ensure that cooling centers operate widely and successfully this summer, including with programming and elements that make them attractive to older adults?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, as you know, the cooling centers are operated with a partner, the Office of Emergency Management, and I believe that DFTA represents almost 35, if not higher, percent of local centers. All of it is contractually obligated

for each one of our older adult clubs to serve as a cooling center during the summer, particularly during a heat emergency. And during a heat emergency, it's to operate beyond regular service hours and on weekends. And we are working out those plans as we speak right now with each one of the agencies.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I'm going to ask just a couple more questions and then I'm gonna kick it over to my colleagues, and then I'll come back. But for geriatric mental health, the pandemic and rising hate crimes have shaken many older adults lives as we know, and supportive counseling through DFTA's geriatric mental health program, maybe many older adults only touch point for mental health. However, this administration has yet to add any funding for geriatric mental health, instead relying on the expansion funded in the previous administration. What geriatric mental health services will be available on July 1 of this fiscal year, and how many by December 31?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We are... we have 48 new sites, I mean, 40 sites that will bring us up to 88 sites, and the plan is to begin that expansion immediately. A lot of that work is underway as we

1 speak, by December 31, we expect it all to be fully
2 operational. And again, trying to expand services
3 through the hub and spoke model that I... that I
4 discussed during the testimony. Uh...

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, was there... did you
6 have something else to add?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, no, I was
8 looking to see if I wanted to give you some
9 statistics on the number of people that we serve, but
10 I'll give that to you later. I'm sorry.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Okay, because I know
12 that you... you did mention in your testimony, that
13 the budget was doubled for geriatric mental health
14 programs, and therefore 88 sites are providing, but I
15 guess we're concerned also about the hours and
16 providing full resources, not just partial resources
17 in.. in also the additional 20 sites of the 108, you
18 know, that wouldn't have any, any geriatric mental
19 health at all.

20 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, no, we, you
21 know, we want to work with you on that. But we want
22 to focus on ensuring that we have a smooth rollout to
23 manage both of these programs, because they are
24 doubling. And we want to make you know... and just
25

given the, you know, the fact that the state is interested in auditing the city, we want to make sure that we roll that out for managed growth. And based on that growth, and that experience, and informed practice, it will lead us to say exactly how many more sites we should have and where the gaps are.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and so, speaking of gaps, how will older adults who don't live near centers with services receive transportation or virtual technology to connect to those centers.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The hub and spoke model is... is what we rely on to make sure that it is within proximity of the older adult and the older adult center.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I don't I don't know if... if I would classify that as sufficient for the moment but let me move on.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. I... It is one model and but it is not the only model. You're absolutely right.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Let me move on to my... my colleagues, and then I have plenty more for you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: For the record, we just want to say that we've been joined by councilmembers Brannan, Hudson, Barron, Brewer, Carr, Dinowitz, Louis, Ossé, Sanchez, Schulman, Ung, Ayala, Powers, Richardson Jordan, Velázquez, and Lee. The first hand that was up was councilmember Barron.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Alright, we will circle back to him. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Brewer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. And I hope you feel better. You're a trooper to be here, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: The first issue is the staffing. Maybe I missed that. I try to pay attention. But, when I visit and I think you'd feel the same with the centers, the seniors have so many issues, and they're just compounded. I think you know that. So they need more case management. And you can only do so many clients. I mean, some of the centers have long, long waiting lists. You know, "I, I have a problem. Can I come see you?" "Yes, we're in May. You can come in July." I mean, that's

literally what they're doing. So maybe you're adding money, and I'm missing it. That's very possible. But I wanted to know what you think about that issue of case... Those caseworkers are like the lifeline, as you know, for the seniors. So how are we how are we going to get more caseworkers? That's one of my questions.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So... so we are expanding case management services. Because, as you well know, Councilmember, case management is the gateway to home delivered meals, and you can't have one without the other. And finally, that was clearly understood by all. And so one of the things that we are looking at -- and you're absolutely right, we are also daunted by the waitlist -- one of the things that we know that we are doing is we will expand the number of case management units and the new RFP will allow us to increase the number of case management agencies. And one of the things that... that came from an earlier hearing was we can't change the requirements of case management agencies because that's dictated by the state, but we can look at where we place them, and how we can configure

increasing the numbers so that we are addressing the cultural and ethnic needs of this growing population.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay, so just helped me to... so how many... so depending on the RFP, how many more case management... or what's the amount? And then... you know, number that this RFP might bring to us? Is there a number? Because the reason I'm asking... (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There is \$14.8 million in new investment.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright? And of that, there is the case management piece, and I'm going to give you right now, how many more agencies... Jose, can you...? Do you have that... how many more agencies we...?

CFO MERCADO: Yeah. Right, so the possibility of bringing on between 3 and 4 additional agencies.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Alright. So this is my stupid question: Because when you say agencies that means that...

CFO MERCADO: Providers. Providers.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Providers. ...so then those, but that doesn't mean that Humpty Dumpty

Senior Center can hire more case managers. Is that... or is that what it means? I don't understand.

CFO MERCADO: Yeah. There's... that's different.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. I'm looking for money for Humpty Dumpty Senior Center to hire more case managers.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I don't want seniors at the Humpty Dumpty senior center.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Right. I mean, I'm just trying to not name them all, because I don't want to get them in trouble, because they're all calling me. Right? I'm trying... That's... (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And... and we share that concern, and it's one of the things that we are in conversations with OMB.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I mean, it's one thing to talk about food. It's another thing about the eviction and all the other topics that they're concerned about. So I'm trying to get more money for the senior centers that currently exist (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Existing but not (inaudible) (crosstalk)

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Yes. Okay. Second...

second question is: Where are we at with the digital? To your credit, there was an allocation -- I think that you did it really well -- where you said to the Senior Center, "How many do the seniors need?"

You didn't just dump a whole bunch of devices, because that never works. So where are we with the... in terms of technology, and funding, and devices, and so on and so forth, with... with technology?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So it's one of those areas, Councilmember Brewer, that we constantly expand. You know that we did the 10 million... I mean, the 10,000 -- I wish it was 10 million -- the 10,000 for the NYCHA residents, and then we did another 10,000 For those who are not NYCHA residents.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We just rolled out 1000 in the Bronx, we have another effort going to happen in the next few weeks to do 1000 more tablets in... in Queens. So it's one of those programs that we continuously are rolling out and evaluating its expansion, because we know... for two things: We know that as senior centers are opening up and not

opening up fully, virtual programming is essential to combat social isolation.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We also know that it's essential to stay in touch with family members.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I don't want to take more time, but just I just with the technology, it will be good for us to know where you're rolling it out for two reasons: Number one, with all due respect, the NYCHA didn't have any training with it. They weren't necessarily getting training. The other one did... the second one. The second round was good. The second... the first round, in my opinion, I saw some in closets and in the lobbies, and I don't want to tell you, but the reason I asked is if you were if you could let us know, when you're rolling these out in our areas, then we could try to make sure that they get the training that goes with it, et cetera, et cetera.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I will... We will definitely do that.

COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I have many more, but go ahead. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you Councilmember.

Councilmember Barron, I see you on screen now. We'll turn to you.

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much. I'll be very, very short. Boy, this mayor should be ashamed of himself, cutting our youth, cutting education, and now even though there was an increase from the preliminary budget, when you look at FY 22... isn't it true there was a decrease of \$82 million?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't know if I can answer that correctly. Jose, is there a decrease?

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, that's a reduction as, remember, we basically... that's the Get Food Program that's expiring. Remember, so yes, there was a reduction? Yes. (crosstalk) and stimulus funding as well.

COUNCILMEMBER BARRON: The reduction (crosstalk) \$82 million (crosstalk)... Yes, that's right. And when the council acts with \$30 million for the meal transition for older adults, the executive budget put \$8.8 million in. When we asked for \$9.7 million and \$3 million for weekend and holiday meals: Zero. For

Ge... geriatric mental health services: \$8.7 million we asked for: Zero. I mean, I hope you can, you know, make the adjustments for these cuts. But this... it's a shame that youth have been cut, that health is being cut... the department is being cut, housing is being cut, education is being cut, while we have a \$7 billion reserve in the budget, and there's no reason for these cuts, particularly when it comes to our seniors. So I wanted to make more of a statement on that my colleagues asked a lot of good questions, the chairs did, and you can respond to that. But I just think that we could not allow for these kinds of cuts to these social services, when we have a \$7 billion reserve budget and a \$99.7 billion expense budget. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you, sir.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember Barron. Next we'll turn to Councilmember Ossé.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Hi, good afternoon, everyone. Hi, chairs. Hi, everyone. So the first question that I have is: District 36 is a naturally occurring retirement community, and a majority of my constituents are seniors. There are two major

concerns that my constituents bring up when it comes to senior issues. And the first one is transit access. You know, many of our seniors in my district have said that the city lacks real accessible transportation for seniors. Although Access-A-Ride exists as a senior transport program is often inaccessible to most seniors due to factors like ineligibility for the program, and making appointments for rides. Although Access-A-Ride is an MTA program, what is DFTA doing to ensure the expansion and accessibility of the Access-A-Ride program is more accessible. And furthermore, what part of DFTA's budget will be allocated to expanding transportation access for seniors, and what steps is DFTA taking to ensure transit access for seniors?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for that question. We are in constant communication with the MTA not only to improve the services... services of Access-A-Ride, but also to improve beyond demand. And Jose, you can talk about what we've done with transportation, and one of the things that we did under the RFP that... from last year, about transportation.

CFO MERCADO: Yeah. So part of the RFP... the new... the older adult center RFP that was issued, we basically expanded transportation within this area, roughly a little bit more than a million dollars. We also have... commissioner if you want to mention My DFTA, My Ride, that's an initiative...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Councilmember, we have a pilot program... a three-year pilot program with the Department of Transportation and I believe it is the Department of Justice -- son will correct me -- and... where we have an on demand service in select communities that are transit deserts, where an older adult will get an allotment of, I believe, anywhere between \$500 to \$900 for the year where they can use that... those transportation services, for family visits, medical visits, recreation, as well as appointments and things of that nature.

It's a very limited program. It's a model, it's a pilot, depending on its success, we will be working with the feds to expand it.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you so much. And the second question that I have is affordable housing. Unfortunately, my district is rapidly gentrifying,

and it is often seniors are most affected. In my district, there are predatory realtors who prey on seniors and fraud them into turning over their deeds, and corrupt landlords who fail to address repairs, resulting in mold, gas, heating, and water issues for senior tenant tenants. What is DFTA doing to provide housing support for seniors, whether that is protection for homeowners, or ensuring that senior tenants know their rights? And then also just to follow up on that: What is DFTA doing to help support agencies like HPD and DHS to help homeless seniors find affordable or permanent housing?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It is one of those challenges, as you know Councilmember, for all of us in terms of housing... meeting basic housing needs. We work very closely with HPD, and we also work very closely with the Department of Buildings, it is a challenge. It continues to be a challenge. But in terms of tenant rights, we have a right to counsel, although it's not legal services that we provide, but we provide advocacy services for individuals who have either been identified and also affected by a landlord for... whatever you call those... those so-called orders for evacuation. And so that is a small

program that we... that we have, and that we're looking to expand. But it is a daunting, daunting problem. We share that. The Mayor shares that. We all share that concern.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: I hope he shares that too. And I really do hope the budget reflects that. You know, I think Chair Hudson is doing a fabulous job as chair of this committee and continues to bring up points that our senior population is close to that of our New York City public school population. Thus, I truly believe that the budget should reflect that, because this city day after day, year after year is proving that it truly is not a city for you know, our aging population.

So thank you for your work. And I'm hoping that we at the Council can make sure that you can do your work smoothly and more expansively to reach all of our communities.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you. And I really do enjoy the partnership and the leadership of Chair Hudson. She minces no words on the needs and her advocacy.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So we're very pleased about.

COUNCILMEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember. I am not seeing councilmember Carr on. We're going to turn to Councilmember Sanchez.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Good afternoon, Commissioner. It's very good to see you. And of course, I want to shout out our Co-Chairs: Councilmember Brannan for... for your endurance of all these hearings, and compliment you on all of your advocacy of for our seniors.

So Commissioner, I have... uh, two parts. I hope I can get to them both. One is on recovery meals and meals delivered to the homes. My district, which I know you're very familiar with here in the West Bronx is heavily Latino, heavily... we have a... an ageing population as well, and I hear a lot of complaints about not being able to access services. Folks that are disabled, folks that are... you know, that should be... should be eligible for receiving meals in their homes. And, you know, on a case by case basis, I've

worked with your team, and I thank them for being responsive.

But more broadly, what is the total budget for the meals... Let's talk about the home delivered meals in particular. And you know, do you have a borough breakdown of how those are distributed?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose, do we have a thorough breakdown now? Or can we... (crosstalk)

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, we can... we can provide it, but we can give you, for example, the total budget, as of FY 22 is... for example... the budget is \$86.3 million. That includes the transition meals as well. For fiscal year 23, we have a budget that basically is \$60.1 million. We do have a breakdown by borough. We can provide that shortly.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: And how is that... that... there's a clip there. There's a huge drop. How is that going to... How are you going to select who is coming off of the program?

CFO MERCADO: Michael, do you want to take that?

COO OGNIBENE: Yes. So the... well, the money was... was given to us to run through June 30 of this year. Since then, we've been finding off ramps for those folks out there shouldn't be the need, and the

true money will be to support the home delivered meals program.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: That's, that's concerning because, you know, folks kind of get used to... used to these resources, and then they disappear. So, you know (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Councilmember Sanchez, I don't mean to interrupt you, but it's one of the... one of the statements we made earlier to Councilmember... to Chair Hudson, which is that the new money is... it is anticipated that about 3000 will be coming off just recovery meals onto home delivered meals, but as you so aptly stated, and Councilwoman and the Chair reminded us... or I reminded that that doesn't address the natural growth, given the population increases. So it is a conversation that we constantly have with OMB and the mayor's office regarding this... this potential growth and we do not want to find ourselves a step behind. Thank you.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah. Absolutely. No, I completely agree with you on that and look forward to working with you. And so the second part of it is about the state comptroller's audit of the home

delivered meal meals program, which found serious deficiencies.

So first, how long does it take to resolve complaints on average? And how many staff does DFTA have to have working on the home delivered meals?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a good question. I have that for you. Just let me find that page. It takes us between one to three days to handle a complaint, and the number of people we have... Michael, do you have that number? I'm trying to find it right now (inaudible).

COO OGNIBENE: It's about 4 to 5 people depending.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: For home delivered meals?

COO OGNIBENE: Yeah. Yeah. Oversight.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. And that's for... and that's for 26 programs.

COO OGNIBENE: It's actually 6... it's actually 15 contracts.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. So, probably three contracts per staffer. (crosstalk)

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: (inaudible) a contract?

COO OGNIBENE: Huh?

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: And the size of a contract is...?

COO OGNIBENE: Well, the contracts vary. I mean, we have... they vary on average, between \$2 million each, roughly.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, that's a lot of responsibility. I'm sorry, I'm about to run out of time. So I just want to get this this last one in and it's very, you know, it's very personal to you and I, Commissioner, which is that the comptroller's report also found that DFTA's satisfaction survey methodology was poorly developed. And folks that have limited English language proficiency were excluded from participation. So, what changes have been made to fix this problem, because that means like, almost 70% to 80% of them...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: ... were not able to give their feedback. You know, what... what is DFTA doing?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That... that is an outsized statement. I will... I can share with you what kind of, you know, just not to take any more time, but I can share with you what we have done in

terms of language and outreach. So as you know, that is incredibly important to me, that people should not be marginalized because of language or gender or any other issues or geography. So it's one of the things we're looking at.

I would say that the major citing was the amount of time between... that we would keep working with the nonprofit with the provider, trying to come up with a correction... a corrective action plan, rather than just stop the service. And so I think that's where we have a major distinction between our approach and... and the... you know, the esteemed comptroller. But I just want you to know that it is something that we have responded to, and we'll continue to work with that.

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: Wonderful, thank you. And if as a followup, you can share some of those efforts, I would really appreciate it. Oh, and I'd love for you to come to my district. I emailed your staff.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, I will do that. I love the Bronx. I'm a Bronxite, so...

COUNCILMEMBER SANCHEZ: I know. Right. Thank you. Thank you, Chairs.

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2 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you, Councilmember. And
3 next we'll turn to Councilmember Lee.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Hi, everyone. Hi,
6 Commissioner. Hi, everyone. Thank you for... and
7 thank you for the Chairs, Justin and Crystal for,
8 yes, the endurance. [laughs] So you guys already
9 know, I'm a huge proponent, like supporter of older
10 adults, and definitely pushing for more money as
11 possible in the budget on the city council side. So
12 I have a few questions. I'll try to rapid fire them
13 so that we can let other folks go. But just out of
14 curiosity for the geriatric mental health program, I
15 know that there's 308 senior centers, correct?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And then how many
18 mental health clinic providers are there? And what's
19 the capacity of them to meet the seniors that need
20 services? Because I know that there was a
21 partnership where they got paired up.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: There are... there
23 are currently 40. By July, we will have 88. And as
24 we said earlier, we have different methodologies to
25 make sure that their reach is beyond those 88 sites.

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2 We are somewhat limited and constrained by the state
3 requirements, but it is something that we are
4 constantly looking at to mitigate.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Sorry, so 88 senior centers,
6 correct?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: 88 new sites. 88
8 new geriatric mental health... it may serve more than
9 88 senior centers, because of that hub and spoke
10 model that I was talking about.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. But do you know how
12 many actual Article 31 outpatient clinics are
13 partnered with those senior centers? And could...
14 would you be able to provide us with a list of them?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I can get that for
16 you Councilmember.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, and then the other
18 thing I wanted to drill down into... (crosstalk)

19 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Give me your
20 question again. I want to make sure I answer your
21 question, rather than an assumption of what I think
22 you asked.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Sure, sure. No, I just
24 wanted to know, on the mental health provider side,

25

which are not necessarily different senior centers,
right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. You want to
know the... (crosstalk)

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Right. How many providers
are there on the mental health side? And if you
could give us a list of who those folks are?

CFO MERCADO: Commissioner. So Commissioner,
there are five providers currently. We can give you
a list.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Five providers from
the state? Who are...?

CFO MERCADO: No five... Yeah, these are... these
are basically our geriatric mental health providers.
Those are the five. We can provide the specific
information you want. We can give you a list of who
they are. Yeah.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And then of those
five, do you know roughly how many languages are
served through those mental health clinics?

CFO MERCADO: We can get to that information.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We'll get you that.
And it depends on... on the geographic location.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah. Okay. And then I wanted to kind of piggyback off what councilmember Brewer was asking before about the homebound meals.

So I know that you guys have done a good job in terms of trying to put the 3000 seniors and assess them. But it's a two part question, which is: What's the... I know that those are the folks that we already know about, that were on the Get Food Program list and the current seniors that are at the centers. But given that we have such an increase in the population, how has the outreach efforts been in terms of reaching out to seniors that may not already be in the DFTA system?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, that is... that is the role of the partnership between the Case Management Agency, and the... and the home delivered meals program as well as older adult clubs. You know, there's a lot of entry points, but everybody has to pass through the case management agency. And what I said to Chair Hudson, and I think Chair Brennan before was that the need outpaces the resources, so that this 3000 accommodates those from recovery foods. But we are looking closely with OMB and the mayor's office on, you know, looking at how

we incorporate the natural growth for home delivered meals that happens every year.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay. And that's a perfect segue to my next part of the case management question, which is... right in line... so I know that the case... When is the contract supposed... When is that terminating? The current contract for case management again?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, hold on a minute, I'll tell you. We've just put out the RFP.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we should be releasing it -- let me get you that...

CFO MERCADO: I can provide it for you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. Thank you, Jose.

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, it's... the current contracts end this June 30th. We're extending them for a year.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, so extending them for a year. So is it possible to... because just like you mentioned, Commissioner, it's extremely difficult to qualify to become a case management agency, because I think we applied... we tried applying one year...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Oh sorry. Is it okay if I...?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Let me... let me just take my time to answer you.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Well, quickly... sorry.

Sorry. So is there a way... Is there room in the RFP, given that new case management agencies may be difficult to get right? So is there a way -- if we're talking about addressing niche communities and marginalized communities with various language barriers -- is there a way to do the RFP with the subcontractors in a way where it would allow room for more growth... growth with the subs?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I want to let you know, Councilmember, that I heard you loud and clear at whatever hearing... whatever it was ago, where you said that we need to do that. So we will be expanding the number of case management agencies, number one. Number two, we're using this year... this year of expansion... this year of rollover, not expansion... this year of rollover to do just that, to identify who could be... using like an MTA model - - I know if I say anything, MTA, somebody's going to

jump on me -- but using an MTA model where we can have subcontracting to then build a capacity to then ensure that moving forward in the following year, we could be able to... to do that. So it's something that we've been looking at very, very carefully. And we are also holding several stakeholder meetings during this period, so that we could... excuse me... so that we could get some of the best thinking and introduce those kind of concepts about subcontracting. Alright?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Yeah. And definitely on the mental health side, too, if that's possible, because we need more... (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's a little harder, because that is not only the state requirements... oh my voice came back... that's a little harder, because not only do we not only have to state requirements, but we also have physical location... physical requirements that that they impose on us that our senior centers might not have.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: No, I agree. But the satellite sites, just so you know, for Article 31's are much less stringent.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: And just one last question:
For the postcards that were sent out, could you let
us know which languages they were sent out in?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Michael?

COO OGNIBENE: Can I get that back? Can we send
that to them?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

COO OGNIBENE: I've got to look it up, meanwhile
while we're talking.

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: While we're
talking. It was multiple languages. And then, uh,
Chair Hudson, I think, was the one that said, when
are we going to do door-to-door, and we decided to do
door-to-door. We're working in partnership with the
(inaudible), for those who have not responded to the
cards, or to the survey, and who do not have
telephones. Okay?

COUNCILMEMBER LEE: Okay, thank you. Sorry
for...

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: And if the answer comes while
we're continuing, Councilmember, we will still be on,
so we can address that in a bit. So we'll turn to
Councilmember Richardson Jordan next.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Hi, yes. Thank you. Thank you chairs for making the time and the space. I wanted to ask if... if there is anything going on in particular for LGBTQ older adults. And were in this budget, are we looking at services for centers... either centers like SAGE centers where the focus is LGBTQ older adults, or even within general centers, programming that is open and available to that... that part of the community.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

Councilmember Richardson Jordan, I have to tell you that for years, even before I got here, the Department for the Aging worked very closely with SAGE and Michael Adams to ensure that we did training in every senior center so that older adults would be able to be incorporated, and introduce, and welcome at every senior center regardless of gender and gender identity. And that was something that was started before I got here. That continues. We've been able, through the RFP, to expand the number of services for SAGE. We're really pleased with the partnership with SAGE so far. We had another one in Brooklyn, but they opted out of services for variety

of reasons, and it was mostly physical plant issues. But we have... that is our goal to make sure that we provide training so that both staff and participants are embracing the new participants coming into their centers.

COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: I definitely appreciate that effort. Do you have a sense of where it is budget wise? Um... the...? (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, I could... I can tell you... I'll get it for you, how much we invest in... in SAGE and not we support SAGE's programs, and they also have been very instrumental in doing specialized housing. So I can get you that information after this hearing, alright?

COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay, great. I... I did also have just two other questions. I wanted to ask about veterans, you know, in addition to being on the aging committee, I'm also, you know, I feel honored to be on the Veterans Committee and those who overlap quite a bit. And in our district, it skews older. And what I've been finding with a lot of veterans is they don't know or understand their... their benefits and the things that are available to them.

So is there anything DFTA is doing, particularly in that space of letting our older adults who are veterans know what they have access to?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We've done two things to that end -- and I agree with you, we should be doing much more because of not only the overlap, but the increasing number of older adults who are veterans, right? And then the increasing older adults who are veterans and homeless, and so it's one of those areas that we're constantly looking at. Well, we work very closely with the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs. And last year, we started some kind of exchanges, again, to train center staff... older adult center staff and case management agency on what the needs are of veterans. And it's one of the steps that we took, I believe it was last year, and have continued on.

COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: And again, do we have a sense of budget around that? Or is that... that something I could possibly get in a follow up?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't know that there's a budget dollar that I can give you. What I can tell you is time on task. And we can extrapolate a budget dollar, alright?, because it's not a new

investment of dollars, but it's a use of resources.

So I can tell you the number of training sessions that we've had, time on task, and extrapolate that for you, if that's helpful if that... that, you know.

COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: No, I would... I would appreciate that. Thank you.

I just had one more question. And it's sort of a technical one, and I'm not... I'm not even all the way sure if DFTA would be able to help us, but there has been some concerns in my district -- I mean, all the centers do need support -- but there's been particular concerns around two centers that are inside NYCHAs and haven't been able to open. That's Lincoln Houses Senior Center and St. Nicholas Houses Senior Center. And, and I'm wondering if you can give any insight into what would happen in terms of capital funding, because I wanted to put in a request for this, but then...

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: I've also been told that when you when you put budget or you put capital funds or you request to give to NYCHA that it's very hard to get those dollars to truly reach the right spaces.

I was wondering if you have any insight into that in terms of wanting to be able to rehab these... these senior centers.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you. It's a challenge that we always have. You know, we... you know, we have a strong partnership with NYCHA. But we always tell NYCHA... we have an issue in Brooklyn right now, and one of the things that we have is that we tell NYCHA we're... we're responsible from the wall out, and nature is responsible from the wall in and the ceiling in. So we're responsible from the ceiling and below. And it's those kinds of challenges that we have, you know. The infrastructure is a real problem in some of these sites, because they are so aged, no pun intended.

What I will do is I will look at each one of these sites, and tell you where are we, if anywhere, with any of those renovations and (inaudible), you know, alright?, so I can get back to you on both Lincoln and St. Nicholas, alright? And I was just informed that I can no longer talk about the CMA RFP because it is still in its in... in an embargo state. So I won't be... I can talk about CMA, but I will not

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2 be able to talk about the RFP. Right. Thank you for
3 that and I hope you respect my limitations.

4 COO OGNIBENE: I have the nine languages.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, Michael, what
6 are the nine languages.

7 COO OGNIBENE: Okay, in addition to English we
8 sent out in Spanish, traditional Chinese, simplified
9 Chinese, Russian, Polish, Korean, Arabic, Bengali and
10 Italian.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you.

12 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: You should repeat that one
13 more time, just so everybody...? Please? Thank you.

14 COO OGNIBENE: Yup. English, Spanish,
15 traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Russian,
16 Polish, Korean, Arabic, Bengali, Italian.

17 And that was based on the preferred languages
18 that we received from Get Food. When folks
19 registered for Get Food, they were asked, "What is
20 your preferred language?" And this is... this was
21 what we were able to ascertain.

22 COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. Appreciate that.
23 And our final questioner is Councilmember Dinowitz.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. Hi,
Commissioner. Very good to see you.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Hello.

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Hope you're feeling
okay. We got some... you're, you're in the Bronx.
So you're in the best borough with the best deli with
best chicken soup. So we'll do that.

I want to quickly follow up on Councilman
Richardson Jordan's question. I really appreciate
that she brought up veteran services. It's the
committee that I previously chaired. The city
agencies are supposed to be on their intake forms
asking a question: "Are you are you or were you a
member of the armed services?" And I just want
clarity, if that question is being asked of all the
clients in the DFTA senior centers, because I think
that would help answer a lot of the other questions
about whether the information is available to ensure
our veterans, especially our older adult...
obviously, our older adult veterans are getting the
services and our... and we are able to give them the
information they need for the services, they are
entitled.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Councilman Dinowitz, I'm really pleased to tell you that we have a battery of questions that we ask older adults to self-identify, and... and I can give you what those are, but I will... I can almost guarantee that being a veteran is one of them.

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay good. It was an executive order. But we know sometimes it takes a little while to comply. (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But just remember that in our survey, all of that is voluntary. So individuals can opt out of answering the question. We ask... we ask a variety of them and I would be more than happy to share that with all of you.

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I would love that. I think one of the challenges that we've discovered in the veteran community is that not everyone does self-identify as a veteran, especially if they were discharged with other-than-honorable status, which, is about 15% of our of our veterans.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Wow.

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, which... which are... which are our veterans.

So I... I'm a little concerned, because I think sometimes it's easy for... to forget that we're still in a pandemic. And I'm wondering whether there's money set aside or strategies being made in DFTA to respond to the reality that centers may have to close again or may have to shift if there's an outbreak within a particular center. There's COVID surges now, or older adults may see this -- what was it? a yellow zone? -- they may be apprehensive about returning to the center, and attendance may vary. So I'm interested in knowing, again, the money and time and plans that are being made to be able to make those adjustments. And in that vein, what efforts is DFTA making to vaccinate and boost older adults? I think a lot of people are getting fatigued with this, but it's really vital that we get boosted and maybe boosted again. So those are my two questions.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right. So two fabulous questions. I can tell you that we are relentless in our vaccine and booster campaigns. And we never tire of reminding people.

You know, we saw that many older adults are getting the first shot but for us is that boosters just as key. For the older adult center, we are

also... you know, we have had so many starts and closures and starts and closures, that we have a treasure trove of experience on what to do in those instances. We did not let one lesson go unlearned and not implemented during this pandemic. Grab and go has become a state-of-the-art kind of approach. And there's many other things. The recovery foods is another one of those.

But I can tell you we constantly give out PPE to older adult clubs to make sure that everybody is adequately supplied. The protocols are -- and we're constantly upgrading our protocols and having conversations with the older adult providers just on those kinds of issues. So to answer your questions, in terms of emergency planning, we have three protocols that we learned how to turn on a meal... turning a congregate, to a grab-and-go, to a meal delivery. We already had that practice. We had that practice, and we've learned how not to do with some of the earlier errors that occurred. And so we're very confident about doing that.

But in terms of budget councilmember, we have not... we have not reduced anybody's budget because

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2 of lack of services. So their budgets have been held
3 whole.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: So people do have
6 the opportunity. Is that? Was that for me? I'm
7 sorry, what was that? Oh... that was for you
8 Councilmember. Okay.

9 We have the programs have been held (inaudible),
10 I'm sorry, in terms of budget, so that they have
11 flexibility within those budgets to... to address any
12 emerging needs that they, have given... given
13 COVID... a resurgence in their particular center.

14 COO OGNIBENE: Commissioner, can I add also...
15 (crosstalk)

16 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose and
17 (crosstalk), I understand you both want it.

18 COO OGNIBENE: Yeah. What are we doing about it?
19 What are we doing about vaccine and boosting? In
20 fact, today, at Frederick... Frederick Douglass
21 Senior Center, we had a mobile unit set up. We have
22 it today at James Monroe older adult center as well.
23 And tomorrow we'll be at SNAP in Queens with a mobile
24 vax.

25

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2 COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: And that is through...?

3 I'm sorry, I just want to make sure that that's a
4 sort of centralized thing, that that isn't an issue
5 of DFTA is taking on, because I didn't really see
6 where that would be in the budget. But I want to
7 make sure that that's not the initiative of an
8 individual center. That you're proactively reaching
9 out.

10 COO OGNIBENE: Yeah. We're doing... we're doing
11 it... that with Health and Hospitals and their test
12 and trace, and just setting up... coordinating for
13 them to come to our sites.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And then the other
15 thing that we do, Councilman Dinowitz, is that we're
16 still promoting the in-home vaccination program, so
17 that if anyone wants a vaccine at home, and any
18 family member, we're still drumming the beat on that
19 one. Jose, is there something you wanted to...?

20 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. I do want to mention
21 Rampage.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, yeah, we have a
23 public service announcement that we developed, a
24 little clever, mean, little virus called Rampage,
25 where he talks about... or it talks about the

vulnerabilities of the older person and encouraging vaccination.

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: I've seen him on your website. And he... he talks in nine languages, doesn't he?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: He talks in several languages.

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay. I think... and I would be remiss if I didn't thank you, you know, the... as... as we were all struggling, and every city was struggling in the pandemic, our seniors were really held together as much as they could because of the work of their older adult centers, and... and the... the meal delivery and all the support they got from our centers. And I know, that was in large part due to a lot of the work that you on this call were doing, so I want to take this moment to thank you for that work.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you for that. And Rampage is a little nasty guy.

COUNCILMEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, he's not cute. I'm looking at him now. He's not.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: Thank you. And I will now turn it back to the chairs as there are no other hands raised.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Chair Brannan, did you have anything before I jump in?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Um, I mean, I guess sort of anecdotally I represent a NORC out in Southwestern Bayridge... Southwestern Brooklyn, Bayridge, Dyker Heights, Bensonhurst. And we've had... we've had, you know, primarily, I think we have one DFTA center. The rest are seniors that get together and hang out, you know, in a Catholic school gymnasium, and that's their senior center. And we haven't had much luck with getting DFTA to engage when we have folks reach out who are looking to sort of make their center legit and try to work with DFTA to become a provider. And I'm just curious why that is.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't know why that is. I can't answer you. But I can't tell you what we did in our commitment to former Chair Drum was to provide technical assistance to those small local groups so that they could become older adult clubs. And as a result, that's how we got the additional 36, Councilmember. So we will continue

working with you. I will look at your particular community and see if one of the gaps and services between the NORC and those individual freestanding progress, and we'll get back to you on that. Okay?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Chair Hudson, I'm good.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Thank you so much. I just... I do have a few follow up questions, and then I know you're aching to get out of here commissioner. So I'll keep it as... as brief as possible. I think we're all aching to get out of here. Honestly.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I'm literally aching.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I understand. I do understand. So, I just wanted to circle back to the recovery meals, and just make sure we're clear. I know you're going to send us the chart with the numbers, but I just want to make sure... are you still evaluating 2000 people? And if so, won't you need to add another \$5 million or more if they come back and say they need meals?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Michael, do you want to take that and talk about the off ramps and where... what are we doing? And then answer Chair

Hudson about "what if"... all right? What we're doing in terms of the what if.

COO OGNIBENE: So, through the calls, the cards, the surveys, et cetera, we've been able to get folks to really clearly... be more clear in what their needs are, and a lot of them overwhelmingly have said, "I'm ready for groceries and meals prep."

Through the those first calls, we ask: "Can you do groceries? Yes or no? Yes? Great. No? Do you have someone that can? Yes or no? Yes? Great? No?" Then we send them to a case management assessment. Or we ask, "Are you ready? Can you go to an adult... an adult center?"

So we do have a series of questions logically, that leads to the point of case management. So far of the 10,700, 3,600 have been sent to case management for assessment. Of those, 2,700 had been assessed, and 1,700 have found an off ramp and 1,000 are going to HDM.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry. 3,600 were sent to assessment.

COO OGNIBENE: Right.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And of that...?

COO OGNIBENE: 3,600 were sent to assessment they've reached so far 2,700.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COO OGNIBENE: Right?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COO OGNIBENE: And so far to 1,700 found another route, and 1,000 are headed to HTM eligibility. We still...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COO OGNIBENE: Okay. In addition, we still have 2,000 that we haven't reached yet by phone, by survey, by postcard.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COO OGNIBENE: So we're going to continue our outreach over the next days to get to those 2,000. So of those 2,000, I imagine a big portion will... maybe half will go to assessments, that's now going to make it 4,600. Right? But they still have to get through over the next couple of weeks. They're trying to do 1,000 a week, and they hit... in the first two weeks, they hit 1,000. And this week, they're already on target to hit 1,000 again. So they should get to 3,000 of those 3,600, alright?, and we still have to go to 2,000. But we're going to

call... our initial call: "Will you go for groceries? Will you go to the older adult center? Or are you... do have mobility issues?" Then of those 2,000, a certain percentage will end up for assessment. We don't know yet.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right. But... but one would presume that if there's any percentage that needs home delivery... home delivered meals, then that would mean more money, right?, for the home delivering meals program.

COO OGNIBENE: Well, I think the money that's already there, accounts for the... the transition from recovery meals into home delivered meals. So when we... back, months ago...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's debatable.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right, if we... we anticipated... we anticipated that 3,000 would be -- you know, given the patterns and given the history that we have -- we anticipated that 3,000 would be home-delivered-meals eligible. The question now becomes if they're interested and getting an assessment and moving forward. But hypothetically, you're absolutely correct that at some point between if they are not off-ramped, and they do need home-

delivered meals, and in addition to that the actual growth, which is what I said earlier...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The actual growth will probably put a demand... an increased demand and pressure on the home delivered meals program.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And so this is... I just want to point... this is why the Council put in for an additional \$12.7 million to account for this natural growth, right? Like, we know that this population is growing. We know that people need to be fed. People need meals. And so what the council is trying to do is accommodate for those needs. You know. So it would be great to see that money, you know, in the Executive Budget.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah. And I want you to know, also, that we are in constant conversation with the Deputy Mayor as well as OMB around these issues, and the earlier issue that we talked about escalating costs for the... the older adult clubs. So it goes hand in hand, alright? So it's not either-or, alright?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: All right. Thanks for that. And then... Has the retroactive FY 22 home delivered

meal reimbursement rate increase included in the budget gone out to providers yet? And if not, what's holding that up?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose?

CFO MERCADO: Yeah. So, it has not. I mean, for example. Part of it, for example, is we've amended... we are amending the contracts, we've actually already amended, I would say, put the separate budgets in what we call our (inaudible) system. We're currently waiting for the providers to resubmit their budgets for the rate increase. Once they resubmit their budget, they can invoice. So it's just a matter, I would say another week.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Another week? So I can tell all the providers it's just one week? And then...(crosstalk)

CFO MERCADO: Well, it's really on them. So right now we're waiting for the provider... (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It's on them, Councilmember. (crosstalk)

CFO MERCADO: (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: If they sign into the system and put in their... their... what is it called? PARS?

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, they have the budgets. They... what their actually what they're doing is, again, (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: They put the budget... to the extent that they input the budget is... there's a fast turnaround. (crosstalk)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so the... (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We would love your partnership in encouraging people to input their budgets so that we can get this out the door.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I'll let them know. (crosstalk)

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, so we've... we've... (crosstalk)

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And you might also let them know councilmember, which is the companion piece to this that I've raised at other... at other hearings, is that we really need them to invoice on time, because we also have... we find ourselves sometimes at the end of the year where people have an invoice and find ourselves with extra dollars that we

could have reallocated and repurposed, and then we might be too late to do that. So I would love your partnership in delivering those two messages to this network that really is so key to both of us.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And you've got it. And I'm not trying to be snarky here. I am genuinely curious to know do you all pay on time?

CFO MERCADO: Absolutely. As soon as we get an invoice.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We have one of the best on-time payment records in the city.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright. I'm going to hold you to that then.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You hold me to that. That one, I will take to the bank.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright, then I'll do the work and try to get them to invoice on time, as long as I know they're going to be paid on time.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah, you got it.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Alright. Cool. Alright, a couple more questions.

As of March 1, there were 421 individuals on the homecare waitlist and 1,517 individuals on the case management waitlist. You know, The Administration

has added \$6 million for case management to serve 3,000 additional clients, all of whom will need case management as the intake to receive home delivered meals. Is there an additional funding for home care in the budget? And if not, how much would it cost to clear the waitlist?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Alright, so I'm going to take the wait list in two tranches. Okay? The waitlist... Right now, we do have a waitlist, but for food insecurity there is no waitlist, because if anybody is identified, and Daniel Kroop knows this. We go back and forth about wait lists. And, um... (crosstalk)

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Because it is a bit subjective, commissioner.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I know. I know. got it. I acknowledge... I acknowledge that distinction. And now we're even calling it a waitlist. Alright?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: But as people are triaged: Is he on there? I want to...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, he's working parking. Don't worry. He's with you.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: As people are triage... oh there he goes. As people are triaging, no one waits for home delivered meals, because we have the default of recovery meals and other meal programs, alright? So home delivered meals, if food security is the primary issue, you get your meals, but you're absolutely right. It's gone up to, I forget, over 1000 people on the wait list, Daniel will give you the exact...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 1517.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's... yeah, that's probably the number. Alright. So, yes. And it's something that we are constantly looking at and managing. We hope that this infusion of dollars in case management may mitigate that a bit. we will come back to you if it doesn't.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, hold on a second. I don't know if you answered my question.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, what was your... ask again.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. Okay. Um, is there any additional funding for the homecare... for homecare in the budget? And if not, how much would

it cost to clear the waitlist? So you're talking about?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You're talking about home-delivered... So for the meal stuff... I get your point. Right? But then there's 421 individuals on the homecare waitlist.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So is there additional funding for homecare in the budget?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, you know, we are doing that analysis right now for -- thank you for that, I would... I thought we were still talking about meals -- we're doing that analysis with OMB, because it is... it is a most people are on the waitlist for additional hours, not that they have not received any homecare hours, alright. And so we're trying to parse out councilmember and Daniel, the distinction between who's not gotten any services and who needs additional hours. And we'll give you that. And we're... and we're also talking to OMB about that. Because it is all part of a larger community care program, you're not going to get any argument

for us that that is a major piece of the community care for that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So let me let me just ask, When are these assessments generally done? Because we're in the middle of budget negotiations. And on a couple of occasions, you've said that you're... you're either in the process of doing an assessment or you will do an assessment. So is there a reason why the assessments aren't done in advance of this phase of budget negotiations?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: You know what? If... When I look at all the competing demands, I tried to parse out what... in my conversations with OMB, and put them in order of priority. Is that a satisfactory answer? I'm not sure. But that's what we're doing.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, I would I would confirm and say it's not, but...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. I got it.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'll take it for what it is. Alright. So... so we don't know how much it would cost to then clear the waitlist, I just want to make sure that...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: We can get you that. We've provided that in the past.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then how much does it cost on average to serve a homecare client?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Jose?

CFO MERCADO: Give me one second. I'll have that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And while you get that: Will the state-enacted budget include any benefits for homecare workers contracted through DFTA programs with private providers? And do you know, what their minimum wage is?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The MSID You're talking about the state SID's or the long term care? I'm not quite sure I understand the question.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Will the state enacted will the state enacted budget include any benefits for homecare workers can contracted through DFTA programs with private providers?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: The home care and... the home care... the long-term care programs are... are not included in DFTA, and the DFTA home care programs are not covered under that. Ours are non-Medicaid eligible programs. Alright?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, hold on. I'm going to... I'm going to check with Dan on that one. But I'll get back to you on that.

But Jose, did you have average cost to serve a homecare client?

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, I was going answer the other question before I did this one, but give me one second. I'm doing it right now.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Go ahead, Jose.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so there are like about five homecare providers that are contracted through DFTA?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yes, one per borough.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So I'm asking about the benefits for those homecare workers: Will the state enacted budget include benefits for them?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And do you know what their minimum wages?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: They vary by the agency. Um...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you give me a range?

2 CFO MERCADO: So they're basically... as the
3 Commissioner mentioned, they basically pay the
4 minimum wage up to 20 bucks. So just trying to get
5 you the same... trying to get the how much the cost
6 is.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So \$8 to \$20 per hour.
8 Okay.

9 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. It varies from place to
10 place. So.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And so you're still
12 working on how much it costs on average to serve a
13 homecare client?

14 CFO MERCADO: I actually have it. I'm just...
15 I'm looking at it while I'm trying to answer your
16 question at the same time as this one. I'll get it
17 pretty soon. Just give me... I'm trying to find a
18 spreadsheet. I have it. I do have it. Sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Should I continue on
20 and you'll just let me know when you have it?

21 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. Absolutely.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So then, regarding
23 technology, and I know we've talked a bit about this,
24 but I think earlier you gave quantities of devices
25 and things like that, but not actual monetary value.

So I'd just like to know, is there any new funding in the executive plan to fund more tablets? And if so, how much?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: No, there isn't any.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No. Okay. And do you have metrics or targets for closing the digital divide among seniors? Like when... what... how are you, you know, judging success on... or measuring success, I should say, on, you know, closing the technology gap among older adults?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I think, I think... that's a good question. There's several ways that we're doing that one of the ways that we've done that is to create a lending library so that everybody's level... level setting is at a minimum, they can have access to programming. So we have... we have that we... and all programs could access that.

It is difficult to look at the number of... so we have all of these tech libraries, but it is difficult to look at the number... One of the things we're looking at is looking at who's using virtual programming, and the... and the frequency of that, but it is quite difficult, because it's so

individually... it's so individually targeted. I can't think of the word. I'm at a loss for words. But what we are doing is at least trying to get a sense of who's providing virtual programming, the number of virtual programs, but we cannot tie that back to older adults using the service, alright?, which is very different than we can if you are in a physical space. We can count, an unduplicated count. We can't do that for virtual programs.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we can't do that because you and I could be watching a program, uh, you know, doing chair yoga. And... and, but the only thing that (crosstalk) (inaudible) and not a video. So there's... there's a variety of ways that we're looking at how to quantify that, and using the tech libraries as a quality measure.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. Alright, um, we're in the hole.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Do you have the... do you have the...?

CFO MERCADO: It's roughly about \$1,000.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: \$1,000 on average to serve a homecare client?

CFO MERCADO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: For what?

CFO MERCADO: Per year.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Per annum?

CFO MERCADO: Per annum. Because, yeah. Because it's basically you know, it's less than 20 hours per week. So it's not a high cost.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You should be having a whole lot more, if this only costs \$1000 per year.

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, this might be a little off.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, because...

CFO MERCADO: I'll double check my numbers because I'm doing...

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: ...that's quite inexpensive.

CFO MERCADO: Yeah, like I said case management is roughly \$2,000 per... \$2,000 a year. So this is a little less.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: It is an inexpensive and yet essential service that keeps the person in...

CFO MERCADO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah. I'm just writing down a case management number. \$2000. Okay. Yeah. I

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2 mean, I would argue at \$1,000 a year we should be
3 serving everybody.

4 CFO MERCADO: No, no, it's actually I'm wrong.
5 Sorry. I apologize. It's \$12,000 or \$12,600. Yeah,
6 sorry. Yeah, that's what it is.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, that's more like it.

8 CFO MERCADO: It's just realized... I just
9 realized...

10 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's about \$1,000
11 a month.

12 CFO MERCADO: Yeah. I realized that I basically
13 was missing one provider. That's why I was like...
14 "Why are there 4. There are supposed to be 5?" So,
15 yeah, \$12,682.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Per year, per person. Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: That's still less
18 than \$184 in a nursing home.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh yeah, trust me. I'm...
20 I'm all about not institutionalizing people to
21 whatever extent, you know, we don't have to.

22 Alright, I want to talk a little bit about social
23 isolation and geriatric mental health.

24 Social isolation is a well-established correlate
25 of worsened health outcomes for older adults, as we

know. Improved mental health can... can help older adults improve. Yet this administration has included no new funding. What message do you think the administration is sending by failing to enhance geriatric mental health?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, we have enhanced geriatric mental health. We're going from 48... from 40 sites... from 48 sites, to another 40 to 88 sites. We are enhancing geriatric mental health. What we are... and we're also looking at, you know, different models so that we can extend that to as many people as possible. So we are doing that.

And we're also using this... this year as a time of this growth period to see what additional resources would be needed, and what additional models, to have an informed approach to the next steps, right?, and using this year of expansion to do that, as we've done... as we're doing with the older adult clubs and the NORCs.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, how much would it cost to provide a clinician access in all 108 OACs that have appropriate private rooms for counseling? So to basically to provide access at every NORC? Or...

sorry, in addition, to provide access to... to every
NORC?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Well, the challenge
there, Chair, is: Does the facility have the room?
Right?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: So for the ones that do.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: None of these are
none of these are freestanding. They're all in older
adult clubs. So that is one of our challenges. Is
the physical layout and the physical plant of some of
our centers.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right. But for the ones
that do have the private rooms for counseling, how
much would it cost? To provide clinician access?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, yeah. We can
get you that number. You know, like, what, what
would it cost to go? If I understand your
question... I want to make sure I'm answering your
question and not my assumption of what your question
is. Right?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: If your question is
beyond the 88, how many more sites could we
establish? And what would that cost be? To meet the

physical and all the other standards imposed by the state? Is that your question?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'll take that. Yeah.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay. Great. I'll get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. And then, the Federal American Rescue Plan act ends in fiscal 2025 and poses a stark \$64 million funding cliff. Much of this funding supports the prior administration's investments in the community care plan, and particularly the creation of new OACs and NORCs. What is DFTAs is plan to deal with this looming fiscal cliff without service reductions. And, you know, this just goes back to the historic underfunding... chronic underfunding of the agency. So we're anticipating this cliff. We know the money is going to dry up by 2025. What is DFTA planning to do about that?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: To do exactly what we're doing with you now, is constantly advocate, show the pressing needs, and work with OMB. We're aware of the growth in the population. And we will work with you and... and the administration in partnership to ensure that this... and we also have,

you know, the state, we've been advocating with the state to give us additional dollars. And also, you know, continue to advocate what the feds, uh, but that's what... nothing short of that is what's going to be required.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, so... but I just want to be clear, and you know, of course, always appreciate your continued advocacy. But is there an actual plan?

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: I don't believe that we will hit that cliff. Jose, is there something that we've looked at, to make up for the... to make up for the... the continuation of... or lack of continuation of...?

CFO MERCADO: I would say, for example, as Commissioner pointed out much earlier, we've been working with OMB on this. So I mean, this is again, you right, it's a revenue shortfall. So we're working with OMB on how to actually move... cover that deficit.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So I trust that there will be, you know, some sort of plan of action moving forward.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Right. And you have to be an integral part of that.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Oh, I will be.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You're not getting rid of me anytime soon. So don't you worry.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we wouldn't want to.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And so... just confirming also... this is slightly different language, but I just want to make sure we're all on the same page. So DFTA is committed to backfilling this funding with city funds?

CFO MERCADO: I'd say we're working with OMB to determine how this is going to be covered.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: And we're also working with Joaquim at... at the state and also working with the feds. Right? So it's... it's... most of our funding comes from three sources. And so we have to continue working with each one of our major funding partners.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I have a few more questions, but I think we'll follow up via email perhaps? Or with a letter? I know it's been a long

day for most folks who are on here and I know you're not feeling at your best. So I really appreciate everyone's participation and engagement and patience, and we look forward to following up and receiving some of the additional information that you weren't able to provide here.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Great. Thank you. And I just want to do one last thing before I leave. And I usually stay here the public testimony. I cannot do that today. But we will have staff people there to listen to public testimony.

COUNSEL BUTEHORN: No this is it. We're done.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Oh, you are smart guys.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're doing all the public testimony on one day, May 25.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Okay, great. I can... Good. Thank you for that. But I want to... I want to encourage all of you to participate on Tuesday, May 17, from 2 to 3 pm at the National Museum of the American Indian on 1 Bowling Green. We're going to have an Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage panel, that's going to address not only the... the some information on the API

community, but also to talk about some of the recent incidents and what we all need to do. And so two members of the council will be participating on that battle, and my colleague from AARP, (inaudible), will be leading that. So I really encourage all of you to participate in this. It's going to be quite... quite an education.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I'll be I'll be on Zoom during another hearing, but hopefully some of my colleagues can join.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you for sharing that with us. We will definitely...

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: (coughing) Don't make me laugh. Okay, thank you all.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Feel better, Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Feel better. Take care.

COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Take care. Bye, bye.

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. And, chair, do you have any closing remarks?

CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Surely, I'll keep it very, very, very brief. You know, and this is what I said before: We just... we need to do far better by our

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2 older adults, we know the population is growing over
3 the next decade or less. And this incredible, deep
4 lack of funding for the Department for the Aging is
5 unconscionable. And, you know, so that's... that...
6 those are my closing remarks. We just, we need to do
7 better. And everybody should be invested in making
8 sure that New York City is the best place to grow
9 older because if we're lucky, we will all grow older
10 right here in New York City. So thanks, Chair
11 Brannan.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right on. Thank you, Chair
13 Hudson. Thank you, Commissioner. And with that, we
14 will adjourn this this hearing. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTÉS-VÁZQUEZ: Thank you all. Bye
16 bye.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [gavel]
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date 06/30/2022