

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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October 29, 2014
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Daniel R. Garodnick
James Vacca
Margaret S. Chin
Stephen T. Levin
Deborah L. Rose
James G. Van Bramer
Mark S. Weprin
David G. Greenfield
Costa G. Constantinides
Carlos Menchaca
I. Daneek Miller
Antonio Reynoso

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

Polly Trottenberg, Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation (DOT)

Michael Marsico, Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Parking
New York City Department of Transportation (DOT)

Alan Borock, Director
Office of Signals, Street Lighting and
Systems Engineering
New York City Department of Transportation (DOT)

Victor Calise, Commissioner
Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
(MOPD)

Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Karen Gouragey, Chairperson
Pedestrians for Accessible & Safe Streets
(PASS)

Lester Marks
Lighthouse Guild a Member of PASS Coalition

Edith Prentiss
Disabled in Action (DIA)

Alex Slackey
AAA New York

Carlos Gourgey
Pedestrians for Accessible & Safe Streets
(PASS)

Anna Lynn Courtney Barbarier
Orientation and Mobility Specialist
Visions: Services for the Blind
Member of Pedestrians for Accessible & Safe
Streets (PASS)

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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2 [sound check]

3 [gavel]

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet.

5 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon,
6 everyone and welcome to today's hearing of the City
7 Council Transportation Committee. I'm Ydanis
8 Rodriguez, the Chair of the Committee. First, let me
9 recognize my colleagues who are here with us.
10 Council Member Vacca.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Hi.

12 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Chin, Weprin,
13 Ignizio.

14 [Pause]

15 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Today, we are
16 here to discuss two common sense pieces of
17 legislation that have the potential to make
18 transportation our city safer and fairer for all New
19 Yorkers. Proposed Intro 216-A introduced by Council
20 Member Levine at the request of the Manhattan Borough
21 President will require DOT to increase the number of
22 accessible pedestrian signals in New York City. APS,
23 as they are known, are vital to use sounds to allow
24 people with visual impairments to accomplish a task
25 that most of us take for granted, the simple act of

2 safely crossing the street. It is not so simple for
3 the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers with visual
4 impairments. As I learned for the first hand last
5 week along with Council Member Levine and members of
6 our staff of indication of Pedestrians for Accessible
7 and Safe Streets. We were challenged to close
8 several busy Manhattan intersections without the
9 benefit or a sense of vision. I can tell you that
10 experience was really humbling, and left a big
11 impression on me and all of us who participated.

12 With all the work we have done this year
13 to work toward Vision Zero and making our streets
14 safer, it is very important that we make sure that
15 our streets become safer for all New Yorkers,
16 especially those with disabilities. I look forward
17 to working with the Administration, Council Member
18 Levine, Borough President Brewer and the many hard-
19 working advocates for visually impaired New Yorkers
20 to figure out how we can best make sure that blind
21 and low vision individuals can more safely navigate
22 our city streets.

23 The second piece of legislation is Intro
24 383. When someone pays for parking at a Muni-Meter,
25 at the end of the daily parking regulations, they

2 often had to put an extra quarter in the machine in
3 order to extend their time past the end of the
4 regulations, even if they are only a few minutes
5 short. New Yorkers have the biggest concern than
6 five minutes on a parking meter. When someone parks
7 at a space that for example costs a quarter for every
8 15 minutes until 7:00 p.m., if that person has paid
9 for time until 5:00-- 6:53, they should not have to
10 spend another quarter just for those extra seven
11 minutes. Intro 383 will eliminate the need to put an
12 extra quarter. I now invite the sponsor of the bill
13 to deliver his opening statement, First Minority
14 Leader Ignizio.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Thank you, Mr.
16 Chairman. Thank you all for being here. Good
17 afternoon, right? Good afternoon, Commissioner.
18 Sorry. It has been a long morning. I just want to
19 thank you for hosting this meeting, and I appreciate
20 it. Intro 383, which was introduced back in June,
21 would round up the parking time for those individuals
22 who because of the time they park and the parking
23 regulations in the area, end up paying for parking
24 even though they are not required to do so. The
25 point of this legislation, frankly, was just to get

2 what you paid for, and what you pay for. And what
3 you pay for you are able to take advantage of. Every
4 time I've been-- I've been in this body both as
5 staff member and as a member for about 17 years, and
6 agencies always come with two things. I may have to
7 look at a testimony. We can't do, technically can't
8 do it or it costs too much money. Well, the fact is
9 the cost is coming out of people who are paying for
10 something that they don't have the eligibility of
11 ever receiving. So the City shouldn't be part of
12 putting their hand into people's pockets and taking
13 out money for something that they openly cannot ever
14 take advantage of.

15 The fact that we spoke to the company.
16 They say that technically this can be achieved. My
17 understanding is from my Council is that we're going
18 to hear testimony for the opposite. So we'll have to
19 have a conversation with them I guess. And I just
20 believe that this a continuation of ensuring that
21 people in this city get what they pay for the city
22 agencies, and I look forward to the hearing. Thank
23 you very much, Mr. Chairman and thank you,
24 Commissioner.

25 [Pause]

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: We will now call
3 on the Administration, and when my colleague, Council
4 Member Levine arrives, and Manhattan Borough
5 President Gale Brewer they also will be happy to also
6 give their opening statements.

7 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chairman. Good afternoon to you and members of the
9 Council Transportation Committee.

10 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: So--

11 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Oh, yeah,
12 you're going to swear me in. Okay.

13 CLERK: Will you please raise your right
14 hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
15 truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony
16 today, and to respond honestly to Council Member
17 questions?

18 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: We do, yes.

19 CLERK: Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: My name is
21 Polly Trottenberg. I'm the Commissioner of the New
22 York City Department of Transportation, and today I'm
23 joined by some distinguished colleagues.
24 Commissioner Victor Calise of the Mayor's Office for
25 People with Disabilities; Michael Marsico, Assistant

2 Commissioner for DOT's Bureau of Parking; and Alan
3 Borock, DOT's Director of the Office of Signals,
4 Street Lighting and Systems Engineering. And I want
5 to thank you for inviting us to testify here today on
6 Intro 216-A and Intro 383.

7 First, I want to stress that the de
8 Blasio Administration and DOT share the Council's
9 goals of improving both the safety and mobility of
10 the blind and low vision community on our city
11 streets. DOT has been making continued progress on
12 our Accessible Pedestrian Signal Program that was
13 codified by the Council with Local Law 21 of 2012.
14 And I want to commend Council Member Vacca. I know
15 he was a great leader in getting this legislation
16 passed, and we've made some progress. And I know
17 today we will be discussing the state of that
18 progress and where we go from there.

19 Currently, we have APS units installed at
20 99 intersections citywide, and we're adding as per
21 legislation at least 25 more per year. The list is
22 posted on our website. DOT currently works closely
23 with MOPD and the blind and low vision community,
24 including groups like Pedestrians for Accessible and

2 Safe Streets to identify key intersections, which
3 present crossing difficulties.

4 DOT has established the process of
5 ranking intersections for the installation of APS
6 units. The ranking is based on criteria like the off
7 peak traffic presence, current traffic signal
8 patterns including the use of leading pedestrian
9 intervals or LPIs, and the complexity of the
10 intersections geometry as set forth in federal
11 guidelines. But we recognize there's also need for
12 input from the advocates and from our expert traffic
13 engineers to maximize the safety benefit for every
14 dollar spent. That's why we've tailored our criteria
15 here in New York City from conversations between the
16 blind and low vision community, our traffic experts,
17 and we've improved upon the Federal Guidelines to
18 account for things mid-block crossings, left turn
19 phases, T-intersections, pedestrian painted
20 sidewalks, painted or delineated build outs, and
21 protected bike lanes. This all gets tallied up in a
22 ranking system so that we make the best decisions on
23 where to install new APS units.

24 Now I'd like to discuss Intro 216-A,
25 which requires DOT to install additional APS units at

2 a minimum of 100 intersections per year where we plan
3 to install an Exclusive Pedestrian phase, Leading
4 Pedestrian Interval, or Protected Bike Lane. And at
5 a minimum of 50 intersections per year out of the
6 approximately 1,250 intersections where we've already
7 installed an EPP or an LPI or a protected bike lane.

8 While supporting Intro 216-A's overall
9 goal, our main concern with the legislation is that
10 it does not build upon the already successful process
11 to site new APS units. The criterion we've developed
12 with advocates and our engineers have worked well at
13 a number of locations around the city including 23rd
14 Street and 7th Avenue near Visions of Selis Manor.
15 At Flatbush Avenue and Fulton Street in Brooklyn,
16 which has heavy pedestrian activity and usual
17 geometry and skewed crosswalks. At Queens Boulevard
18 and Woodhaven Boulevard, which is a complex
19 intersection near the Queens Center Mall. At Morris
20 Park Avenue near Albert Einstein College of Medicine
21 in the Bronx. Castleton and Brighton Avenues near
22 the Staten Island Center for Independent Living, and
23 Church and McDonald Avenues near New York Industries
24 for the Blind.

2 By linking the APS program with the
3 installation of EPP, LPI and protected bike lanes, we
4 are concerned that the bill could create a one-size-
5 fits-all policy that would remove DOT's engineering
6 judgment and the opportunity for community
7 engagement. Intro 216-A could require us to invest in
8 intersections that provide fewer safety and mobility
9 benefits than our current process does.

10 Mayor de Blasio's bold Vision Zero
11 commitments are designed to make our streets safer
12 for everyone, but Intro 216-A may have the unintended
13 consequence of potentially slowing down some of our
14 most effective pedestrian and cyclist safety efforts.
15 I commend the Council for focusing on the danger of
16 driver's failing to yield to pedestrians in a
17 crosswalk, which is one of the leading factors and
18 fatalities in our streets. Signal timing strategies
19 like LPI and EPP effectively combat this threat by
20 giving pedestrians more time to cross before drivers
21 can start making turns.

22 Many of you here have advocated for the
23 expansion of the bike network, and I know there is a
24 growing bike office here at the Council. A big
25 component of that expansion is through the use of

2 protected bike lanes, which is best way to make
3 streets safe for bicyclists and also help calm
4 streets for all road users. That's why DOT is
5 installing approximately 150 LPis and five miles of
6 new protected bike lanes each year. These tools save
7 lives on our street. We recently installed an LPI at
8 West End Ave and West 95th Street after the tragic
9 crash that took the life of Jean Chambers, and at
10 Northern Boulevard and 61st Street in Queens where
11 Nosha Nahayan [sp?] was tragically killed.

12 By requiring APS units every time --
13 [coughs]. Excuse me. We install and LPI or
14 protected bike lane, Intro 216-A could in some cases
15 substantially delay the rollout of these safety
16 measures. Right now, once we have completed a
17 traffic study and determined where we should put an
18 EPP or LPI, we can reprogram the crossing intervals
19 almost immediately. Installing an APS at an
20 intersection requires a survey design and
21 construction, which can take up to four months to
22 complete.

23 While we always want to do more to
24 improve the safety and mobility on our streets, we do
25 have to make choices given our limited resources.

2 The average cost of adding APS to an intersection is
3 about \$35,000. To meet the requirements of this
4 legislation, we estimate that DOT would need
5 approximately \$5.25 million in capital funding every
6 years as well as nearly half a million dollars in
7 ongoing annual operational costs. These are not
8 costs DOT could currently handle with in-house
9 resources. So without additional funding we would
10 need to redirect a portion of the funding that was
11 made available recently for Vision Zero, for our
12 needed roads and Bridges Capital Program.

13 I think our final concern is that
14 technology is on the move, and Wifi and Smart Phone
15 apps may eventually make it possible to develop a
16 simpler and more cost-effective alternative to APS.
17 We're concerned about tying our hands and investing
18 in perpetuity in a technology that may eventually
19 become obsolete.

20 Next, I'd like to discuss Intro 383, and,
21 you know, to speak to Council Member Ignizio, I do
22 sympathize with motorists who may be over-paying
23 meters, but I just want to talk about I think some of
24 the financial and technological challenges this bill
25 raises for us. Currently, when a motorist parks at

2 let's say at 6:09 p.m. in a parking spot where the
3 meter regulations end at 7:00, the motorist must
4 purchase an hour of time for a dollar to receive a
5 receipt that shows the 7:00 p.m. shut-off time. With
6 Intro 383, motorists could only be required to
7 purchase 45 minutes of time for 75 cents, which would
8 give them payment-- Which would provide payment until
9 6:54 and the meter would round up the time to 7:00
10 p.m. Technically, I wouldn't say we can't do this,
11 but I would say our current technology is somewhat
12 limited. And so right now I think taking a look at
13 the current state of our meter software, the only way
14 we could comply with Intro 383 would be to absolve
15 all motorists of payment for the last meter of-- the
16 last unit of meter time at every meter in the City.

17 For motorists this could mean, you know,
18 somewhere from a quarter to in the case of truck
19 parking up in Midtown up to \$6.00. But the keynote
20 of impact of having to forgive all these transactions
21 at every city meter would potentially result in a
22 pretty large giveaway of free meter time just to
23 prevent what appears looking at our analysis to be a
24 pretty small amount of repayment.

2 Our parking experts have been looking
3 through our data, and our best estimates right now
4 show the overpayment problem to be under half a
5 million a year. While the City could potentially
6 lose as much as \$8 million in annual metered parking
7 revenue, but it was legitimately, you know,
8 legitimately owed. And in addition, I hear what
9 you're saying, and I'm not saying it can't be done
10 technologically, but right now with the current state
11 of our Muni-Meters, it would be a significant cost to
12 reprogram. We think it would pretty much have to be
13 done machine by machine, and could take many, many
14 months to complete. And cost potentially up to \$2
15 million.

16 The good news is we're actually pursuing
17 a better option I think to address the problem, and
18 to be fair to drivers and not cost the City revenue
19 that the City is rightly owed. We're pursuing using
20 Pay-By-Cell, and with this Pay-By-Cell program, which
21 many cities already use across the country, you can
22 use a credit card payment direction through a Smart
23 Phone, eliminate the need for the Muni-Meter receipt,
24 and charge people exactly the right amount for the
25 time they're going to be there. Right now, we're

2 working with NYPD to see how quickly we can implement
3 this program. And we think it would actually allow
4 us to achieve most of the goals of Intro 383.

5 In conclusion, we're eager to continue
6 tow work with the Council and other stakeholders on
7 the issues raised in Intro 216-A and Intro 383. We
8 do share the goal of making our streets safe and
9 accessible for all, and we look forward to engaging
10 on how we can continue to do a better job of that in
11 partnership with the Council. Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman, and I'm happy to take questions.

13 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And before asking
14 any questions, I'd like to recognize Council Members
15 Levine, Reynoso, and Menchaca. And now, I would like
16 to ask Council Member Levine to give his opening
17 statement since he's the prime sponsor of Intro 216-
18 A.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you,
20 Chairman Rodriguez. Thank you for your testimony,
21 Commissioner, both Commissioners. Great to see you
22 both, Victor as well. I just want to say a few words
23 about Intro 216, which as you know, calls on the City
24 to increase the pace at which it installs Accessible
25 Pedestrian Signals known as APSs. I want to

2 recognize and thank our Chair, Chair of the Council's
3 Transportation Committee, Ydanis Rodriguez for
4 bringing this intro to a hearing today, and for being
5 a strong advocate for this important piece of
6 legislation throughout the process. I also want to
7 thank Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer who
8 originated this bill, and has been a champion for its
9 cause since its inception.

10 Under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio,
11 Chairman Rodriguez, and additionally the DOT
12 Commissioner Trottenberg, our city has made
13 extraordinary strides making our streets safer for
14 all New Yorkers through the set of policies and
15 initiatives known as Vision Zero. However, we have
16 not yet taken significant steps to address the
17 special needs of pedestrians with disabilities. In
18 particular those with vision difficulties, a group
19 which numbers nearly 360,000 in the five boroughs.
20 Most of these individuals are, of course, unable to
21 rely on visual walk and stop signals forcing them
22 instead to use the sounds of traffic flow to
23 determine when and where they can safely cross the
24 street.

2 To understand the challenges of
3 navigating busy New York City streets without the aid
4 of sight, last Thursday Council Member Rodriguez and
5 I joined Pedestrians for Accessible and Safe Streets.
6 For a simulation in which we were blindfolded and
7 accompanied by an instructor who guided us across a
8 number of busy streets up and down Broadway and New
9 York City Hall.

10 I can tell you that this was a truly
11 harrowing experience in which I felt incredibly
12 vulnerable in a way you can't understand unless
13 you've actually stepped out into traffic without aid
14 of sight. This simulation gave me a new found
15 respect for the bravery of visually impaired New
16 Yorkers, and made me more determined than ever to
17 make their lives safer through the passage of Intro
18 216.

19 APS technology does indeed dramatically
20 improve safety for visually impaired New Yorkers.
21 These devices emit a series of beeps that can be
22 heard from a few feet away so that a visually
23 impaired person can approach the device and locate
24 its button. Once the button is pressed, the device
25 will issue a spoken alert to tell the pedestrian it's

2 safe to cross. The button vibrates as well providing
3 a cue to someone who is also hearing impaired.
4 Wheelchair users report that they, too, sometimes
5 rely on the APS when a crowded corner makes it
6 difficult for them to see the walk sign above.

7 In 2012, the Council took a critical step
8 to meeting these important needs. Passing Local Law
9 21, which requires DOT to install 25 APS devices per
10 year in the areas deemed to be the highest risk, and
11 with the greatest crossing difficulties. But as of
12 today, of the 12,460 intersections in New York City
13 only 99 currently have an APS installed. Leaving
14 visually impaired New Yorkers to fend for themselves
15 when crossing more than 99% of intersections. Our
16 bill seeks to change that. Specifically, it would
17 require the installation of APSs at a minimum of 100
18 intersections where DOT is doing installation work,
19 which would otherwise hinder costing by the visually
20 impaired. There are three instances, which would
21 trigger such an installation.

22 1. When an Exclusive Pedestrian Signal
23 is installed, since this allows for a phase in the
24 light change in which no cars are moving, and thus a

2 blind person would not have the cues of moving
3 traffic on which they usually rely.

4 2. When a Lead Pedestrian Interval is
5 installed this allows for five or six seconds in
6 which pedestrians can cross traffic-- cross without
7 traffic on either side also eliminating the cue of
8 parallel traffic signs.

9 3. When a Protected Bike Lane is
10 installed because obviously bicycles make little
11 noise, and without an APS, it's not easy to know when
12 it's safe to cross.

13 In addition to the 100 new installations,
14 which our bill would require in the above
15 circumstances, Intro 216 would also require at least
16 50 retrofits per year at intersections in which the
17 previously mentioned features had already been
18 installed without the inclusion of an APS.

19 Yes, it is easy to image a day when some
20 sort of intelligent grid would be able to provide
21 safety cues directly to a pedestrian's Smart Phone,
22 for example. But experts say that such a system is
23 likely years away, and at any rate would cost
24 millions of dollars to install. APS on the other
25 hand is a proven technology, which is available today

2 to make it safer for hundreds of thousands of New
3 Yorkers to move about our bustling city. We have an
4 obligation to do right by them by passing Intro 216.
5 I look forward to hearing the comments of my
6 colleagues in further discussion with the
7 Administration and the advocates. I'm sure this will
8 be a rich discussion, and I'm hopeful that it will
9 lead to the eventual passage of a strong piece of
10 legislation.

11 Finally, I'd like to thank the many staff
12 members who were instrumental in drafting and
13 advocating for this bill, including Amy Slattery, my
14 Legislative Director; Shula Warren, Director of
15 Policy for Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer;
16 Carmen De La Rosa, Chief of Staff for Council Member
17 Rodriguez; Transportation Committee staff, Kelly
18 Taylor, Jonathan Nessarano [sp?]; Gaffar Zaaloff; and
19 Shema O'Sher [sp?]. And the Legislative Division
20 Heads Lyle Frank, Matt Garalb [sp?], and Rob
21 Calandra. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you,
23 Council Member. I have a few questions. Of course,
24 my colleagues also have other questions. One is
25 since you come with a great profile being someone

2 that before being our New York City Commissioners,
3 you were like one of the-- the third one nationwide
4 in the Department of Transportation. What have you
5 seen in other cities that you can share with us that
6 is a model of this city that they have installed in
7 large use numbers of APS? Which are the cities that
8 are making a major improvement on this.

9 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Well, it's a
10 good question. Actually, I had the good fortune to
11 spend a day at a conference with my fellow City
12 Transportation Commissioners, and this is one of the
13 issues we discussed. And I think all cities are
14 looking at doing more on this front. But also,
15 respectfully, Council Member Levine, we're really
16 talking about potential technological breakthroughs
17 that may have a way to do this faster and citywide.
18 And one of the things that we're going to be doing at
19 New York City DOT is actually working with a research
20 technology group to do a study and really see are
21 there going to be more cutting-edge way to do this.
22 And that's not to say that we don't want to continue
23 working on APS and work with the Council on this.
24 I'm not trying to say it was an excuse to do nothing,
25 but just there is a lot of interest I think in the

2 urban transportation community right now about can
3 there be a smarter technology in the long run. I
4 think all cities are probably facing the same issue
5 we have in New York, which is it's a question of
6 balancing all the things that a city needs to do.
7 You know, one thing I highlighted in my testimony,
8 and look, this is a genuine issue, and a good one to
9 discuss today.

10 Particularly, as I mentioned in my
11 testimony, when we have an area where we have a
12 terrible collision like what happened on the Upper
13 West Side with Jean Chambers, we can put in a Leading
14 Pedestrian Interval very quickly. It's something
15 that can be done very inexpensively. You know, I
16 think the question we're struggling with
17 understanding absolutely why the blind and low vision
18 community wants an APS there, but in all cases do we
19 want to hold that up? Particularly if there's been
20 some sort of fatal collision at the intersection. I
21 think this is an answer we can all discuss, but I
22 think that this is something I'm seeing with my
23 fellow commissioners. We're all thinking about how
24 to get that balance right.

25 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Go ahead.

2 VICTOR CALISE: Hello, I want to thank
3 the Council members for actually going out with PASS
4 and seeing the difficulties it is for people with
5 disabilities to cross the street so any way that we
6 get our elected officials and our government to pay
7 attention to people with disabilities I definitely
8 encourage it. So thank you on taking that initiative
9 and thank you PASS for pushing that along as well.

10 As relationship to other cities, I have
11 the fortunate ability to meet and talk with MOPD
12 Commissioners around the Country, and there are
13 issues about installing the APSS. I was just in
14 Austin and they are sporadically put around the city
15 as well. And coming up with design structure to be
16 able to do it, is something that's on everybody's
17 mind and how can we do this more effectively. So as
18 APSS roll out and they're putting them in other
19 cities, but they're the same struggles we're having
20 here.

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: What I think is
22 that first of all I know that you are open, the
23 Administration is open to continue having
24 conversation with those and the advocates. But what
25 I see is that we need to do better. We should do

2 better. And in a city where we only have 99 APSS
3 installed, having 12,000 intersections, many of them
4 are very dangerous. Because many times they can--
5 they only serves the community who are visually
6 impaired, and also senior citizens rely on this, too,
7 also to cross the street. So I just hope that we can
8 be able to work on a formula to continue improving
9 that number. 99 is not enough. What you will hear
10 from the advocate community is that this is a very
11 important tool that will make a difference. That
12 they cannot continue relying on the surrounding sound
13 that they get in order to cross the street. So this
14 is like an important tool for them to be able to
15 cross safe.

16 And then when we look at the cost,
17 somebody said \$5 million I think. It's like, you
18 know, it's not like so much money involved. I know
19 that many of us will be able to put some of the
20 capital. You know, like if I'm asked by the DOT like
21 can you help us? Like because, you know, we need to
22 deal with the number. I would say no let's put two,
23 twenty thousand dollars so that I can help put some
24 of those APSS in my district, too. So what I hope is
25 that we can continue the conversation and find a

2 formula where we increase and move from those 99. 99
3 is not enough. 99 APSs is not enough in a city where
4 we have 12,000 intersections many of them with many
5 dangers.

6 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: And thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman, and look, I agree and I don't want to--
8 I think I want to separate out. There are sort of
9 two issues here. One is the resource issue, and I
10 very much appreciate your offer. And look, believe
11 me as DOT Commissioner, there are so many things I
12 wish I could do that I don't have the resources for.
13 I would love to do it all, and believe me, I wish--
14 You know, I get requests on every front, as many of
15 you know. And, if there's a way we can work together
16 on the resource issue and up that number, I think
17 that would be terrific. And obviously, I think the
18 de Blasio Administration is ready to engage with the
19 Council and the advocate community on that.

20 I want to separate out, though. I think
21 it is also careful that we talk about the methodology
22 of deciding even as we potentially up the number
23 where they go. Because I do think we do have a good
24 set of criteria. It takes where we have LPIs into
25 consideration, but that isn't the exclusive criteria.

2 And right now my experts are telling me, we even have
3 currently identified 300 sites where we've come
4 together again with the criteria that meet the
5 federal guidelines, and the guidelines that we've
6 designed that are specific to New York City. And so,
7 we already even have backlog of I think good sites
8 selected. And before we mandate a new list, I would
9 like to at least compare the list again to the extent
10 that even if we get more resources, resources will
11 always be not what we want them to be. Make sure
12 we're investing in the intersections where we're
13 going to get the most safety and mobility benefits.

14 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: My last question
15 is around, and then I will be calling Council Members
16 Levine and Ignizio. They have also other questions
17 first and then my other colleagues. Are there other
18 improvements we could make to the city street
19 intersections that we will improve accessibility?

20 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: I mean I think
21 there's a whole suite of improvements. And again,
22 I'm going to need to turn it over to expert here to
23 talk about what he does everyday. Because he spends
24 a lot of his time on this topic. And he has actually
25 worked very closely with the Community, and has done

2 I think the test you did, which is blindfold yourself
3 and walk the city streets. I actually did it in
4 Washington when I was a federal official, and I
5 agree. It's a very illuminating experience. You
6 know, there's a whole suite of things we do, signal
7 timings, APSs. Look, and other things obviously that
8 make our streets better for the disabled in terms of
9 curb cuts, you name it. So there's a whole suite of
10 things we're doing but I'm actually going to let him
11 talk specifically about the work that he does because
12 he's been on the front line. So I'll turn it over
13 here to Al Borock.

14 ALAN BOROCK: Thank you, Commissioner.
15 When Local Law 21 went into effect three years ago,
16 we worked very closely with the Mayor's Office for
17 People with Disabilities and the PASS group to
18 develop the criteria. The ranking criteria was
19 established, but we worked with PASS to actually add
20 additional factors to that criteria, which include
21 the Exclusive Pedestrian phases, the LPIs, the bike
22 lanes and other criteria to establish the ranking
23 system. They have been giving us many locations to
24 start evaluating, and right now we have 300 locations
25 ranked for Accessible Pedestrian Signals. But

2 existing resources only allow us to install 25. And
3 the constraints to that is resources with manpower
4 and the cost of construction, as you know. But
5 again, we met with PASS, and we will continue to work
6 with them to see if we can expand the program if
7 possible.

8 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Council Member
9 Ignizio followed by Council Member Levine.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Thank you, Mr.
11 Chairman, Commissioner. Once again, good afternoon.
12 I'm a little encouraged actually by your testimony
13 because you set two criteria that we need to focus
14 on. One was technological and the other financial.
15 So using my oversight authority we reached out to the
16 technological side of it. And here's what we
17 learned, which is in contradiction to some of the
18 testimony that you gave. The company can, in fact,
19 remotely work on the rates and download them to the
20 machines without having to visit multiple machines.
21 In your testimony here it says it would take up to
22 two years. Their testimony to me said it would take
23 a couple of months.

24 The process would be not very expensive
25 according to them, and they are already testing

2 machines to begin the process of what would be
3 rounding up. So, on the converse side, I did speak
4 to some friends of mine in the NYPD transit world who
5 said that Pay-By-Cell is still years away from
6 deployment in the city because it's such a large
7 deployment it would be with the procurement process.
8 So in the interim, I think we could offer people some
9 help, and not have to-- You know, basically what
10 we're doing is we're taking money from people that
11 ultimately are paying for something they can't get.
12 And I think that's wrong and the Administration
13 thinks that's wrong. So if the conversation about
14 technology is accurate, does the administration then
15 support the promotion of the bill?

16 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Well, it's
17 interesting. Perhaps this company is telling people
18 what they want to hear because we got a very
19 different story from them.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: [interposing]
21 Yeah.

22 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: And I'm happy
23 to sit down and see if there's a quicker fix
24 technologically. I do think it's a question we have
25 to ask if the overpayment is in the range of half a

2 million. And to do this, the City is going to forego
3 let's say \$8 million worth of revenue. I just think
4 that's a revenue impact that the, you know, I think
5 the decision makers are going to have to think if
6 that's a good bargain. On the Pay-By-Cell, I hope
7 we're going to get there quicker than that. We've
8 had a good bid on the DOT end for a provider to come
9 in and convert us to Pay-By-Cell. I think the
10 question is the NYPD and their reprogramming their
11 hand-held devices. Pay-By-Cell is actually the way
12 that so many cities in the country are moving now.
13 And a bunch of cities have been doing Pay-By-Cell--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: [interposing] I
15 agree encouraging. I think it's interesting.

16 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: So I actually
17 think really the long run solution just given my
18 druthers would be not to focus on reprogramming sort
19 of the old way we do with meters, but get to Pay-By-
20 Cell. Again, we're happy to sit down. Look, if this
21 company is telling you something very different than
22 what they appear to be telling us, then I'd love to
23 get to the bottom or it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Yeah, I would,
25 too. I think getting at the truth is really

2 important, and let's have a conversation to find out
3 which statements are accurate and which aren't. If
4 we need to bring in the experts then we should do
5 that around the table. But, as I said, I'm
6 encouraged. If these hurdles could be overcome, we
7 could afford some people, some help in the short
8 order while the procurement process would take over a
9 year for the larger business crisis communications
10 Pay-By-Cell.

11 That also doesn't bridge the
12 technological gap of those that don't have a cell
13 phone, and can't use them in the city. Which I know
14 this Administration is extremely concerned about on a
15 whole host of issues about access to technology and
16 access to Smart Phones. So I'm sure that this would
17 be yet another one that would be a supplement to, but
18 not take the total place of it. So like I said, I
19 look forward to the conversation. I hope we can have
20 one with the experts who know more about the program.
21 And what they've told me juxtaposed to clearly what
22 they've told you.

23 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Okay. Yes,
24 we would be happy to do that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, Mr.
3 Chairman. You know, doing our research for this
4 piece of legislation, we tried to find out the number
5 of cases in which a visually impaired pedestrian had
6 been struck in a traffic collision. And it turned
7 out that the City doesn't keep records on that. We
8 don't record any form of disability I believe in the
9 NYPD Crash Statistic, which perhaps should be a topic
10 of another hearing. But it certainly makes it more
11 difficult to make this case compelling, rather than
12 more anecdotally how important it is.

13 I also want to explain something for
14 those who aren't super familiar with the issue.
15 Obviously, Commissioner you are, but the method that
16 visually impaired people use to cross streets when
17 there is no signal assistance is by listening for
18 parallel traffic. So if the traffic is going
19 parallel to the route you're taking, at that point
20 you know you're safe. You can walk with the traffic.
21 It's a little scary if you try it, but it does seem
22 to be workable. Of course, that doesn't-- That
23 breaks down in a case where you have an Exclusive
24 Pedestrian Signal. Which is wonderful for overall
25 safety, but it means that there could be, what is it,

2 15 to 20 seconds if there's no traffic moving for the
3 visually impaired person. And they don't know which
4 direction it's safe to walk out into. And if they
5 walk out in one direction, then they would be in a
6 line of traffic when the light changed. So this why
7 we think it's so compelling to have some sort of an
8 audible signal in that case. And I'm wondering
9 Commissioner or Commissioners how you respond to the
10 need for some sort of essentially an audible cue in
11 those cases?

12 COMMISSIONER TROTTEMBERG: And I would
13 say we actually, Council Member Levine, had the same
14 experience as you when we, too, tried to get those
15 statistics. And you're right that at the moment that
16 is not tracked in our crash data, and I think that's
17 something we certainly need to figure out how we can
18 tackle. Look, we're absolutely in agreement that
19 there is a real conflict here between the desire to
20 do more let's say LPIs. They're good for pedestrian
21 safety, and we particularly had a call for them in
22 cases around the city where there's been a crash.
23 But there's no question obviously it does not give
24 that same oral cue to the blind and the visually
25 impaired. So, you know, we certainly agree there's a

2 real issue there. And I think as Commissioner Celise
3 said, and he can speak to it, you know, every city in
4 the country is grappling with this. I think it's
5 just we just want to be careful.

6 As Al Borock mentioned, LPI is one of the
7 criteria we look at in deciding where to put in APSs.
8 But we look at other things, too. Where a bunch of
9 different conditions, you know, the issue of whether-
10 - how much traffic flow can also be actually on
11 streets as you mentioned where you can't hear a lot
12 of traffic flow. Those can also be important places
13 to put it. So it's not that we agree, but it's a
14 very important criteria. I think we want to just
15 make sure that we have some flexibility and ability
16 to use engineering judgment on other corridors and
17 intersections that might be high priority as well.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And I guess I
19 don't know enough about your rubric, but am I to
20 understand that there could be cases where there's
21 Exclusive Pedestrian Signal where your rubric
22 wouldn't determine where you need an APS.

23 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: I'm sorry?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Could there be
25 cases in which you're installing an Exclusive Signal,

2 which is really an incredibly compelling case. I
3 think we agree, but could there be cases of that,
4 which you're rubric or your current protocols would
5 not designate that location for an APS?

6 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: I guess it
7 would be in the case where resources are constrained.
8 And, look, we're talking about maybe have more
9 resources. But let's just say no matter how many
10 resources we have, we're never going to have probably
11 as much as we'd like. We've worked out a system
12 where we're prioritizing intersections. And it's
13 system we worked out using Federal Guidelines working
14 with PASS and other groups. I'm not sure I see the
15 logic in throwing that system out just to do one.
16 Where some people are saying every LPI, every bike
17 lane and intersection. I think those are things that
18 put you high on the list, but they may not be the
19 sole top priority place where we would want to put an
20 APS.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Look, it may be
22 that the results wouldn't be so different. If you're
23 having to weigh them--

24 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: [interposing]
25 It probably wouldn't be that different. But I just,

2 you know, again, if I had infinite resources this
3 would be an easy problem to solve.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And in the case
5 of dedicated bicycle lanes, which you're installing
6 at a rapid pace, here is an obviously problem for
7 someone who doesn't see. Because they don't make--
8 bicycles don't make the same level of noise as the
9 cars do. So the danger there is obvious. How much
10 do you weigh dedicated bike lanes in your rubric?

11 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: We weigh them
12 heavily, but I mean I will just say that there are
13 some parts of the city where we're putting in
14 dedicated bike lanes, but there isn't much pedestrian
15 traffic. So just again it's a very important factor,
16 but is it the determining factor everywhere in the
17 city in a scenario of limited resources? I guess we
18 would say we would like the flexibility to have it
19 considered along with a number of factors.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing]
21 Right.

22 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Just to
23 mandate everywhere what this is going to be. It just
24 may mean we may wind up if we want to continue
25 building out our Protected Bike Lanes, that work and

2 I think we do. Particularly in light of we just
3 announced a coming expansion of City Bike. And
4 obviously, we'd like to connect that with Protected
5 Bike Lanes where we can. Because that gives a lot of
6 safety for bike riders. There may be areas where
7 you're saying put in APS, but our criteria ranking
8 would say well actually there's another intersection
9 in the city that we think we would get more safety
10 and mobility benefits. But we're going to have to
11 put that further down the list.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Well, from any
13 scenario even if we if we don't-- Mr. Calise, I'll
14 let you speak. [sic]

15 COMMISSIONER CALISE: Yeah, what I was
16 trying to say is it's important to have the disabled
17 community involved. And I think having PASS
18 involved, and being able to prioritize looks more
19 important at first. It's way we want to pay our
20 attention to because it's important for us to get
21 their feedback to be able effectively places these
22 APSs.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Right,
24 absolutely. Under any scenario you're going to still
25 have discretion and the ability to prioritize because

2 the number of intersections which get bike lanes
3 alone if you're doing five miles a year would
4 probably exceed 100. It would be roughly
5 approximately 100. Add in LPIs, you'll be well over
6 the minimum mandated. So you're going to have the
7 ability to not include a bike lane where there is
8 very little pedestrian traffic, for example, under
9 any scenario.

10 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Well, I'm not
11 sure I read it that way. Again, I mean I think-- You
12 know, it may be worth spending some more time looking
13 closely at the criteria. Because again Protected
14 Bike Lanes, LPIs, EPPs, and some of the other things
15 we have discussed, T-intersections and build outs.
16 And there are a whole variety of conditions that are
17 important considerations in where to put APSS. Again
18 I want to separate. I really do feel there are two
19 issues here. One is a resource issue. If we had
20 more resources, we could up the number, and we hear
21 loud and clear from the Council that you would like
22 us to do that. And obviously from the blind and low
23 vision community. And we'd like to up the number,
24 too. And then what's the best way of prioritizing
25 where those resources are going to go? And I think

2 again I think we have a good ranking system. I think
3 the frustration is that we're not doing it quickly
4 enough. But not I think actually that we don't have
5 a-- I think we have a good ranking system, and LPI
6 and Protected Bike Lanes are big factors in that
7 ranking system. But it includes other factors as
8 well.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: But just looking
10 at the numbers here, the total number of
11 intersections with protected bike lanes plus LPIs
12 plus the Exclusive Systems a year would that be 200
13 maybe that we're installing?

14 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: I mean it
15 just, it would have to depend on where we were
16 putting the bike lanes. I can't give you a number
17 there.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Right. If I mean
19 if I'm doing my estimations right, it would be in
20 that range. Certainly it would be more than 100.
21 So, I just want to point out that you would still
22 have a fair amount of discretion because the bill
23 doesn't mandate which 100 you would do. It just sets
24 the floor. So you would still be able to eliminate
25 those where there was little demand.

2 I just want to focus on the technology
3 issue, which you raised. We have the Chair of the
4 Technology Committee here as well, Council Member
5 Vacca. It's certainly a compelling point and one
6 that we should all know more about. But can you
7 describe a bit in any detail what is on the horizon,
8 the timeline, the cost that might supersede or
9 supplant the APSs?

10 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Yeah, and I'm
11 going to turn it over to Alan in a second. Look, I
12 think we all know that the GPS and Smart Phone
13 technology is revolutionizing things very, very
14 quickly. I mean a few years ago you could not have
15 imagined Huber [sic] and now it's taking over, too.
16 So we're going to be engaging in this, and I'm going
17 to turn it over to him. And it's not to say that we
18 don't want to continue with APS technology, and look
19 to do better there. We agree we need to do better,
20 but I've seen this actually in my legislative career
21 in Washington as well. I have a great fear of sort
22 of mandating a technology in perpetuity because
23 technologies do change. And even if I can't tell you
24 today how it's going to change because frankly
25 technology these days sometimes comes out of the blue

2 and changes. And just something for us all to think
3 about particularly in a big city like New York. I
4 mean I have an agency where we have some of the most
5 cutting-edge technologies in the country, and where
6 we still process disabled parking permits by paper.
7 So, you know, we cannot-- We're not always as nimble
8 on technology as we could be. I'm going to turn it
9 over to Al to talk about this one.

10 ALAN BOROCK: Thank you. Obviously, the
11 existing APS system is a hard wired system. It's
12 physical devices that is connected to our traffic
13 signals. It's costly, but the intent is to have the
14 low vision or blind individual be able to know what
15 the traffic signal says. When does the walk signal
16 come on? So what we're looking for possibly with
17 technology is to have a Smart Phone or some sort of
18 communication with a Smart Phone that can talk to our
19 traffic signal so they know. Simply what they want
20 to do is to know when the walk signal is on. So
21 Smart Phone technology or some sort of a
22 communication technology can do that is what we're
23 looking to do. We have a contract with the
24 University of Transportation Research Center, and
25 it's just starting up. It's a year-long contract,

2 and one of the things they're going to look at is
3 what are cities using now for APS? What do they
4 envision in the future? And they are going to be
5 looking very closely at this wireless communication.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I'm way over time
7 so I'm going to close, but I will just say that at
8 such point that technology became available, I'm sure
9 that Chairman Vacca would expeditiously move through
10 legislation to implement it. I think you have a
11 commitment to us to be nimble in cases new
12 opportunities are out there.

13 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: And I will
14 just add, if it's okay, there is a version of this
15 technology, which has emerged on the motorist side.
16 Which actually we've been approached in New York. We
17 haven't taken them up on it yet. Some smaller cities
18 have been doing this where basically you can create
19 an app where the motorist is tied into the city's
20 signalization system. And so, they can get a message
21 as they're sitting there telling them when the light
22 is about to turn. So, I mean this may be closer than
23 we think. It may not. I mean I'm not one to make
24 great technological prognostications, but I just want
25 to make sure if there's a better technology that can

2 leap frog in terms of efficacy and cost that we can
3 be nimble and take advantage of it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I agree. Thank
5 you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. And
7 after taking the question from the main sponsor, I'll
8 be putting the clock on five minutes. And then the
9 Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer then she also
10 will give her opening statement on this, too.
11 Council Member Vacca, Menchaca, and Reynoso.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you. Thank
13 you, Chair Rodriguez for all you've done, and Council
14 Member Levine for the legislation. And Commissioner,
15 I thank you for your flexibility and your realization
16 that we should have more conversation. I'm very
17 sensitive to this. My father was blind. So, I know
18 what it is to be always cognizant of what people with
19 visual impairments go through. I very much support
20 Vision Zero, and all that you've done, and that the
21 Mayor has promoted, and what this Chair and this
22 committee has promoted. I can only tell you that
23 when we speak of the blind, they have zero vision.
24 And they are probably the most vulnerable of all

2 populations and we have 150,000 people in this city
3 who are considered visually impaired.

4 Your points I think are relevant and they
5 are on target regarding maybe having the legislation
6 witness a little more flexibility. I was thinking of
7 senior centers, and I was thinking of nursing homes.
8 I mean these may be areas where people with visual
9 impairments go out of and in everyday, and they
10 frequent everyday, may have relatives, whatever. The
11 bike issues. I know bike paths are a concern, but do
12 we single them out? Do we focus on them or do we
13 allow your agency a little more flexibility based on
14 what you know.

15 And I'm upset by Council Member Levine's
16 revelation today that we don't have the stats that
17 really we should have. That would tell us what type
18 of roads are more vulnerable when it comes to the
19 disabled community. So that is something that
20 concerns me. But I signed onto Council Member
21 Levine's legislation because I firmly believe that we
22 have to set the target of APSs. Have a little
23 flexibility perhaps in the legislation, but that we
24 have to quicken the pace of the installation. We did
25 pass legislation when I was chair of the committee

2 last-- two years ago. We did pass legislation that
3 myself and Council Member Brewer at the time
4 sponsored. We tried to make, and I think we did make
5 a good faith effort, but we need your help. And I
6 think that the number that Council Member Levine has
7 put forth is more than a realistic number. You know,
8 when it comes to the disabled and getting them the
9 rights that all of us take for granted, I know you
10 have a budget, Commissioner, and I respect that very
11 much.

12 But I have to tell you when it comes to
13 the disabled over the course of history and disabled
14 people fighting for their rights, they were always
15 told that there was no money. They always had to go
16 to court to get what was theirs. Or, they had to get
17 courts to force states throughout the country and the
18 federal government to do what they had to do. So we
19 look to you for guidance, and we're here to work with
20 you cooperatively. But I do think we have to do
21 more. We're not doing enough when it comes to the
22 blind and disabled.

23 Now, I'm also on Council Member Ignizio's
24 bill, and I do just want to clarify one or two things
25 because to me this represents an issue of fairness.

2 What you cited in your bill I think did concern me
3 which mainly would be the capital budget cost of
4 adjusting the meters and reprogramming them. I
5 didn't know it was that much, and that does concern
6 me. But you did speak about the cost to the city.
7 Now, do you collect from parking meters in New York
8 City. I somehow remember maybe the city collects
9 around \$200 million a year. Is that basically what
10 you collect from parking meters in New York City?
11 Because the testimony from DOT today is saying that
12 this would cost \$8 million. And I just don't know if
13 that \$8 million is all within the last 15 minutes of
14 the parking meter time. We would lose that much from
15 only 15 minutes at the tail end if we were to enact
16 Council Member Ignizio's legislation?

17 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: Right, and
18 again as I said in my testimony, and I'll freely
19 admit we discovered and I may have our Parking
20 Assistant Commissioner jump in. Like gathering this
21 data was not as easy as we hoped. We've been at it
22 for weeks, but essentially it looks now-- And again,
23 I think in speaking to Council Member Ignizio, we're
24 happy to continue the dialogue on this. But we would
25 just have to program meters to basically forgive

2 everybody for that last increment of time. And it
3 would be a wallop in terms of revenue.

4 I'm sympathetic to the goal of the bill,
5 and I, too, would not like to make people pay for
6 that which they didn't use. And I think we're a
7 little hamstrung by our technology. But again, I
8 think we're happy to sit down, and he seems to be
9 getting a different story from our contractor than we
10 are. And I'd like to get to the bottom of that. And
11 there's a way to do it that doesn't cost so much, and
12 doesn't cost the city so much in terms of revenue
13 that's fair to motorists. We'd love to explore it.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Commissioner, I
15 thank you, and I appreciate all you've done, and we
16 would [bell] we have to do more. So we look forward
17 to working with you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

18 [Pause]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you,
20 Chair, so much for the time, and the round of
21 questioning from the council members I think kind of
22 summed up a lot of what I wanted to ask about. So I
23 want to thank the leadership of the lead, Council
24 Member Levine. I also want to welcome the visually
25 impaired community here today at the Council for

2 being here, and your steadfast advocacy and your
3 long-time advocacy. And again, the main kind of
4 connected pieces of information today for me are that
5 this is a resource question. This is also a
6 prioritization figuring out what that looks like.
7 That data isn't here right now, but we need to make
8 that happen. And so, I'm hoping that at the district
9 level we can bring that information as well to then
10 inform how we do that in our communities.

11 In Sunset Park and Red Hill we definitely
12 have strong communities, disabled communities
13 specifically. But strong communities that always
14 feel vulnerable to this conversation. And really I
15 think getting them out of the shadows and into the
16 conversation is important. So I'm hoping that we
17 have community conversations. But this legislation
18 kind of has that ability for us to take that into our
19 communities. I'm hoping that DOT can help that
20 communication conversation happen. And Vision Zero
21 as we move forward can be a part of that work since
22 we're putting so much time and effort. And I'm
23 hoping this can be an added value. I know it already
24 is, but that's just an underscored commitment. So if
25 there is anything that you want to share on that

2 front that would be great, but thank you again for
3 your steadfast commitment, and to all the council
4 members and the chair for this.

5 COMMISSIONER TROTTEBERG: And thank you,
6 Council Menchaca, for that. And look, we certainly
7 agree this is not a decision that DOT wants to make
8 on its own. Clearly we need to do it in partnership
9 with the disability community particularly for the
10 issue of APSs with the blind and low vision
11 community. But also, you know, we need to do it in
12 cooperation with the elected officials here. I hear
13 what Council Member Vacca is saying, and I agree. I
14 don't want to say this is just a resource question.
15 Because I know for the disabled community they've
16 heard that throughout history, and that's not a
17 sufficient answer. They deserve the same safety and
18 same mobility as everybody in this city. But there
19 is no question also that when I look at all the
20 demands on DOT, and I hear from all of you on a bunch
21 of things from bike lanes to potholes to you name it.
22 You know, in the end we do have to try and make
23 judgments and set priorities. And I know I'm hearing
24 loud and clear from the Council this is an area we
25 need to make a bigger priority. And I think we're

2 ready to sit down with you all and see how we do
3 that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Wonderful and I
5 want to continue to throw out in this collaborative
6 process we can bring people power to this question as
7 well, and not just rely on technology. Because the
8 pathology is going to be an important component of
9 this. The research is going to be important. But
10 how do we define resources? This bill does that, but
11 I think at the district level some of the most I
12 think creative stuff happens beyond the dollars and
13 cents and really kind of helps us understand what we
14 have is community power. And so, I'm hoping
15 everybody is involved in that conversation, and all
16 the communities can come together to do that. So
17 thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Council Member
19 Reynoso.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you, Chair
21 and the Commissioner or Commissioners for being here.
22 I wanted to speak to-- There's a piece of
23 legislation that we have in housing where we give the
24 criteria to where you choose to put for example in
25 ours it would be AEP, Alternative Enforcement

2 Program, which are the worst buildings in the City of
3 New York. And the discretion as set forth by HPD,
4 but they have a number and the number is 200 right
5 now. And they have 200 every single year. Do you
6 feel that if you were given the autonomy or the
7 authority or the discretion to choose where these
8 things go, that would be something that you would be
9 more open to? Or outside of resources, which I think
10 you communicated clearly, do you think it's something
11 that you would be open to?

12 COMMISSIONER TROTTEMBERG: Right. Yes,
13 and I think that we-- Such a system exists and I
14 mean really again thanks to the leadership of Council
15 Member Vacca and now Borough President Brewer I mean
16 that's what the original bill on APSs did. And I
17 think we did create a ranking system. It's pretty
18 elaborate, and it takes into consideration federal
19 guidelines. But frankly, we took the Federal
20 Guidelines and we tailored them to the unique streets
21 of New York City. And, you know, we are very keen to
22 have the input. We've worked with PASS and
23 disability. But look, if there's a feeling that that
24 ranking needs to be improved, we'd love to work on
25 that. I think that is-- That's one question, and

2 then the second question is obviously a resource one.
3 And I think I hear a lot of frustration on the
4 resource question, and we get that message loud and
5 clear. I don't know that our ranking-- I don't know
6 that we have about-- I think the ranking system we
7 have-- I mean maybe folks will say otherwise, but I
8 think it's a pretty good one. I think the
9 frustration is we're not putting our resources into
10 getting a number of APSS up.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Right now the
12 number is set for 25 a year?

13 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: Yes, 25 a
14 year.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: And this will do
16 a minimum of 50, and this legislation would ask for a
17 minimum of 50?

18 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: This will do
19 150. Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: So it would be
21 100. Okay. So, do you have a-- So obviously we
22 don't think 25 is enough. I don't think you do,
23 either, and we're just trying to get to a place to
24 start really showing, making a difference and showing
25 what we're getting. [sic] Right now with technology,

2 and I'm all about-- I know very well that technology
3 changes quickly and we want to make sure we keep up
4 to date. But when it comes to even stop lights,
5 right, there's still red, green, and yellow. There's
6 a level of simplicity in some of these things that is
7 timeless, and this I hear it when I cross the street
8 near Brooklyn Borough Hall. I hear the beeping. I
9 don't know what it means, but I'm pretty sure other
10 folks know what it means. And it's so simple a
11 solution, and I see the price here at \$35,000. So I
12 don't know where that assessment comes from, but it
13 seems like such a simple action. They're making
14 noise on a light pole. Why would it cost \$35,000 to
15 do something like that?

16 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: Yeah, you
17 know, I'm going to let-- Sadly, and this is something
18 I've discovered since coming to New York. Things
19 that we do on our streets the price tag can often be
20 a little eye popping. But I'm going to let the
21 expert tell you where that cost figure comes from.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you.

23 ALAN BOROCK: The APS device itself is
24 simple. It beeps and it gives you a message. It's
25 getting the APS at all of the corners where

2 pedestrians are going to be crossing. A typical
3 right angle intersection people are going to be
4 crossing from eight different points. So you need
5 eight APS units at the intersection. In most cases,
6 we would only have four poles on which to put the
7 APS. So we have to install another four poles, all
8 the underground infrastructure that connects those
9 APS. Wire it all back to our existing infrastructure,
10 and that's whether it's-- It's really a construction
11 cost of building the supports for the existing APS.

12 COMMISSIONER TROTTEMBERG: I would just
13 say that we actually have been talking to the
14 disability groups about whether we can find some ways
15 to bring that cost down. Part of that might be not
16 doing APS at every possible intersection. That's
17 actually something that some people think might be a
18 good idea because it would enable us to wire up more
19 intersections. Some people don't think that that's a
20 good idea. It's not what the Federal Guidelines call
21 for. So it's not to say there isn't some flexibility
22 there, but I'm not sure we've found the magic way to
23 lower the price tag quite yet.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Also
25 prioritizing the ones where the intersections are

2 already there. Like that's something that we can
3 look at as well. If the infrastructure is there then
4 it won't cost \$35,000. We can look at those as well,
5 or those could be maybe top priority. We can move
6 forward with those at a price, at a more affordable
7 price.

8 COMMISSIONER TROTTEMBERG: Well, I mean I
9 think we're always going to look at safety and
10 mobility really as our top criteria. But again, I
11 think what we've been discussing internally is there
12 a way to get the price tag down. And I think that's
13 something we would need to work with the blind and
14 visually impaired community on. There may be a way
15 to do it. We haven't resolved that quite yet.

16 VICTOR CALISE: I just want to point out
17 to the Council that what DOT is doing as a whole for
18 people with disabilities in the short nine or ten
19 months that we've been here is extraordinary.
20 They're really concerned about the issues. They have
21 met with PASS as soon as they were able to address
22 the issues and move forward. I haven't seen anything
23 like this in a very long time, and it's quite
24 refreshing to see what's there. And I think PASS can
25 speak to that as well that the Administration has

2 been open to that. That's what we're looking to do,
3 how do we take care and make sure it's equal across
4 the board? And that's what we're concerned about,
5 and we continue to do that, and DOT has done some
6 extraordinary things on that. And I think it's not a
7 question that we don't want to do it. It's just how
8 are we going to get there? And help from the Council
9 is definitely going to be able to assist that, and
10 it's most important for the disabled community.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: I thank you very
12 much. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.
14 Council Member Levine has one question and then we
15 will summarize and then we will call our Manhattan
16 Borough President Gale Brewer.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: It's just a very,
18 very quick comment, which is that as we think about
19 Smart Phones being the wave of future technology. I
20 think all of us should bear in mind that many of the
21 people that we're looking to serve may have physical
22 barriers that make that difficult. It could be
23 cognitive conditions. Maybe they're using one hand
24 to hold a guide dog. There could be a lot of reasons

2 why it might not be an appropriate solution. I just
3 want to put that out there for you to bear in mind.

4 VICTOR CALISE: Council Member I just
5 want to point that people come to our office in lots
6 of different ways to talk about it. Smart Phone is
7 just one of them. Another technology that has come
8 through our office is a key fob that would beep as a
9 person would go by and give those signals. So there
10 are lots of different technologies that we're hearing
11 about and thinking about. And some of the research
12 that DOT is doing important on that as well.

13 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: And I want to
14 emphasize I'm not trying to say we're looking at
15 future technologies to sort of absolve us of our
16 responsibilities today. I don't want to say that,
17 and I can't promise you that there's a technology out
18 there that will work for every single person. I just
19 also want to be sure, though, that again in a
20 universe where we have a finite number of dollars to
21 invest in improving safety and mobility that we spend
22 them in a way that's going to get the biggest
23 benefit. And technology can play a role in that.

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: I would like say,
25 Commissioner, that as I said before that, you know,

2 the APS is very important for us as I know it is
3 important for the Administration and for the DOT,
4 too. And this is part of Vision Zero. So
5 definitely, we're looking to continue working with
6 you. I appreciate your participation and the
7 administration in today's hearing. And we're looking
8 to continue having conversations to make with a goal
9 that makes some progress on those two important
10 bills, especially the APS as a top priority. I also
11 would like to thank you for your leadership in
12 negotiating our new City Bike Contract. And I know
13 that you are committed not only to continue expanding
14 City Bikes to the area where we will see the City
15 Bike right now. But also in the future to expanding
16 to our all five boroughs. So thank you for your
17 leading in negotiating that contract.

18 COMMISSIONER TROTTENBERG: Thank you, Mr.
19 Chairman, and all the members of the committee.

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, and also as
21 you know, I would also like to invite everyone for
22 our Bike Hearing, which is going to be on the 20th.
23 Not only about the Bike Share, but it's about all
24 aspects related to bikes in New York City. We will
25 be discussing that in our next hearing on November

2 20. So thank you. Now, I would ask our Manhattan
3 Borough President Gale Brewer.

4 [Pause]

5 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much, Mr.
6 Chair, and Chair Rodriguez and I am here to testify
7 in support of Intro 216 of 2014. It's a bill I
8 introduced along with Council Member Steve Levin. I
9 think he just took a call, but he's here. And as you
10 know, the concept is to expand the City's APS,
11 Accessible Pedestrian Signal Program. And you know
12 as well as I do because you just heard a fabulous
13 presentation from the Department of Transportation
14 and the Commissioner that it provides an extremely
15 important safety feature for pedestrians who are
16 blind or who have limited vision. Installed at
17 street intersections and designed to work in consort
18 with pedestrian walk signals.

19 An APS device operates at the push of a
20 button, and emits vibrations and audible signals
21 designed to inform a blind or vision impaired person
22 that the walk signal has turned green. Research has
23 shown that APS technology improves the ability of the
24 blind to assess whether they can cross safely a
25 street. And we've had hearings in the past on this

2 topic. I see Dr. Karen Gurgen [sp?] here, people who
3 have been thinking about these issues for a long
4 time. It's thanks to them, and others that I
5 originally conceived of this working with Council
6 Member Vacca. Local Law 21 of 2012 required DOT to
7 install 25 APS signals each year, as you heard
8 earlier.

9 And to the credit of DOT they have been
10 meeting this goal. I believe 28 APS devices in 2012,
11 26 in 2013, and 26 are in Manhattan. However, given
12 the proven effectiveness I think of this APS Program,
13 I do think --I know you've had a lot of discussions
14 already--that we should take the next step and
15 expand. We should just know that 2016 calls for an
16 increase in annual APS installations to 25 to I
17 believe 50 and not to 100. I think that to the
18 credit of the Council they realized that maybe 100
19 would be a stretch. But the current bill is to 50.
20 So that will be a total of 75 every single year as a
21 baseline.

22 In addition, increasing the minimum
23 yearly installation requirement this bill would also
24 require installation of APS at particular
25 intersections that pose greater than average

2 difficulty for people with vision impairment. And
3 these intersections include those that features--and
4 this is what you talked about earlier--exclusive
5 pedestrian signals, which briefly stops all traffic
6 an intersection to allow pedestrians to cross the
7 street in any direction. We have this right here at
8 Center and Chambers where we have the one center
9 street. I know because I'm always in that
10 intersection. Everybody can cross and then the cars
11 continue. Number two, Leading Pedestrian Intervals,
12 LPI, which gives a walk signal to pedestrians before
13 drivers get a green light to provide more crossing
14 times. And three, Protected Bike Lanes, which are
15 separated from motor traffic by a parking lane or
16 concrete barriers.

17 APS and LPI both provide pedestrians with
18 lead time to cross the street safely, more safely.
19 However, they can also be confusing to people with
20 impaired vision. Similarly, Protected Bike Lanes
21 improve bike safety, but alter the layout of the many
22 intersections and make them unfamiliar to those whose
23 vision is impaired. They can imperil people with
24 vision impairments if they are installed without APS
25 technology. The whole issue of bicycles and even

2 hybrid cars is one that I don't think was
3 anticipated. They're quiet. They're very quiet, and
4 it's a good thing, but they are a challenge for
5 people who are visually challenged. And I think
6 that's something that it's an interesting paradoxical
7 problem where you have a healthy environment in terms
8 of a moving vehicle, but it's not healthy for those
9 who are blind.

10 Currently, very few intersections with
11 EPS, LPI, and Protected Bike Lanes include an APS
12 device. According to the DOT website there are 163
13 EPS signals operating in Manhattan, but none
14 currently include an APS. Similarly, 145 LPI signals
15 are operating in Manhattan, but only two sites have
16 an APS. Both are on 23rd Street, which is an
17 important street because of Visions being there. One
18 at 6th Avenue and the other at 1st Avenue. Only two
19 APS sites have been installed at intersections with
20 Protected Bike Lanes including 1st, 2nd, 8th, and 9th
21 Avenues.

22 Intro 216 would require that APS devices
23 be installed at every intersection with EPS, LPI
24 and/or a Protected Bike Lane. I know you had
25 discussion earlier about being more flexible, but all

2 of this should be considered I think as part of the
3 discussion. Installing APS wherever EPS, LPI, and
4 Protected Bike Lane exists would also help ensure a
5 more uniform distribution of APS devices. To date,
6 most of them are being installed at Manhattan's
7 busiest intersections. And even in Manhattan one has
8 been installed above West 65th Street. The blind and
9 visually challenged travel all of our streets. As
10 you know, not just in our most crowded intersections.

11 This bill has the support of many
12 transportation advocates including Transportation
13 Alternatives as well as advocates for those with
14 vision impairments such as Lighthouse Guild. In
15 fact, this bill originated from a Vision Zero
16 taskforce legislative breakfasted by our office. It
17 is a common sense piece of legislation obviously
18 needing tweaking and caveats. But I think it would
19 ensure our city's Vision Zero initiative, which is
20 designed to benefit everyone who uses our streets.

21 I just want to thank you and also just
22 state I am obviously very interested in any
23 technology changes. But I do want to pick up on
24 Council Member Levin's comment. I think about
25 visitors. I love to have New York. And I think this

2 is key to a large extent now. People who are
3 disabled feel like as a visitor and a tourist this is
4 a destination. And they may not get even local
5 people. They may not have the right device to be
6 able to use the correct app. And then we spend our
7 whole lives, those of us in politics, do we find
8 people by text? Do we find people with a map? Do we
9 find people by email? What is the best discussion?
10 And I do worry that that's going to take some time
11 before everybody has the right device to be able to
12 open the refrigerator and close the door and figure
13 out how to get around our streets. I think that's a
14 ways away.

15 So I would like to see as much as
16 possible something that was more universal than
17 technology that would indicate that you have to have
18 a particular device. So, you know, I'm always a
19 believer that when something works for the disabled,
20 it works for others. That's certainly true of curb
21 cuts. It's true of any kind of device in an
22 apartment that makes it more accessible. It's true
23 of doors that open more easily. And I think in the
24 end, I hate to tell you what that means. We're all
25 getting older in this city. And so if that is of

2 help. I think it would be of help to others who
3 might not just-- Who might actually need to see or
4 hear rather than just see.

5 So I think that we need to have a good
6 discussion there. There are many people in this
7 community who would be delighted to work with DOT I'm
8 sure in coming up with something that makes sense for
9 them and for the whole city. So I appreciate your
10 time. We've been working on this for a long time,
11 and it's great starting to have this hearing today and
12 to be thinking about it in such a constructive
13 manner. I think you and I certainly thank DOT.
14 Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Well, thank you,
16 Gale. As you know, your voice is very important in
17 our city. Your leadership not only on this issue,
18 but on many other issues are well taken. And like
19 how important you are and how much you care for the
20 vision impaired and also for the whole city. So
21 thank you, and we will continue working and having
22 conversations with you.

23 GALE BREWER: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And my colleague
25 and Council Member Levine has a question.

2 GALE BREWER: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, Madam
4 Borough President. I'm often confused with Steven
5 Levin, and I always take it as a compliment. So
6 thank you.

7 GALE BREWER: Sorry.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Sure, absolutely.
9 You have just been extraordinary on this issue for so
10 many years. You've really been an inspiration for me
11 and I think to many people in the room. So I want to
12 thank you for all you've done to get us to this
13 point, and for your continued advocacy on this issue.
14 It's really incredible. A wonderful thing for this
15 community and for all the Council.

16 I think you heard Commissioner
17 Trottenberg make the case that in addition to the
18 resource question whatever the number there charged
19 to install that, they would rather have a little more
20 discretion to continuing using that current rubric.
21 Which sounds like it was developed with a lot of
22 thought and input from all sides. Do you have an
23 opinion, a strong opinion about whether we should
24 focus future installations on these cases where
25 there's an LPI, an EPS, a bike lane? Or, whether you

2 would be comfortable with a rubric, which DOT uses
3 which does take into account those elements, but also
4 other factors.

5 GALE BREWER: It's my understanding that
6 the current installation was done with consultations
7 from the community. So I know for instance-- You
8 know I think it should be the community that is
9 visually challenged. I think I've all put people who
10 are, or appointed people who are visually challenged
11 to community boards. And I think that the community
12 boards should be involved. So you need a discussion
13 because I think the world is changing. It's not just
14 changing in terms of our devices. It's also changing
15 in terms of the vehicles as I indicated and some of
16 those challenges. So I do want to make sure that the
17 future is done perhaps quickly in terms of the
18 passing legislation. But there needs to be a
19 discussion with community. I don't think it's up to
20 me to decide, to be honest with you. I think it's up
21 to people who are quite versed, and obviously here
22 today. But they spend a great deal of time thinking
23 about these issues. One of the challenges, of
24 course, is so few people in this community can work,
25 and can move around easily. And I think that we just

2 need to do everything we can, as DOT indicated, to
3 make that a lot easier. To answer your questions,
4 yes I'm open, but I want to hear from the community.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Very much. I
6 just want to clarify. You raised the question on
7 the number, and you said there are 50, there are 50
8 retrofits. I think that's where the number 50 came
9 from, but there is a floor of 100 additionally for
10 these new scenarios with the LPIs--

11 GALE BREWER: [interposing] Yeah, okay.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you so
13 much.

14 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you very
16 much.

17 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: I have no
18 questions, and now let's go to our next panel. Karen
19 Gouragey, Lester Marks, and Ellen Robbin.

20 [Pause]

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: So we're going to
22 be timing the clock on three minutes each.

23 [Pause]

24 KAREN GOURGEY: Thank you very much, Mr.
25 Chair. Good afternoon everyone and thank you all for

2 being here. My name is Karen Gourgey, and I do Chair
3 the PASS Coalition, which is Pedestrians for
4 Accessible and Safe Streets. And as you know, our
5 goal really has to do with making sure that all of
6 the streets in New York City are fully accessible to
7 people who are visually impaired-- visual impairment
8 and blindness. I just want to make a few comments.
9 First, I do want to commend the committee for its
10 concern with respect to these specific needs of our
11 population and the DOT as well. And Council Member
12 Vacca and Chair Rodriguez and, of course, Mark Levine
13 and Borough President Brewer who is here. And so
14 many people who are really doing a wonderful job in
15 their commitment to our issues of accessibility.

16 This bill represents a critical milestone
17 in New York City's efforts to catch up on its
18 installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals. For
19 the first time, it will become a matter of law that
20 when certain conditions occur in the environment, an
21 APS will result. This begins to move toward the kind
22 of universal access to services and to facilities
23 that was envisioned by the Americans with
24 Disabilities Act all the way back in 1990.

2 PASS is pleased to express our full
3 support for Intro 216, and actually the level when we
4 added them all up, which I understand may or may not
5 be changing, but if we added up the 50, 25, and the
6 100 new ones, we came up with 175 per year as a
7 minimum. We certainly support that. We know, of
8 course, that challenges will come in the
9 implementation of this bill. Just for an example, we
10 suspect that at least over the next two or three
11 years nobody is going to be installing an APS at
12 every single bike lane. We know that. But there
13 will be critical intersections where a bike lane is
14 accompanied by say a Leading Pedestrian Interval or a
15 protected turn lane when an APS will be absolutely
16 crucial for safe travel. This is just one example of
17 the kinds of decisions and choices that will need to
18 be made as this bill takes effect in 2015.

19 Where the bill already requires that
20 members of the visually impaired community be
21 consulted as installation decisions are made. And
22 certainly the prioritization tool that's been
23 mentioned is a part of all of that. But PASS would
24 like to propose the formation of an advisory body
25 that would be established to work regularly with

2 relevant divisions of DOT. So that the community can
3 have timely and meaningful input into decisions that
4 affect accessibility.

5 Thanks to the good offices of
6 Commissioner Trottenberg, and Commissioner Calise, we
7 already have, and I think you've heard this, we
8 already are developing an excellent working
9 relationship with DOT. Hello. We simply would like
10 to see that relationship regularized and
11 strengthened. So that, for example, when DOT is
12 considering a corridor project, or it's making
13 difficult choices regarding APS installations, it
14 becomes automatic that our community including those
15 with expertise in orientation and mobility have input
16 for the decisions that are made. PASS urges quick
17 passage of Intro 216, and we applaud DOT and the
18 Transportation Committee for their expanding
19 commitment to full accessibility for all New Yorkers.
20 Thank you.

21 LESTER MARKS: Good afternoon. My name
22 is Lester Marks. I'm from Lighthouse Guild, which is
23 also a member of the PASS Coalition. I'm here today
24 to express our support in full for 216-A. Obviously,
25 this is an important bill for people who are blind or

2 visually impaired. Part of the Lighthouse Guild
3 mission is to train people to travel across the
4 entire city or to any destination that they choose to
5 go to, and do that accessibly and safely.
6 Unfortunately, what we've found over the past three
7 years, and increasing at an alarming rate is that
8 LPis and EPPs are specifically major concerns for
9 people who are traveling. And the cities while we
10 acknowledge that they do increase safety for the vast
11 majority of people, they are not increasing safety
12 for people who are blind or visually impaired. And I
13 cannot underscore that enough. So every time an LPI
14 or an EPP regardless of-- And, you know, we worked
15 with DOT to come with the utilization tool.

16 Unfortunately, through experience and
17 through the increased use and the occurrence of LPI
18 and EPP we have found that they pose serious threats.
19 Every time one is installed it creates a dangerous
20 situation for somebody traveling along that corridor.
21 So in the heart of this bill is to really tackle one
22 of the pressing issues of our mobility instructors
23 and our clients and students. Obviously, we are open
24 to some discussion on flexibility, but this speaks to

2 the major challenge for people who are blind or
3 visually impaired.

4 Obviously resources are a concern. Just
5 to put it in context, the operating budget of DOT is
6 \$900 million and the capital budget is \$6.3 billion
7 over the next five years. So my math that accounts
8 to, this bill as it is passed, would cost about \$5.2
9 million. That's .005% of the overall DOT budget.
10 That's not even including the-- When we factor in
11 the over all city budget, which is \$75 billion, if my
12 math is correct. My calculator broke. So, you know,
13 it is a resource issue, but we're talking about small
14 amounts of money in the grand scheme of things. And
15 the amount of money that will be spent to fund 216-A
16 in its entirety will go a long way. And it will
17 obviously be much appreciated from the PASS Coalition
18 and from our clients, student, and patients. So we
19 implore the City Council to pass 216-A and stand
20 ready to work with you all, and the Commissioner and
21 the Department of Transportation to make sure that
22 that happens. So thank you, and thank you Council
23 Member Levin and Council Member Rodriguez for working
24 with us last week over at 250 Broadway especially
25 considering the elements in the ring. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you and a
3 special thanks to Karen for also your leadership on
4 this particular matter that is important for
5 everyone. The last panel is going to be Edith
6 Prentiss of DIA, and Alex Slackey, and Charles Judge.

7 [Pause]

8 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Anyone here?

9 [background discussion]

10 EDITH PRENTISS: It's all the same three
11 minutes. I want to say first, as some of you know
12 that DIA-- Okay, I'm Edith Prentiss, and I think
13 most of you know me, but I'm representing DIA
14 specifically.

15 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And where is DIA?
16 [sic]

17 EDITH PRENTISS: Yes, Northern Manhattan,
18 a former member of Mark Levine's committee when he
19 was on it and a constituent of Ydanis'. Okay, that's
20 the underground stuff. I'm representing DIA,
21 Disabled in Action, and to say that we think this is
22 a great bill. We think the concept of 25 APSS
23 installed annually is a joke. I would like to speak
24 very briefly about the populations of even visual
25 impairment, blind and visual impairment that also

2 utilize the APS. I have not the greatest night
3 vision. Have never had it. And with a lot of the
4 ped ramps we have out even on Broadway the lovely pet
5 ramp for example at Lincoln Center in which there is
6 absolutely no color contrast. So, I can't find the
7 ped ramp, but I can hear the APS. I can't find-- I
8 mean I sit there in the middle of Columbus Avenue
9 trying to figure out where the ped ramp is.

10 It's a little embarrassing. The
11 Guild[sic] had us do some looking at ramps, and my
12 section was 60th to 67th Street. I see one of the
13 biggest problems is the lack of visual contrast
14 there. People with TVIs, developmental disabilities,
15 et cetera, seniors often rely upon the APS with a
16 number of other issues, including the fact that
17 there's a truck blocking your vision of the walk
18 sign. A great big box truck. The post office trucks
19 they all block it. Quite often the scaffolding will
20 block the ramp, the walk or don't walk sign. I think
21 APS is very important, and unlike other people, when
22 I first encountered them on 23rd Street in front of
23 Selis, at the corner of Selis, I was like, Why is
24 there a bird. I had no concept.

2 I think one of the problems, though, with
3 APS and the cost of APS also is the fact that it's
4 not-- It does not seem to be being planned with other
5 construction projects. For example, there's a major
6 construction project going on at 155th Street, Edge
7 Combe and Saint Nicholas Place. And what
8 intersection is the number one on DOT's list? That
9 intersection. It's a question we see when the 8th
10 Avenue Biplane was put in, they did not repair, they
11 did not install missing ped ramps. So that you have
12 a situation in which the rest of the community goes,
13 Those damn handicap people. They're keeping-- We
14 don't just build these things, and now they're going
15 to build something else. I always feel a little
16 passive aggression there. I think it's very
17 important to try to do a job and do a job once.
18 Thank you.

19 ALEX SLACKEY: Good afternoon, everyone.
20 My name is Alex Slackey. I'm here testifying on
21 behalf of AAA New York, which serves a membership of
22 1.6 million drivers in New York State and there are
23 570,000 drivers in the five boroughs of New York
24 City. And I'm here to testify about Intro 2-- I'm
25 sorry 383, the rounding up parking time bill. We're

2 delighted that the Council, the Transportation
3 Committee, the Department of Transportation are
4 evaluating the parking regulations for city streets.
5 And anyone who has driven in New York understands the
6 difficulty of finding a parking space. And
7 understanding the applicable regulations.

8 This bill attempts to solve a limited
9 problem. People are overpaying for parking meters
10 because they can only pay in 15-minute increments.
11 The solution is to round up the time if the
12 expiration time is within 14 minutes of the end of
13 the parking regulations. And this would result in
14 drivers underpaying the city rather than overpaying
15 the city. You know, we're not going to object to
16 that, but when we talk about nickling and diming New
17 Yorkers, this is literally nickling and diming them.
18 And so the change would be fairly small. The savings
19 are very limited. Outside of Manhattan, it's 25
20 cents for 15 minutes. The most you're really going
21 to save is 23 cents. Even in Midtown Manhattan,
22 \$3.50 for an hour you're going to save 88 cents,
23 which is something that's-- You know, it's certainly
24 not right to overpay, but it's not something worth
25 expending a huge number of resources on. The law

2 won't really result in a huge reduction in parking
3 tickets anyway. That's like the open data portal.
4 From August 2013 to June 2014, there are a little
5 over 600,000 tickets issued for Violation Code 37,
6 which is parking in excess of the allow time on a
7 Muni-Meter when the parking regulations end at 7:00
8 p.m. Now that's an immense amount of tickets, but
9 only about 2,000 were issued from 6:46 to 6:59. It's
10 about six per day. And so this is something that is
11 worthy, but the resources expended on this I think
12 would be better expended on what the Commissioner
13 talked about before, which is pursuing some sort of
14 cell phone based plan.

15 And another option in the interim, and I
16 don't know if this is something that could be done.
17 If you could reprogram the Muni-Meters to instead of
18 having 15-minute increments maybe smaller increments
19 for people with credit cards, or some creative
20 solution like that. Certainly we support the goals
21 of this bill, and we hope that there is a way to see
22 it happen that is worth the resources and worth the
23 time, and we support that. And we very, very
24 strongly support the pursuance of alternative measure
25 like paying by cell and the Parking Technology Pilot

2 Program. We don't want to underplay. We don't want
3 to overpay. We want to pay what we deserve. So
4 thank you for your attention, and thank you
5 Commissioner for your attention as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And I would like
7 to thank the Commissioner for staying here and
8 listening to the testimonials of the rest of the
9 panels.

10 CARLOS GOURGEY: My name is Carlos
11 Gouragey. I'm here as a member of the PASS Coalition.
12 It is taken for granted that people who are blind
13 maneuver adequately the streets of New York using the
14 parallel traffic detection that they learned that
15 their training that they have developed over the
16 years. Well, just like life, traffic patterns are
17 getting more complicated. We've already heard that
18 this is no longer a totally reliable indicator when
19 Extended Pedestrian Phase or Leading Pedestrian
20 Intervals are involved. However, I think the problem
21 goes even deeper than that.

22 I'd like to mention the community that is
23 often neglect that is not mentioned very much but
24 should be. Which are those that are newly blind, and
25 there are more of those as our population is getting

2 order, and who have not had the years to be able to
3 develop these skills that others may take for granted
4 such as the Parallel Traffic Detection. For them
5 auditory or Accessible Pedestrian Signals are
6 particularly crucial. No device at present does what
7 an APS can do, and there may not be one for quite a
8 while. Smart Phones are not an answer. Those who
9 use Smart Phones may take for granted it's just a
10 natural inseparable part of their lives. But not
11 everyone has a Smart Phone especially people who are
12 visually impaired may be using something like a
13 Jitterbug phone with the tactile buttons and a large
14 screen that's easy to use and easy to see.

15 I've used that kind of a phone for many
16 years. It has no Smart capability whatsoever. And
17 this, the APS technology rather is one that is
18 universal that is accessible to everyone. That does
19 not disenfranchise everyone as we move to higher
20 levels of technology for those to whom it comes as a
21 more natural part of their existence. And so, I'm
22 strongly in support of Intro 216, and what to just
23 give my heartfelt thanks to those who are supporting
24 it Council Member Rodriguez, Council Member Levine,
25 Council Member Vacca, Borough President Gale Brewer

2 and all of those other supporters of this bill have
3 my heartfelt thanks. And again for just paying
4 attention to a community that is often overlooked.
5 Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you and the
7 last panel is Anna Lynn Courtney Barbarier, Joe Fine
8 [sic], and Maria Hanson.

9 [Pause]

10 [background discussion]

11 MARIA HANSON: Hi. My name is Maria
12 Hanson. I'm President of Guide Dog Users of New York
13 and a member of the PASS Steering Committee. First
14 of all, I've liked a great deal of what I've heard by
15 all parties today. There are a few concerns that I
16 do have, though, one, and my dog is concerned, too.
17 Protected turn lanes are not mentioned in the bill,
18 particularly protected say lead turn intervals, et
19 cetera, which for visually impaired pedestrians pose
20 more of a hazard say than protected bike lanes. I do
21 understand that the bill mentions that intersections
22 will be evaluated to determine those that pose the
23 greatest hazards to visually impaired pedestrians.

24 Also I understand that there are finite
25 resources. One of the questions I was going to ask,

2 and Borough President Brewer started to answer it,
3 but not fully, is how many Leading Pedestrian
4 Intervals, Explicit Pedestrian Phases, Protected Bike
5 Lanes, and Protected Turn Lanes are currently in New
6 York City to see what those numbers are that we have
7 to catch up on. And I expect in the future that the
8 pace of installation will slow down a bit
9 particularly for LPIs and EPTs. So maybe we could do
10 catching up with the LPIs, EPPs, protected turns, and
11 still have money left for the bike lanes. And the
12 bike lanes are grown at such an exponential rate that
13 every one of them does not need an app.

14 Particularly, key intersections could be specified.

15 When we talk about finite resource also,
16 somebody or Mr. Vacca mentioned, of course, that
17 blind and vision impaired New Yorkers are among the
18 most vulnerable of our population. In addition to
19 that, they are among the poorest group of our
20 population. Just shy of 80% of vision impaired
21 people are employed. Smart Phone technology is very
22 costly. So at the cost of dealing with finite
23 resources of the Department of Transportation are we
24 laying that cost off on the very poor population.
25 And are we also then trading in hard wired

2 signalization such as apps for cell phone technology
3 where maybe the batteries fail. It's not our
4 responsibility to exclusively look out for our own
5 safety. We should have equal access to traffic
6 information. Thank you. [bell]

7 [Pause]

8 ANNA LYNN COURTNEY BARBIER: Hi. My name
9 is Anna Lynn Courtney Barbarier. I'm an Orientation
10 and Mobility Specialist at Visions: Services for the
11 Blind and I'm a member of the PASS Coalition. I also
12 before I look at my own testimony want to respond to
13 a couple of things that Commissioner Trottenberg
14 spoke about. And one of them is exploring other
15 technologies. I've been an Orientation Mobility
16 Specialist for over 30 years, and I've always heard
17 the broad statements of the promise that new
18 technology would bring. But I'm not hearing a lot
19 very specific details. So this is a concern to me
20 when they say we want to look at it. I'm very
21 interested. Everybody in my profession who is
22 interested in this specific topic does want to see
23 things advance because we are aware of how difficult
24 it is to deal with the infrastructure when trying to
25 install.

2 I think that New York City DOT does a
3 very good job of trying to follow all federal
4 regulations and put the stud poles in the right
5 places, which means they are burdened by running
6 wires with all the infrastructure and the cost.
7 We've talked with them, or we've stated to them about
8 the idea of micro trenching, something that is being
9 done in other places. And we would like to talk more
10 about micro trenching so that the cost may go down or
11 should go down. And just to also reiterate what
12 Maria said about cell phone cost for a population
13 that is overall unemployed, mostly unemployed. When
14 people are talking to me about APS they ask how many
15 blind people live in New York City. People are
16 trying to figure out the cost ratio benefit. And the
17 better questions to ask are how many people have
18 difficulty seeing the walk signal? How many people
19 are oriented to auditory rather than visual cues?
20 And how many people walking the streets of New York
21 City are distracted by an electronic device?

22 We have many assumptions that only the
23 blind and visually impaired will use APS, just as we
24 have assumptions that only wheelchair users are going
25 to use the wheelchair ramps and curb cuts. That only

2 the deaf are going to use the closed captioning. I
3 work with people who are cognitively impaired. I
4 work with people who have brain injuries, veterans
5 who have brain injuries. When these individuals have
6 an APS they leave the curb faster. They have more
7 time to cross the street. Right now, Vision Zero
8 really is an exclusive program. [bell] Because
9 everything that Vision Zero does, most of what it
10 does with the curb extensions, and the change in the
11 signalization, it leaves the blind out. This bill
12 will make it inclusive. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Council Member
14 Greenfield.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman. I just want to respond to your
17 testimony. I think you made some excellent points.
18 I for one use closed captioning every single day. I
19 keep New York One on in the background, and so we
20 sort of get that information. I know that in my
21 district, my constituents are particularly fond of
22 curb cuts especially those with carriages and
23 children. And so, certainly there are many benefits
24 that are unforeseen and those are terrifically valid
25 points. And so I want to thank you for that. I want

2 to thank everybody who stuck around for the whole
3 hearing. I especially want to thank Council Member
4 Levine and the Chair for his leadership. I will say
5 just so that you know, because I've been doing this
6 for years, there is something unique that has
7 actually happened at this hearing today. Which we
8 haven't seen in the past, which is that the
9 Commissioners actually stuck around for the entire
10 hearing to get--

11 ANNA LYNN COURTNEY BARBIER: [interposing]
12 Yes. I wanted to say that as well. I really
13 appreciate it. Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: So she
15 certainly deserves credit for that as well.

16 ANNA LYNN COURTNEY BARBIER:
17 [interposing] Thank you very much. [applause]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I wanted to
19 acknowledge that. So thank you very much.

20 [Pause]

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: I look forward to
22 working with the Administration, Council Member
23 Levine, Borough President Brewer, and the many hard-
24 working advocates for visually impaired New Yorkers
25 to figure out how we can best sure that blind and low

2 vision people can more safely navigate our city
3 streets. And as my colleagues here says, you know,
4 as the Commissioner stated through the whole hearing
5 when we had a hearing the Family for Safe Streets.
6 For her also to able to stay with us, and listen to
7 all the testimony is very important. And I have no
8 doubt that we will end in a place where we will be
9 able to make important progress on this particular
10 bill. Thank you and this hearing adjourned. [gavel]

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1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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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 November 2, 2014