

**NYC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TESTIMONY
HEARING BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION ON INTRO 336
February 26, 2018**

Good morning Chair Rodriguez and members of the Transportation Committee. I am Emily Weidenhof, Director of Public Space at New York City DOT, and with me today is Rebecca Zack, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. We are here today on behalf of Commissioner Polly Trottenberg to offer testimony on Intro. 336.

On behalf of DOT, I would like to thank the Council for working to pass Local Law 53 of 2016 authorizing us to develop a regulatory framework for our plaza program. This was an important step forward in our management of the program and has allowed us to establish plaza-specific rules.

This year we celebrate the 10 year anniversary of our plaza program. In that time, we have grown from a patch of paint in Brooklyn to 74 plazas citywide in some phase of design, construction, or completion, with almost 60 of these currently open to the public, which includes our new 185th Street Plaza which we were happy to open with Chair Rodriguez in his district. Plazas create safer, walkable neighborhoods while providing vital gathering space for communities.

And with the OneNYC Plaza Equity Program we are truly taking our program to the next level. Thanks to this initiative we provide vital maintenance and technical assistance to 30 of our most high-need plaza partners—the organizations that are responsible for maintenance and programming under an agreement with DOT—to deliver quality public space citywide despite varying organizational capacity in different neighborhoods.

Regarding the bill before us today, Intro. 336 would require DOT to annually submit to the City Council and post on our website a report on (1) the of number of summonses issued for violations of pedestrian plaza rules by plaza and offense; (2) any measures taken to promote safety and compliance with any such pedestrian plaza rules in each pedestrian plaza; and (3) a list of events held in each plaza.

When it comes to reporting summonses for violations of plaza rules, DOT does not issue such summonses nor do we record or compile such information. Our NYPD colleagues enforce plaza rules and issue summonses and therefore we defer to them on this requirement of the bill.

Similarly, when it comes to events on plazas, the Street Activity Permit Office, or “SAPO,” located within the Mayor’s Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management, is responsible for issuing and tracking permits for such events, and therefore we defer to them on the specifics of that information. The Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment is also responsible for issuing some permits for events in plazas and we defer to them regarding information on those events.

Both NYPD and SAPO have indicated that the majority of this type of data is already required to be made public under either open data law or existing reporting requirements.

Regarding the remaining reporting requirement in the bill, DOT takes a range of measures to promote safety as well as compliance with our plaza rules. To separate pedestrians in our plazas, and our sidewalks generally, from vehicular traffic, we use a variety of treatments to both delineate and provide a physical barrier, based on the needs and the space available. These include our curbs, street trees, landscaping features, flexible delineators, planters, and granite blocks. Permanently reconstructed plazas also include enhanced pedestrian lighting to increase safety and quality of life.

And as you know, the City has also embarked on a new program of installing pedestrian security measures, including bollards and other measures, at locations identified in partnership with the NYPD. Local Law 80 of 2018, sponsored by Chair Rodriguez, mandates among other things, that DOT report annually on the number of bollards we install within our right of way and the number of locations where they are installed.

When it comes to compliance with our plaza rules, DOT plays a role in addition to NYPD's enforcement efforts. We are currently updating plaza signage to make reference to the new Pedestrian Plaza Rules. The content of these signs is based on input from both NYPD and our Pedestrian Plaza Partners about what rules would be most helpful to list based on their knowledge of common issues.

We also consider various design features to ensure compliance with our plaza rules—for example, armrests on benches deter skateboarding. In addition, our Pedestrian Plaza Partners constantly monitor conditions on the ground and report issues to us as they arise. DOT then works with them to craft customized solutions to plaza-specific issues. For example, at one particular location our partner identified smoking in violation of plaza rules as a quality of life issue and we worked with them to install additional no smoking signage placed in key locations.

One of the best known examples of when DOT worked with the NYPD and a Pedestrian Plaza Partner to address a particular issue is in Times Square. There we installed Designated Activity Zones or "DAZ's" and Pedestrian Flow Zones to safely and effectively manage one of the world's most visited spaces. The goal is to provide ample space for commercial activities without impeding those passing through or who simply wish not to participate in such activities.

As you can see, DOT undertakes a broad range of measures to maintain safety and quality of life in pedestrian plazas. We appreciate the Council's interest in our pedestrian plazas efforts, on which we partner closely with NYPD and Pedestrian Plaza Partners. Should the Council choose to advance this legislation, we would request the opportunity to work with you on amendments to reflect the types of measures taken that are suitable and possible to include in an annual report, and avoid requirements that are duplicative or require information that may already be publicly available.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony. I can now answer questions about Intro. 336.



February 26, 2018

STATEMENT BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Chairman Rodriguez and Members of the Transportation Committee:

The NYC BID Association was formed over 30 years ago and consists of the leaders of the City's 75 Business Improvement Districts. New York City has the largest and most diverse BID program in the United States, and the NYC BID Association enables its managers to share best practices, advocate on important issues, and discuss their work citywide. BID services include sanitation and maintenance, public safety, marketing and visitor services, and social and workforce programs.

Since the inception of the Plaza Program a decade ago, Business Improvement Districts have also been the City's community-based maintenance and program partners. We have seen how public plazas enliven and improve the streetscape in diverse communities citywide, and we have marshaled our creativity and our resources to make the most of these spaces. We wholeheartedly believe that attractive, safe and well-maintained public spaces benefit New Yorkers and visitors alike, and are critical to a healthy and vibrant civic fabric. The BID Association has worked with both the Council and Administration to craft legislation and rules to ensure that public plazas remain a permanent fixture for the benefit of our neighborhoods, and we are grateful for the work you have done to ensure this outcome.

Since the adoption of Local Law 53 and the event permitting rules in 2016, the program has continued to evolve, just as conditions in our City have continued to change. The BIDs that maintain public plazas have worked with DOT and other local agencies, including SAPO and NYPD, to address evolving needs and allow the program to meet the needs of all New Yorkers.

Unfortunately, the timing of this hearing did not permit the Association or its Plaza Working Group to take a position on Int. No. 336. However, we look forward to continued engagement with you on the topic of public plazas.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meredith Phillips Almeida".

Meredith Phillips Almeida

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Benfatto, Jr.".

Robert J. Benfatto

Co-Chairs of the NYC BID Association

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/26/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sean Basinski

Address: _____

I represent: Street Vendor Project

Address: 40 Rector St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rebecca Zack

Address: Asst Commissioner

I represent: Intergovernmental + Community Aff.

Address: NYC DOT

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Weidenhof

Address: Dir. of Public Space NYC DOT

I represent: _____

Address: _____