

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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AUGUST 26, 2021
Start: 11:47 A.M.
Recess: 12:45 P.M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS

B E F O R E: CHAIR YDANIS RODRIGUEZ

COUNCIL MEMBERS: YDANIS RODRIGUEZ
FERNANDO CABRERA
PETER KOO
DEBORAH ROSE
MARK LAVINE
CARLOS MENCHACA
ANTONIO REYNOSO
ROBERT HOLDEN
SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS
STEVEN LEVIN

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

2 SGT. KOTOWSKY: This is a mic check for
3 the Committee on Transportation, August 26, 2020.
4 We're in the Council Chambers. This is Owen
5 Kotowsky.

6 CHAIR RODRIGUEZ: Good morning and
7 welcome to today's hearing of the Council
8 Transportation Committee. I am Ydanis Rodriguez, the
9 Chair of the committee. Today, the committee
10 convenes to vote on proposed Intro 1811-A that's
11 sponsored by Council Member Powers and Speaker
12 Johnson. Proposed Intro number 1811-A is a local law
13 to amend the Administrative Code of the City of New
14 York in relation to the creation of a theater
15 district zone. The committee heard a previous
16 version of this Bill on May 5, 2021. New York is a
17 (inaudible) for visitors with a record high of 66.6
18 million visitors coming in 2019. Before I continue,
19 I'd like to acknowledge the time that the Executive
20 Director Tom (SP?), the Executive Director Tanya
21 Lyons (SP?) and Paula Shore (SP?) and Jason Goldman
22 (SP?) have dedicated in (inaudible) conversation when
23 it comes to how to arrive to passing this Bill. It
24 is estimated that the tourism industry supports more
25 than 376,800 jobs. However, as we all know, COVID-19

2 changed everything, and local businesses suffered as
3 the number of visitors to the city plummeted. As we
4 bring tourism back to the city, we also have to
5 rethink the way we designed some of our most heavily
6 trafficked space to make sure we are protecting
7 pedestrians and people with disabilities. DOT has
8 been successful at designing the pedestrian's plans
9 in Time Square to accommodate pedestrians, and this
10 Bill will stay in that plan to a street or on the
11 plaza. However, it is very important to me that we
12 take into consideration the need of the costume
13 characters and others who work on the streets of the
14 Times Square area. These workers are important to us
15 for our tourism industry, an important part of our
16 city. This Bill has been designed to ensure that
17 these workers are given more space to operate while
18 also ensuring that residents and visitors can move
19 around safely on the sidewalks. I will now ask the
20 Committee Clerk to conduct a roll call vote, and I'm
21 sorry, before doing that part, I also want to include
22 in my opening statement, something that I feel would
23 be very important for the Disney costume workers as
24 part of the agreement between the Time Square
25 Alliance, City Hall, and us where with this specific

2 agreement, we hope that this will be important for
3 all the stake holders in Time Square, but also this
4 will be very important for the business workers. The
5 agreement is to create a working group consistent of
6 actors who perform in Time Square daily along with
7 members of New York City Police Department and other
8 agencies as needed, that will meet monthly to educate
9 both sides about any issues that may have arose and
10 resolve those issues without enforcement, to place
11 significance on all designated activity zones,
12 educating the public that if they took a photo with a
13 performer, that performer deserves a tip. This is
14 something that has already been started today with
15 one of the those posts in front of the hotel, and we
16 expect to be in front of each hotel in Time Square.
17 In this agreement, also, we will be encouraging tips
18 to those workers, to place signs at the hotel
19 educating the public that if they take photos with
20 the performer, that performer deserve a tip. A
21 designated person from the Time Square Alliance as a
22 point person for all performance in Time Square.
23 That person will be available to address issues as
24 they arise. The Alliance also will be committed of
25 connecting performers with any social services or job

2 training opportunity that they need or are interested
3 in pursuing, and the point person for Time Square
4 Alliance will be working with that. This is
5 something also that being supported from City Hall,
6 and we hope again that with this agreement in place,
7 we will be able to pass this Bill, which is important
8 for the City of New York because of the volume in
9 Time Square. It's important for stake holders, and
10 again for me having the honor to be in conversation,
11 working with the Tom, Executive Director of Time
12 Square, and Paul Ochoa (SP?) in helping the Council
13 to get at this point. And now, I will ask the
14 Committee Clerk to conduct a roll call vote on the
15 proposed Bill, and I recommend my colleagues to vote
16 yes on this important piece of legislation.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Can we wait a few
18 minutes to vote?

19 CHAIR RODRIGUEZ: As I said in my, in
20 reading my opening statement, there are important
21 conversations today between the Time Square Alliance,
22 especially with Tom, the Executive Director, Paula
23 Shore from City Hall, and Jason Goldman and the rest
24 of the team of the Council that we feel that when we
25 put in writing, with the agreement between the Time

2 Square Alliance to protect the Disney costume workers
3 will be very important, and as you know, I was the
4 first one that when I heard that we were responding
5 to this Bill that we brought in the past was
6 important to, you know, protect those men and women
7 who work so hard to support their families. So, part
8 of the agreement, what we will see for now, only that
9 in each of those hotels around this area, they're
10 going to be signs encouraging tourist to give tips if
11 they take a photo of those workers. Will have a
12 meeting with the NYPD and Time Square Alliance will
13 designate one person to meet monthly in here to any
14 issues that can arise, and also City Hall agreed that
15 in a meeting that we will have very soon, we will
16 continue connecting those workers to all the services
17 that the need as immigrants. So, those for me, are
18 very important pieces in this conversation, and as I
19 said, I will now ask the Committee Clerk to conduct
20 the roll call vote on the proposed Bill and recommend
21 my colleagues to vote yes on this important piece of
22 legislation. Quiero dar las gracias a todos los
23 trabajadores in Time Square, lo que usan el caracter
24 de Disney. Son personas que trabajan duro en la
25 negociacion de este Bill, acordamos que Time Square

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2 Alliance va a dedicar a una persona que se va reunir
3 todos los meses con ellos, que va a proveer
4 entrenamiento, oportunidad de servicio para que aquel
5 ellos que estan trabajando alla, puede ubicarse en
6 otro lugares, encuentran el apoyo necesario y
7 conectarlo con todo servicio que necesitan. Tambien,
8 hemos expresado que necesitamos la unidad de la
9 policia dedicada especificamente para esa area que
10 hable espanol, el idioma de la mayoria de ellos, que
11 lo conectan y lo protejen. So, with that, now, I'm
12 calling on the clerk.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Clark,
14 Committee Clerk, roll call vote for Committee on
15 Transportation, proposed Introduction 1811-A, Chair
16 Rodriguez.

17 CHAIR RODRIGUEZ: I vote I.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabrera.

19 CM CABRERA: I.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK: Koo.

21 CM KOO: I.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK: Rose.

23 CM ROSE: I.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Lavine.

25 CM LAVINE: I.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member Lavine
3 votes I. Council Member Menchaca.

4 CM MENCHACA: Permission to explain my
5 vote.

6 CHAIR RODRIGUEZ: Permission granted.

7 CM MENCHACA: I'm voting no on 1118, the
8 Bill that is in front of us today, 1811, and I've had
9 some really goo conversations with the Chair and
10 Alliance is here and the Mayor's Office is here, and
11 NYPD isn't here, the sponsor isn't here, but I guess
12 what I want to say is that there is still a lot of
13 questions about how this Bill is moving forward in a
14 space that has a lot of focus and I think that there
15 are some great ideas that we haven't talked about
16 that can actually be transformative like removing
17 cars from completely from the Time Square. That's a
18 move that actually create more space and less
19 tensions. So, I want to throw that out there. I
20 understand that the Bill is moving forward, and I get
21 that, but I want to be on record on that front.
22 Second, the NYPD has removed the unit that is
23 linguistically connected to the characters during
24 COVID. I understand that there might be some plans
25 and I got some affirmative information that the NYPD

2 will bring back linguistically appropriate officers
3 so that they can at least, communicate stuff to the
4 characters, but that's all happening within the last
5 few minutes. That's definitely uncomfortable. I'm
6 going to be voting no, and I'm encouraging others on
7 the committee to vote no as well. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Reynoso.

9 CM REYNOSO: Permission to explain my
10 vote.

11 CHAIR RODRIGUEZ: Permission granted.

12 CM REYNOSO: Thank you Chair. I'm also
13 concerned about the dialogue that was had regarding
14 this Bill or the lack thereof. The original Bill
15 that was passed went through a long process and a lot
16 of debate for us to just consider an expansion of
17 this area is something that I'm extremely concerned
18 about without reasonable discussion. We're also have
19 our, we're meeting in delegations for Democratic
20 Conference doesn't allow for the sponsor of this Bill
21 to approach us or talk to us directly. I think a
22 process issue is also at fault here. We haven't been
23 having conversations as a body regarding these issues
24 that I think are extremely important. Three, the
25 restrictive work that's happening here is extremely

2 concerning when we can deal with flow issues in Time
3 Square by removing cars. Broadway and Time Square
4 can be an entire pedestrian plaza and not truly
5 affect any flow of vehicle traffic but increase and
6 improve the flow of pedestrian traffic. It's about
7 time we start having these conversations about
8 opening up our city so that it can be more
9 comfortable instead of enacting restrictive measure.
10 The only issue I have is that the last time I talked
11 to the sponsor, I let him know that even if it was
12 just a technical change, that I could be supportive,
13 but it isn't just the technical change. We're also
14 expanding the zone by which this is going to be
15 allowed. Until I talk to the sponsor, I want to
16 abstain from being able to vote, and I will be having
17 a further conversation, hopefully, as stated, I can
18 either get to a yes, or might have to vote no because
19 my concerns weren't addressed. So, I want vote no on
20 1811, I'm sorry, I want to abstain on 1811, and I on
21 the rest. Thank you, Chair for giving the
22 opportunity to speak.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you, Council
24 Member Holden.

25 CM HOLDEN: I vote I.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Brooks-Powers.

3 CM BROOKS-POWERS: Permission to explain
4 my vote.

5 CHAIR RODRIGUEZ: Permission granted.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you, and thank
7 you so much, Chair Rodriguez for sharing the work
8 that you have been doing to improve this Bill. I
9 also have some concerns on this legislation
10 recognizing how critically important it is to protect
11 low-wage jobs, in particular in terms of helping
12 individuals be able to provide for their families. I
13 too have spoke to the prime sponsor on this
14 legislation to express my concerns and wanted to
15 improve this Bill because I understand it is a public
16 safety component that is being worked on to be
17 addressed. I understand that there was a committee
18 that was established prior to me being in the
19 Council, but those this legislation that only has met
20 one time which was yesterday, and so I am looking to
21 work with Council Member Powers to come behind this
22 Bill to present something that will do that fully
23 intended to do to address this, but because I
24 received that commitment from the prime sponsor, I
25 will vote I on this Bill.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of seven in
3 the affirmative, one in the negative and one
4 abstention, the item has been adopted by the
5 committee.

6 CHAIR RODRIGUEZ: We're going to leave it
7 open.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll call.
9 Committee on Transportation, proposed Introduction
10 1811-A, Council Member Levin.

11 CM LEVIN: I vote I on all.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote on this item
13 is now eight in the affirmative, one in the negative,
14 and one abstention. To close, Council Member Levin.

15 Council Member Levin: Committee on
16 Transportation is hereby closed.

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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 SEPTEMBER 1, 2021