

**NYC Department of Transportation Testimony Before the  
City Council Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
December 4, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I am Eric Beaton, Deputy Commissioner for Transportation Planning and Management. With me today is Rick Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Eric Adams and Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez on DOT transparency and notice requirements.

DOT feels strongly that high quality public input makes our projects better, so it is worth taking the time to do it well. We have been working to strengthen our relationships across the city – including with faith communities and immigrant communities – to ensure we are able to broaden the feedback that helps to shape our projects. We are always happy to take any feedback you have about critical stakeholders and strategies as we develop projects in your communities.

At the same time, we want to acknowledge that there is a balance that we need to strike between depth of community engagement and getting stuff done for New Yorkers. We need to make our streets safer, create a better public realm, and help people get where they need to go quickly and efficiently. It is important to do this while working closely with communities, but we also want to make sure that we right-size engagement processes to make sure we are delivering our work equitably around the city and moving aggressively. As the Mayor announced last week, we are doubling our intersection safety commitment to 2,000 intersections per year, including 1,000 with daylighting, which I know has long been pushed for by our partners in the council, especially you, Chair, and we are grateful for your partnership in making sure we can get these needed safety enhancements in quickly.

I know that there has been concern about how DOT engages with communities, and I want to take a moment to talk about some of the ways that we have been working to expand how we do this, and make sure we are connecting with people and reflecting local concerns in our work.

When DOT develops a project, our Borough Commissioners develop outreach plans that reflect each unique community. This includes formal engagements with Community Boards and briefings for Council Members and other elected officials, but also ways to reach out directly to the public including workshops, surveys, onsite walkthroughs, and flyers posted through the project area and often handed directly to business and homeowners. We work directly with local stakeholders, such as Business Improvement Districts, faith organizations, older adult centers, and other locally important institutions. We also work closely with our peer agencies, including the police department, fire department, sanitation, parks, small business services, and other agencies where relevant.

One focus of this Administration is making sure we are hearing directly from New Yorkers, many of whom may not have the ability to attend formal meetings in the evening. Our Street Ambassadors meet New Yorkers where they live, work, and socialize. They engage people in conversations about DOT projects at locations and times that are convenient for them. They often do outreach in active neighborhood spaces during the morning rush, in the evenings, or

over the weekend. The Street Ambassadors also do merchant surveys where they walk business to business along a corridor to speak directly with business owners and get feedback about DOT proposals. The Street Ambassador team is comprised of multi-lingual public engagement specialists who speak 10 languages.

This model has been successful in getting feedback from community members and for sharing information about DOT's Street Improvement Projects. For many projects, we get thousands of responses, far more than we could get at any individual meeting, and particularly focused on local residents and stakeholders. Going forward, we want to continue to find innovative ways to make sure we are getting important community feedback, and make sure we are communicating clearly about what is happening on our streets.

I also want to acknowledge that we often get many more requests than we are able to fulfill, a situation that will continue to be a challenge through the current budget crisis. We do our best to prioritize work so that we are both addressing the most critical locations and also performing work equitably citywide. We appreciate your partnership in helping to prioritize requests and your understanding when our resources are limited.

### Legislation

Turning to the legislation before the Council today.

#### Introduction 172

First, Intro. 172 sponsored by Council Member Hudson. This bill would require DOT to provide 60 days advance notice to affected council members, community boards, and community organizations prior to the designation, permanent change to, or removal of an Open Street.

DOT is proud to run the largest and most successful Open Streets program in the country. The program transforms streets into public space open to all. These transformations allow for a range of activities that promote economic development, support schools, facilitate pedestrian and bike mobility, and provide new ways for New Yorkers to enjoy cultural programming and build community.

DOT shares the Council's interest in providing sufficient notice and opportunity for community feedback for Open Streets. We recently proposed rules for the program that would achieve a lot of these same goals and would be happy to discuss the best way forward with the Council.

#### Introduction 810

Next, Intro. 810 sponsored by Council Member Bottcher. This bill lays out requirements for newsracks' maintenance and placement. DOT has previously supported newsrack reforms and would be happy to discuss this bill further with the Council.

#### Introduction 922

Next, Intro. 922 sponsored by Council Member Ariola. This bill would require DOT to notify the local Community Board and Council Member 15 days before removing a parking space. DOT has serious concerns with this bill as it would slow the pace of operations and be extremely

burdensome. Streets are fluid spaces and parking spaces are added and removed every day. Providing and receiving such notice would be overwhelming for both the agency and the recipients. For permanent removals, DOT already gives notice before implementing major transportation projects that involve the full-time removal of a parking lane, based on laws passed by the Council. This bill creates a much wider universe of notice by including both permanent and temporary parking space removals that could include temporary removals for construction or resurfacing. Overall, this would slow down a significant portion of DOT's work.

### Introduction 1030

Next, Intro. 1030 sponsored by Council Member Williams. This bill would require DOT to make available and searchable on its website information on speed reducer and traffic control device requests. I'm happy to say that DOT already has such a page on our website. If you go to the [Contact the Commissioner](#) page on our website, you can find the link to the [Check Case Status Map](#). You can enter the case number or search an address to check on the status of a request. If a 311 service request was submitted, there is also a link on the page that takes you to the [311 page](#) to look up your previously submitted request. We would be happy to discuss this page further with the Council and how we could make this information more accessible.

### Introduction 1033

Next, Intro. 1033 sponsored by Council Member Ariola. This bill would require DOT to consult with the Fire Department before approving an Open Street applications and certain bicycle lane projects. Further, this bill would require DOT to notify affected firehouses before approving an Open Street application, a bicycle lane project, and a major transportation project.

DOT works closely with our sister agencies and believes that such coordination is important. We already consult with FDNY on these projects, including meeting regularly with FDNY Bureau of Operations Planning Division and each FDNY Borough Commander to discuss our projects and solicit their feedback on potential issues that may arise—including concerns raised by local firehouses. These are important conversations that we will continue to have, but such communication must continue to happen in a centralized manner. We defer to our sister agency on how best to disseminate information between the Borough Commanders, FDNY Operations, and the firehouses.

### Introduction 1120

Next, Intro. 1120 sponsored by Council Member Carr. This bill would require DOT to assess at least 100 speed camera locations each year to determine the feasibility of installing a raised speed reducer and where feasible, installing such device within one year. Additionally, DOT would be required to annually report on each assessed location, and in locations where both a speed reducer and camera are present, provide a recommendation for whether a camera is still necessary.

DOT has concerns with this bill as it would slow down speed hump installations and reduce the reach of our safety interventions. With this bill, instead of installing speed humps in new

locations based on the many requests we get, we would need to install them where a safety treatment already exists. Moreover, the two tools are best used in different types of locations.

Speed humps and speed cameras are two tools in our toolbox that address speeding, but we have many others that may be more appropriate for a particular location, such as a larger street redesign or signal timing changes. As always, please send us the locations where you have safety concerns, and we can evaluate them for the best treatment.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to testify before you today on DOT's efforts to engage with and notify the public about our projects. We now welcome your questions.