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NYC DOT COMMISSIONER SADIK-KHAN, DEPUTY MAYOR GIBBS, OTHER CITY OFFICIALS LAUNCH PROGRAM TO EXPAND PUBLIC SEATING IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHS

1,000 sturdy, attractive benches will be installed in all five boroughs to make streets and sidewalks more inviting for New Yorkers— particularly for seniors, mobility impaired

New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, Deputy Mayor Linda I. Gibbs, Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli and City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito today announced the launch of the CityBench program, a three-year initiative that will bring 1,000 new benches to sidewalks at locations in all five boroughs where there are few or no places to sit. These sturdy, attractive benches will be installed at bus stops, in commercial districts and areas with a high concentration of seniors and persons with impaired mobility. Outlined as a goal in the second edition of PlaNYC 2030, the CityBench program encourages active use of the streetscapes by making streets more walkable and inviting for shopping and transit users. It was also developed in response to several reports, including the City's Active Design Guidelines, DOT's World Class Streets report, and the Age-Friendly NYC report, all of which called for more publicly available seating on the streets of New York City to make the city more walkable and friendly, especially for seniors and the mobility impaired. The officials unveiled the first CityBench with representatives from the New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) at Covello Senior Center in East Harlem.

"New York is a city where you can see it all, but it's also a city that needs seats to tie it all in," said Commissioner Sadik-Khan. "CityBench brings a new design standard that elevates our streetscapes and simply makes it easier and more enjoyable for New Yorkers of every age to walk and take transit."

"New York City has always been the best city for walking, whether one is admiring our sites and architecture or getting exercise, but even New Yorkers sometimes need to catch their breath," said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. "These new benches are an exciting and attractive addition to the City's landscape that provide all New Yorkers a chance to sit down for a moment, as well as move our City one step closer to the goal of an age-friendly New York."

"Older New Yorkers are extremely active, and investing in benches around the city gives them the opportunity to set out for their destination and have the pleasure of taking a break when they need it," Aging Commissioner Barrios-Paoli said. "These 1,000 benches will go a long way to making the city even more age-friendly."

“I am thrilled that the City has responded to the requests made by El Barrio/East Harlem seniors for more outdoor seating,” said Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito. “Not only will these new benches allow seniors and other residents to sit down and rest, but they will also enable them to chat with their neighbors about their day, their families, and the overall state of the community. The seniors in my district recognized that community is not just the physical space in which you live, it is the way you interact with your neighbors and the kindness you show to one another. This is another milestone in our Age Improvement District efforts, which are helping to make El Barrio/East Harlem more comfortable and age friendly for our growing senior population. I thank Commissioner Sadik-Khan, Deputy Mayor Gibbs, and Commissioner Barrios-Paoli, and all others who have helped bring this initiative to our community.”

“It is wonderful for all New Yorkers that the Department of Transportation recognizes the centrality of street furniture for creating community and is investing in these beautiful benches,” said Dr. Ruth Finkelstein, Senior Vice President for Policy and Planning for NYAM and NYAM Director of the Age-Friendly New York City initiative. “Benches are especially crucial for older New Yorkers—having places to rest allows more people to remain out and about in their communities—staying in touch with neighbors, patronizing local businesses, pursuing interests, remaining independent. And the method DOT has used to place the benches—asking people where they'd like to have them—ensures they will be most useful.”

Designed by New York City-based industrial designer, Ignacio Ciocchini, Director of Design for Chelsea Improvement Company, the CityBench provides comfortable seating with backless and backed styles that are durable and require little maintenance. Made from domestic steel and manufactured in the USA, the benches are similar to a design already in use in public areas in Chelsea. They were designed to meet the rigorous demands of New York City’s streets and are coordinated with the look of existing street furniture.

Working with neighborhood groups and institutions, DOT will expand seating at bus and subway stops, outside senior centers, hospitals and community health centers, commercial areas and other locations with high volumes of foot traffic in all five boroughs. All proposed locations will be reviewed to ensure there is sufficient room and clearance on the sidewalks from obstructions to provide a clear path for pedestrians. The final design was reviewed and approved by the New York Public Design Commission. Federal Transit Administration funding accounts for approximately 80% of the estimated \$3 million cost of the program, while NYSDOT provides an additional 10% of the funding.

Outlined as a goal in PlaNYC 2.0, the CityBench program encourages active transportation by making streets more walkable and inviting for shopping and transit users. It also builds on DOT’s Strategic Plan to enhance New York City’s streets as world-class spaces that are safer, more welcoming for everyone using them.

CityBench applies the recommendations of the landmark report “Toward an Age-Friendly New York City” by NYAM, in conjunction with DFTA and the City Council to improve the quality of life for seniors. In NYAM’s surveys of seniors, nearly two-thirds of respondents said that benches for resting are “very important to the well-being of older New Yorkers.” To better inform the placement of CityBenches, DOT is working with NYAM and DFTA to identify locations for benches with Senior Centers around the city, highlighting places where seniors typically walk to, including bus stops,

pharmacies, commercial districts and municipal facilities. Members of the public will be able to recommend locations for a CityBench online in the near future or by calling 311.

DOT's 2008 World Class Streets report also cited the lack of public seating, noting that increasing opportunities to rest or take in their surroundings would improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike, particularly transit riders and pedestrians, and will connect communities. Similarly, The Active Design Guidelines, a joint publication by DOT and the New York City Departments of Design and Construction, Health and Mental Hygiene, and City Planning, recommends encouraging transit use by providing pedestrian conveniences, such as seating at transit stops and infrastructure that supports increased frequency and duration of walking. To build on this, DOT will prioritize CityBenches at bus stops without shelters. To date, the agency has identified 250 possible locations.

For more information, including the criteria, visit www.nyc.gov

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