

**NYC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TESTIMONY BEFORE THE CITY
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
March 7, 2022**

Good morning Chair Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I am Ydanis Rodriguez, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation. With me today are Eric Beaton, Deputy Commissioner for Transportation Planning and Management, Julia Kite-Laidlaw, Director of Safety Policy, Azikiwe Rich, Director of Performance Management, and Rebecca Zack, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Eric Adams on DOT's commitment to transportation equity.

First, I must say that it is an honor to be before this Committee where I served for all of my 12 years on the Council, and eight as Chair. And even more, I am so happy that my first hearing in this role is on equity—a topic that is so important to me and for which I have long been a strong advocate.

I want to express both my and Mayor Adams's strong belief in creating a more equitable city that guides all of our work. The positive benefits of our transportation investments must be available to **all** New Yorkers. As Commissioner, I am determined to focus our investments in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color—neighborhoods that have received less investment historically and have been left behind.

DOT's vision for racial equity is a transportation network that meets the needs of all New Yorkers—regardless of race, ability, or economic status—in a safe, efficient, and sustainable manner. Our vision of transportation equity means that demographics such as race, income, or language will no longer be able to be used to predict transportation outcomes. Our vision includes a transportation system that is more accessible for people with disabilities, who are also a majority people of color, and have a higher poverty rate than people without disabilities.

Every New Yorker should have multiple travel options that are safe, reliable, and affordable. Our transportation investments should improve access, safety, health, and quality of life. Additionally, New Yorkers should be informed and empowered to shape transportation in their neighborhoods. All people should be able to move freely and peacefully in New York City without fear of injury or death, regardless their background. And all New Yorkers should live in safe, healthy, and resilient communities that can thrive in the face of climate change and economic uncertainty.

DOT is continuously evaluating our agency's processes to bring equity in transportation to the forefront and we have identified a number of barriers to equity in our work. As we have long known, complaint-based processes empower some communities more than others and political influence can speed up or slow down projects.

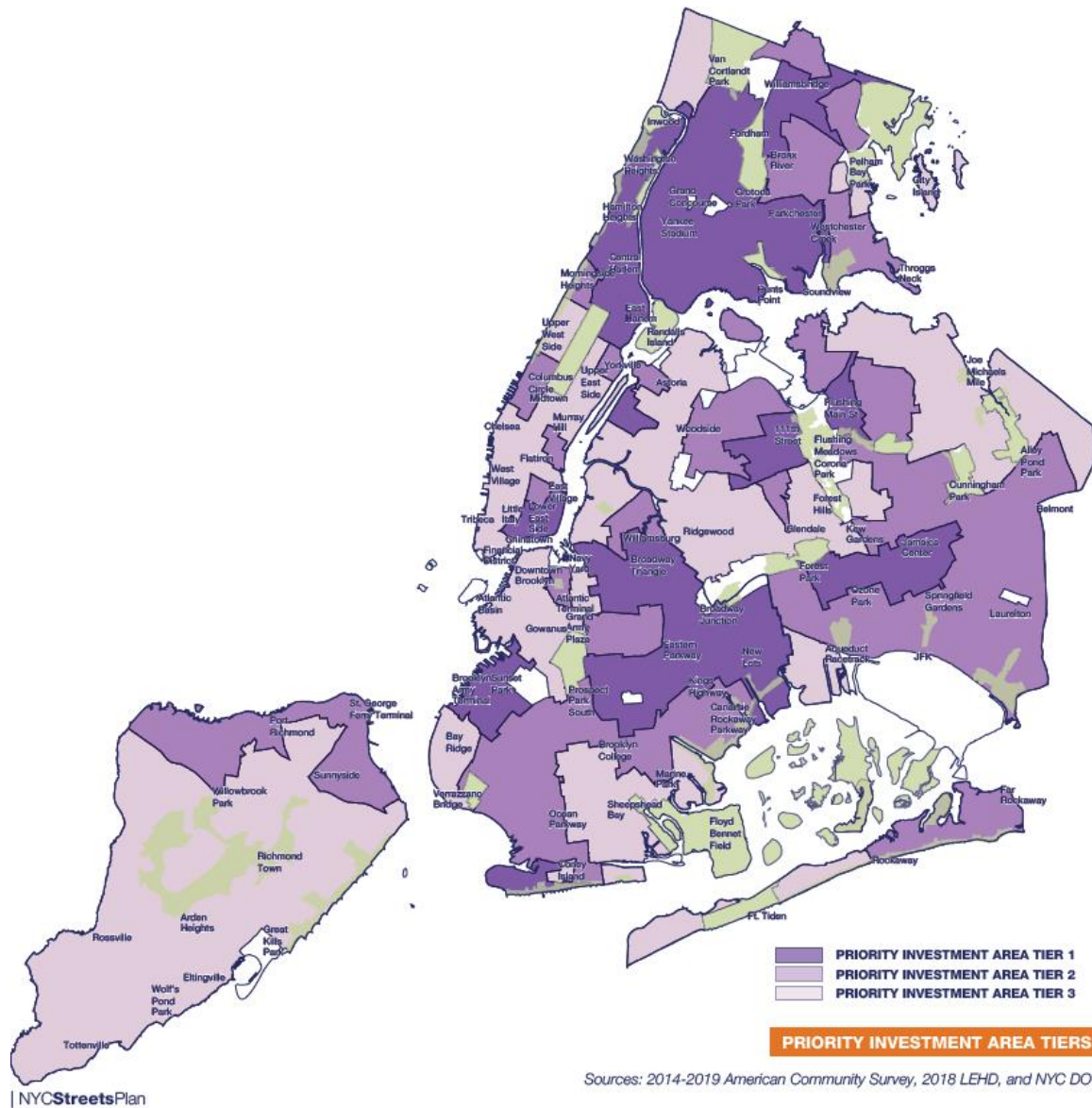
In the Vision Zero-era, DOT has prioritized safety work based on crash data. The Vision Zero Borough Pedestrian Safety Action Plans use fatality and injury data to identify locations that disproportionately account for pedestrian fatalities and severe injuries, and then the agency

focuses safety interventions in these areas. Following this data has been an essential part of the agency's Vision Zero strategy, informing Street Improvement Projects, traffic signs and signal installations, education and strategic communication campaigns, and more. Going forward, however, the agency will also factor in equity in determining where to make our street redesign investments.

As laid out in the *NYC Streets Plan* released in December 2021, DOT is now starting to add an explicit equity lens to our work. This includes focusing our investment in areas that need it most, engaging communities proactively about transportation in their neighborhoods, and making the city more accessible to all.

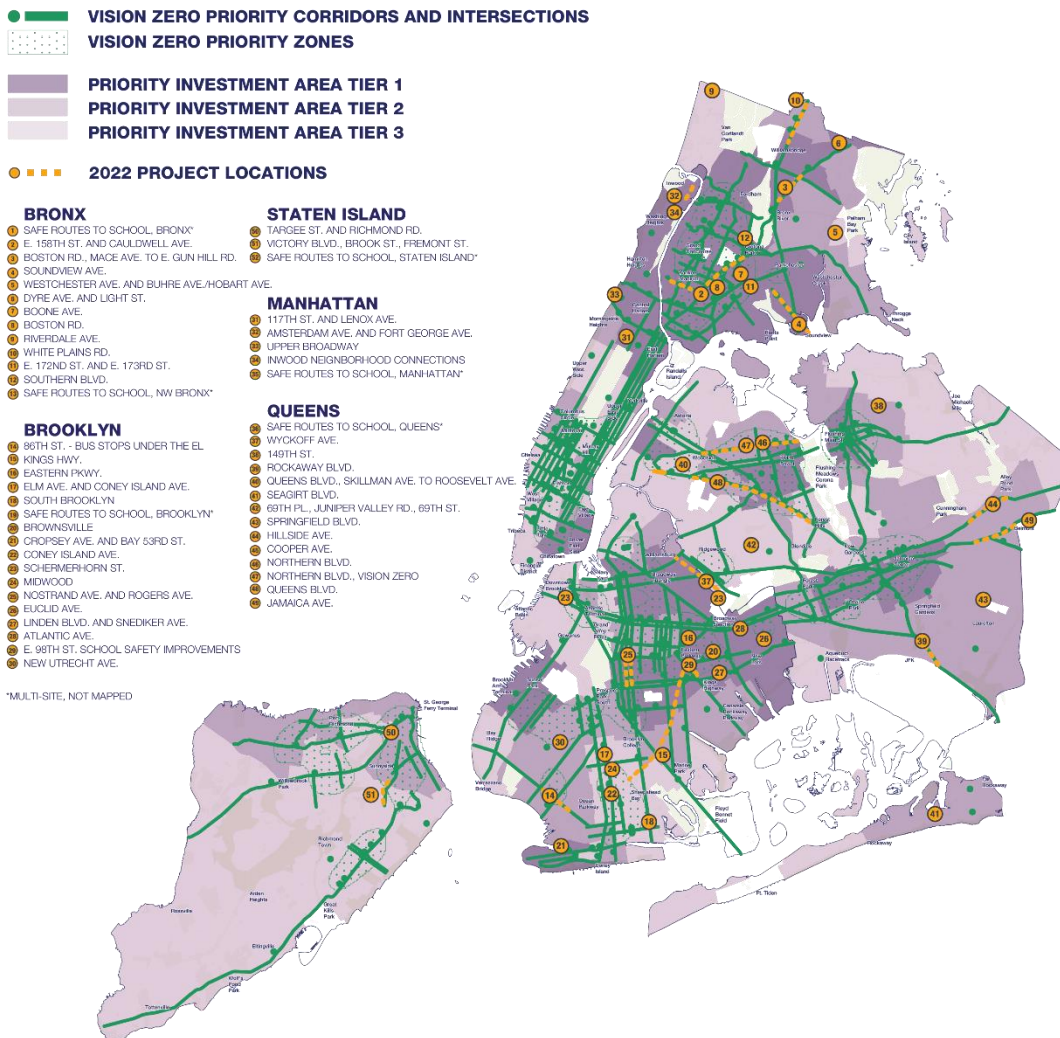
The plan lays out Priority Investment Areas (PIAs) that will help focus our investments to where they can have the greatest impact. PIAs are based on three inputs: race and income, density, and lack of prior investment. You can see a map of the PIAs included in my testimony.

Map of Priority Investment Area Tiers included in the NYC Streets Plan, released December 2021



DOT will continue to invest in communities across the entire city. But, going forward, street design investments as a whole will be prioritized in higher-need neighborhoods based on the PIA tiers—while still being guided by data such as crash histories and slow bus speeds. You can see an example of how we will overlay our Vision Zero Priority Corridors, Intersections, and Areas with the PIAs in the map included in my testimony.

Example of Safety & Vision Zero Priorities Overlaid with Priority Investment Areas



The PIAs are one example of work the agency is undertaking to further equity, and there are other ongoing efforts.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic that disproportionately harmed communities of color and the racial justice uprising in the face of the violence against Black Americans, DOT created the Equity & Inclusion in Planning Working Group. This internal working group’s purpose is to further expand on the agency’s commitment to improving transportation outcomes for communities of color and ensuring that communities across the city have safe, reliable, and well-maintained street-level transportation infrastructure. The working group recommended developing the Priority Investment Areas, as well as other measures to consider equity in our work and strengthen community engagement.

And in 2019, DOT began a Structured Hiring Program, through which the agency creates an annual workforce profile to identify job titles where one or more demographic group is underrepresented. These titles are subject to structured hiring that includes various measures to

increase the size of the applicant pool as well as reduce bias in the interview and selection process by having larger and more diverse hiring panels, standard interview questions, and candidate scoring. Since the program's launch, DOT has seen a 10.5 percent decrease in the number of titles with demographic underrepresentation.

While we have much more work to do, I will now turn to some examples of how our work makes it easier and safer to travel around the city for all New Yorkers, regardless of factors including where they live, their race, or their ability, while improving health and sustainability by encouraging the shift to more sustainable transportation modes and cleaner vehicles. This is particularly important in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, such as the South Bronx where children have disproportionately suffered from asthma and been exposed to higher levels of air pollution.

Through the New York City Clean Trucks Program, the agency gives incentives to accelerate the deployment of cleaner trucks in Industrial Business Zones, which are located near Environmental Justice communities that have historically been subject to a disproportionate amount of diesel exhaust emissions. The program supports replacing older, dirtier diesel-powered trucks with advanced transportation technologies and alternative fuels trucks, including electric trucks—leading to cleaner air and health benefits in these communities.

Our Better Buses program speeds up buses and shortens commutes through dedicated bus lanes and busways and Transit Signal Priority, which reduces bus delay at signalized intersections. These changes are particularly important in areas of the city that do not have access to the subway. Some significant 2022 projects include University Avenue, Fordham Road, and Gun Hill Road in the Bronx, supporting the MTA's Bronx Bus Network Redesign, coming this June. Additionally, capital projects on the Bx6 South Bronx Crosstown and the B82 Southern Brooklyn corridors will deliver pedestrian safety and bus performance benefits.

Our bike lanes make roads safer for all road users—and make more people comfortable getting on a bike. We are focused on improving the cycling network coverage and connectivity across the entire city by building out the bike lane network. Some notable 2022 projects are bike lanes in Fordham, Tremont, and Soundview in the Bronx, which will provide critical bike infrastructure for both bike and scooter riders. And in Queens, we will close gaps in the protected bike lane network on Broadway between Northern Boulevard and 60th Street, and 34th Avenue between Broadway and 69th Street—a key corridor for working cyclists.

And we continue to expand bike share and introduce new modes of micromobility and other shared mobility services, to give New Yorkers more options and close the last-mile gap to access public transit in neighborhoods with less transit coverage. In 2022, Citi Bike's ongoing Phase 3 expansion will bring the system to Sunnyside, Woodside, Ridgewood, and Maspeth in Queens, and East Flatbush, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Ocean Hill, Crown Heights, and Prospect Lefferts Gardens in Brooklyn, with even more expansion to follow in 2023. Once Phase 3 expansion is complete, more than half of New York City's residents will live within the Citi Bike service area.

And to ensure that Citi Bike is affordable to low-income New Yorkers, the program offers NYCHA residents and SNAP recipients discounted memberships for just \$5 a month. In the Bronx, where we recently expanded into many low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, about 66 percent of all memberships are discounted memberships.

In the East Bronx, DOT is in the midst of an e-scooter share pilot through which we are closely evaluating the safety and utility of this shared mode. The three operators are all providing discount programs for low-income riders, and are also testing a range of accessible vehicles for people who use wheelchairs.

We understand that many areas of the city still lack access to bike share or e-scooter share. We are actively exploring strategies to expand these mobility options to more neighborhoods. We will also do more to get the word out about existing discount programs, so more eligible New Yorkers can have access to bike and e-scooter share service.

Our Carshare pilot program also prioritizes equity, and requires participating companies to deploy 20 percent of their carshare vehicles within Equity Zones such as Parkchester in the Bronx and Far Rockaway in Queens. As we transition to a permanent program, we look to retain this requirement as well as encourage participating companies to provide discount pricing for low-income users.

The agency is committed to making the city more accessible for all New Yorkers. DOT maintains and constructs pedestrian ramps citywide to provide for safe access on and off our streets and sidewalks. Our Accessible Pedestrian Signal program is the largest and fastest expanding in the nation and provides access to traffic signals for blind and visually impaired pedestrians. The agency continues to work with the MTA to make bus stops physically accessible for all users, growing from a longstanding program to upgrade bus stops under elevated subways, to now address all kinds of physically inaccessible bus stops. And as part of the Mayor's commitment to enhance safety at 1,000 intersections, we are developing a program to install 100 raised crosswalks annually. This will make it easier for people with disabilities, and all New Yorkers, to cross the street at those locations.

All New Yorkers should also have access to safe, welcoming and attractive public spaces close to where they live. DOT redesigns streets to create, expand, and improve public space, and the OneNYC Plaza Equity Program supports the needs of over 30 plazas in under-resourced neighborhoods, providing landscaping, maintenance, financial subsidies, and technical assistance to plaza partner organizations.

In the face of the pandemic, our agency, in partnership with the City Council, reimagined our streets to create the Open Streets program which created new outdoor space for New Yorkers to enjoy. Open Streets partners have access to funding, programming opportunities, technical support, and citywide coordination and enforcement. And DOT directly manages over 20 Open Streets, with these streets receiving maintenance as well as landscaping and barricade management. This model has allowed the agency to support new, vibrant public space in areas that would not have had it otherwise.

Also in response to the pandemic, DOT along with our sister agencies set up the Open Restaurants program in a matter of weeks to support the city's beloved restaurant industry, save 100,000 jobs, and bring us all much needed joy during this challenging time. And the program brought the benefits of outdoor dining to new areas of the city that were not eligible previously due to zoning restrictions for sidewalk seating. As we recently testified before the Council, we are now actively working to create an outdoor dining program that can live on well beyond the recovery from the pandemic. I would like to thank the Council for approving the removal of the geographic restrictions from the zoning last month, which will lead to a more equitable outdoor dining program that communities throughout the city will be able to enjoy for years to come.

In addition to transforming the use of our streets and expanding transportation options, we know that street maintenance is important to elected officials and your communities, and we are committed to keeping our street network in a state of good repair.

To identify possible correlations between socioeconomic factors and past investment, we have been developing ways to analyze the location and distribution of assets we manage, including the condition of our roadways. Our analysis showed that our process of distributing resurfacing lane miles to every community board by relying on the street conditions and number of lane miles in the board has led to an equitable program. There is relatively no correlation between higher average income or white population percentage and DOT's investment in streets.

And since 2016, the agency has used a scoring and ranking system that incorporates equity as an important metric to prioritize projects for our \$4 billion ten-year capital street reconstruction program. Thanks to this method, we have seen a significant increase in capital funding for street projects in low-income neighborhoods and areas with low levels of capital investment from our agency historically. We are committed to improving this process and investing further in these communities.

And we are proud to operate the Staten Island Ferry to provide free transportation from Staten Island to Manhattan to over 22 million people each year. Last month, I stood with Mayor Adams as we commissioned the new Sandy Ground Staten Island Ferry, named for New York's first free Black community, which was settled in 1828 and served as a stop on the historic Underground Railroad. The Sandy Ground is the first Staten Island Ferry boat named to honor the rich history of Black New Yorkers living on Staten Island.

And as Mayor Adams and Speaker Adams announced last month, the Fair Fares program will be expanded and made permanent. This critical program provides discounted MetroCards to low-income New Yorkers. The announcement that the City will baseline \$75 million in funding is the first time that the City has guaranteed annual funding for the program.

Finally, I would like to finish by further addressing safety, our number one priority. As discussed earlier, our safety interventions are data-driven and prioritized based on fatality and serious injury data to identify locations that disproportionately account for pedestrian fatalities and severe injuries. In addition, not every intervention is right for every location, and our traffic engineers do not apply a one-size-fits all approach. Rather, we direct the interventions that best address speeding to the places where data shows speeding is happening, turn calming in

locations where data shows there are turning conflicts, and signal treatments that protect pedestrians in the places with many pedestrians and turning vehicles.

Enforcement also plays a key role in our efforts to make the city safer for all New Yorkers. Dangerous and illegal driver behaviors, many of which cannot be controlled by road design, continue to be the primary cause of many serious crashes. In the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by a second pandemic of dangerous driving. We have seen an increase in hit-and-runs, driving while intoxicated, and unlicensed driving.

Automated enforcement is more efficient than traditional in-person enforcement and reduces interaction with law enforcement. And with a \$50 fine and no points on a license, DOT's automated enforcement programs have much lower penalties than tickets issued by NYPD.

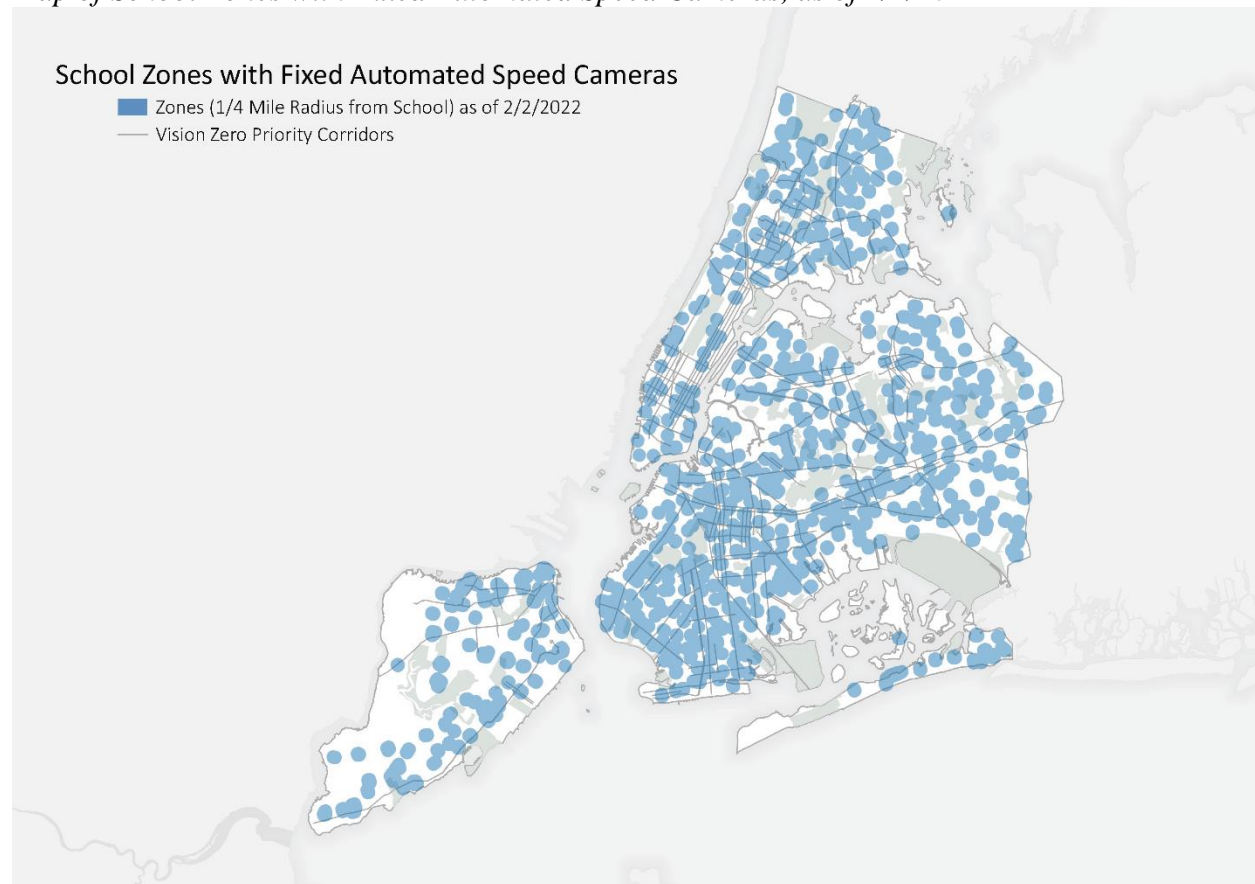
Speed cameras save lives. Driving at a lower speed gives drivers and pedestrians more time to see each other and react—reducing the likelihood of a crash in the first place. And, if a crash does occur, its severity is reduced at lower speeds. Pedestrians struck by vehicles traveling at 25 miles per hour are half as likely to die as those struck at 30 miles per hour.

Since the start of the program in 2014, speeding violations are down an average of 72 percent at camera locations during the hours of operation. This includes significant drops on notable arterials that go through low-income communities of color, such as an 89 percent decrease on Grand Concourse, an 87 percent decrease on Rockaway Boulevard, an 85 percent decrease on Gun Hill Road, and an 84 percent decrease on Eastern Parkway. In addition, injuries are down 14 percent in school speed zones, with pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicle occupants all receiving safety gains.

And from the start of the program in 2014 through the end of 2020—seven years—the majority of violators had received no more than two notices of liability. Furthermore, most violators are not residents of the neighborhoods where the cameras are located. A DOT analysis found two-thirds of speeders lived more than three miles away from the camera that caught them. And over 40 percent of speed camera violators have vehicles registered outside the City of New York.

Regarding placement of speed cameras, we place cameras based on speed incidence and serious crash data. We do not take requests for locations or remove cameras based on complaints. As the map in my testimony shows, all neighborhoods are covered by the program's 750 active school speed zones. And there is no significant correlation between lower average income or non-white population percentage and DOT's placement of speed cameras.

Map of School Zones with Fixed Automated Speed Cameras, as of 2/2/2022



We understand there may be concerns that speed cameras are not always accompanied by street design changes to help reduce the likelihood of speeding in the first place. We hear these concerns and are committed to making design changes where needed. For example, we are working with the community to redesign Seagirt Boulevard in the Rockaways as it has had high numbers of speed camera violations.

Our aim is to have the number of camera violations decrease over time—both as people learn the consequences of speeding and also as we continue to redesign streets. Safety is our number one priority—not raising revenue. We also do not have revenue sharing agreements with contractors. This means that our vendors have no monetary incentive to issue more violations.

Cameras change behavior and protect the most vulnerable road users, our pedestrians. New York City's program has been a model for Vision Zero cities across the country. Based on the program's proven success, I am joining the Mayor in calling on the State to give the City the authority to manage our automated enforcement programs.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Council for the opportunity to testify before you today on our agency's vision for transportation equity, as well as the many areas where we are hard at work to do better. There is so much to be done, and I thank the Council for your partnership as we work together to make this city safer, fairer, and more accessible for all New Yorkers for generations to come.