Curb Enthusiasm Episode 20 Transcript

00;00;16;20 - 00;00;38;19
Emily Weidenhof
Welcome to Curb Enthusiasm. I'm Emily Weidenhof and our guests today are Diniece Mendes, who serves as DOT's Assistant Commissioner for Transit Development, and Elizabeth Adams, who serves as Mayor Mamdani's Senior Advisor for Fast and Free Buses. The primary goal of both Denise and Elizabeth's work is to bring world class bus service to New York City.

00;00;39;11 - 00;00;41;10
Emily Weidenhof
All right! Elizabeth. Diniece.

00;00;41;11 - 00;01;00;18
Emily Weidenhof
Super excited to have you on today. Some of maybe the busiest people in city government right now doing some really exciting work around busses. Could you quickly share your role and and what you're doing?

00;01;00;18 - 00;01;12;09
Elizabeth Adams
Yeah. So. Hi. Thanks so much for having us here today. Great conversation. I'm Elizabeth Adams, a Senior Advisor for Fast and Free busses for the mayor and the first deputy mayor's office.

00;01;12;11 - 00;01;36;12
Elizabeth Adams
And they're, you know, the mayor really came in with a mandate to make our busses fast and free and has, you know, been kicking off day one delivering and I'm really here was brought in to really help make that happen and to support that work. And so, I get to work with DOT and the MTA on making our busses faster and really thinking about how we can make our streetscape work for New Yorkers.

00;01;36;12 - 00;01;43;18
Elizabeth Adams
And so, it's a quite a fun, exciting and big task ahead of us. So great to be here.

00;01;43;18 - 00;02;09;20
Diniece Mendes
Awesome. Well, it's been a pleasure working with you for the last couple of months. You've certainly hit the ground running. I oversee the Transit Development team at New York City Department of Transportation. And, in basic terms, we help to reprioritize and redesign our streets to give busses that priority so that they can move faster.

00;02;09;20 - 00;02;14;28
Diniece Mendes

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And that service is actually much more reliable for New Yorkers who rely on the bus.

00;02;14;28 - 00;02;23;05
Emily Weidenhof
Could you just break down the role between Department of Transportation and the state MTA, New York City Transit Authority?

00;02;23;11 - 00;02;24;18
Diniece Mendes
Sure.

00;02;24;18 - 00;02;33;21
Diniece Mendes
The MTA runs the bus service and helps us set the schedules for when the bus arrives, the frequency in which that service arrives.

00;02;33;23 - 00;03;05;22
Diniece Mendes
How, how frequently, how spaced out the stops are, and also ensuring that a certain level of service is provided. On the on the DOT side, we reprioritize and redesign our streets so really have control over sort of the treat scape and really focus on sort of that space where there be improving bus lanes, making bus stops more accessible and upgrading the amenities as bus stops, seating.

00;03;05;24 - 00;03;09;10
Diniece Mendes
And time arrival clocks and those types of things.

00;03;09;15 - 00;03;16;08
Elizabeth Adams
And I think that really speaks to the importance of the city and state working

00;03;16;08 - 00;03;17;07
Diniece Mendes
together. And

00;03;17;07 - 00;03;42;13
Elizabeth Adams
We have released a plan, Next Stop: Fast Busses, Better Service. And really, it's a historic partnership with the city and state, the MTA and the DOT, and I think the importance of that exactly as, you know, as you're saying, is this works when the people who run the busses, the people who run the streets, are in conversation, are working in coordination.

00;03;42;16 - 00;03;59;24
Elizabeth Adams

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And so, what we're, you know, kicking off, what we're working on is just really an exciting and historic, I think, partnership of kind of a new working relationship between the city and state around our busses, which is going to mean real difference and real change and real improvements for New Yorkers.

00;04;00;10 - 00;04;14;28
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah. And we know that the subway is incredibly important for New York City. We know that basketball is incredibly important for New York City.

Diniece Mendes
Go Knicks!

Elizabeth Adams
Knicks in five.

Why are busses important for New York City?

00;04;14;28 - 00;04;37;23
Diniece Mendes
Yeah, it's a great question. You know, busses, you know, are about opportunity, right? And like, expanding access to opportunity and giving people that sense of mobility that they can go to work and to school or to appointments without having to think about, is that bus going to get there on time?

00;04;37;25 - 00;05;01;06
Diniece Mendes
And so, it's really about expanding access to New Yorkers. And I liken it to the analogy of the subway maybe being the arteries in your body and the veins really being the busses and the system that's so expansive across the city but really connects so many neighborhoods and different parts of the city together in a way that I think has a lot more coverage than the subway does.

00;05;01;29 - 00;05;25;21
Elizabeth Adams
And New Yorkers are also on the bus, riding the bus, you know, millions of New Yorkers every day take our busses. And I think for a long time that's been kind of not talked about to the same degree. I think our busses haven't been prioritized in the same way. You know that, subway or other modes of transit have been, and it is the way so many people choose to get to where they need to go.

00;05;25;24 - 00;05;46;09
Elizabeth Adams

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I am a parent is I ride the bus so much now with my toddler. It is how I pick up from daycare and get home from daycare. And it just as he said, right? There are so many places where the bus can get you that the subway doesn't, you know, between neighborhoods around your borough. And so, we need to make sure it works.

00;05;46;09 - 00;05;55;16
Elizabeth Adams
And it's in service of New Yorkers. And New Yorkers deserve the, the, the, you know, the best bus system in the the country. Not, you know, slower busses.

00;05;55;18 - 00;05;59;05
Emily Weidenhof
And how how fast are our busses currently?

00;05;59;05 - 00;06;27;23
Diniece Mendes
On average? Our busses are eight miles per hour. But in the case of some busses, it's as slow as 2.5mph, which is slower than walking speed. On occasion, I have opted to walk. Instead of waiting for the bus or actually getting there in time before the bus actually passes my stop, and that's unacceptable.

00;06;27;26 - 00;06;32;14
Diniece Mendes
And it's something that we're actually working to fix, right?

00;06;33;06 - 00;06;48;01
Elizabeth Adams
And I think what we know is when we invest in busses and bus service, they go faster that we see the change. You know, as you say, some busses, bus routes going, you know, 4 or 5mph.

00;06;48;02 - 00;07;13;01
Elizabeth Adams
That's not an accident, right? That's a result of policy choices that we've made. And at the same time, only 7% of our city streets that have busses running on them that have bus routes have dedicated bus infrastructure, which means choices have been made in the past that I think we're not in service of making sure our busses have the space and the priority and the investment that they deserved on our streets.

00;07;13;01 - 00;07;28;15
Elizabeth Adams

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And so, if we change the 7% to much higher, you know, dedicated bus infrastructure number, which is what we're, we're working on and looking to do. What that bears out is, is real change and real bus service improvements for New Yorkers.

00;07;28;15 - 00;07;36;26
Diniece Mendes
That's exactly right. And in our plan, we are committing to making investments along 50 priority corridors across the city.

00;07;37;03 - 00;08;06;23
Diniece Mendes
We chose a really data driven approach to select these corridors, really thinking about which of these corridors had the highest amount of delays, like where the bus was extremely slow, and also ridership and demand is pretty high. And so we are prioritizing our investments in the areas that actually can give us the most impact and benefit from these investments, and really to benefit the most amount of people across the city that are using the bus.

00;08;06;26 - 00;08;27;05
Diniece Mendes
So 50 priority corridors. And in addition to that, really working on improvements such as signal priority, there's a lot of innovation in the space. You may think it's very small, but every little bit counts in really helping to improve, the bus operations. Right.

00;08;27;05 - 00;08;36;19
Emily Weidenhof
in addition to some of these signal timing upgrades that you're talking about. What else can New Yorkers expect to see on these priority corridors?

00;08;36;19 - 00;08;44;20
Diniece Mendes
Yeah, it's a great question. So the first pillar is really fast and reliable busses that focuses on the priority corridors.

00;08;44;20 - 00;08;58;07
Diniece Mendes
each of these corridors were setting a target of 20% speed improvements. And that may sound modest, but it will be a drastic change if the bus is running at 3.5mph.

00;08;58;10 - 00;09;24;14
Diniece Mendes
That change will really have a rippling effect. The second pillar is improving the experience for the bus rider throughout the journey of the trip. So, it's not. Also, it's not enough to think

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about when you're on the bus, but also what does your experience look like at the bus stop? Do you have a certain level of predictability about when that bus will arrive?

00;09;24;16 - 00;09;46;25
Diniece Mendes
That might be the, the, difference between you staying at a bus stop and waiting for the bus, or making another decision about, you know, how do you need to get to where you need to go? So we'll be investing in real time information, signs that really provide information on a live feed when the next bus arrives.

00;09;46;25 - 00;09;52;13
Diniece Mendes
will also be upgrading all feasible stops with seating or leaning bars.

00;09;52;13 - 00;09;56;07
Diniece Mendes
And that's extremely important for folks that need a little rest.

00;09;56;07 - 00;10;09;01
Diniece Mendes
And so we will get to universal seating really over the next ten-odd-years, which is a game changer and really a bold commitment to thinking about how we center the writers and their experience throughout the journey.

00;10;09;01 - 00;10;29;28
Elizabeth Adams
I just want to note you know, on the 20% speed increases on bus routes. What that means is up to six minutes on your ride each way. That's if you're, you know, going to health appointments, going to work. That's 12 minutes back in your commute every day.

00;10;30;00 - 00;10;56;19
Elizabeth Adams
I like many working moms and constantly running to make pickup time right on the dot and having those minutes back not being late. Right. All of that makes a difference in just the ease of being able to get through your day with one less stress, one less, you know, challenge that you have to deal with. And it's really about giving New Yorkers time back in their day to do what they need to do.

00;10;56;19 - 00;11;05;00
Elizabeth Adams
And then the last thing I think just in terms of the, you know, the, the, the plan that, I'm excited about, too, is

00;11;05;00 - 00;11;08;06

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Elizabeth Adams
getting, you know, personal vehicles out of the bus lane.

00;11;08;11 - 00;11;19;00
Elizabeth Adams
that I think is really a key piece here too, is how do we clear our bus lanes, make them workable, make them accessible and so that bus riders can can move.

00;11;19;00 - 00;11;55;17
Emily Weidenhof
So let's talk about BRT. Very exciting. I think a lot of people know SBS Select Bus Service. They've experienced the benefits of some of those early, updates to our bus system, buying your ticket before you board, all of the priority bus lanes, fewer stops. So you're moving faster. What is BRT and what what really levels up? This, from what we know and have seen in past bus improvements.

00;11;55;17 - 00;12;05;18
Diniece Mendes
Yeah, it's a fantastic question. I think folks have been extremely excited about this pillar. It's the fourth pillar in our plan: Quality Transit for All.

00;12;05;18 - 00;12;16;05
Diniece Mendes
our goal is really to expand access for New Yorkers to rail, subway or high frequency service like bus rapid transit,

00;12;16;20 - 00;12;36;29
Diniece Mendes
across the city. And so in a plan, we've identified five priority corridors. Flatbush is one of them, which we've actually started, a lot of work. And we'll be wrapping up fairly soon for the first phase of that project and continuing that, we'll be delivering Flatbush by 2030 as our commitment.

00;12;37;02 - 00;13;04;10
Diniece Mendes
And the plan will be to advance design on corridors. The other corridors that we've identified, we're approaching, I think the 20-year mark to the launch of the first SBS route. So, it's about time that we upgrade, sort of how do we think about our priority and our infrastructure, and what does that actually mean? It means physically separated, lanes so that there is that dedicated priority for the bus, unimpeded.

00;13;04;12 - 00;13;04;26
Diniece Mendes
It means

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00;13;04;27 - 00;13;07;13
Emily Weidenhof
That keeps vehicles from being physically

00;13;07;13 - 00;13;07;25
Diniece Mendes
Yes. Absolutely.

00;13;07;25 - 00;13;11;13
Emily Weidenhof
being able to park or use the lane. Yeah.

00;13;11;19 - 00;13;34;23
Diniece Mendes
It also means really upping the game on signal priority. And there are tradeoffs that we need to make with that. But it means that we can achieve a higher speed for buses and to be more comparable with subways. Right. So that is going to be the task at hand is really how do we make this experience feel like a subway above ground.
00;13;34;23 - 00;13;35;03
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah.

00;13;35;03 - 00;13;45;17
Diniece Mendes
And so in addition to that it means also other public realm enhancements. It means greenery, public space and thinking about the whole experience along the corridor.

00;13;45;27 - 00;13;46;13
Emily Weidenhof
Love that.

00;13;48;00 - 00;13;50;10
Diniece Mendes
Girl! Lots of collaboration, Emily!

00;13;51;11 - 00;14;00;11
Diniece Mendes
And then also, how do we really think about first and last mile connections to that? Because oftentimes many of these spaces are feeders to the larger system.

00;14;01;02 - 00;14;13;07
Diniece Mendes
And so it's really thinking holistically and multimodal, and on a multimodal perspective about how we connect people to opportunity to work, to school, etc..

00;14;13;07 - 00;14;38;00

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Elizabeth Adams
You know, to me, I think there's also really a feeling of ease that people are looking for. And when they talk about bus rapid transit is the ease of, you know, not having to worry when your bus is coming, if it's on time. The how long your bus route will, your bus ride will take,. You know, the like frequent service of "okay, this is going to be, this says it's a 12 minute ride."

00;14;38;01 - 00;14;39;13
Elizabeth Adams
It's going to be a 12 minute ride.

00;14;39;13 - 00;14;52;00
Elizabeth Adams
You know what that experience is going to be. And that is really what we're looking to do with world class. You know, bus rapid transit is having that ease, that reliability. And then, you know, station upgrades.

00;14;52;00 - 00;14;53;27
Diniece Mendes
Yes. That was just about

00;14;53;27 - 00;14;54;12
Elizabeth Adams
Yeah.

00;14;54;12 - 00;15;14;10
Diniece Mendes
And a key tool to getting us to that is the commitment to to have Aldo boarding. And so the MTA is committed to implementing that in 2027, which really helps to facilitate sort of quicker sort of, boarding on the bus.

00;15;14;12 - 00;15;18;20
Diniece Mendes
So yeah, world class stations are critical part of this, like a different experience,

00;15;18;20 - 00;15;30;14
Diniece Mendes
The stations will have a more distinct and unique character that really sets us apart and really helps us set the fabric for the public environment, public realm on the corridor.

00;15;30;21 - 00;15;58;13
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah. I'm just I'm getting so excited hearing you talk about all this, because even as an able bodied person, the subway is a difficult system to navigate. So many ups and downs, so

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much hot, you know, climates. Right. And, and so, you know what you are describing. And I think what to a lot of New Yorkers, the bus has been is the most accessible option, right?

00;15;58;14 - 00;16;19;23
Emily Weidenhof
There's not a lot of up and down, but being able to deliver that high quality waiting experience, that dependability and having the joy of daylight in your in your ride, that's just as fast as the subway. Just totally sounds like a dream that you are really working so hard to make a reality. So it's so exciting.

00;16;19;23 - 00;16;23;22
Elizabeth Adams
yeah, I just, I, you know, I, I love the bus in terms of being able to see your neighborhood.

00;16;24;14 - 00;16;38;20
Elizabeth Adams
Having an enjoyable, pleasant ride, you know, above ground on a sunny, beautiful day. It's just it's, it's really a beautiful thing we have, you know, we new York is the best, the greatest city in the world.

00;16;38;20 - 00;16;54;02
Elizabeth Adams
And being able to see it and explore it and be on the street and participate in it, I think the bus just really affords that at, you know, such a unique, special way. And if it can move efficiently, then, you know, we've got it all.

00;16;54;02 - 00;16;55;13
Diniece Mendes
Yeah, absolutely.

00;16;55;16 - 00;17;33;24
Diniece Mendes
The other piece that I'd add to that is, it creates an opportunity for you to really stop and explore and shop, and, you know, check out the businesses on a corridor that's also extremely important that relies on sort of that additional foot traffic. So really, all hand in hand, we're thinking about how do we make communities thrive in a way that really invests in these communities for the long term, and also at a fraction of the cost of expanding, say, a subway line and in a shorter time than it would take to do that.

00;17;34;17 - 00;17;34;27
Emily Weidenhof
Great.

00;17;34;27 - 00;18;02;02

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Emily Weidenhof
So, a lot of our bus lanes come with a lot of rules that might feel new and overwhelming, particularly to drivers. You talked about time of day management. So certainly New Yorkers familiar with the SBS routes, sometimes those red lanes are only in effect during certain times that are posted. But what are some of the other rules and etiquette of of bus lanes that New Yorkers should keep in mind?

00;18;02;02 - 00;18;11;02
Diniece Mendes
Yeah, it's a great question. And I think, lots of like opinions about what should be appropriate versus not.

00;18;11;06 - 00;18;35;03
Diniece Mendes
So, no parking or standing in bus lanes, right? If you need to, pick up or drop off someone, do that expeditiously. Really, because that's becoming now an inconvenience if you are doing that for an extended period of time, you know, read the rules and regulations, make sure that you understand the different types of violations that you can get.

00;18;35;05 - 00;18;41;02
Diniece Mendes
So if you're blocking a bus stop that is also enforceable by the AC program,

00;18;41;02 - 00;18;47;24
Diniece Mendes
If you need to make a right turn, you are allowed to enter in to the bus lane to make a right turn.

00;18;47;25 - 00;19;11;13
Diniece Mendes
You'll see some dashed lines approaching the intersection. When it's safe to merge in, you can get in to make a right turn. You should not be driving through the intersection that is illegal. You shouldn't be driving for, longer, long period of time in the bus lane, because that priority is not for you. Unless you're a bus, unless you're an accessory vehicle, unless you're an emergency vehicle.

00;19;11;16 - 00;19;22;02
Diniece Mendes
I think the laws are pretty clear. It's really about respecting the rules and regulations so that we can share the street in a way that's safe, efficient to move the most amount of people.

00;19;22;02 - 00;19;27;20
Emily Weidenhof

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Right. And you mentioned ACE, which is Automatic Camera Enforcement. Could you talk about that tool?

00;19;27;20 - 00;19;49;12
Diniece Mendes
Sure. And so the MTA enables and mounts cameras in busses that the text, these types of violations, there's a technology that can detect whether a vehicle is double parked in a bus lane or parked in a bus stop, or blocking a bus stop.

00;19;49;13 - 00;20;12;17
Diniece Mendes
And what it does is that it sends warnings and then violations. So typically whenever an Ace route is enabled, there's a 60 day warning period where you may receive a notification that you may have violated, a regulation, but within the warning period, it's making sure that you have that level of awareness so that the activity is not repeated.

00;20;12;21 - 00;20;38;18
Diniece Mendes
After that 60-day period, you'll be receiving fines if you continue that activity. And there's a progressive fine, right, because the idea is to discourage this behavior from happening and to discourage repeat violations as well. And so, the ACE program is complementary to our stationary cameras, which really captures moving violations and captures vehicles that are driving in the bus lane and priority where they should not be.

00;20;38;18 - 00;20;47;06
Elizabeth Adams
Yeah. And I think what you say about, the Automated Enforcement camera program and changing driver behavior is really key here.

00;20;47;08 - 00;21;07;24
Elizabeth Adams
Right? Is the goal is we are teaching people to behave a little differently on our streets and to learn the rules of the road a little better. The vast majority of people who get, you know, 1 or 2 automated enforcement, Automated Camera Enforcement tickets don't get another,

00;21;07;24 - 00;21;08;07
Elizabeth Adams
which

00;21;08;07 - 00;21;15;24
Elizabeth Adams
really shows that it works, right, that people get one ticket and they say, “oh, okay, I am not supposed to be in the bus lane at this time” and all of that.

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00;21;16;05 - 00;21;37;03
Elizabeth Adams
And that's what we want, right? We want to we want people to move a little differently and to prioritize based on our streets a little differently. And it's a very effective tool in shifting driver behavior when it comes to our bus lanes. So that complemented with all the other tools is really, really key to keeping our bus lanes clear, accessible and made for busses.

00;21;37;03 - 00;21;37;18
Elizabeth Adams
So...

00;21;37;22 - 00;21;58;22
Emily Weidenhof
Hey, listeners, we hope you're enjoying this episode of our podcast. For those of you who are as enthusiastic about transportation and planning as we are, we'd like to hear from you. You can submit topics and questions that you'd like us to cover at NYC.gov/curbenthusiasm. And now back to our conversation.

00;21;58;20 - 00;22;48;27
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah. And I think that's really important. You're talking about all of these really exciting updates to the bus network, which often come with trade-offs and which come with both exciting but also big transformation of our city streets. So in the case of clearing bus lanes, sometimes that means clearing curbs or removing parking. And I'm curious how you think about those trade offs, particularly when it comes to businesses and, you know, key commercial corridors in our city that both need, high quality transit service. But businesses need to thrive to get their deliveries, pick up and drop offs, things like that.

00;22;48;27 - 00;22;58;15
Diniece Mendes
When we think about providing priority on our streets for buses, it is also a very space efficient approach in that we're moving a lot more people.

00;22;59;10 - 00;23;32;09
Diniece Mendes
And that is our goal, right? We need to be as efficient as possible and that makes New York City work. And so as it relates to a lot of the commercial corridors where we may introduce bus lanes or do a project, we take a very data driven approach and also and involve the approach where we're engaging and working with businesses so we understand their needs, understand the demands of the curb, how many deliveries are getting, how do they customers

00;23;32;09 - 00;24;05;20

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Diniece Mendes
access those businesses and by which mode they access those businesses. And so we use that to inform our design choices on certain blocks of our streets and re-tailor those designs and curb regulation changes based on that information. Of course, there's an opportunity to consult with businesses. And so we work with Business Improvement Districts or merchants associations, as well as the Small Business Services to, talk to these communities and understand what other adjustments can be made as we move forward with these plans.

00;24;05;22 - 00;24;34;21
Diniece Mendes
And part of that could look like adding additional loading zones on the side streets. That can really help to offset sort of that pressure on the main roadway, or thinking about the time of day that we'd want to encourage that loading to happen. We have an opportunity to also, bring forward really innovative demand management practices, particularly around deliveries in areas where it's very commercial.

00;24;34;23 - 00;24;50;05
Diniece Mendes
Really promoting off our deliveries is a is a it's an excellent point and strategy to really help to manage demand during the most congested times of the day, and that's when we need the bus priority the most, right, to make sure that people can keep moving.

00;24;50;08 - 00;25;17;23
Elizabeth Adams
Yeah, I love what you say about efficiency. I think, yeah. One thing I always say is we are a city of 8.5 million people. If 8.5 million people were getting run by car, we'd all be stuck in traffic. It simply does not work. We have to have different modes of transit. And on small businesses and, you know, in shopping corridors, when done right, you know, busses and, and bus lanes really support small businesses.

00;25;17;26 - 00;25;40;23
Elizabeth Adams
You know what we've seen on, you know, 14th Street when the busway went in, there was a lot of questions, concerns. Is this going to negative impact businesses? But that didn't happen. And in fact, more people were walking and strolling and enjoying and stopping into, to local businesses. And that's what we want. We want people out on the streets, out in the public space being able to access.

00;25;40;23 - 00;25;54;08
Elizabeth Adams

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And ther're all these questions around loading and and coordination of the curb space, which are very complicated. And that's where I think really, you know, bringing people in really talking early and, and

00;25;54;08 - 00;25;57;04
Diniece Mendes
and often.

Elizabeth Adams
Yes, early. Often. Yeah.

00;25;57;04 - 00;26;00;04
Elizabeth Adams
is really how we're able to kind of work through all these questions.

00;26;00;04 - 00;26;10;29
Diniece Mendes
Absolutely. I'll also add that, you know, I think there's this larger conversation about like, how do we want our streets to feel? And like, what is that actually mean for New Yorkers?

00;26;11;03 - 00;26;37;09
Diniece Mendes
Is it a means to an end? Are you connecting from point A to point B? And the streets will very much still continue to serve that function. But we also want to think about streets as places and conveniences and opportunities for businesses, communities to thrive. And like, what does that actually look like? Earlier this summer, I think was it right around when we were looking to kick off the Central Brooklyn Outreach,

00;26;37;09 - 00;26;48;08
Diniece Mendes
We got an opportunity to speak to businesses along the corridor. Part of that is also letting them know that we are starting engagement, and also, we will be back to continue the conversation. But,

00;26;48;08 - 00;26;56;24
Diniece Mendes
in those conversations, we learn from many businesses along the corridor. A lot of their customers actually come to them by bus, and.

00;26;56;26 - 00;27;00;03
Emily Weidenhof
I do. I do most of my shopping by bus.

00;27;00;07 - 00;27;05;21
Diniece Mendes

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There you go. And it's a convenient way to one. Also, if you're on the bus, you can see, oh wow, I'm going to check out this store.

00;27;05;21 - 00;27;25;07
Diniece Mendes
I'm going to check out this restaurant. I had not seen this before. And it really gives you a different perspective about your community that you probably wouldn't see, like if you were driving and you're like, focus laser, focus on getting from where you're going, or in a subway where you're underground. So it unlocks a lot more opportunities for people to, like, be in community.

00;27;25;07 - 00;27;26;04
Elizabeth Adams
Yeah, Absolutely.

00;27;26;08 - 00;27;49;09
Emily Weidenhof
So you're doing a lot of community engagement. People are also seeing real change on the ground. Now, could you talk a little bit about the timeline of a typical transit project, what that looks like and how that, how you weave through the technical design and implementation of a project with the community engagement?

00;27;49;09 - 00;28;06;14
Diniece Mendes
when we look at the life cycle of a project, it's 1 to 2 years, generally speaking, where, we do some of our investigation, but we come to the community and really do some ground truth thing because really, they are our experts on the ground, and they live and breathe the community every day.

00;28;06;14 - 00;28;31;11
Diniece Mendes
First, we introduce the idea that we are studying, bus priority treatments on this corridor. And here's why. The motivation really data driven, focusing on the needs very slow bus speeds really impact to riders. Safety is a huge issue. That oftentimes is a motivating factor for us to looking at improvements to a particular corridor.

00;28;31;14 - 00;28;49;04
Diniece Mendes
And we go to the community, we present these existing conditions, we get feedback from them to help us to complete that picture of what's actually happening on the street, because the street is serving so many other purpose, purposes for them in those communities and businesses as well.

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00;28;49;04 - 00;29;11;08
Diniece Mendes
Based on that feedback and the data collection and other analysis that we do, we come back to the community with a draft proposal. We get feedback on that proposal and work to refine that proposal. And we come back to the community for the final presentation and which at that point we can still get feedback, but the design is pretty much baked.

00;29;11;08 - 00;29;39;03
Diniece Mendes
And so all of that is done before we start scheduling, implementation and appropriate notifications. Throughout the process, we're also doing pop up events and communities where we're tabling and meeting the people where they are, and we work with our public engagement group, that goes out to speak to folks in communities, go to speak to businesses along the corridor, and really get information that informs us, our work in the early phases.

00;29;39;03 - 00;29;59;03
Diniece Mendes
So once we're ready to implement, the, the changes that are more like physical and visible is what maybe the public may see. But this planning work has happened, you know, well over 1 to 2 years, some projects a little bit longer depending on the length of the corridor.

00;29;59;03 - 00;30;08;23
Elizabeth Adams
You know, one question people have is they're like, well, where where can I plug in or what can I actually influence or impact?

00;30;08;23 - 00;30;41;10
Elizabeth Adams
Or like, where does what I have to say actually matter? Where is it going to actually have impact? And I think a lot of people feel like, you know, it's not going to. Right, to be honest or, or that they're, they're not sure where, where to have a say. And so, you know, one thing I think that we've been working on is, is also thinking about how we can be clear with residents, community members, bus riders of exactly how they can plug in.

00;30;41;10 - 00;30;47;05
Elizabeth Adams
Part of this is about, you know, government accountability and transparency

00;30;47;05 - 00;30;48;04
Diniece Mendes
Absolutely.

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00;30;48;04 - 00;30;56;20
Elizabeth Adams
And openness. And, you know, we did this Central Brooklyn Town Hall and we also, you know, in partnership with the Office of Mass Engagement.

00;30;56;20 - 00;31;16;12
Elizabeth Adams
And and one of the questions we asked was, how do we also provide more information for residents to know, kind of at each step of the progress, of each step of the project, where and when to, to, to plug in. And, I think that's, you know, what a lot of New Yorkers are looking for is like, I don't have a lot of time, right?

00;31;16;13 - 00;31;23;12
Elizabeth Adams
How can I, you know, say and share what what matters to me and, and kind of know it'll be heard.

00;31;23;12 - 00;31;40;21
Diniece Mendes
And to your earlier point, I think it's also important to be as transparent as possible about the trade-offs that we need to make. Just because to my earlier point, there's a constrained amount of space that we have, and we have a different task to try to fit everything within that. And sometimes that's not possible.

00;31;40;21- 00;32;08;08
Diniece Mendes
So, we need to make choices about which sets precedent, what priorities we need to make, because those are also communicating our priorities about what we care about in, in these broader communities and on those corridors. And our goal is really to ensure the most moving, the most people and goods, but also thinking about how do we foster thrive in communities because public transportation is an asset to communities, right?

00;32;08;08 - 00;32;09;01
Emily Weidenhof
Absolutely.

00;32;09;01 - 00;32;23;21
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah. So talked a little bit about bus lane etiquette. I want to ask both of you. What is your biggest breach of transportation etiquette.

00;32;23;21 - 00;32;44;04
Diniece Mendes

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Well, on the bus, there are oftentimes maybe a bunch of people that may be staying up front, and there's a lot of space in the back. And, we often have to plead with our fellow writers if they can move to the back to just make space for folks that are coming on.

00;32;44;04 - 00;32;58;16
Diniece Mendes
So just be, I think, in the spirit of being courteous and respectful, like everyone has a place to go, we need to like, just help the bus move along faster. Don't delay the bus by not moving back or preventing other people from getting on if their space.

00;32;58;16 - 00;33;20;29
Elizabeth Adams
Yeah, I love that. I think keep it moving. You know, we all New Yorkers all have places to go. We gotta you know, keep it moving. Very important. A personal like, longtime one of mine on all transit modes is take your backpack off, which I feel like there's been less of that, you know, like little spatial awareness if you're hitting people around you.

00;33;20;29 - 00;33;23;01
Elizabeth Adams
Just, you know, that's like, you know,

00;33;23;01 - 00;33;23;14
Diniece Mendes
Yeah.

00;33;23;14 - 00;33;27;16
Elizabeth Adams
but I think generally, you know, what I would love to see is us

00;33;27;16 - 00;33;32;18
Elizabeth Adams
treating bus etiquette in the same way that we talk about other forms of transit etiquette.

00;33;32;18 - 00;33;32;28
Diniece Mendes
Yeah.

00;33;32;28 - 00;33;45;06
Elizabeth Adams
You know, I think people think about the, the, the rules when they're like getting on the subway and don't necessarily think about it in the same way of the bus. And, and that goes just as much for outside the bus as onside.

00;33;45;07 - 00;33;50;28
Elizabeth Adams

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And. And that, I think is a big one for me, as we were just talking about, like keeping bus lanes clear.

00;33;50;28 - 00;34;04;14
Elizabeth Adams
I think having respect for the bus is like, that is the etiquette that I want to see that we all are like, oh, it's a beautiful red painted bus lane. Let's keep it clear. let's keep it moving. I think for us to all, you know, think about the bus a little more

00;34;05;20 - 00;34;05;06
Diniece Mendes
Yeah. What about you? Do you have a different one?

00;34;07;19 - 00;34;22;00
Emily Weidenhof
I would love if people took their backpacks off. I can just tell you that would make a huge, huge difference. They might not even need to move all the way to the back of the bus. There's so much space to be gained just by taking the backpack off.

00;34;22;00 - 00;34;22;12
Diniece Mendes
I can just meander around

00;34;22;12 - 00;34;26;20
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah, yeah.

00;34;26;22 - 00;34;40;19
Emily Weidenhof
And lastly, want to take us out with your, thoughts about what you are most excited about for the future of transportation.

00;34;40;22 - 00;34;40;23
Diniece Mendes
Do

00;34;40;23 - 00;34;41;24
Diniece Mendes
You want to go first?

00;34;41;24 - 00;35;08;17
Elizabeth Adams
Sure. I'm excited about so many things. I think it's a really, really exciting time for transportation in New York City, particularly, as we've said, we have a mayor who is so committed to this work. And, and a Department of Transportation, an MTA, right, all hands

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on deck, a governor. So I just, you know, I think in general, it's a really exciting time in New York to be thinking about public transportation, what the future can be.

00;35;08;20 - 00;35;33;02
Elizabeth Adams
And, you know, that covers a whole bunch of things that's thinking about lots of new busways where there are dedicated, protected lanes, like, you know, mini 14 streets all around the city. With a lot more public space and greenery and the first bus rapid transit coming to New York City, really thinking about how we are taking New York's public transit to another level.

00;35;33;05 - 00;35;55;02
Elizabeth Adams
Doing something we haven't done before. I think, you know, it's a tough time in the world in many ways, you know, because without saying and to think about how we can do new things in New York and really show other localities, other places that we can do big, bold, wonderful things for our people and provide some care in our public space for people.

00;35;55;02 - 00;35;58;27
Elizabeth Adams
I think just, I feel very honored to get to this work. And it's,

00;35;58;27 - 00;36;00;07
Diniece Mendes
Yeah!

00;36;00;07 - 00;36;13;12
Elizabeth Adams
I'm an idealistic, optimistic person. And, but I think, yeah, just how how many people are really committed and invested in this work just feels really excited to think about all the possibilities ahead.

00;36;13;12 - 00;36;38;08
Diniece Mendes
Yes, and. So collaboration. I'm also excited about what sort of investments in transit can mean for communities more broadly and like making New York City more affordable. As a mom, and, you know, with my husband and with our kid, like on occasion, we've talked about like, is New York City.

00;36;38;09 - 00;37;06;07
Diniece Mendes
Still it for us. Like, what does this actually mean? So if we can make New York City be a place where we can continue to thrive, that it continues to be affordable for all? I think that

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is what I'm excited about, because it's also about mobility in the context of where you're living. And whether or not you get to enjoy those communities and thrive.

00;37;07;03 - 00;37;36;01
Emily Weidenhof
Amazing. I want to thank you both so much for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk with us about this incredibly exciting work. And I just have to say, I feel so energized and inspired by this kind of amazing merging of the political, all of the design and technical aspects that it takes to make this a reality with the people, with the communities and

Diniece Mendes
And funding.

00;37;36;03 - 00;37;48;08
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah, yeah. So I just appreciate how you're really bringing all of this together, and it gives me so much hope and excitement for the future of New York City. So, thank you so much for being with us.

Elizabeth Adams
Yeah.

00;37;48;17 - 00;37;50;23
Diniece Mendes
Thank you for this important conversation. It's a pleasure. It's great.

00;37;50;24 - 00;37;51;05
Emily Weidenhof
Yeah.

00;37;51;05 - 00;37;52;05
Diniece Mendes
Yeah.