

**NYC Department of Transportation Testimony Before the
City Council Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
October 1, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Brooks-Powers and members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I am First Deputy Commissioner Margaret Forgione. I am joined by Paul Ochoa, Executive Deputy Commissioner, Montgomery Dean, Director of Operations, and Rick Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Adams and Commissioner Rodriguez about the Administration's work to enhance New York City's sidewalks, medians, and streetscapes.

DOT is responsible for operating and maintaining 6,300 miles of streets and highways and over 12,000 miles of sidewalk. Everyone in New York interacts with the roadways and sidewalks to get around and the vast majority of our goods travel to their final destinations on our streets. Our goal as always is to make sure that can happen in a safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible way by enhancing safety conditions for all street users, increasing accessibility, improving pedestrian and cyclist connectivity and keeping the roadwork in a state of good repair.

To that end, DOT continues to work hard and creatively to deliver high-quality, high-impact projects that enhance streetscapes through safety and maintenance improvements with our interventions proving successful. The first six months of 2025 had the second-lowest traffic fatalities since 2018, with fatalities down 30 percent from last year. The declines follow the Administration installing a record amount of pedestrian space, a record number of protected bike lanes, and completing major street redesigns across the city—treatments shown to enhance the City's sidewalks, medians, and streetscapes.

Legislation

Turning to the legislation before the Council today.

Introduction 169

First, Intro. 169 sponsored by Council Member Farías. This bill would require DOT to install electric vehicle charging equipment on lampposts based on an annual feasibility determination.

Shifting to more sustainable modes of transportation is an integral part of the Administration's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The most sustainable way to get around is by walking, biking or transit, but for those New Yorkers who choose or need to drive, we want them to drive electric. To support electric vehicle (EV) adoption, the agency continues to develop a comprehensive EV charging network, with an emphasis on expanding charger access in areas where private sector investment is limited and supporting the electrification of the yellow taxis and FHV fleets.

As part of this strategy, we have been expanding access to fast charging across the city, turning our parking lots and garages into EV charging hubs and installing Level 2 curbside chargers.

In June 2021, DOT partnered with Con Edison to launch the city's first curbside EV charging pilot

program, which includes 100 public on-street Level 2 chargers distributed across 35 locations in the five boroughs. These chargers – installed and operated by Con Edison – are consistent with the look of existing street furniture and have two chargers and retractable cables to avoid obstructing the sidewalk. The current system has an average utilization of 70% across all sites – the highest utilization rate of any such system – with some locations reaching over 90%. The program’s performance exceeded expectations and demonstrated that curbside Level 2 charging can meet existing charging needs, is operationally feasible, and can increase charging access equity.

Based on the success of the pilot, the agency plans to expand this program to over 600 plugs across the five boroughs using federal funding. As part of this expansion, we are seeking to deploy chargers that are compact, are consistent with the look and feel of our family of street furniture, and are easy to install and remove, so as to maintain flexibility in the use of the curb. In 2022 and 2023, the agency tested a number of different charger designs, including a streetlight-mounted unit and a unit where the user supplies the charging cord. This research, as well as on-going monitoring of advances in the charger space, are informing our design approach to expansion.

DOT supports the intent of this bill to expand access to charging at the curb. Based on our testing and research, however, streetlight-mounted chargers do present certain engineering and utility-related challenges as compared to free-standing units.

We look forward to discussions with the Council and appropriate stakeholders on this legislation and the best strategies to expand access to curbside charging.

Introduction 221

Next, Intro. 221 sponsored by Council Member Holden, regards the repair of sidewalk damage caused by City-owned trees. The City utilizes various approaches to address damage caused by City-owned trees to sidewalks adjacent to 1-, 2-, and 3-family residential properties. As a matter of policy, since 2019, DOT no longer issues sidewalk violations to owners of these properties for defects caused exclusively by City trees. The City will repair tree-related damage to the sidewalk if non-tree-related defects exist but will not charge owners of these properties for damage caused by City trees when repairing sidewalks.

NYC Parks also offers the Trees & Sidewalks Program, which repairs sidewalks adjacent to 1-, 2-, and 3-family homes that have been damaged by the roots of City trees. Repairs are made based on a rating system that includes the severity of damage, amount of pedestrian traffic, and size and condition of the tree.

The Law Department has indicated concerns over the potential of the bill, as currently drafted, to create confusion in its effort to redefine the balance of liabilities and responsibilities between the City and homeowners. Agencies currently have mechanisms for addressing the damage caused by tree roots at no cost to homeowners. We look forward to further discussions with the agencies, Law Department, and Council to appropriately achieve the goals of this bill.

Introduction 262

Next, Intro. 262 sponsored by Council Member Joseph. This bill would require the installation of speed humps on roadways adjacent to any park equal or greater than one acre, which equates to nearly 5,000 roadway segments. DOT works to enhance safety through a variety of “traffic calming” design interventions that make streets safer by encouraging slower speeds and raised speed reducers are just one example of a wide variety of treatments we use as part of our traffic calming design guidelines. Speed humps are one of two types of raised speed reducers, the other being speed cushions. Speed humps span the width of the street and are typically raised to 4 inches above the level of the roadway and have a proven track record in the city. We are proud of our program to install and maintain these around the city having completed 323 new speed reducers in 2024, and 491 re-installations.

That said, we strongly believe that mandating specific treatments in specific locations is inadvisable, as the agency utilizes a data-driven approach, as well as engineering judgement, to target locations most in need of safety interventions. Our data-driven approach and engineering judgement supports the installation of not only speed reducers but also road diets, bike lanes, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, and signal timing changes. Limiting our toolkit to only speed reducers along all roadways adjacent to these parks leads to a treatment either unsuitable in some locations, and perhaps more importantly, to a less safe, less data-driven approach in addressing the most dangerous locations citywide. We support the overall goal of providing safety around parks and other busy parts of the city and welcome any suggested locations to explore additional safety improvements.

Introduction 270

Next, Intro. 270 sponsored by Council Member Joseph. This bill would modify the Open Streets program to offer special activations on certain holidays and time periods with significant pedestrian traffic. Our Open Streets program is a beloved activation transforming our streets into public space open to all. In 2025, we will feature more than 200 locations citywide, which includes a record-high 72 Open Streets at schools across the city as part of the back-to-school season, and celebrated annual traditions through Car-Free Earth Day and an expanded version of Summer Streets reaching over 400 blocks of car-free fun. We support this bill, as we already extend the opportunity for programming on holidays like our annual Trick-or-Streets activations, and look forward to supporting potential programming partners to activate our streets on even more days.

Introduction 882

Next, Intro. 882 sponsored by Council Member Holden. This bill would grant DOT the authority to install and maintain tree guards on city property. The Department of Parks and Recreation has jurisdiction over street trees including a comprehensive tree guard installation process to get tree guards installed in front of residential buildings and businesses. While we appreciate the Council’s focus on the beautification of our sidewalks, considering the Parks Department already has both charter mandated jurisdiction over street tree maintenance and the expertise on tree maintenance and tree guards, we are concerned with shifting the authority and responsibility of tree guard installation and maintenance from the Parks Department to DOT.

Introduction 1104

Next, Intro. 1104 sponsored by Chair Brooks-Powers. This bill would require DOT, in consultation with the Department of Small Business Service (SBS) and the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), to study and report on the feasibility of siting additional ferry terminals in NYC. Although DOT owns and operates the Staten Island Ferry, EDC oversees the city's private ferry operators and the promotion of the use of our waterways for transportation. As stated in the hearing before this committee on September 10, 2024, we would recommend any ferry feasibility studies to reflect the current nature of how expansion is being done – that it's being led through the ferries team at EDC.

As we do not oversee or operate the NYC Ferry contract, we believe that EDC should be lead on any such study, with DOT providing any needed help or expertise. Respectfully, we defer to their expertise.

Introduction 1147

Next, Intro. 1147 sponsored by Chair Brooks-Powers. This bill would require the cleaning of medians at least once per quarter. Routine median maintenance is a multi-agency effort across paved and planted medians, DOT's efforts include a variety of services including regular horticulture care, litter removal, and ad-hoc services to address conditions that may arise at specific planted medians that we have capitally constructed. Although we oppose the bill as written, if there are specific areas of concern, we are happy to inspect those locations with our sister agencies and work with you to address any problems.

Introduction 1154

Next, Intro. 1154 sponsored by Council Member Menin. This bill would establish a high visibility pavement marking program culminating in a report on whether to expand or make the program permanent.

DOT already uses markings products that are the most visible, while also being proven to be reasonably durable in active traffic. These are primarily thermoplastic markings with embedded glass beads, which provide reflectivity for visibility at night. We install these markings not only when roads are repaved, but through an active refurbishment program so that our streets remain safe with visible markings.

Testing new materials in the active right of way is inadvisable and could directly lead to bad safety outcomes if the materials fail to adhere, are slippery, or prove not to be visible at night.

When new products enter the market, we test them outside the public right of way first and only bring them into public use if they are visible, durable, safe, cost effective, and available at the scale of our city. Our recent testing of photoluminescent markings demonstrated that it does not meet this reasonable standard. We do not support the bill as written, but we are happy to have more discussions about our processes and are open to testing new materials in appropriate locations.

Introduction 1233

Next, Intro. 1233 sponsored by Council Member Bottcher. This bill would require new medians separating bicycle lanes from motorized vehicle traffic to accommodate street trees or vegetation planted by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Vegetation within the right-of-way has been shown to provide significant benefits, enhancing pedestrian safety and beautifying the streetscape. As part of our capital and in-house Street Improvement Project (SIP) work, we already ensure that, as long as the newly constructed medians meet the requirements of the Parks Department and have a long-term maintenance plan, vegetation is planted. We support this bill and look forward to continuing the ongoing work of enhancing our streetscapes with vegetation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to testify before you today. We would now be happy to answer any questions.