BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE
AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES

JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING
In the Matter of the
2025-2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
ON TRANSPORTATION

Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York

February 6, 2025
9:38 a.m.

PRESIDING:

Senator Liz Krueger
Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow
Chair, Assembly Ways and Means Committee

PRESENT:

Senator Thomas F. O'Mara
Senate Finance Committee (RM)

Assemblyman Edward P. Ra
Assembly Ways & Means Committee (RM)

Assemblyman William B. Magnarelli
Chair, Assembly Committee on Transportation

Senator Jeremy Cooney
Chair, Senate Committee on Transportation

Senator Leroy Comrie
Chair, Senate Committee on Corporations,
Authorities & Commissions

Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein
Chair, Assembly Committee on Corporations,
Authorities & Commissions

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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblyman Jonathan G. Jacobson

Assemblyman Charles D. Fall

Assemblywoman Emily Gallagher

Assemblywoman Jessica González-Rojas

Assemblyman Steven Otis

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

Senator John C. Liu

Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes

Senator Roxanne Persaud

Assemblyman Philip A. Palmesano

Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages

Senator Peter Oberacker

Assemblyman Scott Bendett

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

Assemblywoman Claire Valdez

Senator Siela A. Bynoe

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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman MaryJane Shimsky

Assemblywoman Jodi Giglio

Assemblyman Michael Durso

Senator Monica R. Martinez

Assemblyman Matt Slater

Assemblyman Brian D. Miller

Assemblyman Tony Simone

Assemblywoman Yudelka Tapia

Assemblyman George Alvarez

Assemblyman Alex Bores

Senator Cordell Cleare

Assemblywoman Gabriella A. Romero

Assemblyman Manny De Los Santos

Assemblywoman Larinda C. Hooks

Assemblyman Chris Eachus

Assemblyman Jake Blumencranz

Assemblywoman Andrea K. Bailey

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CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I'm Gary Pretlow, chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee. Today we begin the sixth in a series of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal committees of the Legislature regarding the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2025-2026.

The hearings are conducted pursuant to the New York State Constitution and the Legislative Law.

Today the Assembly Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee will hear testimony concerning the Governor's proposed budget for transportation.

I will now introduce participating members from the Assembly. After that, Senator Krueger will introduce members from the Senate. In addition, ranking Ways and Means Committee -- ranking member of Ways and Means Ed Ra will introduce members from his conference.

We have Transportation Chair Magnarelli, Corporations Chair Braunstein. Also with us we have Tony Simone, Michaelle

Solages -- I'm sorry, Assemblyman Simone, Assemblywoman Solages, Assemblyman Epstein, Assemblywoman Mitaynes, Assemblyman Alvarez, Assemblyman Eachus, Assemblywoman Valdez, Assemblyman Fall, Assemblywoman Tapia, Assemblyman Bores and Assemblywoman Shimsky.

Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning. I'm Senator Liz Krueger. I'm joined by chair of Transportation Jeremy Cooney; Senator Leroy Comrie, chair of Corporations; Senator John Liu, Senator Roxanne Persaud, Senator Bynoe. And I see Senator Oberacker, the ranker on Transportation.

Are there any other Republican Senators here?

(No response.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, it's yours.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Ra?

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good morning.

We are joined by Assemblyman Brian Miller, our ranker on Transportation, as well as Assemblyman Mike Durso and Assemblyman Matt Slater.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And Assemblyman Scott Bendett, I'm sorry.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Now I'm going to go over the rules of the road.

Time limits. Governmental witnesses will have 10 minutes to testify. Nongovernmental witnesses will have three minutes.

The chairs of the relevant committees will each get 10 minutes to question each witness, with the opportunity or option of a three minute follow-up at the end of questioning. Ranking members of each committee will each get five minutes. All other members of the relevant committees will get three minutes each.

To all witnesses. All written testimony has been submitted to the Legislature in advance so we ask that all witnesses please do not read your written testimony to us. Instead, please summarize.

To all legislators. Please let myself or Senator Krueger know if you wish to

question a witness or panel of witnesses. After opening remarks of each witness or panel of witnesses has been concluded, the list will be closed.

To everyone. Witnesses and legislators should locate a time clock and keep an eye on it. Please note that when the clock turns to zero, you will be alerted that your time is up.

Please be considerate and respect the clock so that everyone has a chance to be heard. When you see the yellow light come on, that means you have 30 seconds to finish your question or your response -- or actually, your response.

Please note that these time frames for questioning include both questions and answers. So members are respectfully requested not to commence a new question with insufficient time on the clock to permit a witness to answer.

Due to the length of our hearings, we have no alternative but to strictly enforce these time limits.

I should add that any witness for later in the day who is here and has not checked in, please do so at the top of the stairs.

With that, we will begin with Commissioner of Transportation Ms. Therese -- no, I'm sorry, Ms. Dominguez.

Okay, good morning.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Chairpersons Krueger, Pretlow, Cooney and Magnarelli, and members of the State Legislature joining us today. On behalf of Governor Kathy Hochul, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to talk about the Department of Transportation, the critical work that we do, the diverse communities we serve and, most importantly, the amazing people who make it all happen.

It's New York State DOT's 8400+ dedicated employees: Snowplow drivers, who are out and have been out all night, for those of you coming in this morning; mechanics, environmental specialists, drill

rig operators, engineers, motor carrier and rail inspectors -- every member of our team. They are truly our most important asset. They are the ones who keep New Yorkers moving -- safely.

Last year, more than 2800 lane-miles of state and local highways were improved, and more than 3100 bridges were replaced, rehabilitated or improved, thanks to the support of Governor Hochul and our partners here in the Legislature. That vital work continues in 2025.

Why? Because transportation moves New York Forward. Private-sector employment in New York increased by more than 7,000 jobs in December alone, with the unemployment rate at 4.4 percent. One key reason for that is the historic investments being made in infrastructure, which generate an estimated 13 jobs for every million dollars invested.

New York, under Governor Kathy Hochul, is making nation-leading investments to modernize our infrastructure, reconnect and revitalize our communities, and grow our

economy. The people of New York are always Governor Hochul's priority. She is always working to make our state a safer and more affordable place to live and work.

NYSDOT shares this vision and is making it a reality by putting people at the center of our transportation planning. With the largest five-year capital plan in NYSDOT history, currently proposed at $34.1 billion, our infrastructure is being transformed and new jobs are being created across New York every single day.

That growth will only continue with the investments being put forward by the Governor in this year's budget. DOT's capital plan includes hundreds of road and bridge projects that will enhance safety and improve quality of life for residents in every corner of the state. It is also uniting communities long divided by concrete highways -- undoing the planning mistakes of the past, and providing new opportunities for growth. It will certainly transform the state's infrastructure, creating a safer,

healthier, and more sustainable New York.

We see that already in places like Rochester, where the Inner Loop Project has revitalized downtown neighborhoods, and in Syracuse, where the project to remove the Interstate 81 viaduct is generating jobs, economic development, and a new vibrancy in and around Central New York.

Here in the City of Albany, the Governor's budget includes funds to begin the environmental review process to reimagine the Interstate 787 corridor and provide greater access to the Hudson River. DOT is also connecting the cities of Albanaer -- Albany and Rensselaer -- maybe that's a new way of calling it --

(Laughter.)

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: -- Albany and Rensselaer with a new Hudson River crossing which will provide more reliable train service by replacing the Civil War-era Livingston Avenue Bridge.

In the South Bronx, we have begun the environmental review process for a project to

repair and replace five bridges along the Cross Bronx Expressway that have reached the end of their service life. This safety project, which is still in the design phase, is foundational to our efforts to "Reimagine the Cross Bronx" corridor, and we are committed to meaningful community engagement throughout the process.

Simultaneously, the Governor's budget also contains funding to build on the work of the Reimagine the Cross Bronx Visioning Study and further assess options to reimagine how we better connect the community, including capping portions of the highway.

In Manhattan, we're commencing a study on the West Side Highway to identify existing needs and potential enhancements to better serve all users of the system, including pedestrians and cyclists.

In Western New York, the DOT is embarking on a project to enhance safety at an intersection in the fast-growing town of Orchard Park, home of the Buffalo Bills, where the construction of a roundabout along

Armor Duells Road is contemplated.

More than $90 million will be spent on projects to repave the Long Island Expressway from the Nassau/Queens line to Exit 48 in Suffolk County.

And in the Western Southern Tier we will begin a $57 million Gateway Connection Project which will revitalize downtown Hornell.

We're also making our infrastructure more resilient with projects like the $26 million project in Westchester County to raise Annsville Circle in the Town of Cortlandt and to prevent flooding.

To achieve the objectives of DOT's capital plan, the Governor's Executive Budget includes an additional $800 million to ensure that the department has the purchasing power it needs to make these projects a reality.

Additionally, there's $100 million to maintain CHIPS and State Touring Routes, bringing the overall state investment to more than a billion dollars in local assistance. That's the largest amount of funding for

localities ever provided in a NYSDOT capital plan and represents an increase of 85 percent over the last plan.

Governor Hochul is also a big supporter of mass transit. Transit Operating Aid, under the Executive Budget proposal, is projected to be over $9 billion for statewide transit systems.

Investing in transit and clean technology is critical to achieving our sustainability goals. The Regional Transit Service in Rochester recently unveiled two new hydrogen fuel cell electric buses with support from the state, and this budget proposes $100 million in additional non-MTA transit capital funding for similar initiatives, with $20 million to help transit providers transition to zero-emission fleets. This builds upon the $100 million in state funding under our Zero-Emission Transit Transition Program, otherwise known as ZETT, which the Governor just announced.

Ensuring affordable, reliable train service is also a cornerstone of this budget,

which includes $25 million to improve rail service in the Hudson Valley, a region that is experiencing some of the state's fastest growth and is home to several major employers and popular destinations, including LegoLand.

The Governor's vision includes game-changing investments in upstate airports, with work continuing under the $230 million Upstate Airport Economic Development and Revitalization Competition.

And of course it's the dedicated men and women at NYSDOT who make all of these achievements possible. And that’s why we will continue to put a premium on worker protection. Our maintenance workers operate in inherently dangerous conditions, as we witnessed with the tragic deaths of two Thruway Authority workers last year. And with the frightening video -- which many of you may have seen -- of our own DOT worker who was working down in the Southern Tier and was nearly killed when a box truck driver was distracted and ran off the road.

With your help, DOT implemented an

Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement Pilot Program to get New Yorkers to slow down in work zones. Since the launch of the program in 2023, there have been no recorded worker injuries or fatalities in areas where we deployed the program. And in locations where the cameras have been present more than once, fewer notices of violation are being issued, meaning that people are slowing down.

The bottom line is the program is working. The Governor's budget proposes to make this pilot program permanent, and with support from the Legislature we will do just that.

In addition, the budget proposes extending existing legislation to protect our highway maintenance workers from assault and harassment. We must do all we can to keep our people safe, because they truly are the ones who are out there on the roads every day keeping us safe.

Our maintenance workers are also on the frontlines against another menace -- climate change, which is increasing the

frequency and severity of weather events and truly battering our roads, bridges and culverts.

And there's no state that does snow and ice and emergency response better than New York State. New Yorkers see our DOT team out there all the time, plowing in the frigid weather, repairing damage from tropical storms and tornados, fixing traffic lights, bridges and culverts. We're out there 24/7/365. We're on it.

As I have stated, the New York State Department of Transportation is integral to the fabric of every community in New York State. We keep New Yorkers on the move, and we work to provide an accessible, reliable and affordable transportation network that drives our economy forward and, above all, keeps people safe.

On behalf of Governor Kathy Hochul, I look forward to working with you in each of your communities as DOT continues to carry out our critical mission and, together, we move New York Forward.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Magnarelli, 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Good morning, Commissioner. How are you?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning, sir.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Not a great day to be the DOT commissioner --

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: -- and I'm sure there's a lot of people out there who -- well, we all got here, so it be must have been okay. All right? Well, thank you for being here.

First of all, I'm going to get right into the questions, not a lot of background, okay?

The Executive proposal includes an additional $800 million in the DOT capital plan to restore purchasing power. Is this funding sufficient to restore the purchasing power for the remainder of the capital plan, or will another appropriation to restore the purchasing power be required next year?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: The Governor has put forward $800 million to restore our purchasing power, and indeed it goes -- it is that amount of money that we need to actually move forward our purchasing power. We've seen all of the effects of supply chain and other issues, COVID, et cetera. We need to make sure that we restore the ability for DOT to complete this capital plan.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Well, we don't disagree with that. I just wonder if it's enough, or will we be looking at this again next year? Which isn't a problem, it's just a question.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Sir, if I had a crystal ball and were able to predict everything, that would be one thing. But I think that the amount that the Governor has put forward is indeed a huge step in the right direction to actually resolve a number of issues.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: That kind of gets into my next question. Has inflation

slowed down the implementation of the capital plan to date, up to now? How has this issue been addressed up to this point without the $800 million? Are we behind?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: What we do at New York State DOT is actually track the cost indices for all of our materials, whether it's steel, concrete, asphalt, fuel, et cetera.

So regardless of what the supply chain looks like or what some of the other inflationary factors have looked like, you know that DOT is delivering on our commitments under the capital plan. That commitment --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: So we're not getting behind in projects or not being able to start projects or --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: What we've been able to do very successfully is make sure the projects that are contained in the MOU, the agreement between the Executive and the Legislature for the five-year capital plan, those projects are being executed.

If we run into any concern -- it could be we dig and we find something, a geological impediment, et cetera -- and it's going to delay the project and we know that it's not going to happen in this capital plan, we have other projects we can pull in to deliver on the same commitments that the Legislature made with the Executive, regardless of where it is in the state.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. Let's move over to non-MTA mass transit capital. The proposed fourth year of the capital plan includes 220 million for non-MTA mass transit capital, an increase of $100 million above the approved fourth year funding level.

Is this the level of funding targeted toward -- is this level of funding targeted the maintenance and the normal replacement of assets? Or is it your expectation that this level of funding would improve service?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It should do both, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: It should do both? Okay.

The Executive proposal continues to provide $20 million for electric bus procurements. The previous funding for this program was allowed to accumulate for five years before it was made available. When do you expect this new funding to be made available?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We actually have a solicitation out, so it will -- the electric buses, what we tried to do is make sure that we garnered enough money together so that it would be a meaningful notice of financial opportunity, a NOFO that was available to all the transit agencies. So when we actually did put out the solicitation for electric vehicles, it was significant.

In addition to all of that, like I said in my testimony, we also just put out a new program called ZETT, which is also aimed for the non-MTA transit authorities, $100 million available for them to apply for zero-emission vehicles.

As well as facilities, charging

equipment, a lot of other -- the component parts that go into not just the purchase of an electric bus, but all of the accompanying materials that they might need access to.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay, thank you.

Reconnecting communities. The Executive proposal includes $75 million to advance plans to reconnect communities divided by 787 and the Cross Bronx Expressway. I'm going to leave that for other people, because I know you're going to get questions on that.

But I have questions on some other plans. What is the status of Route 17?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: The -- which portion of Route 17? Is it the 17-to-86 project?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Yeah.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So there is a -- we have a very large project underway down in the Hudson Valley to convert Route 17 to interstate standards, otherwise known as 86. We've been working on it, on the

environmental process. We've conducted almost 50 outreach meetings over the course of the environmental review process. And we are advancing the project.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: So it's moving along.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It is moving along. And I have every expectation that it will be literally commenced before the end of this capital plan.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: I'm trying to stay within the 10 minutes, so pardon me, okay?

The Kensington Expressway project has faced judicial roadblocks. What is the status of that project?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It is currently in litigation, awaiting a judicial decision.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: So it's kind of stopped at this point.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: At this point in time we're waiting for the judge to rule.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: When will Hunts Point Access Project be completed? And I've got to be honest, I don't even know what that is.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Hunts Point Access Project is actually a really exciting project that was done in multiple phases down in New York City, trying to get trucks off the local roads in the Bronx and give them a more streamlined access to the market.

And we'll be completed with the next phase here this year, in 2025.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: It will be completed this year.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Well, somebody's going to be happy.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It's on time and maybe a little ahead of time.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: My favorite, I-81.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Are we on

time? Are we on point, moving right along? We're going to be done in 2028?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I will tell you that given the delays that we experienced at the very beginning of the project due to litigation, which we overcame, we are moving on all engines on -- firing on all engines on the Interstate 81 project.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: So do you think it might be a little longer than 2028?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, sir, because of the delay that we had from -- we had a year's worth of litigation that put us behind.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: So that could mean a year, two years?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I don't expect that it will be --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: It fluctuates?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: -- extended delay, but we started a year later than we anticipated because of the litigation.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: No, I understand. Right.

And finally, the Rochester Inner Loop Project recently received a $100 million federal grant?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Is this in line with the assumed federal funding level for this project, and can it be completed within the current capital plan funding level?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We're working with the City of Rochester, who's actually executing the project. But that's the goal.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. Centro. Okay, that's my bus company, bus authority in Onondaga County, Oneida.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. They're going to take over the Cortland County public transit system. That's going to be added to Centro. Will Centro need additional funding to integrate Cortland's

transit system?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I'm not aware of what their financial requirements are right now. I do know that they're looking at doing that. I know that our office has been helping facilitate those discussions to understand what may be needed.

We've seen a number of consolidations across the upstate transit authorities, and our office has been very --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Well, if they didn't step in, there wouldn't have been any bus service in Cortland.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Correct. So we want to make sure that there's --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: And that entity basically was bankrupt. So my feeling is it's going to need some money. I don't want -- I want to provide that service in Cortland, but at the same time I don't want service to deteriorate in the rest of the Centro catch basin, so to speak.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, I think we all share the same objectives. And

the question is, is how do we make sure that we facilitate that level of service.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: I want you to keep an eye on it for me.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Thank you. Bridges. One minute. I get another chance, so I can come back on this. Highway pavement conditions improved to 57.9 percent in the good to excellent condition in 2022, a 1.1 percent increase. Highway bridge conditions got worse. Okay? They went from 64 percent -- they went from 66.3 percent to 64 percent.

Is there a highway and bridge condition report ready for 2023? And what is that going to show us, do you think?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: There's a report that we do called the Graber Report on Bridges, and we're working to finalize it now. That should be out soon.

But you have -- we shared that with the Legislature last year, so you've got the historic analysis of our bridge conditions.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. Well, thank you very much and --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: And we report -- oh, sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: We made it. Thank you. I'll be back.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Our chair, Jeremy Cooney, 10 minutes.

SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Chair.

And good morning, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning.

SENATOR COONEY: And let me start by saying thank you to you and your team for your help in this transition as I take on this new role in Transportation.

Also, thank you and your workers for getting us here safely and for your focus on worker safety overall, an important part, and we're glad to see that reflected in Governor Hochul's budget.

Let me start by publicly stating my

support for the 800 million increase in the state DOT's capital budget. As Chair Magnarelli talked about, this is an important part, an important investment of our core projects and getting those projects finished.

But could you comment specifically on the record about how many of these projects would not have been able to have come to completion if we did not have this 800 million proposed in the Executive Budget for the core work that was originally part of the DOT plan?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So our goal at New York State DOT is always to complete the agreements that are made within the capital plan every year. I can't speculate to understand exactly, you know, what that would be, given where we are. But the bottom line is that we work every day to maximize the dollars that are provided to us by the Governor and the Legislature. And in doing so, you know, everybody encounters a number of questions along the way -- the national economy, factors that influence it

along the way. And so the fact that the Governor put forward $800 million to make sure that we have our buying power restored really does allow DOT to execute to its fullest over the course of this five-year capital plan.

SENATOR COONEY: And we get lots of questions, as you know, as I'm sure your team does as well, about the status of these roads and the maintenance of these roads and making sure that our state roads are safe for travelers.

So let's move on and talk about the materials as part of those roads. We know that in 2023 there was an engineering bulletin, 23-008, issued in March of that year, which addressed streamlining the pavement type selection guidance. In other words, I'm not coming with a specific agenda in terms of what types of material are used, but rather supportive of a mix that allows us to achieve our climate goals as well as find savings, hopefully, for taxpayers, to allow these roads to be completed safely and

timely, but to maximize the dollars that we spend as part of the capital plan.

Can you comment upon your focus on resilient pavement types and what you're doing to address this?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I would be happy to. It's something that New York State DOT has taken on and very much embraced -- not only the CLCPA requirements that the state is working towards, but also it's a particular factor in how we operate.

So construction materials. So what are we doing. We're piloting the 20 percent goal right now related to use of recycled materials, making sure that they meet performance standards. We're looking at recycled asphalt pavement. We look at warm asphalt mixes and how do we incorporate them.

Our engineering instruction that you actually referred to is the guideline by which we make sure -- and we build this into our contracts -- that contractors have to use these materials. Portland cement concrete, recycled glass, reclaimed fly ash. These are

just samples of some of the construction materials that we're utilizing.

And in particular, we just won, and I really hope the federal government comes through on their commitment, a grant acknowledging New York State DOT -- USDOT provided us grant funding to advance this investment in low-carbon materials.

SENATOR COONEY: Well, that's terrific. And I think, you know, in addition to environmental factors, we also want to consider durability factors. And so we know that some materials have a longer lasting period than others, and we want to make sure that we're finding that mix in all of these projects so that we can make the investments where the most critical needs are. So I appreciate that work and very hopeful for that grant, Commissioner.

So we've talked about the plan and the projects and the roads, but let's talk about the vehicles that go on those roads. And I want to talk about my support for public transportation. We know that due to the good

efforts of Governor Hochul and her economic development plan, a lot of these companies that are coming to communities outside of New York City -- talk about Micron in Central New York, but also in my district in the town of Gates, the new Amazon distribution facility. They're locating outside of center cities. And we want to make sure that we're connecting workers to these economic opportunities -- specifically, workers who are often left behind. Right? Communities of color, low-income populations. How do we connect underserved communities to the economic opportunities that we as a state are working towards?

Can you give your thoughts on the role of -- public transportation's role in making sure that these workers have that economic impact?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So I think it's integral. Right? We always want to make sure that if we're fortunate enough to have an employer anywhere in New York State that is providing access to jobs,

that's providing an economic development opportunity for our communities.

And so working with the transit authorities in every portion of the state, certainly the non-MTA elements, we want to make sure that we do provide that level of service in transit. The transit agencies themselves undertake exhaustive study and analysis about where those ridership trends are. We are very much in support of additional opportunities, and we've got them built into our capital plan. How do we expand, for instance, bus rapid transit? How do we make sure we've got an innovative ability fund that's actually looking to try and do some of those elements. And I know you're a big supporter of that as well.

SENATOR COONEY: I appreciate you mentioning BRTs, or bus rapid transit lines. I'm thrilled that Albany has kind of led the way here, but I know that Syracuse and Buffalo and hopefully Rochester are going to be moving in that direction.

That's going to take funds. I am

proposing an additional $5 million fund that would allow these worker connections to take place, what I call the Worker Access Transit Fund, so that companies in all parts of New York State have access to work with their public transit authority to create those direct routes for workers. And ultimately I think that will help with economic growth across the state. More information on that later.

But again, I think STOA is the underlying opportunity here. The Governor has put forth a 3.4 percent increase. We're thrilled by that. Obviously she continued the legislative adds from last year. We're really pleased that she recognizes this value. But I think that kind of similar to what we talked about with the DOT capital plan and the inflationary factors there, there are inflationary factors that impact the ability to operate these public transit systems. And I'm not quite sure that 3.4 gets us to where we need to be. I think we're going to be pushing for additional

resources so that we can do those BRT lines and some of the other innovative approaches for operations, not just in RTS in Rochester, but across transit systems in New York.

I know that Chair Magnarelli mentioned earlier some expansion opportunities in Centro, and obviously we've done that successfully here in the Albany area with the expansion of CDTA into Montgomery County. So we want to continue to provide those opportunities to New Yorkers wherever they may be.

In my remaining two minutes I would be remiss if I did not talk about our opportunities to expand mass transit, and of course that means my interest in high-speed rail. Let me thank Deputy Commissioner Ho for her work and her team's work in making sure that we are advancing those Corridor ID studies that came through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act.

Now, we're hopeful that federal funds will continue to allow us to make those investments in rail, but I still believe

very, very much that there's an opportunity for New York to lead when it comes to high-speed rail, specifically in connecting the City of Toronto with the City of New York. And, of course, thinking about this in an analogous way with the Erie Canal uplifting the communities in between and creating opportunities for economic growth, trade and population recentering.

And so I'm hoping that you could comment if there are additional studies available, whether it's a formal Corridor ID study or research out there that looks at alternative routes. As opposed to just looking at the Amtrak CSX train track route, are there additional parts of state land that we have either right of way access to or that we could have right-of-way access to, to explore the creation of high-speed rail across upstate New York? In addition to what we're doing with the 90B plan for higher-speed rail.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Okay. So a couple of things.

First, I just wanted to make sure, on the transit question that you asked, there is $220 million in this year's Executive Budget for non-MTA transit capital funding. That's a 100 million increase to non-MTA transit systems, both upstate and downstate. So I just wanted to make sure, as part of the discussion with regard to expanding transit access, that is included in the budget.

With regard to high-speed rail and what you're referring to, the department has taken a very exhaustive approach, completing a Tier 1 EIS with the Federal Rail Administration which set the groundwork for a look at everything that we could possibly do, including, you know, exactly where potential right-of-ways could go. That led to a Corridor ID program that we are now officially in, and hope to expand on that investment.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

Assemblyman Miller.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Good morning,

Commissioner. I just want to thank you for your testimony and I want to give a shout out to all the DOT employees who are out there fighting this adverse storm and weather we have right now. I just came in from New Hartford, south of Utica, and they're doing a top-notch job, and along the Thruway corridor too. And I'm just glad everybody is well-behaved. So it was a safe trip there, and I'm sure that the employees will be happy to hear that.

I've got a lot of questions -- a lot of the questions were already asked, so I'm going to take a little different direction in some of these here. And I'd like to start out with electric vehicles.

As the attempt at adoption of electric vehicles increases, does the department plan to introduce new road wear-and-tear studies specific to the impacts of the heavier vehicle weights?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So we have -- we've done a number of things, but first and foremost our engineers have taken a

very exhaustive look at what our existing requirements are right now, and -- for the state system. We've also undertaken some studies with some local communities as well.

For the existing state system, our engineers are basically coming back saying our standards and our specs accommodate any sort of additional weight that might be on electric vehicles. We're already building to a standard that would accommodate what could be coming.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: So all this engineering work will aid to determining the adjustments we're going to have to make in our paving programs, in our bridge designs along the way.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I guess what I'm trying to say is that it already is accounted for, and so we are building, presently our specs account for it already.

Now, I can say that there are probably some local roads where currently buses can't even go down or trucks might not be able to access them because just the nature of -- you

know, they're not heavily traveled, they're not built to the state standard.

I'm just trying to make a distinction between the state requirements that I'm talking about and how we're building to those standards, versus there may be one or two, you know, roads in a community, et cetera, that might not be at that same level. So I want to distinguish between the state system and other local systems.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Okay, that brings me right into my second question right here. You know, I understand the department is obligated to annually release several reports on the highway pavement and bridge condition report, capital program letting and implementation report, capital program accomplishments report, and so on and so on. Are these reports available to all of us here so we can -- you know, when we're asked?

Because, you know, a lot of our offices get questions from different zones on -- on their infrastructure may be lacking in the Hudson Valley compared to the

infrastructure in the western part of the state. So when we get that, we don't have that information available at our fingertips, so.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We make the reports available and have made them available. So our bridge condition report, which was what Assemblymember -- Chairman Magnarelli was asking me about, the Graber report will be out -- the latest update will come out here shortly. We're working on finalizing it right now. But you've got historic data that's available.

In addition, we provide quarterly reports on how we're proceeding through our capital plan. So all of that is available to the legislative members.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Okay. I'd like to go right over to our capital plan, $800 million increase. You know, it's an inflation factor increase. How was that determined? You know, what was the thought process through that?

You know, I know we picked a number

that we -- you know, that our aggregate costs are more, our labor costs are more, et cetera, et cetera. I guess -- can you elaborate?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: All those factors are taken into account and looked at how do we actually make sure that we are able to deliver on the commitments that were made under the five-year capital plan.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Okay, and on the CHIPS, which that's our lifeblood up here in upstate New York. You're saying there's a hundred million dollar increase in the plan. That's basically where we're starting flat.

And I know the highway -- the county highway people, the town highway people are -- you know, they're looking for, minimum, a $250 million increase in the CHIPS programs. You know, right now we're barely funding the decline in New York State. And you know, I know we're trying to get ahead of the game, but at this level it's not going -- it's not going to be there.

I'll come back.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next will be Chair Comrie for 10 minutes.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

Good morning, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning, sir.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you for your great work. I've enjoyed working with you over the past few years. You've been very responsive, and your agency has always sought to try to find solutions, so I want to thank you.

My throat just got wet on me.

I just wanted to ask you a couple of questions regarding the -- how much is New York spending on widening highways this decade to include the capacity to include the broadband cable while you're putting in the roadways? How much -- I've been asking you for the last couple of years to try to help bridge the divide for last mile, first mile upstate, to put in cable while you're adding

new roadways upstate.

How much of that is happening?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, sir. We're looking at where there's opportunity and where there's need. We do do that, especially when there's companies or communities that are interested in expanding on that.

We also do it for -- we're also -- there's specific projects that we're looking at, not just broadband but also how can we also facilitate renewable energy.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. Have you been working with the Thruway Authority with access, to be able to get high-speed cable from them to move to these projects, to these different areas to bring broadband cable and high-access opportunities to upstate?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We work with the Thruway on a daily basis. I -- I couldn't point to a specific fiber or conduit project, but I'm sure there. I'm sure if I ask my right-of-way unit they would say they are.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. And you -- also you mentioned the issues -- I'll switch to another topic. But I would hope that you continue to expand your opportunities to work with the Thruway to put broadband upstate so we can solve the last mile, first mile in those communities.

In the South Bronx you said you started the environmental review process for the five bridges across the Cross Bronx Expressway. Could you expand on that a little bit?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, sir. So we have -- we're working on two projects simultaneously. The first is a project to rehabilitate and/or replace five bridges along just over a mile section of the Cross Bronx. Those bridges have literally come to the end of their useful life, and we need to make sure that we rehab and/or replace all five of them.

That project is foundational to the work that we're also advancing with the City of New York to reimagine the Cross Bronx.

We've undertaken a visioning study to really trying to conceptualize what could the future of the Cross Bronx actually be. And so we're working on finalizing that vision report now. That will then lead to some of the investments that the Governor put forward in the Executive Budget to really carry out that next level of environmental assessment on how do we start to actually act on what some of those reimagining concepts might be to include potentially capping portions of the Cross Bronx.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

And then I'll move to the Van Wyck. How are we doing with the Van Wyck project? I know that the interchange is almost done, it looks beautiful. But -- the Van Wyck interchange at Grand Central. But how are we doing with the Van Wyck repair project?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We are doing exceedingly well. We're trying to complete that project as quickly as possible, and we're making good progress.

SENATOR COMRIE: Have we decided which

roads between Hillside Avenue and the airport are going to be permanently closed, the exits? Has that been decided yet?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I will have to get back to you on that, sir.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay, thank you. Appreciate it.

Also, do you have an open database that people can see your projects and your contracts that you're working on so that folks can take a look at it? And what's the progress of that, and how is that working?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, sir, we have a -- we have a project website called Projects In Your Community that you can click on, on our website and see exactly, you know, what we're undertaking right now, what work we're doing, what work we have planned to do, and the details of all of that.

SENATOR COMRIE: And do you -- with your MWBE program, do you regularly send out notices to your bidders about these projects that are coming up? And how is that MWBE program working?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It's doing well. We have transformed our office diversity and opportunity. And what I mean by that is that we've enhanced our resources, our leadership capabilities, et cetera. We've got a great team in place and they work cross-functionally across the entire department.

This year we're -- I'll tell you our -- I know you always ask about kind of how our goals are proceeding. This year we've achieved an 18 percent compliance. That's up, and we're glad about that. We're certainly getting back to where we were before COVID. And we've got another program that we've launched to really engage a number of MWBE firms called WorkSmart NY. And it's working smart with DOT and all of our contractors to make sure the opportunities are not only known but then working to make sure that people can actually take advantage of them.

SENATOR COMRIE: Great. And do you do regular downstate opportunities or around the

state, not just downstate opportunities, for vendors to see the DOT projects that are coming up and --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, sir. And we would love -- you know, we were working with your office. I think that there's some venues in the city that we would very much like to perhaps do some outreach around some of the opportunities that are coming our way. And that's for the whole state, but in particular I know there are some projects that we're looking to launch downstate in the city that we would like to get the word out. So happy to collaborate with you on that.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. I look forward to working with you on that.

And then a question -- as you know, I've had a wildlife crossings bill that we worked on last year, and I see that the DOT is trying to work on that. And the Biden administration gave you a grant of $323,000 to conduct a two-phase study on the wildlife collisions and ways to improve habitat

connectivity. Can you let us know what you're planning on doing with that? And hopefully we can enact the bill through the study -- after the study.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So first and foremost, we were thrilled to win the grant. Now we actually need to make sure that we get the dollars that are associated with it.

But we are working on that regardless of whether or not the dollars flow our way. I will tell you that NYSDOT is continuing to progress all of the actions under the community -- around the habitat connectivity initiative, including some of the key elements that I think we negotiated and talked through with a number of the advocates, including a toolkit so that we can identify projects and locations where there are actually connectivity needs for wildlife.

And also looking at the preliminary design guidance that we would have to employ. I think that is a huge step forward. And also a framework for asset management -- how

do we make sure that we've got the ability to continue to not only construct effective wildlife crossings, but then actually implement it and maintain the assets as well.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you. I appreciate your answers.

I just want to bring up my pet project, which is not happening and unfortunately may not happen for another four years, but the widening of the Cross Island Parkway. I've been talking to you about that. I know it's not on the agenda, but hopefully we could get a design project or a study project to look at it.

That corridor is consistently overcrowded, and especially trying to access the Grand Central or the Long Island expressway, there's a 15-minute backup sometimes. We need to take a look at it. So I'm going to continue to raise that as an issue. And now that we have UBS Arena there, there's also another backup. So there's truly a need to widen the Cross Island Parkway.

I keep saying it; hopefully one day we'll get the monies to do it. But I appreciate any opportunity we can to take a better study of it.

So again, Commissioner, thank you for being responsive and always making sure that whenever I ask you a question, you come back with detailed answers.

Thank you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR COMRIE: I'm early. I'm early.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Senator.

Before I go on, we've been joined by Assemblymember Simon, Assemblymember Shimsky, Assemblymember Jacobson, Assemblymember Otis, Assemblymember De Los Santos and Assemblymember Gonzalez-Rojas.

Mr. Ra.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And I'm sorry, just -- Senator Martinez has also joined us. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: As has Assemblyman

Palmesano.

Good morning, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Some of our members from Western New York asked if we could -- I'm sure you're aware there's a road-salt shortage that municipalities are dealing with. I'm wondering whether there's anything that DOT can do to assist with that.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So we've been -- I think what you're referring to is a company out in Western New York that is providing road salt to a number of municipalities.

I can tell you that they are open and available. And, you know, if there's any concern with accessing their product or the like, we are happy to work with our colleagues at OGS as well as DOT to facilitate that service.

But there's -- they're available and they're operational.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: All right. Thank

you.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about some, you know, regional items for us down on Long Island. You know we had that meeting a few weeks ago and we talked about a few of these issues. You know, we all know about CHIPS. And as my colleague said, it really is the lifeblood of upstate, with a lot of local road paving.

Years ago there was a program called SHIPs, which was the Suburban Highway Improvement Program that, you know, pushed aid through downstate communities, suburban communities -- Long Island, Hudson Valley. And there were a lot of our local folks talking about trying to revive that effort.

Do you have -- I guess as a department do you feel that we're adequately giving the different regions of the state, you know, a fair share of our highway funding?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So I am familiar that historically there was a program called SHIPs.

I guess I think in answer to your

second question with regard to the availability of funding, I would leave that at the discretion of the Executive and the Legislature with regard to the DOT capital plan.

As it now stands, we have a historic plan that we're executing on. The Governor has added a billion more dollars to make sure that we carry out this five-year plan. That in and of itself is the road map for us actually achieving our goals under the capital plan that has been negotiated through the Legislature and the Executive.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: You know, I know you're talking about the capital plan, we're in, what, Year 4 of five with the current capital plan. In my understanding, the Long Island region is slated to receive 7.8 percent of capital plan funding this year; the Hudson Valley is 9.6 percent; New York City, 13.6 percent; Buffalo and Western New York, around 40 percent.

I know you're aware there has been some talk of an effort to have the

Long Island region develop its own metropolitan planning organization to better assist the region in securing a greater amount of federal aid. Do you think that would be a beneficial thing for Long Island?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I don't know that it would be, to tell you the truth. So the reason being I understand the concern: You want to make sure that there's opportunity for Long Island. But right now the way that the NYMTC, which is the New York Metropolitan Planning Organization, actually operates, first and foremost, the slice of the pie that everybody is looking to access is still the same. There's not going to be an enhanced slice of the pie or an additional slice of the pie coming in the form of federal funding.

New York State receives the funding that it receives, it's formula-driven, it's by Congress, et cetera. That's 40 percent. Forty percent of those federal dollars that we're now executing on right now in the Bipartisan Infrastructure legislation,

coupled with a record amount of state funding that the Governor and the Legislature have put forward, is what our five-year capital plan is executed off of. That's the $34.1 billion that we're working off of.

If there is a separate entity in the form of an MPO, you're going to have to staff it up, you're going to have to do all kinds of traffic analysis and everything that's already being done by the existing staff. It'll cost you probably about $8 million a year. I don't know who's going to pay for that, so that's something to consider. It will probably be at least an $8 million venture.

The third thing is to really look to see, like, the same people that would represent Long Island on the MPO are the same people who have voting seats on the existing NYMTC. It's the county executives, et cetera. So ...

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you,

Commissioner.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next is Senate Ranker Oberacker.

SENATOR OBERACKER: Commissioner, good morning.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning.

SENATOR OBERACKER: Good to see you. And a big shout out, as everybody has said, to our plow and sanding efforts there to get us all in here today. So thank you -- thank you for that.

A lot has already been covered, so I'm just going to hit on a couple of high notes to start with and go from there. So, you know, we are flat on our CHIPS funding, our Extreme Winter Recovery money, our BRIDGE NY and PAVE-NY. So just suffice to say that I am concerned that we are flat. I would like to see us, of course, add something to that.

And I've always been taught that if you raise an issue but don't have a solution, that you're whining. So I'm not whining,

Commissioner. But what I would like to propose is a community-level emergency assistance grant program, otherwise we are calling it CLEAR funding. I have spoken to you a little bit previous about this, and my thanks too to our chair for Transportation for giving me input as we put this together.

But in essence what I'm talking about is a fund, a $62 million fund, a million per county. And for those municipalities within those counties that would realize a 10 percent or more weather issue -- that would be based on their total highway budget -- that this would qualify them then for some funding under this CLEAR program.

It is a way of I think being a bridge program from CHIPS being flat in our budget, acting as just a little bit of a -- you know, a bridge, to quote that term, and helps them out.

So I would like to talk more about that in the future, but I think it's something we could look at.

Another way that we could look at if

CHIPS is going to stay flat, you know, we are -- under Section 5 of the -- it's actually subdivision section 5 of our law, it states that where the service life of these projects are at least 10 years, they can use CHIPS funding for road repair. I'd like to see us look at reducing from the 10 year to a possible eight-year term. Those two years would be very, very helpful in allowing our municipalities to utilize some CHIPS funding, and it may help smooth out some of the issues of not being able to gain some extra additional funding.

On the subject of EVs, I would really like to see us, Commissioner, do a -- just do a carveout or extend the runway, if you will, in three classes: For emergency vehicles, again for our school buses, and for our plows and heavier machinery.

And the reason is, is because as we look at the infrastructure, it's not just electrical that's driving this, it is also bridge weights. They would need to be reevaluated. Guardrail strength on the

highways. School lifts to lift these EVs. And more appropriately, I'm a firefighter and a first responder, and so for us when we attack an EV vehicle versus a conventional, it changes things.

We were talking about mass transit and the chair brought up about the high-speed rail. I'm suggesting a low-speed rail, a green hydrogen rail project that would take folks from Port Jervis up the beautiful western parts of the Catskills -- just happens to be in my district -- all the way to Binghamton. And I really think that this is a green-hydrogen-fired locomotive.

The interesting part about that, the diesel engine can be easily converted by use of green hydrogen. I think it hits our carbon issues and also is a way of looking at bringing some of the folks into the beautiful parts of upstate New York that we all love.

Safety zones. One hundred percent in favor. We really need to crack down on the issues of speeding through safety zones.

And then lastly, I would really like

just to compliment you and give a quick shout out to Director Andy Styles from Region 9. I've worked very closely with him. I think it's a reflection of the people that you have put around you, your guidance, as far as that goes. He's been available, very informative. And again, Commissioner, I think it speaks well to your stewardship.

There was a question in there someplace, but I'll let you determine where that is.

(Laughter.)

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Okay.

SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you for the time.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: We'll look for it.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I really appreciate it. I will reiterate again -- well, first of all, thank you. It's always great to engage you.

And I know you're looking at the hydrogen model for rail. And I do think that, you know, we are -- it's a technologically challenging area, so it will

be good.

SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Commissioner.

All right, the remaining Assemblymembers on my list will all have three minutes for both question and answer. I have a list that was given to me in the order that was asked. If you wish to be moved up on the list, you must get permission from everyone in front of you on the list.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I don't think that's going to happen.

With that, Assemblymember Solages.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: Greetings. I want to return back to talking about Long Island.

So as you know, Nassau and Suffolk County are the only counties with more than a million registered vehicles. Long Island is ranked first and third in center-lane-miles. It also experiences high volumes of truck traffic because of our

limited freight infrastructure. And then according to the department's most recent pavement assessment report, we have some of the poorest road conditions next to the Hudson Valley.

But despite all that, we only receive about 7 percent of the upcoming DOT capital program. And so we have -- in the funding formula we have received about 23 percent in the past, but now we're down to 7 percent.

So can you explain why Long Island's share of transportation funding has dropped so dramatically? And how can we ensure that our roads, whether they're the LIE, the Southern State, the Sunrise Highway, receive equitable investment moving forward?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you very much for the question, Assemblymember.

I'm not quite sure where the figure 7 percent that you're citing may have been drawn from, but I'm happy to sit down with you and go through it. I'm not quite sure that it's accurate.

The MOU for the current five-year plan

that we're executing on right now, the MOU between the Executive and the Legislature, is about $1.5 million for the Long Island region. That includes $268 million in the MOU itself that we're moving on. That represents about 12 percent of the core State Highway and Bridge Program over the five-year period and 15 percent of the portion for State Highway and Bridge Program that's actually subject to the MOU.

So those numbers are very different than the number that you're citing. And so when we look at what the larger investment is, these percentages are actually in keeping with the historical allocations that have been agreed to between the Legislature and the Executive, those higher set of numbers that I just quoted.

So over the last 15 years the regional allocations for Long Island over the five-year planning periods have really fluctuated anywhere between actually 12 percent and 16 percent for our core Bridge and Road Program. So double at least some of

the numbers that you were providing.

Relative to the projects, we're continuing to actually deliver on absolutely every single project that's within the MOU for the Long Island region and across the state --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: And so just really quick because I'm running out of time, so what -- so the last project of regional significance was the LIE HOV lanes. That happened decades ago. So what project is planned for Long Island in the current capital plan or the future capital plans?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So two things. Within the last year the Governor put forward $100 million that actually went towards paving the LIE, and then the next capital plans --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: Of regional significance.

(Time clock sounds; overtalk.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: Thank you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, I

would say the LIE is regionally significant (laughing).

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair. And good morning, Commissioner. Welcome. Good to see you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Where are you? There you are. Hello, sir.

SENATOR LIU: I know there's a lot of us down here.

Thank you very much for your work and leadership on these issues, and I want to give a thank you to Assistant Commissioner Ho as well, and to Assistant Commissioner Gibbon, who has been very responsive on many of the local issues.

I don't have much time, so I just want to get right into it.

Last year you may recall we had a great hearing, led by former Chair Kennedy, and our new Chair Cooney was really very much on top of it. He started asking questions about the state rail plan.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

SENATOR LIU: And so my first question is, is there any update since the hearing we had last spring?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, what we've done is actually complete the Tier 1 EIS. We've taken that to a new level and we've applied for Corridor ID funding and acceptance into the Corridor ID program at FRA. And those elements are moving forward.

That allowed us to actually apply for federal funding and grants. So thank you all very much for your support. Those grants that we are receiving we are actually executing on. So it has been a huge step forward on the rail side.

SENATOR LIU: And that was to the Federal Railroad Administration, is that --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Correct.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. And with the incoming -- well, they're no longer incoming, they're there, the new federal administration. Is there any -- I mean, are we just going business as usual or are there

any kind of updates or modifications to that application that we might foresee would be necessary?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So I have to see -- like each of you, every day brings a new twist. So we're looking -- I was just in Washington earlier this week with the Congress and the new administration, looking to see what some of the new requirements may be.

As you know, some of the executive orders have come out and then they've been withdrawn. We're looking to see exactly what the U.S. Department of Transportation, how they're going to execute their program. We'll look to see exactly what the opportunities are for both formula funding, which should not change -- I vociferously suggested it should not change -- but the discretionary funding, how that will actually play out as well.

SENATOR LIU: Let's hope for the best.

My final question is -- it's good to see the Executive Budget has another

$25 million for Amtrak service between New York City and Poughkeepsie.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

SENATOR LIU: Was that discussed with Amtrak?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, it was. What we were doing is really looking to make sure that to leverage all the work that we've been doing, the Governor put forward $25 million to have -- to make some critical investments in the reliability of that service.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblymember Valdez.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALDEZ: Good morning. Thank you to the chair, and thank you for being here with us today.

I wanted to ask about a specific proposal in the Governor's Executive Budget. She proposed legislation around speed limits on bike lanes and bike paths. I have concerns about overpolicing, you know, a population that's already very much very

heavily policed -- namely, immigrants, workers of color. And I'm worried that this proposal won't actually do very much to move the needle on public safety in New York City.

My question is, what role do you think that delivery apps like DoorDash and Uber Eats might play in protecting not only workers but the pedestrians and cyclists who use those spaces too?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I hear your question. Jurisdictionally, that actually falls within the Department of Motor Vehicles in terms of the proposal that's been put forward.

I will tell you that we're members of the Governor's Task Force Safety Advisory -- DOT is -- Committee, and looking to make sure that the outreach on any e-bike measure or speed-related measure or pedestrian safety measure or bike safety measure is something that the Governor's Traffic Safety Commission takes very seriously. So just know that from our perspective jurisdictionally, that's where --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALDEZ: Sure. No, and I appreciate the response. Thank you so much.

I did want to ask too about CLCPA, and that's come up a couple of times already. What -- or how is the department anticipating complying with CLCPA if the intention is to continue expanding roads and highways?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, with regard to how we're implementing CLCPA, we are -- there's not an aspect of it that we're not actually working on. So whether -- it's like I talked about before construction materials and how we're incorporating them.

But also we have a very rigorous environmental process that we go through with any project that we have. We are not looking to enhance capacity by any means whatsoever. We have to -- we are compelled by law to make sure that we look at every single opportunity, and that's why we usually put forward in some of our larger environmental reviews different alternatives.

But how we select those alternatives,

we try to make sure that everything that we do falls within the framework of making sure that it's complying, first and foremost, with CLCPA.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALDEZ: All right. Thank you so much for the responses and for your commitment to expanding mass transit and public transit around the state. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator O'Mara.

SENATOR O'MARA: Good morning, Commissioner. Thanks for being with us today.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning, sir.

SENATOR O'MARA: I want to thank you for your department's great involvement with our local communities in the flood responses that we've had this last year, but in several years running now, unfortunately. And more recently, in the Village of Ovid, with the devastating community fire they had there and the assistance that DOT provided to the locals there. It's a great department to work with, from my perspective, and your

regional director in Hornell, Brian Kelly, is one of my favorites. So just a shout out to him for that.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you, sir.

SENATOR O'MARA: On the $800 million for the capital plan, basically it's an inflation -- to cover inflation, is that what it's basically for?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It's to help restore our purchasing power, yes.

SENATOR O'MARA: Over what period of time is that $800 million --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It's for the remaining period of the existing capital plan, so for the next two years.

SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. And what percentage does that come out to, the 800 million?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Of the overall capital plan?

SENATOR O'MARA: Of -- for the next two years. If it's covering two years, what -- is it related to inflation at all?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I went to law school, not math, but -- there was no math requirement. But I think that -- the bottom line is we're executing on $34 billion. So it's 800 -- the capital plan for five years was set at 33.1. This is an increase of an additional billion.

SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. Well, I think that's important and needed.

How did you arrive at that number?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: The bottom line is, is that this is -- this is the number that, you know, was worked through a number of factors, but -- you know, working through with the Department of Budget and others, this is what the Executive proposal is.

SENATOR O'MARA: To basically cover for increased costs in these --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: To restore the purchasing power to make sure that we can get through the existing five-year capital plan that the Legislature and the Executive agreed to.

SENATOR O'MARA: So following that rationale, then, how can we justify keeping CHIPS, PAVE-NY, BRIDGE NY, Touring Roads, Winter Recovery, potholes -- how can we justify keeping all those flat? Have these local communities, these local governments not seen the same types of inflationary pressures? And why should we not be increasing these programs?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, sir, I would say that over the course of the existing five-year capital plan we've seen an enormous investment in local programs across the board. More than $6.3 billion has been provided in our existing five-year capital plan, and now a billion dollars on top of that. And that's just for local highway and bridge programs.

That's an increase in this capital plan of over 85 percent from the previous five-year capital plan -- 85 percent increase in local programs.

What do I mean by local programs? I mean CHIPS, I mean Pave Our Potholes. I mean

State Touring Routes. I mean Extreme Winter Weather Recovery. All of the programs that are accessible to locals.

Local governments are actually receiving a billion dollars in direct local assistance for roads and bridges. And, you know, an additional $350 million increase per year under Governor Kathy Hochul's capital plan is really more than we've ever done before. And I think it's pretty extraordinary.

I know that we work very, very closely with the local governments to make sure that they can actually execute on all those dollars. We've made changes in the program to make sure that they've got the flexibility and the payment processes to do everything they can to spend those dollars quickly and effectively. There's a lot of coordination that goes on with the local programs.

SENATOR O'MARA: We have had some increases, but not much last year and there's none in this year. And I think we need to work as a Legislature with the Executive to

do better on that in this year's budget. And we'll certainly be working towards that.

You talked a little bit to some of the other questioning about the standards that you're building roads to at the state for the new heavier electric vehicles. What percentage of our roads -- state roads at this point are actually built to those standards, and what percentage is going to need upgrades to meet those demands of heavier vehicles?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So all of our roads are built to the standards that are specified within our manuals and our engineering instructions.

And what we're seeing basically is that there doesn't need to be any changes in our current bridge load postings in any of the practices that we actually undertake right now to accommodate electric buses. Because based on what we've done, the analysis that we've done looking at bus weight information and the work that we've performed through our structural engineering

team, electric bus weights and the configurations that they fall into are all provided for within our existing standards and our load-weighting assessments.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Simone.

Assemblyman Eachus.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

And good morning, Commissioner. I want to reiterate that I called you a few months ago and thanked you and all of your workers for all the great work that you do on a daily basis.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I want them to be recognized, and please pass that on.

But of course we're here, each of us representing a different area or region -- in your particular case, with the DOT -- and we're all asking for more. And I certainly am asking for more for my region because we have the greatest number of miles, I believe, out of any region. And yet we're nowhere near the top of the funding -- you know,

receiving the top funding amount.

I don't know how you do your -- or how it's broken up, but I would hope that you would reconsider that.

I would also like to reiterate what was brought up, which was Route 17 to I-86. You are, as you've told me, doing the SEQRs now and environmental reviews for that. And I believe you said that should be done so that shovels in the ground in 2026, is that correct?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes. We're looking to begin the -- to actually start the project before the end of this capital plan.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay, I appreciate that very much.

I know there's been many, many backups on that plan, and none of them really we can say were your fault, but there has been a lot of them there.

So I also would like, like everybody else, to increase the amount for CHIPS. I would like the $450 million increase, not

just the $100 million, because we definitely live in communities that use CHIPS to, you know, repair our roads and so on like that, and I'm constantly asked by my DPWs to increase that amount. And of course also allow them to use different methods of resurfacing that we always want to keep in there too.

So the final thing that I have to say is I have discussed with you State Route 218. I thank you for repairing that and for putting the money out, because we only get 75 percent of the money from FEMA. And we did get that.

But I appreciate your very positive outlook, as I posted to you, that we would like to change -- or I think I would like to change 218 into what I'm calling a linear park. And I believe you know the reasons behind that, because specifically of safety reasons, but also I think it's what we need to do with that length of road.

So I thank you very much for being positive on that. Now I have to get Parks to

be positive about it.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, thank you for your compliment of our workforce. And all the members who have complimented our workforce, I greatly appreciate it. You see folks out on the road today, and they're at it all the time, keeping us safe. So thank you for that.

With regard to 218, you know, it was a devastating loss with that intense, extreme weather event that happened in the summer of -- what was it, 2023, that really took out 218 across the board. And we're glad we were able to repair that road and a number of other roads and the significant Popolopen Bridge in your district. So --

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: -- extreme weather is real.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Martinez.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: Good morning, Commissioner. Good to see you here.

Just to follow up on my colleague's

questions, since you didn't have time to finish. Can you please explain the projects that are currently in completion on Long Island and those that are in commencement?

And aside from that, aside from the fact that you've heard that Long Island and the Hudson Valley have the worst streets and pavements, what are you doing or have planned to do, and where are we with the additional types of projects that we need on Long Island such as the Southern State Parkway, which is one of the deadliest highways here in the State of New York, the Meadowbrook expansion, the Northern State Parkway expansion, and Oakdale Merge?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So I'll start with the Oakdale Merge. We are in the process of doing environmental work on it. In answer to the question I think that Assemblymember Solages was also asking that you're referencing, that is a very significant project. It is a project of regional concern. It is a cloverleaf

project. It's in an area with extreme wetlands.

There's a lot of work that's going on as we look at getting ready to do a full-scale EIS on the project. That would -- it's a very labor-intensive but also significant project that we're looking to undertake on Long Island itself.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: And thank you for that. My concern, too, when you just mentioned the clover is many of our -- many of our on- and off-ramps really need to be looked at, specifically on Southern State Parkway.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yup.

SENATOR MARTINEZ: We -- as I mentioned before, one of the deadliest roads. And part of the issue are on- and off-ramps and the clover construction. And we discussed this before, that the Southern State Parkway was not meant to carry all the amount of cars that it carries now. But honestly, we need to start looking at what we have on the island to stop the amount of

crashes that we're seeing. And not just crashes but, honestly, deaths that we're currently seeing on Long Island.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So we've undertaken an enormous amount of work over the last 10 years, I would say. Most recently we have done an upgrade on all the Wrong Way Do Not Enter signs, all the pavement markings, all the counter-flow arrows that are in and around all of the exits. We've upgraded in advance all of the bridges' bridge height signs. We have milled and filled the Southern State Parkway from the Queens/Nassau line up to the Sagtikos State Parkway. We've done concrete pavement repairs to all the ramps from the Queens/Nassau line to the Sagtikos. We've extended numerous ramps across the board.

The projects that we currently have in construction on the Southern State include a westbound Southern State Parkway reconstruction project at Exit 15, the Corona ramps. That's going to eliminate some of the south -- we're going to take out a ramp there

and --

(Time clock sounds.)

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Anyway, the bottom line, I just want to say we've got upcoming work and additional enhancements on the Southern State, so please know that we are continuing our work.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

Before I go on, we've been joined by Assemblymembers Gallagher, Romero and Hooks.

Next on my list is Assemblymember Alvarez.

ASSEMBLYMAN ALVAREZ: Good morning, Commissioner, and thank you for your testimony and the good work that you're doing at DOT.

Let me go back to the Bronx. I'm seeing that the Executive proposal for the fourth year of the DOT capital plan includes a combined 75 million to advance the plan to reconnect communities divided by the Cross Bronx Expressway, as well as the Interstate 787 here in Albany.

Regarding the communities along the Cross Bronx Expressway, what specific measures does the plan entail?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: What we're looking to do is build off of the -- the Governor specifically included in her Executive Budget dollars for New York State DOT to begin an environmental assessment. We're really looking at that PEL study, which is a linkage study -- that will help us then further expand into a full-scale EIS -- on what the vision of the Cross Bronx could be.

So right now we're partnered with the city on a visioning study to reimagine what the Cross Bronx can be. The next step in that process -- because we're about to publish the visioning report -- the Governor, anticipating that, included money in her Executive Budget to take us to that next step and invest in it. And that includes the beginning of the environmental review process. And that's what those dollars are for.

That will then take us to defining

more specifically what the alternatives could be, how we could look at potential capping in different sections of the Cross Bronx, all the things that we've been discussing, and initial discussions with the community will now be taken to that next level and really enhanced.

ASSEMBLYMAN ALVAREZ: Thank you.

I have another question here. I also noticed two new appropriations meant to offset the proposed All Funds that decreases the DMV by 26.5 percent from the last fiscal year. Can you provide more specifics regarding the 5 million General Fund appropriation for the hiring of drug recognition experts related to driving while intoxicated?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: No, sir, I can't, but I'm sure my colleague who will be testifying later this afternoon from the DMV might be elaborate on it.

ASSEMBLYMAN ALVAREZ: Oh, I thought DMV belongs to DOT.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Correct,

no.

ASSEMBLYMAN ALVAREZ: Fine. Thank you. I'll yield my time back to the chair.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: It goes into the ethos {sic}.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I think I'm the last Senator. I'll take my ten minutes now.

Appreciate all your work, Commissioner. And it's certainly a complex world we're living in.

So all of the state agencies are responsible for evaluating particularly their capital projects in relationship to the CLCPA. So I believe you have 40 new capital projects in your pipeline; I could be wrong on the number. And so I'm curious, do you have a system in place to evaluate the impact of those projects from the standards of the CLCPA and also impacts on disadvantaged communities as required within CLCPA?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We do,

Madam Chair. What we do is we look at everything through the lens of, first and foremost, the environmental review process that we have to go through, the standards that are articulated in NEPA.

And in doing so we also look at what the CLCPA requirements are and how we are complying with each of those. So as we do that, we look at everything, like I said, from impacts on communities, what those are -- air, traffic, the like. And in addition to that, we're also looking at making sure that all the materials -- if we go into construction, what are we looking at.

In terms of some of the things that we've been able to advance, we just got a federal grant, as I was stating earlier, to really look -- and I really hope the federal dollars come through -- at low-carbon construction materials.

So the gamut of everything that we look at in our projects is pretty robust, to help us execute on it.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So a number of

states have actually put into law requirements to attempt to decrease the number of miles driven in their states -- again, as part of their environmental goals.

And some people wonder if efforts by State DOT to do expansion of the width of various highways is actually in conflict with those goals. And I'm curious how you do that kind of analysis in your department.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So there are a number of efforts I would say nationwide to look at how vehicle miles traveled are actually examined.

And we are learning -- we are part of different consortiums with sister states, I would say in particular Eastern states, that are looking at vehicle miles traveled and what some of the results of some of those studies are.

So we're keeping an eye on all of that and how that actually translates then into potential opportunities for New York. I'll say that we are definitely studying it.

The second piece of it is really to

look at -- we're not interested -- I think some folks are really looking at what we do and what we look at. We have to, by law, look at every alternative when we look at a project, especially capital projects.

And, you know, I think some of the concern that's been expressed, as you just stated, is are we, you know, in some way looking at building additional highway lane-miles. We have to, by law, look at every alternative, whether it's a no-build alternative or perhaps looking at additional lanes.

Does that mean that we actually select those? We have to work with the community on every single project on how we actually are going to select alternatives when we go forward.

But the number of aspects or the reasons to move a project forward can be really diverse. Is it asset preservation? Is it safety? Regardless of whatever it is, we want to make sure that we're going through a thoroughly robust environmental process,

whether that's for air quality emissions, et cetera, health-related concerns, and making sure that we require these mitigation measures to offset anything that we're actually doing.

And, in addition, to make sure that we're complying with our CLCPA requirements.

I would say, if it's -- you know, RPA actually did a study recently that they published that said that NYSDOT was cited as leading the country in terms of transit investments -- which is obviously a low-carbon alternative both for capital and operating budgets -- and by continuing to grow the transit aid, as this Executive Budget reflects.

And, you know, just under 1 percent of the current projects that are on the Statewide Transportation Plan are really devoted to helping us do that.

Anyway, RPA deems that highway widening or, you know, highway capacity is really under that 1 percent threshold, and I would cite that to anyone who's looking to

understand how we're actually doing it.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

So this isn't really a TV commercial, but I'm just pointing out the Comptroller's office has shown up every day with these handy cheat sheets on audits and reports they've done on whatever agency is in front of us that day. So I want to thank the Comptroller for doing these kinds of reports. But also I think it highlights how important oversight and questions are.

So one of the reports they did a couple of years ago was the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund, which I believe is under your department, and they made recommendations to reduce the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund expenditures for state operations and debt service, increase the share of capital funds financed through pay-go rather than bonding, and reduce reliance on annual General Fund transfers.

Has your department reviewed that audit and followed up on any of these

recommendations?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We have looked at it. And I would say at the end of the day a lot of that gets to the financing of how transportation is paid for. And I would leave that to the discretion of the Executive and the Legislature.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And let's talk about design-build, because that's been relatively controversial up here for a number of years, and we the Legislature have expanded it and allowed it for some things, and you've used it I believe quite a bit.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So have you been able to evaluate the pluses and minuses of our giving you and other state agencies more design-build authority?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So we -- I would say New York State DOT was an early adopter of design-build within the state agency framework. It has been a very valuable tool in our toolbox. It has given us a lot of flexibility and allowed us to

move forward on projects that we might not have otherwise been able to.

It's particularly helpful in some of the larger, more complex projects. But what I mean by it's a good tool in our toolbox is it's not the only tool.

We're able to, for instance, on the I-81 project, we have a mix of contracts that we're able to execute. And in doing so, whether it's design-bid-build or design-build, it gives us the flexibility to work with the contracting community to make sure that we've got contractors available that are able to do the work. At the same time it can run on the time frame, if you will, and the project design elements that we're interested in executing.

And I would say the other opportunity under design-build that is really unique -- and New York I think is a leader nationwide on our design-build application -- is that it gives us some flexibility on alternative technical concepts that we might not have been able to otherwise capture in a

traditional bid process.

So the contractors come to the table with some concepts that we're then able to evaluate. So it's an interesting ...

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. And someone earlier asked you about a shortage perhaps of salt in upstate New York, and I think you answered that there's not a problem.

But there's concerns occasionally about certain municipalities using products on their roadways that are very environmentally dangerous, particularly in the runoff into the water system.

So does DOT have specific rules or standards that are used for what products can and cannot go on the roads in New York?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We look at a series of things. We just actually completed a study in the Adirondacks, Adirondack Park, along with DEC, the Adirondack salt Task Force. Our work with DEC was completed with a number of stakeholders from the park last year.

And we came up with a variety of I think really critical recommendations that we've been executing on along with DEC. Part of those recommendations, in addition to the best practices that we're undertaking at DOT, include helping to further educate local municipalities on salt usage. And that would include materials -- what are they using, what types of salt -- you know, what are they doing to make sure that they're addressing snow, ice, and the relevant vegetation concerns, et cetera, and some of those best practices.

Because obviously just -- best practices are what really need to be applied here. One of the measures that New York State DOT has done is we've calibrated our trucks and we are monitoring how much salt we're actually distributing. And in doing so, we understand exactly what the existing condition on the roadway is, how much salt we're applying, and the safety factor that we're accounting for.

So it's been a huge tool for us. We

hope to share a lot of those best practices with localities.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblymember Mitaynes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Thank you.

Can you share with us an example of how the agency has been applying Section 7 of the Climate Law to the decisions regarding how to allocate federal highway funding?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So with regard to how we're actually looking at federal highway aid, we look at -- like I said before -- a number of factors.

So we have -- what we're trying to do right now is put together all the requirements that are under Section 7. We have a plan that we're executing and we're developing -- we're developing, and then we will execute.

Specifically on those requirements, we're following the Executive Order 22 that the Governor has put forward to implement

CLCPA and all the requirements under that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: This is around the Governor's proposal to require daylighting within 1,000 feet of elementary schools in New York City. What safety impact will this have?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I hope that it will have a huge safety impact in the sense that, first and foremost, it's not something New York State DOT has control over. It's not jurisdictionally ours. It is actually with City DOT.

But the bottom line is anything -- I support the Governor's actions in the sense that anything we can do to enhance safety for school-age children is important.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Is that it?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Yes.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Ah, thank you.

We have Senator Bynoe.

SENATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning.

SENATOR BYNOE: So I'm representing Nassau -- some of Nassau County's South Shore communities. And with the severe weather and flood-prone areas, I'm wondering, with the aging infrastructure, what are you doing in terms of funding those issues on Long Island to build out resiliency?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I will tell you that every single project that we undertake in Long Island factors that in. Because obviously it's an island, so you've got a number of flooding-related factors. That, along with the actual materials -- you know, you don't have to dig too far to actually hit sand.

So realizing that drainage and flood mitigation is critical to absolutely everything that we do. We just completed a project on Crooked Hill Road that encompassed all of that, created one of the -- a very significant drainage improvement for that whole area.

So it's factored into everything.

SENATOR BYNOE: Okay. And then could you talk a little bit about the State Touring Routes and that program?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Sure.

It's something actually that the Legislature put forward. Senator Cooney's predecessor put forward a proposal to create State Touring Routes that are directed primarily at more urban centers, where localities have access to funds to help support the roadways in those areas.

SENATOR BYNOE: Okay. And to your recollection, is Nassau County participating in that program?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I would imagine so, but I would have to come back to you with the exact opportunity. It usually does have opportunity in larger urban areas.

SENATOR BYNOE: Okay. And then in terms of electrifying the buses, I'm wondering if they're tapping into those funds as well.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes. A

number of the non-MTA transit authorities are looking at opportunities, especially with the new ZETT opportunity the Governor just published last December. We are working with all the transit -- the non-MTA transit authorities to look to see how those funds can be accessed.

And that does provide not just buses, zero-emission buses, but charging facilities and the buildout that goes along with that.

SENATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you very much, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: You're welcome.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblymember Tapia.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TAPIA: (Mic off.) Thank you. Good morning. Thank you, Commissioner, for being here -- (mic on). Okay, I didn't put the thing. Thank you.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TAPIA: I represent the Boogie Down Bronx, and I want to ask you

specifically about the Cross Bronx Expressway, which is something that we are really, really worried about it.

We have heard concerns from residents and from advocates regarding the proposed east-west connector to repair the five bridges across the Cross Bronx. And specifically, we have concerns that this would increase car traffic in the Bronx.

Can you just provide some more information regarding the ramifications of that project? Because, I mean, what we are doing with one hand, we might be destroying it with the other one if we increase the number of vehicles that are going to be trafficking.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I'd be happy to.

So what we started to undertake last September, we're undertaking an environmental review process to look to develop some alternatives about how we would actually undertake the rehabilitation and replacement of these five bridges. In other words, what

would the projects look like, and what would be the means and methods by which we looked at it.

So there's five bridges that need to be looked at and that need to be replaced or rehabilitated along a one-mile stretch of the Cross Bronx. Looking at that, there's several different alternatives that we -- based on the conversations that we're having with the community and the engagement that we're undertaking, you know, we can go everything from don't do anything, the no-build alternative, all the way up to a number of other opportunities.

But I think the two critical things that are on the table are: Do we undertake the project within the existing parameters of the Cross Bronx? Which would mean that we would have to stage traffic in different ways. It would likely take two years longer in construction. Or do we build a diversion road to take traffic off of the Cross Bronx so that we could complete the project, the five bridges, complete those five bridges two

years faster?

So that's kind of the difference. The question then would be if we did build the diversion road, would that be a road that remains a road or do we turn it into a pedestrian and bike access facility only? Do we limit it just to MTA and, you know, transit options?

There's -- those are the conversations and the engagement that we're trying to undertake right now with the community to best understand what's going to be in the best needs of the community, understanding that we have to undertake the construction, but what's going to be that positive way forward.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TAPIA: Thank you, Commissioner.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We have Senator Roxanne Persaud.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Good morning, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning, ma'am.

SENATOR PERSAUD: I do not have any questions for you per se. I just wanted to make sure publicly I thank you and your staff for working with myself and my staff on the issues that we've brought to your attention.

I think sometimes, you know, we're constantly calling and we seem to have a hotline to your team. But they have always been responsive and receptive to anything that we have asked them to assist us with, especially the complaints about pigeons and, you know, the issues. Anyone who has pigeons in their district with major issues, they'll understand what we're talking about.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR PERSAUD: But again, I really want to thank you and your team for always working with us. Thank you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you, Senator. That's very kind of you.

I have to say I've learned a lot myself.

(Laughter.)

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I

appreciate that, and I'll take it back to our team. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Chairs are allowed to have a three-minute follow-up, so Chair Jeremy Cooney.

SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate it.

Commissioner, let's talk about worker safety if we can. I know this is important to you, and I want to be on record with supporting the Executive's proposal for worker assaults and criminal penalties. We have to get that done. I carry that legislation in the Senate.

But I want to talk about the Work Zone Speed Camera Program specifically, if I can. The proposal if the Executive Budget is to make that Work Zone Speed Camera program permanent. And since there hasn't been a report yet on that program, can you talk about the effectiveness of that program?

And specifically I want to point you -- and we've talked about this before --

to one of the cameras that was operating in my district in the City of Rochester where there were 25,000 tickets issued over the course of 24 days, which seemed a little excessive to me.

But can you talk about not only the effectiveness of the program -- are we meeting our goals to increase safety -- but in terms of the signage and the notification so that drivers know to be prepared for these new work site speed zone cameras.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So foremost, thank you for your support of the program.

Overall it is one of the things that, you know, in talking to my colleagues up and down the East Coast, but then nationwide -- like I said before, I was recently in D.C. earlier this week. Work zone safety is I'm sure going to be -- I think New York is one of the national leaders. We've had some states on the East Coast that have also taken this initiative.

But I do look forward to it being a

national issue, perhaps in the reauthorization at the federal level of the Surface Bill.

With that said, in answer to your question, the bottom line is the program's working. We -- part of our requirements in setting up a work zone are to make sure that the work zone is set up according to engineering standards but, more importantly, to make sure that the signage is there so that any driver coming through understands that this is a camera-enforced work zone.

The data is showing that, just like the site we had in Rochester, the longer the work zone is in place, the fewer notices of violations. While that number was significant, that area happened to be a 40-mile-an-hour speed limit. We didn't reduce the speed limit in that area. We just simply put up a sign that said "This is a work zone." People were still moving through there really fast, and that's why they got ticketed.

SENATOR COONEY: Well, and there was a

lot of money collected through that process, through the fine process. And I understand that that goes to the Worker Safety Fund in terms of being able to be reinvested into things --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Correct.

SENATOR COONEY: And I hope that -- I know we don't have time today, but we can talk further about how those dollars will be allocated out of the lockbox so that we keep our roads and communities safer. Thank you, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: And they go directly back into those worker safety initiatives.

SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Bores.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Hi, Commissioner. Thanks for being here.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Hello, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: There was a report in August of 2023 about spending from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. Six billion dollars at that point had been given to New York State in flexible funds that could be used for any kind of work. And about 90 percent had been given to highways and car-based infrastructure, and only 1 percent of those flexible funds had gone towards mass transit or buses or sidewalks or things like that.

I'm wondering if there's any updates on those numbers of how, when we have the choice of spending federal dollars, how we end up spending them.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So I will tell you, we take the dollars and incorporate them directly into our five-year capital plan that we're executing now. So we're taking the money that we got from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, along with a record level of state investment, and that's what we're executing on. That's the 34 billion that we've got.

Off the top of the New York State Department of Transportation's budget, $9 billion is going directly to transit. Eight billion of that goes directly from New York State DOT's budget into MTA.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Oh, I want to be very clear, I think you're doing a great job supporting and we're spending money on the MTA and transit outside of New York State. So I don't mean to imply anything like that.

I'm just saying of the federal funds where we have the option to spend it, are we looking at how much is going into -- are there any updates on how much is going into car infrastructure versus transit?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Absolutely. And the other portion of those funds that we give directly to MTA come out of our CMAQ dollars. My point is, is that regardless if it's federal or state funds off the top from New York State's 33 -- hopefully $34 billion budget, 9 billion of that is going directly into transit.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Okay. Thank you.

Obviously keeping our roads safe and secure is important, where we're a spread-out state and in emergency circumstances or weather like today we want to make sure those roads are working.

We also -- from 2019 to 2024, our six largest cities all saw increases in the number of miles driven. That makes it harder for us to achieve our climate goals. Some -- like Buffalo, I think, had a 25 percent increase in terms of its miles driven.

When you're thinking about planning our road infrastructure, how we're spending our dollars, how do you take into account our climate goals and hopefully reducing the amount that people are dependent on personal cars?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We look at everything. I mean, that's the great thing about a lot of the planning studies that we undertake. We really want to -- right now we're executing a master plan, a statewide master plan. We're in the process of developing it and looking at it, and

that's looking at every level of mobility.

Regardless of how people want to move, we want to make sure that there's access to transportation and that there's the ability to do it. If you want to walk, if you want to bike, whatever you want to access transit, it's going to be there. And that's the level of investment we're looking at.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you so much, Commissioner Dominguez. Thanks to you and your staff for always being accessible and for listening and engaging with us.

I just want to say how grateful we are for the $800 million in increases for the core roads and bridges program. Do you see this money allowing additional emphasis on improving pavement conditions?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, I do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Great. Just what I want to hear.

Is the work going to be done with new projects, or is it just going to be reprioritizing what's already on the --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: What we're looking to do is making sure that the existing projects that were within the MOU scope are executed. If for some reason they can't be within the time frame of the capital plan, we will pull in other projects and make sure that they are executed.

The bottom line is is that we want to use the money wisely, according to our asset management strategy, which is informed by data, which gets to the road and bridge conditions that we're trying to address.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Right.

I just want to add to the chorus about Region 8 and giving emphasis to parts of the state with the most problematic conditions. As you know, Region 8 has the largest number of road miles. It also has the worst conditions, and its relative conditions

vis-a-vis the average throughout the state has been widening.

So anything we can do to make sure that the Hudson Valley gets some of the needed repairs, that would be really great.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I appreciate that. Understanding that you know this better than anyone, we've got the most lane-miles in the Hudson Valley, some of the oldest roads in the state, and we also have extreme weather that we deal with. So oftentimes --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: (Inaudible.)

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, exactly. Freeze-thaw cycles don't help.

So making sure that we can manage our roadways and address the road conditions. That's exactly what these dollars are intended for.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: And having this 800 million is fantastic. But in order to fully catch up and make sure all of our roads are in a better state of repair, we are going to have to continue extra investments

going forward.

What do you see as the best ways to keep the momentum going forward?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I -- I think that is a great discussion that the Executive and the Legislature might undertake.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Okay, great.

In terms of CHIPS, my mayors don't want any more bureaucracy. They want more money into CHIPS. An extra $250 million would help put the local roads in parity with the state roads in terms of additional investment.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

Assemblyman Fall.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Good morning, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: And thank you for being here. And thank you for your leadership.

In the sixth paragraph of your testimony, you mentioned the importance of undoing the planning mistakes of the past and providing new opportunities for growth.

That I think also applies for the Staten Island Expressway. About a decade ago there was some federal funding that was received by the state, and there was a massive undertaking of redoing the whole Staten Island Expressway, but it did not include expansion of the HOV lane. Right?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: And so as you know very well, when you get closest to the Bradley Avenue exit, it becomes a bottleneck. Right? And that creates traffic in the area where there's tough challenges or there are challenges with public transit.

And of course we understand that the proposed capital plan is $34 billion. It doesn't include any expansion for the HOV

expansion on the Staten Island Expressway. Kind of curious to know, you know, where does that fall in terms of priorities for the State Department of Transportation?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We've done a number of elements to help improve the Staten Island Expressway. Just completed a big project there a couple of years ago.

The bottom line is is that project, the expansion of the Staten Island Expressway, is not currently part of the executed MOU of the five-year capital plan that we're doing right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Okay.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So I would, you know, in the coming years, that would be a point of discussion between the Legislature and the Executive.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: All right. I'm anxious for that conversation, because this is something I often hear from about -- from constituents. You know, it just doesn't make sense to the public why it is that way. So I would like to work with you and hopefully get

it in the next capital plan. All right?

My next question is related to -- you mention in the tenth paragraph of your testimony some of the work that's being done on the West Side Highway in Manhattan. I have part of that in my district.

And I met with some of your staff and City DOT back in June of 2024 related to some safety concerns that we have received from pedestrians and cyclists that live in the district and in the community. But we haven't heard back after various follow-ups. So if you could please have your team follow up with my staff, we would like to kind of get those issues addressed.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Absolutely. Be happy to.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: All right. Thank you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yeah, we're just kicking off, so it's just the beginning. There'll be lots of time for engagement with the community. So I just want to be clear about that.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Okay. Thank you.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: But happy to answer any questions with your staff. We'll follow up.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Appreciate it, thanks.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Is that it?

Assemblyman Palmesano.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Thank you, Commissioner. I know we've talked before; let me just say this really point-blank: CHIPS, CHIPS, CHIPS, CHIPS.

Given the fact that 87 percent of the roads in New York State are owned and maintained by our local municipalities and 52 percent of the 18,000 bridges are owned and maintained by our municipalities, and given the fact that there's an $800 million increase for the core program -- which is good, to help deal with the inflationary increase -- and given the fact, according to the Federal Highway Administration National Highway Construction Cost Index, highway construction costs over the past three years

have increased by 70 percent -- but yet this budget, even though it's been perceived as an increase of $100 million, it's not. It's flat from last year.

Last year the Governor proposed cutting funding from CHIPS. We restored the funding. So it's been flat basically the past -- since the '23-'24 budget.

Given this 70 percent increase in the inflationary costs, how do you justify not increasing the CHIPS program? Forget the historic improvements you've made in the past. But isn't that kind of missing the boat?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I don't think so, when you look at it in the aggregate.

What we have to do is look at the entirety of the program. And I think the Governor acknowledged that in her budget proposal: 800 million towards the larger capital plan to make sure that we can restore our purchasing power.

And in addition to that, that builds

off, as I stated before, the historic amount of local assistance that has been provided in the capital plan. That's $6.3 billion --

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: I understand. I understand.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: That's an 85 percent increase over anything we've ever seen before.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: I don't want to sound rude, and I know I'm cutting you off, and I apologize. But I've got three minutes.

CHIPS is flat. The Governor did not propose a CHIPS increase this year. She cut it last year, she proposed cutting it last year.

A 70 percent increase in the local highway construction costs for municipalities. This is -- and then we have the electric vehicle mandate. There's a study that I know we had some preliminary reports at the electric infrastructure hearing we had last week -- the school bus mandate, it's the mother of all unfunded

mandates, is heading towards our school districts.

And weight -- a diesel school bus weighs about 10 tons per axle. An electric school bus has 14 tons on the front axle and 25 tons on the rear axle. It's projected that towns -- because the weight is going to impact the life of those roads, maintenance costs will increase $20,000 to $50,000 per mile and major reconstruction will increase 550,000. Those are increases.

Is the DOT and the commissioner ready to commit to significant increases in CHIPS funding to help our local roads infrastructure that are going to bear the weight of these -- this major unfunded mandate that's going to be put down on our local school districts and our towns and our property tax rates? Is the state ready to make that significant commitment for the future to deal with this unfunded mandate, major unfunded mandate?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Assemblyman, I think that what we've been

clear about with regard to the existing -- we don't see an impact on the state system for these EV buses.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: But our locals are going to feel it, and they're going to be hurt by it.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Madam Commissioner.

Assemblymember Jacobson.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good seeing you again, Commissioner.

Your regional office is quite cooperative, but we still have some outstanding issues in the Hudson Valley. You know, I go from Beacon to Newburgh up the Hudson, over to Poughkeepsie. On Route 9D in Beacon, between the train station and the bridge, Newburgh-Beacon Bridge, it is a nightmare whenever a train comes in during rush hour. Traffic is backed up.

The big reason is is that you have two lanes going north by the bridge, and one lane turning. What you need to do -- and I've

mentioned this before -- is just like you have on the Newburgh side, on 9W, you have two lanes merging quickly into one, and that would alleviate the problem. That's a major, major problem. Because traffic gets backed up, sometimes it will take 20 minutes to get from 90 to the bridge.

Route 52, from the City of Newburgh to Rock Cut Road, is a disaster. I get calls all the time.

Route 32, from the intersection of 300 to the Town of Newburgh or Ulster County border, is terrible.

Route 300, from 52 to its intersection with Route 32.

On big issues, we're part of Region 8. Region 8 is the largest DOT region in terms of roads. I mean, that's Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia, Rockland, Orange, Ulster. It's huge. But we don't get the proportion of the CHIPS money that we should. So it should be done proportionally.

We need another CHIPS program for ADA compliance, because I'm sure you know

that when you do streets in cities or villages where there's sidewalks, the ADA-compliance cost is much greater than for the paving.

And while it's not in my district, it's important to the region. When are we ever going to start the expansion of Route 17?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: The 17 to 86 project? What we're doing right now is -- is that your question? Like --

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Yeah.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We have every intention -- we are advancing the environmental review of that project right now, and our goal is to actually start construction before the end of this capital plan, in the next two years.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: I thought that was done last year, the study.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: No, sir. It's not complete.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Gallagher.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Good morning, Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning, Assemblymember.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: I am going to play the role of nosy neighbor, because I know that what happens in communities near mine also impacts me. Right? So I'm going to be helping out my friends from the Bronx over here.

I know you already talked about the Bronx expressway bridges project. But what I'm curious about is this multimodal community connector that there hasn't been a lot of information out about. But I think a reporter did a FOIL request, and they got some interesting information. Like the speed limit is 45 miles an hour, it's along the Cross Bronx Expressway, but it's five lanes.

It doesn't really seem like it's trying to connect people from the corner store to the park. It sounds like it's like an adjacent highway that's being added.

So I'd love to hear a little bit more about that and, you know, what are your plans. And how is it that the federal government is giving us climate resiliency money for something that is going to -- it sounds like primarily -- I don't want to -- as a cyclist, I don't want to ride on a 45-mile-an-hour road. So I'm interested in hearing more about that plan.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Sure.

So I think -- let me just kind of level-set where we are. We started an environmental review process last September for the five bridges project in the Cross Bronx. What we're looking at in the engagement we've been having with the community is what should our approach be, what can we -- because there's two different approaches we could potentially take.

One, do all the work within the existing framework, if you will, of the Cross Bronx Expressway itself. And that would take a certain number of years. It would take an additional two years in

construction to do all the work that we need to do to replace and rehabilitate the five bridges.

Or should we look at a diversion road --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: I just have a quick question. I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'm just watching my money -- my money tick away? My time.

What is the community that you're talking to, because I heard from a NYCHA advocate that they had not been talked to. And the NYCHA facility is right next to this road.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes, across.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: So who is the community that is being asked about this?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So we are doing continuous engagement with both the Bronx Housing Authority, a number of the community boards, a number of the advocate organizations. We're trying to reach -- we're just -- our outreach is continuous.

Our engagement is continuous.

So I'd be happy to work with whoever you're talking to --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Yeah, no, I can definitely connect you to my neighbors --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Be happy to reach out to them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: -- who are saying that they have not been reached out to.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Durso.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Thank you, Commissioner, for being here today.

So I just wanted to touch back on what some of my colleagues from Long Island was talking about. When we spoke about this 7.8 percent number that we have with the amount of capital funding we receive, you were saying it was roughly 12 to 15 percent. So maybe our numbers differ on the amount of money that's coming to Long Island, but historically Long Island got well over 20 percent, just -- and especially now, with the amount of lane-miles that we do have, and

the highest concentration of registered vehicles within New York State, do you think that a program like SHIPs or maybe an MPO would be able to help areas like Long Island and regions like the Hudson Valley be able to get that money that they need to start up those projects and finish those road projects that specifically even on Long Island we use our union contractors to do that work?

Do you think that there's an appetite for that work to get done by those contractors and that the MPO and the SHIPs program could help do that?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So with regard to the SHIPs program, that is a program that was initiated some 30 years ago or so. How that actually plays out I think would be a discussion between the Legislature and the Executive. It's not an existing program now that we execute.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: But it was executed at a time, and I'm just -- that's what I'm asking. Do you think a program like that could help to make sure that those two

regions get the money in the capital program that they deserve and need to keep their road and infrastructure up?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I think there are a number of programs that are in existence right now that the Legislature and the Executive have to fund to make sure that, you know, roads and bridges are actually addressed in the course of our capital plan as well as access for locals for assistance.

So my point is is that there are a number of funding mechanisms across the board right now. How you all negotiate on how to change anything would be at your discretion.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: So the disagreement on the number, as far as we have 7.8 percent and you're saying 12 to 15 percent --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I'm not quite sure where that number came from. I don't know --

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: How does that number get worked out?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It might

be like some sort of a split in one time in one year.

But you have to look at the course of our overall investment over a five-year capital plan, and our numbers are significantly higher over the course of the entirety of a five-year capital plan. The level of investment is almost double.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: So is the number of lane-miles and registered vehicles in a region, in an area, taken into account when they do the formula for the amount of money that's going to go to those areas?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: The way that we look at it is asset-based. We have an asset management system that we actually employ across the state. So what DOT does is really look to make sure that we preserve our assets as cost effectively as we possibly can.

So we calculate the data, we literally inspect all of our bridges. We look at the bridge conditions, we look at our pavement conditions, and then we look to see what

needs to be addressed based on those factors. And then we share that information and develop the MOU.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Thank you, Commissioner.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Bendett.

ASSEMBLYMAN BENDETT: Thank you.

I had a nice time speaking with you and your staff a couple of weeks ago, and we discussed a few things. And the first thing that I wanted to say was I know we're in this room without any windows, but there's people outside right now that are plowing and literally risking their lives.

And the reason why I know that is because I get behind the plow sometimes -- and I will be later today -- and so I recognize that.

With CHIPS funding, one of the problems is, is when it's held flat, our local highway departments have to make choices in order to continue to provide the services that are necessary for our citizens.

And when they do so, they have to make cuts to perhaps personnel, and different things happen that create different safety issues.

And I just want to say that that is something that really concerns me, knowing full well what my colleague said, that all of the materials have gone up so much in our county and town highway departments are continuously asked to do more with less.

Do you have any suggestions about how our local highway departments can continue to provide the services that they need to provide when their funding has stayed flat for so long now?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Acknowledging that first and foremost the investment in local assistance, whether it's through CHIPS or a number of the other programs that are available -- Pave Our Potholes, Extreme Winter Recovery -- all of those local assistance programs have fundamentally grown over the course of Governor Hochul's tenure. She has invested more than any other Executive in local

assistance.

And when we look at this capital plan in particular, it's a $6.3 billion investment that's been leveraged. In this particular budget, an additional hundred million dollars has been added to help, again, with CHIPS and CHIPS funding.

The department executes a very robust local assistance program. We work with the municipalities across the state, the counties, to make sure that those dollars are executed as efficiently as they possibly can be. We've made some improvements in literally the processing and the requirements -- how do we make sure that municipalities get the biggest bang for their buck and they're not having to do additional paperwork?

ASSEMBLYMAN BENDETT: Can I just interrupt you quick? I appreciate all of that. It's just that we continue to hear it from our county and town highway departments about how much they're struggling.

I hope that you'll go back and maybe

help sharpen that pencil and help these people out. Thank you so much.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Slater.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Thank you very much.

And good morning, Commissioner. always good to see you. Appreciate the work that you and your staff continue to do.

You know, it's funny, there's really not many times that Republicans and Democrats here in Albany come together and use a uniform voice on something. But I'm hearing it in the Hudson Valley. Because we all know, whether you're Republican or Democrat, that our communities are suffering right now. And they're suffering because of the conditions of the roads that we continue to see. And we hear that from our constituents.

So I'm curious if you can tell me what the current paving schedule is for the Hudson Valley compared to the rest of the state. Is it on par with the rest of the

state? Is it below? Is it going to take us longer to pave the roads in the Hudson Valley at the current investment rate that we're going at?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, let's start from the premise that has been stated, which is that in the Hudson Valley there are more roadways, it's a denser population, there are a higher number of cars that are actually utilizing the roads.

That said, what we also do is, as I mentioned before, we have an asset management strategy that we undertake --

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Yes, you mentioned --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: -- to make sure that we're addressing the most critical roadways as part of identifying exactly what needs to go into our capital plan, and --

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: I understand that we're being asked to approve an $800 million allocation. Which I think we all support, but how do we know for sure that the

Hudson Valley, our constituents, are going to benefit from that $800 million investment?

Because it's a great headline, but when it comes to actually seeing the results in our communities, we just haven't seen that in a meaningful way yet.

And so I'm wondering, how can you assure us that the Hudson Valley will actually benefit?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Because it's going to be maintained along the historical allocations that have existed for purposes of the MOU and how those splits are made statewide.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: And are you going to be willing to share with us the different allocations of dollars region by region?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Those are -- those are just -- those are an agreement between -- we're doing it along the same lines that the Executive and the Legislature have historically made. We're not -- we don't control that. That's a -- that's between --

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: So it sounds like, though, what you're saying is the allocation formula is really not changing, meaning you can't tell us that we're going to actually see a meaningful difference in the Hudson Valley with a significant increase of $800 million.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We are going to be executing those projects that need to be executed along the lines of our asset management system.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: I appreciate it.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I do think you will see --

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: In my remaining time I do want to just bring up something that -- I think it was Senator Comrie had talked about, which was RAP. When do you expect the pilot project to be completed on recycled use of pavement?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: When do we think that the --

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: You said -- you were talking about a pilot project that

you're engaged in right now for DOT?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We're doing -- yes. We have projects that we're executing to look at low carbon and recycling.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: When do you expect it to be completed?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I don't know, but I'll be happy to get back to you. I don't know what the timeline is.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Understood. And then, if I could, CHIPS, CHIPS, CHIPS. Our local highway departments need them desperately. And I agree with what was said before, we're not seeing the necessary investment there either.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Assemblywoman Simon.

(Pause.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay, I'm working on it. Technology, you know?

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Good morning,

Commissioner.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you for your testimony today.

I have a few questions.

The first one is, as you may know, we passed legislation for the weigh-in-motion for overweight trucks on the BQE, which has been wildly successful in reducing the number of overweight trucks on the roadway there.

So it is about to -- the initial authorization is about to expire, and I know the Governor's office has included making it permanent and some other uses of it in her budget, which I want to thank you for.

But also I have a couple of things I'd like to chat with you further about, based on our experience using it.

And also just I want to make sure that we mention that DEC is doing air monitoring along that corridor, and of course it's a very, very polluted area. And so that just furthers the -- my concerns about needing to

use wind technology more broadly and more effectively. Thank you.

And then -- but I do have a question about speeding. We've had so much speeding, increasing really through -- since the pandemic. And we have lost like 250 people to traffic violence in 2024 alone, including 16 or 17 children.

So there's a bill that would have -- for people who are found to have been speeding, who have a lot of speeding tickets, for example, to have a speed-limiter on their car installed. Somewhat like the ignition interlock device, but not that, that wouldn't allow them to go beyond -- five miles beyond the speed limit.

And, you know, I would really like to know what measures are being addressed by the DOT with regard to speeding, and your support for such a bill.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I'm not familiar with the legislation. We'd be happy to take a look at it. You know, we don't -- DOT doesn't have jurisdiction per se over

speed limits around the state.

We do determine on particular roadways exactly what that -- you know, we do speed studies to understand exactly what the traffic should travel at.

But that said, you're right, the numbers nationally have gone up, the numbers in New York State have gone up, certainly in a post-COVID environment. You know, fatalities have gone up, and it is very troubling.

We've undertaken a safe systems approach to everything that we're doing for traffic safety management, and I'd be happy to go through the program with you in greater detail. I know our time is limited.

But it is a very comprehensive approach to safety, everything from design standards to, you know, how do we actually make sure that there's driver cognizance, awareness, paying attention. It's half the battle right now. People are not focused on driving.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you very

much. I appreciate it. I'll take you up on it.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Giglio.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Good morning -- or good afternoon.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: And thank you, Commissioner. Thank you again for Region 10, too. They're doing an awesome job. Rich Causin and Karyn Meyer, shout out to them and the entire staff at DOT. They're very helpful.

And thank you for your phone conversations before these hearings to tell us what your priorities are. And I couldn't agree with them more.

But my question has more to do with what you were discussing earlier about the recycled materials that you're using for roadways and for backfilling. And we currently can't use that on Long Island. So I want to know if there are cost savings --

you know, in 1988 New York State adopted the reclaiming before landfilling and mandated state agencies promote recycling and find uses for waste materials.

So I want to know what the cost savings are for using those recycled materials. With our landfills closing on Long Island and with our -- really, we're going to be trucking garbage out once our -- everything starts happening. So we really need to focus more on recyclable materials.

And I want to know if they're effective, what the cost savings are, and why we can't use them on Long Island.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I will tell you that right now what we're doing is we're recycling -- in terms of asphalt, we're recycling about 1.6 tons {sic} of asphalt pavement every year.

And what we're looking to do is make sure that the -- what we're undertaking is actually meeting the performance mixes that we need to achieve in making sure that the durability in everything that we do -- make

sure for -- the duration and durability of our roadways is actually accomplished.

So the bottom line is is that we are not only testing it, but we're actually affirmatively putting in -- making sure that -- we're testing it to make sure that the performance is achieving what we want to do.

As for the requirements on Long Island, I'm not personally familiar with that, but I would be happy to circle back. I'm not familiar with why Long Island wouldn't qualify for a performance --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Like I said, our landfills are closing and they're on extension. And a lot of it has to do with the ash, which could be used for right-of-ways and perhaps roadbeds or drainage.

But we're currently not able to use those materials. And if we are facing a garbage crisis on Long Island, it would be fantastic to be able to use these recyclables.

So if you have a report on the effectiveness -- I don't know how long New York State DOT has been using these applications in their roadways. I know the act was adopted in 1988 by New York State. But --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We've got an active pilot right now looking at the mix design, and we'll be writing a report to actually publish, and we'll share that with you to see exactly --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Thank you very much.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: -- what worked and what didn't and what we need to refine going forward.

The bottom line is, is that we affirmatively want to make sure that we're reducing carbon in the materials that we're using, and that they're -- but at the same time they have to make sure that they're meeting the design standards and that they're safe for the performance of our roadways.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Commissioner.

Assemblyman De Los Santos.

ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Commissioner Dominguez, for your time and for being here today.

You know, transportation is a form -- personally I believe is a form of quality of life. And I represent Upper Manhattan, which includes Washington Heights, Inwood and Marble Hill. So can you share what the department is doing specifically for my district to improve conditions, transportation conditions?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So we have -- we work very closely with New York City DOT. The roads and bridges are uniquely divided in New York City between -- jurisdiction between New York City and New York State. So it could be any number of road-related projects or bridges. I don't have a list in front of me, but I'd be happy to circle back with you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: So just to be specific, what initiatives are being funded in this year's budget to improve pedestrian safety, especially for seniors who rely on sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals in an urban area like my district?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I'm not familiar with the particular projects that are specifically in your district, but overall we look to make sure that pedestrian safety is top of mind in all of our projects, making sure that sidewalk projects, curb cuts, et cetera, are all ADA-accessible. It's part of our requirements.

ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: In addition to that, can you provide an update on accessibility improvements in major transit hubs serving high senior populations?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: That would probably be best directed at the MTA.

ASSEMBLYMAN DE LOS SANTOS: All right, thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Is that it?

Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Commissioner, for all your time today.

I just want to follow up on the issue of ensuring that we're complying with our Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act goals. I want to make sure that throughout the process, through the procurement, operations and the contractors we hire, that we're deeply committed to making sure that we're living up to those goals that we passed five years ago.

Can you commit that your agency will do whatever is possible to ensure throughout all procurement and RFP processes we're going to comply with those goals?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: As you and I had a chance to discuss briefly, what we're doing is making sure that we're building into our standards that the contractors then have to comply with the CLCPA goals. So whether that's -- particularly I've been talking today about our construction materials: What needs to actually be built in, how do we make sure

that we're utilizing low-carbon materials. And that is part of our engineering requirements and specifications.

In addition to that, we also have to meet goals for purposes, for instance, for DOT for our fleet, our fleet mixes, whether that's, you know, our regular cars that we make available to our employees who have to be out on the roadways executing, or how we work with the equipment manufacturers to develop medium- and high-duty, heavy-duty equipment that could potentially be battery-powered: Can they operate in the conditions that we have in New York State, where it's exceedingly cold and we need to make sure that they've got charging facilities.

All of those things we're working actively right now, whether it's with equipment manufacturers or with our partners in New York State at NYPA, NYSERDA, DEC, to make those types of equipment available for our state forces.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So it sounds

like you are committed to doing that in all sectors of your contracting and procurement.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We'll look to that as well, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Commissioner, I have just a couple of questions. I won't use my entire 10 minutes.

But just in looking through the Governor's budget, there's $40 million set aside for the State Touring Route program. What is that?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It's an opportunity -- it's a program that was created -- actually, it was a proposal from the Legislature that was put into action a few years ago. It's a program to address urban roadways. And I apologize, I think one of the members asked me is it available for counties. It's not. It's available for urban municipalities to access for roads.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And this is for road improvement in urban --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: So that would be the cities within the State of New York, every city?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Correct.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And what do they have to do to qualify for that? Do they have to have a winery or a brewery or something on that street or -- why is it a touring -- I mean, like I represent Mount Vernon. No one's touring through Mount Vernon. And it's a city. Would they qualify for that?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: They're very similar -- I'll say it's very -- there's a lot of -- the requirements are not as broad as -- they're very broad, rather.

There's a lot of different ways you can look at State Touring Routes. I'm happy to go through the requirements with you. I don't have them in front of me, but they are different.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. I'm just interested in that. It seems like $40 million could be, I would think, more used towards CHIPS than used toward the

touring. But if it helps the cities, I think most cities do need road improvements. So I'd have to look at it and see exactly what the qualifications are or how someone would apply for it.

I also noticed in the budget there's a million dollars set aside to study transit service in the Lower Hudson Valley, with particular interest west of the Hudson River.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I mean, I -- do you need to spend a million dollars for that? I could tell you right off the top of my head, there are no trains going from Rockland to Westchester or vice versa. You need more bus service. The Tappan Zee Bridge isn't sufficient at this time to carry the workload, and people have to go to Jersey to get downtown.

That didn't cost a million dollars, but if you want to give it to me, I'll gladly take it.

(Laughter.)

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: We want

to make sure that it's documented.

So the Governor put forward $20 million to actually look at enhancing and making the train service that's offered between Poughkeepsie and New York City more efficient. And that will fund a number of projects between Metro-North, MTA, and New York State DOT and Amtrak. So making that ride efficient and reliable, a 90-minute ride into the city from Poughkeepsie, is incredibly important.

And to the question that you're asking -- so anything we can do to enhance it. That project actually includes, for instance, adding a second track at Spuyten Duyvil. Why do we need a second track? Because at Spuyten Duyvil we get a convergence of passenger rail, freight rail, all coming in the same time. And oftentimes trains are delayed there.

Eliminating any sort of delay -- if we add a second track, it eliminates the delay. Anything we can do to make train service more reliable for our passengers in the

Hudson Valley, that's what the goal is.

In order to do that, the other thing is is we also see a huge, as you well know, increase in population density. People are moving to the Hudson Valley in more significant numbers. To do this destination study that's been proposed, it's a million dollars to quantify a lot of what you just said and make sure that we understand what additional transit options could we then look at providing, as you stated.

Should we be enhancing our bus shuttle service? What would that look like? Where would we go? Start to flesh all of that out so we can understand what some of the potential transit options that we could look to invest in moving forward.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. Now, is it possible, with the Tappan Zee Bridge rebuild, to have trains crossing that bridge? I know it's built with a less than 12 percent grade, which is what trains can't go over anything much more than that. My understanding is is that the bridge was built with the intention

of eventually adding rail service from Rockland through Westchester into the city.

Is that still on the table?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: You're referring to the ability of what was written into some of the language when we put together the Gateway Commission to actually look at how we could get a ride from the west side of the Hudson into Penn Station?

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Right.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: That is still -- that is written into the legislation. Right now the Gateway Development Commission is moving expeditiously on the Hudson Tunnel project, and that would be considered Phase 2 of what they could take on.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. So it is still on the table that the Tappan Zee Bridge can eventually carry rail service.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: It's looking at how you get a -- it's the Bergen Loop: How do you actually make sure that you can get a ride from west of the Hudson into

the city and Penn Station.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Magnarelli for his follow-up three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Three minutes, okay.

First of all, staffing. DOT has had a longstanding issue with recruitment and retention of engineers. What has been done to address this? How do you feel about it at this point in time, staffing?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, I think like any going concern, you know, certainly with the state workforce as well, we've had staffing challenges.

But that said, I'm really encouraged by a number of things that have been put forward in the Governor's proposal, including a community college incentive for free community college. That includes a number of people that might be interested in going back and getting engineering degrees, architectural licenses, a number of professions that would then benefit the state

workforce, including DOT.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. So we could use more.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Yes.

Okay, switching gears, what actions has the DOT taken in its capital plans to integrate needed infrastructure for electrification and other forms of zero-emission transportation?

How is the DOT prepared to deal with the needs of commercial trucks when it comes to electrification that's called for in the Clean Trucks Rule -- that the Department of Environmental Conservation is now implementing -- with no means of these trucks being electrified?

And does DOT have any plans to install heavy chargers along the state routes and interstates it manages? I'm talking about concrete plans that you're going to go into, you're going to fund, they're moving forward. Can you give me any indication of where we are on that?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: With regard to the Advanced Clean Truck Rule, my understanding is that DEC has extended their enforcement of that rule --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Partially. Partially.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: -- out to 2029.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Yup. Partially. They haven't taken it off of the manufacturers. Which means there's still a problem.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: So as I stated before, one of the goals of DOT is we've been working directly with the OEMs to see what is the technology that's being advanced for medium and heavy-duty fleets.

And then from there -- this is for our own fleet. For instance, for plow trucks. How do we make sure that any technology that's being advanced we can take advantage of, pilot, procure and make sure that we're including it in our fleet.

Right now there's not a lot of options

out there, but we're hoping as the discussions and the investment --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. Would it be honest to say -- I'm talking for myself -- that the DOT, along with a lot of other agencies, hasn't really come to the bottom line on how to do this and plan for it, that we're just not there yet because technologies, et cetera, are still, you know, being developed?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Well, I will tell you that as part of the funding that we receive from the federal government under the NEVI program, the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program, we partnered with NYSERDA, NYPA, the Thruway Authority and really -- and DEC, to really look at what are those Alternative Fuel Corridors to include heavy- and medium-duty charging.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And to close up questioning for you, Senator Comrie for a three-minute follow-up.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

Design-build procurement. Can you tell us how many projects the DOT is doing that is under design-build? And has that been helpful to you in your planning and dissemination of projects?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I don't have the list in front of me, but I'm happy to give it to you.

We've been doing it for over 20 years, as soon as the authority was given to DOT, and we've been executing design-build projects across the board for many years.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. And you'll send that to us.

Can you also send us a copy of your department audits and how you verify the savings that you're using for these projects, the audits that you've had for the last couple of years?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Audits on safety for design-build projects?

SENATOR COMRIE: Or just projects in general. Your last capital projects. For

two thousand and -- I'm sorry, 2000 -- the last two capital project budgets. What has been spent on the budgets from the two -- 2020 and the 2022 and the 2023-2027 capital plans? Have you sent us an update on how much has been completed and how much has yet to be completed for those two plans?

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: I'm -- I'm not sure, but I'm happy to follow up with you directly and make sure that we're responsive to your requests.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. Our staff is looking for those. So if you can get that to us, that would be helpful.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Okay.

SENATOR COMRIE: All right, thank you. That's my time.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank you very much --

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- for being with us here this morning.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank

you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We had a lot of questions for you. Obviously transportation means a lot to all of us. Appreciate your work. And you're free.

DOT COMMISSIONER DOMINGUEZ: Thank you very much. Appreciate the opportunity.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And any legislators who want to grab the commissioner, please do so in the hallway and continue your conversation out there, because we need to move along with our next panel of guests from the MTA.

(Pause; off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Take your seats, please.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Would everyone please take their seats so we can get started.

Will the chairman and chief executive officer of the MTA please take his seat?

(Pause.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Mr. Chairman, good afternoon. You can introduce your staff

if you'd like, or you can begin your testimony. You have 10 minutes.

(Mic issue; overtalk.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Speak kind of closely to the mic so everyone can hear you.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay, will do. I should be a veteran here; this is my fourth go-round, but I'm not, so.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Not your first rodeo, huh?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I'm Janno Lieber. I'm the MTA chair and CEO.

I am joined by the team that -- these folks, along with many, many others, are the reason that I've been able, we've been able to accomplish a great deal. Shanifah Rieara is the chief customer officer of the MTA. Demetrius Crichlow is the president of New York City Transit. Kevin Willens is the CFO of the MTA, and he's joined by his co-CFO Jai Patel. And hiding back there are a couple of other folks who many of you know, including John McCarthy, who runs policy and external affairs and does so much with

members of this body.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Listen, timekeeper, can you reset the clock to 10 minutes? Thank you.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: All right.

Thank you again for the invitation. And this is the fourth year, as I said, that I've appeared before you at this hearing. And the MTA has faced down many, many challenges because of the work that we -- and it is we -- have been able to accomplish together with you in the Legislature.

None was more existential than the 2023 fiscal cliff solution that we developed with you. Back then the MTA was facing a multi-billion-dollar operating budget hole. At that time I called on the Legislature to step up and help preserve the high level of transit service despite the ridership and financial challenges that had been brought on by COVID. And those were challenges that every transit system in the United States was facing, and many of them at a much greater rate than New York.

As I always say, and it's a bit of a cliche coming from me now, transit for New Yorkers is like air and water. We need it to survive, full stop. And to your credit, you acted. With the leadership and support of Governor Hochul, you passed a budget that made transit whole and kept New York running. We preserved service, and you were very much part of that success.

Today I want to tell you about the ROI, the return on that investment. Ridership has grown dramatically in the last two years. The subways are regularly carrying before four and four and a half million people a day, more than the entire United States aviation system. Every day. Every day.

And that was thanks to your investment. We were able to increase service on 14 subway lines, a lot of it in the weekend and the midday and the off-hours, the time periods when we were seeing the most dramatic growth. We are frequently seeing over a hundred percent of pre-COVID ridership

in those times of day, when people really do have options.

Both the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North are coming off their best years ever -- ever, when it comes to on-time performance. Long Island Rail Road on-time performance was about 96 percent, despite running much, much more service than ever before. In fact, 13,000 more trains per annum. And since 2023, ridership has surged, and today is roughly 85 percent of pre-COVID levels -- and customer satisfaction has soared with the service improvements on the Long Island Rail Road.

Not to be outdone, Metro-North on-time performance was an amazing 98 percent, while ridership grew more than 12 percent year over year. Eighty-five percent of Metro-North riders are telling surveyers that they are satisfied and happy with Metro-North service.

And don't forget about buses. The final plan for the Queens bus network redesign was just approved by the MTA board members. Tip of the hat to Senator Liu and

others -- Senator Comrie -- who participated in that process. It includes a $35 million annual investment to increase bus frequency in our most bus-dependent borough, and much better connections to the subway and the Long Island Rail Road.

All this is just on the operating side.

Funded by the MTA capital program, we are cranking out elevators and accessibility projects at an unprecedented rate, more than four times predecessor MTAs. There are now more than 150 fully accessible subway stations, with another 36 in construction. More are on the way: 23 projects that are funded by congestion pricing -- yes, I used the word -- are actually in process, plus another 60 slated to be included in that capital plan you are taking up this year.

But with every project, not just ADA projects, we are advancing the agenda of inclusiveness in our contracting. For many years now we at the MTA have been number one of state agencies and public authorities in

dollars that we are expending to certified MWBEs. In 2023, the last year for which we have complete stats, almost 40 percent of MTA contracts were awarded to MWBEs. And together with the work that we do under the federal program, which is slightly different, there are more than a billion dollars going to those companies.

And it's a source of strength for us because it increases competition. It's not just spreading the wealth, it's about more competition in a huge space where we need it.

But together, and again with encouragement from this body, we are running a much smarter business. We hear from the anti-transit crowd the same tired criticisms of the MTA, a lot of them about our cost structure. These are what I refer to as the not-so-golden oldies.

Since Day One of my term as chair, I have been all about efficiencies. So let's talk about the results. The MTA budget, ladies and gentlemen, today is 3 percent lower than it was before COVID in real terms.

That's right, 3 percent lower. And notwithstanding that we're running all that extra service on the subways -- 40 percent more service on Long Island Rail Road, 20 percent more on Metro-North, hundreds and hundreds of ADA elevators that we're operating -- and by the way, a little old 700,000 square foot railroad terminal -- and yet our budget is lower. Much more is being delivered at lower cost.

We did a presentation at our board meeting last week -- and I don't know if it came to any of your attention -- which went through in detail how the MTA is actually the most efficient transit organization in the United States based on the cost per rider and the subsidy per rider. We are the best deal.

Now, you have played a part in that success. We did some serious belt-tightening as part of that 2023 budget deal. And as part of that, you challenged, we challenged the MTA to cut out $400 million in our operating budget without cutting service or doing any layoffs. We hit that target, and

now we're pushing that number to 500 million in recurring efficiencies.

And we're not stopping there. We have a wide range of efficiency initiatives underway -- I'm not going to go through all of them, but we want to get into them with all of you. We have cut the time it takes to do federally required inspections of every railroad car. We are looking carefully and saving money on the cycle of our overhauls. We're even looking at each computer that MTA employees have to make sure they don't have software that we're paying for that they're not using.

If you have Excel on your computer and you ain't using it, we're taking it away. And we're doing the same thing with phone and other devices that are issued to MTA employees that they don't use. How do I know this? They took away my iPad because I wasn't using it.

(Laughter.)

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So this is real. And we're going to keep going, because

this is the essence of good government. This is what we want to be known for.

So I think it's time to retire the old talking points about how the MTA doesn't manage money. This is a new MTA, and we're all about efficiency.

Now, obviously we have a long way to go on key issues like public safety and fare evasion.

We are making real progress, however. In the last six months -- news flash -- fare evasion on the subways is down 25 percent. The buses, which are more challenging, because you can't put a cop on every bus -- but we are also making progress and have knocked fare evasion on buses down by 12 percent.

This did not happen by accident. Our strategy: Stronger barriers, a ton of publicity to push back on the misimpression that seem to have developed among some people that the whole system is free, and plenty of enforcement, which I am for. And it's all starting to pay off.

The gate guard program. If you ride the subways, you see that we have security guards blocking the gate to make sure that the superhighway of fare evasion, which is that fire code-required exit gate, does not get opened. Many of you are riders, and you've seen those people.

And it's making a difference, and we're doing a ton of work with the physical barriers. And also we are making sure that our young people, that the students have those OMNY cards, which have dramatically cut down on student fare evasion. Success after success, but we've got a long way to go.

I'm also a bear on fare evasion because it creates a sense of lawlessness at the entry point. And we want the subways, the commuter rail system, and everything to feel welcoming and safe. We've had great support from Governor Hochul, from City Hall, and from the NYPD. Customers tell us again and again what they want is to see more cops. And this is every demographic, every neighborhood, every income level.

So everybody's agreed, and we're going to keep pushing for more cops. And I bless the Governor and the Mayor and Commissioner Tisch for stepping up and putting cops on every train at night.

We know that the high-profile incidents have put New Yorkers on edge, and especially these pushings -- which happen infrequently but are terrifying, it's a New York phobia -- and assaults on our employees. So in addition to advocating for our cops, I'm going to keep pressing our criminal justice system to take seriously the crimes that do take place in mass transit.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: You're going to cut me off, all right.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I hate to do it, but we do have to move along.

Assemblyman Braunstein, chair, for 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you, Chair Pretlow. And thank you, Chairman, and

your team for coming up on this snowy day. We appreciate it.

You didn't get to it in your testimony, but I'll bring it up now, is the MTA capital plan funding gap for the 2025-2029 capital plan. There's a significant funding gap, I believe it's somewhere around $35 billion. The Governor didn't propose any solution to that funding gap in her executive proposal. You're appointed by the Governor. Have you had conversations with the Governor, or has she given you any indication on how we should move forward in closing that gap?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Listen, let's talk about where we are. Right? One thing I -- number one, I want to acknowledge your chairmanship and the help that you've already provided to us. So thank you.

Listen, every year there is a -- this year there's a $250 billion State Budget. The MTA's budget, the capital budget, is totally predictable. We had a $55 billion capital program. It's expiring, it's not a

secret. And it is a little bit of a mystery to me that every time the MTA capital program comes up, we treat it like, Oh, my God, they need a bailout.

This is no different than Medicaid and education and everything else that's done at the state. It happens to be treated like an off-budget item. So respectfully, I don't agree with the paradigm that the MTA has a gap. What it has is something that we all know, which is 40 years ago there was an acknowledgement, under Dick Ravitch's leadership, that we need a capital program. That we have a hundred-year-old system that will fall apart unless we invest in it. And we all need to step up and do that.

I have been thrilled that the Governor has been clear that she supports the MTA capital program and intends, with you, to address the $68 billion proposal, which is not even -- which is below inflation, versus the capital program that's expiring.

So I'm not going to get into who needs to propose and who -- it's clearly something

the Assembly and the Senate and the Governor are going to have to come to terms on. But what I want to say is that I am pushing back a little bit, and it's not at you in particular, but at the idea that somehow this is a -- you know, we have a budget gap that needs to be addressed. This could be addressed by the existing state budget. It could be addressed, as we have proposed in some cases, by some financing approaches that could reduce the size of the challenge. And it could also be addressed by new revenues. We leave that to you under the division of labor.

Our job is to frame the scale of the need, and we did that with our 20-year needs assessment, which was unprecedented in its scope and detail.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So there's no indication that Governor plans to try and fund this in the budget, through your conversations with her?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Again, my discussion with her has been one of, you

know, appreciating -- listening and appreciating the fact that she supported the MTA $68 billion capital program and acknowledge that it was based on a really detailed needs assessment and that it was kind of a minimum program. But it's not on the MTA, which doesn't have taxing authority or any -- all we can do is raise fares, which we don't want to do.

So it's not the MTA's to figure out the power of the purse issues. That is between the Executive and the Legislature, and we are counting on you. Although we will support you all along the way.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So is there any discussion about when there's a new vote on the capital plan, is it going to be the same plan? Do we have a time frame?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, again, I'm sure some of that is going to be shaped by the dialogue that takes place today and as the discussions in Albany unfold.

But from our standpoint -- you know, I'm not being shy about this. Given the fact

that it was -- it cannot get smaller unless you want to cut the expansion, and we don't want to cut because the IBX is a generational opportunity to connect the two biggest counties in the state. Right? But it's not going to get any smaller, because our bottom line is we're not going to let the system continue to lose ground with this 100-year-old infrastructure that's just getting older and older and more and more broken.

So, you know, would we have some -- potentially some small adjustments? Perhaps. And we're in dialogue with all of you. But it ain't getting smaller because we are at the minimum point where we can assure that we do not lose ground, that we don't end up with elevated structures that are more likely to fall apart or power systems that are more likely to blow up like those did in Brooklyn and at Columbus Circle in the last --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I'm sorry, I have 10 minutes so I just want to move on.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: You got it.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Has there been any conversations with our federal partners about contributing to the gap? I know you don't like the term "gap," but -- you know, has there been conversations?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Listen. You know, not news to anybody here that we're in a tumultuous period of change in Washington, right? And there's nobody who could give me any specific guarantees about anything. I mean, you know, I learned yesterday that we might be -- federal money may be given out based on, what was it, birth rates and procreation rates --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Marriage rates. Marriage rates.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't know what to make of that. I do know what to call it, however. It's that -- it's conception pricing, I think is the right way to call it.

(Laughter.)

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But I don't know what to make of any of that.

But that said, we're going to let the

dust settle in Washington and then we're going to have conversations. History says that bipartisanship on transportation investment prevails. We partnered with red state transit systems through COVID, and transit funding was preserved. So we are optimistic. But obviously we're going to have to wait for the dust to settle before we have any indications.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Thank you. And you did touch on -- the next topic I wanted to discuss was toll and fare evasion.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I know there was a recent media report about the toll repayment. I know it's disputed, some of the numbers that were in that media report.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Just some of the numbers. How about all of the numbers?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: All right. But if you can just give us a breakdown, combined, of how much lost revenue the MTA incurs with fare evasion and toll evasion

combined.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. Listen, the truth is I can't. We've made progress, as I said, on -- dramatic progress on subway fare evasion. We've made significant progress on bus fare evasion. And we have made significant progress on commuter railroad fare evasion because instead of the old system that I inherited where people were being given IOUs -- like, you know, assuming that they would then send in the money -- we now say, Okay, give us an I.D. You know, in effect you're given a ticket that you have to pay or else a cop meets you at the next station. So we have really cut fare evasion across the board.

Toll evasion is a serious problem, and that's why we appreciate the steps the Legislature took last year. But the big picture is we collect 96 percent of tolls. Everybody loves open-road tolling. Nobody wants to stop at tollbooths anymore. And part of that is people need to pay bills.

Four percent of the bills go unpaid.

We then go after those folks, and we end up collecting, you know, something like 30, 35 percent of those unpaid tolls, and then we send it to collectors.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So the issue's --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So there's no neglect. There's no neglect going on. It's like 150 million a year, I think is the number on the toll evasion side.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But this legislative session we're going to ask for more powers to crack down on toll evaders, including those who cover plates and engage in other kind of shenanigans.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: So that was my next question. It's more the people who don't pay as opposed to people with altered license --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Right now most of it is people who just don't pay their bills. You know, if we were a credit card company, the numbers would be about the same.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Do you have an idea of how much you lose because people have altered license plates?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I'm going to get back to you on that, because it is -- it is a real issue.

But if instead -- I'm going to ask -- I'm asking the Legislature this year if instead of like giving a people a ticket if they cover their plate and letting them drive away with the plate, we are empowered to confiscate the device or even the car, which is what we do with people who owe big money. We would have a lot more power to push back on this problem.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. And a dollar figure, combined, you said it was 150 for tolls and maybe 600 for --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But again, again, it's not evasion, it's un -- whatever. We'll give you -- we'll write to you a specific response. I just don't have the numbers at hand.

But the trajectory is -- I just don't

want anyone to think like the MTA doesn't take fare evasion seriously. We've asked you for more powers, we asked the NYPD for more enforcement every day, all day. And we're doing everything in our power to change the physical technology, which is just -- you know, those turnstiles ain't cutting it anymore, no news to anybody.

So on every front we are fighting back on fare evasion. And, you know, I'm just -- I'm sick of people acting like the MTA is somehow letting money pour out. That is not the game we're playing.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. That's my time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

We will start with Chair Leroy Comrie.

SENATOR COMRIE: Good afternoon, team, Chair Lieber. I won't do a preliminary, I just want to jump in with some questions if you don't mind.

My understanding is that you're cutting the MTA police budget $20 million,

but you're getting $77 million from the Governor to put police officers in the street? Can you explain to me why you're cutting the MTA police budget $20 million?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I'm going to defer to Jai Patel, our co-CFO. I think the -- we're not cutting anybody. We actually tried to just make sure we manage overtime effectively. And we have improved the professionalism and the effectiveness of the MTA police dramatically in the last couple of years. Everybody is seeing cops on trains -- MTA cops on the commuter trains a heck of a lot more. So the number I think you're talking about is about overtime.

One other point and I'll throw it to Jai is we lost a grant from the Manhattan DA that enabled us to pay MTA cops to do additional fare evasion enforcement, and that has also had an effect.

Jai?

MTA CO-CFO PATEL: Sure. Thank you, Chairman.

I'll start with MTAPD has been vital

to our organization. They patrol both the railroads and at subway stations. The number of head count, for example, in 2021 was there about 1100 MTAPD, and in 2024 we have about 1350 MTAPD. So we've been growing our PD in-house and we have employees that are out in the system --

SENATOR COMRIE: But there'll be no loss in head count for this year, it's just a way to --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No.

MTA CO-CFO PATEL: No. As the chairman mentioned, it was a grant that we had received. That was one time --

SENATOR COMRIE: How much was that grant?

MTA CO-CFO PATEL: It was $10 million on an annual basis over four years.

And so we lost that funding from the forfeiture fund, and so we've reduced that funding --

SENATOR COMRIE: So the 77 million -- I'm sorry to be -- but I only got 10 minutes.

So the $77 million from the Governor

could offset that 10 million, to make that up.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No, the 77 million that the Governor's investing is to put two NYPD cops on every subway train.

SENATOR COMRIE: Right.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: And that's good. And that's a great thing.

The NYPD patrols the subways. We have four locations where the MTAPD is taking over subway enforcement responsibilities, and those are our terminals. So the subways at Grand Central, and Penn, at Jamaica and Atlantic are MTAPD-enforced. Otherwise, the subway system is the NYPD's, and they're doing a heck of a job.

SENATOR COMRIE: Gotcha. So you won't lose head count with the MTA Police, but you're able to supplement the money with the MTA with the New York City Police Department.

And how long a period of time will that 77 million last?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: It's six months, right?

MTA CO-CFO PATEL: I believe it's six months.

SENATOR COMRIE: Six months, okay. All right, then we'll move on to the next question.

You talked about the fact that your budget is lower. Can you talk about how your dashboard is showing people that? And can you talk about exactly how John Q. Public can look at the dashboard and see how your money is being spent?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So the MTA is like the open data king of state government: 150 data sets with like trillions of terabytes of data. Anybody should go online, dig in, there's unlimited data.

Among the things that you have asked us, in addition to all of those 150 data sets, is a capital plan dashboard, and a skeletal version of that has been posted. It needs to be improved in terms of additional functionality. You are right that it needs to be, you know, more developed. We're in the process of doing it. It will be in place

by the time that you all pass the capital plan funding, and will be there.

SENATOR COMRIE: And will they show procurement as well? Like you said they took your laptop. Will they show the procurement gains in the other $500 million in gains and how people can access that and see how well you're spending your OTPS dollars on supplies and everything else?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah. I mean, that is all absolutely part of it.

But I'm going to circulate, just since you specified it, like the presentation that was given at our board meeting so all the members of this committee, of the various committees have it. Because that goes directly to the issue that you're raising.

SENATOR COMRIE: Got it.

And you said now that the issues around fare evasion, the Fair Fares program, as you know, PCAC has some ideas to increase it to 200 percent of the poverty level -- we fully support that -- and to do other things to create opportunities for more ridership,

to create a kids program, and also to create a transfer program. I hope you can support their five platform ideas that would increase ridership and increase prime-time ridership as well.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, we love the Fair Fares program. We pushed always for more eligibility. And Shanifah, would you talk about what we've done? Because we are pushing more people to sign up to make sure that low-income folks get that benefit.

Shanifah?

MTA CCO REIARA: Yup. So thank you, Senator. Fair Fares, as the chair mentioned, huge supporters. And we do everything possible to push and promote getting people signed up and enrolled. So much so that we do monthly programmatic activity, setting up spaces within the transit system and encouraging people to sign up, in partnership with the city.

So if you come out on-site, we advertise and promote ahead of time. And we're also going to be using our in-station

customer service centers for customers to come out and sign up for Fair Fares very soon, 24 hours a day or at their leisure.

SENATOR COMRIE: Great. I look forward to the Fair Fares program. There should be notice of it being expanded in all the stations as well. And even with the Long Island Rail Road, there needs to be better notice of their discount programs so that people can see it when they come in.

I appreciate that.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Can I just say one thing on that topic? What you and we have done in terms of funding the city zone so that folks can ride the railroads inside the city for five bucks or seven bucks at peak, that is that the most satisfied customer segment in our system, people riding the railroads under the CityTicket program. People are thrilled about it.

SENATOR COMRIE: Definitely. Glad that we were able to work on that together. I look forward to working on other ideas.

Right now the issue that came to me

regarding the trains and the availability for new trains and the Alstom trains and the M-92 and M-96 or whatever. Now, I know you need trains and -- but, first, have you figured out why the wheels are disappearing so quickly on, what is it, the R line?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, the wheels aren't disappearing. What's happening is that on the Queens Boulevard line, which you and I both care about a lot, service has been much better, well done, because we have now modern signaling on that line. But the wheels on the trains, you know, that are working the Queens Boulevard line, that's the A and the F and the M, and the R train, sometimes are wearing out more than they should, so there's a series of engineering studies underway -- I'm not going to spend a ton of time on that -- but that is being studied deeply right now.

So we don't have an answer on that issue.

SENATOR COMRIE: Didn't we put new rail through that whole area? Didn't you

replace the rails?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Go ahead, Demetrius.

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: Thank you for the question.

It's more than just the rails, it's -- we increased speeds in the area. We -- you know, over the last several years we've tried to look at every way to improve our service, which means increasing speeds, introducing new train cars, we've updated our signaling system.

So there are so many different changes to the system, it's hard to determine exactly why the wheels themselves are wearing more quickly. So we have an engineering team, in addition to a consultant, that's looking at our overall operational experience to see what could be impacting it. So it's being tackled from many different fronts, from both the car perspective, the wheel perspective, and the wear of the actual -- whether or not the composite of the wheels has changed, going down to the actual trains, how they're

moving, and the tracks themselves.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. Can we talk about the Alstom contract for a second?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So, open procurement, so no details, obviously. We have -- in the current capital program we want to buy hundreds of railcars, in part for commuter railroads, and we're continuing to buy hundreds of subway cars under the Kawasaki contract for the R211s.

We've recently -- since congestion pricing was moving forward, we've moved forward with an option on the R211 subway cars.

You're talking about a commuter rail contract that's been underway -- a commuter rail procurement that's been underway for years. We lost competition on that because the feds kicked the Chinese out. You know, probably a good decision, but it impacted on the competitiveness. And we're in the middle of that procurement right now.

So I can't really describe it other than we're working our tails off to see if we

can make it work.

SENATOR COMRIE: Gotcha. How many cars do you need right now? How many cars are out of service?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, we are proposing in the new capital program to buy 1500 railcars, including both subway and commuter rail.

We have about 8,000 cars in the subway system -- right?

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: About 6700.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Closer to 7,000 cars in the subway system. And I don't know the offhand number. So we got to buy a lot of cars.

SENATOR COMRIE: My time is --

(Time clock sounds.)

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Your old friend Dick Ravitch --

SENATOR COMRIE: My time is up for this round. I'll come back; I get to do another --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you both very much.

SENATOR COMRIE: I get 10 minutes later, right?

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: So I guess MTA stands for "More Trains Available."

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yes.

(Laughter.)

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Better than some of the other acronyms your friends have come up with.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That might work.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Magnarelli.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I've just got a couple of comments.

I'm from upstate New York. I'm non-MTA, okay? And I just want to bring a couple of things to your attention. We're talking about tens of billions of dollars for the MTA and its capital plan. It is what it is. But when you look at everything else that's going into the DOT, its capital plan is $34.1 billion. So all the rest of the state, including New York City,

$34.1 billion. Okay? When you talk about non-MTA mass transit capital this year, $220 million, versus what the MTA is looking for.

I only say these things to have you realize what everybody else in the state is looking at when they look at New York City.

Now, for me, I say to them if we don't fix New York City, nothing else is going to get fixed. And I've said that not only to your people but to people in New York City. We have to fix the subways, the buses, the transit system in New York City because basically it's the heart of our state. And people don't realize that.

But at the same time I would like to proffer to you that some education needs to be done on a statewide basis, not only in New York City, but to let people know just how important that transit system is and why we're spending that amount of money on it.

That's all I have to say to you today, and I appreciate your being here.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I appreciate

what you're saying.

I mean, the numbers are staggering: That, what is it, 85 percent of the personal income taxes and 60-plus percent of the sales taxes in the state come out of the MTA region. That the 3 million jobs that are enabled because of mass transit at our density. And this is what to explain to people who -- as you said, whether they're from upstate New York or they're from Utah. At our density, which is nine times Sunbelt cities like Phoenix or Houston, we couldn't have our economy without great mass transit. It just doesn't exist. You can't have our economy.

And that economy is the engine of our great state and of our great region, and I bless you for calling attention to that.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: And I just want to say one more thing.

Make sure it's clean and safe and stop the crime that people perceive, anyway, okay, because I think that makes a big difference as well. I think -- that's all I have to

say.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: We're doing our best. You got it.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Thank you.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Roxanne Persaud.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Good afternoon.

SENATOR PERSAUD: You know, we have a scheduled meeting coming up.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yup.

SENATOR PERSAUD: But I want to talk about, as you hear me every year talking about the express bus, particularly the express buses that serve my area, particularly the BM2.

What are we doing to improve the service and the reliability of the BM2 bus? I take the BM2 when I have to get into the city, and I can tell you, the time -- it's never on time, and it takes forever to get

into the city. What are we doing to improve the service?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: The one thing we're doing -- and then I'm going to turn it over to Demetrius -- is congestion pricing. because that has dramatically improved the speed of travel in and out of the city, from New Jersey, from the boroughs -- in and out of Manhattan and the Central Business District, not the city.

And we've seen people gaining 10, 20, 30 minutes. And express bus speeds have improved, and express bus ridership is up.

But to your specific question, Demetrius.

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: So thank you for your question. One of the things that we realize particularly is that each of the boroughs needs to have attention to the system. The current routes that we had in the past are not really indicative of what our ridership or customers need.

So the most recent network redesign was for Queens, because it was the borough

that needed it most at the time. So we spent a whole lot of time making sure that what we gave them for the Queens bus network redesign was what our customers needed.

Brooklyn will be next. We will --

SENATOR PERSAUD: But in the meanwhile, we're still suffering. If you have a bus scheduled to be -- leave at 8 o'clock, you shouldn't be waiting till 8:30. That has nothing to do with the design. It's about the management of the timing of the buses. There should be someone there that says "This bus is scheduled to leave at 8:30, why isn't the bus there?"

And then the riders are waiting there with no information. If you try calling that number, forget it, that's a different story. So the customer service and the call line is not helpful. So we need to fix the bus system, because we are in a transit desert.

And the people who are going into the city, we want them not to be taking their private transportation to the city, but to be reliant on public transportation. But if

they can't rely on public transportation, then what should they do?

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: Senator, you're absolutely right, and I totally understand your point.

I'm happy to take a look at this specific route. You know, if there's a problem with the specific route and the buses themselves -- even with the snow today, we got 98 percent of our buses out of the house.

So, you know, it's not an issue of like us like providing the specific service. But I'm happy to take a look at the specific route.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you very much.

Assemblyman Miller.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: And we have to get your people from your neighborhood, because your district has more MTA employees than any other.

SENATOR PERSAUD: I know.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So it is

especially important.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: He's on your time, you know.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Okay, I'll be real quick here. You can start the clock.

Okay, unpaid fares and tolls. The audio here in this room can be a little tough. With respect to -- the article in the New York Post on January 26th revealed that the MTA lost over 5 billion in unpaid tolls since 2021, which has largely been attributed to cashless tolling, 1.4 billion last year. Does the authority intend to collect on this unpaid toll revenue? And how will we make up for these losses?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. So I think I dealt with most of this before, but I'll take another crack.

Just for example, last year we had $2.5 billion tolled. We collected 2.3. Another 60 to 70 million has already been recovered. So the facts that are in that article are misleading. I'm not going to go through a specific critique, but we are

recovering tolls. And in fact with the powers that you gave us last year, which are to de-register cars that people owed tolls on, we're actually moving more quickly to get settlements and to get people to pay.

So there's progress on collecting tolls. The article -- God bless the tabloid media, they're occasionally not quite exact.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Okay, so that power to collect tolls, unpaid tolls, I guess what percentage of vehicles don't pay tolls? And how many violators come from outside of New York State?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, like I said, the percentage of -- you know, it's $200 million out of 2.5 billion. So somebody do the math; that will tell you roughly the percentage.

So 96 percent of tolls are paid. And then of the 4 percent we collect, roughly 35 percent of that remainder, just through normal outreach and pushing people to pay.

You have helped us to accelerate those payments. We are collecting more. And then

some of it, just like a credit card company, just like anybody who has bills that they collect on, some of them we have to send to bill collectors, to collection agents. And we're also successful with that.

So we're going to keep pushing.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Okay, so we have collaboration with other states to be able to collect these tolls from their drivers?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: That's a good question. We have reciprocity with a lot of states.

Jai, you want to talk -- can you talk to this issue? No?

But not all of them. So there is -- it is worth talking about in this legislative cycle, how do we get tougher control on, you know, toll deadbeats who are out of state that we can't deregister their cars. That is something that we would like to talk about.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Thank you, Commissioner.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Bynoe.

Senator Cleare.

SENATOR CLEARE: (Mic off) -- the transportation desert of East Harlem, but I wanted to talk about the expansion west into West Harlem. I know that we're planning on stopping at Lenox, Saint Nicholas, and Broadway. Where are we in that project? Do we think the $7.5 billion is enough? And what's left? Because we want to see it happen. And have we considered including Metro-North and even possibly, in the future, an Amtrak connection?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, bottom line is we have -- the Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 is a good project, and it's being well-run, and I'm not going to drag you through all the details. But we ain't going to end up with a front-page article in the New York Times like the first version that says it was poorly run and there was a lot of delay and waste. Okay? Number one.

Number two, we do have -- we do not --

have not funded the extra engineering and tunneling that would extend it to Broadway. That is a concept that is on the table. We have set aside, in our proposal, $800 million for a lot of different potential projects. And working with the Governor's team and the Legislature, we will have to narrow that down. That is a project under consideration for that additional roughly billion dollars that we have proposed in the capital program to extend it.

The project all the way to Park Avenue and Lenox, as you said, is funded. But the idea of extending the tunneling all the way to Broadway is not yet finalized funding, but it is a concept that is under study and eligible for consideration.

SENATOR CLEARE: Anything I can do to help move that along, I am happy to do.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: We're happy to get into specifics with you. Let's get into it.

SENATOR CLEARE: Okay. Okay.

And as for the 125th Street and

Broadway -- all my -- all our subway stations, the accessibility is an issue, especially for the elevated line at 125th Street and Broadway. That one in particular because there is a partnership with Columbia University, I understand.

Where are we in that?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, we have advanced the discussions with Columbia. I don't want to get ahead of myself, but I think we're close to an understanding with Columbia where they would take some responsibility for enabling us to put in elevators at the 125th and Broadway No. 1 line station.

SENATOR CLEARE: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

Congestion pricing disability exemption. I have had some communications with constituents, and please tell me if I'm correct about this process.

I know that you could be enrolled in a previous, you know, Access-A-Ride or

something like that. But otherwise the individual has to go and be seen at one of the MTA's centers in order to get that exemption? Is that correct?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Just like paratransit, which has got 200,000 people enrolled and found eligible, you have to go through the assessment process. And we've done that for thousands of people already.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: But is there -- or are you looking at potentially expanding that to Long Island so that -- because for a disabled individual who has mobility issues, to get to the Bronx or Manhattan or Brooklyn is -- can be difficult.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah. Respectfully, we require assessments for folks qualifying for paratransit, and we've had success with it, and we're using the same process, including assessment centers in the boroughs.

Honestly, Assemblymember, if somebody wants an exemption to enable them to drive to the Central Business District, it doesn't

seem unreasonable to go as far as Queens to get assessed. So --

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Well, the individual I spoke to doesn't drive. You know, has very severe mobility issues. And they've found it just very difficult to get --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No, but wait a second. They're going to get an exemption that allows a particular car to be exempt.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yes.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Not -- the exemption doesn't --

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: They are not the driver themselves.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So the person who's going to drive them regularly and get the exemption for their car needs to take them to the assessment center in Queens, if that's the most convenient one.

So we're comfortable that if you want an exemption to drive to Midtown, you should be able to get, you know, a third of the way there to get assessed.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Going back to the

conversation you had with Chair Braunstein, I understand you don't want to call it a gap or whatever with the capital plan. But is there a number that you feel needs to be addressed in this budget in terms of additional capital funding, whether it's through some new dedicated, you know, funding source, tax, whatever it is? Is there a number --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: You could -- you could take it from the existing budget. I don't buy the idea that we treat education and Medicaid and healthcare and all these other state programs as a given. Oh, we have to fund those -- there's no gap, no one says, Well, there's a gap. But when the MTA comes with this predictable capital program, which is below inflation -- so when everyone's talking about gaps and bailouts, it ain't right, it's not accurate. And I'm going to keep pushing back on that rhetoric.

So with that said, the number that needs to be resolved, whether it's through existing revenues or the future, under our proposal was roughly 33 billion over the

five-year period. That would require, you know, a much smaller number of regular revenue to be bonded.

And I think under the Governor's proposal it's slightly larger because she had some other variables.

But everybody knows the scale of the issue. The point is you have the power of the purse, along with the Executive, and we're counting on you to solve it.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And as part of that as well, do you need the gap between what was initially projected from congestion pricing and the lower amount with the lower fine to be addressed?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No. We have -- without wasting everybody's time, we have figured out how we make the lower numbers of -- the lower revenue from congestion pricing work in order to fund the projects that were supposed to be funded, albeit at slightly longer time frames.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And then you mentioned the actions of a couple of years

ago with regard to the operating funding and plugging that gap. Is everything now, you know, basically where you are now in terms of fares, in terms of all the dedicated taxes, all of that stuff, everything basically lines up right now? There's no funding gap?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No. We've made good on -- the projections that you and we all made together back in '23 have stood up through the five-year period that was on the table at that time. So we're balanced-budget through '26.

The outyears have some gaps in them which we'll need to talk about over time. That's not a this-year issue. But it depends on, you know, a lot of variables, including how much the real estate taxes that you all, we're all dealing with, a downturn in real estate tax revenues, how well they perform. So -- but that's not a this-year issue, and we've made good on the commitments that were made in '23.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Tom O'Mara, Finance ranker, five minutes.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

Good afternoon, Chairman. Thanks for being with us.

As you know, we have a very strong railcar manufacturing base across the Southern Tier of New York, with much work that you've done with Alstom in Hornell over the years, that we have CAF in Elmira, and soon to come, Siemens in Horseheads, building high-speed rail, building railcars for municipal transit systems across the country.

My only question for you, and I thank you for visiting us over the time, is -- and I know you've been to Alstom with myself. In fact, are you in discussions or anything with CAF, the other manufacturer currently in Elmira, on possibilities working for the MTA and, you know, where do --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: We were not -- listen, here's the bottom line. We're buying 15 -- I misspoke earlier. We're buying

1500 subway cars and 500 railcars in the next -- I would love it if every one of them were manufactured in the State of New York. New York State was the historic center of railcar manufacturing in the great rail age. It ought to be again.

I'm thrilled that CAF, which is a Spanish company, has started to expand in New York State. I'm thrilled that Siemens -- and we're going to buy some dual-mode locomotives from Siemens -- is doing it at Horseheads. It's all great. Let's work together to make the huge railcar needs a part of our --

SENATOR O'MARA: Are there any tools that the Legislature could help you with in prioritizing New York State manufactured railcars?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Let's have a longer discussion about that. But yeah. I mean, yes, I do think that we need those companies to be enabled to produce MTA railcars. They're producing all kinds of different stuff. But there are some unique

characteristics of our operating environment and otherwise that we need them to be able to make MTA -- you know, it's not just a quality issue, it's literally the physical type of car that they can build at those facilities.

So we can talk about how do we work together to get them there.

SENATOR O'MARA: And also incorporating all the various and many subcontractors that provide services and parts and components to the larger Alstom and CAF's -- keep those in mind too.

But just to follow up, I think you were asked earlier about the M-9A contract. You say that's in procurement right now, but that's been going on for about nine years. I know you can't get into the details of procurement going on, but what's the timeline we're looking at here? I mean, nine years seems to be an awful long time.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I mean, thumbs up or down, it's got to be sooner rather than later. You're right, it is really complicated to do railcar procurement. This

is not like going down to the hardware store.

But let me tell you, we would like that one to be resolved, and for good or bad, we have to resolve it, you know, in the next six months.

SENATOR O'MARA: Well, thank you. thank you for your leadership on that. And anything that you or your crew comes up with where we might be able to do something legislatively to help ensure that that manufacturing process happens in New York, certainly I'm all ears, and I'm sure everybody else here as well.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblyman Simone.

ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman, for joining us.

I have a question about subway safety gates. Last year 26 people were pushed in front of the subway tracks according to the New York Times. And I know we have these half-assed gates up that don't even go all the way up.

Are you looking and studying other cities, what they're doing with their gates? Like for instance in Eastern Europe and that, they have the full-fledged rope gates that no one can be pushed in front of a subway car because they go all the way up. And they're more costly -- less costly, and it takes -- it's quicker to build them, from what we've read.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I'm happy to look at any model that you're pointing to.

The big picture is this, that those -- in the modern railcar situation you have these what they call platform screen doors that block the entire platform. Our platforms -- remember, this is a hundred-year-old system. Our platforms can't take that weight.

So we've gone to alternative approaches which have been working and, equally important, make people feel safe. I don't accept the phrase half-assed, respectfully. So --

ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: I mean, if you're

tall, you simply get pushed over.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So the bottom line is we're putting in those -- what we call the platform barriers. We've done it at 17 stations. We're going to do it at 100 stations in the next year. Thank you, Governor Hochul, who's funding that.

ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: I have another question, so --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. But that's my story.

ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: You answered my question.

When we fight to secure MTA funding, there's often criticism from constituents and the media that we spend far more on projects than peer cities. I know I read your testimony that you've reduced costs by 3 percent; I commend you for that. But what innovative approaches are you taking to reduce the costs of construction?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. You're opening the fire plug right now, because this is like -- this is my life.

ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: That's why I asked.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I joined the MTA in 2017, right as Second Avenue Phase 1 was being finished, attacked the specific problems of that project, and set MTA construction development on a new course.

And how we do it is, you know, we changed the contracts so you're not randomly putting risk on contractors. We've ended customization. Limiting customization in the designs is a dramatic driver of costs. We bundle projects so every time you shut down a line to get work done, you get maximum amount of work done and you're getting economies of scale.

We do A plus B procurements, is when you take the schedule into consideration so you can get more work done at a cheap rate over a shorter time.

We do different project management -- this was my life when I ran the World Trade Center project -- of how you manage risk.

And we innovate like we have in the

Park Avenue viaduct, where we are actually rebuilding a hundred-year-old structure in the middle of East Harlem in 21 months on the weekends without shutting down service. And I won't tell you how, but it is real innovation. All of those areas.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you for that.

Senator?

ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: Thank you, Chairman.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank -- thank you.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So I've got another hour if you want it on that topic.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN SIMONE: We can do it over cocktails.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Chairman.

Senator Bynoe.

SENATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hi, I have a question regarding the Long Island Rail Road bridges in Nassau and

Suffolk County. It's been reported that a few of them are in poor condition, and it's also been stated that there's a complexity in the repairs because local governments share responsibility in repairing those bridges.

Can you tell me, you know, how impactful that is and how do you think we can overcome the challenges with local governments that might be under-equipped to meet the needs?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, I mean, everyone assumes always that we're fighting with Nassau County because of politics. Actually, Nassau County has been pretty cooperative with us in those situations where there's a shared collaboration. And what bridge was that, John? There's a bridge recently we did where there was that collaboration. Yeah, Cherry Valley Bridge.

So I think there is occasionally jurisdictional complexity and so on, but the bottom line is this. We've got 80 bridges in the Long Island Rail Road system that are in poor or marginal condition. That does not

mean they will fall down. It means that they need to be invested in so they don't get to that point. And this capital program is the one that's going to fund that, along with a million other things.

So thank you for the question. It is a big piece of the next capital program.

SENATOR BYNOE: Okay. And I understand in Manhasset you had to close a bridge? Were we in fear of that bridge collapsing?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, what happens frequently -- I don't know the specifics, but what was happening all the time with Long Island, we had low bridges all over Long Island and trucks would run into them, dopey truck drivers run into them, they don't read the signs. And then we'd have to shut down the railroad for half a day to make sure that the bridge was structurally sound.

Because of the Third Track Project and other projects we've done, we've dramatically reduced those kinds of -- what do they call it when the truck hits? Bridge strikes --

bridge strikes that shut down service, and the result is much more reliability and more service for Long Island Rail Road customers. Great investment in the Third Track Project.

SENATOR BYNOE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Fall.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Thank you, Chairman Pretlow.

Good morning, Chairman Lieber and your team. Appreciate all the work that you guys are doing.

Very happy about the new R211 trains that are on Staten Island. Hear a lot of good feedback about that. And also I am impressed with the recent aesthetic improvements to the Verrazano Bridge. I know it's a long work in progress, but it's going. Although the tolls are hurting us, so --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: You can stop there. I don't get "thank you" for more than five seconds.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: And then Access-A-Ride, your team has been really

responsive and helpful to my team on the various issues that we have on that end, so I want to commend you guys for that.

Now, a topic that's near and dear to my heart, and I know it's something that, you know, you also care about, the bus rapid transit. What can I share with my constituents on where we are with that?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So big opportunity here. So bus rapid transit, North Shore of Staten Island -- been working on it a while. There is a major opportunity to improve it and reduce the complexity of the project by resolving conflicts with the mall that's just west of the Staten Island Ferry terminal, so you don't have to take it onto the street. Nobody wants this bus rapid transit system on the street if it doesn't have to be, if it can be in its own right of way.

So we're trying to resolve that. We want to advance the design. We want to resolve that issue and move the design forward, and then we have to see if we can

get federal funding. That is -- you know, we're going to -- we're in an unknown territory with the federal government. But we would like to work with you to see if that is realistic, because that is an opportunity that I think all of us want to pursue.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: I gotcha.

Going to the Fulton Station on the Manhattan side of my district, I hear a lot of quality-of-life concerns in that station, and I'm kind of curious to know what are we doing to not only address the quality-of-life issues there, but to address the concessionaire space that is empty? Because there are various concessionaire space, and I think that is also revenue that the MTA is arguably missing out on.

So any thoughts on that?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So I'm going to throw it to Demetrius in a second.

The bottom line is that's a real estate deal. Westfield is the outfit that runs the retail in the World Trade Center and in the Fulton Transit Center and other

places, a big mall operator around the country. They're getting out of America, so they're spreading a lot of lies about the quality-of-life issues in that so they can try to get out of their lease. Period, end.

There is -- this is a big station, it has -- you know, does have people who misbehave and fare evade and stuff that we see in the system, but it's not some dramatic difference from experience that we're struggling with elsewhere. We have private security that we provide there, and we also have the NYPD there. So we're going to keep pushing on that issue.

ASSEMBLYMAN FALL: Appreciate that.

Tompkinsville Station, need help there as well on Staten Island.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Bores.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you, Chairman Lieber, for being here. Agree with you, we need to find a way to fund the full capital plan. Thank you to you and the Governor for your commitment to platform

barriers.

And also one thing I haven't heard you talk about enough is the automated accessibility assistance and MTA train time app, which is a government-tech success story that I think many states should learn from. It was really a wonderful rollout.

I want to ask, since congestion pricing has come into effect, what's the total amount of revenue that's been forgone because of credits to the Holland or Lincoln Tunnel?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Listen, I don't know the answer to that. We're -- just so everybody's -- this is all going to be very open-book. We're going to put the revenue numbers out as soon as we have them.

Bear in mind that we don't get the taxi and FHV revenues. Remember, that's a big piece of the --

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Sorry, I just wanted -- you are the open data king.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: We are the open data king.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: And using the open data this morning, my team put a quick estimate together, around 5.3 million --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Let 'er rip. Let 'er rip.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: I would love to get -- we had some assumptions in doing that. I'd love to get the real figures from you when we can.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Happy to do it. And you can talk about how you think that money ought to be invested, that's --

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Well, I was just going to say, 5.3 million, how many New Jersey residents have thanked you?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah. There's a large house down by Princeton that I know has not thanked me. It's called the Governor's Mansion.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Fair enough.

So -- and then I also want to ask, when you were setting up the tolls and now obviously we've changed the price, at any point in the modeling did you look at how

much it would cost to have a discount or exemption for those that live in the zone?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Listen, you know, there were some specific discounts that were written into law. And then we gave it to the Traffic Mobility Review Board, which looked at all the discounts and what they said is, Listen, we're not doing any more rifle shots --

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: No, I've read the report, I'm just saying was it ever priced. I haven't seen --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't know that it was. But we were very, very respectful of that group which studied every one of the exemptions in detail, and we adopted it with their recommendations. That was kind of what the law that you wrote intended for us to do.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: I agree. I just want to be able to report to my constituents the ratio of what we're giving to Jersey versus to them. That's all.

I just want to ask, on the 59th Street

Bridge entrance, obviously that -- there's a way to exit without paying the toll. There's no way to enter without paying the toll. I'm concerned for my constituents about more people now driving up to the Triborough, which has a lower toll overall.

Has that been studied? In the first month, what's the data on how that's shifted traffic?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Listen, that is one of the complexities. The way the law was written, we had 60th Street as the barrier and we had to live with that. It created some complexities. That's one of them, one of the big ones.

The one thing I would say to you is that what we believe from the studies that we've done is if we had magically made that a way to get in and out of the city for free, your constituents on the far east side would be living with a ton of extra traffic. So there are tradeoffs.

(Overtalk.)

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: If that could be

shared, that would be appreciated.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: The law that you wrote, we complied with, and the result is you got a lot less traffic.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: If that could be shared, that would be appreciated, the report.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblymember Epstein.

Assemblywoman Solages.

Assemblywoman González-Rojas.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: All right. Thank you, Chair Lieber. Proud straphanger here.

So I want to state for the record that I support revisiting the Free Bus Pilot. I know that's on us. But until then, we know that the Fair Fares Program has been a lifeline for so many working-class New Yorkers. Expansion of Fair Fares to 200 percent of the federal poverty level was a key recommendation in the Blue Ribbon Report on Fare Evasion.

So do you know why the eligibility is

only at 145 percent of the federal poverty level years later?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So I'm going to hand that one to Shanifah.

We have always supported raising the threshold of eligibility because New York is a heck of a lot more expensive. What it means to be low-income or poor or even working class in New York is different than, you know, a lot of other places.

So we've supported increasing the eligibility threshold. And our job, which we're pushing hard on, is to sign everybody up. And Shanifah and team have led that, even though it's a city program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Great. I'm excited to partner on that effort, and I'm excited to share a bill with Senator Comrie that would increase the federal poverty level to 200 percent.

Can you provide an update on the status of the Interborough Express Project that runs between my neighborhood in Jackson Heights, Queens, to South Brooklyn?

I saw that the MTA issued an RFP, but given the hostile federal administration, I'm concerned there might be an impact. So can you share an update on that project?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Honestly, what we've got to do now with that project -- which is a great project. It's going to connect people, the two most populous boroughs of the city which have very little connectivity, rail connectivity. Huge benefits for our economy. More people go between those two boroughs for jobs, believe it or not, than go across the East River. That's a stat I'm always shocked by.

But -- so we've got to do it. It's an existing right of way. It's crazy not to use it. But it costs money. And we got -- what we are going to do in this capital program is get through the whole complicated environmental review process and design the thing. That's what the RFP is about.

So I'm not, you know, spending time worrying about the feds are going to give us, you know, a multi-billion-dollar grant.

We've got to get through the design and the environmental, and then we'll be positioned to go ask whoever is the next president for federal money.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: And I think I know the answer to this question, but I know a number of us had pushed to consider expansion of the IBX to the Bronx. Is that at all part of conversations or consideration? Because I think that's such a gap for us that rely on public transit.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: We get it. But chicken and egg problem. When we went for Metro-North/Penn access, we put as much railroad on that right of way, which is the Hell Gate, as we can. So we can't jam another operation onto that bridge and that right of way. That's not an option.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Eachus?

Assemblywoman Mitaynes?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Oh, no,

he's here.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Gotta speak up.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chair Pretlow.

Wheels on some of the cars on some lines are wearing faster than expected. You've been in negotiations with a company here in New York for three years, and yet you haven't come to any type of conclusion on what's wrong with those wheels, what is needed, and so on like that? I don't get it.

And I really didn't like the comment about, oh, we are restricted because we can't use China anymore. What the heck are we sending our dollars to China for when we have companies -- and this is different than the company that Senator O'Mara was talking about.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Listen, I don't know what -- what you heard, but I think we answered the question about the wheels. That hasn't been under study for three years, that's about three months. So information gap. But --

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I didn't say that you were studying those wheels for three months. I said you'd been in negotiations with a company from New York, here in New York, that builds railcars, for three years. And you still haven't come to any conclusion or drawn any conclusion at this point.

Congestion pricing, the dagger in the heart. I am from the 99th District. That probably doesn't mean anything to you. That is Eastern Orange County and Northern Rockland County. We get like 1 cent back on the dollar for all the payroll taxes we pay. We have nearly zero service in our area. As a matter of fact, we have to deal with the PATH line and so on like that.

I don't know why you consider my district to be a whipping dog, to continually collect money from it and yet we don't get any increase in services.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: My wise chair, Mr. Pretlow, asked the DOT just earlier today

about a proposed $1 million study directed mostly to the western side of the Hudson River, and he was given some excuse back about, Well, we'll have to look into double track. We already procured $10 million to double one mile of track on our side of the river. We don't need a million-dollar study. There are no trains. The buses are terrible, absolutely horrendous on our side. There are very few of them, both trains and buses, such that our people can't do anything except commute into the city with cars.

And you put in congestion pricing. It's a killer. It's a killer for my district.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Is there a question that I can answer?

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: No. There's no question that you can answer.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay, I didn't think so.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I'm just making the statement so that the public knows what's going on.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. So there's 80 percent of the people in Rockland County who commute to Manhattan Central Business District do take transit. We acknowledge the fact that rail service on the West of Hudson stinks. It is run by New Jersey Transit. The tracks are owned by the freight railroad. We have no ability to alter that for you, much as we would like to. That is the reality.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair and CEO. So I try to go after all the other Senators, and I gave the Assembly some extra time because there are more of them.

So let me just start with where we just closed. My understanding is the MTA provides $27.9 million of spending specifically in Assemblymember Eachus's district. Is that correct, do you know?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't know

the answer to that.

But the studies you've seen is that every State Senate district, every congressional district in New York State is benefiting from the MTA capital program. And I think the study that came out today saw that the congressional district that includes Rockland County gets like $2 billion out of the MTA capital program.

So we don't get anything -- if the point is the question of who's getting what back from the MTA capital program, I take your point. Clearly our friends -- although clearly there's a difference of opinion -- are benefiting from the MTA capital program.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So that's really the broader question I was going to ask.

So you need a lot of capital money, and I understand why. But it's also, I think, really important for people to understand how much of that capital money actually just goes right back into our regional economy, with a multiplier effect for jobs and for businesses throughout the

State of New York -- not just in the 12 MTA regions, but everywhere.

So can you just talk about why you're an economic generator as well as coming to the State of New York saying, We need some capital money?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah. So I think everybody's seen the recent Ernst & Young study and the Reinvent Albany studies. The MTA capital program creates -- is estimated to create 73,000 jobs. One out of four of those are outside in the State of New York -- one out of four of those are outside the MTA 12-county region. And the average job among the 73,000 is north of $100,000.

So it is $112 billion of economic activity created by that -- our roughly $68 billion capital program. Those are the estimates. And there are lots of other metrics of the positive impact this capital program has. Don't forget, it enables the whole multi-trillion-dollar New York City and regional economy. I mean, on top of the

specifics we're talking about. We don't have that New York City/New York region economy without mass transit that enables us to function.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I live in that city, so I actually understand what happens when the buses and the subways aren't working or when you're in a desert without enough of them. So -- but I don't know if all of my colleagues know how we talk in the city about -- like when we had the Summer from Hell, and what it would mean if we didn't invest in the capital plan the way it's needed, and one day we woke up and it just wasn't working.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah. So we tried that. You know? We actually experimented with not funding the MTA capital program. It was 2015. And it had consequences.

And I'll just remind everybody, because I keep this in my office (showing). This is the front page of the two big New York tabloids in the middle of the summer

of 2017 during the so-called Summer of Hell. It's got the same photo: It's people standing 40-deep on a platform in Washington Heights. They can't get anywhere because the subway system fell apart. Enough.

So we've tried not funding the MTA capital. That's where it brought us.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: We try not to use props, I'm sorry. Due to the brains over there.

(Laughter.)

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: You wouldn't know I'm a rule-breaker, but occasionally I resort.

(Laughter.)

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Anyway, the point is -- that's the point, is we tried it, it didn't work. It killed our economy. New Yorkers rose up.

And we have -- we had the 2020-2024 capital program, 55 billion. We're asking to grow that by less than inflation. We can afford to do that. You know how? We've gotten better at being efficient in how we

spend capital money.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And that actually was my next question. Even though people think the number seems very large, that when you adjust for inflation, it isn't a significant increase over what we would have automatically expected. And yet you're talking about needing more effort to good repair of the existing very old system, plus expansion.

So my understanding is some people's analysis is that you really needed far more than you're asking for.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, I mean, listen. We're realists. So we went to JPMorgan Chase and said: Compare us to a freight railroad or Con Ed or some older industrial operation. What would you need to get to a state of good repair? And they said to put you really there, that's 100 billion over five years-plus. Actually, 112 I think was the number.

Even the State Comptroller, who's not known for encouraging more spending, said

that the right range was between I think roughly 60 and 92.

So by being at 68, we are at the low end of the range and well below what the pros at JPMorgan Chase said.

That said, we think that this is the minimum necessary in order to make sure we don't end up at the end of this capital program worse off than we are now, that we do make progress. That's why we believe in it.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: One of the other issues I hear about all the time, as someone who is from Manhattan, is the critical need for improving access to subways and buses for people with disabilities. There have been lawsuits, settlements. I don't know if everyone's noticed, we're all getting older. So the percentage of New Yorkers who use mass transit are getting older, and therefore, even if they don't meet ADA definition, they can't get up and down those stairs. They need elevators, escalators.

Tell me what happens for everyone who is in that category if we don't come up with

adequate funding to make sure we get to these targets.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, listen. We've made a binding commitment to invest enough in ADA accessibility projects to get us within a 30-year period -- it's not tomorrow, but within a 30-year period -- to full accessibility. Which is what everybody expects a modern transit system to be. You know, we're 40-plus years past -- 40 years past the ADA. We've got to get there.

But it doesn't just benefit people with disabilities. We're talking parents with strollers. Who do we want to keep in New York who has financial challenges of being in New York? Young families, seniors who just can't get up and down the stairs even if they're not in a wheelchair.

These are all -- this is a benefit for everybody. And as you say, we're all going to get older and need this.

So what we're proposing to do is continue to make progress on the road to full accessibility. We have quadrupled the pace

at which ADA -- stations are being made fully accessible. Super-proud of that. And it is probably, of all the things we're doing in the capital program, the number-one most popular aspect.

So we're going to keep pushing 60 stations in this coming program.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I have half of my district in the zone, half of it right next to the zone. We're all very concerned about the environmental impacts that we were hoping would come out of congestion pricing. I know it's only been a few weeks, but I think part of the deal was that you'll be doing evaluations of the environmental impact of less congestion.

You know, I'm reading every day -- today we got a report that despite some people's concerns that fewer cars would mean fewer business activity -- actually, it's just the opposite and that we had a fantastic January in the zone for all the businesses.

Do we know anything about the congestion environmental impacts yet?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So you're right. You know, fewer cars. You know, we've got -- Broadway is doing great, much better than last year. Streets are safer. Half as many car crashes with pedestrian/cyclist injuries. Traffic speeds up dramatically. And lo and behold, you know who's the biggest supporter of congestion pricing? It's shocking: People who drive to Manhattan regularly. In the recent poll, 66 percent of the people who drive to Manhattan regularly say, I like this, I'm getting there faster, I'm willing to pay that toll.

So on the environmental front, we will have data as soon as the environmental scientists who manage the models, which are fairly complicated, give us feedback. We're collecting the data. Again, it's a little like the financial results. We need to give the pros time to do their work. It's probably a couple of months off.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But we do have equipment to do that kind of evaluation,

right?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yes. And we were -- I was asked about a specific location earlier, and we're going to check on that as well.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Got it.

And then with just my last minute, somebody sent me a note saying that the state still owes the MTA 2.3 billion from the 2024 capital appropriation. What's the status of that?

MTA CFO WILLENS: Sure, yes. Both the state and the city, out of their own bonding program, committed 3 billion each to the '20-'24 program. And we've actually committed all the funds both on the state and the city side. So the spending is going on.

There's obviously a little bit of delay from COVID, but both the state and the city have kept their commitment in the '20-'24 plan where we've been able to move forward on projects with that money.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And in fact the city was just up here the other day asking us

for additional transitional bonding authority so that they could actually guarantee an additional 3 billion for you in the coming year.

MTA CFO WILLENS: For the next program, correct. Yes.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: It could also be 4 billion, like the MTA Board proposed, but go ahead.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: All right, fine. We'll try to get to 4 billion.

My time is up. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Solages.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: Greetings, everyone.

First I want to say congratulations on your one-millionth rider at the Elmont Station. The community is very happy with the work being done. And we always like increased capacity, but we already have a new train station, so we're happy.

So on to the railcars. So as we continue to discuss the new capital plan, I

want to ensure that we're not forgetting about the current projects that are in the pipeline.

So riders on the Long Island Rail Road were promised new train cars many years ago. You know, I've ridden -- I rode on the M-9, they're nice. I've ridden on the old line, the old cars. Would like to know if -- you know, what's going on with that, when are the riders going to expect the new railcars. And how can we ensure this process doesn't get delayed any further?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So I think we talked about it earlier.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: Yeah, I'm going to talk about it with you now.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: It's an open procurement, so I can't get into details. I said we would resolve, you know, go/no go in the next six months.

But the good news is the Long Island Rail Road's on-time performance is out of sight last year. So even though they have a few cars that are a little long in the tooth,

they are delivering for not just Elmont -- on-time in a budget project, by the way -- but also for everybody on the Long Island Rail Road. We're very proud of that 96 percent. Right now it's 97-plus-percent year to date.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: Okay. And about electrification of Suffolk County rails, I know -- yeah. Even though I don't represent that area, it's important that Long Island gets increased capacity in the future.

Are we looking at some type of electrification like the Port Jefferson Rail, you know, in the future?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So in the board-adopted capital program, which was vetoed by the Legislature but which in many ways I expect to come back with, is $800 million for a range of potential different electrification, slash, expansion projects on Long Island. They're named in it as possibilities. And those are very much under consideration.

So that includes the PJ -- some of the PJ investments, and it also -- one that a lot of folks have been talking about, which is moving the main line east to Yaphank and in the direction of Riverhead. So those are both under consideration, as well as some others.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: Okay. I hope that we can remain that as a priority, because it's very important to Long Island for our region to have a strong rail system.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, my friend Demetrius lives in Huntington, so he's very much attentive to all those --

(Overtalk.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SOLAGES: I'm glad we have an advocate on the inside. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assemblymember Mitaynes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Thank you.

Right now the city is investing to redevelop the Brooklyn Marine Terminal in Red Hook, to change how the city envisions the concept of a working waterfront, which

will bring new development to a community that has experienced a lack of public transit options over the last several decades.

Given the increased demand in Red Hook, Brooklyn, for better transit options, could the MTA consider implementing a new bus route that connects Red Hook to Lower Manhattan? This bus route would help provide greater access for seniors, students, NYCHA residents, and people with disabilities to schools, cultural institutions and be able to access Manhattan quickly.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So thank you. You've let us know about your interest in that issue, as has Congressman Bowman. And I'm going to throw it to Demetrius, but we are studying it.

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: So I mentioned the Queens bus network redesign earlier, where we actually looked at how do we provide great service to all neighborhoods that need it and, more importantly, the connectivity to rail systems that need it.

And so the Brooklyn bus network

redesign will do that. If we do determine beforehand that additional work is needed, with every pick we have an opportunity to make adjustments to our scheduled bus and we could add additional service if that comes in earlier than the network redesigns required.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Okay. They did have that bus service and it was discontinued, and since then the community's been wanting it back.

I have a question. The MTA has proposed a $68 billion capital program for '25-'29, which the Capital Program Review Board recently vetoed. Disability advocates are concerned that if the program is reduced in size, it will affect the number of accessibility projects you're able to do.

Is that the case? And how do you determine specifically how many projects wouldn't move forward if the capital program falls below the 68 billion level?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So we -- very quickly, we have a formula in our deal with the disability community in settlement of

that longstanding litigation that's -- you know, with the Governor's support I did that settlement a couple of years ago.

It's a formula for how many stations would be made accessible in the event that the funding falls below our projected number. So I can't tell you offhand what those numbers are, but there is an adjustment. I don't want to do that. We don't want to consider it.

And even worse, if the funding falls off the table, we will be faced with, you know, really dialing back improvements like ADA just to keep the system from truly falling apart.

So we've got to get to the 68 number. It is a minimum number -- I think I've said that a number of times here -- and we look forward to make sure we do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Thank you.

And I just want to end with saying Red Hook needs a bus to Manhattan.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And our next Assemblymember is Jo Anne

Simon, from Brooklyn.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

So a couple of points I want to make first. York Street -- I wouldn't be me if I didn't do this. York Street, P71. And the level of dysfunction that still exists in Access-A-Ride is outrageous, right? And in fact I don't know why anybody has to go in-person to be documented to have a disability. So many of these people we've known for years. They're not going to not have a disability.

And this is also a problem with the congestion pricing process. You know, I've had people who have gone for an evaluation where, you know, somebody who's a lawyer goes in and they're asked -- practically asked where their guardian is. Right? So there's a very insulting aspect to a lot of this too.

So whoever is the contractor doing this, they have to get up to speed with reality. The people who are going to be driving in because they need to work and they don't have access to transportation are the

people who are actually competent people and need to be treated that way. So that's just a concern I want to share with you and put that on the record.

And I also just want to sort of just follow up on this issue of elevators and why we have -- because that's a separate lawsuit -- why that hasn't been resolved. I know a lot of the elevators are not built by the public, they're built by developers, they haven't been working. What can we do to speed this along and make this actually happen?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay, so -- but facts do matter. And you and I have worked together a lot and very successfully, so thank you for all your support.

But here are some facts that are really important. Ninety-seven percent elevator availability. The lawsuit was from a different era when elevators were broken and not being fixed. But right now we have for several years now -- is it 97 -- 98 percent elevator availability. The

elevators are being fixed. And you are right: To the extent that we have a little more problem, it's because we have developer-provided elevators and they're not doing a good job, but we're beating the crap out of them, to be honest.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Can we sue them?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: What?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Can we sue them?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Oh, yeah. No, but, you know -- but these are some big developers. I'm talking about the Barclays Center, that we lean on every day to make sure they don't let the escalator or the elevator go out of service. So that's number one.

Number two, I am going to pass on your message about any disrespect in the assessment process. But as for Access-A-Ride, we have by far the highest customer satisfaction rates that we've ever had, north of 80 percent. And we are -- I'm sorry if you're -- or somebody is communicating to you dissatisfaction. I'm

sure that, you know, stuff that goes wrong, especially with -- you know, we hear a lot about drivers not speaking English well enough --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, Mr. CEO, you have to stop.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But 98 percent. What?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I have to cut you off so we can keep going, I apologize. I'm the bad guy. Okay, thank you.

We are next going to Assemblymember Valdez.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALDEZ: Hello. Thank you so much for being here.

Thank you, Chair.

I actually have a similar question to you to the one that preceded mine. In my district we have one accessible subway station, it's Court Street.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Court Street?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALDEZ: Mm-hmm. So obviously the connection between the G and the 7, super important to our constituents.

And the escalators and elevators are frequently out of service. My understanding is that is another public-private partnership. So my question is if you think that private maintenance is part of the problem, their service there, and if the MTA anticipates using more public-private partnerships to expand accessibility in the city.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, the reason we're getting more private maintenance is because private companies -- the way to make sure that they build the elevator right in the first place is to make them responsible with serious financial penalties if it doesn't operate reliably.

And that has worked very, very well. We're getting very high levels of operation. So that, in answer to your question about private versus public, we're not -- we're not scaling back E&E, the elevator and escalator division, we are in fact growing it. Right, D? But that -- it makes sense to have the guys who build an elevator be responsible for

making sure it operates. And that's what we're doing.

But Court Street has been a challenge. It's a privately developed elevator. I don't know about the escalators.

Demetrius, do you want to add?

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: So I think the other thing is the performance of what we're maintaining, in addition to what our contractors that we are overseeing, as the chairman said, is at 98 percent, which has been fantastic.

Privately owned escalators, elevators, is a very different story. But we have worked with them directly to improve upon their performance. You know, somewhere back around a year ago they were performing somewhere in the mid-70s and have since improved to the mid-80s. So they have definitely made progress in how they're maintaining their equipment, but there's still work to be done.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALDEZ: Sure. Thank you very much for that.

Just in the interests of time, I'm grateful that my colleague also asked about the IBX. It's a project that we're very excited about in Queens. I'm wondering what kind of funding the MTA would need to prevent fare increases in the future. I'm very committed to expanding our public transit system, but we also want to make sure that's affordable and want to continue fighting for the money that we need on the inside here to support all your work.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Say it again, I'm sorry. Expanding fare what?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALDEZ: To prevent fare increases. How much money, yeah. What do you need?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. So we have embarked on a pattern that -- Dick Ravitch created a commission about 15 years ago, and we followed that pattern, which is small increases every two years. We'd like to stay on that pattern. It avoids the situation that historically has happened with MTA where all of a sudden you had to do a 10

or 20 percent fare increase and that blew everybody up and was very harmful.

So that's what we're trying to stay on.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next is Assemblywoman Hooks.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HOOKS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you all for being here today.

I did hear you talk about the Queens bus redesign a couple of times. I'm not a big fan of it in my district in one specific area. So East Elmhurst, which is next to LaGuardia Airport, it seems all the redesign, the bus redesign, was just to get people to the airport faster and forgot about the community right in front of it.

Several bus stops were taken away. So it's a NORC, a naturally reoccurring older community there. Not only that, we are a two-fare zone. We're a transportation desert, right? So when we were able to have one bus to at least get us to Queens Boulevard, or at least get us to the other section of Queens Boulevard, now it's become

a two-bus zone.

It was complained about in the meetings, it was talked about a lot. And I feel like it just wasn't -- they weren't -- the community concerns about it wasn't taken into consideration.

That's one. We could talk more about it later.

But the other one also is the youth. To the youth now, if their MetroCard -- I mean if their card was stolen, the school card was stolen or if they lost it or whatever, there's been real problems with them to get on the bus still to come home, even though they expressed that.

Several times, I know just from my personal experience, so when the card was stolen or lost and you sent the money for Cash App or Apple Pay to pay, it wouldn't register on -- when she tried to register it, immediately, like instantaneously, it would say "Declined." But then it would take the money out around 2 o'clock in the morning. But she didn't get on the bus because it

didn't register it.

So I think that needs to be looked into, because it's not up to the speed --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Give us the specifics. I mean, there are once in a while problems with the OMNY machines.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HOOKS: It's a lot.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But if somebody specific -- we'll look into it and try to make sure it gets fixed.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HOOKS: Okay. After this I'll send you a list of specifics and when it happened.

The other thing is because East Elmhurst is a desert, is there a way that the MetroCard bus -- because we also don't have the link there, we don't have the check-cashing place, so it's not a place where you can go and buy a MetroCard. So you have to get to the train in order to purchase a MetroCard. Is there a way that the MetroCard bus -- not just my area, I know it's not just for my area, it's for other areas where there's desert areas, that the

MetroCard bus can just come -- be slated to come like once a month or once every other month so that people can get their MetroCard?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yes. And we do that all over.

You want to talk about that?

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: So we absolutely do send the MetroCard van out to all locations that -- as needed, so we can certainly look at the schedule for you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HOOKS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next is Assemblywoman Giglio. No? Okay, we'll skip her.

How about Assemblymember Jacobson?

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, sir.

As you know, I represent both sides of the Hudson, I go from Beacon to Newburgh up the Hudson over to the City of Poughkeepsie. So I'm happy that you're going to do something maybe about the flooding on the tracks going south. At the same time, you

should also fix the flooding at the Beacon Train Station. It floods the parking on the river side too often.

But today I'd like to focus on the Orange County side, where you just said that service stinks. How many people take the trains from the west side of the Hudson on an average day, daily average?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't have the number. But it's a small number. And it's -- as a result, it's highly subsidized. And we're subsidizing the individual ridership on West of Hudson. It's $79 per rider on the Port Jervis line; it's only 18 bucks on the Pascack Valley line.

But ridership is low. New Jersey Transit runs that service. And I'll say it again, it stinks. And we are --

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Well, would you say, what, about 500 a day, something like that?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't have the numbers offhand.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: And how much

does Orange County pay into the MTA, with all the taxes?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I suspect you have the numbers at hand, so --

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: You don't?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't have them. Why don't you tell me?

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Well, I think I can -- I can give you some numbers, because I did a little research. Orange County employers pay $25 million of the Payroll Mobility Tax. Orange County residents pay 8.57 million from the mortgage tax. There's 620,000 from the Metro-North commuter railroad station maintenance use and operation fees. There's 146,000 from statewide mass transportation operating assistance. And, from the sales tax, at least $1.46 million.

So that's -- that's a lot of money. And I don't believe we're getting the service that we deserve. And I don't think that the train service has been expanded or updated. You know, if the Moodna Creek Viaduct is

scheduled for repairs or routine maintenance, well, that should happen. And of course there's no direct train. We go to Hoboken. But those on the western side of the county have to take this loop to finally start going south. So Orange County can do better.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Giglio is back with us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay. So hello, and thank you for being here.

With congestion pricing in effect and increasing the number of people on the trains, why is the MTA Police budget being cut when this is a time when we need more police for the safety of the public and our employees?

The MTA Police has doubled in size in the last few years. Next month they'll be the primary law enforcement agency on the Throgs Neck and Whitestone bridges, replacing the TBTA officers. There's more work but, right now, lack of support from the MTA.

So what are we going to do to fix

this? And with train patrols being pulled off to fill in in these other spaces where you need them.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So I sense the MTA Police Department has been visiting with some of you.

We've gone into this before, where they have grown in size. We're not cutting their budget, we're -- we have reduced the amount of overtime we have scheduled. That's because we are generally trying to manage our workforce with less overtime and more effectively.

But you're right that we are getting more done with the number of officers we have. We are policing, as you say, the Whitestone and the Throgs Neck. That's good. We're leveraging the force to account for the fact that we have a reduced number of TBTA officers because they've been given accelerated pensions in a law passed last year.

So I think we're doing better, and we've got a lot more cops on the trains.

That's what our riders want to see. And we think that the MTAPD is doing a good job and they're being well-managed right now. So I'm thrilled with the progress we've made.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay. And inaccurate pension estimates, speaking of pensions and retirees.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No idea. We'll get back to you if you want a specific pensioner's --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Yeah, just because they've been overpaid and now they're being asked to pay that money back. And these are retirees. So it's catching up, it's like 36 to 48 months behind as far as getting caught up in what people are supposed to receive in their pensions, and then the expectations of them to pay back when they've been overpaid.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, there was some pension miscalculations by the pension authorities that not only -- it's not a core MTA function. And everybody is being -- who underpaid, most people were overpaid, so they

got money back. Most of them are happy.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Yeah, but now they have to pay them back.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But some people -- no. No, some people who got too much are being asked to pay it back, but they're being given the benefit of no interest and a long time to pay it back. So it's a good deal. They got an interest-free loan and at least in the financial world I come from, that's not such a terrible thing.

But so far we've had mostly people who are really happy with the way the MTA has responded to the pension miscalculations that have been identified.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay. We'll follow up. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblymember Slater.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Thank you very much. And good afternoon, Chairman.

I wanted to visit, if we could, the emergency vehicle exemption plan for congestion pricing. There were reports last

month of New York City elected officials who utilized vehicles that fall under this plan and are not paying congestion pricing when they're traveling below 60th Street. Can you confirm that to be the case?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: So the way the emergency vehicle exemption works is, you know, ambulances, fire trucks, police cars. Some of these elected officials you're referring to are, to the extent they have anybody driving them, are being driven by a New York City police officer, so that car is exempt.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Is it limited just to the Mayor, the Comptroller and the Public Advocate?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Elected officials? I will have to get back to you on that, honestly. I don't --

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Is that something that you would fall under?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't think there are congest -- I don't think there are councilmembers who are being driven around in

police cars. But I'll check to be sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Is that something that you fall under, sir?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No, I don't. My -- to the extent that the MTA Police drives me around, they are not exempt.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Okay. And then how does it work? Do you use the E-ZPass tag?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No, the vehicle -- the vehicle -- the way that the exemption works is there are vehicles with certain license plates that are exempted because they're used in police or emergency work.

And the ones that are ever used for me are not exempt.

ASSEMBLYMAN SLATER: Understood.

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

I cede back my time.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Durso.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Thank everybody for being here.

So I just wanted to go back to what

you were saying before about the MTA Police overtime budget cut, which is roughly 20 million. And now obviously having -- right, that's what you had said earlier, roughly about $20 million?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: It's 10. Ten.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Ten. So it's being cut by 10. For the overtime, correct?

But now you also have NYPD basically filling in, especially in the subways, keeping trains safe. Correct?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No, I mean, the principal role of the MTAPD, just to be clear, they're responsible for safety on the commuter railroad.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Understood.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay? There's a narrow exception that we worked out with the NYPD where we're taking on -- the MTAPD takes on responsibility for the subways in the terminals the MTA operates for commuter railroads -- Atlantic, Penn, Jamaica, Grand Central.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: But now you have

the NYPD going to those areas also, right? Currently?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No. I mean, that's not the reason that there's been any reduction. Overtime is like, you know --

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: I'm not saying that's the reason why that's -- there's a reduction.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No, the -- overtime is being well-managed. I think -- I thought that everybody wanted the MTA to manage overtime effectively. I keep hearing that from all kinds of authorities --

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Well, my concern, and --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: -- especially the Legislature.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: The reason why I'm asking this is because, again, my concern and the reason why I'm asking this to you is not only the safety of the riders, but also the workers. I've spoken to many conductors that have the issue with being attacked on-train, having people on the trains act against them,

and we don't have the police that are on the trains.

So my question is, how in the future are we going to not only keep the riders safe, but also the workers?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Respectfully, I think this is an area where we've made a ton of really positive progress. We have now -- we've changed the fare evasion model where there are no longer these IOUs being given out. Either you produce an ID and you get a ticket, or else there's a cop who's called at the next station or, more often, a cop on the train. Because there are a lot more cops on trains than there used to be. That's been a push of mine.

I'm thrilled that we've made progress protecting those conductors. My relationship with the conductors union, SMART, they say to me that they are happy with the progress that's been made on that front.

Happy to talk to you about the specific issues that you know of.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Okay. So if we're

cutting the overtime, because you said you're saving money and being more fiscally responsible, are we going to be hiring that many more MTA police to --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: We have.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: How many more have you hired over the past --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: There are 250 more MTA cops this year than there were last year. And that's about a 20 percent increase over last year. That's a goodly increase.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Okay. And do you know the numbers that they're supposed to be at?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I'm going to ask Jai to respond. Jai's on top of it.

MTA CO-CFO PATEL: Yeah, the budget is 1358, and that's what we're hired up to. Previously we were at around 1100.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: So you're currently at the number that essentially you're supposed to be contractually?

MTA CO-CFO PATEL: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Okay, thank you very much.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Again, happy to talk about specific issues.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

So why don't we change the subject a little bit to the Hudson Line and Metro-North. It's -- I think everybody's somewhat relieved that we have $800 million in the capital plan dedicated to saving the Hudson Line.

What is the plan for that money and for the process over the next five years?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. So the Hudson Line, because of where it sits, is widely exposed to sea-level rise and also -- because, you know, the Hudson's going to get higher as sea rises -- but also because of the embankments. The slopes are so steep,

these torrential rainfalls we're getting again and again are causing landslides. Twice that's knocked out the Hudson Line.

The plan is to lift the tracks over time. It's going to take a long process, but to lift also the equipment out of harm's way so the signals and all of the electrical equipment aren't exposed, and to stabilize those slopes, those embankments that are at risk. All of that work.

It will not all be completed -- our -- the current proposed capital program, the $68 billion capital program, calls for it to be done up to Croton-Harmon, with additional work in capital programs to follow.

But really important. This is a must-do. It's one of the reasons if we don't invest in this capital program, we're in bad shape.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Right.

There are some questions about ownership of sections of the embankment.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Do you have

the access you need to privately owned embankments to at least learn whether or not they pose an imminent risk?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: It's not an issue that I'm aware of. Does anybody on our team -- we've had a couple of cases where that was an issue, but I don't know all the specifics on it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Okay. One of -- I am a huge supporter of capital investment, including yours. One thing I hear when I talk about it with people is the MTA is so in efficient spending money. Now, last term I had a Zoom with a number of your high-ranking capital people who talked about all of the changes in process that the MTA's made to help bring down the cost of capital projects.

Are you aware of any metrics, any comparisons that show how effective those new measures have been in making our capital investments more cost-effective?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: A dramatic reduction in signaling project costs, for

example. That's evident on the G Train project, which is now a new project.

And the other is 22 percent lower costs on elevators and escalators than in prior capital programs. But we can give you more specifics.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank -- thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: And what Jo Anne said on disabilities.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I hate to keep interrupting people in the middle of the answer, but remember, the yellow light's 30 seconds. So if you ask a question and the yellow light is on, you're not going to get a full answer.

So anyway. Assemblymember Simon.

(Laughter; overtalk.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Oh, they put you on the list again.

Assemblymember Blumencranz.

ASSEMBLYMAN BLUMENCRANZ: Thank you.

Chair Lieber, I can't help but think

back to the time just a few weeks ago I was with some neighbors who saw you on television celebrating the initiation of the congestion pricing for my community in Oyster Bay. It was frustrating and difficult with many of my neighbors and constituents who are now starting to realize this $6,000 a year potential burden on them just for going to work.

My constituents are sick and tired of feeling like the ATM to the MTA as far as a lack of delivery for them in our communities, of waste, of mismanagement, and with results that aren't seen in the communities like ours.

There's currently no independent forensic audit of the MTA or legislative oversight for that audit, something that we've called for many times, myself and my colleagues. I have some questions on some of the spending that we have been privy to seeing on a greater level, and I was curious as to some of your opinions.

So the MTA has spent nearly

$700 million on consultants for the Second Avenue Subway first phase, when just 378 million was spent on actually boring, tunneling and construction itself from 63rd to 96th Street.

Is this the case? Was this --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't know, but you're working on a project -- you're talking about a project that finished eight or nine years ago that I had nothing to do with setting up and that's inconsistent with our current practices.

Please be honest with your colleagues and with your constituents. Eighty percent of the people from your district take mass transit to get into the city. They're paying lower monthly fees than they were before COVID, lower --

ASSEMBLYMAN BLUMENCRANZ: Just for time --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: -- lower than before COVID. So any --

ASSEMBLYMAN BLUMENCRANZ: Procurement still seems to be a systemic issue within

your organization.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Let's talk about the ones we do now, or in the last say 10 years.

ASSEMBLYMAN BLUMENCRANZ: The Comptroller just released a report. Do you not find that his report on the issues about procurement and the process you have there has not met the efficiencies that he felt like it would have met by now?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, I think you're talking about the Comptroller -- it was a wacky study. I love the Comptroller, but to study $33 million of the overall MTA capital program and not -- didn't find that we didn't save any money, but found that we -- that somehow that the savings that we accomplished were not attributable to transformation that was set in motion in 2019. Not relevant.

Let's talk about the actual cost savings that yielded that 3 percent reduction in real terms. If you want to talk about who's saving money, find me other state

agencies that are saving -- that are 3 percent less budgetarily and that are providing a ton more service.

Especially to Oyster Bay. Especially to your Oyster Bay constituents, where we changed the schedule in order to make sure that they had better services, and cheaper. I'm happy with it.

ASSEMBLYMAN BLUMENCRANZ: You called the organization the most efficient transit organization in the United States. Is there a way you think in the future we'll see greater efficiencies compared to the global transit --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Let's set a meeting and we'll go over everything. We'll go over everything.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And end it here.

Assemblyman Palmesano.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am in support of the MTA. I understand, number one, it's the lifeblood of the downstate transportation network.

But I do -- I think it's important to mention what Chairman Magnarelli said, or my colleagues up here, or the Governor. The DOT capital plan and MTA capital plan -- the MTA, $66 billion, the DOT capital plan is 33 billion -- there was a time 10 years ago that was never the case. It was parity.

And so many of us are just calling for parity. We're not seeing DOT and the MTA budget have parity with the system, because the system has -- the DOT system billions in unmet needs. Particularly the CHIPS programs, which we talked -- that's the lifeblood, just like the MTA is the lifeblood of downstate transportation, CHIPS is the lifeblood of our upstate transportation network. And sometimes that's the only money local communities have to spend.

But that being said, as you know, I represent Alstom in Hornell, New York, and I do appreciate the fact that you've been there to visit and tour to see the gem we have. As you know, Mr. Chairman, Alstom employs hundreds of constituents in my district. As

you know, they've done great work for the MTA and other systems and will continue to do so if they're given the opportunity.

I can emphasize it -- I know Senator O'Mara brought this up. I can't emphasize enough how important it is to me and our local workforce that the MTA prioritizes working with them on the rolling stock projects so they can continue to bring good-paying jobs not just to my community, but all New York.

So what -- just to get it on the record again -- what is the MTA doing to really ensure that you work with New York manufacturers like Alstom so we can get these projects moving now and in the future?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Well, I mean, I think the biggest thing we're doing is putting in our capital program 2,000 railcars. You know, that's an opportunity.

Everybody's got to compete; it's not a secret. But we -- we're in the business of buying railcars, but obviously it's competitive and we've got to make sure that

the public's getting value. So we're going to do our part to make a good deal.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: And prioritize our New York manufacturers. Is that a priority?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, I said it before. I would be thrilled if every railcar we bought were from, you know, facilities in New York -- Kawasaki has, you know, a facility in New York, Alstom obviously, Siemens, CAF --

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Right.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: And so on. So we love that. But we have -- we do our procurements competitively and we have to be price-conscious.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Okay.

Maybe just one more question, since I have a little time, which is very rare for me.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: On the congestion pricing, since it's been implemented, are you tracking the

implementation and are you seeing an increase or decrease in the level of ridership on the subways and buses as a result of the new tolling program?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I'm going to run out of time. We've got plenty of room, right? We're only at 80 percent, roughly, on buses -- I mean on subways, 90 percent on buses. And we also -- room on the railroads.

So we have been ticking up in ridership. It's hard to know whether that's attributable to congestion pricing. Only 130,000 people drive to the CBD a day. We carry 6 to 7 million every day.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Otis.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In your testimony you spoke in responses to other questions about the importance of the capital plan, but I'd love you to talk a little more about the nexus between on-time service, continuity of

service, modernization of the facilities, and maintaining and growing ridership on both subway and commuter lines.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I think it's sort of self-evident. It's the virtuous circle, right? When people can count on good service, regular service, they are more likely to use that option and not to go to other options.

We've seen -- we have improved -- you know, under Demetrius's leadership, subway service is the best it's been in over a decade. Long Island, Metro-North, best years ever in terms of on-time performance. ridership is growing. All a virtuous circle, all what you want to see in our system.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: So in the capital plan most of it is very tied to sort of essential moving parts.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: And so I think that's sort of the case that you've made previously.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, I mean,

that's the key, is that the only way we preserve -- Metro-North and Long Island Rail Road are providing unbelievable service, but their physical infrastructure is at risk. And we cannot -- we can't continue to ignore it. We got platforms up and down the Harlem line that are literally collapsing. We have the resiliency issue on the Hudson line, which is dramatic.

You know, we have to buy more cars because the cars that Dick Ravitch bought are now more than 40 years old and they're starting to break down more frequently. That -- making these investments that you're referring to in the basic stuff is what delivers service. And we need to do it on behalf of the customers.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

I'll yield back my time, Chairs.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Bailey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman.

I just have a quick question, and I

know it's been brought up a few times about -- it has to do with our disabled folks and with the congestion pricing specifically.

So one question I have, as I've looked through it, how much does it cost to operate an IDEP Assessment Center?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Have to get back to you. I just don't know the answer.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: And at that assessment, if I have a disability or one of my constituents has a disability, what is done during that assessment process that would be different than what the medical documentation that they submitted with their New York State parking permits identification would include?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't know the answer. We have made eligibility under the New York City parking process, which does allocate automatic -- I mean, allocate eligibility to certain disabilities after an assessment, we've made that automatic.

But I don't know the difference with the New York State process that you're

describing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: And I apologize, I meant the New York City -- because it's a requirement that the individual bring to their assessments their permit from New York City, that they have received that.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, it's not duplicative, it's an automatic eligibility. If you've already passed the assessment for New York City, you do automatically get eligible for the individual exemption on congestion pricing as well. So there's not a duplicative assessment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Okay, then I might be misunderstanding this, and maybe I can get clarity later.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Then why would we have to jump through hoops to set up that platform for the assessment to come to one of the three locations if we already have that New York City permit?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I don't know

the answer. Do you know, Shanifah?

MTA CCO REIARA: Yeah. So those who were already eligible and were permitted are automatically enrolled. Those folks do not have to be reassessed.

Is that the question that you're asking?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Yup.

So on the website it actually indicates that I have to bring that to my assessment. Maybe I'm missing something along in there that says that I'm automatically eligible for it. But it says that that's one of the requirements in order to go to the assessment, that I need to provide at the assessment.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I know you have to provide the paperwork, the evidence of your enrollment in the New York City parking program. I don't know about the assessment center process.

Let's clear this up together.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: That would be great. Because if we're -- I would just like

to eliminate additional hoops that we're making people jump through if the process is already in place elsewhere, because then we might be able to reduce some costs.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Gallagher.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Hi. Thank you so much. I am personally really invested in transit safety. Not only do I ride the MTA every single day, but my good friend was murdered at a bus stop in 2023. The cops were five minutes from that bus stop. They did not catch the assailant, and they did not save his life.

So I have serious concerns about spending $77 million for six months of policing on the subway. Vera Institute for Justice, Riders Alliance, TransitCenter and Brooklyn College Center for Policing and Social Justice all say that this is not going to be effective.

And my constituents have sent me

(showing) hundreds of pictures of cops on the subway doing nothing but looking at their phones and zoning out and chatting.

So I have serious, serious concerns about this. I have a DropBox of a hundred photos like this that I'm going to send to you guys, because --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: We don't use props, please. I admonished --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Oh, I didn't know that that was a rule.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: You should have been here when I --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Can you pause my time? Okay.

So I'm in touch with supportive housing experts that have informed me that $77 million could result in current ESSHI rates for 3,000 supportive housing units that would be permanent for people who are struggling with mental illness. I've also heard that since the congestion pricing took place, a significant impact has been reducing violent incidents 36 percent.

So is it possible that $77 million would be better spent to stave off fare hikes and improve service so that even more people ride the subway?

Additionally -- my final question, which you can answer in a moment -- is that you've said that the MTA plans to fully cooperate with law enforcement. Does that include ICE?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Okay. I'll deal with them sequentially.

On the issue of ICE, we -- and I think all of our -- all state and city authorities cooperate with federal law enforcement on criminal matters. We don't historically have anything to do with civil matters. And on that question, we will be guided by state policy. So we're -- we are obviously going to take direction from the state.

There are EOs specifically dealing with this issue, so I'm sure the state is going to give us direction that is consistent with those EOs, and I know you're interested in that.

On the issue of cops on trains, I respectfully disagree with you. First of all, I'm not sure that we can allocate -- much as I love the success of congestion pricing, and it is an across-the-board success so far, I don't take credit for the reduction of crime on subways in the month of January on that -- is it 36 percent? -- you were right, reduction in crime, but I don't know that it's congestion pricing.

And I'll have to answer your other question later.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you very much. As you can see, I like to run things on schedule, and I think MTA operates on a schedule.

Now, to that point, you made -- you mentioned earlier that traffic flows a lot smoother in Manhattan since congestion pricing came into existence. Have the bus schedules been adjusted to reflect that?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: That usually takes a little time. We'll let Demetrius --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: So if they're

running on schedule, then they're still running at the old speed and not the new speed --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, even worse than that --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: -- so they're slowing down traffic.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: -- they're running ahead of schedule, and then they -- sometimes they have to stop in order to preserve their compliance with the schedule.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: That's my point, yeah.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But we are -- but we are adjusting the schedules, just so we're clear.

We can't -- you know, it takes a little while to adjust schedules. It's a little technical. And we have to then do a new pick for our union bus drivers so that if we're running more service or more frequent service, that we're assigning the right number of people. That takes a few months.

We're in the middle of it, right?

NYCT PRESIDENT CRICHLOW: So yeah, this is a very new learned instance, right? The fact that we have more time the buses are operating faster than what they had initially been intended to operate -- so it does take a little bit of time to create a schedule.

But the team is currently working on a schedule. We've selected I think it's two or three bus routes specifically that we're going to pilot. And we'll be revamping the schedule to be able to have the buses run as they're actually timed at this point.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: But --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: -- Mr. McCarthy reminds me the express buses are getting the whole benefit of the time savings already. So they're showing up in Manhattan much faster, and that is --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Well, that's fine to show up somewhere when there's no stops in between. But if someone is depending on a schedule and want to catch, you know, the 8:32 bus and it comes at 8:31 and leaves, and

I get there at 8:32 and I see the fumes coming from the back of the bus, I'm going to be a little bit upset when I was there on time.

But you are working on that. And the buses are now working -- or operating at the old schedule, so they're actually going slower than they should --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: That -- hence the rescheduling process we put underway.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: -- based on traffic.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. And this is just a -- you had mentioned the police on trains. And we had this conversation -- I just want to put it on the record now -- about why we're not pushing for police on buses. Because my understanding is that people that walk on the bus are just as flagrant as the ones who sneak on trains.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Absolutely. And it's a conversation I've begun with the police commissioner, that we do need -- we

need more help.

Now, we've had -- one of the reasons that fare evasion has gone down on buses is that we have had some police who will cooperate with us in operations to push back on fare evasion. I won't go into the details, but that is part of the success.

We would like more cops assigned to that. It's part of the 1994 agreement that -- about the Transit Police being folded into the NYPD, that they would police fare evasion on buses. We do need that help.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. And a side question. How do the MTA fares in New York City compare to other places in the country, slash, or the world, like the BART or the system in Washington? How do our fares compare?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Generally lower in particular because most of those systems are distance-based fares. So you have a -- you're charged a different amount if you go a longer distance.

One of the New York system's, you

know, things that we're proud of is that you can go from the Rockaways to the Bronx on a single fare. So we are generally less expensive, especially if you're measuring it on a per-mile or any distance-based metric.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: You could actually ride the trains all day and never get off.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: And some do.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Did he never return? No, he never returned. That's an old story.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: You also made mention of the need for funds. And there has the availability of a minimum of a billion dollars to a billion and a half dollars available to the MTA based on the Governor's budget of last year, which had to do with the -- I'll call it the confiscation, but whatever of the revenues derived with the licensure of downstate casinos.

Again, in this budget I did not find any mention of that. And since that money is supposed to be allocated to the MTA, you

should be kicking and screaming and asking that this be pushed along.

There is the -- so even if it happened in this fiscal year -- well, it's not going to happen in this fiscal year because it's not in the budget. So do you have any comments on why, or you think it's not happening now? Or is there a reason that you're not asking for it to happen?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I have no insight into the casino selection process, but you are right that our operating budget -- not the capital budget, which is what's on the table this year -- but the operating budget does have a dependence in the outyears on the share of casino revenues that were assigned to the MTA back in 2023, and that we are counting on those revenues showing up in the time frame -- 2026.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: But you didn't need it this year. You don't want it this year.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: No, no, it's in the financial plan, but it is scheduled for 2026. You're right, sir.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: All righty. And just as you mentioned to my Senate colleague's comment about the capital money that you do spend is local, you know, the subway trains are finalized in Yonkers, New York, which is -- and that's a large part of your budget. And I know for a fact everyone that works there lives in the Bronx and Westchester County.

So that's all the questions that I have. Did I miss any Assembly people? I don't think so.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Comrie for a three-minute follow-up.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator Comrie for his three-minute follow-up.

SENATOR COMRIE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Nope?

(Laughter.)

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: You run a tight ship there.

SENATOR COMRIE: But my Transportation chair is not here. I can't get five?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, you don't get his either.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry.

SENATOR COMRIE: Stop the clock here.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Go back to three.

Yeah, the complaining doesn't count on the clock.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR COMRIE: All right. Well --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Only for him.

SENATOR COMRIE: Three quick questions, then.

Would you submit to a forensic audit, since that's an issue?

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Listen, this phrase "forensic audit" is thrown around. There was one that the Legislature commanded us to perform, I think in 2019. We did it, and we've executed on virtually all of the recommendations, so.

SENATOR COMRIE: Yeah, but there were holes in that audit that people weren't

satisfied. So we're asking for --

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: I'm sure there are always dissatisfied folks. But this idea that the MTA is not transparent is ridiculous. Just look at the open data that's available on -- through the state government and through the MTA.

So let's talk about what we -- you know, when folks look at the open data --

SENATOR COMRIE: We just want to satisfy people that you are doing what you say you're doing. I know at the Elmont Station and other projects you have been on-time. I just want to make sure that the public can understand it. I think that -- I think an audit would make people happy. It would make the naggers happy, let's just put it that way.

Just two other questions, real quick.

Can you give us a thought about your opinion on doing a frequent user discount for express bus riders. And, in the same vein, the weekly CityTicket that was eliminated, can we get that back? A lot of people want

that, you know, sort of discount for the subway and bus transfers. We want to try to increase ridership, especially at this time.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Yeah, listen. Listen, we have controlled fare increases over time and I think we've been responsible with that 2 percent a year increase that doesn't even keep up with inflation.

But if there are specific additional discounts that folks want to talk about, we will definitely ask our board, which controls fare policy, to take a look at them.

SENATOR COMRIE: I appreciate that.

And also just a final -- you know, the Queens bus redesign. I didn't bring it up. As you know, I'm not happy with some of the elements, especially with there's not a connection from the Rockaways to JFK and not a connection to Long Island Jewish.

I hope we can resolve those things over the next few months. I think it's important to the Rockaway folks to be able to get access to JFK.

So I just want to take these few

minutes to thank you for your responses. Thank you for also starting to do opportunities for people to see the MTA and coming out to the boroughs to do hiring halls and procurement opportunities.

I think we could do that upstate as well, to let people know. Because it is important that the capital dollars that are being spent within the state are advertised as much as possible. It shows economic activity.

You know, I'm looking forward to work with you to try to resolve these issues. As long as we can be transparent about how you're spending your money, people will feel more comfortable about where that money is being spent. I think we need to show that and we're not showing that enough, where that money is being spent, around the state.

But thank you for your time here.

MTA CHAIR/CEO LIEBER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you. And I believe this ends your portion of this hearing. I want to thank you all for your

participation.

And we'll call up the next group --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much for being with us.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: -- we'll call Panel A.

And as everyone's been admonished, if you wish to speak to the chairman for anything, please take it to the hall.

So we'll call up DMV Commissioner Mark Schroeder and Thruway Authority Executive Director Frank Hoare.

(Lengthy pause; off the record.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I guess we should get started. I'm not sure where Senator Krueger is, but I know she's on the way.

Even though I know the bulk of you, could you just say your name before the testimony starts so the people in the booth upstairs know who's -- which name to put up.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Sure. Mark Schroeder, DMV.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE:

Frank Hoare, Thruway Authority.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay, who wants to go first?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: I'm happy to.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Former Member Schroeder, you're on.

(Laughter.)

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you. As you know, I'm a proud former member of the New York State Legislature. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the great work happening at DMV.

Since I became commissioner six years ago, we changed our vision statement to "shatter the perceptions of the DMV," and thanks to our more than 3,000 dedicated civil servants, we are passionately doing that every day.

I'm confident that you and your legislative colleagues are well aware of the great things happening at DMV thanks to our Legislative Constituent Affairs team. This

team not only handles your questions, but they also play offense by visiting all legislative offices to spread the word of what DMV is doing.

Regarding modernization. Providing an exceptional experience for our customers is the driving force behind the agency's ongoing technology modernization plan. When I sat before you last year, I was looking forward to the beginning of that effort, and now I'm happy to say we are well underway.

Regarding the Executive Budget. Governor Hochul's Executive Budget provides $495 million to continue the implementation of this critical improvement project and to support day-to-day operations at both state- and county-run offices.

The return on this investment will be felt immediately through improved customer service and DMV not being reliant on outdated, unstable technology. DMV generates over 2 billion, $2 billion per year back to the state. So when systems and offices go down, the impact quickly adds up.

Our modernization plan will replace the majority of our more-than-50-year-old systems during two phases over the next four years. It is the cornerstone of a broader initiative that we began nearly five years ago to re-imagine the DMV.

Regarding DMV's website. By embracing a new way of thinking and leveraging innovative technology, we launched a redesigned website, added new online transactions, made it easier to access DMV records, and introduced online pre-screening for some of the most complicated transactions, like getting a REAL ID.

Let's talk about REAL ID. As millions of New Yorkers prepare for the full implementation of the REAL ID Act in May, we know that our online customer support tools are invaluable. We also know that not everyone has the luxury of going online, so DMV hit the road this past year by participating in community events and reaching into neighborhoods to better meet underserved New Yorkers where they are.

Our creative approach to customer service also led to record-setting improvements in our contact center. We launched a self-service tool that provides important license status information, made it easier to navigate through our phone tree, and we continued to improve live chat and email interactions to ensure customers receive fast, consistent guidance regardless of how they interact with our agency.

Regarding Mobile ID on your cellphone. Our forward-looking staff also led New York to become one of the first states in the nation to launch a Mobile ID, and they continue to help shape the evolving digital credential ecosystem. Secure mobile IDs will become increasingly important in the future as businesses, governments and consumers continue to combat fraud and identity theft.

Regarding ghost plates and toll evasion. Through the leadership of our Governor, DMV staff have also been active in the state's fight against ghost plates and toll evasion. Last year DMV participated in

more than five dozen security details through the Ghost Plate Task Force that led to more than 700 arrests and 3,400 illegal vehicles seized.

Our investigators and automotive field inspectors also recovered hundreds of stolen vehicles and vehicle parts last year, worth more than $8 million. They recovered vehicle titles valued at $2 million, and helped New Yorkers access nearly $1.5 million in restitution and repairs from dishonest auto dealers and repair shops.

Regarding the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee. Keeping everyone safe on the roads is central to the mission of both DMV and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, which I chair. Around this time last year, we proposed a series of regulatory amendments to make it easier to remove persistently dangerous drivers from our roadways. I am happy to say that we have adopted those regulations and the first of them became enforceable in January.

Regarding drugged driving, which we

talked about quite a bit last year. The Governor also continues to aggressively lead efforts to address drugged driving by proposing important updates to Vehicle and Traffic Law to close loopholes and better hold motorists accountable for driving while impaired by drugs. I believe we must keep up with the bad actors who find new ways to put the lives of innocent New Yorkers at risk. I am confident this proposal will do just that.

Additionally, the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee continues to focus public awareness and outreach efforts in communities that are overrepresented by traffic crashes and fatalities, like in Rochester, where speeding is the number-one cause of fatal crashes. Last year we partnered with the Rochester Redwings baseball team to help reach new audiences. This year, we will again give special attention to speeding, impaired driving, distracted driving, and micromobility.

As we focus on diversifying our traffic safety messaging, we also strive to

ensure that our workforce is as diverse as the more than 15 million customers we serve. The attention we give to creating an inviting and diverse work environment also extends to the contracts we procure. I am particularly proud to say that more than 79 percent of our current fiscal year spending is done through MWBEs, and more than 33 percent is done through service-disabled-veteran-owned businesses.

Regarding CDLs. We know the need for truck and bus drivers is still very real, so we continue to offer a federal waiver for part of the commercial driver license road test, to make it easier to get prospective bus drivers licensed and ready to meet the need of our schools statewide.

Regarding Donate Life. There also remains a critical need for organ, eye, and tissue donors. New York has one of the lowest donor registry enrollment rates in the country. However, we reached a critical milestone last year. For the first time in New York's history, more than 50 percent of

eligible New Yorkers joined the organ donor registry -- 85 percent of them do that through a DMV -- and we hope to continue that momentum in 2025. We have a plan.

Speaking of key partnerships, I'd be remiss not to mention our critical partnerships with the county clerks who run DMV operations in 51 counties statewide. We rely on our close collaboration with the clerks to provide effective and efficient services to all New Yorkers.

I am confident that if you visit a DMV today, you will be as pleased as so many of our customers who write to us each day with compliments like these:

• "I have never had such outstanding customer service from anyone as I did today. Thank you!"

• "Lost my license; the online renewal form and temporary license made it easy and painless."

• "Ever since the end of COVID, the DMV did a complete 180. What a difference from years past. Everyone should be

commended."

I could go on, but the point is these are real people seeing real results from the improvements we are making, and we look forward to making things even better for years to come.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to present to you today.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Chairs Pretlow and Krueger, Magnarelli and Cooney, Braunstein and Comrie, thank you for the invitation to be with you this afternoon.

My name is Frank Hoare. I am the executive director of the New York State Thruway Authority.

I have submitted detailed testimony, but let me hit on some of the highlights here this afternoon with you.

The Thruway Authority is committed to its mission to operate a reliable and affordable superhighway delivering high levels of safety and service. The importance of making safety a priority was tragically emphasized to us in 2024. After eight years

without a fatality, two of our employees, Vincent Giammarva and Stephen Ebling, died, and another, Mark Vara, was seriously injured, in separate incidents while working on the Thruway.

It reminds us all that when our workers are out on the Thruway, there is never a routine day.

My goal at the Authority is prioritizing safety in everything we do, and you will hear this throughout my testimony today.

In 2024, the Thruway processed more than 403 million transactions and motorists drove 8.2 billion miles on the Thruway. To that end, the Thruway Authority's 2025 budget represents a total financial commitment of just under $1.4 billion. It funds the resources required to maintain and enhance the current levels of maintenance, safety and service our customers expect and deserve. This balanced spending plan provides $500 million for operations, which includes $71 million for Troop T, $477 million for our

capital program, and $383 million for our debt service.

This budget includes not a single dollar of dedicated federal or state taxpayer dollars. Those that use the Thruway pay for the Thruway.

Overall, $2.7 billion will be invested over the next five years into the Thruway's 2025–2029 capital plan, which is a $742 million increase since the approval of the 2023 plan which went into effect on January 1, 2024. The increased investment will lead to work on more than 60 percent of the Thruway's more than 2,800 pavement lane-miles as well as the replacement or rehabilitation of 20 percent of our 817 bridges.

This work is a visual reminder of our continued investment of toll dollars in our infrastructure, and the result is safety and jobs for New Yorkers.

This significant investment comes as the Thruway continues to offer some of the lowest and most affordable toll rates in the

country. The Thruway's base passenger toll rate is less than a nickel per passenger mile. Compare that to 17 cents in Pennsylvania or 39 cents in New Jersey.

I want to highlight some of our safety initiatives. One example is the Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement pilot program, sponsored by Chair Magnarelli and signed by Governor Hochul in September of 2021.

Data from that program indicates that motorists across the Thruway are changing their behavior and, on average, slowing down in work zones. However, although most drivers are slowing down and paying attention, more than 130,000 notices of liability were issued on the Thruway alone. Of those, 7,000 violations were repeat offenders of two or more times.

An important element of the pilot program is that revenue from the fines is invested in worker safety. Last year alone we were able to add $300,000 from this program to our $4 million safety program.

For these reasons, the Governor's 2026

Executive Budget includes a proposal to make this program permanent and increase penalties, and I ask for your support of this vital safety program.

Another safety initiative we pursued in 2024 was a statewide commercial vehicle enforcement campaign to reduce bridge strikes caused by over-height vehicles. Since 2020, there have been 231 bridge hits reported on the Thruway, including 56 just last year.

The enforcement initiative was conducted in partnership with the State Police, and during the fourth quarter of last year, 30 enforcement details were held in various regions of the state, leading to more than 7300 violations, including 31 for over-height vehicles.

The authority is also capitalizing on its existing infrastructure by using its fiber network which runs along its right of way. We plan to build on the public broadband infrastructure initiatives that Governor Hochul has undertaken over the last few years. The Governor's goal for this

partnership is to expand and increase global productivity and reliability along the Thruway system and beyond.

As we continue to modernize our Thruway, our service area reconstruction project is nearing completion. As I sit here today, 24 out of the 27 service areas have been rebuilt or refurbished, and the final three will be completed by this early fall.

As part of the service area project we have committed to increasing the availability of electric vehicle charging. As of today, the Thruway has nearly 100 electric vehicle charging points at our service areas, welcome centers and commuter lots, and we're committed to growing demand in the future.

In addition to passenger EV charging stations, the Authority has taken steps for anticipated demand for medium- and heavy-duty electric vehicle charging, which includes working with our state partners, the trucking industry and utilities, and participating in a cross-agency working group led by the Governor's office.

This is a challenging issue, but I pledge we will continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to provide this vital service to our commercial customers.

Enforcement continues to remain a priority. Tolls represent 90 percent of our revenue, and without collecting tolls we will not be able to operate, maintain and enhance our system. It's critical to balance the toll collection with enforcement, and we use a variety of tools to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. Most importantly, enforcement protects the 96 percent of people who do pay.

The authority continues to make it easy for our customers to pay their toll bills. The Tolls by Mail Enhancement Act is another important law in our efforts to improve customer service. Approximately 85 percent of our customers have an E-ZPass account.

And for those who don't, they receive a bill at the address of the vehicles owner that is on file with DMV. This law requires

every vehicle owner to keep their address up-to-date with the DMV.

When a bill is received, the owner can pay by mail, online, over the phone, on the mobile app, or pay in cash at over a thousand locations around the state.

If customers do not pay, they face violation fees. If they don't pay after receiving three notices over a 120-day period, we then turn to collections for the money owed. For the most egregious cases, we work with the DMV for registration suspension.

In August of 2022, the Thruway resumed its registration suspension program. Since that time we have suspended over 15,000 registrations, with more than $15 million collected in debt.

We are committed to collecting every dollar owed to us. We will work with all of our customers who want to pay. But to be clear, large outstanding toll bills do not materialize overnight. We must have effective enforcement in place for those who

do not pay.

To conclude, I want to emphasize my commitment to Governor Hochul's charge to me to continue to ensure that the Thruway remains the safest, most convenient and affordable highway in the country. Our accomplishments are made possible by the dedication and professionalism of the Thruway board of directors, our union leadership, and the 1800 employees of the Thruway Authority. They work hard every day to serve and protect all those who use the Thruway.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblyman Magnarelli, for 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: So we're going to be succinct, I hope.

Commissioner, Director, thank you very much for being here. I've known you both for (pause) -- too long, probably --

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: -- but it's

always a pleasure to have you here.

I'm going to start with the Department of Motor Vehicles, okay? I've been given a Yellow Book, which both of you know what I'm talking about, okay. The Executive proposes an All Funds appropriation of $495 million, a decrease of 170.1 million, or 25.6 percent from fiscal year '24-'25. This decrease primarily reflects the discontinuance of the multiyear DMV transformation project related to IT improvements, consisting of 178.5 million appropriation last year, '24-'25, and a 106 million appropriation in '22-'23.

I'm confused. And I stood up in front of my conference, I think it was yesterday, and told them that the IT project was complete and that we have funded it. Now I listened to you, and I'm hearing something different.

So I want to know, what's the difference here? Is it complete? And what new services will be online and what other improvements will there be, you know, and how

do I benchmark this to see if there are improvements in the long run?

But the first thing I want to know is, is it done or is it being completed with the monies we've already put in, or are you going to be looking for more money next year?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: No, we're not going to be looking for more money.

So let me just say this. I am a disciple also of the Yellow Book. I understand it, and I used to read it all the time --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: For seven years.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: -- right? But I want to be clear --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: And he used to write in it.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: In deference to the Yellow Book, I want to be clear. This project is not discontinued or canceled. Last year we executed the contract with the vendor and we kicked off this project. And why did we kick it off?

Because we are determined to eliminate outages and glitches. We have legacy lines that go back to Governor Rockefeller in the 1960s.

So what you are seeing, Mr. Chair, in the budget is just a return to previous years with our capital budget. Last year it was included in our initial investment for this project that will take us through 2029. So to be specific --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: And will it complete your -- it's never complete in this day and age.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: No, no, it -- so --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Is it going to complete what you set out to do, is what I want to know.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yes, it will. And so this -- in the easiest way to explain it, over the next four years it's essential that the --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: All right. But the money is there.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: The money's there. The Governor and the Legislature supported us. So thank you for that.

The first rollout will be one year from now. It will be February of 2026. And it will be everything having to do on the driver's side. And then we'll take a little break, we'll sit on the bridge and make sure everything's working well. Then in March of 2028 we will roll out everything that has to do on the registration side.

So we are well in advance of this project, and things are going well and we have the funding thanks to our partners, the Governor and you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: That's what I wanted to know. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Director, okay, I've got a couple of questions that I wanted to ask you two weeks ago, but you weren't here. This has to do with charging stations and chargers. And you did mention it a little bit; I didn't quite get it.

But here's the question. How many passenger vehicle chargers and how many -- and this is the more important one -- commercial chargers are currently installed along the Thruway?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Currently there are none, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: None, no commercial.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay, there are none. What are the Thruway Authority's plans to provide commercial charging along the Thruway?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Well, for the past two years we've been working with an interagency group that includes other state agencies or stakeholders, the Trucking Association and the utilities, to plan out and strategize how we're going to approach this. And we've been --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. And I

accept that, okay? Because I'm hearing that from a lot of different sectors, not just the Thruway Authority. Okay? But the bottom line is there is no plan today. There's no plan. I'm not saying you're not looking to do one or trying to put one in effect, but there is no plan. You don't know how it's going to be done, you don't know what agencies are going to help you, you don't know what utilities are going to supply the electric, you have no idea at this point in -- wrong, I overstepped. You have an idea, but there's no plan.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Well, when I say plan and strategize, what we've been doing, we've identified 10 sites on the Thruway system, 10 service areas that we would put medium- and heavy-duty chargers in. And that's what we've been doing and planning and working with the utilities.

The utilities have told us, like I'm sure they've told you, that any one of these sites will need the energy and power of a small city. So that is our challenge. So

from the Thruway part of this, we are just one part of a complicated, multifaceted issue that we've been working on to address.

So when I say plan and strategize, that's what I mean -- identifying sites, talking to utility companies of how they can get the power in there to sustain that.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: But -- and this is just a policy or theoretical type of question. I mean, we're asking our communities to go out and buy electric vehicles, whether they be passenger or the DEC is kind of -- I know they pulled back a little bit, but DEC is actually forcing people to buy trucks which do not exist, okay?

Not only is this not a plan, this borderlines on ridiculous. Okay? And I'm not talking just to you, Mr. Director, I'm talking to the State of New York. We need a plan. We need to know where we're going, and we have to be honest. Right now there's no honesty out there. And I said it three years ago in conference: The only thing we're

creating in our communities is anxiety and fear. Because they don't know what's happening, what they're going to be mandated to do. This is wrong.

And I just want to make that statement. And I have no more for you, Frank. Okay? Thank you very much for being here --

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: You're welcome, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: -- and listening to me. I'm done.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Our chair, Senator Leroy Comrie.

SENATOR COMRIE: Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for being here today.

Commissioner Schroeder, I want to thank you for your innovations and what you've done to improve DMV. I just have a couple of technical questions.

Over the past few years you've made significant increases in appropriations. Do you not have the sufficient resources to

complete that transformation, or will you be pursuing more resources to -- appropriation increases in future years, and what would that look like?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, thank you, Senator. And the short answer is yes. Based on what we're trying to do and with the support of the Legislature and the Governor's initiative last year to underwrite the tech redesign, everything is going along well. We are now in the execution stage.

And as I mentioned, we have two major rollouts coming, one next year at this time and one in March of 2028.

So thank you for asking.

SENATOR COMRIE: And how is the REAL ID information -- the REAL ID requirements and the opportunities for people to transfer over, how is that working? Can you transfer over for free if you got a license last year and you need a REAL ID this year, or you've got to pay the fee for a REAL ID?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So

regarding REAL ID -- and thank you for mentioning that, because it's important that all viewers who are watching us today understand that if they are not REAL ID-compliant by May 7th of 2025, they may not be able to go visit grandma in Fort Lauderdale. They might be disappointed. So we are doing everything --

SENATOR COMRIE: Even if they have a passport or --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Oh, if they -- a passport is REAL ID-compliant.

DMV's really not in the passport business, so we're doing everything we can to encourage New Yorkers to come in and get a REAL ID. And things are working really well, but we only have about 90 days left to convince New Yorkers to do that.

SENATOR COMRIE: Is there going to be an increased ad campaign to make that happen?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: There are, yes. And we -- I've been to all 13 airports, including the two in New York several times, doing press conferences with

elected officials and with others, trying to convince New Yorkers that it's time to be REAL ID-compliant.

And we also have a public campaign on the DMV website. And we're working with others. And we also have a very strong relationship with TSA, not only in New York but around the country too. And they too also are promoting what we're promoting, REAL ID.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. So New Yorkers can expect to see commercials about coming out and doing the REAL ID between now and March -- now and May?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Sorry, Senator, I didn't hear the beginning.

SENATOR COMRIE: You're going to have commercials on the air or on the internet to urge encourage people to come out and transfer to REAL ID?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: The answer is yes. We already do. In fact, I heard some REAL ID commercials and some other

commercials just recently in Buffalo and other places when I travel across the state.

So the answer is yes, we have a comprehensive program to do everything we can to convince New Yorkers to be REAL ID-compliant.

SENATOR COMRIE: Great. E-ZPass issues, that covers your agency? Or that doesn't cover you, people that are having problems with E-ZPass? I didn't get a chance to ask the MTA, but I've gotten increasing complaints from consumers about bad E-ZPass receipts and tolls that were taken out for people that were supposedly driving to Rochester but never left Brooklyn. Since congestion pricing, there seems to be a dearth {sic} of mistakes on the E-ZPass system. How can we do more to correct that?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So let me just say this. We have a government relations liaison. All of your offices know her, she visits all of you. And she also fields questions that come in.

And if we get a question having to do

with E-ZPass or with a tolling issue, we do not do this (pointing in different directions). We do the best we can to explain to the customer how we may be able to help them.

I also want to give credit to the Legislature and to the Governor, because on every single different tolling authority, there is what is called a tollpayer advocate. So there's 1-800 numbers, there's emails, there's all sorts of information to get to our customers to make it easier for them.

SENATOR COMRIE: It's not enough to reach customers. I have a backlog of customers -- I have even members recently that have gotten bad E-ZPass bills.

And so I hope this year the Governor would consider doing pop-ups in every borough on weekends for people, like you've done with the small businesses that can also do licensing. You know, if you can make some of those centers E-ZPass adjudication centers, as you've done so well with the -- giving people an opportunity to go to a place to get

their license or their registration.

I would hope that both of your agencies could do some pop-ups, because the backlog is tremendous. And just having one person in each agency is not going to deal with the backlog that's happening. So I would appeal to both of you to make that happen.

And also to do an amnesty program, you know, once or twice a year, to allow people not to -- just to pay the fees and not the fines, so we could get a better response on the E-ZPass as well. Not the truckers, the passengers. Let me just make that distinction. There's a distinction between for-hire vehicles and regular passengers. I'm talking regular passengers, owners of, you know, family cars and folks like us that are driving every day. So I would hope that we could do that for them.

On -- for the for-hire vehicles, once a year doing an amnesty would be helpful as well, both of you.

But thank you, Mr. Schroeder. Just

since I only have four minutes left, Commissioner Hoare, I want to thank you for meeting with me the other day and telling me about your plans.

Can you just illuminate for the public what you're doing with high-speed internet connections for everyone?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Yes, Senator, the Governor has proposed our budget to extend that. The Thruway has already had a robust program the last few years. We put fiber on our right of way. We anticipate this year it being approximately -- bringing in $10 million to us.

But the plan is the Thruway is, in essence, the spine of the state, so we want to expand that and send it up through the Thruway, send it up the spine of New York, and then other partners then will take it off, off the system to more localities in the North Country, the Southern Tier and the like.

SENATOR COMRIE: I spoke to DOT

earlier and they weren't aware of the program, so I guess you haven't started telling them yet. So hope we can have that discussion with DOT so that they can take advantage of it.

I appreciate you -- also, you just want to tell folk about the toll increases and how that is cheaper than the other states? I know you alluded to it in your conversation -- in your presentation, but do you want to expand on that a little bit more to tell people how we are saving money by using New York roads?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: We think, in accordance with the Governor's efforts to make life here affordable, we are less than 5 cents a passagenger mile. Again, comparing that to -- the New Jersey Turnpike's about 39 cents. So less than 5 cents versus 39 cents. Seventeen cents in Pennsylvania. The Governor Cuomo Bridge is $6.75. Compare that to the George Washington Bridge, of $16.

So we have worked very hard to

continue to make it affordable for all our customers.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

I agree with your issues to make sure that your service areas -- I mean your roads are protected and your workers are protected. I congratulate you on being able to highlight that, and hope that we can continue to highlight that so that we can protect our workers.

Who is in charge of registering vehicles, is it -- which agency? Every year that trucks have to be reregistered, what agency is that? I don't know.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: The registration of vehicles? That would come under the Department of Motor Vehicles.

SENATOR COMRIE: No, the -- I'm sorry, I'm saying it wrong. The trucks that have to come through every year to get -- not reregistered, reinspected. The truck inspections where they check for safety and whether or not they're being compliant with the roads.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Right, that would come under the Department of Motor Vehicles. And we have inspection stations across New York State who are doing inspections each and every day for New Yorkers.

SENATOR COMRIE: So you inspect out-of-state vehicles as well, or is it just New York State vehicles?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Senator, I'm inclined to think that we do, but I don't totally know the answer to that. So I will follow back with you on that.

SENATOR COMRIE: I'm told you inspect out-of-state vehicles as well. I hope that we could stop that, because there's a lot of vehicles that are illegally registering in New Jersey but coming to New York to get their inspections.

I would hope we could stop that so we could focus on how we can make insurance better for New Yorkers. Because that's just inflating and conflating the insurance issues for New York residents.

Thank you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thanks, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblymember Miller.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Thank you, Commissioner, thank you, Director, for your testimony. I just want to start with the director on the Thruway.

Great job this morning. I came in from Utica on the Thruway with the inclement weather, and I will attest I travel the Thruway all the time -- every day, probably -- and it's the safest, best-maintained road in New York State, I will say that. And today it was probably one of the safest roads in New York State.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Thank you, Assemblyman. I will pass that on to the great employees of the Thruway Authority that keep it that way.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: But I'd just like

to talk about some safety initiatives here. And you pointed one out with iCone. And I think -- and I want to commend you again for embracing technology that's available to us with -- with the i -- with the technologies there for Waze and, you know, maps and things like that, so we can identify where our snowplows are. Can you elaborate a little bit on that little project that we're doing?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Yes, Assemblyman. It's in my longer testimony.

But iCone is a company that provides realtime notice to those with Waze and Google Maps, and it's an effort to, right on the roadway -- we put them in as a pilot this winter, we've put them in a number of our snowplows, and the point is to send a message to drivers that up ahead, a mile or so up ahead, that there are snowplows, so that they will slow down and pay attention and, as we say, don't crowd the plow.

So that's one of the technologies that we are using and benefiting, again, from that

money that is coming from the work zone pilot program.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: It's a great technology. We've got to get the word out there; as technology changes, we're going to be able to use our -- everything in our vehicles.

Let's just take a few minutes on the charging stations. You know, as the chairman said over here, the committee chair said over here about it, how long out are we realistically? I know that's a tough question to ask. But realistically, so the trucking -- so our trucking in New York State doesn't get totally disrupted with this, you know, with the CLCPA initiatives here in the ACT Act and all that, what are we, 10 years out, 15?

You know, it's -- we're a long ways away. And I think, you know, maybe we should be looking at some other plans along with this for supplying some alternative fuels for these diesel trucks that are out there. And, you know, that may help us push -- that will

get us to the point we have to be.

So anyways, is there any idea how far away we're going to be?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I can't give you a date, Assemblyman. Again, because the Thruway's just one piece of this very complicated, multilayered issue, so.

But we will continue, we'll continue to plan and strategize, we'll continue to dialogue with you all in the Legislature and with our stakeholders and partners in the trucking industry as well as the utilities.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: On to the -- as I'm driving along the Thruway, I see we're pulling fiber, and it was here (indicating document). We have some fiber manufacturers here in New York State. As these corridors are leased, would it be possible to include some of the fiber that, if it's leased on state right of ways, that would have to be -- the fiber would have to be manufactured here in New York State?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I know we're dealing with -- certainly with

New York-based telecommunications companies that are involved in that. I will -- as we discussed when we met, I will go back and see where that is manufactured.

But certainly we're always looking to, as the Governor said, promote New York, New York industries and New York manufacturers.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Thank you. And thank you for the safe ride in this morning.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Commissioner, I've just got a couple of -- I've got 30 seconds here. I don't even know if I can get one off.

Has there been any thought of, you know, how we're going to do our inspections on our EVs out there? Because that's a whole different situation. Are we going to charge more? Is there different training?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Assemblyman, there is -- there will be -- at this moment in time, there is no difference.

And I don't think there will be unless we, you know, talk with you and others to figure that out.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Tom O'Mara, ranker.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you both for being here. Director Hoare, just to follow up on a few of the questions with the Advanced Clean Truck Rule and the need for medium- and heavy-duty charging stations.

I take it from reading your written testimony and what you've said here today that we currently don't have any medium- or heavy-duty charging stations along the Thruway?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: That's correct, Senator.

SENATOR O'MARA: And my assumption -- and knowing for sure that those types of chargers are going to have a higher demand for electricity than the Level 2 and 3 chargers that you have, and I just know from

experience throughout the state that any time we even have a new economic development project, the availability of increased demand is very hard to come by.

What are your projections on the limitations you're going to have in even getting the power to run those types of chargers? And, you know, you have no timeline here, but the Advanced Clean Truck Rule is being implemented right now. So how are trucks going to be able to utilize the Thruway?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Again, the plan is to, at least in 10 locations, 10 service areas, strategically placed, looking at traffic patterns and where trucks are coming in, is to place them along the Thruway in 10 sites.

So we have that -- charging is a challenge. Another challenge there is -- when you come to the Trucking Association, is space. Right? Right now with a passenger vehicle you pull into, in essence, a parking space, pull in, you plug it in, you go in for

the fast chargers, it's about 20 to 30 minutes so you go into the service area, get a cup of coffee, go to the restroom. The space is more -- you don't need as much space.

But if you have a 50, 55-foot container truck, we're going to -- we're looking at that and how much space we have at the service --

SENATOR O'MARA: What is the charging time for those medium and heavy-duty vehicles? Do you know what the charging time is, if they had a charger?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I don't. I can get you that information in terms of how it breaks down.

I know right now that they -- when they, you know, fuel up, that takes them about 20 to 30 minutes and they're good for 1200 miles. But that's -- again, the chargers are going to differ --

SENATOR O'MARA: Can you repeat that again? They charge up for 20 or 30 minutes and then --

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: They fuel up, they can go typically, I am told, about 12 --

SENATOR O'MARA: No, when they're fueling.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: On fuel, about 1200 miles.

SENATOR O'MARA: Do you know what the range is for these heavy-duty vehicles if electric?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I don't offhand. Again, I'm told it varies on geography, on whether --

SENATOR O'MARA: What parameters? It varies how much?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Well --

SENATOR O'MARA: -- distance-wise, that these trucks can go?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I am told it can be as little as 300 miles.

SENATOR O'MARA: We had the DOT commissioner earlier talking about the demands on our roads with the heavier

electric vehicles and such. And she said there are specifications for -- the state system has that in their capacities, that everything is up to snuff on that.

Is the Thruway similarly situated on that? And what safety upgrades are going to need to be done because of the heavier vehicles being on the road?

And I've heard, if you could comment on this, I've heard that the Thruway needs to replace its guardrails to withstand these heavier vehicles, and that's going to be about $350 million. Is that accurate? Or where does that stand? Or where do we stand on all the needs and demands on our roads for heavier vehicles?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: That is one of the elements that we're looking at in terms of what we will need to do to enhance that safety. Certainly it's going to have an impact on the surface of our roads and bridges.

But I have not heard that number. I don't think that we're at that number that

you cited.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Braunstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

And it's good to see you both. I'm going to start with the commissioner.

First, I just want to reiterate something my colleague Senator Comrie said about public notice about REAL ID. We're 90 days away. You know, sitting here, it was kind of news to me that we need to get moving and get everybody to get a REAL ID. So I think, you know, more emphasis needs to be done about public awareness. So just wanted to bring that to your attention.

And of course I think all of us in our offices, through our email newsletters and things like that, could help as well.

I really wanted to ask about your efforts to crack down on ghost plates. You

know, I live in Queens and I frequently see people with defaced license plates or modified license plates. And it's particularly concerning for us in the city where we have a speed camera program. And someone with a ghost plate can just drive around through our community, continuously speeding, and there's never any repercussions.

So it says here that DMV has participated in five dozen security details. I have two questions. How many of those details have been in New York City? And what is the process when someone is found with a ghost plate?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you, Assemblyman, for the question.

I've participated in some of these in New York City. And so the Governor last year created a task force, along with the mayor of New York. And so law enforcement, especially in metropolitan New York, have worked together with the MTA and others to try to prevent these ghost plates from coming into

our communities and also on the roadways and with obstructed plates.

And so as the MTA said earlier today, they have the numbers. I have some of the numbers. But there is a complete set of numbers offered by the police task force in New York. I can get you those numbers in terms of summonses, in terms of cars that have been taken away and fines and things of that nature, I can get you that information.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Yeah. And what's the process? If I scratch off a letter on my license plate and I just go to drive and I get pulled over, what is --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: It's a violation. And so it is a violation of Vehicle and Traffic Law.

And so the enforcement part would then come in to exactly what you just described. And then the officer would do whatever he would need to do if the plates have been altered.

If it's peeling plates and it had nothing to do with -- the customer really did

nothing wrong, then that's one thing. DMV will replace those plates.

But we are talking about people who are defacing New York State plates coming into our toll areas and marking their plates or trying to buy fake New York State plates.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: No, no, believe me, I understand. I see them.

But my question is, so I get a violation, the first offense. What is it, I just pay a penalty? Like what's to stop me from just continuing to drive with that license plate again?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Again, Assemblyman, it would have to do with the situation at hand. Law enforcement would make that decision. There have been vehicles that have been apprehended, and there have been arrests -- 747 arrests, I think, over the summer.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Arrests for a defaced plate or --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: -- arrests

for an outstanding -- something outstanding?

COMMISSIONER SULLIVAN: No, for coming across into the toll, being caught by police. And then the police make a determination to what is going to take place.

And so the task force has impounded 3,000 vehicles, 630 arrests, 29,000 summonses have been given out by this task force law enforcement group who are working together.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. And then you talked about the peeling plates. I think that's something that kind of compounds the problem. Right? Because some people, I've seen their license plates peel and I think people aren't, you know, necessarily aggressive about going to get that license plate replaced. They might even, you know, just be happy about it, right?

And I don't know if in the future there's an effort to work on the license plate so they don't peel so easy.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. That too, Assemblyman, is a violation. However, we are doing our best to communicate

with all New Yorkers, through many different mechanisms, including our website, that if you have a peeling plate, we're going to make the general assumption it's not your fault. So come into a DMV office, and we will replace that plate for free.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay. Okay.

But if I'm pulled over and I have a peeled license plate, do I get a summons?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Again, law enforcement will make that determination. But we would hope that the law enforcement would simply say: Go to a DMV and take care of this today.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: And then just a question for the director.

We met last week and we were discussing a similar kind of issue with your efforts to collect tolls. And you mentioned in your testimony that the Tolls by Mail

Enforcement Act has been helpful. And in our conversation you indicated to me that a lot of the issues you see with toll collection is with out-of-state trucking.

Do you want to just expand on that and just talk about some of the approaches you've taken to try and collect those tolls, or the challenges that you see with collecting those tolls? And if there is anything that we could be helpful with that.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Thank you. Of that 4 percent that don't pay the -- most of the money of that 4 percent is out-of-state trucking -- New Jersey, Ohio, Illinois. So obviously we have less ability to enforce.

Now, what we're doing on that, to cut down on that, because we're not neglecting it, we're doing everything we can. We have a variety of tools that we use. So we have a reciprocity agreement with Massachusetts currently. We've been working on expanding that and getting agreements with New Jersey, with Pennsylvania, Delaware and Ohio and

Illinois now.

The hope would be that we have that, the practical impact -- like what we have now with Massachusetts is that we have that agreement, we can then send that file in essence to somebody who has not paid and ask that state to put a hold on their registration until they're made whole.

So that reciprocity agreement is one piece of it. Legal, we have a -- my general counsel, Sandra Rivera, leads up a team of lawyers in-house and outside counsel that are attempting to bring civil suits to collect. We are using registrations with our partners at DMV. We send over to DMV 275 files a week to be -- to be suspended. And that's part of the 15,000 in the last three years. And we've been able to collect 15 million on it.

But there's a lot more out there. So again, we're not neglecting this. We take it seriously. The ghost plates I'll say is not an issue really for us; it's less than 1 percent of those not paying. But we're not ignoring that. We go after -- we go after --

we have a talented staff that attempts to locate the actual driver by looking at video footage and looking at our files and records. So we're not neglecting that, either. We are looking to make sure that every person who owes a toll pays their toll.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Great.

Thank you very much. I'm done.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

Senator Roxanne Persaud.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

Commissioner, it's always great to see you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you.

SENATOR PERSAUD: I just wanted to touch on the REAL ID. I know you're -- I just want to commend your team for all the outreach and the publicity that they've been doing. I think every time I turn on the television I've been seeing the information, and across my district we've been seeing the outreach and the reminders.

Do you have a sense of the number of

people with New York State licenses who have not done the updates?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: On the REAL ID updates?

SENATOR PERSAUD: Yes.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

And so I can refresh these numbers for you, but the last time I asked -- I always do ask -- I think we were getting close to about 7 million New Yorkers who were REAL ID-compliant, meaning having a REAL ID or an enhanced driver's license.

I also know, because I've asked -- even though we're not in the passport business -- I'm told that there are 10 million New Yorkers who have a passport. The reason why that comforts me is I don't want any families stranded at an airport after May 7th and not be REAL ID-compliant.

So we will continue to do what we can to publicize this. And we've also given all information to all members of the New York Legislature. In your office, your staff has

information on REAL ID, and we thank you for promoting it as well.

SENATOR PERSAUD: I know on Monday the TSA was reminding people -- I think your team was there also -- reminding people that beginning May 7th, you know, be prepared to be there for a very long time if you're not compliant. So I just want to remind everybody about that.

Can you also tell us -- you've been doing the mobile offices, and I thank you for doing the one in my district. It was a tremendous success, and we'll be trying to get another one in the district.

Could you tell us, across the state, how many of those have you been doing? And are you working with counties to ensure that we have more?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. So, Senator, thank you for that question, because we have done this quite a bit, especially over the past summer. Because we were able to get the equipment necessary. And then we spent a lot of time in different

places in metropolitan New York. I went to places myself to reach New Yorkers where they are.

We are also fortunate that we have 51 county clerks in upstate New York who have also figured out a way how to do Mobile IDs so that their constituents can get a REAL ID.

So in a comprehensive way we're doing everything we can, outside of the technology, to reach people where they are so they have an opportunity. And when we go to community events with our Mobile ID, we can give people a REAL ID right there and then, and we do that with our team.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. Good afternoon.

Commissioner Schroeder, I know and I'm sure you're aware that many of our motor vehicle inspection service stations throughout the state have been asking to increase the maximum fee they can charge.

And it's my understanding that, you know, the number of these facilities has been going down. So does the department have any thoughts with regard to that issue?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So the question, Assemblyman, has to do with inspection stations being able to increase the inspection fee.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yeah. My understanding, it's been at the same level for quite a long time.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: That is correct.

So we are well aware of it. We are working with our partners. As you know, there are six different auto dealer associations across the state -- in New York City and statewide and also in many different regions.

So they have expressed to us a desire to have an increase. So we are now gathering all information. We've done so in a comprehensive way. And we will be determining exactly what we're going to be

able to do in short order.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And do you have any sense as to, you know, where the numbers are of those, how many stations we have in the state relative to what we maybe had five, 10 years ago?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: We do. So I don't have it to memory, but my deputy commissioner, who's not here, she would be able to tell you exactly what we have and what has increased and what the limits are to inspection stations. There is also a limit to how many there can be in the state.

But I'm happy to provide you with some of that information.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And then with regard in particular to electric vehicles, is there any talk of having, you know, any additional criteria or things that would need to be inspected with regard to electric vehicles? And I guess in particular batteries -- which, you know, we have had some problems with, you know, fires and things of that nature.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. So I've asked this question before to my operations team at DMV. My recollection is that there's no difference. That doesn't meanwhile that will be forever. We will continue to look at it, Assemblyman, and if there's any change in that thinking we'll be happy to let you know.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you. And last, just a comment. You're including a piece of your remarks here with regard to the feedback. You know, I do feel like our constituents have never been happier with the DMV. And it's quite an accomplishment if you can get people to enjoy visiting and making a transaction with the DMV, which was obviously a joke people would always make in terms of having to deal with it.

So you and your team are doing good work.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you. Thank you so much. When I became the commissioner in 2019 I Googled DMV jokes, and there were a million of them. Right now, not

so much. We're getting compliments from New Yorkers who are stopping their day to tell us how much they appreciate our people. So thank you for that.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yeah, the new facility in my district where they moved over into Uniondale, I've visited for many different types of transactions and they've been very smooth. So thank you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Bynoe.

SENATOR BYNOE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, Commissioners.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Good afternoon.

SENATOR BYNOE: My question is for the DMV commissioner.

So two people in the district have reported -- one reported they turned in a plate in Suffolk County, the others turned in

plates in Nassau. And subsequent to turning in the plates, they received tickets. Is that systemwide, or is this an isolated situation?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yes. No, no. So I am aware that this does happen. And DMV is prepared to be helpful. So if you have two outstanding cases right now, if you could let me know or Shannon Milton, who is our legislative director, she would be able to look into this to see if there's anything that DMV could do.

SENATOR BYNOE: So it's happening throughout the system?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, this is -- I've heard this before, and I don't believe it's just isolated to your district.

SENATOR BYNOE: So what is the process for rectifying that? I understand I can call you separately, but I just would like to know in the immediate.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, so I'm not exactly sure of what exactly the

process is. I am aware of what you're talking about, and we can get back to you with the details of it.

SENATOR BYNOE: Okay. Thank you very much.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Is that it?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's it.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Bailey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Well, good afternoon. And my question is actually for the commissioner, but thank you both for being here.

And Commissioner, it's nice to see you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Six years ago you walked into the county clerk's office in Livingston County, and I met you, and have appreciated working with you over those years and look forward to working with you in the

future.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: My question specifically is in and around the e-bikes and the shift in the budget. You know, it's looking at reclassing the heavier e-bikes in New York City over the 100 pounds as -- into the limited-use motorcycles.

My question is specifically as it's written right now, it indicates that it would require the driver's license and the registration. As limited-use motorcycles are outlined with the Department of Motor Vehicles, there's different classes based on speed. And based on those classes, there's additional requirements that might be required -- i.e., inspections, helmets and eyewear or insurance.

Do you see, in an attempt to make the bike lanes safer, that there will be other pieces added to that aside from the driver's license and the registration being required?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So thank

you, Assemblymember. And so as you indicated correctly, the Governor is doing her best to advance what is called smart legislation.

And so again, you're correct, e-bikes, as you know, you do not have to have a license or a registration, but a moped you do. So those -- the heaviest e-bikes are the ones that we're most concerned about right now, and that will come under this to get a license and be registered.

The Governor also has given -- like this is a major problem in New York City. It certainly is a problem in other places as well. But also the Governor's initiative is giving New York City the elastic power to determine what the speed should be in the bike lanes as well.

So these are a number of things that the Governor is trying to do, and DMV, to be helpful for public safety within our communities.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: So do you anticipate inspections or insurance needing to be done on these bikes?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So I would say, Assemblymember, I am aware, as you probably are as well, there are a number of bills in the Assembly and the Senate that probably will address that.

Right now we're only able to address, you know, what's in the Governor's budget. And so it has to do with the heaviest e-bikes, it has to do with advancing smart initiatives.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BAILEY: Thank you very much.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: All right, thank you. Nice to be with you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I'm going to start with you at the DMV. So we passed a number of laws in the last couple of years to require that anybody selling mopeds or other vehicles that have to be licensed in New York State have to confirm that you are actually getting the registration and the insurance before you leave their store.

I want to recognize my colleague Alex Bores for his work on this, including a report he did showing that there are more unlicensed illegal mopeds I think in New York City than those registered. So we changed the law.

My question is have you been doing investigations into these stores to confirm that now they're following the law? And have we seen an increase in actual registration of these vehicles?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. So, Senator, thank you. And I know the Assemblymember here also is very interested in this as well.

And I am happy to report there is a slight uptick. Now, you know that this just went into effect about 30 days ago. But I'm here to tell you that in 2023 there were 2,317 mopeds that were registered. In 2024, 5,702. Going into 2025, 7,353. So I do believe that this bill, legislation, Governor's signing, is going to begin to help. And I'm interested in giving you

another report, maybe in six months or so, not waiting until, you know, next year at this time.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great.

So you also already heard questions about vehicles that don't have legal license plates or being-covered-up license plates, et cetera. Because of I guess primarily E-ZPass and the new technologies for tracking, do we have new models for being able to see and do something about these vehicles and get them off the roads or make it clear enough through penalty that people stop with illegal license plates and with covering their license plates?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. So, Senator, we at DMV and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, we are proud to partner with the New York City task force, the Governor's task force, and with law enforcement, especially in metropolitan New York.

But on the enforcement side, once a vehicle is stopped, then the law enforcement

person will know exactly what to do based on what he or she is seeing.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

So I gather you don't pull a driver's license for this kind of penalty. Can you pull an E-ZPass for this kind of penalty so that they can't continue to get discounted rates when they drive on our roads and Thruways when they've been caught doing this?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, so this is where -- thank you. This is where we work with the tolling agencies. And Frank did mention this before, that the tolling agencies, once they're at wits' end and they're not being -- they're not getting the payment that they deserve, then one step would be for a suspension of the registration, and that we do have the ability to work with our tolling partners to do that.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: And I would just say, Senator, so we do pull or suspend an E-ZPass account if you haven't paid your bill. So some of that 4 percent that hasn't paid, most -- the vast majority

of them are people with Tolls by Mail, so ...

But there are accountholders who run into arrears, and if they don't pay for a certain amount of time, then we do suspend their account.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

So this may be a unique to New York City storyline, I don't know. But it's been an urban myth or truth for as long as I've been around that there are more cars registered in Vermont that are actually in New York City on a daily basis than in the entire State of Vermont. And that is because people are getting cheaper insurance by illegally registering in another state that they don't live in.

And it's always been the complaint that if you eyeball cars on my streets, you'll see that and go, Oh my God, is all of Vermont here in Manhattan today? Probably not. But it's been very hard to track that.

Because of E-ZPass and even because perhaps of the new zone of congestion pricing data, can we track in some way that a vehicle

that in theory is not registered in the State of New York seems to be in the State of New York, I don't know, 350 days a year, and do something about it? Because we're losing that money, right, that's supposed to be coming to the State of New York.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Together with the tolling agencies and with the transportation group, I wish I could answer this question for you, because quite frankly you have brought this up before. It's a legitimate question, and I don't know exactly what the answer is.

But we'll do our best to reexamine it again and to see if there's a way that New York can benefit from this.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Well, again, when a car is registered in another state, they don't pay us those registration fees or tax as a New York vehicle.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Right.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think they do get a lower insurance rate, but I'm not sure we're supposed to encourage that. And I'm

sure Vermont's happy to take the money of New Yorkers registering their cars there. But I feel like we are not getting that money, and it's not really kosher, so to speak.

So I've always been -- and trust me, if you live in New York City and you're trying to park legally on the street parking, you drive by and think, why are the people of Vermont using every parking space on the Upper East Side, or the Upper West Side, or Lower Manhattan?

So I do think it is a problem for New York. I'm just not -- I'm curious whether all the new technology's giving us a solution.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Sorry, one more. One of my colleagues just asked about the annual registration fees when you have to have your car inspected, and that fewer places want to even do these inspections. So the person I get my car

inspected with every year said, Why do we still have to do this every year? The car's technology has radically changed. A car that is one to 10 years old doesn't have the problems we're measuring. It just doesn't.

So have you looked into whether there's a reason to decrease the frequency with which we make everybody have their cars inspected?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. Senator that is a very legitimate question. And quite frankly I do remember seeing it in a State of the State or maybe in a budget some time ago. So I will reexamine and work with the operations folks at DMV to see where that is and what sort of appetite the Legislature might have on something like that.

But thank you for that. I'll follow up with you on that.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

And then last, for Frank. So there was discussion already about needing more

chargers on the Thruways for medium and heavy trucks. And my understanding is that because of the I guess grandfathering-in of certain language at the rest stops, you have the ability to put in the electric chargers for the cars and trucks -- for the trucks.

So what is preventing us from doing it?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Again, it's the technology and the power, the power that we need for the utility.

But we have that ability under the service area agreements -- you're talking about now for medium- and heavy-duty?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yeah, the medium and heavy.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: So it is looking at the technology, it's looking at the -- working with the utilities to get the power in there.

And there will be an element of the space. As I described earlier, a tractor trailer needs a lot more space to pull up to a charging station than a passenger vehicle.

So those are all the challenges we are facing right now that we're working through.

And again, one of the things we have done is identified 10 sites, in cooperation with our partners, because we are just one part of the puzzle, right. So we work with DOT, we work with localities, because we want a system that a -- whether you're driving a truck or a passenger vehicle, you can get on and find a connection and a route that has those chargers.

And we're working with other states, too, because if we charge up here, it doesn't help us if Pennsylvania or Ohio or New Jersey doesn't have that too. So when you get to transportation, it's all interconnected because different people, different entities own the roads.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Right. And apparently there's been a decent amount of national data being collected. And I don't see New York on one of the lists for the states that are doing the best with it, so I guess I'll encourage us to take a look at

states that seem to be doing better and seeing if we can steal their best practices. Because I know we have to get there, and I would like us to get there as quickly as possible.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Yes, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And I've used up my time. Thank you, Mr. Assembly.

CHAIR PRETLOW: Assemblyman Palmesano.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Yes, quick, Mr. Schroeder. I just want to say -- Commissioner Schroeder -- thanks for what your department does on Donate Life. I see your pin. Thanks for the work you do there.

But in that sense, I hope you -- when you're talking to the Governor offline, Donate Life -- and she proposed a quarter-trillion-dollar budget, increased her proposal by $19 billion over last year, and she proposed cutting a million dollars from Donate Life programs, which makes no sense to me. So hopefully offline you can talk to her

about that.

Don't need any comments, I only have three minutes. But I definitely -- but hopefully you can do that.

Director Hoare, my questions are for you, and I'll just ask all of my questions. You said that -- I was reading your statement -- we're actively working with our utility partners to analyze electricity capacity and energy capacity. But yet we have this ACT regulation that's already in effect.

You spent $450-million-plus redesigning all the rest areas, but there's no charging infrastructure? This makes no sense to me. And shouldn't we do the feasibility study, the analysis, before we put this mandate on our trucking industry? I mean, that seems like it would be the commonsense thing to do. But this is New York State; everything doesn't seem to be done by a commonsense measure.

This will in fact destroy the trucking industry. You mentioned you had

10 locations. Well, there's 27 sites across the Thruway infrastructure. The question was asked -- you couldn't answer the question how much in between charges. Two hundred miles. And four hours of charge.

But yet a diesel tractor trailer can go 1800 to 2,000 miles on a full tank of diesel, and it takes them 20 minutes to fill up.

I hope my colleagues sitting here, and the Governor, see this -- it's not all directed at you -- that this is a train wreck. We are going to destroy the trucking industry in the State of New York, no doubt about it. Ninety-six percent of products are shipped by truck. We have 330,000 workers working in the trucking industry. This is going to decimate the trucking industry. But it's also going to affect your constituents because shipping of food -- food prices are going to skyrocket because this is going to be an additional cost that's going to be placed on the trucking companies.

Lumber is going to increase. Everyone

talks about the affordable housing crisis we have in New York State -- how's that going to make it more affordable?

Ladies and gentlemen, we've got to stop this. We've got to pause and hit the brakes on this thing. Other states are delaying it. We need to implement it. You should have been here before -- and I know every one of my colleagues wants to say, Well, this is to help save the environment. Nonsense. This is going to do nothing to save the environment, because New York only contributes 0.4 percent of global emissions, 0.4. China contributes 30 percent, has a thousand coal plants and building more every week. It's not going to matter one difference.

We can get down to zero, but it's not going to do anything. But we will have more New York families, farmers, businesses and people leave the State of New York with these continued nation-leading outmigrations. We have to change this and stop this, and I hope my colleagues put a pause on this ACT

regulation now.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Hooks.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HOOKS: Hello. Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Commissioners, for your time today.

My question is about reckless e-bikes. I know you've had other questions about e-bikes. This is one of the biggest quality-of-life issues New Yorkers have raised. These bikes speed through red lights, ride the wrong way, and ride the sidewalk. My constituents are always coming to me with stories of almost being hit by either an e-bike or a scooter, which last year alone were involved in 800 collisions in New York City.

We have a bill that will require DMV license plates on e-bikes and scooters, and another bill that requires liability insurance that will hold people accountable. If the state were to begin requiring the DMV to issue license plates to electric bicycle and scooter riders, would the agency be able

to handle that demand? And what additional resources would be needed to support the agency?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So, Assemblymember, thank you for your question. And I understand your concern here. And I think this is the reason why the Governor has addressed this this year in the budget.

And so as you know, TED Part G reclassifies the ultra-heavy-e-bike as a moped. Which means you would have to license it and you would have to register it. Those are the heaviest e-bikes that are traveling in New York City, and so we want to be able to address that.

It also gives New York City the ability to determine speed limits in the bike lanes. The Governor has also put that in. And also the Governor, as you know, last year she signed a package of bills to address lithium-ion battery safety, which is also a concern of yours and others, especially in the city.

So we are very mindful of all of your

concerns, and this is the reason why the Governor has advanced what is called the smart legislation on e-bikes, and DMV and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee will continue to work with you and other organizations in New York City to see how we can do better.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HOOKS: Okay. Has there been a survey on the weight that bikes -- what weight the bikes were that were in these collisions? Or where did the weight come from?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, so there have been all sorts of information that we're able to ascertain. But I think this attempt was to take the heaviest e-bike that we're aware of and to make it a moped, meaning that it would be classified as a moped, so you would have to have a license and registration.

So that's a first step of what we're trying to do, and we'll continue to do our best.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblymember Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Yes, thank you. First, might as well give the commissioner another gold star for taking the butt of jokes and turning it into a really well running organization. I've had my own personal before and after experiences, and thank you so much for all of that.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you for that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: In terms of publicizing the REAL ID, you know, have you been trying to work through with car dealerships? Because you've got people there who are thinking about cars, and there are all kinds of other related businesses that may be willing to help publicize it. And that can reach to more people as well.

Going back to the Thruway Authority, I'd like to talk about bridge strikes. As you know, especially in the Hudson Valley, it's a real problem given that our roads were constructed a long time ago and especially out-of-town trucking businesses don't know

what a parkway is, for example.

And of course we had the big one just coming over right before the approach to the Cuomo Bridge. What are you seeing as potential new avenues for trying to prevent the number of bridge strikes?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Well, it's plaguing every transportation entity in the country the last two or three years. There are different views of why that's so.

But I will say that regardless if you're from the state or not, you're required to know what the rules are. And our lowest bridge is at least six inches above the federal level. So there really is no excuse.

So what we're working with, as I referred to in my testimony, we started working with the State Police, we had the enforcement program last fall. Again, out of 7,000 violations -- and that can be violations for anything, but there were 31 or 32 that were specifically over-height, so we think we saved it there.

We're working with partners at the Trucking Association to get the word out. We put the word out in terms of the bridges. But, I mean, at the -- ultimately it's up to the driver. They're supposed to know what the rules and regulations are. They're supposed to map out their route.

That driver hit that particular bridge in Nyack, the South Broadway Bridge -- which cost us $6 million, by the way, in terms of tolls lost in the 16-hour period, and then reconstructed. They're supposed to know those rules. He was not aware of it, he was a Florida driver.

But we've got to keep at it. We're looking for enforcement and getting that word out on those programs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblyman Bores.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you both for being here.

My questions are for the commissioner,

and around the e-bike proposal, following up on my colleague Assemblymember Hooks' questions.

Do we know what percentage of e-bikes in New York on the market are over a hundred pounds? Like what -- how much of the market would this apply to?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Assemblymember, I don't have that data at my fingertips, but I'll do my best to see if we can ascertain it.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: That would be great, thank you.

And then just, like, how would it be implemented? Would this include the weight of the battery or extra batteries that people are carrying? Would officers have to weigh the e-bike if they pull someone over? Does it include the four-wheel cargo bikes? Like, just a few more details as to how this weight threshold plays out.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. So on that as well, I'm aware of what I already said. So I will go back, though, and get

more information for you on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you. Appreciate it.

The Mobile ID, I have the app, it's great. Congratulations on that. There are nine states that let you just directly add your ID to your Apple Wallet, you don't need to download a new app.

Is that on our roadmap? Is there a reason we haven't chosen that yet?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yes. The short answer is yes, we are very aware of that. And we will do our best to do that. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Wonderful. Thank you. And then as -- following up on Chair Magnarelli's questions on the IT modernization, there's been 106 million allocated fiscal year '23, 22 million before that, fiscal year '22, 174 million fiscal year '25. The results are clear. I mean, the website is great, and it's improving.

But how do we know we're not going to be back for more? I mean, given the -- I

think when the 101 or 106 went out in fiscal year '23, you weren't expecting 178 two years later. Sort of what have we learned, what's changed, so that we know we're not going to have to keep putting money in after this?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: You know, I think the real answer is the measurement tool that we're using for this. And so right now that includes me and DMV communicating constantly with Dru Rai, who's the ITS CIO. We also communicate with our 3,000 employees with town hall meetings, Auto Dealers Associations, dealers, county clerks. And the feedback that we're getting is that everybody understands what it is we're trying to do and the money has been allotted for now through 2028, 2029.

So we feel very, very comfortable that we do not have to come back here, all we have to do is execute. And the customers will benefit from this once we launch it next February 2026.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: You're

welcome. Thank you for the question.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Is that it?

Assemblyman Eachus.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chairman Pretlow.

Commissioner, first a question for you. Many, many moons ago I was a county legislator -- many moons ago -- and it was during the time when they went to -- the state informed us that you could do online registering. That, of course, caused a huge revenue shrinkage for the counties.

At this point in time are we planning on implementing or are we implementing any other programs that are going to reduce the fees that the counties can gather?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, so, Assemblyman, I would say you probably would want to have some conversations with the county clerks. For example, because we work with the 51 county clerks, we changed the county retention last year. It became effective January 1st, thanks to the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and they

are actually receiving more money. And they've deserved it.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay, thank you very much.

Director, again, thank you for the phone call that we recently had. Please express to your 1800 employees that we're obviously, bipartisan, overwhelmed with the great work that they do. And I'm so glad that we're working together on the safety issue for your workers.

A couple of questions I had, because I had a meeting with DOT many months ago. In the camera-monitored work zones, is it five or six miles over the posted speed limit, or 11 miles over the posted speed limit that you're going to get the violation?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Eleven, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. And is it true, as I was told, that this will also refer to the EMS vehicles, the police cars, the ambulances, the fire trucks, so on like that?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: If they speed through a work zone?

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yeah.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Yes, it applies to them.

If they're responding to an emergency situation, they would not receive a violation.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. Well, we need to inform them of that. That's our job. But -- okay.

And then another question is I have a bill out there that will give free E-ZPasses to ambulances and ambulance -- well, actually, just the ambulances. I don't think it will be the control cars.

Do you see a problem with that? Because the fire departments have free E-ZPass at this point, right?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Well, we don't have an E-ZPass. We have a program, we've had it for some 30 -- 30 years, where emergency vehicles, whether they be fire or ambulance or police, if they were

responding to an emergency, they do not pay a toll.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Well, I heard that the ambulances have to reapply to get that money back -- or apply to get the money back. They're charged, and then they have to apply to get the money back?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Well, if they have an E-ZPass, their account would be charged and then they'd submit the information and we would reimburse them for that toll.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. Well, that's time-consuming, and they don't have time.

The last thing, do we have animal crossings planned for the Thruway?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: No, not at this time.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblyman Jacobson.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you.

It's good seeing both of you again.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank

you.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: As far as the DMV, I'm not getting any complaints at the moment, but it doesn't mean -- I do expect to have when the enhanced driver's license deadline comes. I expect that. If anything, I get complaints about the county, but I don't get complaints about your stuff.

Thruway, I like to say when things are better as well, that I'm not always complaining. And it made a big difference on the paving that you've done, particularly Exit 17, because of all the trucks that get off at the Newburgh exit to get on to Interstate 84 and cross the bridge and so forth.

New Paltz, there's got to be something wrong underneath the ground by the New Paltz exit when you go north on both sides. I mean, it's just something that's there, that it didn't -- doesn't seem to stay as well, in as good a condition as the others.

So I only have a couple of questions. When are the rest areas going to be completed and open?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Twenty-four are completed now. There's one next Tuesday, No. 26 on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day. And then the final one will be early fall.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: And when?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Early fall will be the last one. Two in the next couple of weeks.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Because the complaint I get about that is not so much -- not the food, because they can go a lot of places, but bathrooms. People need bathrooms. It's a long trip. And I don't know why we can't put temporary bathrooms there like you see at work sites. I think it would be a temporary solution that would work.

That's all I have at the moment. So keep paving. Don't wait 20 years like your predecessor.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Will do. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Gallagher.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Thank you so much.

Hi, Commissioners.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Hi, Assemblymember.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Thank you.

I am really interested in the line of communication between DMV, courts, law enforcement and other agencies with regard to drivers with terrible records of complete violations -- multiple license suspensions and so forth. Are the State Police, Thruway troops, NYPD, MTA Police and others notified of cars or drivers to look out for by DMV, and vice versa?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: I'm sorry, repeat that, I --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Yeah, sure.

I was wondering if when you know that

someone is a reckless driver, is there a communication between you and law enforcement about keeping an eye out for that license plate or that individual?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, so, Assemblymember, I think the way I would like to answer the question that you're very concerned about is the Governor has introduced some initiatives in the State of the State and in the budget. One has to do with drugged driving, and the other has to do with what your concern is, what I would call traffic safety regulations. And the Governor is addressing that as well.

And so we will continue to use those initiatives to be able to solve the problem that you're seeing, you know, within your district.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Yeah, most of the reckless driving that I've seen really have a human cost, including death of pedestrians, has been folks who have suspended licenses that are still able to rent a car and drive their car and, you know,

are still driving recklessly.

So that's just something I want to flag. And I think I even have a solution for it, which is speed-governor technology. Have you been aware of this kind of technology being used in other states and other countries? It's super-successful.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, so personally I'm not aware of it, but I do -- my deputy commissioner is also an officer of AAMVA. AAMVA is the organization that works with all 50 states' DMVs.

And so I will ask him if he's aware of that and what AAMVA's -- what their feeling is on that and how that could help us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Great. I would love to work together with you all about making sure that we get some kind of reckless driver accountability program involved that actually interrupts people's ability to speed. Because sometimes with folks speeding is the addiction, not necessarily drugs or alcohol. Sometimes it's actually the need for speed.

And as a lover of the Rockford Files, you know, it can be entertaining, but it is not -- it's not a good thing in the city.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: We can work with you on that.

And as I said, the Governor has an initiative we'll share with you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GALLAGHER: Great. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Giglio.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Thank you.

As I'm sure you're aware, my two sons and I are members of International Union of Operating Engineers Local 138, Heavy Highway. So expanding the crime of assault on a highway worker is personal to me.

But my concern and hope is that cameras are not intended to replace law enforcement. Cameras do not handle accidents, bad roads, speeding, slowing people down in inclement weather, and many other safety measures, such as assault on a highway worker.

So do you believe that cameras will be more effective in making sure that there is no assaults on highway workers on the roadways?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So, Assemblymember, at this point in time I believe that what the Governor has initiated this year may be helpful to what you're most concerned about.

And so this began as a pilot program. The Governor is interested in making this a permanent program and expanding it to include others, like MTA and other tolling agencies as well.

So we at DMV, I know my partners in the transportation portfolio, we are all with you on this, and we want to do our best to make sure that we protect our workers and everybody in New York.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: I just think that law enforcement, suited at a construction site, is -- especially because of the assault that happened in Monroe County last year, which prompted this, I believe.

And I think it's laudable for sure. God bless that family and that person that lost his life.

But the assault took place, I believe, as it was explained to me by the DOT commissioner, after the work zone, where an angry driver pulled over on the side of the road and, you know, assault is taking place after the work zone. So how are cameras going to capture that and replace law enforcement?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: I don't think there's any replacement of law enforcement. But the cameras will aid us, and I think that is what we're looking to do And one of the reasons why the pilot program has been successful thus far.

But I think we need to take it to the next level, and that's what the Governor is proposing within the State of the State and the budget.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay. And for you, please, if you could answer. You said that it is 70,000 violations; 300,000 of that

fund will go towards safety and equipment and cameras and things of that nature for work zones.

So how much was collected altogether out of those 70,000 tickets, violations? What was the total amount that was collected through the pilot?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: It was several million. I don't know what the latest number is. I will get that to you.

But they're all operating costs to the program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay. And then I do get a lot of complaints from people that have actually shown me videos of them getting tickets in work zones where there's no work going on.

So how are you going to manage that, Commissioner?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: The legislation specifically provides that it has to be in --

(Overtalk.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Hold that -- hold

that thought.

Assemblyman Otis.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

Thank you, Commissioner and Director.

I first want to thank both of you and your staffs at your agencies for how responsive you are, your teams are, to constituent issues that come up. I think I probably speak for everybody here, but I certainly speak for myself. And so important to say that for Thruway Authority, Todd Gold is in the house. Thank you, Todd Gold. So very -- very exceptional.

I have a -- for Commissioner Schroeder, thank you for the technology upgrades at DMV. Exceptional job. And you've done a great job leading that effort.

Director Hoare, a question for you. A lot of talk today about EV charging and all that sort of stuff. For vehicles, you have a subcontractor that has installed the vehicles at your rest areas, but you have a process for, as the demand goes up, that contract has built into it more charging stations at those

sites.

Can you tell us how that process works or will work down the road.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Yes, Assemblyman, the operator of the service areas is contractually obligated to meet the demand. So as demand goes up, they are required to meet that demand. Currently less than 2 percent of New York are EVs, but we know that's going up. We want that to go up. And the operator is contractually responsible and obligated to meet that demand.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: So as we start to see lines at the charging stations at rest areas, there's a process to tell them they need to expand. Can that happen with some kind of alacrity?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Yes. It hasn't happened yet. We track this. We can -- we track usage at each and every site. We've had no issues of lines or delays. But as the volume increases, certainly we'll be monitoring that very closely to make sure that we meet that

demand.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Great. Thank you very much. I'll yield back my time.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Durso.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you both for being here today.

So, commissioner, I just had two quick questions I wanted to try and get at. When it comes to the EV bikes, you said that as of right now in the Governor's proposal there's no insurance policy needed for the registration, correct?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: I didn't say that. That was suggested, and I'm not sure about that. So I can get back to you about that, Assemblymember.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Just your thought on it. Do you think that those EV bikes -- because obviously some of them weigh 320 pounds, go about 20 miles an hour. Do you feel that they should -- again, hearing

from others talking about accidents with them, do you feel that they should have an insurance policy on them when they register?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So I believe, Assemblymember, that that really would be a legislative matter. That would be something for the Assembly and the Senate to come up with. And then we would do everything we can to implement it exactly the way you want it.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Okay. And my other question would be about the inspection stations. With EV cars, obviously inspections are done differently. Right? There's different components that are done. I mean, if you take a 1985 Corvette, obviously the inspection is different than on, you know, a 2024 Tesla.

Has there been money appropriated for these inspection stations to use different equipment to make sure that those inspection stations are getting what they need, and then be able to charge a certain amount depending upon what training has to be taken place, the

computer system that they need?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yes. The answer is yes. We just completed the program that ended last year that gave all of the inspection stations new equipment. And so we're forever looking at that to make sure that they're up to speed and that they have the best technology available.

And we will continue at DMV to evaluate the concern that many of you have in terms of the inspection fees. And we will let you know what direction we can go in, with your help.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: So just a quick question with that. You said you gave the inspection stations those new machines. Do the inspection stations pay for those, or does the state pay for them and provide them to those inspection stations?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: They would pay for them.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: So we're not giving it to them. The inspection --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Oh, no.

Yeah, sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: -- stations purchase them, correct? Do you know the prices on those?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: I don't. But I can get you that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: I'm interested -- just assuming, especially as time goes on, as technology progresses, those machines are pretty expensive for those inspection stations to take on, correct?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, and it's something -- the machines that we look at are important that they can do everything for a period of time, so they don't have to be replaced on a yearly basis. But I can get you more information on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DURSO: Okay. And then just one thing I wanted to throw out there. I know that somebody had mentioned about, especially with newer cars, they don't need to be inspected every year -- well, they felt that maybe they don't need to be inspected every year because of technology. The fact

of the matter, inspections aren't just about internal, they're external -- tires, windshields, so forth, just for safety reasons. So thank you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Understood. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Good afternoon. Thank you. It's almost good evening. Good to have you here.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I have a quick question which I hope is appropriate for you. The Governor has in her Executive Budget an expansion of DUI and driving while intoxicated that is -- goes to drugs or other substances than alcohol. Are you familiar with this proposal?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Oh, absolutely, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So one of the

questions I have, because in looking at this in the past -- is how it is that we are able to test for other substances, that it's not clear what these levels might be that might be impairing. There are so many possible combinations.

Can you tell me how this would actually be assessed? I understand, obviously, if there's saliva, right, we're talking about --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So, Assemblymember, thank you for the question --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: How can you confirm that somebody's going to be intoxicated?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So -- sorry to interrupt you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: No, no, that's --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank you for your question. As you indicated, it is in the Governor's budget, TED Part E, to strengthen drugged driving laws. And this subject matter did come up quite a bit in our

discussion last year.

This also came up in the Governor's State of the State address. And this expands, this expands the definition of drug and adds definition for impaired and intoxication. It also adds penalties for refusing chemical drug testing. And it also expands reasons for suspending a driver's license to include drugged driving.

Now, to your question, I must tell you I got a D in anatomical kinesiology, but I'll do my best here to give you this information. A chemical test can detect alcohol, amphetamines, opiates, cocaine, cannabis. So I think this is one of the reasons why this initiative is so important, because it does fit also with our drug recognition experts that we have across the state who are incredible and they do a great job.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So I guess my question is, what is the level at which -- like we have a definition of blood alcohol content, right, which I think should be lower, but we have one.

We don't really have a level of how much of X drug or how much amphetamine or how much whatever. Is there new science on that that you have learned about that we can actually know that information?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So this is the reason why the drug recognition experts are so important and we have so many of them across New York State. And they're working with all sorts of law enforcement agencies in all the regions and New York City.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Romero.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROMERO: Good afternoon, Commissioner. And I'm just jumping off of that last question.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Okay, sure. Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROMERO: I share that concern. I'm concerned with the language about impairment but, more specifically, the level of impairment about any substance. For example, one could be impaired by coffee or

caffeine, and that could potentially trigger a violation of this section of the VTL and therefore an arrest and a court date, correct?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROMERO: Right. And so that's very troubling, I think, to many -- that could be potentially very troubling to many members here. And that's something that I would hope many people might reconsider in this upcoming budget, because to be impaired by coffee or by caffeine is something that I don't know if that should be codified within our VTL.

I understand that there is a desire to catch larger violations of drugged drivers. And I think that maybe there's a consideration to look at other violations of the substances. Maybe we can expand that list for the ever-changing drugs in that section.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROMERO: Is there a suggestion there?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: I just want to come back. I'm unaware of the coffee/caffeine thing. So we'll double-check that for you.

But the real emphasis here is that we have drug recognition experts who will be called to the scene, or a police officer will do what they do roadside. Right? And we have roadside police, police that we've trained, over 7,000 of them in New York State. They are equipped. They know what to do. And they will then be able to make the chemical determination. And so I think it would be a very fair process.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROMERO: Yeah. And I was just using caffeine as an example of a stimulant, but I think in the language, proposed language itself it was expanding the definition of impairment to be any substance that could impair one's regular functioning. Right?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: I don't know about that, because the intent here is for the drugged driver. That is the intent

of this. And so we're really going to have to go through the detail of the bill to make sure that what your concern is, whether it's there or not, so that you all will be able to do your job.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROMERO: Of course. just my main concern is that if the language is too vague, it could catch potential non-criminal-type concerns and that --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: No, understood. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

And Commissioner Schroeder, I go back to a time when it was preferable to go to the dentist and have two root canals and an extraction without anesthetic.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay? The Motor Vehicle Department is a dream to go through now. It really is. I know it started a little bit before you, but you've kept it up and it's really going well.

I just have a couple of questions for you. REAL ID. A passport isn't good enough

for REAL ID? You require two bills to -- why is that?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, the answer is yes. So the federal government is saying that in order for you to be REAL ID-compliant, you would have to have -- in our state you would have a REAL ID and/or an enhanced driver's license or a passport is REAL ID-compliant. And so New Yorkers who have that are going to have no trouble going, after May 7th, to fly domestically.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: So if I have my passport and my driver's license, I'm good?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: All you really need is your driver's license, which is a REAL ID. You need to have a REAL ID, which would be --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Right, but to get that designation of REAL ID you have to go to Motor Vehicles with certain proofs of identification.

So my question is, can I go to the Motor Vehicle Department with just my passport and have them give me the REAL ID

star or stamp or whatever they put on it?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah, so the answer is no. When you go to the DMV -- and I'm glad to assist you, Assemblymember -- you would want to bring with you your U.S. birth certificate, U.S. passport or foreign passport with proof of lawful status, a United States Social Security card or other proof of the Social Security number, two proofs of New York State residency, proof of name change if there was a marriage or divorce.

These are federal requirements, and that's what you would have to bring in to a DMV office to get a REAL ID.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. That's what I thought, there's a lot of things that we need.

So I can go to the airport and go to Istanbul with just my passport, but I can't go to Chicago. After the 15th.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: You would go where? Where do you want to go?

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Istanbul. Only

using my passport. I don't need REAL ID, I need a passport.

But I want to go to Chicago, I need a birth certificate, my Social Security number --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Yeah. So, Assemblymember, this is because of what happened on 9/11. This is the commission who then the -- the Congress then codified this. This is a law. This is a REAL ID requirement.

And so this is not DMV, this is the federal government. And these are all the things you would have to do in order to come into a DMV office. You cannot do it online like you can 77 other transactions at DMV. These are federal requirements.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay, I understand. I just thought it was a little strange that I need so much to fly locally, domestically, and I don't need as much to fly internationally. But I understand it's a federal rule and it's a little --

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Thank

you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Well, I won't go there. I remember a time when --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No country's going to let us in anyway.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: That is true.

I remember when you couldn't have a -- remember those little scooter things with the two wheels, a Segue? You needed insurance, you needed a helmet. And Segue never made it in New York because of so many requirements.

Now people are zipping around on all types of motor vehicles -- no helmet, no license, nothing, not obeying traffic laws. And it just seems to just flow.

I should know this; I've been here long enough. But when did we change the rules to allow motorized vehicles not having to comply with those rules?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: So, Mr. Chair, I think because of what has happened with micromobility and the e-bikes in particular. Mopeds, you have to have a license and you have to register it.

E-bikes, you do not have to. And that is probably the number of things -- motorized vehicles you're seeing.

And so this is something that I do know that members of the Assembly and Senate have legislation on. But right now it is -- it is not imperative for somebody who has an e-bike to have a license and/or to register it.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: So a little -- when I see little motorcycles, I don't know if it would be considered e-bikes. They look like motorcycles, they sound like motorcycles. I don't know if they're gas or electric-powered. But they don't have plates on them, the drivers don't have helmets, and they disobey the rules like the bicycles -- you know, the regular bikes do.

I just think it's a problem. And I inquired to my local police, and they told me that they don't chase them anymore because it's dangerous to them -- not them, the police, dangerous to people that are being chased.

So people know this and they just flaunt the law. And they know the police aren't going to go after them. I do know that there was a time when New York City was confiscating these vehicles; they had piles of them. But now they don't do that anymore because ...

And fake license plates, I saw on the news recently that people can go online and order New York State plates and they just stick them on and they look real. Is that true?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, it is true. And I think it's absolutely despicable that companies like Amazon are actually selling New York State replicant plates.

And so we are aware of it and we're doing what we can to see in communicating with all of you and others to see if there's anything that we can do to bring that to an end.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. Because they said one of the ways to spot fake plates is

that the fake plates are flat and the regular New York plates are raised. But my plates are not faked, and they're flat. You charged me a lot of money for them.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I'm just saying, our plates are flat. Right, Alex?

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: We actually -- we actually have both in New York State. We have different plates that aren't just flat.

So this is problematic. And so we're aware of it. We're concerned, as you are. And this is the reason why the Governor and the Legislature have these initiatives, you know, having to do with what is called ghost plates or fake plates.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. Thank you.

DMV COMMISSIONER SCHROEDER: You're welcome.

Mr. Executive Director, I want to thank you for all that you do.

I just have two questions for you.

When the trooper issues a speeding

ticket on the Thruway, how are those funds divided?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: It's split between the state and the locality. I'd have to get you --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: So whichever county the ticket is written in, they get a percentage?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I'm sorry, is that for the work zone?

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Pardon?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Is that for the work zone, speeding work zone?

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: No, just anywhere on the Thruway. If I'm coming to you and I get stopped in Saugerties -- I don't know what county that is -- you go to that county's court, how is -- and I get a hundred dollar fine, how is that split?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: My understanding is that there's a split between the locality and the state. But I can verify that and get back to you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And then the

surcharge goes where?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I do not know where the surcharge goes.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And does any of it go to the State Police themselves, or does all of it go -- the state's portion go to the State Police?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I don't believe it's dedicated to the State Police. I know we --

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: So it goes to the General Fund?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I believe so. The State Police -- well, the Troop C State Police budget is paid for by the Thruway Authority. This year that's about $71 million.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay, thank you.

And just before -- I have a minute and a half left. And, you know, City & State recently made a comment about my eyesight, and I've also mentioned to you about the reflectiveness of the lane markers. And I find and I think many other people find it

difficult seeing the lane markings in the rain or at night. And I just want to know the difference in cost, say, per mile of the flat paint that you're using now and, say, the 3M Stamark, which is a reflective paint. I know it's going to cost more, but I think, you know, it will save lives. Because most accidents happen at night, even though most drivers are driving during the day, because a lot of people can't see the lane markings and they go off the road.

So is there a marked difference, or is it a minor difference? Or you're not sure?

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Well, because safety is always our primary concern, we're always looking at ways to enhance that safety. Where there is a stretch that if there's a particular issue with some of those markings, that we get our maintenance folks to go out there and deal with it.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I think it's the whole Thruway. And I would just recommend if you would do a test program with these highly

reflective lane markers, say, from the New York City line to Albany. That would -- you know, just -- and then you can have a large enough swath of the Thruway to see whether the accidents are reduced and to what extent.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: I will certainly look at that. I know when we do pavement, when we reconstruct the pavement, we apply the latest technology to the markings for that segment that's being reconstructed.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. Thank you.

And thank you for what you did for me locally with my E-ZPass.

So anyway, this concludes this section of our hearing. I want to thank the two gentlemen here, and we're going to move on to Panel B.

THRUWAY AUTHORITY EX. DIR. HOARE: Thank you.

(Off the record; pause.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Lady and gentlemen, welcome. You are Panel B.

So just for our media people upstairs, could you just introduce yourselves before you start your presentations, just so they'll know which names to put up when it's time to speak.

And then you'll each have three minutes. And members, you all have three minutes for questioning. So okay.

MR. MORRELL: James Morrell.

MR. BURRIDGE: Mike Burridge.

MR. PROPHET: Gary Prophet, of ESPA.

MR. O'MALLEY: Rich O'Malley, of the New York Building Congress.

MS. DAGLIAN: I'm Lisa Daglian, from the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Welcome one and all.

MS. DAGLIAN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Which way do you want to start?

MR. MORRELL: I'll start it.

Thank you. Thank you, Chairwoman Krueger, Chairmen Pretlow, Cooney, Comrie,

Magnarelli and Braunstein, and all of you here today for supporting public transit, the work we do and the New Yorkers who rely on us every day.

My name is James Morrell, president of the New York Public Transit Association and director of public transit for Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority in Buffalo, New York. Earlier you heard from our largest member, the MTA, and we support their priorities. My testimony focuses on the needs of transit systems in upstate New York and downstate suburbs.

Our systems are developing programs and services that improve mobility for customers and communities across New York. We're investing in improved services, better infrastructure, and strong partnerships. This has resulted in increased ridership and a demand for more service. This is creating a new energy throughout the state as more New Yorkers rely on transit.

Now, we must respond by enhancing service and providing more connections

throughout communities. This includes having resources to compete for quality employees, addressing critical infrastructure needs, and preparing for zero-emission fleets. Better service drives ridership and improves communities. This is proof positive of the value of increased state operating aid to transit.

Increasing state aid to non-MTA systems will result in more transit service to more people, spurring economic and community development. We need this investment now. We thank Governor Hochul for recognizing the importance of public transit in the Executive Budget, especially the increased capital funding. But more investment is needed to expand the mobility choices of communities who are demanding and need to thrive, to fund expenses to operate more and better service, cover the rising costs of paratransit service, and offset the loss of federal COVID relief funds.

To ensure that transit continues to support our communities, we recommend a

15 percent increase in state operating assistance to increase service across the state, enact the Governor's proposed 219 million capital funding for non-MTA systems, build on the Governor's non-MTA capital funding to provide 1 billion over five years as part of the action to fund the MTA capital plan, restore the 26 million annual appropriation for NFTA rail infrastructure, create a commission to address the limited dedicated revenue that funds upstate transit and report recommendations by December 1, 2025.

Thank you for supporting public transit and the work that we do. All our NYPTA members urge you to increase transit funding in the final state budget.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

MR. BURRIDGE: Hello. My name is Mike Burridge. I'm the director of government relations for ACEC New York.

I would like to first thank the State Legislature for last year recognizing the need to put additional money in the budget to

enhance the New York State Department of Transportation capital budget. I think that really laid good groundwork for this year and really helped entice the Governor to put in the $800 million for this year. It's very much needed. And I think in a year when we're focusing on public safety and affordability, what other way to do it than to invest in our public infrastructure, especially transportation.

So it's -- again, we feel that this is necessary to continue on with the Core projects in the current NYSDOT capital plan. And, you know, in terms of safety, you know, we had the most recent Annual Highway Pavement and Bridge Conditions Report, which says that 11,400 -- which is about 65 percent of the state bridges -- are either in fair or poor condition, and about 17,000 lane-miles, which is about 45 percent, are in fair or poor condition.

Following up on the economic impact of this, the National Transportation Research Nonprofit TRIP report says that combined road

conditions, congestion and accidents cost motorists about $3500 per motorist.

Moving on, I'd like to also support what has been said about the need for the MTA capital plan. ACEC New York supports a robust MTA capital plan, and we hope that the State Legislature and the Governor can find a way forward to fund that.

Alternative delivery. We are very encouraged to see that year after year more tools are being put in the toolbox for our state agencies and for the City of New York. This year it is mentioned in the State Budget that progressive design-build is to be included, although we would like to see it actually defined. As of right now in the PPGG Article 7 it just notes progressive design-build, but we do feel like it should be actually defined in law. We have subject matter experts that can help the State Legislature and the Governor's office do that.

Work zone safety. We commend the Governor's proposal to make the Automated

Work Zone Speed Enforcement Program permanent and to extend it to other properties around the state. We believe that the men and women who are working on our roadways deserve this protection and a safe work environment just like anybody else in the state.

QBS is a hallmark of what we support in terms of procuring architectural and engineering services in New York State. That's qualification-based selection. It's required by state agencies, it has been since 1980, and at the federal level since 1972. Now is the time that we also extend that requirement to public authorities as well.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

MR. PROPHET: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Gary Prophet, the president of the Empire State Passengers Association. We're a statewide nonprofit organization to improve intercity rail across New York State, with more reliable, frequent and faster Amtrak service, as well as maintaining an improved commuter service downtown and

improved local bus service to the major upstate cities, and expand the Buffalo Rail Line up to Amherst.

Thank you to the Governor and everybody else who has mentioned the funding of the Livingston Avenue Rail Bridge. That's a critical bridge that connects the Albany area to the cities to the west and to the north. It is a large project, replacing a bridge that is over a hundred years old.

Also the Governor earlier had spoken about the Metro-North improvements between the Bronx and Poughkeepsie. Although those do help the Hudson Line of Metro-North, they're primarily to assist the Hudson Line and Metro-North to improve their operations a little bit more than actually helping Amtrak. For example, one of the items is having a yard facility just north of the Poughkeepsie Station so that Metro-North does not park their trains on -- at the station, which then sometimes delays Amtrak service. But of course it is needed to encourage the throughput of the entire system.

We would hope that the Governor would also look at increasing the speeds of Amtrak north of Cold Spring, which used to be 90 miles an hour about 10 years ago. That was removed after a series of incidents with Metro-North that happened about 10 years ago, and those changes, those increases in speed were downgraded to 79 instead of the 90 that they used to be, which impacts the timeliness of the service between New York and Albany, which is now longer than it was 10 years ago.

Also we need to develop a robust state rail passenger plan across New York State. We need to fund more projects across New York State. The New York State high-speed rail Tier 1 EIS, which was briefly mentioned earlier, that was a project that started in 2010. That was 15 years ago. In 2023, Option 90B was decided, both with New York State and the FRA, as the preferred option. That needs to be funded and it needs to be going forward. We know what needs to be done to improve the Empire Corridor, to improve interstate rail across New York State, and we

need to do that as soon as possible and stop looking at other options at this point.

We know what has to be done. It's all in the EIS. It's been approved and it's been studied for many decades.

As far as the East River Tunnels, that's another project that will impact Empire service, as currently since November one round-trip has been taken away and there's a current plan, assuming the capital funding comes through, that two additional round trips will be coming out of Albany to New York City. That is also something that should be tried to alleviate those issues, and we should work to have that improved into the future.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

MR. O'MALLEY: Chairs, Senators, Assemblymembers, thank you for still being here to listen to us.

My name is Rich O'Malley. I'm the senior director of public affairs for the New York Building Congress. And we're here

today, all of us, looking to help advance your effort to put forth a transportation agenda that supports the growth and prosperity of New York State.

The Building Congress represents over 500 constituent organizations, more than 25,000 skilled professionals. And our members are global leaders in the industry working on over 30,000 projects totaling 1.65 trillion across the U.S. alone. They represent every stage of development and are dedicated to the vitality of the communities their projects serve.

We firmly believe that a well-funded and efficiently managed transportation network is essential to maintaining New York's economic vitality and quality of life. As such, we urge full funding of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's five-year capital plan to ensure reliable, safe, efficient, accessible and modernized service across its network.

Additionally, we advocate for a robust Department of Transportation capital plan

that addresses both maintenance and new projects essential for statewide connectivity and development. Investment in major projects such as new bridges, road expansions and enhanced transportation networks is vital for stimulating economic growth and ensuring the future resilience of our transportation infrastructure.

The Building Congress also supports innovative transportation initiatives such as the integration of new technologies and sustainable practices within the MTA and DOT projects. These initiatives will not only improve operational efficiency but also contribute to the state's environmental goals.

And I'm going to take a moment and just add to what Mike said and plug alternative delivery there as well for efficiency efforts moving forward.

We are committed to collaborating with all stakeholders to advance these critical projects and policies. Thank you again for always considering our members' perspectives

on these important issues as we join the Legislature in pursuit of transportation strategies that will benefit all New Yorkers for generations to come.

Thank you.

MS. DAGLIAN: Good afternoon -- evening. I'm Lisa Daglian. I'm the executive director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC.

It's been a pleasure meeting with many of you this week and spending time, and I look forward to continuing that conversation.

PCAC was created in 1981 as a result of the fiscal crisis of the '80s. I'm not sure that we've ever really gotten out of that fully. Our role is to represent the riders on New York City's subways, buses, Staten Island Rail, Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North. And we've got three rider councils that do that and three non-voting members on the MTA Board.

I am here to thank you for our existence but also to impress upon you, as others have, the importance of fully funding

the MTA's capital plan. If we could use props, I would right now hold up our 24 ideas for fully funding the capital program. It's available on our website, pcac.org. And I will also leave some for you if you'd like to see them.

The capital plan -- as you have heard, will hear, and continue to know -- for each billion dollars of the plan that's spent, creates 5900 jobs, the majority of which are in New York State and in every single congressional district, in every district in the state -- also New Jersey, Connecticut, and as we continue out.

We are also so extremely fortunate to have our transit champion, Senator Comrie, who is working with us to move forward our affordability goals. And I would again hold up a flyer that showed you what they are. I'll leave some of those for you as well.

They are our five platforms for moving forward in more equitable access to affordable transit, including giving seniors and disabled riders the ability to use their

discounts in the morning peak on the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North, which is the only time of day they currently cannot do that.

Implementing a family fare, a "mid-kid" fare, on the railroads so that 12- and 17-year-olds aren't considered adults and have to pay full fare. It's great for students, but it's also great for families going to a game or to a show.

Implementing the CityTicket Weekly that we heard about. Janno talked about how that would be great to bring back to the board and that the board members, you know, put that into play. We've got three board members; they're nonvoting, so they can't even say I'd like to make a motion.

We have an opportunity to change that, and we hope that you'll consider our Rider Representation Act -- again, carried by Senator Comrie and Assemblymember Dinowitz. And so many of you joined us in moving that forward last year. We hope to do that again this year.

We are also hoping to increase Fair Fares to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Right now it's at 145 percent, which means that if you work at Chipotle or the Gap, you make too much money. So that just really is not equitable. Most people can't even get to work.

And we'd like to see Fair Fares on the commuter rails within New York City so people can get where they need to go, when they need to go there, the best way possible for them.

Thank you very much on behalf of the riders. Appreciate all you do.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblyman Magnarelli, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: First of all, I just want to say to all of you, thank you very much. I know that pretty much all of you have been sitting here all day. And I do appreciate that and your testimony.

The other thing I'd like to say is that most of the -- at least your staffs or your people have done business with my office. And I look forward to the

information that is given to us, the things that concern you as the year goes on, not only during the budget. And I hope to continue that. So thank you very much for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Leroy Comrie, three minutes.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you all for being here also. Thank you for your continued diligence and oversight and review of the issues of transportation in our community and our state.

I look forward to working with all of you as we try to make sure that we improve transportation, that we improve equitability, and that we especially improve transparency so people can feel confident in their transportation systems. It's important.

As you heard, I asked Janno Lieber for another forensic audit. I think only to make sure that we are keeping -- making everyone understand that they're in a better place than they were six years ago.

No one's perfect, I've given up being

perfect myself a long time ago. Clearly a system like the MTA is not perfect, but the more that they can show that they're trying to do their best, that would help the public.

I would just ask each of you what would be your pet project that you'd like to see in the next year.

MR. MORRELL: I'll start there. So our main goal right now, NYPTA, the transit agencies outside of MTA is to make sure that we have adequate funding to provide the services that our constituents are looking for: Extended BRT, making sure that we can provide services late-night, and extending to businesses that are locating in New York State to have services for them so we can get those individuals to those jobs.

So our biggest thing is to provide the 15 percent increase in STOA to make sure that we can provide that service.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

Sir?

MR. BURRIDGE: Ensuring that that $800 million for the NYSDOT capital plan that

was included in the executive proposal makes it into the final budget, I think would be a huge victory for all of our members and everybody in the design and construction industry, and every motorist in the state.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

Sir?

MR. PROPHET: Additional personnel in the New York State DOT for passenger rail in order to move the EIS for high-speed rail across New York State further, as I said earlier. I think you had actually stepped out then for a second. But the EIS has been -- started 15 years ago. It's the preferred option for 90B. And I think we need to move forward on that. Other options are far more expensive, and that just simply will not get done. We need to move forward on 90B, and we need all of you to help that out in order to improve passenger rail service across the State of New York.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

I have 26 seconds left.

MR. O'MALLEY: Our members are

builders, they're looking to put shovels in the ground. So they're all about projects and I would say that the moving on Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 and simultaneously beginning the planning for Phase 3 would be of utmost importance to us, as well as starting the process for -- which we have -- on IBX.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

MS. DAGLIAN: I don't have a lot of time, so I'm going to say I like everything. So I would like to see the capital and the operating.

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Miller.

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Braunstein.

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Ra.

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. Assemblywoman Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you,

Mr. Chairman.

It's really great that we got that $800 million infusion this year, but going forward we know we're going to need to continue infusions of funding to catch up to where we have to be. How do we keep the momentum going in terms of interest in continuing long-term capital investment?

MR. PROPHET: I would say the first thing that needs to be done is a series of steps. You don't want to come out with a plan that has something that has no deliverables until 10 years in the future, because then people tend to lose focus.

So, for example, on the Second Avenue Subway we got part of it opened, then we have another part opened. For example, as the Governor said on improving the Hudson Line on Metro-North, some funding is there to improve some items with the Hudson Line and some of Metro-North's concerns, then we need to have the next phase after that in order to improve some of the inner-city service up to Albany and across New York State.

So a series of steps where you have a lot of things that both legislators and the public can see done immediately, or within a couple of years, is better than something that just takes too long to see any benefits from.

MR. MORRELL: So there are capital needs across the state. New York has great capital needs. NFTA, in particular, looking for a $26 million infusion to take care of their rail system. It's the only rail system outside of New York City. It's a 40-year system, and we need to make sure that we're able to move that system for another 40 years. All the upstate systems have capital needs, and we want to make sure that they'll be able to do that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: With high-speed rail in particular, do we have an idea how -- I mean obviously you don't have an exact estimate, especially since you don't know when it's going to be built. What is the magnitude of expense involved?

MR. PROPHET: Well, the first thing

that needs to be done is to have equipment to take care of the customers now. For example, the ridership west of Albany was actually down in December of '24 compared to December of '23 because there simply wasn't enough equipment to carry the passengers, and there were several five, six days in a row where every single seat was taken.

So you need a series of improvements starting with more coaches and more equipment, and then gradually upgrade the speed and also reduce the areas of low speed. There's still a lot of areas where the train goes 30, 40, 50 miles an hour when those could be easily upgraded to 60, 65, 70, 79 miles an hour in many areas, which would make the trains slightly faster than driving as compared to today where driving is slightly faster than taking the train. Only with the weather this morning, my guess is it may have been the reverse.

But in general, you can probably drive a little faster, but that needs to change.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Okay, thank

you very much. Resiliency -- that's my time.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Bores.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you all for being here.

My questions are for ESPA President Gary Prophet, and I'm just going to -- it's about Amtrak. And I'm just going to ask one question, because there's only two more trains out of Albany tonight, and I want to make it home.

Your written testimony refers to account contracts that states have with Amtrak to -- that have incentives to -- we pay more if it's on-time and good service and have penalties if it's mediocre. That's a fascinating thing I hadn't heard before. How widespread is that? Do states do that? How long would it take for New York to get that implemented? That's just a fascinating concept I hadn't heard.

MR. PROPHET: Yeah, Virginia has that now. I don't have all the details of how Virginia has it, but they do have a program

with incentives. They're probably the state that's the furthest ahead. California also has some.

But Virginia's probably the closest model to what New York has with that. Because, you know, you need a really close partnership in order to improve the service. And, you know, there's a lot of things with the service that needs to be improved to be able to be a more important part of transportation in the state.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Got it. I would love any more information you have on that, and a follow-up.

MR. PROPHET: I'll send you some information about Virginia, then.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you. Appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Palmesano.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Yes, my question is for Mr. Burridge.

There's been a lot of talk about the CHIPS program, and it's a very important

priority for a number of us -- certainly for our local towns, villages, and counties, because that money goes right to our local infrastructure.

I know your members work with our municipalities in designing important projects, whether it's bridges, culverts, roads, whatever it might be. It's been flat. The Governor's proposing a flat CHIPS budget to match last year's, so it will be two years in a row. And the statistics have come out, the Federal Highway Administration said the highway construction costs for the past three years have increased 70 percent.

What are you seeing with your members with how these inflationary increases and impacts are having on local communities being able to address their critical infrastructure needs?

MR. BURRIDGE: Similar to the NYSDOT capital plan, you know, we would also support an increase to CHIPS as well, to make sure that those inflationary pressures which we're seeing with that capital plan, with all the

capital plans around the state, that would maintain pace with that -- and that those very important projects, just as important as the NYSDOT projects, can get done as well.

So yes, we would support an increase to CHIPS as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Okay. So you would see -- you definitely see the inflationary impact that this is having on our local communities, correct?

MR. BURRIDGE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: As far as their ability to do projects, right?

MR. BURRIDGE: Horizontal infrastructure, vertical infrastructure, it is all having -- it's having an impact, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: And given that, and given I know at a hearing recently the highway superintendents say they've got some preliminary results from a study showing that with the electric school bus mandate, the wear and tear that it has on our roads, given the fact that a regular or near-zero emission diesel bus, axle per axle, is 10

tons, on an electric school bus, the front axle is 14 tons, the rear axle is 25 tons. The results have come out and saying -- usually there's a 10-year useful life; they're saying it's going to decrease that useful life by 20 percent. And also the increase the cost per mile for maintenance by 20,000 to $50,000 and total reconstruction by 550,000 -- these are increases. These aren't totals.

Given that, and with the inflationary increases, wouldn't you also see this as more of a justification for an increase in the CHIPS program to help meet these critical infrastructure needs for our local municipalities, given the tax cap and other challenges they have?

MR. BURRIDGE: If we're trying to meet the CLCPA goals, you know, any type of peripheral support to help meet those I think would be appropriate. So yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you. That

does it for questioning for this group. We appreciate your testimony.

And I'm calling Panel C.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, so Panel C is Associated General Contractors, Construction Industry Council of Westchester and Hudson Valley, New York State County Highway Superintendents Association, New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways, Rebuild NY Now, and Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. If everybody would head up.

And then if Panel D people are still in the room and they want to head towards the front to be ready for the next panel, thank you.

Hi, everyone. So what we're going to do is first we'll just go down and you'll each introduce yourself so that the folks in the back know whose name to put on the screen when you actually testify. So if you would just start here and go down.

Hi.

MR. COONEY: John Cooney, Jr., Construction Industry Council of Westchester

and the Hudson Valley.

MR. PACHOLCZAK: Walter Pacholczak, vice president of government affairs for the associated general contractors of New York State.

MR. HIFFA: Fred Hiffa, Rebuild NY Now.

MR. MUSTICO: Matt Mustico, highway superintendent of the Town of Elmira, Chemung County.

MS. THOMAS: Colleen Thomas, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe.

MR. HAJOS: Kevin Hajos, president, New York State County Highway Superintendents Association.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. So why don't we start on this side (indicating). We'll just go down that way. Thank you.

MS. THOMAS: {In Mohawk language} --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You know what, we have to get a mic closer to you.

MS. THOMAS: And raise it up, too.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

MS. THOMAS: {In Mohawk language.}

Thank you for allowing me to testify before the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.

Chairpersons Krueger and Pretlow, Transportation Chairs Cooney and Magnarelli and the distinguished members present, I appreciate the opportunity to share my experiences. My name is Colleen Thomas. I'm the director of planning and infrastructure for the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. We're located way upstate, along the Canadian border between Massena and Malone.

In addition to operating water and sewer treatment plants and managing our capital construction projects, the planning and infrastructure division is responsible for the tribe's transportation program and the Mohawk Territory of Akwesasne.

I would like to relay the conditions of the approximately 136 miles of local roads under the purview of the New York State Department of Transportation. As established by Highway Law 53, that obligates the state to maintain highways it constructs on Indian Reservation lands.

During my 20-year tenure at planning and infrastructure, we have reconstructed and repaired 24.6 miles of our local roads, in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and NYSDOT. For most of that time, our relationship with NYSDOT and the Franklin County Highway Department has been cooperative and very productive. However, after the recession in 2008-2009, the previous administration cut funding to Franklin County, and as a result the services they provide have steadily declined.

This lack of funding is grossly evident. In my daily commute I traverse about five miles of State Route 37, where I must dodge potholes and pavement cracks the entire way. The last time New York State DOT funded a project on this stretch of road was in 2011.

Without your support, this major North Country thoroughfare continues to deteriorate. Route 37 sees an average of more than 15,000 vehicles daily, compared to 6500 on nearby State Street, where I stayed

last night.

In the past year or so, members of the current administration and NYSDOT officials have made a concerted effort to improve dialogue with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. Going forward, we want to be active partners in the overall transportation safety in the North Country. I traveled here today to request annual set-aside funding for NYSDOT, particularly for Franklin County, so they may fulfill their legal obligation to properly maintain roads in and around Akwesasne.

MR. MUSTICO: Good evening, Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow, and other members of the State Legislature. I am Matt Mustico, highway superintendent for the Town of Elmira -- and also president of the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways -- in Chemung County.

With me representing New York State County Highway Superintendents is their president, Kevin Hajos, P.E., superintendent of public works in Warren County.

As always, we appreciate the annual opportunity to discuss the Executive Budget proposal and report to you on the conditions and needs of New York State's local transportation systems.

We would like to begin by thanking all of you and your colleagues for your steadfast support of local roads, bridges and culverts. As you know, our collective membership and union workforce is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of 87 percent of the state's public roads, half of the bridges, and plowing not only the huge system of our own, but over a quarter of the New York State Department of Transportation's roads. This massive local system is owned by 1,600 local governments and consists of over 97,000 centerline miles of roadways and 8,600 highway bridges. Every time there's a weather event, whether it's major snow accumulation, freezing temperatures, or severe flooding, the hardworking people on our local crews ensure New York's drivers get to and from work, homes, schools, hospitals

and other destinations safely.

In the Executive Budget, Governor Kathy Hochul kept the state's local highway and bridge funding programs flat while she added $800 million to the New York State Department of Transportation Core Road and Bridge Program. In her budget briefing book, she noted the need to restore the purchasing power of the NYSDOT capital plan to address rising construction costs and ensuring that projects remain on track. This additional funding is necessary to slow asset deterioration.

We agree state roads need investment but the Governor should have stepped up and also provided increased CHIPS funding for New York State's massive locally owned road and bridge system. Record high inflation rates for highway construction materials have severely increased costs and, as a result, local governments are seeing a significant reduction in the real dollar value of local highway maintenance programs.

It is critical that an additional

$250 million be added to the 2025-'26 budget for local highway programs like CHIPS. This will allow us to recoup some of the real funding value we lost to inflation since the five-year program was initially adopted in 2022. We are requesting that five of the state's local road assistance programs be combined into two programs to --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, I have to cut you off, sir. The clock went off. Thank you.

Next?

MR. HAJOS: Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Hajos. I'm the president of the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association, and I'm also the superintendent of public works for Warren County.

I first want to thank Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow, Chair Cooney and Chair Magnarelli, and all of you for your steadfast support of local roads, bridges and culverts.

The BRIDGE-NY program directs federal and state funding to local bridges and culverts throughout the state. We are

currently in the fifth round of BRIDGE-NY programs. Through periodic reviews and modifications, the program's administration process has become more efficient and there's much more of a regional balance of projects. This is due to New York State DOT implementing the program through the existing capital program planning process instead of the statewide solicitation. That's the positive.

The negative: The number and value of project applications far exceed the funding available for each region. Of the applications submitted for all five rounds, 41 percent of bridges and 19 percent of culverts were funded.

In previous years the Legislature has responded to the dire conditions of the state's transportation needs and augmented CHIPS and other local transportation funding. But more is required. Funding shortages mean that many local governments cannot apply pavement preservation strategies to extend the life of the road networks which they

have, which eventually leads to more costly rehabilitation or reconstruction down the road.

For smaller towns or counties, this is their budget. This is all they have to repair the road network. This is their lifeblood.

Based on these conditions and the rising costs, we would like to make the following requests: Support combining the following three programs into CHIPS. These would include an increase of CHIPS by $250 million, to 848.1 million; maintain your Extreme Winter Recovery Funding of 100 million, and then maintain the State Touring Route funding of 140 million.

We would also like you to support combining the following two programs into a combined Pave Our Potholes program totaling 250 million annually. This includes maintaining the PAVE-NY funding of 150 million, and maintaining the POP funding for 100 million.

We would also like your support for

maintaining the Marchiselli program for 39.7 million, and for maintaining the local BRIDGE-NY program at 200 million annually.

We would also ask the support of adding language to the budget to amend the Highway Law to increase the bid threshold from 350,000 to $1 million or even eliminating it altogether. This will provide more flexibility to municipalities to pursue more cost-effective options on behalf of the taxpayers, bid projects or perform the work in-house while still being eligible for state reimbursement.

As public officials we understand the difficulty of trying to meet all of our constituents' needs with limited resources. We must work together so that all state and local critical infrastructure needs are addressed.

Thank you.

MR. PACHOLCZAK: Good evening, Chair Krueger, Pretlow, Magnarelli and ranking members, and all the members that are here today. Thank you for your time. I know it's

late in the day, and I'll be very quick here.

AGC has three priorities in this upcoming budget. First and foremost, we'd like to thank Governor Hochul for putting $800 million for the Core DOT program in that budget. Between the Governor, Commissioner Dominguez and the staff at DOT, they've done an extraordinary job with this budget, in our opinion. We think it makes a big impact on some of the inflationary pressures that our budget has seen over the past three years.

But also it's important as a job creator, and to support small businesses as well. And as Mike Burridge said from ACEC, it helps to make New York more affordable by reducing the cost to motorists for things like car repairs, accidents and, more importantly, traffic safety.

Two legislative priorities that are supported by AGC that the Governor put in her bill were to make permanent and expand the Work Zone Speed Camera Program. I think we all know the results of that program -- triple-digit speeds captured in some areas.

It is really frightening when you talk to people that actually work on highway roadsides, as the Assemblymember's husband does there. I don't need to tell you how scary that can be.

Also, to close the loophole Part R for enhanced transportation worker protections. Last year the Legislature and the Governor agreed to do that for ferry workers and for transit workers. Highway workers also deserve those types of protections.

One final comment on the MTA capital program. Our members build the lion's share of all infrastructure in this state, whether it's public or private. MTA is a vital, vital portion of our multimodal transportation infrastructure system that requires your attention. So I'm here before the Legislature today to ask you to support the Governor's budget, the two legislative proposals there, so that we can Rebuild NY Now.

MR. COONEY: Thank you, Walter.

Thank you, Chair Krueger,

Chair Pretlow, Chair Magnarelli, and all of the members of the New York State Senate and Assembly for hanging in there with us. I appreciate it. We all do.

I'm going to really echo much of what Walter has just said. We fully support and thank the Governor for stepping up and proposing an $800 million increase to the New York State DOT capital plan Core program. It was necessary. Inflation has just taken the buying power out of all that has gone on here.

I would then press on just a little bit with that same inflation message. To be equivalent to what's going on, the CHIPS program needs to increase. And, you know, that $250 million, if you do the math on the inflationary hit of the funding that CHIPS has and what the Core program has, the 250 million lines up. And it's necessary, and I think many of you know; people that are riding on the roads, they don't know if it's a state road or a local road, they just want it fixed.

Just moving on -- and then, you know, I'm going to repeat this, but I am from the Hudson Valley, which is represented by NYSDOT Region 8. It has and continues to have the worst road and bridge conditions in New York State -- I think it's a 10-year run or longer -- and has more lane-miles in bridges than any other region in the state.

Somebody's got to look at the formula there or, no matter -- this increased funding is great, but New York State DOT Region 8 will further fall behind.

Next, I fully endorse both the speed enforcement, the expansion of that and making it permanent. You heard Frank Hoare from the New York State Thruway Authority talk about losing two people on the Thruway. Speed kills. And the transportation worker protection, the expansion of that and the classification of that, we appreciate.

And thank you. And I thank you all for your time.

MR. HIFFA: Good evening. On behalf of Rebuild NY Now, we greatly appreciate the

opportunity to go through the fourth year of the Executive's proposed five-year capital plan.

Rebuild NY strongly supports the Governor's decision to prioritize the infrastructure by proposing the largest year over year increase of $800 million to DOT's Core program. We also strongly urge you to add 250 million to the CHIPS program funding for local systems. To be clear, the Executive's local highway aid is flat year over year. This would be the second year.

The unprecedented growth in the rate of inflation on highway construction impacts all projects. Plans that were for five bridge replacements are now three. Reconstruction of 10 miles became two.

Compounding the demand on the limited available road maintenance dollars are the CLCPA mandates. Rebuild NY strongly supports the CLCPA greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, but the funding needs to be there to support the transportation system's transformation.

One such mandate is the Clean Trucks Act, which calls for electrifying the state's and local governments massive snowplow fleet. The DOT has over 1600 snowplows, and statewide all local levels of government have another 15,000 snowplows and over 1300 garages housing them.

The DOT and Town Superintendents have separately begun working with the joint utilities to assess the level of electricity to supply these massive fleets, and the cost. As you know, the utilities have already gone through this exercise with the state's 700 school districts. In some ways the comparison is similar, but other ways very different. An EV bus is about 425,000. An EV plow, when they do become available, will be approximately 800,000.

School buses can charge overnight, using less electricity flow than a plow charger, which needs to charge in the shortest period of time possible during emergencies.

Even at their lower charging rate, the

joint utilities found 15 percent of school bus garages couldn't get enough electricity to charge a single EV bus. Another quarter couldn't supply more than 10 EV buses.

While we don't know the exact cost yet to electrify the state's plow fleet, we know it will be billions more than is currently being spent on the system. And of course every dollar going to electrical infrastructure takes away from road maintenance and operations.

In conclusion, we appreciate the Legislature has always recognized our road system is critical for both the state's economy and quality of life in our state. Again, we support the Executive Budget with increases in funding for DOT, but additional funds are absolutely critical in supporting the local system.

We look forward to working with you.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Magnarelli.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Well, again,

I just want to say thank you for being here. You've been here all day -- again. And the thing is, we talk often with most of you. I think I saw the town supervisor just last week. Right? So we hear what you're saying.

I have one question, though, for Colleen Thomas. Okay? You're saying that there are state highways within the jurisdiction of the tribe, but they're state highways and they're supposed to be maintained by the state. Do you get any state monies? Do you get CHIPS? Do you get anything?

MS. THOMAS: No, we don't.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: You get nothing?

MS. THOMAS: No. We are -- transportation funding comes from the BIA only.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: PIA? What's PIA?

MS. THOMAS: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Tribal Transportation Program.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: So it's

federal money.

MS. THOMAS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. But you get nothing from the state.

MS. THOMAS: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: I will take a look at that.

MS. THOMAS: And the Franklin County Garage that serves our territory, for years they've complained about their lack of resources and equipment.

For example, there's one mower that serves the entire Region 7. So they have access to it once a summer. So the tribe ended up --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Once a summer.

MS. THOMAS: Yeah, once a summer. Grass doesn't grow that slowly.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: And are there any impediments on the tribe's territory for the use of that road? Or --

MS. THOMAS: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: -- can I

drive it any time I want?

MS. THOMAS: Yes, of course.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Okay. All right. We'll check into it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I just -- hi. Before I turn it over, so it's not the clock, I've just been asked to recognize the University Student Senate members who are here but won't be able to be around to speak later because they have to get on the train.

So just hello, everyone. Thank you for being with us.

(Applause.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I hope you've had an educational day.

And I'm going to pass it over to Leroy Comrie. Thank you.

SENATOR COMRIE: I don't have any questions for the panel, but I just hope that the University Student Senate will leave testimony, if they have it. Or if not, email it to us.

So thank you for being here, panel. I

want to thank you for your continued diligence. In the spirit of now Congressman Tim Kennedy, and I've always been supportive of CHIPS and upstate funding and winter extreme funding, and I will definitely fight along with Senator Mannion -- sorry, now he's Congressman Mannion -- Senator Cooney -- we had two Senators jump to Congress -- to make sure that that happens. As you know, Senator Cooney has taken up that mantle as well.

It's important to me that the upstate communities do have as much resources as possible, because New York is a wonderful place for people to visit, and tourism is important.

And to the Saint Regis Tribe, we have to figure your stuff out so you can get your roads repaired. It's egregious that that is happening, and we will make an effort to try to get you some relief.

Thank you all for being here.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Who's next? Mr. Miller.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Thank you. Thank you all for your testimony. I wish you all had more than three minutes, because what you're talking about here really affects everything -- you know, all of our CHIPS funding, Bridge-NY, Pave Our Potholes, it's all right here.

And with the flat funding on the CHIPS programs -- this is for the County Highway Superintendents and the Association of Town Superintendents. With the flat funding, what's the percentage of work -- less work you're going to be able to perform? Just a rough estimate.

MR. HAJOS: Yeah, I guess I don't know exact percentage, but I'll say that with the flat funding and with the inflation cost of construction materials that we've seen -- and I think Fred said it, with a mile of road that I used to be able to do, let's say, at a hundred thousand dollars and using CHIPS money, I'd be lucky to get a half a mile of road now done.

And without that extra funding and an

increase in inflation cost, it's only going to get worse.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: So all our lane-miles and all our structures, it's -- you know, we're seeing more and more weather events every year. And as the funding stays flat or decreases, we're going to get farther and farther behind the eightball.

MR. HAJOS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: One more question, a real quick one. This is just the effect the EVs are going to have on your members. How many -- you know, like Mr. Hajos said here, it's going to cut into your projects, but most of your members won't even be able to even comply with any of it because the infrastructure's not there even to get them charging.

MR. HIFFA: Well, that's why we're going through the process now, though. It will probably take six months to a year. But we need that assessment. That's why we're working with utilities, so we know what the real costs are.

But considering the size, most of the local budgets, you know, it's way beyond the scope. But you have to get the facts, it's in law, we're going to work and do our due diligence just like the school districts are.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: So one statement. So given the CHIPS funding's 250 million additional, it's vital at this time because every year we're fighting for this money and then we just -- we can't get to that level where we really need to be.

That's all I got. Thank you, fellas and ma'am.

MR. HAJOS: Thank you.

MR. MUSTICO: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oops. Senator Tom O'Mara.

SENATOR O'MARA: She forgets me often even though I'm sitting right next to her.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR O'MARA: But thank you, Chairwoman.

Thank you all for your testimony. It's great to have you and your advocacy on CHIPS, which has been a major issue of mine throughout my tenure here in the Legislature. So just thank you for your advocacy today. On looking for the extra $250 million, we will be working very hard to achieve that. And it makes complete sense given the very good amount that was given to the DOT programs.

So your advocacy is much appreciated. Look forward to seeing your associations around the halls of the Capitol in the coming weeks, the coming month. It's good to have you here. Matt, good to see you here from home. Had another witness testifying yesterday from home, which is very unusual for my neck of the woods. But it's great to have you all here.

If everybody would just want to comment on -- that we've got all these various programs, CHIPS I think being the most important one of -- the Extreme Winter Recovery, Potholes, they're all a little bit

different, but I think CHIPS is the most fairest distribution really of any funding program I think in the state.

But just the importance of putting whatever additional funding we can get into CHIPS, as opposed to some of those other spin-off programs we've had in recent years, if anybody wants to address that.

MR. HIFFA: I mean, normally what we look at -- and we have a pie chart which I'm not going to bore everybody with, but it shows you your lane-miles on the local system and how much you're getting out of the five programs. And historically the towns, for example, have 57 percent of the local roads and they're getting about 2900 a lane-mile. If you look at like the STR program, it's closer to 10,000 a lane-mile and it affects a much smaller group of communities.

So the CHIPS hits all 1600 communities. It gives them the most flexibility on how to spend the money. And clearly in this time of inflation, every community is desperately in need of these

additional funds, and that's the best way to distribute it.

MR. MUSTICO: And one other thing. Most of the communities -- not most, a lot of your smaller communities, that's all they use for their highways. They don't have any other funding. And so whatever they get for CHIPS money, that's what they're using in the roads. So every little bit they can get extra helps them a lot.

SENATOR O'MARA: Absolutely. Thanks for that. I do know that, I see that with the many, many rural towns and even some villages that that's all they have, is the CHIPS funding. So it's critically important for them.

Thank you all very much.

PANELISTS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

I think you kind of answered this, but the -- because I think the same thought is in all of our heads that when you look at the

800 million for the capital plan, you're saying this is what it takes to keep up and actually be able to do everything we had planned to do because costs have gone up. It makes perfect sense you do the same on the CHIPS side.

So you would say, in calculating, that that $250 million number is the appropriate number to do something commensurate with the CHIPS program?

MR. HIFFA: Yeah, I think the way we're looking at it, the industry as a group supported the 800 million and we used the same formula to come up with the 250, except that they're making the Executive Budget.

And someone had brought it up earlier, and it's incredibly important, that we've seen these declines over the last seven years. One additional lump of money, as important as it is, we need to keep moving forward and we need to look at, when we -- for the MTA, they need a long-term funding solution for their next plan. We simultaneously should be looking to make sure

whether we reconstitute the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund that we stopped using in 2012, or a redistribution of driver fees, which right now about 6 billion are being collected annually, but less than 1.9 billion are going back in directly to roads.

So I think those things need to be part of the conversation too. As you look at redefining how we are going to pay for transit, highways should need to be part of that conversation.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And then the bidding threshold issue. I mean, I wrack my brain with this every year as we get through, because it just seems like it's something we should be doing.

I don't know, any comment? I mean, obviously we're all legislators up here. But what is the real objection to doing that?

MR. HAJOS: I was just going to say, I mean with the inflation costs that we've seen, the dollars go farther if we don't have necessarily that threshold. I mean, for us as a county, we don't do a lot of our own

paving work, but there are other counties who do their own paving work. If they have to bid it out, it's not cost-effective. It's costing them more to do it, because they're up against that limit of 350,000.

We think just eliminating it altogether would make more sense.

MR. COONEY: I just -- I would be contrary on that. Obviously the funding, yes. But we live in a competitive bid environment. And I support that entirely, and I do believe it is the best way to get value.

Yes, some, you know, communities do self-perform some of their work, but I would tell you that I would not quickly accept the argument that that is cost-effective. We live by the competitive bid with almost all that we do here in the state buying things. And I am not in favor of raising that limit.

Sorry for the disagreement here, but I had to state it.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: No, that's -- that's helpful. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Mic off; inaudible.)

PANELISTS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Whoa, whoa, whoa. It may be the upper house, but they don't control things around here.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Palmesano.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Yes, thank you all for being here.

Given the fact, you know, from my research, according to the federal highway administration -- you've been talking about inflation -- that for the past three years highway construction costs have increased 70 percent. Is that an accurate estimate?

(Panel members nodding.)

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Okay. And I've heard you all talk about CHIPS, so I guess real quick, if you think an increase in CHIPS is warranted and desperately needed,

raise your hand.

Thank you. Almost unanimous. That was an easy one.

What about long-term needs? I know, Mr. Hiffa, you talked about long-term needs assessments. Was there a 2023 study that was recently done showing what the transportation needs were for -- across the towns? Wasn't that like -- a significant amount, if I recall. Do you know how much that --

MR. HIFFA: Yeah, there was an analysis that was done by the Town Highway Superintendents, and that number now -- outside of New York City, we're spending about 2 billion a year on the local system, and that's underfunding by about 2.6 billion.

And we have pulled the city bridges out of that, which the Comptroller estimated at 20 billion of the 30 billion need.

So it is significantly more than we're investing now, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: You said 2 billion, so over 15 years that's about $30 billion in unmet need? Okay.

And I think Kevin, you were talking about the per-mile maintenance cost. There was a lot of talk -- and I know at the electric vehicle charging station infrastructure there was talk about the school buses. And I think there's a preliminary study going on. How much is that -- you know, how concerned are you about, you know, the weight of these vehicles and the damage this can do to our local roads? Because they're going to go over the local roads -- they're not going to be going over the state highways as much as the local roads.

And how will that impact the cost per mile for both rehabilitation and for just maintenance costs, significantly?

MR. HAJOS: Well, I think first of all it's going to be a huge impact to our roads system. Because as you know, and you're well aware of, most town roads or rural counties, they don't have thick pavement structures. So the weight of these vehicles is going to do a significant number of damage to these

roads.

So for us, you know, it used to be maybe a million dollars to do a reconstruction project per mile. It's going to -- I mean, with the damage that these could cause, it could triple that.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: And Mr. Mustico, I know your report's coming at some point. You gave some preliminary numbers. Hopefully you could share that with us when it comes in; we'd like to have those numbers.

And what are you seeing from your perspective on what you understand as far as the cost per mile and -- I'm sorry, and like how would that affect the life use? The normal life use of a road is about 10 years, I'm hearing. And it might decrease the life?

MR. MUSTICO: Ten? For us it's -- yeah, lucky if we get 10, because, you know, our rural roads, we don't build them like we do the other roads we have. So yeah, if we get 10 out of them, we're lucky.

But that's going to impact them big

time.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you very much.

Assemblyman Jacobson.

ASSEMBLYMAN JACOBSON: Thank you.

I just -- first I want to thank all of you for hanging in there. You know, you had to battle the snow in the morning and then when you get up here, you made it to the end.

I just want to reemphasize what Mr. Cooney said about getting the fair share for Region 8, because it's such a large area. I mean, if you can imagine, it covers Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess and Columbia. And then it covers Rockland, Orange and Ulster. So it's very important.

And I think the rest has been said, so thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Giglio.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: So thank you all for being here.

And as being in local government for 10 years before I joined the State Assembly,

we always had a general construction bid in the beginning of the year where we would bid out all the services that we would need for highways and construction.

So can you explain to me a little bit about the raising the bid from 350 to, you know, over a million, on how that would benefit you.

MR. HAJOS: Well, I know that there's a little bit of a disagreement here. But the bottom line I think for us is costs have increased significantly. And it used to be when we'd submit for CHIPS, you could only submit up to 250,000. Then it was raised to 350,000.

We feel -- and look, we're not saying we're opposed to bidding, we just want the threshold raised little bit. I don't think it would hurt the contracting industry.

But there are many localities who do their own work and they are efficient at doing that work, and this would extend that, you know, threshold for them to allow them to get further in that work.

Again, I don't -- I don't think it's going to impact the construction industry, but I think it would benefit our members who --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: But don't you, like, don't you put out a general construction bid, like we need a price per, you know, yard of asphalt, we need a price per yard of concrete, we need a price for, you know, a mile of guardrails? Don't you do that in the beginning of the year and then that's your contractor you're with for the whole year, for all this work?

MR. HAJOS: Yeah, we call them term agreements, and we do do them. And we do it -- we, because we don't do paving in-house, we bid out all our paving work. So we typically, you know, evaluate our roads, pick roads to pave for that season, whatever type of treatments we're going to do, then we bid those out. So same with guardrails, same with -- we don't do a lot of concrete work. We do a lot of drainage work in-house. But some of it is bid out, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay, so your general construction contract that you bid out, and then you could have 10 different contractors on that general construction bid -- one that does asphalt, one that does concrete, one that does drainage, but where you buy your drainage rings from -- you know, all of that is -- I mean, it was my experience that they would just order it from that because it was the least expensive for the whole year and that they wouldn't have to go out to bid.

So what type of projects would go out to bid that would be from, you know, 350 to a million dollars? What type of projects --

MR. HAJOS: Yeah, when we -- I'm sorry, when we do our paving projects we bid it all at one time. So it's not bidding for pipes separate, we bid a project. So we typically put that whole project out to bid, soup to nuts, from reconstruction, paving, guardrail, drainage work, it all gets bid at one time.

And typically, you're right, it's this

time of year that we put those bids out.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay. All right, thank you.

MR. HAJOS: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you so much to all of you for your advocacy and for your information and your thoughtfulness on these issues.

I wanted to go to the concept of consolidating some of our road programs. I know -- I'm downstate, but my district is all villages and towns, and sometimes I suspect the way some of the officials talk to me is because there's so many programs to read the requirements of and bid for that they may be leaving some money on the table.

Do you see that in your experiences?

MR. HIFFA: I mean, normally what we would see -- I mean, a lot of our departments are really quite small. We have five programs. Three of them have almost the

exact same specs, and then the other two have the exact same specs.

This is something that DOT helps them, reduces their -- right now, I mean, I have all these DOT spreadsheets that they have to run for every single program for every single community, 1600 communities in some of these programs, and then rolling over -- I mean, it's -- they do a great job, but we're all on the same page, which is let's consolidate them, let's make it a little bit easier, less bureaucratic. And I think it really would be beneficial for everyone.

Thank you for asking.

MR. MUSTICO: Well, if you look at the guidelines on those -- I do my own CHIPS paperwork, I don't have a clerk that does it. So if you look at all different ones, you could basically pick out of any of those a project to do. I mean, like the pave or the potholes. I mean, it's not just for potholes. You know, you can be creative and use it on something else.

So if you could combine them, that

would be -- it's just, you know, less pages you have to do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Okay. Some of Director Thomas's testimony brought something else to mind aside from the terrible position that the Mohawk Nation is in.

But the condition of our secondary state roads definitely need the help, and that's even more of a reason to make sure we start putting in some new infusions of capital.

Are all of you seeing similar situations where you are with the secondary roads?

(Panel members nodding.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: I see a lot of nods.

The other thing I wanted to say is as we move forward, it's not like one year of this is going to solve the world's problems. So instead of asking you, I'm going to tell you -- if you want to comment in 10 seconds, you can. But we're going to need this conversation to continue year over year over

year to make sure we get the incremental improvements, which is the only way we are going to catch up with our local roads and our state roads.

PANELISTS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Otis.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you.

Thank you all. I would say that you are one of the most important panels in the whole budget cycle, and that is because each of you in your own testimony make the case and give statistics on why increased funding is necessary. It's not enough to just say we need more money, you actually give the metrics -- road conditions and all those things. Very valuable.

I have a couple of comments. On the consolidation issue, have you folks asked DOT, even if they have separate programs, to consolidate their application? It seems like you can do the same application and work it in different programs. If you haven't, it's a conversation we could toss at DOT ourselves. But has that been raised?

MR. HIFFA: I mean, DOT has literally run this for each community in the state to try to do this consolidation. And honestly, they really do a good job. So we're deferring to their leadership on how it should be done. So that's why we're putting it together the way we are.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Yeah, that's great.

Then the other thing that caught my ear from a few of you was if you don't have it, it would be great for us to have statistics on how many communities depend entirely on state funding for their roads, that they're not able to contribute anything locally towards their roads. I think that would be an illuminating statistic to make, again, the case for the continued need.

So that's it for me. But again, thank you for the importance of the information that you convey every year. Very valuable.

MR. HIFFA: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I echo Assemblyman Otis's sentiments. And thank you all very much for your testimony; most informative.

Thank you.

(Off the record pause.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Good evening, everyone. You are Panel D. And just for the purpose of our media people upstairs, could you just state your names and your organizations. Don't start your testimony, the clock won't start. Just so they'll know whose name to put up when you do speak.

We'll start from the left to the right. We'll start with you.

MS. BAILEY: Sawyer Bailey, AdkAction.

MR. EPSTEIN: Good evening. Ron Epstein, New York Materials.

MR. HEEFNER: Hello. Mark Heefner, Greater Binghamton Airport, New York Aviation Management Association.

MR. HRONCICH: John Hroncich, with BAE Systems.

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE BYRNE: Kevin Byrne, former member of the Assembly, Putnam County Executive.

(Off the record.)

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Who wants to start?

Okay.

MS. BAILEY: Good evening, and thank you for having me here today. My name is Sawyer Bailey, and I'm the executive director of AdkAction, a nonprofit in the Adirondack Park working to solve problems to help communities and ecosystems.

If you couldn't tell, I am coming to today's hearing eight months pregnant, and anyone pregnant in the winter will tell you they're extra cautious to avoid slipping and falling on snow and ice. People are salting the steps a little extra for me this winter. And I realize they salt because they care, but the problem is there's a slow violence salt causes when it's consistently overapplied. What's preventing a sudden fall is causing significant harm across a geography as vast as a state like ours.

Road salt has polluted the water throughout the Adirondack Park and across New York, at times to extents comparable to saltwater estuaries. Of nearly 500 wells tested by the Adirondacks Watershed

Institute, 64 percent exceeded sodium levels set by the EPA. And the most significant contamination zones were abundantly clear in this data: Wells downslope of state highways.

Oversalting state roads has polluted the wells of hundreds of people in the Adirondack Park who live downslope of state highways and rely on their private wells for drinking, cooking, washing. For those who don't know the extent of the pollution in their private well, especially people who live in older homes, they may be drinking water compromised by heavy metal leaching from salt corrosion.

Think about my safety, something you can see, and now think about theirs, compromised by a magnitude of potential lead contamination we can't begin to imagine.

But I want you to know that change costs zero dollars. AdkAction and 30 Adirondacks towns and counties have proven it. More sustainable, cost-effective winter road maintenance methods work, and the

Department of Transportation should be empowered to scale these methods, especially in a budget season where affordability is of the highest priority.

Of the $156 million set aside for snow and ice management in this year's proposed budget, too much of that will bounce and scatter off the road, showing up as wasted salt. The department should have the ability to reclassify a portion of this money to do something to fund the recommendations offered in the Adirondack Road Salt Task Force Report, like starting to use "live edge" plow equipment, salt brine and spreaders, and state-of-the-art salt, snow and temperature tracking equipment.

With the support of our legislators, DOT can reach an initial 20 percent salt reduction in salt use, funded simply by material spending reductions in a single winter, if they're given the opportunity to be entrepreneurial. From there, a 50 percent reduction of road salt use and attendant pollution can be achieved. And I think we

owe it to communities like mine, our most rural upstate residents. Let's show them they matter more than our fear of leaving business as usual behind.

Thank you.

MR. EPSTEIN: Good evening, everybody, and thanks for being here.

On behalf of the New York Construction Materials Association, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this evening to talk about the Department of Transportation's recommendation in the Executive Budget.

My name is Ron Epstein. As I mentioned, I'm with the New York Construction Materials Association. I'm the president and CEO.

Prior to that I served more than 30 years in government, you know, culminating in my role as the executive deputy commissioner for the New York State Department of Transportation. I personally like to think that I know a little something about the agency and its annual budget

process. I'll defer to you on that.

But given today's time limitations, what I'd like to do is focus on, you know, three comments on the Executive Budget and provide three recommendations.

First of all, we applaud the Governor for including the $100 million in the Executive Budget for the Core Highway Pavement and Bridge Program, specifically the Core program, because that has suffered. This represents a 30 percent increase over year to year. And this, as you've heard many times today, will restore the purchasing power that's been lost to extraordinary inflation. Again, we want to, you know, really support and hope that, you know, this is the base level moving forward in your one-house bills.

Secondly, we commend the Governor as well as the Legislature -- I specifically want to call out Chairs Cooney and Magnarelli for their sustained support to enhancing worker protections. I can tell you as a former transportation official, I can

personally attest to the importance of how these measures will impact and will protect workforce, and how this will ensure that these valuable workers will return home each evening to their families.

My recommendation to anybody that has any reservations about enhancing these protections: Put a desk in a work zone, sit there for about 10 minutes and see how it feels.

In terms of the local program, and I know I'm rushing, I just want to reiterate that we support the recommendation for adding $250 million to the CHIPS program.

In terms of conclusions and recommendations, like I said, the $800 million funding increase is vital to keeping the projects and programs for the forthcoming year on schedule. But there are risks in the budget, risks that we do not necessarily control such as future inflation -- you know, economic growth which could impact outyear deficits -- and borrowing constraints. And these are things

that we're going to have to work for in the long term as we look at infrastructure investments that can be supported during the next five years.

To address these challenges, we recommend the following. First of all, develop, you know, recommendations to modernize and strengthen the state's core transportation infrastructure priorities.

Also, when you look at solutions for the MTA, let's look holistically at what we can do long-term for the needs of all transportation entities. Let's not take the punch in the face on the MTA and two years later have to come back and raise revenue again.

Lastly, it's time that we have a comprehensive needs assessment for the New York State Department of Transportation similar to that of the MTA, so we understand exactly the needs moving forward.

My time is up; I just want to say thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

MR. HEEFNER: Good evening. My name is Mark Heefner. I am the president of the New York Aviation Management Association and commissioner of aviation at the Greater Binghamton Airport.

Most of you know NYAMA members, ranging from commercial service and general aviation to engineers and various aviation professionals. You probably also know that New York State airports are major economic engines. According to the New York State DOT Report, the aviation industry contributes over $80 billion in annual economic activity in New York State. More than 454,000 New York-based jobs are in aviation or aviation-related industries, generating $25.8 billion in payroll, and $6.1 billion in state and local tax revenue each year. Over 111 million passengers use New York airports annually.

What you might not know is that the investment from New York State's budget last year was $12.5 million in the Aviation Capital Grant Program, and $14 million of

matching funds for federal programs.

That's what we're here to talk about, right? Money, investment, and how to best utilize it for our state's taxpayers. There are very few programs that come to mind that move over 11 million people each year and generate $25 billion in payroll and $6 billion in state and local tax revenues. I know I'm repeating that from earlier, but to me it seems very important and speaks to a tremendous return on investment.

Today you've probably heard more times than you can count how inflation is driving cost increases. Well, we're going to echo that, just, you know, because we're here. The difference is the Aviation Capital Grant Program has been $12.5 million for the past eight years, each year, which was woefully underfunded at that point in time.

NYAMA continues to advocate for a minimum state financial commitment of $40 million per year for this program. You heard earlier what we can do with underfunded amounts -- just think how we can positively

impact your community with proper funding.

While I'm on a roll, NYAMA is consistently looking towards the future because airplanes don't fly in reverse. We go forward. We're seeing future challenges in air service and economic development as well as environmental sustainability and advanced air mobility. Our members are really good at what they do with the money that we have. And with your help and the funding, we can outpace the nation in these areas.

NYAMA is ready to work with you to launch our state ahead of all the others, but we need to do it together with good investments from New York State. NYAMA commends Governor Kathy Hochul for recognizing the unique capital needs for airports, and we extremely appreciate the importance of the Aviation Capital Grant Funding program by the cochairs of the Aviation Caucus, Assemblymember Donna Lupardo and Senator Monica Martinez, and the members of the caucus.

In conclusion, well-funded aviation capital programs for the Empire State's airports are essential to protect jobs and ensure economic health for the state and its residents. Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

MR. HRONCICH: Good evening and thank you to Chairs Pretlow and Magnarelli and to the collection of Senators and Assemblymembers for staying with us this evening.

My name is John Hroncich. I work at BAE Systems. I'm here representing the over 2,000 employees BAE Systems across New York State, including over 1200 in Endicott, where I'm from, where I live -- I've been there for 15 years -- and where we design and manufacture electric propulsion systems for heavy-duty transit vehicles.

I'd like to talk to you today about the MTA capital plan: $68 billion is what the plan is asking for. Comparatively, the rest of New York State, the five-year capital request is a billion dollars, just to give

you some scale. Right? The MTA is a very large agency. They represent about 10 to 12 percent of total bus production between the U.S. and Canada each year.

In the capital plan that was approved by the MTA Board, there are 500 battery electric buses. We support that. What I'd like to challenge is the 1,746 diesel buses and zero hydroelectric buses in the current 2025-2029 MTA capital plan. One thousand seven hundred forty-six diesel buses represents more diesel buses than the combined 10-year purchases from Boston, Montreal, Toronto, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., in the past 10 years. In fact, Philadelphia just retired their last diesel bus.

The MTA fleet is about 75 percent diesel buses, which represents the highest percentage in about 20 years. And for the $68 billion they're looking for, what will that get? Well, the percentage will go down to 72 percent. Essentially the battery electric buses that the MTA is planning to

procure aren't replacing diesel buses, they're replacing hybrid buses. The hybrid buses that are manufactured in Endicott, New York -- the hybrid buses that have served the MTA well with proven, reliable service, the hybrid buses you see running throughout all five boroughs of the city.

I'm here today to talk about the investment that is being made through the capital plan. Yes, there's a benefit to upstate. When the MTA buys a diesel bus, 76 percent of that money leaves the state. When they spend the incremental money to buy a battery electric bus, over 90 percent of that additional funding leaves the state. If they were to buy a hybrid electric bus, the incremental spend would be 80 percent kept in New York State.

That's why I'm here today, and we hopefully can count on your support.

Thank you.

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE BYRNE: Good evening. Kevin Byrne, Putnam County Executive.

I want to thank Chairman Pretlow -- congratulations on the Ways and Means chair. Quite the upgrade from the last time I was here. And it's great to see so many former colleagues.

I'm joined with my deputy commissioner of DPW, Joe Bellucci, and I want to share some perspective as not only just a former state legislator, but now as county executive.

But I also want to start by reinforcing some of the comments and discussions earlier regarding the congestion tax in New York City. And while some may not think of Putnam County and the businesses in Putnam County as being affected, we are. And there is a detrimental impact to not only our residents that commute but also to some of our businesses, including our largest private-sector employer -- which employs over 600 people -- Ace Endico.

Our economic development team projected it's going to cost them potentially a quarter of a million dollars, $250,000 a

year. So I just wanted to share that, and hopefully there will be consideration in the future for other forms of financing. I know there's a lot of discussion about that.

Speaking specifically to Putnam County, I want to thank the Legislature. Last year we received 1.2 million alone in CHIPS funding. And that was 1.2 million which would have otherwise likely been raised and spent with the support of property taxes.

In Putnam County we serve just under 100,000 people, and our county government is responsible for maintaining 83 culverts, 31 bridges, and 116 centerlane miles of county roadway. And that is not including the state roadway that we also take care of.

I also want to just mention as far as from my experience in the State Legislature, things that I learned, that nearly nine out of every 10 roads in our state are maintained under local jurisdiction, totaling more than 97,000 centerlane miles of local government's roads, compared to just over 15,0000 lane miles owned by the state.

Additionally, of the nearly 17,500 bridges in the state, more than half -- over 8,000 -- are owned by local governments. I know that's something that you probably heard so many different times, people like Phil Palmesano can say it in his sleep.

Specific to Putnam County and Region 8, I've heard that be discussed several times. I want to thank the New York State DOT for many of their projects that they've worked collaboratively with the county government. I see that Route 311, Route 52 are on our project schedule.

But noticeably absent is Route 301. Route 301 connects essentially the Hudson River to the rest of the county, east to west. We have miles and miles of protected parkland which we treasure, but in many ways Putnam County is segmented from the west side to the east side. And Route 301 is in disrepair.

We also wanted to bring to your attention any opportunity to expand paratransit. County government works to

provide paratransit services, but we also know that there's gaps in services. So where there's an opportunity to expand those services, we want to do that. And a shout-out to your DMV commissioner and my clerk: Parents as the Driving Partners. Great program, hope you expand it statewide.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you, Mr. County Executive.

Mr. Magnarelli?

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Ms. Bailey, I just have a question.

First of all, thank you all for being here again. I've seen you before.

Ms. Bailey, you talked about salt in the Adirondacks. We did a study, I think it was just two years ago -- I'm not quite sure -- I was told it came back and that the DOT was looking at it and it was going to implement some of the things that were there, including using less salt on the roads.

Are you saying they're not, or they're not doing enough even with the study? Could

you explain that to me.

MS. BAILEY: And yes, for those who may not know, in the fall of 2023 the Adirondack State Road Salt Task Force Report was released, issuing about 160 best-in-class recommendations for how to prevent salt pollution across the State of New York, but seeing the Adirondacks as the canary in the coal mine.

As part of the act that mandated the creation of that report, several pilot projects were required to be initiated by the DOT. This August, some findings were released about the status of those pilots and their degrees of success. That is all we really know, as the general public, about the direction that the DOT is moving in --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: How did it go? I mean, things were released, information released.

MS. BAILEY: Yes, there was a digital report --

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Was it helping? Was it not helping?

MS. BAILEY: They showed signs of positive salt reduction. I don't believe the recommendations are being implemented to their fullest extent.

Those of you who drive around the Adirondack Park have seen plenty of plows dropping salt when there's no precipitation coming down and no snowpack on the road. Our communities see it plain and clear, particularly our local and county highway road managers, who are doing their part to reduce salt.

And I realize this is a large institution to change. It takes time. But we want to be a supportive partner to help the department do just that. We think there's a lot more they can be doing with support.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Well, I'm going to ask you to either contact my office and come in and see me for an evaluation of what we're talking about, or send me something.

MS. BAILEY: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Because this is something I am interested in. And I know Billy Jones is very interested in it too. So I'd like to follow up, okay?

MS. BAILEY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Inaudible.)

SENATOR COMRIE: I don't have any questions, but thank you. Please keep in contact with my office during the budget. I'll do what I can to make sure that I support my upstate colleagues.

As I said to the earlier panel, we want to make sure that all of our communities in this state get what they deserve in the resources that you have.

I appreciate your testimony. Thank you for being here.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Braunstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you.

And thank you all for your patience, for waiting all this time to testify.

My question is for the gentleman from

BAE Systems. How do you pronounce your name, sir?

MR. HRONCICH: Yes, it's John Hur-on-check.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Okay, thank you.

You talked about the MTA plan and the proposed bus purchases. You express there's three different kinds of bus: There's diesel, there's hybrid, and then there's electric?

MR. HRONCICH: There's also natural gas. That's another --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Let's stick with those three that you discussed.

What is the cost of each individual one?

MR. HRONCICH: That's a great question. On average, right, a diesel bus is about $700,000. A hybrid electric bus would be 925. And a battery electric bus would be 1.1, $1.15 million each.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: Not a huge difference. Have you contacted the MTA and

had a conversation about why they chose diesel over --

MR. HRONCICH: Yes, we've been supplying the MTA with product for over 20 years, so we had a very good relationship with the MTA.

They're investing in battery electric buses. Now, the prices I gave you are just for the bus. Out of those three types, battery electric buses require substantial funding for infrastructure, which is almost 1.5 times the cost of the bus. And the MTA has 26 depots. So they're, you know, working with Con Ed.

And you can just imagine, right, that the bus, when it comes to battery electric buses, is just a piece of the capital requirement.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: And do you have a hypothesis about why they're moving off of a hybrid bus? Is that the same challenge with infrastructure?

MR. HRONCICH: No. Hybrid buses are essentially no infrastructure required.

They're essentially replacements for diesel buses in that respect.

I think it's a matter of funding, frankly.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: But you said there were only about 200,000 difference.

MR. HRONCICH: Correct. Well, again, this is John Hroncich's --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I guess I say only, but when you're buying thousands it probably --

MR. HRONCICH: Right, I can't speak for the MTA, right, particularly. But the MTA's looking at buying 2200 buses, so, you know, the numbers get big really fast when you're talking about --

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAUNSTEIN: I want to just thank you for bringing that to our attention.

MR. HRONCICH: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much -- {mic out; inaudible}. Sorry, there we go. Thank you up there.

-- since you handle construction materials and there's a lot of interest and concern about trying to do things in a more environmentally safe way.

Has there been progress in actually being able to meet things like the CLCPA requirements for improved products for building our highways and our roads and repairing them so that we can meet both sets of targets, making sure we have safe and healthy roads but also trying to decrease the environmental damage?

MR. EPSTEIN: Sure. First and foremost, I do want to say that we're agnostic in terms of types of materials as long as they're tested and they're deemed safe and durable for the common public.

One of the things we'd like to see is the state use more recycled asphalt pavement, recycled concrete pavement in their specifications, because basically not only would it reduce the amount of aggregate materials that need to be produced, but saves energy and carbon emissions, as well as you

are reducing the amount of energy in the production stage for -- you know, in terms of energy.

So by using more recycled material -- and I believe New York City can use up to 40 percent right now -- you're not only reducing the cost of production, the cost of the material, and you're getting greater value of the materials in terms of what you can actually do in terms of performance on the system.

So we would support any and all alternatives that are deemed safe. And like I said, what we want to do is remove our energy footprint from the manufacturing process.

But I do want to kind of cross over to the conversation that was just had. Unfortunately, because of the types of temperatures that are involved in producing materials like asphalt, there are no viable or commercially available electrification processes.

So this is something that we'll have

to work with the Legislature on in terms of how we prepare the industry that's more than willing to work with you on these alternative materials, but in a way that we can actually make them available to the towns, to the counties, and to the state.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I would love for us all to work on that together. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Mr. Miller.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Thank you.

Thank you all for your testimony.

This is a question for Mr. Heefner. You gave a figure there, and I just want to clarify that. Eighty billion in aviation economic impact across the state. Is there a report with the airports broken down?

MR. HEEFNER: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Is it something you can supply us with?

MR. HEEFNER: Absolutely. Would love to do that.

It's a beautiful website that New York State DOT just finished this last year and

released it. They actually did a great job of gathering pre-COVID information, during-COVID information, and then the last most updated information is from 2022. So it's a really comprehensive study, and it's quite interactive. I send my county legislator there all the time.

You can click on it, click on all the airports across the state. And it's a beautiful graphic because you see how many airports New York State has, and we are just so gosh-darn blessed to have the ability to have so many airports.

So yeah, I can definitely supply that for you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Mr. Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you all for your patience and sticking around.

County Executive Byrne. So you finished -- right under the wire you mentioned a program that you have in your county and that you wanted to see perhaps expanded. Could you perhaps just tell us a

little bit about it?

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE BYRNE: Sure. Thank you. It's a great question, Assemblyman Ra.

Yes, Parents as Driving Partners. It's actually -- I was trying to highlight. It's a program that I don't administer, I won't take credit for it. It's really our county clerk, Michael Bartolotti, and it's been a regional program that we worked with Dutchess County and I believe Orange County, in collaboration with our Youth Bureau.

And it really is a program that helps give more of a guide and instructions for parents to be actively involved in taking a pledge with their teens when they go into driving. That's been kind of a lacking structure. It's been much more engaging. And the whole thought process is that we're now really not only helping them, but also making our roads safer.

So it's been a very helpful collaboration with our DMV and Youth Bureau throughout the Hudson Valley. I just think

it's a really good model and it is something that I think is very low-cost -- except for some time, some commitment and some brochures -- that could easily be expanded statewide and help make our roads safe.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Parents as Driving Partners.

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE BYRNE: Parents as Driving Partners, correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Bores.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Thank you all for being here.

My questions are for Mr. Heefner.

Does NYAMA -- do you represent airports of all sizes, including smaller airports? Or is there a limit to who is included?

MR. HEEFNER: Nope, we'll take anybody that wants to be a member. We have all the way from the Port Authority airports down to your small general aviation --

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: So I want to ask you a question mostly about small airports,

and I wasn't sure if it was relevant.

MR. HEEFNER: Fire.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: You mentioned sustainable fuels in your testimony. I would add in replacements for avgas. You know, I think most people don't realize that leaded gas is still used, and obviously the FAA has a long program, the EAGLE program, along with others, to find replacements for it.

One of the challenges that's being found is that there might be many different kinds of fuels without lead that work, but they can't actually be combined, which means many small airports will need to have multiple fuel tanks and may only have one.

So as you talk about investments in these airports and preparing for what's coming, what's your sense of where small airports in New York are in terms of installing additional fuel tanks and fuel lines to prepare for that transition?

MR. HEEFNER: I couldn't have asked for a better softball.

(Laughter.)

MR. HEEFNER: That's what the Aviation Capital Grant Program helps with. So at Greater Binghamton Airport we just actually finished a self-serve avgas tank to serve the general aviation public. And we utilized the Aviation Capital Grant Program, and there's an $800,000 to do a tank.

That program is the perfect way to allow the smaller airports to be able to afford those different types of funding sources. And we're also working with several partners to be able to allow the smaller airports that don't have the spending power, the buying power, the borrowing power, to be able to find avenues to be able to do that.

So it's definitely something that is 100 percent on our radar, and that's why we think, you know, it's a great investment because it allows those small communities to get in front. I'm a former college football player, so I'm always competing against everybody, and that's why I say like New York State has the ability to get in front of all the other states if we invest in it properly.

So our airports are an absolute gem.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Would love to follow up on that.

Senator Liu -- who had to leave -- and I are working on helping this transition happen in New York, which I think really needs to happen by 2031 when federal preemption goes away. Which seems like a long ways away, but in terms of investing in these changes, isn't that far. So would love to talk more about how we can make that transition in New York.

MR. HEEFNER: Absolutely.

And I will just add that, you know, we always, from NYAMA's perspective, try to make sure that we take into account that the federal government is a large player in this. And our neighbors all the way on the West Coast decided they wanted to jump the gun a little bit and get in front of that, and then they had to be reeled back.

So, you know, we're here to help. We're here to work together. Love the conversation. Let's roll.

ASSEMBLYMAN BORES: Looking forward to it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Palmesano.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Yes.

Mr. Byrne, Mr. Epstein, it's wishful thinking that you're both going to be able to answer this, but I'm going to start with Mr. Byrne.

But CHIPS, CHIPS, CHIPS. Flat funding proposed in this budget, last year was flat funding. But yet the Federal Highway Administration said a 70 percent highway cost construction inflation increase. How is that impacting your ability in your role as county executive to do the job you need to do and the infrastructure?

And then also, you know, if you can answer it, you know, based on your experience both in your past job and with the construction materials industry, what are you seeing on how that's impacting your customers who you're providing materials to?

So Kevin first, and hopefully you'll

have a chance.

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE BYRNE: Sure. I'll try to be brief so Mr. Epstein can respond too.

Obviously the cost of inflation, the cost of labor, the cost of everything has gone up. So anytime we're not able to get that increase, it will either force us to do more borrowing as a county, postpone capital projects, or dip further into property taxes more than we need to. Or it forces us to prioritize our spending elsewhere.

So yeah, it is a concern. And one of the things that I know that we gave as recommendations from the task force the Assembly Minority came up with a while back was tying the CHIPS to CPI. So it would be indexed, so you wouldn't have to have this battle each and every year. I think that would be a really worthwhile endeavor.

MR. EPSTEIN: So to answer your question directly, we're seeing much lower placement of pavements on state highways.

And the thing that alarms me more than

anything is that there's something called vendor placed paving, which is actually administered by OGS, but the Department of Transportation develops the projects. It is probably the lowest-cost type of paving program you can do in the state and has one of the most expansive reaches.

But those numbers are basically roughly half of what they were from a year ago. So the tonnage for paving materials are down, the number of lane miles that are being renewed are down.

Now, that's not all the result of inflation. We have to be honest with ourselves, there are some big large-scale projects that are underway. We saw this when the Thruway went through the Tappan Zee Bridge to the Mario M. Cuomo Bridge, you know, transition.

A lot of time, attention and resources go to large-scale projects, and so the core activities tend to suffer. And so part of what we need to look at is also prioritization: Are we getting the maximum

amount of work for the public, or are we doing, you know, a minimum amount for priorities -- I'm not going to say they're not important, that's not the issue. But are we, given the condition of our current system, are we using the money in the best fashion that gives us the greatest return on that investment?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Thank you.

And this is unusual for me. I just want to say thank you.

And Kevin, thanks for working on that task force. It was fun, and we traveled around the state and we learned a lot and came up with some good ideas. Hopefully some of that can be implemented in the future.

Thank you. Thank you, guys.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Shimsky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SHIMSKY: Just quickly, thank you, Chairman Magnarelli, for agreeing to look at the salt issue. There are better ways. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you one and

all. That ends this session -- this section.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you very much for your testimony.

(Off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, Panel E, if you'd like to join us up front.

(Off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Do we have anyone else here joining us?

(Off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Want him to start?

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Yes, you can start. Introduce yourself -- just start. Go right into it.

MR. GREIF: I'm Christopher D. Greif, advocate for people with disabilities and the ADA accessibility president of a group that I created over four years.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. Okay, please start.

MR. GREIF: Good evening, everyone. Good evening, Senators and Assembly. If I

say everyone's name, we will not have enough time.

My name is Christopher D. Greif. Some of you may know me as a New York City Transit Riders Council member, ACTA member, advocate for people with developmental disabilities, advocate for disabilities for over 32 years.

I'm here today to advocate for accessibility. As the MTA was here -- and I've been here since 9:30 this morning -- I have seen a lot of things, and my presentation, PowerPoints, the reason -- people thought I was going to do it on the screen, and I said no. We need to show the pictures of the history, what we accomplished.

Senators and Assemblymembers who are living in upstate, downstate, and everywhere have seen what things have changed. We're not talking about the old, we're talking about the future of accessibility. The future of accessibility is important to everyone.

And when I say everyone, my former

colleague, let her rest in peace, the late Edith Prentiss, was always fighting for accessibility. And I am -- you may have heard some of them call me Edith Prentiss 2.0. Yes, I am.

I am advocating for more accessibility -- not just for elevators and ramps, but everything. As you see in those pictures and everything, we are trying to advocate for more accessibility for not just elevators and ramps but updating our signages, LED lighting, updating the buses -- which I did hear somebody mention gasoline.

Well, it's called funding. We have to advocate to get updated buses. But I'm glad the buses are ADA-accessible and safe, because there is a ramp in the front of the bus, not in the back of the bus.

Second, Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North are being tested with a special alert button which is called boarding assistance. The boarding assistance means we will press the button and the train crew will know there's an accessible customer.

Right now Metro-North is being tested, at the Harlem Line, and it's already being done at the Long Island Rail Road branches on Nassau and parts of Suffolk County. And yes, there is one in Brooklyn, at Nostrand.

We want to make sure we continue those thoughts and continue those technologies to move forward. As you've seen, there's a program going on thanks to our elected officials in Manhattan, and it did start in Brooklyn in Jo Anne's district at Jay Street-MetroTech, which is called the NaviLens program. And it is in your district too, Senator Krueger.

The NaviLens program is linked, even on my phone. And it's not just for a person for language, but deaf and blind communities can also use it very well. It's been tested.

I was the chair of that technology committee years ago, and I will say it is nice to see -- to try something new and test it first. I am the OMNY tester as well. Unfortunately, my mother couldn't be here; she is the AAR, Access-A-Ride. I've been

testing it all over around the boroughs and everywhere.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN MAGNARELLI: (Mic off; inaudible.)

MR. GREIF: Thank you, Assemblyman, and it was good to hear from you on the phone last night.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Leroy?

SENATOR COMRIE: Thank you for being here and waiting all day.

Can you -- I didn't understand the system. Can you explain it a little for me?

MR. GREIF: The system for accessibility, you mean, Senator?

SENATOR COMRIE: Yes.

MR. GREIF: Okay. For the last six years, accessibility, thanks to our former president, Andy Byford, who restarted the accessibility, MTA accessibility created. Thanks -- that's why we have Quemuel Arroyo, Q, who is there to continue working on more

accessibility.

Right now as we have been advocating, and which I have been advocating with that group, and Transit Riders Council, with Lisa Daglian with PCAC, which is part of it, we've been continuing advocating, updating our trains, buses, elevators, ramps and, yes, signages as well. And as you know, I have been with you at the open house in Queens.

SENATOR COMRIE: Mm-hmm.

MR. GREIF: I was there for a reason because a lot of people need to understand that we have to move forward, not backwards. And a lot of the groups when I've seen lately --

SENATOR COMRIE: I'm sorry, I've only got a little amount of time.

MR. GREIF: Sorry.

SENATOR COMRIE: Do you think ramps are more effective than elevators for the accessibility community?

MR. GREIF: A lot of us want more accessible elevators, but if some stations could be ramped, it would be really

appreciated and save costs, money.

SENATOR COMRIE: So as far as Hill Station, do you think that's better as a ramp or as an elevator?

MR. GREIF: It depends with the station's structure. I can say some stations may have more opening space; then you can do a ramp. But if not, then the elevator's the next option.

SENATOR COMRIE: Okay. Thank you. Thank you.

MR. GREIF: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly?

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblymember Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: There we go. Thank you, Chris. Good to see you.

MR. GREIF: Good to see you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you for coming and staying all day.

You know, a couple of us asked questions of the MTA earlier about accessibility -- which is obviously a work in progress, as you know. Once upon a time we

didn't even have the hundred stations yet, right?

MR. GREIF: Mm-hmm.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: But we've also had a continuing problem with elevators not working, particularly the ones that are put in by somebody else.

MR. GREIF: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And we've made a lot of progress on that. There's a great deal of fear that if the capital plan isn't funded to the tune of the 68 billion, that there will be cuts to the number of accessibility improvements in stations.

Given your, you know, working so closely with the MTA and being at just about every opening I've ever seen -- I know I see you all the time on Facebook --

MR. GREIF: Guilty as charged.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: -- you know, what is your feeling about the likelihood of success in making the system more accessible? And how quickly are we going to be able to do that? It's a long project, but I'm

curious -- because you know a lot about that -- what your views are on that.

MR. GREIF: Well, Assemblywoman Simon, just to be very clear, what I've been telling everyone -- not just in Brooklyn, but in all the New York region -- you want an accessible station, you have to put in the support letter and they have to not just cc to the MTA, it has to be cc'd to the Assembly, the Senate, yes, and the Congress as well.

Thanks to some of -- we have seen more stations being added in. You did have on your list 4th Avenue-Ninth Street and Smith at Ninth Street, which I mentioned to your staff yesterday. Because a lot of people have -- it's not just going to community boards, it's support letters that would work.

And I have encouraged everyone, I have done a presentation on it encouraging people to do that as well. And I'm not afraid to remind people that, you know, those are going to be delayed, like with congestion pricing, because that is going to go through.

We need the accessible stations. We

need them for a reason. Because if Access-A-Ride cannot come, we need accessible stations. And buses could be also -- could be acting up. That's why we need accessible stations as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Right. Okay.

MR. GREIF: And I have full confidence, not because it's MTA, but advocates watching the MTA. Because why should we all go there and yell and fight? We're sitting there, we're seeing the facts, but there are times the press doesn't get the right facts. And I will say the truth on that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I think that's a very important point that we have accurate information as we go forward.

But I think that -- there's a lot of support, I think, among the Legislature for improving the accessibility. So keep fighting. Thank you.

MR. GREIF: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman Giglio.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Thank you for being here.

Yes, so I'll go back to accessibility. And accessibility is important, and I'm curious as to whether or not the MTA has on their website any indication or information for people with disabilities when an elevator is down or when they can't get on a train, so maybe they would look to go to another station to get on a train where is accessibility.

Do they have that information on their website?

MR. GREIF: Yes, they do.

And I just want to add something that I'm glad you brought up. Because since I've been on the ACTA committee, I created the accessible re-route. When the 1, 2 and 3 trains were out because of switch replacement at 96th Street, I asked -- the staff at that time before Q came on was Alex -- that we need to work on accessible reroutes, because if a total section is out, how is a senior, a person with a disability or a baby

stroller -- or let's not forget veterans also have disabilities, I don't want to leave them out -- how can they get options in different directions?

And I have been working with very well -- close, yes, to the MTA. Some people have said, Oh, you're so close -- well, yes. How can you earn the trust if you don't work with them? Fighting is not going to solve anything. Working as a team and moving forward.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Do they have somebody specifically at the MTA that works with you?

MR. GREIF: Yes. His name is Quemuel Arroyo. And there is an MTA Accessibility Division. There is an MTA Accessibility Team, which is thanks to Andy Byford, who changed the name to MTA Accessibility.

I have attended a lot of those board meetings. It's nice to hear the word "accessibility" in their mouth. Just like a cup of water.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Yes. And because people with disabilities and seniors and people with strollers rely in public transportation, it is so important for accessibility.

And my next question for you is dealing with the blind and dealing with people that may not see signals at a crossing, the way in New York City or anywhere else they have those bumps that they put on the corners of the intersections to let people know --

MR. GREIF: They're called braille.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: What?

MR. GREIF: They're called the -- they have braille on the floor also.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: The braille on the floor. And then they also have the indications to let people know when it's safe to cross and not.

So do we need more of those? And if we do, is anybody mapping that out?

MR. GREIF: Right now, as I said maybe before, it's in my presentation, it's called

the NaviLens program. It's being piloted right now in Manhattan.

It was started at Jay Street and MetroTech, in Jo Anne's district, which we did start. It's now expanding, thanks to Rabinowitz {ph} and my State Assembly or Senate -- because right now I'm concentrating, thinking.

The NaviLens program, which is actually on my cellphone here, and I have tested it myself, not just for deaf and blind, but language as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Interesting.

MR. GREIF: And it's been going up through different phases, and I will suggest people who are going to come visit, try it out.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GIGLIO: Okay, great. Thank you so much.

MR. GREIF: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Roxanne Persaud to close.

And we want to make sure you don't miss your train.

MR. GREIF: Yes.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Yes, Chris. Thanks again for coming and sticking it out. Thanks again for all the emails that you send every day.

MR. GREIF: That's free of charge.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR PERSAUD: I just want to touch on the Broadway Junction Station. Could you give us any update as to their -- what they're doing? We know we've gotten the money to do the elevators and all the work that's being done. Did they give you an update on the progress?

MR. GREIF: Right now -- with that station right now, since it's the most heaviest one of all -- and Queensboro Plaza was done thanks to the community of Long Island City combined, and those were the two.

I have seen them starting some work going on, because it's not just a state, it's a city and federal combined. And it's supposed to link to the Long Island Rail

Road.

So it is going a little slow. But I will say it's better to go slow because when you're transferring there, it's very congested and you have to be very cautious where you're going to build.

Just like when they did Queensboro Plaza. Yes, they closed the station. But they did let everyone know as an option what to transfer to, because the station has to be fixed.

Just like on the 7 Line I mentioned to Jessica earlier. Some of those stations have holes on the floor, just like Broadway Junction. They have to do not just an elevator to be built, or escalators, they have to build everything on that station to make it fully accessible, and safety as well.

SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay, thank you.

MR. GREIF: No problem.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

MR. GREIF: Thank you so much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The advocacy is so important.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And this formally closes the hearing on Transportation.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, the budget hearing concluded at 6:47 p.m.)