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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
COMMENCING WORK ON \$100 MILLION VISION ZERO OVERHAUL OF QUEENS
BOULEVARD**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Lizi, thank you. You know, my children are just a little younger than Lizi's son was when he passed away. And, as a parent, I feel such empathy and such connection to you, Lizi. And I appreciate that you went through so much, but you decided to try and use that pain for good, and to save the lives of others. That is noble. That took a lot of strength. I think that's a great and fitting tribute to your son as well. Let's thank Lizi for all she has done.

[Applause]

Queens Boulevard is, tragically, legendary. We all became used to the phrase the "Boulevard of Death." That is something we need to reflect on – how something that's happening in our city that was so harmful to so many, and yet somehow, change didn't happen. It was never an acceptable state of affairs.

A lot of times change doesn't happen because there isn't enough willingness to break the status quo – to challenge the bureaucracies, to challenge the conventional wisdom, to challenge different interests. But here is a lesson if ever there was one, on the fact that we had to change things here on Queens Boulevard. We were losing too many good people, and we could avoid those losses. And finally, the actions are being taken to save lives here on Queens Boulevard that should've happened long ago.

Asif was a good young man, as you heard. There are many other stories like Asif's – many we haven't heard, but people we know should still be with us today.

So, I know that it's unacceptable to have any street known as the "Boulevard of Death." I know all of my colleagues here – elected officials and the community activists – all agree. That is a phrase we want to banish from the lexicon.

So now work has begun. Work has begun to turn Queens Boulevard into a "Boulevard of Life" – literally remaking this street – rewriting its future, making it safe for all. We're putting up \$101 million dollars – \$101 million dollars into this effort, so that we can save lives in the future, and that this great boulevard can be what it was meant to be – something positive in the lives of the people of Queens and the people of the city, and not something we associate with a horror. That's unspeakable and unacceptable. No longer will anyone's life be threatened simply by a virtue of walking or biking or driving on this street.

This is one of the actions we're taking all over the city. We're already redesigning 50 streets and intersections each year across all five boroughs. That work continues.

And with the \$250 million dollar investment through the Vision Zero initiative, focusing on four of our great streets – four arteries that are crucial to this city, but too dangerous today – we'll be remaking not just Queens

Boulevard, but also Atlantic Avenue and Fourth Avenue in Brooklyn and the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, so each of them will be safer and better for the communities.

This will take, obviously, substantial work – safer crossings, shorter crossings for pedestrians crossing the street, wider sidewalks, protected bike lanes – that which Lizi has fought for, and so many of my colleagues here have fought for. Traffic calming measures – many pieces to this equation, but all focused on the same reality: safety for our people.

I want to thank the advocates and activists and community residents who have demanded change – their voices have been heard. I want to thank Transportation Alternatives. And I want to thank Make Queens Safer, who are with us here today, and members of the Community Board 2, who strongly supported this action. Let's give all of them a round of applause to thank them.

[Applause]

The story of Queens Boulevard really tells you everything you need to know about why Vision Zero is so important – why we had to do something that was a radical departure from the past.

Since 1990 – and this is a figure that I hope people pause and reflect on for a moment – since 1990, 185 New Yorkers have lost their lives on Queens Boulevard – 185 people, mainly pedestrians. And this particular stretch, between Roosevelt Avenue and 73rd Street, has had the highest concentration of fatalities from – just from 2009 to 2013, 42 individuals killed or severely injured just on this one stretch of Queens Boulevard. And this is another astounding figure – 591 individuals in that five year period were injured along this small stretch of Queens Boulevard.

Those are numbers – and those numbers alone should compel us to action – but behind every number is an individual, and a family, and the human cost of inaction. That's why we're resolute about making major changes here. And when those changes are complete, this will be a safer street for all.

Pedestrians will actually have enough time to cross the street and they'll have a shorter distance to cross. Drivers will find a smoother and slower, but still better, drive because things will make more sense. We're going to change the whole configuration of Queens Boulevard to make the traffic move more slowly and more smoothly. The bike lane will finally be protected. So for all the people who depend on this crucial road, life will change for the better. And we're going to use every tool we have to continue that work – not just on Queens Boulevard, but all over the city.

Vision Zero – as you remember – when we first announced it, many people questioned whether it would have an impact. And then we got to see the results after the first year – we had the safest year in 2014 for pedestrians, literally since recordkeeping began in 1910, over a century ago. It's clear that Vision Zero works. That's why we're going to deepen our commitment to it.

People of this community have waited for a long time. Their day has come. We owe it to Lizi, we owe it to the memory of Asif – we owe it to all New Yorkers who have lost loved ones, and everyone who wants to live in peace in this city, to continue aggressively with this Vision Zero approach.

The goal is zero deaths. We understand how difficult that is – but it's amazing how some simple actions have already started to change the equation so profoundly. And we're going to keep taking action all over the city. And remember – if ever there's a case of us all being in this together – it's our streets, where our pedestrians, our bicyclists, our drivers all come together. We owe it to all of them to get it right. And we will.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

[...]

Mayor: Okay, we're going to do questions on topic first and then we'll do off. Let's start with on-topic questions.

Question: [inaudible]

Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation: First phase, we're going to have this operational project done in the fall – we're hoping the end of October. And then the capital work will – you know, with an operational project, we like to have it operate for a while, see how it works, while we design the capital project. And then we're going to start the capital project in 2017. We're going to start the planning for the next phase and basically go in that sequence of doing probably an operational project – I think my staff will correct me if I'm wrong – every year, and then the capital projects a couple of years after that.

Mayor: On topic. On topic. Going once.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, we said operational project – let's make sure we're speaking the same language here.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, I'll let Polly speak to the particulars. The Vision Zero plan has many, many elements – capital elements, elements that I would define as operational, obviously enforcement elements – and changes to law that we've achieved already in terms of speed limits, speed cameras, etcetera. So I think we're firing on all those cylinders. But let's have the commissioner go into detail.

Commissioner Trottenberg: [inaudible] I'll get you the final number, but I'm happy to say the mayor has given us more resources for both operational projects and capital projects. So I think on the resource – resource-front, we're doing very, very well.

Mayor: We'll challenge his numbers. We're officially offering a challenge on numbers. We'll follow up with you. On topic. Going once. Going twice. Off topic. Off topic.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I'm sorry – I couldn't hear you. Start again?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, first on the capital plan, we have put more capital dollars in than ever before for the MTA, and we'd be very happy to lay out to you all the different ways that we support the MTA, both through the city government and the ways the people of this city support the operations of the MTA. And Polly is one of our board members on the MTA board – and will follow up with you to give you those details. But the bottom line is the city, you know, listened to the MTA's original request, and in our budget that we just did in June, we literally responded exactly as the MTA requested with the budget we put forward. At the 11th hour, some new requests came in, which struck us all as a little disingenuous. The state has responsibility for the MTA, first and foremost – it's abundantly clear. And the state needs to decide what kind of actions it's going to take to preserve the MTA for the long term. But we've said we want to sit at the table with the state and with all the stakeholders in the region to figure out how we can achieve long-term – you know, long-term reliable solutions for the MTA,

because we all depend on it. So I'm very much looking forward to a productive conversation on all the city can do, but it begins with the state taking responsibility for that which is theirs. In terms of the governor's comments, I haven't seen them, but, you know, we've said we'll discuss any and all options. I don't think anything should be taken off the table, but no one at this point has put together a bigger plan for how we're going to address the future of the MTA. That's a conversation that has to happen – and the private sector has to be a part of that conversation as well.

Question: [inaudible] have you read the MoveNY plan at this point?

Mayor: Again, I have been – I sat with the folks who put together the plan a while back. I'm still not conversant enough in it. I certainly look forward to getting to understand it better, and I think it was an improvement over previous plans. But I want to emphasize that I think there's been some misunderstanding out there. My views haven't changed one bit – we're going to talk about any and all options, but we start with the assumption that right now the city is making a very generous contribution to the MTA. And the MTA is the state's domain. And we need to see the state step up. But we'll work with the state and we'll work with the private sector and we'll discuss any options. But the city of New York has not committed to a specific plan, because the other stakeholders have not come forward with yet a vision of how they're going to address this issue.

Question: Your five-borough ferry system [inaudible]. There's been a push to try to get the city to consider potentially having a ferry go to the South Shore, which has the longest [inaudible]. And I was wondering [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, you've asked the question before and I'll answer it the same way. First of all, what's different between comparing this ferry and the Staten Island Ferry is this is a citywide system, goes to multiple boroughs, and linking Staten Islanders to all of those destinations is a different thing than what the Staten Island Ferry does today. It's really quite clear. And I think Staten Islanders want as many options as they can get when it comes to transportation. So I think the initial plan makes a lot of sense in terms of maximizing options for Staten Islanders. We do not have a specific expansion plan yet, but we're certainly willing to consider other options.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I think we have to begin at the beginning on this question. Uber is a multi-billion dollar corporation, which is looking out for its own interests and its own profitability. You know, let's not kid ourselves about their motivations. I think in this city there are a lot of transportation options and there are a lot of ways that people can get around in the outer boroughs – and there always have been. If Uber is providing another option, that's a good thing. And certainly I want to make sure no one is ever discriminated against and we're quite clear in terms of the Taxi & Limousine Commission – we don't accept discrimination by any for-hire driver and we are very adamant about that and we'll enforce that very vigorously. So I think the bottom line here is multiple transportation options are a good thing, but they all need to be regulated by the government. The people depend on us to set the rules. The people depend on us to make sure the public's interest comes ahead of corporate interest. And that's what we'll continue to do.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Sure.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Look, again, I think we have to make sure that everyone has transportation options. So I'm very comfortable saying there are some good things about Uber and we want to respect those good things. And obviously Uber's going to have a substantial presence in this city under any scenario. But that doesn't mean that

Uber gets to go without any kind of rules or regulation, which is essentially what they have tried to do all over the country and all over the world. So again, I'm going to ask of all of you some subtlety here. We want people to have options. Uber will have a strong presence in this city under any scenario. That's a fact that has been lost very quickly in this discussion – in part because of the misinformation that Uber has spread, backed up by millions and millions of dollars and lots of lobbyists. They're going to be a presence. They do bring value added. But there's real issues. How are we going to make sure that disabled New Yorkers have access? How are we going to address the congestion problem, which obviously Uber contributes toward? And that's why the study is so important. What about the MTA tax, which right now Uber doesn't pay, but we need for the future of the MTA? These are serious issues that government has to deal with. And boy, I'll tell you one thing, I know plenty of companies that would love to have no rules put on them – believe that the free market should decide everything. And if that was a reality, life within this city would be a lot worse – and that would be true in this country as well. So there will be rules – I don't care how much money they have – there will be rules.

John.

Question: Mr. Mayor, following up on that, you mentioned the [inaudible]? And then the part two, if they fall short of that, how willing are you to go back to the City Council and say I want a vote on a cap?

Mayor: 100 percent willing. The cap is on the table as an option and will continue to be on the table as an option. Look, part of why we engaged Uber over the last few weeks, before they decided on their aggressive path, was to say, "Hey, we've got these real issues – how do we sort them out?" For the first year-and-a-half of this administration, Uber's been growing by leaps and bounds, to the point that there are now many, many more Uber than there are yellow taxis, for example. They benefitted from the freedom to keep growing. When we went to them and said let's talk about trying to mirror the accessibility opportunity that we're doing through the yellow taxis – you know, half of all yellow taxis will be accessible under our current plan – how do we do something like that with Uber? How do we address the revenue for the MTA? We have pointed out the obvious facts about congestion. People are experiencing it and there's facts to back it up. Midtown in particular is more congested. The speed of cars traveling in Midtown is going down – it's getting slower and slower. Something's going on here. And our offer to Uber was to try and sort that out together, and they resorted to obviously a very different approach. So we're going to come up with specific ideas. We welcome their ideas. We welcome ideas from advocates and other stakeholders. And if we can find a way to address all these issues in an amicable fashion, that's certainly our preference. But if not, that cap is absolutely on the table.

Question: This is the deal you wanted all along. And the fact that you've gotten Uber to agree [inaudible] accessibility, MTA taxes, and other things make you feel that you won a victory [inaudible] because they're now willing to talk about these things? And [inaudible] –

Mayor: Can we just do that one first? I'll come back to you on the second. I'll just – let me reflect for a second, Marcia, on the facts. So I happened to be in Rome and mayors from around the world were in Rome. And I spoke to my colleagues and it was extraordinary – every one of them that I talked to about Uber had a story of Uber trying to use its wealth and power to blow by any kind of rules and regulations, basically trying to dictate to government what Uber would be allowed to do and not do. And all of them said that they decided to stand and fight, and slowly but surely were able to create the kind of rules and regulations needed. So it's quite clear to me that the victory here is that Uber understands that there has to be a set of rules. They have agreed to limit their growth in the short-term while we do the study. We originally said to them the goal was to have a study so we could all have facts – very public, transparent facts – about what's happening, and then we could make decisions about what to do. They've agreed to a limit on growth. They've agreed to participate in the study, including giving us information that they wouldn't give us previously, which is another area where we in government get very sensitive when private companies will not provide information that the public needs. So I think it's quite clear – we did achieve the things we were talking to Uber about just a few ago are now coming to pass. And we retain all of our rights as the public sector and we keep all the tools on the table. My hope is that the study will give us clarity and then the kinds of decisions we need to make on accessibility for the

disabled, on reducing congestion and pollution, on the kind of revenue we need for the MTA will then be easy to achieve – and I look forward to that. But again, we keep all options on the table.

Question: Unrelated, but the police commissioner said that he thinks that he's too old – his words, not mine – to serve in a second de Blasio term – that he would be too old. I wondered how you feel about that and if you had tried to persuade him to stay?

Mayor: I have only this comment – he's not too old. Having just come back from Rome, where, I think, the most important moral voice on this earth resides – and he is well into his seventies – and I think it's fair to say he's having a huge impact on the discussion and the decisions being made all over the world. I think it's fair to say that our conception of age needs to change. What the commissioner chooses to do with the future, obviously, is his choice. But I have immense respect for Bill Bratton. I think he's doing an outstanding job and, as per usual with Bill Bratton, he has the numbers to back it up. You know, I think he's doing a great job and he should do it as long as feels it's what he – it's right for him and his family.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I – without getting into private conversation, I'll simply say amongst the mayors I spoke to were the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo; the Mayor of New Orleans, Mitch Landrieu; and the Mayor of Portland, Oregon, Charlie Hales. And, again, it was déjà vu, all over again. Everyone went through a similar scenario, where Uber thought its ability to purchase advertising and lobbyists would be all it needed to get its way without any exception. And those of us in the public sector, elected to serve the people, take exception to any company that believes it can dictate the terms to government. I think the public's been very frustrated over the years – whether you're talking about big oil companies, or real estate developers, or anybody who thinks they can tell the government what to do. So I think that's where – the answer I heard from each and every one of them was they will not accept that, and they're going to fight to make sure the public's interests come first. Jonathan?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: No, I [inaudible] – as you may have seen in the agreement, they have agreed to voluntarily limit growth in the short term while the study is conducted. The study is just a four-month timeframe. So, in and of itself, four months isn't going to change the situation too profoundly. But more importantly, they have agreed voluntarily to some limits so that we can make sense of the situation.

Thanks, everyone.

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