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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS LOCAL MEDIA ROUNDTABLE

Mayor Bill de Blasio: ... all the time, does not connect to the grassroots, misses a lot. And this is really what I've found at the town hall meetings and I'm looking forward to tonight in Canarsie. Town hall meetings almost always give me a new idea, give me a new perspective, or help us drive a solution that would not have happened necessarily as quickly or as well.

So we started a City Hall in Your Borough last year. Something that, as I have mentioned, it goes back to the first time I ever experienced it was working for Mayor Dinkins. I think it was '92 or '93, and I was really pleased with it and now I see in the second go around how much it's allowing us to get done and we intend to do this every year. And I just think, let's face it, anyone in government needs all the feedback they can get about what's actually happening to everyday people. I know that's a lot of what you all do – is helping to keep us focused on those realities but it's nothing like getting out into the community so, really pleased with what we're experiencing so far this week and more to come.

And with that, I'm want to open it up to your questions and all I ask is when you ask just remind me of your name and your outlet you represent. Take it away.

Question: I guess I'll start. Sir, thanks for having us. I'm Vince DiMiceli. I'm the editor-in-chief for the Brooklyn Paper. And I work with [inaudible] where we cover not only Brooklyn but Queens, the Bronx, all sorts of places as well as [inaudible]. The question I want to ask you is one of the problems we're having with the City administration is when we call up different City agencies and we ask for comments on different things, we get an answer and say alright well this is the comment and then that comment is not so much off the record but not attributed to anyone at the City agency. So my question is, is that a policy that's coming from on high or why are they choosing to do this? And if it's not a policy that's coming from up on high, are you – would you remind them that they are working for the City? It is their job to give out information and by not giving their name when they give that information, kind of makes it look like –

Mayor: I appreciate it. Yeah, that one's straight forward. It's not coming up from me. I can tell you that. My name is attributed and Eric's name is attributed and the commissioners names are attributed so should anyone else being a spokesperson. I understand if someone says, "I wanna say something off the record." That's cool but on the official responses, I think it makes a lot of

sense to have a name attributed so we will make sure that's the case. You follow up with Eric after. I assume there's particular agencies where my people are [inaudible] get to work on it.

Question: It's a lot of them.

Mayor: Okay. I want to fix that. That one sounds like one of the easier things we get to fix today. What else is on the people's minds?

Question: Sir –

Mayor: Mr. Witt!

Question: How you doing, Mayor, thank you for –

Mayor: Mr. Witt has been covering me since I started out as a City Councilman.

Question: And you look in great shape by the way.

Mayor: [Inaudible] congratulate the YMCA for that fact.

Question: [Inaudible] First of all, a suggestion for the charter commission and I mentioned it before. I know you're progressive and you care about the local media –

Mayor: Yes, sir.

Question: It's your thing. So the suggestion is this. The Campaign Finance Board by definition is a nonpartisan, its bipartisan [inaudible], and we're looking at the charter commission now. We're changing it and adding more funding. And I know you care about local media. I think it would really be a good idea if written in the charter commission, there was a threshold and one of two things happened. Either the total amount of money goes to – some percent will go to local media that meets a threshold and/or anybody that opts into it, that pays like a lot of money to consultants, have to give a certain percent to local media.

And may I just mention this, I've looked at your own campaign finance. You gave several million dollars to digital, Google, Facebook. All you gave the local media was \$5,000 to the Queens Tribune and it's like, if you say you're progressive – noticed you got mad at DNAinfo, you called him a billionaire. At least the guy tried to do it and now that I'm a businessman besides being a reporter because I own Kings and Queens County Politics. I kind of admire the guy because he tried to do a local media thing. He tried to do right. He just didn't understand media. You know, he didn't understand –

Mayor: Look, I would answer in two separate ways. The reality is, and I want to separate the political process from government because I think there's a profound difference. If you're in a campaign, which inherently has limited funds, you've got to make the decisions of where you think you're going reach people most effectively. And that could be local media or that could be

digital. That could be a TV interview, whatever it is. But I don't think it's fair or constitutional to dictate to a candidate, even with use of public funds, what they specifically have to spend it on.

With that said, I think the much more important question is government. We've tried to deepen this and I think there is more we can do. There is more all of us in government can do. Because now we are at a point in history where free media is being affronted. Not just by the President but it's being affronted by market forces and consolidation of media ownership. And so it does beg the question, what's the role for government? So one role for government, I think is to increasingly support more local and more independent media outlets. I'm interested in what's going on in New Jersey. I saw an article recently about how they are explicitly supporting local outlets. I think here the first step would be to deepen the money we're spending anyway on media going to local outlets and community and ethnic media. Again, we've made some real progress in the last few years but I'm certain we can do a lot more than that.

Question: Yeah. You can.

Mayor: No. You're right. I'm comfortable with that. We're going to have more to say on that soon. But I don't think it makes sense to do it through campaign finance. I think it makes sense more to do it through other forms of government support.

Question: If I could follow up?

Mayor: Please.

Question: The way it is in Jersey, they do it through the university system. And I know that the CUNY School of Journalism of CUNY. Right? Which is a lot of money.

Mayor: Is it actually called that?

Question: Yeah. They call it the Craig Newman's School of Journalism.

Mayor: Oh. Craig Newman. Not Craigslist. You're scaring me.

Question: It might as well be. Right?

Mayor: No. No. That's different. Calling it after a person versus calling it after a company, okay.

Question: Okay. There is an inherent partisanship because the City has relationships with CUNY funding, with different things whereas with campaign finance and [inaudible] public officials you've got \$3.5 million. I just, I have to ask you specifically. You didn't spend a penny with local.

Mayor: My friend, we've known each other a long time. My job is to tell you the truth. In a seemingly limited budget – so I'm going to talk about my last campaign trying to reach 8.6

million people. I'm sorry you're going to go where you feel, each campaign feels, they'll make the biggest impact.

Now, again, for some campaigns, I would argue, most obviously, the more local the campaign, they may feel that there are specific community and ethnic media outlets that really achieve their goals. And that's their choice. And the bigger the campaign the harder it is, honestly, to make that choice because of the imperative of trying to reach so many people [inaudible] to TV, [inaudible] digital, etcetera. I'm simply saying that I cannot, on first blush hearing it for the first time, I'm not comfortable mandating it. I think it creates too much of a legal and fairness challenge. I am comfortable with maximizing the City's spending for all the things we normally spend on to advertise with community and ethnic media. And we need to more systematically – given what's happen, just in the last few years I've been in office, the changes in media and demand maximizing that.

But I also think we have to think about the next phase which is what forms of government support for independent media makes sense. Once upon a time, there was WNYC. It was a city outlet. And from everything I've ever heard, it was fair. No one questioned that – it was not like because it was a government outlet somehow it was unduly biased. I think we need to examine different models. Example in New Jersey is one of them. There is examples in European countries, in different government-supported media with different viewpoints that are equally funded. But right now, I do not like what I see in terms of media consolidation. I think it's dangerous. We're going to have to think of some different solutions. Other folks?

Question: Last November, when you were campaigning for re-election in a Lower East Side town hall, you said the City was interested in reacquiring the old P.S. 64 on East 9th street. The former school building that became a charter [inaudible] community center. It's been 20 years since it was sold to auction and nothing. It's still vacant.

Mayor: The owner has been exceedingly uncooperative. We've tried to have a productive conversation about purchase. We've gotten nowhere so far. We're not giving up. We're working very closely with the Council member, Carlina Rivera. I'm very frustrated with that owner.

Question: What will it take to get the building back?

Mayor: I'd like to know that.

Question: Was it eminent domain?

Mayor: We'll look at all our options. I'm not sure if that's an immediately available option. Certainly something I want to know more about but I had hoped the best solution here would be a direct purchase. That's not off the table. It's just we're just not getting any cooperation so far.

Question: [Inaudible] local stakeholders about that?

Mayor: I talked to Carlina about it less than a year ago. We've been trying to pursue it ever since. But we're going to have to come back with it soon. [Inaudible] Brooklyn questions though.

Question: Hi. I'm Julianne from Brooklyn Paper. Last week, you were appearing at City Council, Councilman Levin criticized the administration for making him have to choose between the two towers that would be built with the 80 Flatbush project and putting new schools in his district that's overcrowded. I guess can you – and then he said in his eight-and-a-half years in office, the City has not found other ways to bring more classrooms to his overcrowded district. Can you speak to the overcrowding in schools in Downtown Brooklyn and should he have to make this decision between new schools, classrooms, and development? And is that a viable [inaudible] –

Mayor: Okay. Hold on. Hold on here. You are adding many pieces to the question. Let me speak to it and you can always follow up.

This is a problem in Brooklyn. It's a problem in the whole city more and more. I think we all have to kind of have a more honest conversation about it. We are growing incessantly. There are many good things about that. There are many challenges about that. It is a fact. We're 8.6 million in the city now. We've never been that big. We're on our way to nine million. That could be as early as 2030. That [inaudible] probably a little later but it could be as early as 2030. And nowhere is leading the growth more than Brooklyn. And our job is to make sense of that growth and to figure out where it can happen and obviously there's places where it should not happen.

Downtown Brooklyn is a very dense area. That's one of the reasons this has even been put on the table. The idea of using the development process to get us school space is increasingly popular because it's great for the taxpayer. It's a way to get the developer to build the school space so the School Construction Authority can be working on other things. It's cost efficient from a taxpayer point of view. We need the school space as you indicated. Obviously, we get affordable housing as part of the package. Again, someone else builds it and pays for it.

So, when you think about the fact there's only so much space. There's almost no place in the city where when we are building something sizable there isn't going to be concern. But if we can combine a site that has a lot height density around it with the ability to get a school, a major school facility built and affordable housing built. That's a pretty rare combination. And that's what's led us to that proposal. Now that whole discussion on 80 Flatbush is very live. I talked to some constituents yesterday at our resource fair who expressed their concerns and their desire for changes. That's what the ULURP process is all about. Those conversations are ongoing.

But to your question of why we would look at a site like that and think about something of this size. It's because we have fewer and fewer available sites and more and more need and because we want to get the most bang for our buck. We want to get the most cost efficient outcome and this kind of development allows us to do it.

Question: Well, I mean. Part of my question also was, would you say though that Levin criticizing the DOE and I guess your administration for not building schools there sooner is a fair assessment? Could you have built more classrooms there before he –

Mayor: I don't know what that – I mean, I have great respect for Stephen Levin and we've work really well together, for a long time. I'm not sure what that achieves to say that. We've only been here for four years. We've been building at a very intense pace all over the city. To say, "Well there could have been more building in the past." I guess that could be true but that doesn't change the reality now that we have more and more demands.

Brownstone, Brooklyn and everywhere surrounding it, there's more and more people. There's more and more people with young families. We need more and more school space. By the way, another really important point, more people are – I don't have the perfect data for this but I know it from human experience. More people are choosing our public schools than ever before. We know that Catholic schools for example used to be a much bigger share of the educational pie. We know a lot of people used to choose private school and are now feeling better about our public schools, and also are recognizing the huge advantage to their families economically to go into public school. So we see demand increasing, we got to meet it. If something wasn't built in the past, I don't have a time machine. I've got to deal with today. What else? Please.

Question: [Inaudible] Charlie from the [inaudible]

Mayor: Yes. I've been to your headquarters.

Question: I wanted to ask about the Uber [inaudible]. Which is very relevant to people who live in residential areas where there are no yellow cabs. It seemed that the [inaudible] of the yellow cab started with the just basically with government [inaudible] medallion rates [inaudible] –

Mayor: No. I appreciate the theory. I disagree. I mean, I like intellectually being thrown the question of, should we look at the world in a totally different perspective? I think that's always healthy. I mean I hear, I appreciate it, and I immediately disagree with and I'll tell you why.

The medallion market has always been a market. And the fact is, it does up and it goes down [inaudible]. No one anticipated things going quite the way they did. And that's obviously because of rapidly changing technology, and consumer preferences but it's been a market. But the cap reality has been sensible because it's not just about market dynamics it's also about how many vehicles should we have on the road? How are we going to regulate the use of those vehicles? I think in many ways it's a good example that the right kind of regulation yielded a pretty good result. Yellow cabs over the years in New York City provided a crucial piece of our transportation system.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well no. I disagree. Airports obviously as well. And for a lot of people, might get a cab and go to the outer boroughs. It's not a [inaudible]. But it's one piece of a much bigger system. And I think it formed a very valuable role for years and years and still does. There's still a big market for what a yellow cab provides. Green cabs, I think, were an important in [inaudible] added another piece to the puzzle. But now what we have is a purposeful over saturation of the market by certain private companies. It's clearly too much. And studies have shown, recent studies, about 40 percent of the for-hire vehicles drive around empty at any given point.

It makes no sense in a growing city with a congestion problem. Obviously, there are also pollution ramifications. And very powerfully, there are powerful ramifications for the drivers in terms of their wage loss. I think we did the right thing and I really commend the City Council. I commend Corey Johnson. Time out. Reset. Finally going to be able to now look at the whole picture and decide. And I suspect what's going to happen is we're going to say, "Here's a number that we think is appropriate for the for-hire vehicle sector." Just like we have a number that is appropriate for the yellow cabs and the green cabs. And bring some coherence to this project.

Any system that's got 40 percent of its vehicles empty, there's plenty of capacity to reach [inaudible] in the outer boroughs who need them. I think what it will do is incentivize going wherever you can get business. And it's not just [inaudible]. There's seven million people in the outer boroughs and more in the center of gravity. Part of what we've talked about in the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront for example. That is increasingly the center of gravity in New York City. And so much of what's happening that is about the future of this city, is happening in Brooklyn and Queens. So, I disagree. I think the leveling off and coming up with a coherent system is actually going to work for everyone. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] there are more concerns with areas that might shut down because of limited traffic to the area now. So, what if anything, can the City do to help kind of [inaudible] –

Mayor: Well, the things that were [...] that will go across the bridge in HOV lanes [inaudible]. Many, many more buses. We talked about a lot more biking. We talked about ferries. People are still going to be moving through the same area. You're talking about 15 months, not a limitless period of time and I think it's really important to add that into the equation. I think the public was right on about this to say pull the Band-Aid off. Do it all in 15 months rather than three years or more where it's done on weekends or nights or whatever the hell. I think this was a very smart decision to say let's do this in the most concentrated fashion.

But you're talking about – there's still going to be a huge amount of people moving through the exact same areas who can patronize those businesses. And we want to more sure that if businesses need help we're looking for a variety of ways to support them, but it's not a limitless period of time. It's an amount of time that I think a lot of businesses can persevere through. The most important thing is to get this done and get this done quickly and provide all the options that people need in the meantime.

The street issue, which is one of the things that businesses obviously have the very fair right to say what's that gonna do to the business, well that affects 14th Street in Manhattan, that affects [inaudible] street in Brooklyn, but generally street changes are not the core of this plan, so that should limit the effect on small business.

Question: Hi, my name is Kevin [inaudible] and I'm from the [inaudible] group. You mentioned at the Canarsie town hall this evening two years ago [inaudible] town hall – you told Canarsie residents that ferry [inaudible] the table. Now you're going there this evening [inaudible] Canarsie residents. I know it's a big issue for them.

Mayor: No, it's a huge issue. I understand.

This is the year of decision will be the news I can tell people. I don't have a final decision. Canarsie's clearly in the mix. That is a true statement. We're looking at sites around the city, and we need to make a decision based on what we've experienced already, which has been very promising. Right? That we've had about double the ridership of what we expected. I've talked to a lot of the ferry riders who are really, really excited about it. What we've got to look at is what will the usage level be. We're gonna have to feel pretty certain it's gonna be a high level use because if we're building out a substantial facility to handle the ferries we've got to know that it's a pretty sure thing.

It's got to be sustainable and we've got to put it in the context of the overall budget because it costs a meaningful amount of money to do. But I've got to say, two years ago I could not have predicted the level of success we've had with it. I thought two years ago it was really important to do, especially for some of the most underserved areas, and to see if this could be a more important part of our future in terms of transportation. Two years later, I think it has exceeded every expectation. If we can find a way to do it that's cost effective there's tremendous potential here, but this year will be the decision.

Question: If I could just follow up-

Mayor: Please.

Question: You see a certain sense of urgency. The transportation down in that area has been less [inaudible].

Mayor: The urgency around the L-train is its own thing. Obviously in that immediate area we are going to use the ferries as part of the solution. Not being an expert on what it would take in the case of Canarsie – what we know from the previous experiences is it's been a year or two to put together the ferry service in most places. That does not correlate to what we have to do in terms of the L-train shutdown, which if I'm counting right starts April 2019 and is done November 2020.

So, I don't think we should assume it would be a part of that solution. I think we're looking here at what the long term impact is. But I also remind you for folks farther out in the L-train route, like Canarsie, obviously there's opportunities to switch to other lines. The folks for whom the L-train is the only option are the ones who are gonna be the most seriously affected. New Yorkers who can switch to other lines are going to do so. Everyone knows that. New Yorkers are gonna be resilient. They're gonna be creative. They're gonna find other route, but I would say we need to de-link those two discussions.

Question: Can I just follow up with that? Are there any studies that say the Canarsie route wouldn't do well? Have you had studies –

Mayor: The studies so far – I don't have chapter, verse – the studies so far on ferry service show that we get an unclear picture of ridership and that's what we're trying to refine.

When we started out looking at the ferry service we have now, there were cases where we underestimated ridership, cases where we overestimated. We're all working that through. But I think the concern I have is, we need to know are we getting year round ridership? Are we getting strong, consistent ridership? Do we expect it to be year in, year out? Would it justify the tax expenditure? Would it justify the subsidy? And we've gotta be really clear about that.

So, what we now have is from a natural model we've learned a lot about how to make that assessment and we're going to apply it now in Canarsie and other places like Staten Island as well, and that's gonna lead us to our decision by the end of the year.

Question: So, you're looking into it now, but you don't have a definitive study on it yet?

Mayor: No, we don't have a final [inaudible]

Question: Hi, I'm Anthony [inaudible] the editor of [inaudible]. Thank you for having us.

Mayor: You're very welcome.

Question: Earlier this year you called for the arrest of Dorothy Bruns after she hit and killed two children on 9th Street, Park Slope, but in June a driver ran over a four-year-old girl on a sidewalk in Bushwick and was stopped by cops [inaudible] because he had to be publicly arrested...Why haven't you publicly come out and called for the same treatment for that driver and how do you expect people to take your Vision Zero initiative seriously when you're calling for justice in one instance and are maybe quiet in the other?

Mayor: Well, respectfully, I think people take the Vision Zero initiative seriously because for four years it's reduced fatalities. So, I respect all media questions, but I think your question kind of takes things out of balance. Vision Zero has worked consistently. People have bought into it. They believe in it. They want more of it.

That's a different question than each individual instance. In the case that you're referring to, it's still under investigation. The facts that I received just weren't clear enough on what happened to know if it was something that I would speak to in such a way. At the end of the investigation, we'll know more.

The case in Park Slope to me was absolutely cut-and-dry. The driver had a medical condition that caused her at times to not be able to control her vehicle. She knew it. She shouldn't have been in the vehicle.

Question: That came out after you made that comment, though.

Mayor: My memory of the sequencing is that's not accurate. I'm happy to go back and look at it, but that's not my understanding.

Question: Have you seen the video footage of the Bushwick crash?

Mayor: Of the actual crash? No, I have not.

Question: You haven't. Okay.

Mayor: What else?

Question: Mary Frost, Brooklyn Eagle. Hi. Okay, going back a little bit with the L-train, but also in other things. The Fast Forward plan, is that going to be rolling out soon? It will have a massive effect again on the L line on nights and weekends, and other lines in Brooklyn. There's already a lot of lag catching trains at nights and on weekends. So, how is this Fast Forward plan gonna roll out? What's it gonna do to the L-train and all other Brooklyn lines?

Mayor: Well, that's a question for Mr. Byford, obviously. I respect him a lot and I think the plan he's put forward is very promising. We're still trying to understand the cost and the timeline, but I think the basic construct is a good one.

The MTA right now has a substantial amount of resources that come from New Yorkers. We overwhelmingly pay for MTA operations in New York City through fares, and payroll tax, and all the contributions that New York City government makes to MTA, which are many and large. Job-one, I think, is to use the very ample resources they have and apply them better and I'm hopeful that Andy Byford can do that.

The MTA historically – and look at the East Side access as an example – has been horrible about using money. Very inefficient. So, my hope is that they would use their money effectively, that we would not see any more siphoning off of MTA money by the state, which we know happened to the tune of about a half a billion dollars, and that we're on the verge of a long term funding source, which I think should be a millionaire's tax and other people think should be congestion pricing, and in theory it could be more than one thing. That's really what needs to be the long term solution. The long term answer is a permanent funding source that would then empower the Fast Forward plan.

Question: Leanna [inaudible] from Brooklyn. I want to bring the question back to a bigger picture and ask how you feel all of us are doing in covering Brooklyn. The number of reporters has shrunk considerably just as the borough has grown and development's taken on. We all go to community meetings [...] And I think there is –

Mayor: That's a good thing.

Question: There is really only maybe a handful of reporters outside of this table that are currently covering Brooklyn today. And I just wonder, Sir, like how you think we're managing with what we have and what the city can do to support a more robust coverage of the communities? And, I mean, we have a third of New York lives in Brooklyn.

Mayor: Sure. Well as a Brooklynite I'll say the obvious, I mean, if we were a stand-alone I think we'd be the fourth biggest city in the country and we would not assume the fourth biggest city in

the country doesn't have just this many reporters. Right, so, obviously there's something wrong with that picture. That doesn't mean reporters who cover other beats don't do a lot of Brooklyn news but on your first question – so I've been a connoisseur of Brooklyn local media since 1999 when I ran for the school board in Park Slope. And I like it. I have always found the local media picks up a whole lot that the typical daily newspapers, and TV and radio don't catch and a lot of it really amplifies local voices and local concerns very powerfully and offers ideas and solutions you're not going to get any place else.

And you know, look, I've obviously been pretty vocal about the fact I worry about sensationalization in the media, I worry about the click bait culture, and you don't have that as much in the local papers, and the community and ethnic media in general tend to be more grounded in terms of people's everyday lives.

Now, that deserves support, and I think the answers going forward sort of, I can see a set of answers. I think one piece is what we talked about before maximizing government advertising in a coherent way, shifting as much as we can to media that is less resourced and to support that. And two is absolutely a good question, can we do some kind of direct support to local media. And three is the question of whether there should be government media outlets on top of what we have now, again, scrupulously governed to be unbiased or overtly representing different viewpoints.

And then the last question is beyond government, it's the subscriber concept, which I know a lot of outlets have used very effectively, and I think that is also part of the shape of things to come. That everyday people want that kind of news, it's not provided for free, they're going to have to decide if they're ready to make an investment, and I actually think a lot of people would make an investment in it if they believed it was the only way to get it.

So I think it's all of the above, but, you know, this is – it's something, I'll put it this way, it's something that people would miss a lot if it were gone and we have a chance to do something about it now so we're going to try to figure out our piece of the equation but I also think a public dialogue about the fact that more and more media outlets at the local level are in danger. And people having to think about what their personal responsibility is in that. There's a real consumer issue here, too and we shouldn't shy away from it. If people value it they should be willing to pay for it. Yes?

Question: First I want to correct myself, what came out after you called for her arrest was the fact that Dorothy had been arrested before, or, was in [inaudible] so I apologize for that.

Mayor: Alright.

Question: However, I do want to ask, you mention the Brooklyn-Queen connector, or the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront, so what's happening with the BQX? The last, I guess that your administration had said was you were still deciding whether it needed City and federal subsidy, so where does that stand right now?

Mayor: Well, we'll have a lot more say shortly on the specific plans moving forward. Clearly we'll need federal subsidy but we'll go into the details of that soon. But it's an idea makes a ton of sense. I believe it is 400,000 people and 100,000 jobs are on the route. Again, if I was talking to you about any place else in the country that had that intense a concentration of people and jobs in very small area, and I said we need light rail to link all that, it would be a no-brainer. So, it is a no-brainer, I think, that the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront is so much of our future. Figuring out how to do it is what we've been working on cause it is complex, we're going to have an announcement soon on the details. But, you know, bottom line is the original concept makes sense, we believe there will be some real funding created by its presence but, we're gonna need some additional support.

Question: City subsidy as well?

Mayor: Only thing I can tell you now is federal. When we have a more detailed plan we'll speak to it, but the primary focus I have beyond the resources that would be created via its very existence because of increased property taxes for that area, is the need for federal support. I don't think it's doable without federal support, but we'll speak to the details.

Question: And do you have that federal support yet?

Mayor: No, that's something that would have to come in the upcoming federal budget. Now the good news is we have seen the beginning, the beginning in the last budget reconciliation of some spending on infrastructure. I am hoping that is the beginning of something much bigger. Obviously Gateway, a very important project for the city, is moving, but it's something that would have to move federally going forward. I keep a hopeful stance on that particularly as it relates to the outcome of the coming election. Anyone out here? Yes.

Question: Yeah, staying on the topic of transportation infrastructure and its associated headaches. The city is responsible for constructing a portion of the BQE, and the triple cantilever is [inaudible] and it needs to be done, but the simple plan of how to do this without creating a nightmare along that very body route with the cars being diverted and how can we be sure that the isn't going to collapse into itself?

Mayor: Okay, the, I think the city, over decades, has a very, very good record of staying on top of our highways and our bridges in terms of their structural reality. We can't rest on laurels, but I am saying there's a track record that's meaningful and everyone's focused on the BQE and the triple cantilever. So a lot of work has been done to keep it going on the way to a much bigger solution. We will have to start the process very soon of announcing what the plans look like. But, I would just caution, again, I'm coming from the perspective of not that long ago I was someone who lived a life without being driven around by the NYPD and drove my own car and dealt with all sorts of disruptions and people make sense of it, and when I rode the subway and didn't even own a car. You deal with all sorts of disruptions and people make sense of it. I would never minimize what these things mean. But I would say New Yorkers are resilient, they know what they signed up for in terms of a big crowded city. And they are very good at figuring out alternatives.

When it comes time to fix the BQE it will cause disruption. It's impossible not to cause disruption. We don't have, you know, a perfect alternative. Important to see the difference between, for example, the L-train train shutdown and closing down parts of the BQE. The L-train shutdown is taking a piece of mass transit offline for a very limited piece of its run. We can do a lot to compensate with buses, ferries, bikes etcetera, for only 15 months. The BQE is taking a crucial highway out of the equation that also is a truck route. That in some ways is a more complex reality. So, I don't like nightmare, I don't like 'summer of hell' I don't like all that stuff, I just think that's like, again, I know you need your fix guys, but I just think it's, it creates this atmosphere of alarm and then people deal with it. And I just think we should all chill a little bit, like, yes, there's going to be disruption any time they have to do something big. The good news is that you do it once and it lasts a long time. We are very focused, plans are going to be start to be discussed soon. We'll do our damndest to minimize disruption, but of course there will be disruption.

Unknown: We've got time for a few more, there are folks that haven't gone.

Mayor: Who hasn't gone?

Question: Hi. My name is Dina Rabiner, I'm with the BKLYNER. And you've expressed how much you support the community together, you believe in it, even with the media. For online media [inaudible] is part of that landscape, we're at a competitive disadvantage with regards to potential revenues since the according to the city and state that we cannot publish public notices of which print media can. So this revenue stream is closed to us –

Mayor: That's city and state law?

Question: I believe so, we're –

Question: Yeah, newspapers –

Question: You have to be able to print.

Mayor: What century are those laws from? Are you serious? Online is not considered appropriate?

Question: Yes. So what I'm asking is what can you do to level the playing field?

Mayor: Yeah, well we'll have to change the law then. I mean, that doesn't sound overly difficult, it's kind of perverse in a world where we are talking about the elections being shaped by an online reality that, you know, it's not appropriate to advertise official notices online makes no sense. So, I don't know all the nuances and I will reserve my rights on any details I don't know, but if you're saying principals should be – also be able to advertise through online outlets, yes. If it takes a law change it is certainly something that I'd like to pursue. Because, it is important to keep a variety of media voices alive. Who has not gone?

Question: Hi. Thank you for your time, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Thank you.

Question: I'm Cindy Pereira, I'm also with Community News Group. So, I want to ask about – the US Army Corps of Engineers has been studying for a couple of years what to do in regards to storm surge and they're looking at five different alternatives varying between a five mile barrier between Breezy Point and Sandy Hook, and then a mix of barriers and shoreline specific measures and they're supposed to narrow it down to two by this fall-winter. How is the City coordinating with US Army Corps of Engineers and what the City's ongoing studies and such on waterfront protections? And also is the City, you know, leaning towards one of the alternatives, could you discuss?

Mayor: So simply, I met with the head of the Army Corps General [inaudible] I think it was January, in D.C. and found them to be very responsive and very focused on the central concern we were talking about then was the situation with the Rockaways and the very evident corrosion that's happened there. I believe very soon we're going to hear the next set of plans for immediate actions from the Army Corps. Our team constantly in touch with them [inaudible] resiliency team here, so we are in close coordination, but I think, what I understand is the next things that will come out are about specific and immediate actions.

In terms the bigger question, we're obviously trying to sort out which of those longer term alternatives would be most helpful. I emphasize longer term, I've said this to people at town halls and in neighborhoods affected that, you know, any kind of barrier approach is a long process, difficult process to achieve. And as you know there's various barriers around the world some of them have been very successful, some of them have not been. So I don't want people sort of having a panacea feeling that there's an easy answer around the corner. But we are trying to sort it out with the Army Corps and I think they are, they are focused obviously understanding this is one of the most populous areas that they have to deal with.

Question: I have a follow-up to that.

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: What is your take away or are you concerned that this study is only looking at storm surge flooding rather than actual sea level rise, especially because you're particularly concerned about the long term?

Mayor: I'm going to be honest, but I don't know the nuance and I, that's not my impression that they're ignoring sea level rise but I don't know enough about the details. Obviously it is part of the reality we've changed a lot of our policies, building code etcetera, to account for sea level rise. So this is a good example of a media question that will cause me to go and ask pointed questions because it is part of the discussion. So give me that opportunity to do that and we will come back with a more airtight answer. Okay, who has not gone? Okay.

Question: Alright, I have a two part question. I'm Alex I'm from Caribbean Life, so I just wanted to ask you, what new security measures implemented at last year J'ouvert parade do you think

there's like [inaudible] to happen and what new additional measures are going to be added this year?

Mayor: Well as to anything new, I'm going to leave that to – NYPD will be talking more about that in the next few days so I want to make sure all that has been perfected before we talk about it, but you can expect an announcement very soon on that. I think the bottom line on last year is it broadly worked, we're always going to be making adjustments but it broadly worked and I think it was the change in the time and putting the checkpoints in place and obviously the tremendous police presence and I think that combination achieved much more security while still honoring the ability of folks to have that event and enjoy that event. So, that basic structure, but we'll talk about the details very soon.

Question: Have you ever been to a J'ouvert parade?

Mayor: I have not been to J'ouvert, well I have been to the pre-J'ouvert, like the mas camps. But I haven't been to the actual event.

Question: Do you plan to go?

Mayor: Not this year, no. But at some point in my life. Okay, who has not – you're up next. Okay.

Question: Hello I'm Alex and I'm a reporter with Parks [inaudible]. I'm just –

Mayor: Very noble institution.

Question: Thank you. We'd kind of like to ask you about the reselling effort, near the Brooklyn Botanic Garden over in [inaudible]. The area over there was [inaudible] zoned many decades ago to protect the garden from the fear of oversized development. The fear was that it could black out the sun essentially and starve the plants. There's now a rezoning effort that could potentially result in the construction of a substantial amount of affordable housing, to the tune of seven or eight hundred units what would rise it up to forty – about forty stories in parts, and – which is in comparison to a six or seven story limit. We'd like to get your take on that, is that something that you think maybe a compromise can be worked out in the future? And at what point, you know, how much of the City values the Brooklyn Botanical Garden [inaudible] –

Mayor: One, I value it deeply as a Brooklynite but also as Mayor and it's a very, very important part of this borough and we do want to make sure it's protected for the long haul. Now, I think that's, what constitutes protecting it is its own discussion. I am not familiar with the details of that rezoning, I am trying to always say what I know and what I don't know. I am not familiar with the details of what's been proposed. I appreciate the question because it presents the balance of that we're always trying to strike, and the story goes back to where we started this discussion.

As a Brooklynite I would say what a blessing that all that is great about Brooklyn is finally being acknowledged, and, you know, the years that which people looked down on Brooklyn, wouldn't invest in Brooklyn, wouldn't even visit Brooklyn, you know, which is what I used to hear when I

first moved to Brooklyn in 1992. I literally would hear people say Manhattanites say, "I don't go to Brooklyn." Like it was normal. Thank God that Brooklyn has now fully come into its own. And that we have the strongest growing economy of the five boroughs in many ways, and a lot of the things we always wished for for our borough.

But at the same time, the challenge of growth is very real. And the challenge of affordability is probably the number one issue on people's minds. So when you say, again, I'm not commenting on a specific scenario because I haven't heard it, I have not been briefed on it, but you just said give me a theoretical of 700 or 800 units of affordable housing, that's a big, big deal. And I always put it in human terms of the average family size is basically three people in New York City.

You know. Eight hundred units is 2,400 people, if 2,400 people can live in this city permanently – effectively, decades of guaranteed affordability, think about if either one of you and everyone you report on. I think on a very human scale, that's a very big deal, I think about my constituents going back to when I started out, what a big deal it would be for them, who have struggled to live here to finally have that guarantee. But, as much as I love affordable housing, as much as it's the number one thing I think about land use action, there are other considerations and other things we have to balance. So another good question that will cause me to ask good questions as well, is what – I don't know that plan is, I want to know more about it, but we have to strike a balance with –

Question: Can I ask a good follow-up?

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: The Bedford Union Armory Development, which I am sure you are very familiar with.

Mayor: I am indeed.

Question: Extremely controversial.

Mayor: Yes it was.

Question: The community board and the borough president essentially voted against the proposal that came before them, which ultimately changed as part of a deal between the developer and City Council [inaudible] your administration that they never really had the opportunity to comment on. Do you feel like that is the ULURP process working, or do think that's a flawed [inaudible] process?

Mayor: No, I think it's working. When you think about a democratic system where it's acknowledged there are different interests and different world views. And one of the most interesting things about being in representative democracy is, you know, trying to figure out how to address the needs of different constituencies in a fair manner. Never getting lost in one piece of the equation or another, but really trying to balance things, and so what I think happens in a

lot of cases is community boards bring up a particular perspective, borough presidents bring a particular perspective, that affects the whole discussion and often leads to changes. And the ultimate arbiters under the system we have now are City Planning commissions, City Council and Mayor. And there's a lot of interplay there.

So I ask a lot of checks and balances a lot of opportunity to correct sometimes things just get turned down. If something isn't good enough and doesn't meet enough needs it can be just turned down outright, sometimes things get modified really profoundly, sometimes it's smaller modifications. But, I think it works, I think there's a lot of give and take and it tends more and more towards an emphasis on affordable housing which is very much what I think it should be, you know, trying to maximize the amount. And then also, what we see in most ULURP processes is big, long standing community concerns get addressed often. Parks based, or school construction or other things that people have wanted for a long time and they get it done through that process. So is it perfect, I'm sure it's not perfect. Do I think it's basically working and basically insuring that community concerns are heard? Yes.

Thank you, everyone.

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