

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, COMMISSIONER GUTMAN DELIVER  
REMARKS AND RIDE BUSWAY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you. Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez has been speaking up for this community for years and years fighting for equity. And this is what equity looks like to have quality mass transit, to have it be something that actually works for people, buses that move. Working people need to get around, they need a way to live their lives better. We're devoted to the working people of Washington Heights and this whole larger community, because now tens of thousands of people will get where they're going a lot faster. And we're not just doing this in one part of New York City. We're going all over New York City to bring equity, to make sure that buses work better for all New Yorkers. So, this is a big deal. The Council Member is right. He has spoken up time and again, and said what's happening in his community, the buses are too slow, we need change, we need something dramatic, we need something bold. Bus ways are that change. And we inaugurate this busway knowing it will improve the quality of life of so many people in Washington Heights.

Now, everybody, 181st Street, legendarily congested, legendarily slow buses. We're changing all that today. We're making the buses move. We're going to make sure that people who for years and years said, we need something better, see today that their voices were heard. We're bringing this community – and yes, a community has been hard hit by the pandemic – we're bringing hope that things really can change. You're going to see it with your very eyes today. A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

This busway will let New Yorkers spend less time traveling, more time living their lives. And that's what it's all about. And someone who does so much to help us get around and make the city work better, our Transportation Commissioner Hank Gutman.

[Applause]

**Commissioner Henry Gutman, Department of Transportation:** Mask and glasses. Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. And thank you for all you do to make transportation better and more accessible for all New Yorkers. And I want to particularly thank Chair Rodriguez, our host today. For those of you who don't know, the chair and I've been conducting a five-borough transportation tour of the city, this is our third stop. Mr. Chair, I will be scouting some locations in Queens later today. We're going to – and Staten Island, too. But I value our partnership with you and your colleagues in the Council. We couldn't do what we do without your partnership.

As we pursued the Mayor's agenda to create more and better alternatives to reliance on the private car, particularly by focusing on mass transit and making sure that we address the needs of underserved communities and transportation deserts, it's a treat today to be able to focus on the importance of buses in getting that done. Just to make – provide one example, here on 181st Street, 66,000 people, New Yorkers, ride those buses on an ordinary day and the speeds of those trips will be increased by at least 30 percent. That's a lot of time for a lot of people. That's a major impact, and we have a lot more that we plan to do. So, stay tuned for future announcements and future developments.

Now, I would like to thank some of the people who make that possible without whom it wouldn't happen. First, our partners at the MTA. We have some control over the streets, they control the buses. None of this could happen if the two agencies didn't work seamlessly together as absolute partners. We have been, we will continue to, and I can't say enough to thank and express appreciation for the work of our MTA partners. And you'll be hearing soon from the President of Buses Craig Cipriani – Cipriano, sorry. I'm thinking restaurants, sorry. And then, of course, I want to thank our DOT team without whom none of the things we do could be possible, led by our Deputy Commissioner Eric Beaton. And in particular, Janet Jenkins and Nolan Levenson –

[Applause]

Whose project this is, they've been here. If they look familiar in the neighborhood, there's a reason. And I want to thank them. So, Mr. Mayor, thank you for all you're doing. Thank you for setting our agenda. Thank you for keeping our feet to the fire and making sure that we pursue it with all speed. I left out deliberate – all speed. Since this is a day about increasing speed, that's the name of the game. So, thank you very much.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Hank. Okay, everyone, there's a good news story. News flash. Good news story. The relationship between the MTA Bus Division and the City of New York has been a really positive, successful story.

[Applause]

Let's be clear and I want to say thanks to everyone at the MTA, because we've all worked together to make it work. Buses really matter. Sometimes subways get a little more of the attention, but for millions of New Yorkers buses are part of their lives, every day. We've got to get it right in this city. It's more and more mass transit, help people get out of the cars. We only do that with putting more and more investment into buses and making them go faster. So, this partnership is working, and I want to thank Craig and everyone at MTA Bus. We're showing we can get some great stuff done together. Pleasure to introduce the President of MTA Bus, Craig Cipriano.

[Applause]

[...]

That means you, all non-buses.

[Laughter]

That was good. That was good, Craig. Craig, congratulations. Just think about that, 60 percent of the ridership back already, and it's only April. That is very good news. Congratulations. And that's a credit to you and all your team. Congratulations.

[Applause]

One more point we got to make here before we ride the bus. When we improve mass transit, when we get more people out of their cars, more people into the buses, we're also fighting climate change. If we're going to be green, it means making buses more and more of the solution. So, I want you to hear from our Director of the Office of Sustainability Ben Furnas.

[Applause]

**Director Ben Furnas, Mayor's Office of Sustainability:** Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. And Chair Rodriguez, it's great to be here. Commissioner Gutman, great to be here. You know, as I've said, we are in a sprint and we can't afford to take a single year off from acting on climate change and better buses are key to climate action. More people on buses means fewer cars on the road, and it means lower greenhouse gas emissions and, you know, taking action on climate isn't just about fighting for the future. It's also about improving daily life in the here and now and correcting inequities in the here and now. And a busway for tens of thousands of bus riders in Upper Manhattan is exactly what I'm talking about.

A busway means more time with our kids and less time in traffic. It means getting to work or school reliably and on time. It means cleaner air and it means furthering environmental justice. You know, in the face of the incredible challenges of the last year, DOT managed to make 2020 – and in partnership with communities all across the city – the most transformative year on New York City streets in a generation. There were record numbers of new bus lanes and bike lanes, new busways like the one here and neighborhoods were entirely transformed with Open Restaurants and Open Streets.

You've really lived up to your name, the Department of Transformation. And I think you're just getting started. All of this is key to acting on climate and all of this is key to making our recovery a green recovery. You know, just a few short years ago, there was not a single busway in New York City. Now it's spring and they're sprouting up all over. And that's thanks to your dedication, Mr. Mayor, thanks to the incredible work of DOT, partners at the MTA, and the city and state elected officials, and all the advocates for great transit and livable streets. And I do want to just reiterate a special congratulations to the DOT bus team. I know this was a real labor of love, so thank you all very much.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** All right, let's go ride a bus.

[Applause]

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