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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO DELIVERS EVENING WINTER WEATHER
UPDATE**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I've been going around the city, getting a sense of what's going on out there. I've spent some time in Coney Island, inspecting the situation in terms of potential flooding and the efforts that have been put in place to make sure we will not have flooding. Very impressed by the work that was done by the parks department – securing the beaches at Coney Island. I know they've done the same in the Rockaways, and in other parts of Queens, and Staten Island – then went out to Staten Island to the North Shore to get a sense of how things were going there with the efforts of the sanitation department.

Let me emphasize at the outset, sanitation department is doing an extraordinary job. I want to really thank the men and women of the sanitation department. I had an opportunity to talk to some of the sanitation workers as I drove around and I thanked them on behalf of the people of this city for the great job they're doing. They got ahead of this storm and they have stuck with it every step of the way.

Now, the fact is, sanitation is dealing with a very tough situation. At this moment – sort of fighting an uphill battle because the precipitation keeps coming down. They keep plowing, but the rate of this snow storm continues to be intense – between one and three inches per hour, depending on where you are in the city. So, recognize that this is a storm that's got a lot of – packing a lot of punch, and is continuing very forcefully, and will do so into the evening. So, that just emphasizes how important is to get out of the way of our sanitation workers and let them do their jobs.

I'll say again – travel ban is in effect. The NYPD will enforce the travel ban. It's very important that people clear the roads so sanitation can its work and get this city back on its feet over the next day or two. Of course we need our roads clear for our first responders so they have the freedom to get to anyone who is in danger. NYPD – as made clear by Chief O'Neill before, no one wants to have to arrest people, but the NYPD will take any measures necessary to keep our roads clear in the middle of this emergency. You'll see some images that are starting to go out on social media – the NYPD enforcement actions. We want New Yorkers to know that this is a warning being given very clearly. If you want to avoid these enforcement actions, get off the streets now.

It's also important to recognize that because of what's happened with our mass transit, it's all the more reason that if anyone needs to get somewhere, they need to go immediately. Of course, now, not only are MTA buses no longer running, but subways that have routes above ground have now been suspended. Underground subways continue – the state and the MTA made the decision – and we're very happy about that decision – to keep the underground subway operations going. So, there is a way to get around in much of the city. But, again, the smartest thing to do given that this is a storm that continue to grow – it's getting colder, it's obviously getting dark – the smart thing to do is to get away from any place – if you're at work, get home from work. If you're out for any reason doing errands, get home – get home, get safe.

National Weather Service has given us an update now, and it's quite striking. You know, we said earlier in the day that if we broke 20 inches – it was more than 20 inches of snow – it would rank as one of the top five

storms in terms of accumulation in the history of New York City since these records were first kept in 1869. The last exact reading I have is from 4 pm in Central Park. Central Park has always been the recognized location that is used to measure snowfall in the city. If you're going to have one location – that's been the go-to location over many, many decades. As of 4 pm in Central Park, 19.3 inches. So, that's well over an hour ago. At this point – very likely that we've passed the 20-inch mark right there. But certainly in other parts of the city – even more snowfall has occurred. The current scenario from the National Weather Service has us expecting 24 to 28 inches of snow – 24 to 28 inches before this storm is over. So, this is a forecast that in the last 24 hours has jumped up several times – and, now, as high as 28 inches. Again, from the point of view of this city, we have to prepare for an even worse-case scenario than that and be ready if it goes even farther.

So, again, our sanitation crews – out doing an extraordinary job. They're working very long shifts, working very hard. They will keep doing that – luckily, plenty of salt, plenty of vehicles ready. I'm very pleased with what I saw earlier in terms of the work of the parks department to protect against coastal flooding that I mentioned. So far, the indications on the kind of tidal levels we'll have seem quite moderate. No more than three or four feet above normal levels, which is manageable, especially given the precautions that have been put in place. But, again, our agencies will be ready to respond if we see anything happen that might cause a danger to people.

I want to emphasize how important it is for folks to help our first responders. One of the simplest things you can do is if you have a fire hydrant in front of your house, when you're shoveling, keep that fire hydrant clear. The life you save could be your own, or your families, or your neighbors. So, please, keep the fire hydrants clear. But, as Chief O'Neill will indicate, we already unfortunately have seen several situations where people overextended themselves, in some case, with tragic results. If you're in good enough shape to be shoveling, great. If you're not in good enough shape, let someone else do it – another family member, or some of the folks who go around neighborhoods, offering to help shovel. Better to spend a few bucks for someone to shovel than to do something that might present a danger to yourself.

Again, any problems with heat and hot water, we need to know about them – call 3-1-1 if your building management is not dealing with them. Any situation where someone's life is in danger, please call 9-1-1 immediately so we can get there and help them.

Quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

And that is midnight, and that – actually, that time range is going to be extended. I'll speak about that in a moment.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Before I bring up First Deputy Commissioner Calvin Drayton of the Office of Emergency Management – just emphasizing that our travel ban will continue into the early-morning hours. We'll have an update before the evening is over with an exact time. Originally, we projected to at least midnight. We're going to continue that into the early-morning hours. Given how strong this storm has been and how long it's going, we need more time for sanitation to do their work, but we will set a specific time as soon as possible. We'll certainly have an update later on this evening.

Deputy Commissioner Drayton from OEM –

[...]

Mayor: Alright, we'll take any questions that there are. Yes?

Question: Could you elaborate on the NYPD enforcement actions that are going to be going out over social media [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, absolutely. So, again, when the travel ban went into effect, of course, a lot of people had just heard about it – were getting home. NYPD took a very generous view of that and the chief has instructed the men and women of the P-D originally to give warnings and just tell people get home immediately – speed them along. I saw the chief do that himself in one case out in Coney Island. But, as we go on, we obviously have seen some real improvement on the roadways, meaning more and more people are going home, staying home. The roads are getting clear and clearer. People who go out now after this much time, after this many warnings, are asking for enforcement. So, you will see more and more visible enforcement. And simply what I was referring to was some of that enforcement has been captured and will be [inaudible] video images and will be put on social media so the people of this city can see the NYPD is very, very serious about this enforcement.

Any other questions? Yes?

Question: Do you have estimated price tag for the snow storm?

Mayor: Not yet. I mean, the good news for this season is we had a very substantial snow budget in place given what we saw the last couple of years. We did not use that snow budget until this point in any meaningful way. I think I might have the number here, but the fact is this is the first one. So, I think we budgeted \$77 million, if I'm getting this right, for this fiscal year. This is really the first time we're tapping into that in a meaningful way. So, I think we're good shape.

Any other questions? Yes? Keep going –

[Laughter]

Question: Did you have to make the case to Governor Cuomo to keep the underground subways open? Or was he on board with that?

Mayor: There was absolutely a consensus on that. There was good back and forth on all of these issues. He – over the first conversation we had earlier in the day – I think we both were working under the hope that as much as possible of the subway system could keep going. And we – even earlier in the day were talking about whether we might get to the point of a travel ban. And we both felt, earlier in the morning, that we weren't at that point yet. Later on, after 11 o'clock, when we got the new estimates, everyone started talking in great detail about when and how to do a travel ban. So, I think the facts really lead us, you know, as the situation clarified. Again, look at the trajectory over 24 hours – how great intensified these forecasts have been. And so, I think the MTA did things right. First, the buses, which were obviously going to be in potential trouble; then the over-land trains. They've done a good job of keeping the underground service going, which I think is a smart move. So, there's been a lot of unity on this one. Again, emphasizing – I want to say to people again – travel ban – the state's made clear and we agree – in effect until further notice. That definitely means not the early-morning hours. We'll have an update before the evening is out, giving a more specific timeframe to that. But the travel ban is in effect until you hear otherwise – I want to emphasize that point. We originally said might – we're definitely going to go well beyond that given the nature of this storm. Travel ban is in effect until you hear a specific message saying that it will end at a specific hour. It's very important for people to honor the travel ban until it is over.

Last call – any questions, please? You're doing great.

[Laughter]

You're on a role.

Question: I know this is maybe a Port Authority question, but can you give us an update on the airports?

Mayor: We're actually – your timing is impeccable. We are just starting conversations with the Port Authority to get a sense of what they believe is a valid timeline for the reopening of the airports, and obviously we're going to work with them on that, and that will be important to consider in terms of personnel who have to get to the airports, and allowing them to do so. But we don't have yet a read on what that kind of timeframe is. We'll know more about that in the next couple of hours.

Question: Do you have a timeframe on bringing up – above-ground subways and buses [inaudible]

Mayor: That's obviously – it's the MTA's call. I think everyone would agree that right now, again, as these numbers have intensified and increase with each time I've stood here – I've had to give you a higher number each time because of the nature of this storm. You know, until we finally see this storm end and we see just how much snow is dumped on us, then we'll be able to estimate how long it will take to clear out. And once of course the MTA restarts is over-ground operations, they have to sustain it. So, I think considering right now, we still believe this storm goes until 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock easily this evening. It's premature to say when that restart time will be.

Question: I've got one more –

Mayor: You may.

[Laughter]

Question: Broadway, as I'm sure you know, cancelled –

Mayor: Yes, and I appreciate that everyone in Broadway made that decision. That was a very responsible decision.

Question: Did you or your staff reach out to the folks from Broadway?

Mayor: Yes, we did, and we made very clear that we thought we understood the situation they were in obviously. It was regrettable for all of us, but that – they had to take down the matinees and the evening shows just because there's so many employees associated with Broadway who would be stranded otherwise. And if we needed to get people home right away, we couldn't have them held up at their workplace. And I was actually – very interesting to me – when I was in Coney Island, you know, I think we were down there – we got there a little before 2 – you still saw a fair number of stores open. Then I went over the Staten Island, then I went through my neighborhood in Brooklyn – through Park Slope. By the time I got to Park Slope, maybe about 4:15 – 4:30 – almost every store in the neighborhood was shut. So, I think employers heeded the warning that, you know, if everyone has to be off the road, they can't keep their employees in a situation where they'd end having to violate the travel ban. So, I think at that level, the travel ban was very effective. But in terms of Broadway, I think they did the right thing, they did the responsible thing, and they recognized that for all their employees if was just unfair to hold them there.

Question: One more –

Mayor: Please.

Question: There was a report this morning that the parks departments and sanitations departments had gotten into a fight over snow – I'm sorry, over salt. Have you heard about that?

Mayor: No, I don't – they're not two departments that tend to fight with each other. So, I think we have lots of salt. As I said, we started the storm with over 300,000 tons of salt – an extraordinary number. We're obviously going to make sure all our departments have what they need. Parks department has done a great job in this crisis, especially with the way they reinforced the beaches. Sanitation has done a great job. Everyone is working together – OMB, helping to coordinate all our agencies.

Thank you very much, everyone.

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