



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: WITH THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY TRAVEL UNDERWAY, MAYOR DE BLASIO AND BIPARTISAN REGIONAL LEADERS URGE INCREASED FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, good afternoon, everyone.

All around us right now are some of the 600,000 commuters who pass through Penn Station every single day. 600,000 people a day come through this station – that number is actually going up as more and more people are turning to mass transit.

And we know – we are now starting over the next few days a time-honored American tradition – it is not just turkey, it is not just football, it is Thanksgiving travel. And we know what it means – more and more people on our trains and buses and in the airports, and it really points out to you this time of year, the problems that we have in our infrastructure – the fact that we haven't been making the investments we should as a country – and you can see it, with all the delays people experience and all the problems that they're going to experience – the headaches, the traffic jams – so much of which are related to a lack of transportation and infrastructure investment.

Well, it's something that we feel all year around, even if we especially feel it today. And in this city, some of these challenges are very, very pointed. For example, in this city, we don't just have a handful of bridges over 100 years old. We have 160 bridges in New York City over 100 years old – that's just one of our challenges. And what we see all over the metropolitan area – the traffic jams, the delays our commuters go through because of aging infrastructure. The average New York City commuter spends the equivalent of three days a year stuck in traffic, traffic jams taking up 72 hours of their life each year, largely because the investments haven't been made, particularly on the federal level.

It has been a very different reality since Washington stepped away from its obligations to pay for infrastructure. For decades, Washington led the way on mass transit, on highways, on infrastructure, but that's been so different in the last 20 years. And now, we are literally seeing our nation at a 20-year low in infrastructure spending. We're spending about 1.7 percent of our gross domestic product as a country on infrastructure. You know what? One of our chief rivals, China, spends 9 percent of its gross domestic product on infrastructure – almost five times as much.

The Congress – and when I say it, I want to immediately exempt the members of the New York City delegation, who have been extraordinary – who have been extraordinary in their support, bipartisan support, for infrastructure investment. But the Congress as a whole has failed to act and now finds itself at a crossroads.

There's a serious discussion going, as you'll hear from the two Congress members with us today – there's a serious discussion going on about the future of this country – the future of transportation, the future of infrastructure.

There's two roads – there's really a fork in the road and they have to make a choice. Down one road lies economic growth for this nation, many more jobs, safe and efficient travel; down the other road, more and more delays, more and more danger, and fewer and fewer jobs – it's as simple as that. It's a choice that has to be made.

And by the way, talk to the business community – if you want to hear what it means to them. It is extraordinary how clear our business leaders are about the failure to invest in infrastructure – what it means for their businesses in this economy. One specific study that came out for the American Society of Engineers said that when we fail to make proper infrastructure investments, \$1 trillion dollars a year in sales are lost and 3.5 million jobs a year are lost because of inappropriate underspending on infrastructure.

So we have a road we have to take, which is towards investment.

And again, the people standing around me understand that.

Now we are here to make a point to all of you and to the people of this region. This is a bipartisan group standing here. We are proud of the fact that it's a bipartisan group. We want to send a message to Washington that, yes, people can agree across party lines on common-sense matters, like investing in our roads and bridges and highways and mass transit.

And we've been reaching out to people all over the country who feel the same way. Again, this New York City congressional delegation is unified. Regional leaders, county executives, and other key leaders unified across party lines. 72 mayors around the country – I joined with 72 of my fellow mayors, bipartisan consensus – we sent this letter to the congressional leadership – 72 mayors from all parts of the country, from both parties, and independents, calling on the congressional leadership to act. And as I said, business leaders and transportation advocates, like the folks we have here – there is a clear consensus on the need to act.

We know that the difference in dollars pales in comparison to the difference in human lives in terms of the dangers we face, in terms of whether people have a job or not, how much time taken up in their day in traffic jams and delays. There is a huge cost to not investing, and we see that cost played out time and time again.

And I have to tell you, I've mentioned the bipartisan consensus and the business leaders, the advocates. I want to mention some of the folks who are here and thank them. I want to thank our city transportation commissioner, Polly Trottenberg, who also sits on the MTA board. I want to thank some of the other elected officials besides those who will speak, including Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez, and Assembly Member Dick Gottfried for their support; Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers' Campaign, Veronica Vanderpool of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, and John Raskin of the Riders' Alliance. Thank you all for your commitment. Also, Chris Jones of the Regional Plan Association and Council Member Corey Johnson – thanks to all of you.

Now just to finish up here, before I turn to my colleagues, when we get additional investment, it really changes people's lives. Another \$100 million dollars a year in funding would allow us to speed up subway service for the extraordinary number of people who take the subway. It's almost six million people a day taking our subways – or in annual terms, astounding 1.75 billion annual subway riders. \$100 million dollars more means that we could make those rides go faster, we could end a lot of those delays.

But instead of that kind of common-sense additional investment, what are we facing potentially? And Jerry and Dan will tell you about this. There's a danger of an \$80-million dollar cut to New York City. In fact, there are discussions in Washington about going backwards. An \$80 million dollar cut – and what would that do? Well, that would certainly cause further delays in subway service that people are already rightfully upset about. They would only get worse if that money were cut out of the budget.

And again, I thank the bipartisan support of our congressional delegation, fighting back those cuts.

If anyone says to you, well, you know what? The Congress needs to see localities act more, and that might inspire them. Let me remind you – over the past decade, the city of New York has increased investments in roads and bridges 50 percent – five-zero – 50-percent increase in infrastructure spending over the last decade. We have had to take up a lot of the role that Washington used to – and we can only go so far with the resources that this city has.

But we sure are putting our money where our mouth is. Now we need Washington to step up.

What this means for the country is so clear – and I have to quote one of our greatest leaders, President Kennedy. He said a very simple thing that sure resonates in this moment. He said, “There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long-range risks of comfortable inaction.” We cannot allow the majority in the Congress – and I mean that, again, excepting our colleagues here – we cannot allow the Congress to make the choice of comfortable inaction. We have to work to a day when there’s actual investment.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I want to first turn to Congressman Jerry Nadler, who has been leading so many times over the – as he has so many times over the years – efforts to get fair transportation funding for this city, for this region, and for this country. He’s one of the true experts and one of the go-to people over the years. And I want to thank you, Congressman, for always sticking with that battle. Congressman Jerry Nadler –

[...]

**Mayor:** Alright, we’re going to take questions on this topic – on this topic, go ahead.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** That option exists, but we haven’t analyzed whether we’re going in that direction or another direction. It’s something that is clearly a possibility, but I can’t tell you yet whether that’s the best plan or another plan that’s been put forward to turn it into a park. So, we’re going to analyze that and at some point in the future come back with a vision for it.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I’ll let the County Exec speak for himself, but I will first say – if we’re going to work in a bipartisan fashion we’re obviously going to work with people that we respect, but also have respectful disagreements with. It’s just self-evident. Every day in Washington, I bet Dan and Jerry will Amen this, the only way we’re going to move the nation forward is for people to reach each other across the aisle as much as possible. So, there is no litmus test that we take before we agree to get transportation funding for our communities. We’ve got to fix our roads, our bridges, our highways, our mass transit, and that is something that unites us. And we should be, I think, ready when we see that unity, when we see people ready to work together, we should embrace it. And, by the way, if we don’t have strong bipartisan shows of support nothing is going to move the Congress forward.

**Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino:** First of all, I think the Governor should be here. We’re speaking in one voice because this is important to everybody in New York City. And specifically for the Governor throughout New York state. But I’m here because the mayor is leading on this issue, and he’s correct. And even though we don’t see eye to eye on certain aspects, we do certainly see eye to eye on this, and why shouldn’t we be walking together and speaking with one voice to our Congressional Delegation because all of

our constituents win on this issue. You know, it seems to me the statement that the Governor made was completely out of line, number one. And just from my observation it seems like the Governor has some insecurities. And since he's a constituent of mine, I'd be more than happy to set him up with our Department of Community Mental Health if he actually needs a little help on this issue. But I am here to help. I'm going to work with the mayor whenever we can see eye to eye, and advance an issue that's important.

**Congressman Dan Donovan:** I'm good after that.

**Question:** Mayor, I'm wondering if you agree with Mr. Astorino.

**Mayor:** I don't agree with his last comment, with all due respect to him.

No, I think the Governor's been very supportive on the efforts to get transportation funding from Washington. There's no question about that. I disagree, however, on the point should we work with people across the aisle. We have to work with people across the aisle.

**Question:** Should he be here?

**Mayor:** This was put together for regional leaders meaning mayor, county executives, and Congress members. But, again, I absolutely want to be clear, on this issue the Governor's been very much in the place we are, but if we are not proceeding in a bipartisan fashion – so, this where I would disagree with him and the Congressman – if we're not proceeding in a bipartisan fashion, if we're not standing Democrat and Republic together, if we're not working with business leaders, we're aren't going to get this done.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I'm going to have Polly Trottenberg come over. She's going to fill in some of the blanks with me as both our transportation commissioner and a member of the MTA board. But look, amongst the things we care about the most and we want to focus on the most, when we win this battle and get proper funding for mass transit, I want to see it go to the infrastructure elements of the MTA that will speed up our trains. We have real signal problems and other foundational problems in the MTA that new investments could help us solve. Clearly, we want to keep moving along on the Second Avenue Subway, so that's another area of priority. Polly can add a little more detail for you –

**Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation:** A [inaudible] on both the MTA and New York City DOT, and, as the mayor mentioned, some of the big MTA projects that we're clearly counting on a big federal investment – Second Avenue Subway, North Shore BRT – hopefully for us together, working on the Woodhaven Boulevard BRT. And then, for New York City DOT, some of the projects where we're looking for federal funds – our BQE Triple Cantilever, our Great Streets Project. And both agencies and the state just obviously have a lot of state of good repair projects to keep the transportation system working for all New Yorkers.

**Mayor:** Okay, other topics – other questions on this topic, go ahead. On this topic –

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** \$80 million.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** What – when you say what scenario –

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** What would it mean in actual, tangible impact? Polly – \$80-million dollar cut – explains some of the things –

**Commissioner Trottenberg:** I mean, it's \$80 per – \$80 million per year from the MTA's bottom line would mean quite a lot of reductions in services the congressman mentioned – reductions in bus service, subway services, a diminishment of the state of good repairs. So, if you total that up, that would be almost half a billion over the course of five or six years. That's a big hit to the MTA.

**Congressman Nadler:** [inaudible]

**Commissioner Trottenberg:** Yeah, that's right.

**Congressman Nadler:** None of those new projects –

**Mayor:** Go ahead, say it.

**Congressman Nadler:** That would basically be equivalent to a dime – if you wanted to maintain the same services, you'd have to increase the subway fare by about 10 cents for that cut.

**Mayor:** Okay. Anybody else on this? On this topic – going once, going twice – alright, we're going to break for a moment. I'll come back to a couple of others on other topics in a moment, but let us break for a moment first. We'll see you in a few minutes.

[...]

**Mayor:** Okay. Anything else on your minds? Grace.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Again, there's a legislative process going on with the City Council right now. We've talked about this many, many times. When there's a legislative process going on, there's a lot of give-and-take, and seeking common ground so we can get something done. But my values on this issue are the exact same, but I can't comment on anything until we see if there's some resolution, and we're just not there yet.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** Again, until we see – no, it's just as simple as this – until we see where this process goes, I'm not going to comment on a hypothetical. My views, my values are the exact same – we've been going, as everyone – and we've talked about it quite openly. We've been going back and forth with the Council now for quite a while. There's been some real differences. We've been trying to work them through. And when we believe – if we think we have a resolution, that will be the time to talk about it.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** That's a variation on the same question. And again, until we see if there even is some agreement to talk about, I'm not going to comment on it.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I like non-hypothetical questions.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I've talked to a number of Council members of the last few months on this issue, absolutely – over the last few months. Yes –

**Question:** [inaudible] Gracie Mansion [inaudible] Mayor's Office. How do you respond to that?

**Mayor:** He obviously isn't looking at the facts. The great increase in homelessness started in 2011. We've shown you the charts – I think we showed them to you at the last budget unveiling and other times. It started in 2011, when the State and the City both, I think very regrettably, cancelled the Advantage Program, which was a very effective subsidy program. And as a result of that, the number of folks in shelters started to shoot upward. On top of that, what I talked about yesterday – the economy got worse for many people and the cost of housing kept going up. So that's how we started down this road. I'm proud of the fact, in this administration, we've come up with the kinds of tools to actually get people out of shelter – and you've seen how substantial those numbers are. So that's the truth. In fact, resources matter a lot in addressing this problem. They certainly matter in terms of creating the supportive housing we need to get out of this problem in the long-term. They matter in terms of providing rental subsidies and anti-eviction legal services. So it's quite obvious that we do need resources for this solution and we've been investing those resources.

**Karen Hinton:** Last question.

**Mayor:** Anything else? Last call – sorry.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** I would say this – the – New York City is the best-prepared city in this country to prevent any act of terror and if, God forbid, we encountered even a lone-wolf type of situation, to address it very promptly with overwhelming force. People have to – I believe this very, very strongly – have to trust law enforcement, have to understand the extraordinary efforts made every single day to keep them safe. For 14 years in this city, the NYPD has succeeded, with our federal partners, in averting any further terrorist acts. And I really believe that the terrorists are engaged in psychological warfare. They are trying to get us to change our lifestyle, they are trying to get us to change our democracy. We cannot let them do it. We have to stay true to who we are. So I strongly advise people to do the same things you would do – go to the Macy's Parade and go shop and go out, participate fully, and know that the NYPD is protecting you every step along the way.

Thanks, everyone.

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