

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces Historic Investment in Traffic Safety

April 23, 2022

Regina Myer, President of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership: Good morning. I'm Regina Myer, president of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership. So glad to welcome you all to Albee Square. Here we are in Albee Square, the heart of Downtown Brooklyn, right here at Fulton Mall, celebrating Car Free Earth Day. I'm so glad you're all here. The historic center of Brooklyn is right here at Albee Square, we have everything that comes together, government, shopping, restaurants, music. So just really putting my plugin for you all coming back here. We're here to celebrate Car Free Earth Day with a lot of great events, with a lot of great partners. So please, if you can linger, that would be wonderful too.

Myer: But we're really here today to talk about what it's like to maintain beautiful open spaces, just like this in New York City. And in partnership with the New York City, we work together right here in Albee Square to make streets greener, plant our street trees, make sure we have seating for all, and make sure that it's a safe pedestrian environment, and that we're able to enhance our bike infrastructure to really improve mobility. So we're so glad to celebrate Car Free Earth Day with all of you. But most important, I'm here to introduce to you the mayor, our mayor, my friend, Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you so much. And really thank you for what you have done downtown, you continue to be the leadership, it was a real partnership when I was in Borough Hall. And Ms. Myers is right, part of the reason we are here is because we want you to spend money. So stop in the shops, spend some money so that we can continue to open our economy. And to our partners here, Senator Jackson, real, real hero around these issues for so many years. Councilman Marte, Lincoln Wrestler. Oh, you didn't ride your bike. You know?

City Council Member Lincoln Wrestler: I ran a 5K this morning.

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: Okay. Okay.

Mayor Adams: And all of our partners, particularly with just my good friend, Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, former Councilman, who's now the commissioner of DOT. Just enjoy some of the good vision that Ydanis has. As we push forward, as we were walking, after riding, we were talking about just the whole battle of traffic fatalities that we are seeing in our city. And we want to lean into the enforcement aspect of it, we must be more proactive than reactive.

Mayor Adams: I was a captain in traffic stats when I was the xo of the six precinct. Where we zeroed in on enforcement, making sure we set the right message, and we want to just find out what is going on. We're going to be convening a series of meetings with our precinct personnel, zeroing in on those dangerous intersections, and really push back on the number of traffic crashes that we are seeing, that we think we could take a more stronger approach to it. And I'm excited about doing so, and I'm looking forward for your leadership in this area.

Mayor Adams: Just right across the bridge, I love that new path. It was a nightmare going on top, and it was a dream going on the roadway. And to all those critics that stated, well you're going to back up traffic, wrong, wrong. You are able to share the streets with pedestrians, and those who need to utilize the bridge and drive in a vehicle, it was a nice, smooth run. You know, I'm going to look to do it more often as I come into Brooklyn, but it was a great way of getting your blood pumping and exercising, a beautiful... To all those who advocated to get it done, you need to give yourself a hand because it was really a great idea, and we need to continue to look great ways of opening our city to those who bike in a safe way.

Mayor Adams: Far too many people are not biking because they don't feel safe. And the more we make it safe, the more we are going to see people utilize their bikes, which is good for exercise. It's good to interact with everyday New Yorkers, and it is just good for our environment. You're talking about a win, win, win. It's definitely a win, win, win. And so that's why today, we are making an historical announcement. Now I say this term all the time, and you guys just never write about how many times I say historical. You know? We just keep making history. I feel like the Jackie Robinson of mayoralty, I keep making history. And I just want to see a line, "this historical mayor keeps making

history or historical." Historical funding in so many areas, historical announcement, investment of more than \$900 million to continue to keep our streets safe. This is the largest amount that we have put in place.

Mayor Adams: And so tomorrow you're going to see, "well, Eric didn't do \$901," you know? No, we're the largest amount, the historical investment in making our streets safe. And we are committing 904 million over the next five years to help build critical infrastructure. This builds into what Stefan and Ryan, and what we did over at Prospect Park, when we did the protected bike lane. People said it couldn't be done. We got it done. And you know what? We got it done within my administration, within the time that we allocated it. And if you haven't been over to Prospect Park, it's a beautiful route to take going along Flatbush Avenue. It used to be extremely frightening, but we got it done.

Mayor Adams: And this is part of our New York City streets plan that Councilman Rodriguez has been talking about and pushing forward, it includes expanding the mileage of bike lanes, dedicated bus lanes and busways. And it builds on the work we are doing to reform on-street parking, and reduce a number of dangerous vehicles and drivers in our city. There are people who are habitual, dangerous drivers. They speed, they have a total disregard for others, they are all always in a rush, no matter where they're going, they don't believe that there's a speed limit. We need to find them proactively, and get them off the streets. And they're continuous abusers, they have a total disregard for our streets and the safety of our citizens. Too many New Yorkers have lost their lives, and we are committed to stop this increase with those who are part of Transportation Alternatives, Families for Safe Streets, and other advocates who have really pushed this important issue forward.

Mayor Adams: You know, I say this over and over again, these are our streets, and it's about riding, skateboarding, walking. It's about being able to move throughout your city in a safe way. And when I sit down and speak with my elders, or those who are living with some form of physical impairment, they talk about the challenges of crossing the streets. And we looked at that as the Boll president, and we're going to continue to look at that as the mayor, as we did build out curbs, build out how we put in place pedestrian plazas. Look at this beautiful plaza here. You know, this is a good place you could come shop, sit down, spend time, and just enjoy the outdoors. That's what's great about this city, I'm a big people watcher, and this is a good place to just watch people walk by.

Mayor Adams: And so as part of this investment, we are installing barriers on five of our protected bike lanes across the city. This is part of our 20 miles that we want to reach the heart in protected bike lanes. By the end of next year's year. These five protected bike lanes, in addition to improvements made earlier this year, will make up 10 miles that will be completed by the end of 2022. So we are moving forward at a very consistent pace, we'll track to meet our targets. I say this over and over again, and I borrowed this from Senator Jackson, promises made, promises. You got to keep the promises you made.

Mayor Adams: We are a city of pedestrians, cyclists, skaters, drivers, and mass transit. When I bounce from here, I'm hopping on the train to go back. So, you can see the different ways we can move around our city, and you know my motto, I've said this over and over again, eventually New Yorkers are going to walk around, they're going to walk around with their thumbs up, and they're going to say GSD, get stuff done. We get stuff done in this administration. That's why we continuously use the term historical because we are moving the barriers away from getting stuff done and placing barriers along our protected bike lanes, so people can get stuff done in a safe way and biking through our cities a safe way. Motivating our children to bike to school, safe corridors for them to bike to school once or twice a week, having them not be stationary, but to actually bike to school, having biking clubs.

Mayor Adams: There's some amazing biking clubs that are taking place, so the energy is here. We must do our part, and that is to ensure that the pathways are safe, where people can feel comfortable in utilizing the bike infrastructure that we have. We are so far behind international leaders. When you go to other cities and countries across the globe, they're so far ahead of us. We don't follow in New York, we lead in New York, and so we are going to regain our leadership under the next a few years to make sure that this is the place where people will come and study and analyze how we got it right. Under the Bloomberg administration, it really took off. We need to continue what was put in place under de Blasio's administration, but we are going to push forward and do the historical things that are needed to make it happen. We have the right team, the right people, and the right energy, and that energy starts at the top. It starts with my amazing good friend, the commissioner of DOT, Ydanis Rodriguez.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and first of all, I'd like to recognize also that we're being joined here by Kizzy Charles-Guzman, the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental, so big round of applause for her. It is nice to be also another Latina also playing important leadership with this administration, and I also want

to— two things before reading my talking point. One is to say thank you to the 6,000 leaders at DOT, the men and women that they've been working for so many decades.

Commissioner Rodriguez: As we are speaking right now, with some of them here, Margaret Forgione, my deputy commissioner, she's at Dyckman to be sure that the diamond color that we are closing today from Broadway to La Marina that's St. Nicholas from 181st to 190 has all the programming that our working class community deserve. That's what this administration... We leave the fingerprints. It's about equity, it's about fairness, it's about the same thing that we are seeing in downtown Manhattan, in Downtown Brooklyn, in Long Island City, we will see on the same community under this administration led by my good friend Mayor Eric Adams. So, this is where we're going as a city.

Commissioner Rodriguez: The second thing that I want to acknowledge is that New York City never sleeps and we move forward. We are going to be at 5:00 PM ending our Car Free Earth Day, and at the same time, the mayor has also the person that May 1st already have it sold out of 32 cyclists that will be participating-

Commissioner Rodriguez: 32,000, exactly, that will be participating in the five borough bike tour on the Mayor Eric Adams for the first time since 1978, they got an extension of the time, so that they can be not only the larger bike borough tour in the nation, but with the plan to be the largest one in the whole world. So, that's what this mayor's all about, but we need partnerships such as Ken Podziba, so thank you, Ken too.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Listen, we were here in 2018. At that time Brooklyn borough president, now Mayor Eric Adams celebrating Car Free Day, riding on our bike. It was a rainy day. We work with what our mother earth gave us. Now, today we got a beautiful 60 degree, but 2018 was a rainy day, and we were there here at Brooklyn, where they are standing with the Car Free Day, which is the biggest one that has been seen, that is happening in the United States of America.

Commissioner Rodriguez: So, New York city always is taking the lead. During one of our first Car Free Earth Day celebrations years ago, I came to Brooklyn again, as I say, with at that time our Brooklyn borough president, now Mayor Eric Adams, where we hosted one of just a few locations that opened in the street for pedestrian cyclists. At that time, we only have Broadway from 23rd to Union Square and a block or two here in Brooklyn and some areas in Washington Heights. Six years later, I'm proud to stand

alongside Mayor Eric Adams today as we kick off the biggest Car Free Earth Day in the nation to announce his historic investment in the New York City street master plan.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Today, we are announcing 904 million to reclaim space from cars on our streets. We will be building even more bike lanes and dedicated bus lanes, and both ways, as well as new plazas and other public spaces. The commitment includes more than half of a billion dollars for capital and even more in baseline expenses funds. We know we have a lot of work to do to address reckless driving and the senseless traffic violence on our streets at the same time that we get this investment. This funding will help New Yorkers reduce the dependency on dangerous cars and embrace safer, greener alternatives like biking and transit. We are already hard at work on the street plan. We are redesigning some of our open streets to make them permanent, like 34th Avenue in Queens. We are planning on signing new bus projects in the Bronx and new bike lanes across the city, among many other initiatives. We are also on pace to meet our commitment to having our bike lanes across the city.

Commissioner Rodriguez: And place the question should not be if we have not done it in the time that we say, we make with Bike New York, we make with TA, and we're committed, and they understand that important is that if we were doing the three months, that important is about the quality, and that's why they're also on board on the miles that we've been able to change the plastic protected bike lane for a solid one. Today, we're announcing another group of lanes to be hardened, including Grand Street in Brooklyn, not in Boulevard, not in Boulevard, in Queens and Southern Boulevard in the Bronx, amongst several others. Every year Car Free Earth Day reminds us of transportation's important role in sustainability, the environment, and to the city as a whole, the city that is composed by upper, middle, and the majority working class. Today, we are bringing public space programming to nine corridors across the five boroughs to celebrate.

Commissioner Rodriguez: We have partnered with over 150 community organizations and city agencies that will provide programming promoting education surrounding climate change, sustainability, and other relevant topics, plus fun community based performance and activities for all ages. If you want to do free sailing, go to Dyckman Marina. If you want to learn how to ride a bike, go to those corridors and Bike New York. They're ready to teach you how to ride a bike. The future of our city depends on our alternative forms of transportation. It is crucial that we continue to embrace electric and green and motor transportation in a city that is only composed by 350 square miles. As we continue to improve the safety and reliability of our transportation system. I'm

encouraging New Yorkers to leave their cars at home, not only today, but as many day as possible.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Environmental justice is a racial justice. Most people who died during COVID were the working class who have pre-health condition, such as asthma, obesity, diabetes and other. We know that climate change and carbon emission impact our underserved and low income community the most. That's why this investment industry plan is so important. We are committed to deliver these projects in a way that is equitable or work with benefit the communities that need it the most. We are incredibly proud to celebrate Car Free Earth Day with Mayor Adams and New Yorkers across the boroughs. And we thank the mayor for his support and vision to deliver a safer, more reliable city. And this activity is happening from Staten Island, where I started my day today at eight in the morning as they are planning for the Car Free Day, across Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx and Manhattan.

Commissioner Rodriguez: [Spanish]

Mayor Adams: If you haven't noticed, I love dogs, and I'm going to want to get me a dog before ... Two things I'm going to do before I leave office. And you remind me of the second, or you remind me of the second. Got to get my nose pierced and I'm going to get a dog. Those are the two things.

[Laughter]

Mayor Adams: We had some great partners here. Before we open to Q&A, this is not just our vision. And I'm so happy you mentioned that, as we did with the DOE, we spoke with local stakeholders. We did the same here. We did not have to find our biking advocates. We were speaking with them throughout the years. We didn't have to all of a sudden say, "well, let's find who are the biking advocates? Who are the safe street advocates?" We stood with them for years and so it was easy for us to just take the plans they gave us and implement them. And one thing you mentioned that many people miss, having the ride tomorrow, all we needed from the city was to give them the additional hour. And no one wanted to just move from what we've always done and said, "let's give them additional hours so we can go to the largest biking event on the globe."

Mayor Adams: And so when we came in and started asking the question, "well, why can't we do an additional hour?" Everyone looked like the three stooges, scratching their heads saying, "we don't know why." So we said what? "Get stuff done." And so now you have your additional hour. Now you're going to expand. We're not going to allow bureaucracy to get in the way of making this a safe, friendly, fun city. Our city became so boring. That's all we know is, "no." Everything you want to do in this city, people say, "no, no, no, no, no." Let's start from, "yes." And how do we get there to get it done? And thank you, Ydanis, for getting that additional hour and making it happen in a real way. I want to bring on our other partners, Senator Jackson, then Councilman Marte, and then the great legendary Lincoln Restler.

State Senator Jackson: Well, thank you mayor. Good afternoon, everyone. And let me just thank the commissioner and everyone who put this together. I was invited by a member of his team to come down and ride bikes across the Brooklyn Bridge, had come Downtown Brooklyn, and I'm glad to be with you. And I was just thinking about the issue of safety and security. And I've said to people, my top priority is the safety and security of the people that I represent. And I know that's your top priority. And that makes our city a safer place to be.

Senator Jackson: But I was thinking about the bills in Albany that are still pending, as far as giving this city permission to reduce the speed limit here in New York City. I know that would make the city a safer place for people to walk, to run, to ride their bikes, and understanding it's about education also. We need to educate everyone about their roads and responsibilities, drivers, bikers, walkers. I've seen people walking across the street with their cell phone and not looking at the cars turning. So it's about a holistic approach to make our city a safer place to be. And I just thank you for inviting me to come down here today, to be with you, commissioner, and your team, and you, mayor, and your team. Thank you.

City Council Member Christopher Marte: Hi everyone. My name is Christopher Marte. I'm the council member representing Lower Manhattan, where we started our ride today. And I just want to give you a quick recap of what happened. There was no breakaways, no one was dropped. We rode as a Peloton, as a united force, with the mayor, great mayor, the commissioner, all the bike advocates, council members, state senator, riding united to say this is how we fight climate change. This is how we make those promises that we've said for the past few years of expanding and protecting our bike lanes, making them happen. I'm glad that- to stand here with everyone to announce, I don't think it's only \$900 million. I like to say it's close to \$1 billion in

investment. And that's historic. So thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you everyone for being here. Thank you.

City Council Member Wrestler: Bringing this one down a little bit. My name's Lincoln Restler. I want to welcome you to Downtown Brooklyn. And I want to thank, I want to commend, I want to laud Mayor Eric Adams for this historic investment. I'm not shy when I disagree. And when I do agree, I'm going to shout it from the rooftops. This is a big, big, big day for street safety in New York City. And I want to thank the leadership in the City Council. In our Council budget response, we prioritized the investment in the streets master plan. And I want to thank all of the great advocates like TA and Riders Alliance and so many more who have been out on the streets demanding this investment for street safety. This investment, \$900 million plus dollars over the next five years will save lives. We are going to achieve, with the great work of Commissioner Rodriguez and the team at DOT, safe, protected bike lanes, not paint barriers, that are going to keep our community safe.

City Council Member Wrestler: We are going to have buses, real busways where folks can actually move efficiently on their commutes. And we are going to have dedicated pedestrian space so that New Yorkers can enjoy our great city. Now I'm so glad you got to enjoy the amazing new bike lane coming over the bridge and end here, because this is where the investment is needed. We need to actually make Schermerhorn have a real protected bike lane so it's safe. We need your namesake, Mayor Adams, Adams Street, to have a protected bike lane so that it is safe. We need the pain point by Barclays at Flatbush and Fourth and Atlantic, which has killed too many people, we need it to be safe. This investment today can make our streets safe. And I am so thrilled, thrilled that this mayor, who I have known personally to be an ally on these issues for years, has now demonstrated to every New Yorker that he is going to deliver safe streets. Thank you so much.

Question: [Inaudible] council budget proposal had 3.1 million for a safe streets plan. This is not [inaudible]. Is this negotiation? Is this your last and final offer? How do you explain the daylight between the two?

Mayor Adams: No, no, no daylight on the desire. We are still in negotiation. We have other things we're going to be announcing. As I stated, this is historical. And as Lincoln alluded to, this is the arm of government. It's good for us to continue to debate issues, have conversations around issues, push in one area, push in another area. But I think

with the speaker, we call ourselves Adams & Adams Law Firm, I think we're going to continue to do these successful things. And so this is part of the continuing conversation.

Question: Hi. Is there a number of how many miles of bike lanes this might go into, or miles of barriers? Just any sort of number over the next five years?

Mayor Adams: You have that?

Commissioner Rodriguez: Well, and also with the money, one thing that we should know is also that what the Mayor is allocating right now for the street master plan is even more than what the Council anticipating, call for the bill to invest because the original call for the Council was over the 10 year. And this is investment over the five year, so the money that the mayor is putting right now is even much more than what the Council included when we passed the bill. We are working with a bus lane and following the plan the mayor committed, 150 mile protected bus lane units for year. This is the plan that we have.

Question: [Inaudible] street master plan [inaudible] 20 miles of protected bike lanes each year, but [inaudible] 10. So is that less than what the plan requires? Or how many will you be building this year and every [inaudible]?

Commissioner Rodriguez: Our goal is to add 150 protected bus lanes over the next four year. That's the number that we have. We know that this year, because of the pandemic and all the challenges that we had, we are probably going to be working with this number under 20. But our goal and Mayor Adams and DOT is to get 150 protected bus lanes over the next four years.

Question: [Inaudible].

Commissioner Rodriguez: Oh sorry. On the bike line, on the protecting one, I met with Bike New York and TA as soon as we were working with our goal, and we had this conversation about the importance to focus more on the quality than getting the 20 this year. And that's why they are happy with the numbers of mile that we get so far. And our goal is to get this 20 mile protected with new material. We better than when we anticipated by next year. But this is something that we work with advocates.

Question: The law that was passed by the City Council, by you, requires [inaudible]. So now you're saying that you're not [inaudible]

Commissioner Rodriguez: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought I was thinking about the hardening on the protective bus limit. We are working, I can get a show from DOT to add it, but we working. We are working with our goal to get the 20 mile. That's our goal that we are working as we are speaking right now.

[Crosstalk]

Mayor Adams: Okay. We are going to do some off topics so you're freed up. You're freed up. Thank you, brother. Thank you. Hey, Gina. Thank you. Good to see you.

Question: Thank you, Mayor. [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: We've always made it clear, it was never about giving fines to people. It was motivating good behavior and we are doing our spots inspection checks, and we received complaints. We're following up on that. So it was never about how do we continue to be heavy handed. From what I get from the city, the residents and many of you in the news industry, heavy handed enforcement is not what the city needs. We need to operate together to get the results we need. So we get complaints, we go in and look at it. But we are clear, this is what our businesses should do and we are not trying to be heavy handed and just go in and be harmful to businesses and to residents.

Question: If I could just- [Inaudible].

[Crosstalk]

Mayor Adams: We're not getting a lot because New Yorkers are following the rules. And so I'm happy that we don't need a lot, but we're looking if there's a specific number. But every number we get receive, we follow up on, but we're not getting a lot because New Yorkers are doing what they're supposed to do. That's what's great about the city.

Question: Can you stop [inaudible]?

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: This is a question about [inaudible].

Mayor Adams: I said last week and I said it again. I spent two days talking about my taxes. I'm done. The next thing you'll get from me is the tax information. But that's a wrap. What you're going to find with me, I'm not spending 10 days on talking on topics that's interested to some people. I know what New Yorkers are interested in. New Yorkers are not stopping me on the street and say, hey, let me see your tax info. They said, Eric, stop the gun violence. Make sure that we have affordable housing. Make sure that our children are educated. This is about New Yorkers, and that is who I'm spending my time. I already answered all the questions on the tax question. And I spent two days on that, and that was even more on what I wanted to spend on that. So I'm done with that.

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: They can keep asking me and I can keep answering. I have no control over what you write. No one has control over what I answer to. So you could ask me and I respect that, and you should respect the fact that I answer the questions and I did. So I'm done.

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor Adams: Ceiling evolution. I need New Yorkers to be safe. And we have some good possibilities out there and we are excited about them. And so I must make sure New Yorkers are safe and comfortable in the system. And when the deputy mayor of public safety is ready to roll out the information, he is going to do so. But we have some great possibilities out there and we will be announcing it when we are ready to announce it.

Question: Mayor, what's your response to [inaudible]?

Mayor Adams: I'm just learning about that. I'm disappointed if anyone had a fake vaccination card. I think that undermines the entire system. When a parent dropped their child off to school, they did it with the understanding that everyone inside that building that's employed there was vaccinated. And I think that's a lack of trust if someone faked a card. And so my understanding is an active investigation. And when

the investigation's going to determine if there was some misgivings that took place. But we should be vaccinated. I'm vaccinated, I'm boosted and because of that, had COVID two weeks ago, a week ago, the days are all together, and I only had a tickle in my throat. Vaccines and boosters work. And so I'm disappointed if we find that there were DOE employees or any employee in the city that faked a vaccine card. That undermines our entire system. Okay.

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